

**Can Evangelical Christians claim to be followers of Isa?  
Investigating the purpose, death and return of Isa and Jesus?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research project deals with a simple question which drives the whole project. Can an Evangelical Christian claim to be a follower of Isa? The reason for asking this question is that there are two different groups of scholars who each answer the question differently. Both groups of scholars do not engage deeply with Islamic Christology to see what is the Isa of the Qur'an and hadith to be. There after a comparison is done with Jesus from the Gospels highlighting differences and similarities between the two figures. Thereafter, observing the missiological and anthropological aspects of claiming to follow Isa. The research is an exclusive literary study.

The researcher attempts to argue that followers of Isa should be careful in adopting Isa as a self-identity and social religious identity. There are two dangers in that followers of Isa maybe perceived as Muslims by the Muslim community since most of the followers of Isa are converts from Islam. The second danger is that followers of Isa maybe syncretic in their approach and not contextual since they are merging two religions.

## **KEYWORDS**

Missiology, Christology, Islam, Contextualisation, Insider Movements, Hadiths, Qur'an, Islam, Insider Movements.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Title

Can Evangelical Christians claim to be followers of Isa? Investigating the death, return and purpose of Isa and Jesus?

## 1.2 Background

The researcher became interested in the topic of Insider Movements after attending two conferences in 2011 and 2012. The first conference that introduced him to the topic was pro-Insider Movements (IM) and the second anti-IM. These two conferences were vital to his introduction to the topic of Insider Movements. These Movements arose because of the lack of sustainable witness of converts<sup>1</sup> from Islam remaining within their local Muslim environment. The Insiders were attempting to prevent extracting the convert from their local community because after conversion, the converts from Islam would leave the Islamic community and join a Christian community. Thus, they started introducing Islamic terms and practices that, according to them, were Biblically permissible. However, this practice has become controversial among local Christians, especially those in the Muslim world<sup>2</sup> (Nikides, 2011:47-57). Moreover, the scope of the controversy is global, illustrated by the Presbyterian Assembly reports presented in America, dealing with the Insider Movements (Taylor, 2013). Furthermore, even prominent Evangelical scholars<sup>3</sup> have also engaged in some of the controversy surrounding Insider Movements and contextualization.

Those for the Insider Movements<sup>4</sup> argue that Muslims who convert to Christ should not relinquish their old religious identity with their “Social-Religious community”, but should instead reinterpret their previous identity. Stated differently, if a convert to Christianity feels that they would not like to adopt the Christian identity they should be able to retain their pre-Christian identity and blend it with their newfound Christian

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<sup>1</sup>See Madany 2009

<sup>2</sup>Arabia, Asia and certain parts of North Africa to be specific. See Madany 2009, Nikides 2011:47-570.

<sup>3</sup>See Piper 2006, Carson 2012.

<sup>4</sup>See Travis 2000, Higgins 2006, Brown 2007, Lewis 2009.



faith. Instead, they can define themselves as a follower of Isa or as a Biblical Muslim. An example of this is Mazhar Mallouhi (2009:3) who defines himself as “a Muslim follower of Jesus”.

There are those against Insider movements<sup>5</sup> because of the problems relating to these attempts at contextualisation<sup>6</sup>.

The topic is worthy of investigation because there are two significant movements among those who are engaging in training Christians to deal with Muslims and believers from a Muslim background (they are known as MBBs). The controversy surrounding Insider Movements has long-term consequences for Christians who are or will be working with converts or Muslims. Many Muslims are converting to Christianity<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the controversy surrounding contextualization would only increase.

Both those proposing IM and those against it have influence around the world and Christians in South Africa have been drawn into the discussion. Key issues that are dealt with in this study are Islamic Christology, Biblical Christology, Contextualization and Religious identity.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

As stated above, there are those<sup>8</sup> who conclude that Christians can make the claim that they are followers of Isa, and who maintain that this is a valid form of Biblical contextualization. This leads to the following question: Is there legitimacy in the claim that a Christian can be a follower of Isa, more specifically an Evangelical Christian? It should also be observed that Parshall (2003:68-71) makes allowance for the term but does raise concerns specifically in relation to certain practices of IM proponents.

Dutch (2000:15) argues that some missionaries and MBBs prefer to associate with Insider terminology in relation to religious identity, because of the bad perception of

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<sup>5</sup>See Smith 2009, Madany 2009, Houssney 2011, ed Lingel, Morton and Nikides 2011.

<sup>6</sup>Contextualization in this study is to be understood based on Gillian's (2000:23) definition of the church attempting to understand the implications of the Gospel within their own culture and making the claims of the Gospel relevant to it.

<sup>7</sup>See Rosenberg 2009, Doyle 2012, Trousdale 2012

<sup>8</sup>See Travis 2000, Parshall 2003, Higgins 2006, Brown 2007 and Lewis 2009.

the term “Christian”. He criticizes westerners for being naive about the issue of religious identity. He argues that many misconceptions about the Gospel can be avoided by using Insider terms in Muslim contexts in relation to religious identity.

Furthermore, Mazah Mallouhi (2009), who is an example of being a follower of Isa, argues that Evangelicals demonstrate a prejudice towards Muslims. Mallouhi (2009:7-10) points out that there are various sub-cultures within Christianity, such as Christian bikers and Jews for Jesus, both of which are generally accepted by most Evangelicals as authentic attempts at contextualization. However, there are major objections brought up when some claim to be Muslim followers of Isa. Additionally, he implies that saying what Muslims call the Shahadah (or the witness) is not wrong in certain instances. However, the researcher’s own critical evaluation of Mallouhi’s (2009) argument would indicate the fact that Islam has a unique Christology<sup>9</sup>.

Furthermore, Asad (2009:133) argues that the definition of personal identity used by IM proponents is widely used. It has become the norm of those working with Muslims today. Asad (2009:133) also points out that the MBBs have been using these terms (Biblical Muslims and Followers of Isa) for their identity since the 1970’s. However, is what Asad indicating factual? Mandany (2009), in pointing out how Christians in Algeria wanted a clean break from Islam, does not seem to think so. They adopted Christian religious identity, rejecting any notion of Islamic terms in their religious identity. This is explored further in the chapter dealing with contextual issues.

Accad (1997:10), also a strong proponent of the Insider Movements, stated, “As I’ve studied the Qur’an for thirty years, I’ve found it overwhelmingly pro-Christ, pro-Christian and pro-Bible”. In contrast, there are scholars like Smith (2009), Caner (2011) and Lingel *et al.* (2011) who argue that the Qur’an is none of those things described by Accad. Furthermore, they believe that the Isa of the Qur’an is a false Jesus. Thus, he should have been rejected from the beginning. The following quote from Morton illustrates this perfectly (2011:3207):

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<sup>9</sup>Christology in this study is understood as dealing with works and words of Jesus in both Islam and Christianity (Ayoub 1976:163). Further explanation of Islamic Christology would be provided in the section dealing with concept clarification (1.10).

Would the Jesus of the Bible be caught dead working in Islam, How could he? The Isa of Islam is not the Jesus of the Bible. Isa would not be caught dead because he never died and rose from the dead. How can Isa, a man that took part in the deception of the cross, call men and women to embrace the truths of the Bible when his very existence is evidence for the falsity of the Bible.

The above quotation indicates what most of the scholars<sup>10</sup> against IM believe about the use of the term Isa for religious identity. They feel that using the term Isa is a denial of the Christian faith and that it is syncretistic.

Additionally, another argument presented by Mandany (2009:50) notes that certain MBBs from North Africa refuse to use the term Isa. He points out that the Christians in this region choose to identify themselves openly as Christians, rather than as followers of Isa or any IM equivalent. Moreover, these Christians could have chosen IM religious identities to avoid persecution.

Emir Caner (2011:3781) points out that Insiders are guilty of not only misunderstanding the Bible, but also of “misrepresenting the Qur’an”. Balic (1979:1) agrees with Caner when he makes the following statement: “It is primarily Christian Missionaries or Orientalists who are either themselves theologians, or who are well disposed to Christian theology, who overestimate the role of Jesus in the Qur’an”. The question arises, are the above statements true, or are these scholars misinformed, as this statement contradicts what Accad Implied?

Thus, each movement has its own favourite publications, namely the International Journal of frontier Missiology (IJFM) for those promoting IM and those opposing the Insider Movements, the St Francis Magazine (Bourne 2009:58). We now move onto works dealing with Islamic Christology. A brief sampling of this is provided here and expanded in the next chapter.

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<sup>10</sup>See Smith 2009, ed Lingel, Morton & Nikides 2011, Caner 2011, Houssney 2011.

Geoffrey Parrinder (1965) deals with all the references to Isa in the Qur'an, covering all the main titles and comparing key New Testament passages when they intersect. A comparative religion approach is used by Parrinder in his publication. He does not deal with Christians being followers of Isa. The same can be said of another key figure, namely Mahmoud Ayoub (1980), whose article on Islamic Christology is a masterpiece. He approaches the topic of Isa from an inter-religious faith perspective. He gives some interpretations that are rare among Muslims.

Furthermore, Leirvik's (2010) seminal work deals with the major studies done on the life of Isa within Islam. This edition is actually an update from an earlier work published in 1999. He points out that the current edition attempts to add new information. He starts from the Qur'an and Hadith and moves his way to the 21st century. Included are polemical works by Muslim authors. Leirvik touches on the Imanders<sup>11</sup>, MBBs from Bangladesh, who define themselves as followers of Isa. In light of these people, he suggests that perhaps Jesus should be understood as between the views of Islam and Christianity. He also states his belief that Islam does not have one central view of Isa. Instead, he suggests that Islam has many "Christologies"<sup>12</sup>.

Zahniser's (2008) work highlights some of the major differences between Isa and Jesus by discussing His death, burial and mission. He highlights both the views of Islam and Christianity on these three topics. He however takes the unusual approach of demonstrating the differences between Christianity and Islam without being polemical.

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<sup>11</sup>Levirk (2010:3552-4188) points out they are Muslims who have converted to Christianity but they are not keen on defining themselves as Christians. Thus, he is describing a group of Insider Movements in Bangladesh. He also points out they are critical of both the established Church and the Mosque.

<sup>12</sup>Levirk (2010:97-119) argues that it is partly related to Qur'anic revelation the issue of many Christologies. With some Islamic Christologies being more about enhancing what is found in the Qur'an while other attempts at Christologies are used to combat the Jesus of the Christians. "Both tendencies may be said to have their origin in the Qur'an, whose revelations vary from the Non-polemical references of the Meccan period to a more polemical confrontation in the median context". Moreover, political and cultural factors also play a role in the type of Christology that is produced. Thus, Christologies from Egypt during the twentieth century would be different to Christologies found in Pakistan in the twenty first century. For further discussion, see the literature review (2) later in this study.

Lawson's (2009) work entitled *The Crucifixion in the Qur'an* is also a valuable resource. This work is popular, yet the author's main perspective is again attempting to bring a closer understanding of the Christian and Muslim perspectives. An illustration of this is the way he argues that the crucifixion has been rejected in Muslim commentaries because of Christian doctrine and not because of Qur'anic denial.

Lingel *et al.*'s (2011) publication clearly points out that a Christian cannot claim to be a follower of Isa because it is syncretistic. Unfortunately, they do not engage adequately key Islamic texts dealing with the person of Isa. They merely cite the Qur'anic text without interacting much with it.

To conclude, the researcher was confronted with the following three shortcomings with regard to the reviewed literature:

1. Literature against Insider Movements, as represented by Lingel, Morton and Nikkides (2011), who argue that it is impossible to be a follower of Isa, hardly engage key works dealing with Islamic Christology (Qur'an & Hadith).
2. Authors who, on the other hand do engage in Islamic Christology and understand it on its own terms, yet, do not deal with Evangelical Christians claiming to be followers of Isa<sup>13</sup>.
3. Do those authors who use IM methodology only do so in order to be understood effectively by the Islamic community? Alternatively, by claiming to be followers of Isa, are they syncretistic in their approach?

This study hopes to contribute to the controversy surrounding the Insider Movements by dealing with three areas of Islamic Christology: Isa's death, return and purpose. A comparative study was done, highlighting a selection of Biblical passages from the Gospels dealing with the same themes, noting differences and similarities.

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<sup>13</sup>With the exception of Levirk (2010:3552-4188) who only briefly engages with one Insider Movement group the Imanders. Levirk points out more research needs to be done on them.

The results of the Christological section of the study would also illuminate this attempt at contextualization<sup>14</sup> by those who use IM methodology. There after a link would be established showing the connection between the exegetical work done in the Christological section and the practical application of being a follower of Isa in relation to Islamic worldview and culture and how the two are interrelated. anthropologists with regard to forms and means were also consulted and the overarching question arose. Are those who are claiming to be following Isa merely adapting to the Muslim culture surrounding them?

The following questions are proposed in dealing with the theological ground that has to be covered in an attempt to answer the question: Can an Evangelical Christian legitimately claim to be a follower of Isa?

- How is Isa understood within the Qur'an and Hadith<sup>15</sup>, dealing with three areas of his life, namely his death, return and purpose found within selected passages in the Hadith and Qur'an.
- How does the Jesus of the Bible compare with the Isa of the Qur'an in the same three categories focusing on the Gospel accounts of him, noting similarities and differences?
- Is this approach by IM with regard to religious identity truly contextual in the light of Islamic culture and worldview?
- How do MBBs who claim to follow Jesus in the Mosque understand their identity as Evangelical Christians?

#### **1.4 Aim**

This proposed study desires to engage critically with certain MBB's claims that they are followers of Isa in the light of Islamic Christology and to additionally also observe if the practise is syncretistic or merely adopting to the culture surrounding them.

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<sup>14</sup>Namely Insider Movements claiming to be followers of Isa.

<sup>15</sup>The Hadith collection that would be reviewed is Sahih-Al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Furthermore, whenever Hadith are reference in this study it is in relation to these two works of Hadith literature. The two specific hadith referenced in regard to Isa's return is as follows: Bukhari (2006, 4:657) & Muslim (2006, 1:289).

## **1.5 Objectives**

- To investigate the Islamic Christology that is formed by the Qur'an and Hadith in relation to Isa's death, return and purpose.
- To compare the themes mentioned about the Isa of the Qur'an with the Jesus of the Gospels, noting similarities and differences.
- To examine the approach to contextualization in the light of Islamic culture and Islamic worldview.
- To scrutinize insider proponent's choice of religious identity in relation to Evangelical Christian identity.

## **1.6 Central theoretical argument**

The central theoretical argument of this study is that Evangelical Christians claim that the followers of Isa should understand Isa's role within the Qur'an and Hadith. Furthermore, followers of Isa have to deal with contextual concerns that are brought up by using Isa as a religious identity.

## **1.7 Methodology**

The term Evangelical was used in this thesis in the same way as Enns (1989:611-613) understands it, namely, people who have a high regard for Scripture, and base their theology on it. The researcher included all the various labels by which Evangelicals define themselves, namely Reformed, Charismatic, Dispensationalist, Anglicans and Baptists. All these and other traditions were included in the definition of Evangelical.

The researcher conducted an exclusive literary study. Thus, there no, empirical work was done. The reason for using this method was that the majority of the study dealt with theological<sup>16</sup> works and consequently it was better to engage with scholarly literature, instead of doing an empirical study. Furthermore, with regard to contextualization, it was also more advantageous to use scholars who had more

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<sup>16</sup>Specifically, in this study two types of theological works: Christological and Missiological.

years of experience in dealing with this issue than the researcher had, and who were engaged through their literature.

The approach that was used by the researcher concerning the Qur'an was the thematic approach as described by Levirk (2010:349). The purpose for choosing this approach was because it would be easier to bridge over to the Gospels than other approaches<sup>17</sup>. As indicated earlier, three key themes were addressed in the study: Isa's death, return and purpose in the chapter dealing with Islamic Christology. The following Qur'anic texts were consulted: 3:55, 4:156-159, 19:33, 61:6 in answering these questions.

Regarding the death of Isa, the focus was exclusively on the Qur'an. The reason for this was that most scholars<sup>18</sup>, when dealing with the death of Isa, focus on the Qur'an and only mention the Hadith when it comes to the return of Isa. With regard to the return of Isa, the two volumes of Hadith that this study already referred to, were investigated. The return of Isa and the death of Isa are related in Islamic Christology and it is therefore important to review both the Qur'an and the hadith<sup>19</sup> when dealing with the return of Isa.

Additionally, in understanding Isa from an Islamic perspective, key tafsirs<sup>20</sup> from the classic period were consulted since they were some of the earliest tafsirs on the Qur'an. In understanding Isa from a modern perspective, three key supplemental works were considered: Ayoub (1980) on Islamic Christology, Maududi's (1978) tafsir on the Qur'an and Qutb's (1995) commentary *in the shadow of the Qur'an*. Additionally, Ishaq's *Sira Rasul Allah* (1955) work was also consulted where the need arose for understand the Qur'an at a deeper level. The Sira helped with explaining how particular verses had come about and what issues Muhammad had been dealing with at the time. Furthermore, the scholar Levirk (2010) denies that

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<sup>17</sup>For more discussion regarding the various methodologies undertaken with regard to Islamic studies of Isa. See Levirk (2010:297-347).

<sup>18</sup>See Parrinder 1965, Haqqe 1980, Ayoub 1980, Cragg 1985, Fonner 1992, Zahniser 2008, Lawson 2009, Levirk 2010.

<sup>19</sup> See Zahniser 2008:15-75.

<sup>20</sup>*Tanwīr al-Miqbāsmin Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* 2007, *Tafsir al-Jalālyn* 2007, *Tafsir Al Tustari* 2011.



there is one standard Christology within Islam. However, there are some key points that are common to most Islamic perspectives<sup>21</sup>.

The next section deals with the same three categories, except the researcher would engages the Gospels. The purpose for engaging the Gospels, is that a fair comparison could be made with Isa. Thus, when comparisons are mentioned, they are mostly from the Gospels. The three key anchor texts that were examined are as follows: Mark 15:25-37, Matthew 25:35-46 and John 18:33-37. The researcher explained these verses based on the exegetical principals set forth by Smith (2008:171-178), namely that exegesis has five main parts. The implication of all these passages and their relation to our identity as Evangelical Christians are also highlighted.

These passages are then used to compare the differences and similarities between Isa and Jesus. The tools used to engage the research question were specialized dictionaries, exegetical commentaries and key lexicons.

Moreover, the next chapter of the study evaluates if this approach is syncretistic or if Insiders are merely adapting to the culture surrounding them. In answering this question, insights from resources dealing with the Islamic worldview and culture are highlighted<sup>22</sup>.

The researcher also interacted with insights from anthropologist like Hiebert (1985:150-170), specifically in relation to form and meaning. With regard to the controversy, the researcher dealt with other IM self-definitions like Messianic Muslims/Biblical Muslims<sup>23</sup>.

The researcher furthermore engaged briefly with Muslim friendly translations<sup>24</sup> and reflects on what the possible consequences are of removing the Biblical phrase “Son

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<sup>21</sup>That Isa is human and a prophet for example. See Ayoub 1980, At-Ata ur-Rahim 1995, Mourad 2012.

<sup>22</sup>See Hesselgrave 1991, Parshall 2003.

<sup>23</sup>Brown (2007:67-70) points out that Messianic Muslims are Muslims who have put their faith in Jesus as described in the Bible. Biblical Muslims is a synonym for Messianic Muslims.

<sup>24</sup>Translations of the Bible that remove terms like Son of God and Father and make them more palatable to Muslim sensibilities. For further discussion, See *Chriislam* (ed Lingel, Morton & Nikides 2011).

of God”? The material that was interacted with in this section were specialized journal articles, dictionaries and books dealing with the subject.

The section also deals with the analysis and findings and assess if the thesis question was answered during the course of the study. In other words, if the question could be answered by either a yes, followers of Isa are syncretistic, or a no, they are just merely being contextual in their environment.

## **1.8 Presuppositions**

The researcher comes from an Evangelical perspective, as set forth by Smith (2008:183-184). Thus, central to his worldview is the Bible and all its claims. In this study, the Qur'an was not considered divine or inspired in any way.

*Contextualization*,<sup>25</sup> in this study was understood in the light of the traditional orthodox perspective, mentioned by Hesselgrave (1991:139-140).

Moreover, with regard to religious identity, the researcher was of the opinion that the term Christian should not be used lightly. People died for claiming to be Christians in the past and we should think about that fact before removing it from our religious identity. Furthermore, many people who love God use it to define their identity. Other religious identities like Muslim followers of Isa should be evaluated in the light of the scripture.

In this study, the term *Syncretism* was understood based on Tano's (1983:159-160) definition: "syncretism incorporates elements of non-Christian religions based on the claim that there is no qualitative difference between the Christian and other religions".

When referring to followers of Isa in this study, places like Arabia, Africa and Asia were the contexts that the researcher had in mind. The countries in the above

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<sup>25</sup>Hesselgrave (1991:140-141) provides three different approaches to contextualization with the first being the liberal view this view points out the Bible should be discarded in light of higher criticism and science and thus any attempt at contextualization is fine. 2<sup>nd</sup> is the traditional orthodox approach which attempts to make the Gospel relevant to any culture, knowing that scripture is the key to any contextualization effort. 3<sup>rd</sup> The neo-orthodox and Neo-liberal position look towards scripture for its contextual model yet ultimately believes it comes down to the individual to determine how they would like to go about the process of contextualization.

mentioned regions that have no formal Christian churches with building structures were ignored in this study (Houssney, 2010:1320-1321). A country that comes to mind in this regard is Saudi Arabia as it is against the law to build church structures and no formal gathering is allowed for Christian worship (Kelsey, 2000:855).

### **1.9 Limitations of the study**

With regard to the chapter on the analysis of Islamic Christology, the researcher focused on the purpose, return and death of Isa. The birth of Isa was of secondary importance to the study and was only mentioned in relation to these three themes.

The translation of the Qur'an that was used as the standard text in this study is Mohammed Pickthall's (1980) translation. The Islamic tafsirs that were consulted were all English translations. Islamic perspectives with regard to eschatology were largely ignored, while the researcher only focused on Isa's role in them. The reasons they were ignored are because they would distract the reader from the current study and because they were in-depth perspectives that require a subsequent study.

In contrasting the Biblical Christology chapter, the canonicity of the text of the Gospels was not disputed. Additionally, concerning the return of Christ, the researcher did not engage in a debate surrounding various eschatological systems namely pre-, post- or a-millennium positions. Instead, only Jesus' role in the parable found in Matthew 25 was highlighted.

### **1.10 Concept clarification**

For the sake of clarity, the researcher did not refer to Isa as Jesus. Thus, in the chapter dealing with Islamic Christology, Isa is portrayed as the Islamic description of Jesus, based on the Qur'an and Hadith. On the other hand, the name Jesus was exclusively used in relation to the person described in the Bible.

Furthermore, the term *Islamic Christology* was seen in light of Mohammed Legenhausen's (2005:14) definition, which pointed out who Isa was and what he had done throughout his life, based on the Qur'an and Hadith. Ayoub (1976:163) adds

that Islamic Christology is not exactly similar to the theological understanding of a Biblical Christology. Thus, Islamic Christology was not considered part of Islamic theology. Islamic theology deals exclusively with God, whereas Islamic Christology basically deals with what the prophet Isa said and did in the Qur'an. In this study, though, the Hadith was also included in the conception of Islamic Christology.

This study differentiates between contextualization and syncretism on the following terms: syncretism refers to incorporating another religious idea and concept without giving much thought to what has actually been assimilated (Tano, 1983:159-160), while contextualization, on the other hand, refers to making sure that the message communicated is not misunderstood by the recipients (Gillian, 2000:23). For example, an effective contextualisation effort would involve a Christian communicating the message of Christianity in such a helpful manner to a Muslim, that the Christian not only sets forth the truths of Christianity but also helps the Muslim eliminate the misconceptions about Christianity generally held by Muslims, such as the idea that Christians are merely advocating a certain political party or that Christians are sexually immoral. Such a contextualisation effort would pave the way for more meaningful dialogue in that it would help the Muslim to either accept or reject the Christian message on its own terms. Furthermore, the researcher referenced Christian missiological works exclusively.

### **1.11 Classification of chapters**

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Analysis of Islamic Christology
4. Analysis of Biblical Christology
5. Contextualization issues
6. Presentation of findings
7. Conclusion

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature that is important for this particular study. The majority of works that are engaged within this chapter are Islamic Christological works<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, the majority of Islamic Christological works<sup>27</sup> quoted in this study was published with inter-faith dialogue as their main focus. In an attempt to understand if those claiming to be followers of Isa are being contextual, an evaluation of Isa must be made that includes Islamic Christology. The reason for this is because the Muslims who the IM is attempting to convert, think of Isa in Qur'anic terms.

This chapter is divided into two major parts: Islamic Christological works and Christian missiological works. The Islamic Christological works mainly focus on issues of doctrine, while the missiological works on the other hand focus mainly on the practical aspects of claiming to be a follower of Isa. The Islamic Christological works are further sub-divided between Western/Christian authors and Muslim authors. The second section deals with Christian missiological works generally and it includes both pro-IM and anti-IM publications.

### 2.2 Christological works

#### 2.2.1 Western/Christians authors

##### 2.2.1.1 Geoffery Parrinder:

One of the key works of Islamic Christology in the modern period is Geoffrey Parrinder's *Jesus in the Qur'an*. This work was first produced in the 1960s and is one of the key seminal publications within the field of Islamic Christology. Many prominent<sup>28</sup> authors make use of Parrinder's material, thus indicating his value to the field. *Jesus in the Qur'an* was aimed at a Western audience in order to inform and

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<sup>26</sup>These are works dealing with the life of Isa as found in the Qur'an and hadith as an example see foot note 27 below.

<sup>27</sup>See Ayoub 1980, Cragg 1985, Robinson 1991, Zahniser 2008, Lawson 2009, Levirk 2010, Mourad 2012.

<sup>28</sup>See Cragg 1985, Robinson 1991, Zahniser 2008, Levirk 2010.

acquaint the reader with the picture that the Qur'an presents of Isa. Even though a review was provided earlier on in the introduction, the researcher felt it necessary to go into more depth with his work, since it is a vital work for the study of Islamic Christology.

Parrinder points out in his introduction that he will be dealing primarily with the text of the Qur'an and not Muslim commentaries on the Qur'an. There are two important chapters that are particularly important for this current study, namely the chapters on the death of Isa (1965:105-122) and the return of Isa (1965:122-126).

Parrinder (1965:14) translates Isa as *Jesus* and Allah as *God*, as do most scholars<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, one of the key points that Parrinder (1965:105-122) argues when dealing with the death of Isa is that the Qur'an does not deny it. He bases this on Qur'an 19:32-35, arguing that it should be understood as referring to Isa's death, not the obscure passage of Qur'an 4:156-159. Moreover, his argument is that the classical commentators (Razi, Tabari, Zamakshari, Badawi) have been too heavily influenced by Qur'an 4:156-159 without understanding the clear teachings of Qur'an 19:32-34. It is the classical commentaries on the Qur'an that have imposed this interpretation on the text. Baidawi is used as a representative of the classical commentaries in his work.

Parrinder (1965:122-124) summarily dismisses the Muslim<sup>30</sup> understanding of Isa's return as found in the Hadith<sup>31</sup>, which indicates that he will descend from heaven to destroy Christianity. Thus, according to Parrinder, when dealing with the return of Isa, the Hadith should be completely ignored. In contrast, he argues that the Qur'anic understanding of the return of Isa could possibly be compared to the ascension of Christ, as found in the Bible. However, he does not expound how Isa's return found in the Qur'an could be compared to the ascension of Christ. Parrinder also cites the rector (whom he does not name) of a world-famous Muslim institution (Al-Azhar in Egypt) who points out that it is not incumbent on Muslims to believe in Isa's return. He deals with the Isa of the Qur'an and attempts to bring him closer to the Jesus of

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<sup>29</sup>See Haqq 1980, Ayoub 1980, Cragg 1985, Zahniser 2008, Hassen 2008 Lawson 2009, Levirk 2010, Mourad 2012.

<sup>30</sup>When referencing Muslims without any description the researcher is referring to orthodox Muslims.

<sup>31</sup>See Bukhari (2006, 4:657) & Muslim (2006,1:289).

the Bible. This book is helpful in that it spends more time engaging the text of the Qur'an itself than focusing on the classical commentators' understanding of it.

### 2.2.1.2 *Abdul-haqq*

Another work that is useful with regard to Christology from the Christian side is Abdul-haqq's (1980) publication. Haqq spends the first few chapters (1980:22-50) arguing that the Qur'an is favourable to the scriptures of Christianity but Muslim scholars have misunderstood these clear teachings of the Qur'an.

Furthermore, throughout the work, it is argued that Muslim scholars have misunderstood the simple meaning of Isa being a word from Allah. Haqq (1980:66-70) is of the view that the Qur'an has two understandings of the term *word*. It is understood as a spoken word. John the Baptist's preaching (Qur'an 3:39) is used as an example. However, in the Qur'an (4:171) it is said of Isa that he is God's word and this should be thought of in the same way as Muslims understand the Qur'an, which they believe to be eternal. From this base he progresses his argument that the Qur'an can be used to demonstrate that Isa is divine. Moreover, Haqq (1980:131-139) argues that the Qur'an does not deny the crucifixion, but instead attempts specifically (in Qur'an 4:156-159) to settle a controversy among Christian sects (Nestorians & Monophysitism<sup>32</sup>) at the time of Muhammad. The Qur'an's purpose is not to provide an overarching statement on the death of Isa. Nevertheless, Haqq avoids those Qur'anic passages which directly contradict this assumption.

The criticism that the researcher levels against Haqq (1980) is that he is wary of all Islamic scholars that are not in agreement with his point. He is also guilty of applying a Christian understanding to the Qur'an and this is illustrated by arguing for Jesus' divinity from the Qur'an (1980:67-73). The Qur'an<sup>33</sup> is strongly Unitarian and any notion of other concept besides this is strongly rejected. Thus, Haqq, in the researcher's opinion, is attempting to force a Christian meaning into the Qur'an.

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<sup>32</sup>Nestorians and Monophysitism were Christological heresies that the church withstood during the fourth/fifth centuries. Haqq argues that Qur'an was actually engaging the controversy around if both natures of Isa were eliminated during the crucifixion or only one nature. He points out that the Qur'an comes closer to the Nestorian position that Isa's divine nature was not destroyed during the crucifixion (Haqq, 1980:138).

<sup>33</sup>See Qur'an 2:115, 19:34-38.

### 2.2.1.3 Kenneth Cragg

Next to be reviewed is Kenneth Cragg's publication entitled: *Jesus and the Muslim*. It attempts to bring dialogue between the Qur'an and the Bible. The title is descriptive in that the work deals with a Muslim understanding of Isa and attempts to argue that Isa can only be truly understood when the New Testament perspective is kept in view. The key chapter for this particular study is the one on the crucifixion (1985:167-180). It is argued throughout the chapter that there are three motives, which should be kept in mind when engaging with the Qur'an on the death of Isa. Firstly there is Isa's act of love - he loved his own people so much that he was willing to take the punishment they deserved. The second motive is God's act of grace in sending Isa to save his people. Lastly the Jews' desire to kill Isa was not the key motive that won out in the end with regard to the death of Isa. Thus, according to Cragg the Qur'an (4:156-159) is correct in pointing out that the Jews did not kill Isa. The implication is that they did not defeat Isa by crucifixion, but rather that it was all part of God's plan to overcome sin and death. It was God's act of grace and Isa's act of love that allowed him to die. However, he also adds Qur'an 19:33 to his argument, which deals with Isa's speaking from the cradle. Isa says in the verse "Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive". Cragg argues that John the Baptist said the exact same words and died. Yet, no Muslims claim that he was raised to heaven before he was killed. Could the same principle apply to Isa? This is examined more closely in the next chapter of the study.

In reviewing the authors mentioned so far, what the researcher has noted is that Parrinder, Haqq and Cragg all review what the Qur'an says about Isa and attempt to make those statements fit within a New Testament understanding. This is best illustrated with Qur'an 4:156-159 in that all three (Parrinder, 1965:105-122, Haqq, 1980:131-139, Cragg 1985:167-180) argue that these verses should be understood in closer proximity to the New Testament understanding.

### 2.2.1.4 Neal Robinson

The work of the next Western author, Neal Robinson (1991), deals primarily with four areas of the life of Isa, namely his miracles, return, conception and crucifixion. His knowledge of Islamic sources is very useful. Specifically, his chapter (1991:61-78) on



the classical period of Islam is insightful, because he explains the hermeneutics behind the classical commentators of the Qur'an. His extended chapter (1991:75-105) on the return of Isa is very pertinent for the study in that the author engages with the hadith that relates to the return of Isa, unlike Parrinder (1965:122-126). Robinson reviews what the Qur'an (4:159, 43:61) states about Isa's return. He also reviews how the classical commentators dealt with those verses found in the Qur'an concerning Isa's return. He focuses mainly on the Qur'an when dealing with the return of Isa and only briefly deals with the Hadith.

#### *2.2.1.5 Michael Fonner*

The article of the author Michael Fonner (1992) deals with the Interpretation of the Qur'an in relation to the death of Isa (4:156-159). Fonner (1992:436-439) also demonstrates that Isa is an important figure in the Qur'an because over 90 verses are focused on him. However, he warns that Isa's role within the Qur'an should not be exaggerated because Abraham is mentioned over 200 times and Moses over 500 times to keep things in perspective, least Isa's importance be exaggerated.

The hermeneutical assumption of Fonner (1992:432) is that more than one interpretation of a divine text can be valid and helpful. What is implied by him is that there is not just one interpretation of the Qur'an which holds an eternal monopoly over other interpretations. He proceeds to emphasise the reality that Muslim and Christian theology influences the way Muslims and Christians interpret these verses (4:156-159) connected to the death of Isa. The Muslim understanding of sin, humanity and God influences the way they see these verses. Additionally, Fonner (1992:439-448) points out that there are similarities between Muslim's attempting to defend the honour of God and Christians arguing that the honour of God is protected by the death of Isa, the main similarity being that God's honour is protected in both Christianity and Islam. Yet, each interpretation of the data is vastly different. The work is valuable in that it accounts for Muslim theology and because of the way it affects the interpretation of these key verses (4:156-159). Moreover, the purpose of Isa within Islamic Christology is not discussed by him.

However, Fonner (1992:443-448) could be pointing to the purpose of Isa within Islam when he suggests that Isa should not be thought of as in the Christian tradition,

belonging to theology. Instead, he should be thought of what he terms “prophetology”.

#### 2.2.1.6 Mathias Zahniser

Mathias Zahniser’s (2008) work on *the Death and Mission of Jesus in Islam and Christianity* is another masterpiece. In many respects the current study’s approach has been deeply influenced by Zahniser’s work in that there are two distinct sections, one dealing with the Qur’an and the other with the New Testament, as this study attempts to do. This work’s approach is more apologetic than polemic. An illustration of this is the way he argues in the introduction that “Muslims and Christians worship the same God” (2008:37). The researcher completely disagrees with the above statement of Zahniser, yet it reinforces the view that his approach is apologetic. This work attempts to demonstrate the key differences between the two communities in their faith perceptions of Isa and Jesus. What is unique about this work as compared to others<sup>34</sup> is the in-depth exegesis that the author does when dealing with the New Testament. He does not merely quote Bible verses but rather exegetes key texts.

Furthermore, Zahniser (2008) reviews many Muslim substitution legends<sup>35</sup>, which hold at their core that Isa did not die but somebody else was substituted for him, either on the cross or before Isa’s arrest. This substitute then died in Isa’s place while Isa was raised to heaven. Indeed, Zahniser’s arguments are persuasive and his analyses of both the Qur’an and the Bible are in-depth. His arguments are persuasive because he reviews both the context and syntax of the Bible and Qur’an. The work also deals very substantially with the return of Isa, which is constructive. He engages the Hadith and their importance for the return of Isa. The work is helpful for the study in that it covers the return (2008:45-55) of Isa but focuses only on the Hadith. It does not focus on the Qur’an when dealing with Isa’s return, in contrast to Robinson (1991).

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<sup>34</sup>See Haqq 1980, Cragg 1985.

<sup>35</sup>These legends attempt to deal with the reality that a major prophet of Allah dies such a horrible death. They also try to answer the question what does it mean when the Qur’an (4:156-159) says that they did not crucify him it only appeared to those crucifying him that they did it.

### 2.2.1.7 Todd Lawson

Todd Lawson's (2009) publication on the *Crucifixion and the Qur'an* attempts to deal with the way that Muslims have understood the controversial verses found in the Qur'an (4:156-159). He argues that his main thesis is to dispel the myth that the Qur'an is against or for the crucifixion of Isa. He engages with the substitution legends, which are so common among orthodox Muslims (2009:10-18). He attempts to demonstrate that the Islamic understanding of the death of Isa has not been uniformly understood over the centuries. The author is of course only dealing with one passage and therefore does not engage much with the return of Isa, or his resurrection or ascension. The work is also helpful in dealing with the passage about Isa's death. It is useful in that it translates key passages of Islamic commentators that are extremely rare to find in English, like Al Tabir's (2009:70-71) comments on Qur'an 4:156-158, found in Al Tabir's *Jami al-bayan an ta wil ay al-Qur'an*.

Furthermore, the overview of the history of interpretation from medieval to modern times<sup>36</sup> is also helpful in pointing out developments among commentators of the Qur'an over time. Lawson, in his introduction, spends a lot of time dealing with Docetism<sup>37</sup>. He posits that the Islamic legend on the substitution of Isa was deeply influenced by this heresy because Docetism taught that Jesus' death was only apparent and not real. In summarizing Lawson's thoughts of Docetism and Islamic substitution, legends may not be direct parallels, yet their ideas on the death of Isa set the ground work for Islamic substitution legends according to him. The researcher may disagree with the connection although Lawson's observation is interesting.

### 2.2.1.8 Oddbjorn Levirk

The next publication that deals with the Isa of the Qur'an is essentially a literature review of authors who have dealt with Isa from an Islamic perspective. In Oddbjorn

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<sup>36</sup>As an example during the pre Tabir period Lawson (2009:43-69) demonstrates how there is little interest in the grammar of Qur'an 4:156-159 and more interest in legendary stories of how Isa ascended to heaven. In contrast during the medieval period (2009:68-114) there was greater desire by the tafsirs to show Christians did not spread rumours about Jesus' death rather they were just not fully aware what actually happened. Additionally, during this period the tafsirs showed greater criticism of tradition and more engagement with the grammar of Qur'an 4:156-159.

<sup>37</sup>Second century heresy, which taught that Jesus only appeared to be human, See Lawson 2009:3-18.

Levirk's work, *Images of Jesus Christ within Islam* (2010), he indicates engaging with other religious traditions is helpful not only towards understanding their point of view but also for coming to grips with one's own religious tradition. This is not done through shying away from the differences, but rather by engaging them head on. Levirk (2010:1-450) additionally keeps reiterating that Islamic Christology is deeply affected by the context within which it is engaged. Thus, according to him, if Muslims do not feel threatened (Militarily, culturally, socially) by Christians/Christianity or the West they tend to be less polemical in their Christology and the reverse is true if they feel threatened. This idea that Christology is less polemical due to context is indeed debatable. If for example an evaluation is done on the earliest commentators, like Ibn Abbas (2007) and Al-Tustari (2011), on the death of Isa, it is extremely polemical. There could indeed be cause to disagree with Levirk as Islam was politically and militarily at their strength during this period of history and yet the Christology produced was still polemical.

Furthermore, this work is the only Islamic Christological work that acknowledges groups like the Insiders. The researcher believes that this is due in part to the fact that Insider Movements have only arisen over the last couple of decades. This is demonstrated by the literature<sup>38</sup> dedicated to the controversy which have only brought some of the issues to the fore recently. Levirk (2010) does not provide an opinion on Insiders Movements, yet uses them as an illustration to argue that Jesus should be understood between the two views of Islam and Christianity.

Nevertheless, what is also observable in the works from the 1990s, starting with Robinson (1991) and continuing with Zahniser (2008) and Lawson (2009), in contrast to the earlier works of Parrinder (1965), Haqq (1980) and Cragg (1985), is the acknowledgment of Islamic Christology within its own right. What is meant by the pervious statement is that there is a great awareness that Islamic Christology and Isa should be understood within its own Islamic context. Using Robinson (1991:91-103) as a representative, it is best illustrated when he engages the return of Isa. He hardly engages the New Testament, but instead focuses exclusively on the Qur'an

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<sup>38</sup>See Brown 2000, Parshall 2003, Higgins 2006, Bourne 2009, ed Lingel, Morton & Nikides 2011.

and Hadith. However, in contrast, Parrinder (1965:122-126) incorporates the New Testament when he engages the return of Isa.

What also should be stated again from the Western/Christian side is that there is no discussion of followers of Isa<sup>39</sup> with the exception of Levirk 2010.

## **2.2.2 Muslim Authors**

### **2.2.2.1 Mohmoud Ayoub**

Mohmoud Ayoub's *Islamic Christology* is another seminal article. Ayoub (1980:91) commences his article by pointing out that Muslims have generally given much thought to the person of Isa. He furthermore argues that Muslims have an original Islamic Christology. Additionally, Ayoub suggests that orthodox Muslims have a contribution to make to the topic of Christology.

Ayoub (1980:91) states: "The Christ of Islam, we wish to insist further, must not be dismissed as a distorted image of the true Christ of the Gospels, but must rather be seen as a living and dynamic personality, addressing humanity in many languages and across the barriers of dogma, creed and even scriptures". He indicates that the purpose of his essay is to comprehend the way that Muslim commentators have understood Qur'an 4:156-159. Ayoub's (1980) purpose is really to understand one key phrase dealing with the crucifixion in the text. The reason for him focusing on these verses (1980:92) is that dialogue between Christians and Muslims can advance in order to see whether Islam is willing to accept the possibility that Isa died. He evaluates the various key tafsirs (like Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Al Razi) during the classical period (9th-14th Century, during which Islamic civilization was at its peak) and some from the modern period (Qutb, Kamal, over thirty are mentioned), yet he also produces his own tafsir in the process of evaluating other tafsirs.

This is demonstrated by Ayoub's unique conclusion in that he has not followed the classical tafsirs. He also engages sects (like Shia, Sunni, and Sufi) within Islam and the way they have understood Isa's death. He focuses on the reality that Islamic Christology is a fully human Christology. Ayoub's contribution to this particular study

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<sup>39</sup>See Parrinder 1965, Haqq 1980, Cragg 1985, Robinson 1991, Fonner 1992, Zahniser 2008, Lawson 2009.

is the reality that he is one of the first modern Muslims willing to acknowledge that maybe Isa had been crucified and did in fact die (1980:96). He does not get drawn into the question where Isa died, but he is willing to acknowledge his death.

This allows for more creative dialogue between Islam and Christianity. It also favours the Insider position in the sense that a Muslim is willing to admit that Isa did indeed die. As has been demonstrated, based on Morton's (2011:3207) argument that Isa, according to Islam never died<sup>40</sup>, Ayoub (a Muslim) is willing to claim that he could have died. Nevertheless, this is not a traditional opinion among Muslims.<sup>41</sup> Rather, most Muslims refer back to substitution legends when they refer to the death of Isa.

#### 2.2.2.2 *Muhammad Ata'ur-Rahim*

The next work that was reviewed is *Jesus prophet of Islam* by Muhammad Ata'ur-Rahim (1995), an updated edition of his earlier work published in 1977. This work is extremely polemical in its approach, as seen in the following statement by Ata' ur Rahim (1995:308): "The Qur'an also confirms that even though some of the people of the book know that their teaching have been altered and that the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad are pure, they still nevertheless prefer the falsehood to the truth". There are two chapters that are of particular importance for the study: Jesus in Hadith and Muslim traditions (1995:263-279) and Jesus in the Qur'an (1995:279-321). He includes many quotes from the Qur'an with very few original comments, staying very close to the traditional Islamic position. In contrast to Ayoub (1980), Ata'ur-Rahim hardly adds anything unique and insightful.

On the death of Isa Ata'ur-Rahim (1995:298-299) just adds a few comments stating that he did not die and that Isa was not crucified. Furthermore, there is no engagement with the classical tafsir (1995:279-321) literature during the section dealing with Isa in the Qur'an. Subsequently, the rich history of interpretation with regard to Isa's death found among the tafsirs is ignored. Moreover, when dealing with the Hadith<sup>42</sup> about the second coming (1995:271-276), the same problem

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<sup>40</sup>This argument favours Christianity as well but in this particular study it shows that maybe Insider Movements are correct in that the Qur'an is not as anti-Christian as assumed by those against Insider Movements.

<sup>41</sup>See Ata ur-Rahim 1995, Zahniser 2008:15-21.

<sup>42</sup>See Bukhari (4:657) & Muslim (1:289).

persists as with the previous chapter. The work is helpful as an introduction to understanding what orthodox Muslims believe about Isa without providing deep commentary.

#### 2.2.2.3 *Mustansir Mir*

Another work that is helpful to this study is the article of Mustansir Mir (2005:115-124) *Islamic views of Jesus*. The author points out the importance of Isa within Islamic mystical works and poetry in Urdu and Persian. He then presents an argument which is valuable for this study, namely that Isa creates both a bridge and an incredible gap between the two religions.

The above statement is useful in that Mir (2005), whilst remaining authentic to the Islamic position, also argues that Isa is not as important to Islamic theology as some Christians<sup>43</sup> attempt to make him. He also expounds on Islamic theology regarding prophets, namely Isa as the seal of the prophets of Israel and Muhammad as the seal of all the prophets.

Mir (2005) presents an orthodox Muslim perspective on Isa, namely, that Isa is an important prophet but not as significant as Muhammad. This is explored deeper by Mona Siddiqui (2005) in that she reviews what most Muslims believe about Isa.

#### 2.2.2.4 *Mona Siddiqui*

Understanding how Isa is understood by common Muslims is valuable for the study. Siddiqui (2005:125-131) deals with what most common Muslims believe about Isa, focusing on their usage of Isa through poetry and popular culture. Thus, she attempts to discern what the average Muslim thinks about Isa looking deeper than what they believe in contrast to Ata ur Rahim (1995). She starts by indicating that Isa is used within poetry to express love.

However, Siddiqui (2005:128-131) points out that the average Muslim actually never thinks too deeply about Isa. In their minds, Isa is just one of many prophets like Abraham or Moses. Putting in comparative terms, Christians would not think too

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<sup>43</sup>See Haqq 1980.

deeply of the prophet Malachi. Muslims believe, according to Siddiqui, that Muhammad is the final messenger and Isa is thus considered vital for his time but not as important as the person of Muhammad. Furthermore, Muslim scholars in the past have debated the doctrine of the Trinity and have rejected it subsequently, according to Siddiqui. Although that may have happened centuries ago, not much has changed since. Siddiqui (2005:131) acknowledges that maybe Muslims should consider ways to connect with the person of Jesus of the Bible without engaging Christian theology.

#### 2.2.2.5 *Farazana Hassan*

Most of the works which have been engaged thus far in the literature review had Islamic Christology as their focus. In contrast, the following work by Farazana Hassan (2008) deals with eschatology. This work attempts to place Christian expectation about the coming of Christ alongside Muslim eschatological expectation. Moreover, Hassan points out that, with regard to methodology in relation to literature sources, she chose two types of literature - either popular or scholarly.

Hassan's (2008:808-1051) chapter specifically dealing with Jesus/Isa within Christian and Muslim end times scenarios, is vital for this study. Hassan explains some of the Muslim expectations regarding Isa's return and who Isa is to them. Furthermore, she does not engage in polemic, but she rather states each eschatological view objectively.

This work, however, does not take into account the diversity of eschatological views between various Christians groups, nevertheless Hassan does engage Isa's role within the end times, which is reasonably helpful for this current study (2008:808-1051). She explains what the Hadith states concerning Isa when he returns. She also is a useful source explaining what traditional Muslim's believe about the return of Isa.

#### 2.2.2.6 *Suleiman Mourad*

The next article to be reviewed is *Does the Qur'an deny or assert Jesus's crucifixion and death*, by Suleiman Mourad (2012). Mourad begins the article by acknowledging



that the subject is complicated by the fact that the Qur'anic language found in the Qur'an (4:157-158) is not easy to comprehend.

Mourad (2012:350) also points out that the vast majority of Muslim scholars have rejected the crucifixion according to him. However, Muslim scholars are undecided about the death of Isa. He proceeds to point out that the Qur'an does not deny the death and crucifixion of Isa. Instead it denies the theological implications that Christians attach to these events.

Furthermore, Mourad (2012:354) points out that Isa did die on the cross, but that he did not remain dead and was resurrected to heaven. He adds the Qur'an (3:169) to his argument, which points out that those killed in God's path are not dead. They are alive with him in Muslim paradise since they have been resurrected. It is wrong to refer to those who died in his cause as dead. Using the same logic means that Isa was crucified and died, but he was resurrected so it is improper to refer to him as dead. This is because he is alive with his Lord.

Mourad (2012:355), in agreement with Lawson (2009:3-18), argues that the Substitution legend does not emerge from an objective exegesis of the Qur'an. It is instead influenced by Docetism. According to Mourad, there is no dispute among Muslims about their teaching that Isa is only human. However, Muslims have not had a unified view on the death of Isa, as Mourad and Ayoub demonstrate. Mourad's (2012) article is shorter than Ayoub's (1980), yet Mourad (2012:356) is more forthright in his conclusion and appears to be suggesting that maybe Christians may have a point. Both Mourad (2012) and Ayoub (1980) argue that the Christian understanding of the death of Jesus should be rejected, yet they are willing to acknowledge the possibility that Isa could have died.

## **2.3 Missiological works**

This section interacts with Missiological works. These works are important for attempting to understand followers of Isa within their local environments, as it is important to understand Islamic culture and the Islamic worldview. These works focus more on practical aspects related to followers of Isa and their local environment. The works reviewed in this section are Missiological works related to

the major concern of the study. In that they are not related to pro-IM or anti-IM, they provide principles and concepts that are helpful in answering the thesis question.

Missionaries from western countries in the past have often not displayed enough sensitivity towards the cultures of the groups to whom they ministered in cross-cultural settings. Paul Hiebert's (1985) publication arises against this background.

Hiebert (1985:149-153) wants missionaries to be more cognisant of various cultures and how social sciences can help better interaction between the missionaries and the culture in which they minister. The focus of the publication is more on the practical than on the theological aspects of being a missionary. The key factor for this particular study is his principles dealing with form and meaning and the way that they affect each other with regard to words.

Hiebert uses the example of Bible translation and how the literal meaning may not always accurately portray what the missionary intends to communicate. He cites how missionaries to the Telugu<sup>44</sup> people would translate the simple Biblical word "Shepherd" in their Bible translations, not knowing that shepherds are perceived as immoral alcoholics in the Telugu culture (1985:151-153). This illustration by Hiebert indicates the importance of form and meaning<sup>45</sup>.

The form that was used was not adequately communicating what the Bible translators hoped it would to the people. This is important for understanding if followers of Isa are being contextual or syncretistic. Furthermore, could followers of Isa not be deceiving Muslims into thinking they are fellow Muslims, by claiming that they are followers of Isa? Since after all Muslims love all prophets and may not have problem with somebody claiming to follow Isa. Hiebert's (1985) work does not deal specifically with Muslim culture but provides enough broad principles that apply to it. This publication could be helpful in understanding how followers of Isa are perceived in the Muslim community.

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<sup>44</sup>They are a people group from northern Nigeria.

<sup>45</sup>Forms refer to the cultural practices or religious ceremonies that cultures do. Meaning refers to the deeper understanding that lies behind the practise (Parshall 2003:77).

If communication is crucial in all endeavours in life, how much more crucial should it not be in the endeavours of missionaries attempting to contextualize the Gospel in foreign countries. David Hesselgrave's (1991) book is a seminal work with regard to cross-cultural issues. One of the key chapters in this book in relation to this current study is the chapter entitled: The problem of meaning (1991:55-79). In comparison with Parshall (2003:77-87) Hesselgrave's scope with regard to meaning is broader than Parshall. An illustration of this is that he not only engages meaning but reviews the way various scholars (Plato, Aristotle, Galileo and Bacon, see Hesselgrave 1991:56-78) have understood it through the ages.

Moreover, even though Hesselgrave may be broader on issues like syncretism and contextualization compared with Parshall (2003:47-59), yet he provides insight into the way the terms have been used in the past and how they are currently perceived by Missiologist.

One of the key chapters of the publication is the section dealing with various worldviews especially with regard to sharing Christ in monotheistic worldviews. The chapter on sharing Christ in monotheistic worldviews (1991:271-280) is useful in that the author demonstrates some of the characteristics that are important in an Islamic worldview. The work does not delve as in-depth with Islamic worldview in contrast with Parshall (2003) yet it is nonetheless valuable. This is because in other areas like contextualization and syncretism its insights are in valuable for understanding the broader controversy surrounding the terms.

The work by Yoder, Lee, Ro, and Priest (2009) deals with Christian identity based on bounded and centred sets. The article combines most of the written work of Hiebert and his understanding of Christian identity. The article deals with missionaries and their attempts to finding a method to determine who is a Christian. Is it based on social norms or doctrinal commitments? The authors of the article point out that ultimately it is only the Lord, who truly knows those who are Christians. However, in their review, they argue that Hiebert provides a useful system based on his love of maths. He proposes two basic categories when dealing with Christian identity either centred sets or bounded sets. Furthermore, what is meant by bounded sets in that there are strict boundaries, and these are the defining features of this category.

Thus, these types of Christians use the bounded sets thinking that they can indicate the day when they became “Born again” (Yoder, Lee, Ro, & Priest, 2009:177-186).

On the other hand, the centred sets approach is focused on the relation to the centre. Thus, if the example of conversion is cited again, these people would come to salvation over time and not necessarily at one moment in time. This approach to Christian identity focuses not so much on what Christians do but rather on their becoming like Jesus. In other words, in the beginning phase of their Christian walk these types of Christians may be worldly, but, over time as they read their Bible and pray they become more Christ-like. Therefore, the focus on centred sets is not on boundaries but on moving towards the centre (Yoder, Lee, Ro, & Priest, 2009:177-186).

In contrast, the bounded set approach would allow no hint of worldliness. They would have set boundaries on what Christians do, and if they do not remain in them; they are no longer Christians. It is argued that Hiebert felt that centred set approach was more biblical (Yoder, Lee, Ro, & Priest 2009:183-185). This, article has direct bearing on the study with regard to followers of Isa and also other IM self-identity. This is due to the fact that IM proponents<sup>46</sup> use similar patterns of reasoning with regard to identity.

### **2.3.1 Pro-Insider Movement**

#### *2.3.1.1 Phil Parshall*

*Beyond the Mosque* by Parshall (1985) is a unique work among the works cited in this study. In that the author reviews the structure of Muslim society and the various sects that exist within it. He then proceeds to suggest a church structure within a mostly Muslim context.

Parshall argues that extraction evangelism should be discontinued immediately. Parshall then suggests ways in which a Muslim church, which is culturally relevant without partaking in syncretism, could be attempted (1985:149-176). This work gives insight into some of the challenges of planting a church in a majority Muslim context.

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<sup>46</sup>See Dutch 2000, Brown 2007.

### 2.3.1.2 John Travis

John Travis (2000:53-55) argues Evangelical Christians can be followers of Isa. He points out that Muslims are attracted to Jesus, but, they cannot comprehend changing their religion. He then progresses to illustrate the various roles<sup>47</sup> that Muslims play within their religious communities. He also points out that the key to any movement of God is their progression over time to be more like Jesus. Travis also explains the misunderstanding of the term Christian, which is understood in the Muslim world to mean people who are morally loose and who are violent according to him. On the other hand, Travis (2000:53-55) would not encourage Christians to claim to be Muslims, as an, attempt to gain entrance into sharing the Gospel with Muslims. This practice should be rejected since there are social, cultural and political connotations when a person claims to be a Muslim. For example, culturally there may be an expectation to fast during Ramadan, so if Muslims see a person calling him/herself a Muslim, who is eating they would be offended.

Furthermore, Travis (2000:55-59) proceeds to respond to objections of the C5 model. The article provides four case studies of MBB's and their experience of salvation and also remaining in their Muslim community after conversion (Travis 2000:57-59). These case studies would be revisited later in this study in the chapter dealing with contextual issues.

Parshall's book *Muslim Evangelism* (2003) deals with modern approaches to contextualization. He reviews how he has personally practiced contextualization (2003:59-75) and also how other people have gone about this task. Parshall also provides examples from the 1900's and how Christians from Indonesia have attempted contextualization. The publication is helpful in demonstrating the difference between syncretism and contextualization (2003:47-75). Practical examples are given throughout the publication from Parshall's personal experience. This is because he has over forty year's experiences as a missionary in Asia. He evaluates certain C5 practises and argues that they are not wise as they run contrary to the Gospel. The key for the study is the section dealing with the Islamic worldview.

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<sup>47</sup>Like Imams and Mosque Treasurers.

Form and meaning are also dealt with in relation to Muslim contexts, Parshall (2003:77-81) suggests forms (A Christian Shahadah based on 1st Timothy 3:16. Adopt practises from Islamic weddings that are not contrary to scripture) that could be adopted by churches working in Islamic areas. These are some of the suggested practices and social customs that may make the church more appealing to Muslims. Finally, another key area covered in the publication deals with the Islamic worldview and the different components that make up the Islamic worldview.

It should be pointed out Phil Parshall is not pro-C5, but he is sympathetic to Insider Movements. For example, at the end of the chapter entitled contextualization controversies, he quotes Romans 14:10 and indicates that he is no “heresy hunter” and he may be wrong about C5 (2003:74-75). Moreover, recently Parshall’s (2013) article in Christianity Today entitled: *How much Muslim context is too much for the gospel?* Indicated that he believes there is nothing erroneous with claiming to be a Muslim follower of Isa.

Conversely, Parshall thinks it wrong to claim to be a Muslim without indicating you are a follower of Isa again indicating his sympathy towards Insider Movements. Thus, he does not correct Insider Movements for using the term Muslim rather he says that they should just add that they are Muslim followers of Isa. Parshall (2013) does not elaborate further on this Issue instead he suggests prayer and respect for the various opinions that exist on these and other controversial issues.

However, Parshall does criticise Insider Movements when he feels that they are wrong (2003:69-73, 2013), especially with regard to the Shahadah and the affirmation of Muhammad as a prophet.

### *2.3.1.3 Mazah Mallouhi*

Mazhar Mallouhi (2009) is arguably the most preeminent proponent of the Muslim followers of Isa. His article shares his experiences as a follower of Isa. He points out that there is a vast chasm between churches in Muslim contexts and their surrounding culture (2009:3-5). Mallouhi (2009:7) also argues that followers of Isa are treated unfairly by Christians because of unbiblical attitudes demonstrated by them towards Muslims. Moreover, he cites various examples of how he has had

access to Muslim settings which he would not have been afforded if he were “Christian” in the sense of his social religious identity. Converts from Islam have not had a lasting impact on the Islamic community according to Mallouhi (2009:8-10) because they often move out of their communities. Indeed, this last point is a strong argument in favour of Insider identity<sup>48</sup>. Needless to say this article is valuable in that the Mallouhi presents his experience of being a Muslim follower of Isa in Syria.

#### *2.3.1.4 Rick Brown*

Rick Brown (2007) introduces his article by reviewing the implications of Muslim identity. Muslim identity encompasses more than self-identity it also includes social and community identity (2007:64).

Brown (2007:64) proceeds to clarify the admiration that Muslims generally hold towards prophets and the previous scriptures. He proceeds to point out that sometimes Muslims desire to know more about some of the prophets in the Qur’an. For example, people like John the Baptist and Isaac who are mentioned in the Qur’an but not much detail is provide about their stories. Thus, they commence reading the Bible to learn more about these prophets according to Brown’s experience.

However, some Muslims form study groups to learn about these prophets together. Brown proceeds to suggest themes (God’s grace in guiding history, Jesus’ love for people, ect.) which intrigue Muslims as they begin to engage the Scriptures (2007:65-67).

Furthermore, as they study the Scriptures more intensely, some Muslims start believing what the Bible says. They receive salvation, yet they do not think of themselves as Christians but as better Muslims. Brown (2007:69), thus, distinguishes between Biblical Muslims and those who are sub-Biblical. The sub-Biblical Muslims are those Muslims who study the Bible but do not yet believe it.

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<sup>48</sup>However, Sam Schlorff (2006:140-147) provides an equally persuasive rebuttal.

### 2.3.1.5 Rebecca Lewis

Rebecca Lewis (2009) another strong proponent of the Insider Movements provides a good working definition of IM, because her definition is easy to grasp and not too technical. She also demonstrates the differences between people movements (A people group who all decide to convert to Christianity) and Insider Movements. Insiders, for example, remain Muslims in their social setting. They do not change their religious social practices, yet their theological beliefs are Christian<sup>49</sup>. The key difference between people movements and Insider Movements is their socio-religious identity. It is also indicated that the current way of church planting is uniting strangers who are converted from various races, cultures, and religions together to form a church. She argues that a better way of church planting is to use existing community structures.

### 2.3.2 *Anti-Insider Movement*

#### 2.3.2.1 Sam Schlroff

The next scholar's work reviewed is Sam Schlroff's (2006): *Missiological models in ministry to Muslims*. Some of the key points dealt with in this publication are as follows the history of Protestant mission to Islam (2006:3-12) and the use of Qur'anic language within Protestant Bible translations (2006:31-50). Schlroff (2006:36-37) additionally, points out that the term "Isa" is avoided in Arabic translations of the Bible.

Yet, he leaves the controversy up in the air by pointing out that it is a contentious issue. Furthermore, another key chapter (2006:141-162) that relates to this study deals with churches within majority Muslim countries. Schlroff in agreement with Parshall (1985) argues that more should be done with regard to having an effective church that is relevant to Muslims. Yet he acknowledges that Muslims are resistant to conversion and sometimes violently so.

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<sup>49</sup>Lewis (2009) when she refers to Christian beliefs means that they are orthodox in their Christology and theology proper. However, this may be an overstatement by Lewis that these MBB's are orthodox and not affected by Islamic theological ideas See Parshall survey of C5 believers (2003:68-70).



This may be part of the reason for the growth of Insider Movements. In that they are avoiding persecution this matter will be engaged later on in this study in the chapter dealing with contextual issues. This work is important in that it deals with the major issues related to missions to Muslims.

#### 2.3.2.2 Lingel, Morton & Nikides

Another work that is against the Insider Movements is the publication *Chrislam* (ed, Lingel, Morton, and Nikides, 2011). The work is a compilation of articles from various authors (Caner, Morton et al) arguing against matters regarding the Insider Movements that concern them. The work is also helpful in that it shares the perspectives of two groups who are against the Insider Movements: First, Christians who have seen the movement in majority Muslim countries and Second, converts from Islam who have been part of the Movement and now reject it (2011:5403-5499).

The coverage of key areas of the controversy is also commendable about this work. Two illustrations are cited first the way the work engages Muslim Friendly Bible translations in that there is critical engagement with methodology behind this translation (Lingel, 2011:1184-1263). It also argues that the relationship of Islam to Christianity is completely different from that of Christianity to Judaism. This work is foundational in understanding the controversy from the other side. The only criticism that can be levelled against this work is that it only partly engages Islamic Christology. This is demonstrated by Morton's article entitled: *Theology of religions would Jesus be caught dead working in Islam?* (2011:3207) which was quoted earlier in the introduction about Isa taking part in the deception of the cross<sup>50</sup>. In contrast to these perspectives Ayoub's (1980) and Mourad's (2012) articles indicates that there is not just one way of perceiving Isa from a Muslim perspective.

#### 2.3.2.3 George Houssney

The next worked to be reviewed is by George Houssney (2011) entitled: *Muslim follower of Jesus is this possible?* Houssney points out that the term follower of

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<sup>50</sup>It should also be noted that Morton does have another publication dealing with Isa and Jesus. However, it is a novel. Morton, 2012. *Two Messiahs*. Colorado: Biblical publishing.

Jesus is a scriptural one. He delves into what this entails from a biblical perspective<sup>51</sup> and comes to the conclusion it involves giving up everything for Jesus' sake. A follower of Jesus is not an identity instead he points out that Jesus wanted his disciples to follow him in his footsteps. He states, "nothing, no family, no society, no culture can separate us from Christ". Thus, forsaking all others and walking the tough road of discipleship. It is then demonstrated that Christ and Christianity are inseparable. He states, "The truth is that as soon as you mention Christ in context of the Bible, you are tagged as a Christian, whether you like it or not".

Then he proceeds to argue that it is better to distinguish between Biblical Christianity and nominal Christianity. Thus, in contrast to Pro-IM<sup>52</sup> Houssney (2011) says it is impossible based on scripture to be a Muslim follower of Jesus. Houssney however, approaches the topic from a discipleship perspective and does not deal with Islamic Christology or Biblical Christological perspectives.

## **2.4 Summary**

The majority of Islamic Christological works did not engage the question of whether an Evangelical Christians can legitimately claim to follow Isa. They only engaged with inter-faith dialogue and did not discuss Christians who use the Isa of the Qur'an for their religious identity. The IM proponents claimed that the Isa of the Qur'an is not much different to the Jesus of the bible. The majority of Missiological works did not adequately engage Islamic Christology. In contrast besides a few general quotes from both anti-IM and pro-IM movements neither side dealt with Islamic Christology adequately by asking do all Muslims accept that Isa never died. Also what is the purpose of Isa within Islam? These questions from an Islamic perspective were not engaged in by both sides rather sweeping statements were made.

Thus, the rest of the study would engage the question from Islamic Christology, contrast it to Biblical Christology and note the practical issues with regard to contextualization.

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<sup>51</sup>He looks at the following verses to determine what a follower of Jesus should be: Matthew 4:20, Matthew 16:24, Mark 10:17-31, Luke 9:59, Luke 9:61 Luke 18:18-30.

<sup>52</sup>See Travis 2000, Brown 2007, Lewis 2009.



## CHAPTER 3: ISLAMIC CHRISTOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

Accad (1997:10) indicates that the Qur'an is "pro-Christ", implying that the Quranic Isa is favourable to Christian understanding. On the other hand, Morton (2011:3207) indicates that the Isa of Islam is a false Christ and deceives people with him being taken up into heaven and somebody else dying in his place. Furthermore, the Camel method (developed by Greeson, 2007) of Muslim evangelism argues that Isa should be used as a bridge with Muslims to get them to consider Jesus. Thus, we have two major views - one arguing that the Qur'an at its core is not against the person of Jesus, since this was all that Muhammed had available to him at the time, and the other that the Qur'an and Islamic Christology are against the Jesus of the Bible. Also based on what has been said above, it appears the pro-Insiders (Accad, Greeson<sup>53</sup>) are arguing that Isa and Jesus is the same person, but with minor differences. On the other hand, there are those who disagree, for example Morton (2011:3207). This chapter reviews Isa from the Islamic perspective by evaluating Isa from Islamic sources<sup>54</sup> as well as works of Western/Christian scholars. Additionally, as pointed out in chapter one, both sides have not engaged Islamic Christology adequately to see if Islamic sources do make allowance for people to claim to follow Isa. Three areas were investigated: the death, return and purpose of Isa Islam. These areas were chosen because this is where Jesus and Isa could be compared objectively.

### 3.2 The death of Isa

Muslim<sup>55</sup> scholars who willingly acknowledge the person of Isa al-masih, clearly and forthrightly point out that the Qur'an distinctly denies the death of Isa and in their

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<sup>53</sup>Greeson may not be strong a supporter of Insider Movements. However, an article entitled "should Christians use Allah in Bible translations" appears to move closer to the Insider Movements position. That being said they may also just be neither for Insider Movements nor against it. <http://www.camelmethod.com>.

<sup>54</sup>Namely Qur'an, Hadiths, Tafsirs.

<sup>55</sup>See Shafaat 1979, Ata ur-Rahim 1995, Yahya 2005.

assertion Qur'an 4:156-157 is provided as a proof text. An illustration of the above point is Rahim (1995) whose title alone is descriptive *Jesus prophet of Islam*<sup>56</sup>.

Isa is almost exclusively the Muslim word for Jesus. Thus, followers of Isa should be aware of this context when using the name Isa. Muslims may be thinking that followers of Isa might be claiming to be Muslim when they claim to follow Isa, since Muslims claim to follow all the prophets. It is imperative to understand Isa's role within Islamic theology, because this answers the question if they are being syncretistic or contextual. Within this context, it is important to see what the Qur'an says about Isa's death. In keeping with some key scholars,<sup>57</sup> the text of the Qur'an is displayed under a separate heading.

### **3.2.1 Qur'an 4:156-159**

Because of their disbelief and of their speaking against Mary a tremendous calumny; and because of their saying: We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger - they slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain. But Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise. There is not one of the People of the Scripture but will believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.

#### **3.2.1.1 The context and theme of Qur'an 4**

There are 176 verses that form part of this Sura. Lawson (2009:27) points out this Sura is "non-legal or non-prescriptive" and its main focus is to edify the believer. The Sura is not prescribing anything. It is rather telling various narratives to encourage Muslims. However, Zanisier (2008:17-24) points out that one of the central themes engaged within in the Sura is that Jews and Christians should resist from making religious claims that put them at odds with God's commands. Additionally, the denial verse (157) is actually attacking the Jews for saying they killed Jesus. Thus, the

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<sup>56</sup>For deeper engagement with regard to his work see the section on literature review.

<sup>57</sup>Parrinder 1965, Robinson 1991, Zanisier 2008, Lawson 2009.

main verse denies the crucifixion in the Qur'an and does not even focus on the implications of the death of Christ for Christians. It is rather pointing out that the Jews did not kill Jesus.

### 3.2.1.2 *Muslim authors*

#### 3.2.1.2.1 Ibn Abbas

Regarding the denial verses, Ibn Abbas<sup>58</sup> (2007:108) suggests the following interpretation:

And yet they did not slay him nor did they crucify him, but he, the one slain and crucified, who was an associate of theirs [the Jews], was given the resemblance, of Jesus. In other words, God cast his [Jesus'] likeness to him and so they thought it was him [Jesus]. And those who disagree concerning him, that is, concerning Jesus, are surely in doubt regarding, the slaying of, him,

for some of them said, when they saw the slain man: the face is that of Jesus, but the body is not his, and so it is not he; and others said: no, it is he. They do not have any knowledge of, the slaying of, him, only the pursuit of conjecture (illā ittibā'a l-zann, is a discontinuous exception) in other words: 'instead, they follow conjecture regarding him, that which they imagined [they saw]'; and they did not slay him for certain (yaqīnan, a circumstantial qualifier emphasising the denial of the slaying) (But Allah took him up unto Himself) in heaven. (Allah was ever Mighty) in His vengeance against His enemies, (Wise) by granting triumph to his friends: He saved His Prophet and destroyed their man.

What Abbas (2007:108) understands about this text, is that Isa was not killed. He was substituted and someone who was attempting to hurt Isa was crucified instead. Abbas additionally indicates that the Christians are confused about the

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<sup>58</sup>Ibn Abbas is helpful in that it does not have allot of technical information and is simple, additionally his work is considered a seminal work with regard to exegesis of the Qur'an (Meri, 2008).

death of Christ. This of course is a standard argument that most Muslims<sup>59</sup> use when they are confronted with the death of Jesus in the Bible. Ayoub (1980:98) refers to this theory as “punishment substitutionism”. This theory holds that the substitute died in Isa’s place as a punishment for planning evil against Isa.

#### 3.2.1.2.2 Al Tabiri

Al Tabiri, who is also a classical commentator provides another variant of the substitution legend, however, the disciple takes Isa’s place willingly. Al-Tabari (2009:71) cites Qatada, who pointed out that Isa asked the disciples who would impersonate him in order to die in his place. Somebody agreed, and was killed in his place. Wahb indicates that Isa was forsaken by all his disciples: “He was tied with a rope and dragged through the streets to the place where he was to be crucified”. At that moment, a switch took place - somebody took his place while Isa went to heaven. Al-Tabari is not convinced by these reports and suggests a theory in his conclusion (2009:71-72).

Al-Tabari’s theory suggests that Isa was with his disciples in the house. When the Jews came, one of Isa’s disciples was changed into his image. In the meantime, Isa returned to heaven while the person imitating him was killed. According to Al-Tabari (2009:71-72) the disciples who were with Isa thought that they had seen him being killed. The truth was not revealed to them. Al-Tabari (2009:71-72) also suggests another theory that Isa’s likeness was placed on one of his disciples. This transformation into Isa’s likeness only happened after all the disciples had left the house. To complicate matters, the disciples heard Isa saying that he was going to pass on. Al-Tabari (2009:72) reminds the reader that what the disciples saw at the cross was real in terms of crucifixion, however, it was not Isa but his disciple.

Al-Tabari, in contrast with Ibn Abbas (2007:107), suggests that one of Isa’s disciples went willingly, without being deceived. Yet, the main point that is clear is that Isa never died but that he escaped to heaven. This account differs from Abbas’s (2008) in that one of Isa’s disciples had taken his place willingly and

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<sup>59</sup>See Shafaat 1979, Ata ur-Rahim 1995, Hassan 2008:930-946.

not a person who was punished because they desired to kill Isa. Thus, if you claim to follow Isa based on these understandings of him, found in both Al-Tabari & Abbas, it would not be wise, as clearly Isa is attacking a key Christian concept, namely the death of Christ. So far this confirms Morton's (2011:3207) assessment that indeed the Qur'an is not in favour of the death of Isa.

#### 3.2.1.2.3 Baidawi

Baidawi (1976:127) argues that the phrase regarding the Jews killing Isa, found in verses 156-157, was only said scornfully. Thus, the Jews were attacking Isa and as was the case with Moses. God defended the prophet and the next part of the verse was revealed (1976:128). Baidawi progresses further with his narrative of Isa and how he was being mocked by certain Jews. While they were still mocking him, God turned them into pigs and dogs. He implies that after this event, the Jews agreed to execute Isa. God then informed Isa that he would raise him to heaven despite the plans of the Jews. Isa told his companions that he was going to ascend to heaven. According to Baidawi he continued to say that if any-one of them was willing to take his place, they would in return be granted eternal life. One of the disciples stepped forward and was instantly changed into the likeness of Isa. Yet, Baidawi (1976:127) suggests further theories that could have been possible with regard to Isa's death:

Others say that a man pretended (to be a believer) before Jesus and then went away denouncing him, whereupon God changed this man into a form similar to that of Jesus, and then he was seized and crucified. (still) others say that the Jew Titanus entered a house where Jesus was (with a treacherous intention) but could not find him. Then God changed him into a form similar to that of Jesus, and when he came outside the people thought he was Jesus and so they seized him and crucified him.

The above quote clearly demonstrates some of the theories that have developed about the death of Isa. Here again we are presented with another case of "punishment substitution". Furthermore, it appears as though the substitute legend is developing because the name of the person substituted is now suggested. What is



also obvious, is the amount of time Baidawi spends on denying the crucifixion. About the next part of the verse, Baidawi (1976:128) argues that those who were involved with the crucifixion of Isa were confused in that they suggested various theories. Yet, neither theory is solid. Thus, the Qur'an is not appearing very Christian friendly. Additionally, how can Insiders claim to follow Isa? When from a theological position his very existence is attacking the foundation of the Christian faith, namely that Jesus died (Morton, 2011:3207).

The three Tafsirs (Baidawi 1976, Ibn Abbas 2007, Al-Tabari 2009) reviewed so far are abundantly clear on the fact that Isa never died. Thus, based so far on what the Qur'an says, there appears to be no way that Islamic Christology even hints of anything that suggests that maybe Isa died. This also points to something that Followers of Isa could claim to demonstrate – the fact that Isa did die and are thus being syncretistic.

#### 3.2.1.2.4 Kathir

Kathir (2013:41) states that the Jews were jealous of Isa because of his status and the fact that he performed miracles. They accused him of being a liar and always attempted to destroy him. It became so bad that Isa and his mother had to move around often. That only frustrated the Jews more and they went to the king of Damascus, Seleucid. The Jews told the king that there was a man teaching in the temple, encouraging people to be disobedient to the king. Isa, sensing that they were coming for him, asked his disciples who would be willing to take his place. He also promised eternal life to this individual. A young man agreed but Isa was not too thrilled. He attempted twice to find somebody else. Nevertheless, Isa consented the third time and told the young man that he was the one. Afterwards, Isa went to sleep. While he was asleep he was raised into heaven and the young man's appearance was changed to look like Isa. He was subsequently killed, while Isa ascended to heaven.

The intricate detail about the story is indeed fascinating. Yet, what is noticeable is Isa's irritation at the young man who stepped forward to die in his place. What remains clear is that Isa did not die. Instead a complex rescue plan was created by God to save Isa. Yet again the commentators of the Qur'an so far indicate that Isa

never died. Thus, in choosing Isa as an identity, it is clear, based on the classical tafsir, that he is exclusively Islamic and that Insiders need to reject him. He is totally embedded within Islamic theology as just a mere prophet.

#### 3.2.1.2.5 Al-Razi

There is one other name who deserves mentioning, namely Al-Razi. The reason why he is important for the study is because he provides six potential objections to the substitution theory and they are provided in Zahniser (2008:42). Furthermore, Al-Razi provides solutions to each objection, although he acknowledges the problems of these theories. Most of the objections are answered directly, except objections of similar nature. These are answered at the end.

Firstly, does casting the likeness of one person unto another not create chaos? Al-Razi cites two examples: how do parents know that it is their child and not somebody else's and how did the people closest to the prophet Muhammad know that it was him when he was setting up rules for the Muslim community? His solution to this objection is to state that God can cause one person to look like another (2008:42).

Secondly, Al-Razi (2008:42) questions the whole process of Isa being substituted and also suggests why the archangel could not just come and protect Isa? Furthermore, why was it necessary to sacrifice somebody else in Isa's place? Surely he could have caused an illness to come on the Jews to stop them?

Thirdly, If God has the power to bring Isa to himself why did somebody else need to take Isa's place? Razi suggests that if the Christians had been aware of God taking Isa up into heaven without dying, we would have created an even worse heresy (2008:42).

Fourthly, Al-Razi states: "if the people would have believed that the substitute look-alike was in fact Jesus, they would have been thrown into confusion. Is this congruent with God's providential wisdom" (2008:42).

Fifthly, the next question deals with if doubt of this magnitude is casted on the Christian doctrine, could doubt not be casted on other historical reports as well? Al-

Razi specifically points out Muhammad and furthermore all the prophets (Al-Razi, 2008:42).

Sixthly, since the person who was being crucified remained alive a while longer, would he not have protested his innocence and claimed they had the wrong person? If this was observed, would it not have been added as a credible story (Al-Razi, 2008:42)?

Al-Razi (2008:42) provides solutions to questions 4, 5 and 6. He suggests that the amount of people who actually witnessed the crucifixion was far too little to count as irrefutable sources. Furthermore, he argues that his opinions are based on the reality of the prophet and the Qur'an and since they are without error in his view, they provide a firm foundation. In contrast of course, the New Testament is unreliable if we follow his line of reasoning!

The researcher agrees with Zahniser (2008:43) in that Al-Razi's answers are not satisfactory. His arguments, if they were presented in a neutral court of law, would be dismissed. Furthermore, he keeps presenting answers that do not engage deeper into the debate. This is illustrated in the way that Al-Razi deals with Christian history. Yet he does not move away from the fact that Isa did not die and argues for a substitution theory. Furthermore, Al-Razi is more influenced by his theory (substitution theory) than attempting to have an honest dialogue with the death of Isa. Yet, there is a shift in that Al-Razi does appear to see that maybe the death of Isa is not as clearly cut in Islamic Christology.

There may be some differences in the various substitution theories. Yet, what they all accept is that Isa went to heaven and that he will return some time in the future. If the above is accepted it would be in agreement with what Morton (2011:3207) indicates, namely that Isa did not die. This of course creates identity problems if you are attempting to connect with a prophet of Islam, as understood by Muslims and using him to create a bridge, are you not destroying your own foundation?

The next section deals with modern authors who have been influential. Some modern Muslims<sup>60</sup> have been influenced by a document called the gospel of Barnabas. During the arrest of Isa, according to the gospel, Judas entered the house to betray Isa and the angels instantly took Isa to heaven and Judas's features were transformed into Isa's (Barnabas, 1907:263-273). Thus, he was crucified in his place. If Rahim is used as a representative of those who believe in the gospel of Barnabas, then the argument is that the true church suppressed this gospel because it argues for punishment substitution<sup>61</sup>.

The next author was chosen because of his influence with regard to the Muslim world. Sayyid Qutb is considered the spiritual father of the Muslim brotherhood and has deeply influenced the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He has been criticised specifically for his views regarding the west and Jihad, by both Muslims and non-Muslims (Newby, 2002:181). Yet, nonetheless his ideas with regard to the Qur'an 4:156-159 are interesting to observe.

With reference to verse 156, Qutb (1995:378) indicates that "no prophet could ever be killed rightly". He also states that it is a fact and it is both unjust and wrong. He accuses the Jews who declared these things as evil. Those Jews who were speaking claimed that they killed the Messiah. Concerning the major verse 157, it is argued that Christians and Jews are incorrect with their assertions that Isa was crucified and died.

The Jews are guilty of claiming they killed Isa, denting his claim that he is a messenger of God. The Christians are wrong for asserting that he died and was buried.

Qutb (1995:378) further argues that events happened so quickly with regard to the arrest and crucifixion of Isa that there was naturally major confusion. Unsurprisingly,

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<sup>60</sup>An illustration being Muhammed Ata-Ur Rahim (1979:39) who declares concerning this document "The gospel of Barnabas is the only known surviving Gospel written by a disciple of Jesus".

<sup>61</sup>Nevertheless, the work is of a dubious nature and this is illustrated when Isa prays to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael (Barnabas, 1907:259). Moreover, at the commencement of the gospel, Barnabas decries the fact that Paul is teaching false doctrine which happens to disagree with Islam (1907:2). Zahniser (2008:83-93) demonstrates its unreliability. The gospel is no doubt a fraud. Yet, Qutb (1995:378) makes reference to it as a source when reviewing the death of Isa. Indicting its effect on Islamic commentaries.

Qutb thanks God for his divine guidance. This, according to him, came through the Qur'an. The four gospels are then demonstrated as being suspicious and the gospel of Barnabas is presented as a possible replacement. Yet, he seems sceptical towards the gospel of Barnabas as well.

Qutb (1995:378) makes an interesting remark about verse 158. "The Qur'an does not give any details concerning how Jesus was raised or whether it took place in body or soul together in this state of life or in soul after death". He then goes on to state "Nor does it tell us when and where his death took place, if it all". Yet, in the next sentence, Qutb denies that the Jews killed or crucified Isa. Qutb then sets about presenting the substitution theory.

The amazing thing about Qutb (1995:378) is that he is willing to acknowledge that there is a certain mystery concerning these verses in the Qur'an. He remains loyal to the substitution theory. However, he may not be in favour of Isa dying but he does cite it as a possibility in the above quote. This is where the Insider Movements may have an argument - in that maybe the earlier commentators may have misinterpreted the death of Isa.

#### 3.2.1.2.7 Ayoub

Ayoub's (1980:103-106) opinion on this verse is worth noting at this point. He responds to the issue of Isa's death by indicating that the Qur'an demonstrates Isa as a challenge to human foolishness and unbelief and on par with these two is conjecture. He also justifies his view by observing that what he says about Isa is nothing that cannot be gained via the text. He refers to Ibn Abbas who points to the substitution theory.

Ayoub furthermore argues that the Qur'an is not only addressing the Jews in the context but all mankind. He is of the opinion that the very thing that was said to Isa's contemporaries can be said of the Tafsir authors. They have hidden the Qur'anic view of Isa behind a veil of their own conjecture. Moreover, it is argued that the Substitution theory will stand in any form. According to Ayoub (1980:104) it ridicules God's justice and the "primordial covenant of God with Humanity to guide human history to its final fulfilment". He also questions if it would be consistent with God's

character and nature to deceive mankind for centuries? Islamic commentators are rebuked for their superiority complex towards Christians, whom they should have guided to the truth. He proceeds to argue that Isa did in fact die, that this was asserted a few times in certain contexts, and that the Qur'an does not deny the death of Isa.

Ayoub's comments are unique. As a Muslim he corrects the tafsirs and their understanding of the death of Isa. He also dismisses the substitution theory on the bases that it belittles God's justice. He does attempt to stay within the boundaries of orthodoxy Islam and asserts that Isa is strictly a human.

The advantage of Ayoub is that he attempts to illustrate from the Qur'an that it is not against Isa dying. However, it must be cautioned that Ayoub is not promoting the Christian understanding of the death of Isa, but that he is misrepresented. He is willing to grapple with the text and shun traditional interpretation if it does not fit the context. What is also observable besides the gospel of Barnabas, is that the modern commentators are much more open to an alternative understanding of the text Ayoub (1980) being the supreme example). This leads back to the thesis question: can an evangelical Christian be a follower of Isa? Put in other words, is it possible from these verses to claim to follow Isa and not violate Christian doctrine? The tough answer is yes.

From what has been engaged in this section it appears as though the Qur'anic understanding is not as clear cut as Morton (2011:3207) made it appear. From the section above it can be assumed that there may be space for followers of Isa to remain faithful to the Biblical understanding of the death of Christ and still claim to be followers of Isa, in the sense that there are scholars like Ayoub (1980) who indicate that Isa died. From the Muslim section it appears as though the Insiders may have a point with the followers of Isa being Biblically faithful and remaining close to the Qur'an on the death of Isa. The researcher is of the honest opinion that it is an uncomfortable conclusion. This is explored some more after the section dealing with Qur'an 3:55 and Qur'an 19:33.

### 3.2.1.3 *Western/ Christians authors*

Parrinder (1965:107) argues, concerning Qur'an 4:157-159, that it is imperative that the context first be interacted with. He continues that this context has to do with the Jews and their rejection of the prophets. He begins by reviewing the word *masalabuhu*, which in the passage in English refers to "it only appeared to them so". Parrinder (1965:107) argues that verses 157 are to defend Isa against the slander of the Jews who thought they exclusively killed and crucified the Messiah. He then suggests the following translation: "They did not cause his death on the cross".

The questions that need to be addressed to correctly interpret the passage, according to Parrinder (1965:113-121), are: "Did Jesus really die on the cross? Was there a substitute who suffered in his place?" In engaging the first question, Parrinder reviews church history and suggests various sects (Gnosticism, Docetism<sup>62</sup>) that might have influenced the Muslim Substitution theory. They are important because all of these beliefs have in common a strange understanding of the death of Christ and present alternative views of his crucifixion.

Dr Hussein is then enlisted by Parrinder who states "it is a crude way of explaining the text" (1959:183). Parrinder (1965:118-123) also uses the four gospels as evidence for the reality of Isa's death. Thus, he answers both questions: Jesus did die and subsequently no substitute was needed. This line of argument allows the Qur'an to be seen in a way that Insider Movements understand. It is clearly drawing a parallel between the Qur'an and the Bible and shows that the Qur'an is not as anti-Christian as believed by most who are against IM<sup>63</sup>. Additionally, so far it has been demonstrated in this study that Islamic Christology can accept the death of Isa and be loyal to the Qur'an.

Cragg (1985:167) commences his interpretation of the passage by reviewing the context. It is argued that pronouns and verbs are the key to interpreting the text. A

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<sup>62</sup>Gnosticism is broad term for a group of people who believed that Salvation came through knowledge they existed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Docetism taught that Jesus was not really a man it only appeared so.

<sup>63</sup>Namely, Morton 2011.

translation of the phrase *shabbiha lahum* is suggested. According to Cragg the verb is a passive past tense with a reflexive. Cragg suggests the following English translation of the verse: “they were under the illusion that...”. Furthermore, two pronouns are suggested in the text, either *he* or *it*. If *he* is suggested, then the possibility of the substitution theory becomes more likely. However, if the pronoun *it* is chosen, then it opens the possibility of Isa’s death. He then suggests making sense of the context in that what is doubted is the point and manner of the crucifixion and not Isa’s role in it.

Cragg and Parrinder again demonstrate that, in spite of their different approaches, they come to the same conclusion that Isa indeed died. This again reveals that maybe a link could be made with Islamic Christology for followers of Isa to demonstrate that they are being contextual in their approach. Not only have Christian authors been saying this but scholars like Ayoub (1980) also make allowance for the death of Isa. Thus, if Islamic Christology allows for the death of Isa, one can claim to follow Isa and remain with the Islamic community and not feel you are deceiving anybody by saying that Isa died.

Zahniser (2008:32) argues that this verse could be a defence of Christianity and Islam, since both religions consider Isa/Jesus to be the Messiah. He argues that even though there is a polemic against Christians, there is none against the crucifixion and death of Christ. This naturally runs contrary to those Muslims who hold to some form of substitution theory. Zahniser states that there are two questions for interpretation of this verse. First, what does the Qur’an mean when it says “so it was made to appear to them”? and second, who are the people who differ?

Zahniser (2008:17), in answering the first question, begins by reviewing the grammar of the text. He argues that the phrase “it appeared to them” is ambiguous. He then spends time dealing with the tense of the verses. He finishes off with an interesting quote to the effect that the verb “shubbiha must be an impersonal passive. If the subject of this passive verb were Jesus, then it would mean that Jesus was caused to resemble somebody else”.

This of course is the exact opposite of the substitute theory, which argues somebody impersonated Isa on the cross. The implication of this argument is unique.



Nevertheless, Like Cragg we see an attempt to interact with the grammar of the text of the verses.

In response to the second question, Zahniser (2008:17) argues that if we depend on the Qur'an alone we will not reach a satisfactory conclusion. He answers the second question by indicating that the Qur'an is really attempting to attack the Jews for thinking that they could kill Isa. Thus, the verse, as stated earlier, is a polemic against the Jews, not against the Christians and this can be proved from other Suras. This leads to the conclusion that Isa did die on the cross.

Zahniser's argument is by far the most persuasive because of the way in which he digs deeply into the text and tackles all theories that run contrary to his own. Moreover, his analysis is deeply influenced by his comprehensive understanding of Arabic. Compared to the major tafsir he truly attempts to grapple with the grammar. Additionally, his two interpretative questions are different to Parrinder. Yet, they both agree that Isa died.

#### 3.2.1.3.4 Lawsono

Lawson's (2009:2) main point he desires to bring across, is that the Qur'an 4:156-159 can be understood in more than one way. He argues that Islamic teaching does not present a unified position concerning this passage. Additionally, the term shubbiha is central to understanding the text. This is in agreement with Parrinder's and Zahniser's understanding of key issues with the text. Some have understood the verse to mean that Isa is waiting in heaven to return to earth. Equally valid is others believe that he is dead. Lawson (2008:142) argues that the Qur'an is impartial on the crucifixion and the historicity of it and it could be read to affirm it. When he reviews the classical tafsirs he finds that they are dependent on things other than the Qur'an to come to their conclusion. He demonstrates that they are dependent on Jewish myths and Christian Gnostic gospels and Christian heresies for their substitution theory.

Lawson attempts to be impartial and from the researcher's perspective he does achieve his goal. Furthermore, Lawson indicates that over the centuries there have

been more than one way of understanding the death of Isa. This was also proven earlier when comparing Ayoub with some of the classical Tafsirs<sup>64</sup>.

All of the authors quoted from the Western/Christian section were critical of tafsirs found in the classical period. Especially with regard to the substitution legend even Ayoub was critical and he is a Muslim. Thus, this study attempts to indicate that it is not just Western/Christian authors who are indicating the concern.

Kuitse (1992:360) states that there are three major points when dealing with this difficult verse. Firstly, he asks “Did the Jews really make this boastful statement regarding Jesus’ death”. He answers that with our current knowledge on the most ancient of Jewish sources it appears, based on them as though the Jews never emphasised their part in Isa’s crucifixion. It is then suggested that maybe the reason for the statement in the Qur’an is that Muhammad was searching for allies among the Christians against the Jews.

The second question for Kuitse (1992:360) concerning the verse which was shared earlier is how must *Shubbiha Lahum* be translated? He explains that the root *shbh* is not used regularly in the Qur’an. He suggests two options for the way the word can be understood: similar or make equal or “being, doubtful, uncertain, and obscure”. He favours the definition of similar or making equal, which he uses as a springboard to argue that Isa was never crucified. Furthermore, pointing out that Gnostic tendency has not influenced the Qur’an, but maybe it did influence later Islamic history. He then argues that Islamic theology would not allow one of its major prophets to suffer such an ignominious death.

The third point is how this verse connects with other verses within the Qur’an that engages the death of Isa. Kuitse (1992:363) criticises Zahniser and Parrinder for claiming that the Qur’an states that Isa died and God raised him up afterwards. He explains that he finds it hard to accept in light of Qur’anic theology. He progresses to present the standard Islamic object and also where Isa is currently. Creeds are then appealed to with regard to the return of Christ to further supplement his argument.

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<sup>64</sup>When comparing Ayoub with Baidawi 1976, Ibn Abbas 2007.

The researcher is in agreement with Kuitse. However, Qur'an 19:33 is also a strong argument in favour of the fact that Isa died a normal death. Kuitse does not engage much with Ayoub (1980) and thus subsequently arrives at his conclusion assuming most Muslims commentators interpret the verse the way he concludes. Furthermore, Zahniser (2008:17) when engaging the grammar of text of the Qur'an, indicates that there are other perspectives equally persuasive. Moreover, Lawson (2009:142) argues this verse can be understood in more than one way.

Based on Qur'an 4:156-159 it appears as though these verses are not denying the death of Isa. Thus, so far it appears that followers of Isa can claim that they are being contextual since there is more than one way of understanding Qur'an 4:156-158. Additionally, these interpretations are not just coming from western authors, but from Muslim authors like Ayoub (1980). Thus, it appears that concerning the death of Isa, those who are followers of Isa can claim to follow him and attempt to be faithful to what the Bible teaches. They can claim to follow him and use the arguments of Ayoub to demonstrate from a Muslim perspective that Isa died.

### **3.2.2 *Qur'an 3:55 and Qur'an 19:33***

(And remember) when Allah said: O Jesus! Lo! I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto Me, and am cleansing thee of those who disbelieve and am setting those who follow thee above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then unto Me ye will (all) return, and I shall judge between you as to that wherein ye used to differ.

Qur'an 19:33:

Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!

#### **3.2.2.1 *Theme and context of Sura 3***

Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2004:62) indicates that this Sura deals with the "religious history of Mankind" specifically the people of the book (Christians & Jews). He argues that it demonstrates the rituals and ordinance of the people of Islam and also of people who should be willing to fight for the truth. He progresses to indicate that those who

are in the household of Islam should remain faithful and seek spiritual guidance and hope for the future. He also points out that Christians in this Sura are encouraged to accept the light of Islam. The lessons from the Muslim battles are indicated. The rules of the community are laid out with regard to those who form part of the community and those who are on the outside.

Maududi (1978:208) agrees with Ali except for the fact that it is not directed to Christians exclusively but also the Jews. The Sura attempts to correct all the false beliefs of the Christians and naturally the death of Isa and Christology with regard to the Son of God would also be engaged.

### 3.2.2.2 *Context and theme of Qur'an 19*

The cause for this revelation was that certain people of the Muslim community had fled from Mecca and went to stay with the Christian king in Abyssinia. While there, the people of Mecca sent a delegation to the king asking him to send them back so that the Meccans could punish them. The Meccans told the king that they were creating a new religion. At that time one of the companions of Muhammad defended the Muslim community and also produced a scroll from the Qur'an. The scroll was Qur'an 19 and the king after hearing the recitation of the Sura was weeping (Ibn Ishaq, 1955:151-153).

Ali reminds us that the focus of this chapter is "the story of individual Messengers of God in their personal relations with their environments" (2004:303). Yet, one common thread that stands out is that all prophets mentioned in this chapter faced<sup>65</sup> adversity. All these stories are given to encourage Muslims in remaining steadfast even if there is adversity.

### 3.2.2.3 *Muslim Authors*

These two passages are dealt with together since they have a direct correlation on the death of Isa. We have seen in the last section that most of the tafsirs before the 20<sup>th</sup> century was deeply influenced by the substitution theory.

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<sup>65</sup>An example would be Mary who is accused of being unchaste by her people when they see her with Isa after his birth. However, Isa speaks from the cradle declaring her innocent Qur'an 19:26-36.

However, there are some, like Razi, who acknowledges some of the issues involved with the theory, yet provides weak answers to the problem. Moreover, the reality is that even up until today most Muslims have not changed their views much regarding the substitution of Isa on the cross (Ali, 2004:106).

During the modern period, two author's views are noted, namely Qutb and Ayoub. The next section review's what some Muslim commentators say about these two verses, since at face value they appear to be indicating that Isa was talking about his death. The debate focuses on one specific word in Arabic namely "mutawaffi". To add to the controversy Baidawi (1976:131) gives five different definitions of the word Mutawaffika. "Achieve thy whole term and tarry till the appointed end, and take you from the earth". Additionally, Baidawi suggests the following definition which the researcher has summarized: to bring you to myself sleeping (God of course speaking to Isa) or to destroy in your lust, which prevents you from coming to the spirit world or God let him die for three/seven hours and raised him up again.

It is interesting to observe how Ibn Abbas (2007:59) understands Qur'an 3:55. He understands the verse as stating that Allah took Isa up into heaven, and that he would cause Isa to die when he returns a second time. However, Abbas does suggest that it could possibly mean that God will make Isa's heart die to the love of the world (Ibn Abbas, 2007:60).

Yet, with regard to the death of Isa Abbas leaves the question open and does not give a definitive answer to it. This verse of course works in concert with 4:156-159. The logic being that if Isa was substituted on the cross then this verse can only be referring to a future date since his natural life was interrupted.

With regard to Qur'an 3:55 Jalalayn<sup>66</sup> (2007:60) considers the verse to imply that God raised Isa to be with him. He also indicates that it was without the involvement of dying. He goes on to imply that God is cleansing Isa from all the disbelievers.

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<sup>66</sup>The authors of this Tafsir are Al mahali & Al-Suyurti they are better known as Jalalayn (2007). This is a 15<sup>th</sup> century Tafsir that along with "Ṭabarī, Rāzī, Qurṭubī, Bayḍāwī, Ibn Kathīr and Jalālayn" is considered the unofficial commentary of Sunni Orthodox (Talal, 2007). The commentary is also very popular and was even recommended to the researcher by an Imam who he is acquainted with. From this

The only difference between Abbas and Jalalayn is that Abbas adds the possibility that Isa's death could be understood in a more spiritual light and that Isa could have died to the world. Furthermore, concerning Qur'an 19:33: Jalalayn does not add anything more substantial as he already dealt with the topic partially.

Thus, as before the classical commentators keep reiterating that Isa did not die. The point being that Islamic Christology has no place for Isa's death. By implication the Insider Movements are wrong about the Qur'an. Additionally, IMs are being syncretistic because they are combining religious concepts that don't work if you just focused on the classical commentators. However, the modern commentators leave much more room for deviation.

Returning again to Qutb (1995) he argues that the word should be understood in the sense that God will cause Isa to die and then raise up to himself. He indicates that God would cleanse him from those who blaspheme. Qutb stays near to the traditional understanding not seeking to go deeper.

In contrast Ayoub (1980:107) begins by reviewing the word *Mutawaffika* and the way that the word is understood. Ayoub cites that the word "*Mutawaffika* means receive you. The verb *tawaffa* literally means to reclaim a debit or a charge in its entirety to somebody else. In general usage, however, it means in its passive form, *tuwuffi*, ("to die").

Ayoub (1980:109) indicates the dilemma that the commentators have had in light of the clear meaning of the text thus, Isa died and God received his soul or his soul and body was taken by God directly into heaven. The second solution allows Isa to be assumed into heaven. Ayoub cites a long story by Al-Tabari in which it appears that he is combining some of the key verses of the Qur'an with Islamic tradition.

Ayoub (1980:157-159) also reviews an interesting theory concerning *mutawaffika* and cites Wahb which in effect said that God caused Isa to die for a three-hour period after which he was raised up into heaven. Razi is credited with attempting to truly understand what the verse is implying. It is pointed out that Razi implies that the

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point on, the work will be referred to as Jalalayn as it is more popularly known. In keeping with Islamic tradition this tafsir would be known by its authors first name as Jalalayn throughout this study.

term Tawwafi includes death, however it was not synonymous with it. He suggests that the term might mean God accepted the deeds of Isa which he brought before himself. Razi then states that the verse could be implying that God was saying to Isa all his good deeds and good works would not be destroyed and all his acts of obedience were accepted. Ayoub suggests that Razi may have been influenced by the Sufi view of Isa. Ayoub (1980:103-110) progresses to engage the cross of Christ in Sunni Islam in comparison with Sufism he also engages the way Modern authors have tended to view the verse. However, his views concerning the verse are exactly the same as the previous section in that he argues that Isa died.

The reason for the long explanation about Razi is again the fact that we observe that Razi is prepared to engage the text however, he does not move beyond the theory of Substitution.

Maududi (1978:238) argues that the word *mutawaffi* in the Arabic text of the Qur'an comes from the root word *tawaffi*. He shows that it means "To take and to receive" and additionally "to seize the soul". He however suggests not a lexical understanding but rather a metaphorical meaning. He declares that it could be used to summon a person from their mission. Maududi presents his case by demonstrating how the Jews killed many righteous men and prophets and how they even desired to slay John and Isa. He indicates that John the Baptist was beheaded. God then became annoyed with the Jews for their treatment of his prophets and their disobedience. He subsequently cursed them till the day of resurrection. Furthermore, God recalled Isa up to heaven in protest of the Jews.

Maududi (1978:238-239) focuses on the context within which the verse is found. Pointing out the discourse is really attempting to correct Christian false beliefs and he suggests three errors namely, Isa's miracles, his virgin birth and finally his ascension.

The last "error" is of course the most important for the study. After reviewing the previous two errors he indicates to Muslims, that, if Isa's death was a reality there would have been a place where the grave could be identified. However, nowhere in the Qur'an it is said explicitly (Maududi, 1978:239). He contrasts the reality of the fact

that the Qur'an not only hints at the ascension but, according to him, denies the crucifixion. He observes that the one who cried on the cross was not Isa.

Maududi (1978:239) states rather seriously that anybody who argues from this verse that Isa died is committing blasphemy. The reason he argues this is because he believes God communicates clearly. Regarding Qur'an 19:33 he refers back to his previous comments having felt that he has dealt with the subject adequately. However, as demonstrated by Ayoub (1980) and Qutb (1995) there is more than one perspective.

Ayoub (1980:108) could be correct in asserting that many Muslim authors are guilty of jumping over the simple meaning of the verse (Qur'an 19:33). The Qur'an seems to leave open the possibility that maybe Isa did die.

Yet, nevertheless we have seen in reviewing Jalayin and Maududi that they remained loyal to the substitution theory and thus the standard Muslim position. Maududi directly attacks those who claim that Isa died. Abbas seems to be unclear on Qur'an 19:33 and its interpretation, demonstrating the two ways the text could be interpreted. This leaves open the possibility that from a Qur'anic perspective Isa may have died.

Furthermore, this means that, yet again, there is possibility for Evangelical to claim to be a follower of Isa, because there is more than one way of understanding Isa within Islam. The exceptional thing about Ayoub is that he is not a liberal. He is a Muslim and a stanch one at that. Therefore, his interpretation is coming from neither a Christian or western perspective. He is not connected to the Insider Movement either.

Yet, he is willing to acknowledge that Isa did die. This could possibly indicate that followers of Isa are not guilty on the death of Isa to be breaking with Islamic theology. Moreover, Qutb remains within Islamic theology, at times acknowledges that maybe there could be other valid interpretations. Thus, Accad (1997:10) maybe correct in that the Qur'an is not as anti- Jesus as Morton and those against the Insider Movement would have us believe. Indeed, one could claim to be a follower of Isa and use the Qur'an to demonstrate that Isa could have died.



This of course could be demonstrated through Ayoub and Qutb's acknowledgement that the issue of Isa's death in the Qur'an is not clear cut, as some Muslims<sup>67</sup> and some of those against Insider Movements<sup>68</sup> would have us believe.

#### 3.2.2.4 *Christian/ Western authors*

As demonstrated previously there appears to be a very strong possibility based on the Qur'an, that indeed Isa may have died. If Islamic Christology makes allowance for this there is no problem claiming to follow Isa as it can be demonstrated that the claim is contextual because it does not violate a biblical principle. This is also where both IMs and those against IMs have failed to engage Islamic Christology effectively instead making sweeping comments<sup>69</sup>.

Parrinder (1965:105) argues that the tafsirs have misunderstood Qur'an 3:55 and Qur'an 19:33. Qur'an 5:117 is referred to bolster the argument. The structure of the sentence is broken down with emphasis placed on the verb and participle. He argues that the verse should be understood as Isa's inward experience and furthermore, that he really did experience death.

Parrinder (1965:105) states that Qur'an 19:33 speaks naturally about the death of Isa and that it agrees with the true humanity of the "son of Mary". This verse should be understood in the same way that it was earlier on in verse 15.

Haqq (1980:131) begins demonstrating rather inadequately what Muslim scholars claim about Qur'an 3:55. That the verse (3:55) is not implying order which means it could be understood the way Muslim scholars have understood it. In that Isa is returning to die. They are not named but based on the context it would appear as though Haqq is referring to the Substitution theory. Muslim scholars according to him have interpreted Qur'an 3:55 incorrectly since they hold that the text is not referring to the past.

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<sup>67</sup>see Ata ur-Rahim 1995, Shafaat 1979.

<sup>68</sup>Smith 2009, Houssney 2011, ed Lingel, Morton and Nikides 2011.

<sup>69</sup>See Introduction and literature review for discussion on this statement that not much engagement has taken place with regard to Islamic Christology.

With regard to chapter 19 verse 33 Haqq (1980:131) continues that the Qur'an speaks in enigmas concerning the resurrection and death of Isa. He also indicates that Isa was subject to suffering like all the prophets. Yet Haqq argues that the same words that were used by Isa in Qur'an 19:33 is also used of John the Baptist in verse 15. Yet, no Muslim would argue that John the Baptist is coming back a second time.

Cragg (1985:176) commences by indicating that *Mutawaffiaka* naturally and almost always means death and this verb is used only by God. Other theories that could provide plausible explanations are suggested, but they are rejected. The text should be understood in plain language, namely that Isa died and rose again, which is in sync with Christianity. Baidawi is cited again for one of his definitions that death came upon Isa for a couple of hours. Qur'an 5:117 is then included in the argument which, according to Cragg has an echo of John 17:12. That there is an echo of John 17 may be a bit of a stretch yet his other argument concerning *Mutawaffiaka* is plausible.

Chapter 19 verse 33 is also reviewed by Cragg (1985:176). He concurs with Parrinder (1965) and Haqq (1980:131) that the exact same phrase is used when referring to John the Baptist. He argues that the most natural understanding of the verse should be applied and that all the other theories just do not add up.

Zahniser (2008:28) begins by reviewing Ayoub's and Nolins understanding of *Sura Imran*<sup>70</sup> highlighting how different their perspectives were to traditional Muslim perspective. Yet Zahniser argues that neither look at the context within which they appear and that adds to the interpretation. He evaluates Qutb and Mahmud Shaltut<sup>71</sup> and their understanding of the context. He suggests that *Sura Imran* should be divided into four sections. He systemically works his way through the context of the *Sura* and comes to the key verse by choosing to translate *mutawaffika* as "I will cause thee to die and raise thee to me". The context indicates that the sovereignty of God is the major point, and not the crucifixion and death of Isa.

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<sup>70</sup>The Suras name in Arabic which is Sura three.

<sup>71</sup>Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Karim:al-ajaza al-asharah al-ula. 1966.

Zahniser does not engage much with Qur'an 19. The researcher suggests that his view would not be much different from those stated earlier. Yet, in review what was interesting to observe was that the Muslim's understanding was abit more dogmatic in asserting that Isa never died. Whereas the western/ Christians tended to argue that Isa died. However, there are exceptions<sup>72</sup> to both perspectives.

Based on this section of Islamic Christology there is scope for Evangelicals to claim that they are followers of Isa and prove via various verses in the Qur'an that there is more than one way of understanding the death of Isa. As pointed out earlier<sup>73</sup>, the Qur'an does not present a unified view on the topic of Isa's death.

This was acknowledged by various scholars<sup>74</sup> who pointed out that there is some mystery concerning the life of Isa with regard to key events. However, there is another danger which should be warned against in that the Qur'an does not support a biblical Christology. There is a danger of seeing within the Qur'an what is clearly not there. The researcher at the outset of this chapter of the research was convinced that the Qur'an denies the death of Isa however there is more than sufficient evidence to suggest that maybe the Qur'an does allow for Isa's death. This means followers of Isa so far can claim to follow him while remaining faithful to their Biblical conviction.

### **3.3 The return of Isa**

#### **3.3.1 The Qur'an**

Qur'an 43:61

Verily there is knowledge of the Hour. So doubt ye not concerning it, but follow Me. This is the right path.

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<sup>72</sup>See Ayoub, 1980 Kuitze, 1992.

<sup>73</sup>See section 3.2.3 of Islamic Christology.

<sup>74</sup>Haqq 1980, Qutb 1995, Lawson 2008.

### **3.3.2 Hadith**

Bukhari<sup>75</sup>

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, "By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, surely (Jesus,) the son of Mary will soon descend amongst you and will judge mankind justly (as a Just Ruler); he will break the cross and kill the pigs and there will be no Jizya (i.e. taxation taken from non-Muslims). Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it, and a single prostration to Allah (in prayer) will be better than the whole world and whatever is in it" (2006:657).

Muslim:

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) observed: I swear by Allah that the son of Mary will certainly descend as a just judge and he would definitely break the cross, and kill swine and abolish Jizya and would leave the young she-camel and no one would endeavour to (collect Zakat on it). Spite, mutual hatred and jealousy against one another will certainly disappear and when he summons people to accept wealth, not even one would do so.

### **3.3.3 Explanation**

The approach of this section is slightly different. In that there is no division between Western/Christians and Muslims authors as there was not enough from either of them to justify that division. The majority of Tafsirs<sup>76</sup> authors believe that Isa was taken up to heaven and will return and do what was indicated above by both Muslim and Bukhari.

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<sup>75</sup>Hadith literature is second only to the Qur'an in terms of importance (Azami, 1977). The "Arabic word hadith literally means communication, story, conversation" (Azami 1977:1). The hadiths are collections of sayings that relate to Muhammad. It relates to things that he allowed and also his life in general (what he did in certain situations, favourite food etc). The hadiths are also important theologically for Muslims since it was through Muhammad that the Qur'an was revealed. Thus, his sayings are of equal importance in interpreting the Qur'an (Newby, 2002:69-70).

<sup>76</sup>See Baidawi 1976, Qutb 1995, Ali 2004.

In answering the question whether a follower of Isa can claim to follow him it is incumbent on the researcher to engage the hadith and understand what is expected of Isa at his return, according to the hadith.

The hadith mentioned by Bukhari and Muslim, when dealing with the return of Isa, it was firstly obvious to observe that Isa is descending it could be assumed, from heaven. According to Bukhari (2006:331) Muhammad was miraculously ascended to heaven where upon he meets a few prophets and one of them was Isa. He even described Isa physically. Thus, Isa is in heaven waiting his time until he returns.

The second point that is observed is that Isa will break the cross. Hassan (2008:860) rightly pointing out “The cross of course being a symbol of Christianity”. Hassan does not justify her answer with an explanation. Yet, it is obvious that Isa is not coming back to break many crosses, just one. This makes the most sense.

Hassan (2008:860) also notes that some people have attempted to understand the hadith to mean that Isa will not be coming to destroy Christianity, but rather to unite Islam and Christianity. An example of a scholar who believes this is Harun Yahya (2005:604) who is an Islamic polemist who argues that with the return of Isa, Muslims and Christians will unite into one faith. He argues that when this happens, the world would enjoy global peace and tranquillity.

However, what Yahya actually means by this is that Christians will see the truth of Islam, and they will convert to it. He additionally points out that when Isa returns it will not just be the Christians but also the Jews who will finally come to see the truth of Islam. Yahya goes on to indicate (2005:662) that Isa will rule with the Qur’an. That it would be the foundation of Isa’s reign.

This is troubling because how can followers of Isa claim that they following him when clearly he desires to return and destroy the very thing which is our foundation? Followers of Isa who use Isa as a self-identity need to understand what Isa’s role is within the Qur’an and hadith.

Furthermore, this hadith (Bukhari and Muslim) is very clear on Isa’s role in the end times and that is to destroy Christianity. Levirk (2010:666) explains about the hope

Muslims have regarding Isa's return: "The essence of this expectation is that Jesus in his second coming will confirm that he is a Muslim, and rule according to Muslim law". This statement correctly sums up what is truly being indicated by the hadith in question. The reason for this conclusion is self-evident.

In contrast, as indicated in the literature review section Parrinder disagrees with Levirk. Parrinder (1965:124) argues that these are later fabrications and though they are popular they are to be dismissed as Muslim fiction.

Parrinder (1965:124) quotes from the dean of Al-Azhar University (which is the Harvard of Islamic institutions) who opens up the possibility that rejecting this belief is not against Islam. Yet, he argues that when discussing Isa/Jesus it should be done strictly from the Bible and the Qur'an.

Additionally, Zahniser (2008:56-57) asks the question why does the early biographers of the prophet Muhammad not mention any hadith of this nature? Since the biographers mentions some incidents that relate to Isa yet these descriptions found in hadith are curiously missing. Furthermore, descriptions are provided of Isa's physical appearance by the biographers. Yet they make no mention of a second coming.

A second objection is then brought forward. Zahniser (2008:56-57) begins by quoting from Ibn Ashur (1960:28-29) who states that when doing Qur'anic exegesis, it is not incumbent on the person to consult the hadith. He argues that the prophet actually interpreted very few verses in the Qur'an himself. Additionally, his companions contradicted themselves with regard to their interpretations and harmonization of their views would be impossible. Thus, indicating according to him that the companions understood key verses in their own unique way. It is also argued that these hadith sources can be traced back to two people.

Zahniser (2008:56-57) and Parrinder (1965:124) both reject the hadith dealing with the return of Isa. Both go about it in two different ways. Parrinder suggests an historical argument that the hadiths were fabricated later. Zahniser's (2008:56-57) first objections are also based on a historical premise, yet he exclusively uses

Muslim<sup>77</sup> sources to argue his point. He also appeals to a Muslim exegete to substantiate his second point that the hadiths are not always reliable when interpreting the Qur'an. All of the above combined indeed make a compelling case. Zahniser's arguments are persuasive because he deals only with Muslim sources to arrive at his conclusion.

However, returning to the next part of the hadith that will be dealt with Isa will obliterate Jizyah tax. According to Umar Qurayshi (2010:332) Jizyah tax is something levelled against all Non-Muslim citizens living in a majority Muslim country. The verse that is cited by him is Qur'an 9:29.

Jizyah is a tax imposed on people who are non-Muslims, living among Muslims. Thus, when Isa returns in effect there will be no need for taxing of non-Muslims, since all will submit to Islam and logically the whole system will be made obsolete.

In recapping, Isa will break the cross which symbolizes Christianity. He also will destroy the Jizyah tax. This, will obviously be directed against all those who are living in Islamic states who do not submit to Islam. Therefore, Isa is coming to destroy Christianity and declare submission to Islam. Can any Christian claim to follow a person like that? Of course not, but this is what is expected from a hadith perspective with the return of Isa.

Larry Poston (2010:108) poses a valid question: He asks that if Muslims believe that Muhammad is the final messenger of God why does Isa return to rule the Islamic kingdom? Why not Muhammad? He points out that a host of deductive arguments are presented for the return of Isa. Poston (2010:109) quotes Ali (1989:559) who indicates that Isa never experienced some of the mundane things of life that the others experienced, like marriage and raising a family. He also indicates that his mission was limited and that he did not have to deal with the issues that arose in a highly organized society.

Poston (2010:109) argues that nothing is said in the hadith or Qur'an about marriage and fatherhood. Yet, according to him does not mean that Isa won't get married and

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<sup>77</sup>See Ibn Ishaq, 1955.

father kids. He also argues that God was not willing to leave one of his main prophet's lives uncompleted. He completes by observing: "Isa allows not only for a final vindication of his prophethood, in that he defeats the enemies of God and reigns in great power and glory, but also affords him the more mundane privileges of humanity, those of "hearth and home".

Firstly, in response to the objection that Isa did not live a full life because he was not married, it should be noted that within Islamic or Christian theology there is no suggestion that John the Baptist was married. He may have died a "normal" death in the sense of there is no real controversy surrounding his death. Yet, does the fact that he was not married mean that he will be allowed a second opportunity to return? Since following that logic, he never experienced the mundane things of life and he was a prophet of God? Needless to say, Poston's answer to the objection of the question why Isa needs to return is good.

Based on these two hadith, it is almost impossible to claim to be a follower of Isa, as this clearly indicates that he is returning to destroy Christianity. There were of course other things that could have been added, for example that he will return to destroy the anti-Christ and also what the hadith claim about his appearance. But no attention was paid to these extra details, since they are of only secondary importance.

Yet, could it not be argued that, as with the previous section there is more than one way of perceiving things? Is the researcher not being biased? For example, Parrinder and Zahniser just dismiss the whole hadith as fiction?

In response to the first objection that came to mind: yes, there is Parrinder's and Zahniser's objection. In contrast Yahya (2005:422) concludes, after reviewing various authors on hadith that Muslims have to accept the fact of Isa's return and thus if they deny this, they are not true Muslims. Furthermore, he argues that these hadiths are beyond dispute historically.

It should be pointed out that Yahya is a popular author and is known for sweeping statements. Yet, his work with regard to the return of Isa represents a very popular perspective. The reality is that most Muslims (Yahya 2005:422) believe that Isa will



return. Furthermore, unlike in the previous section where other interpretations were suggested. Parrinder and Zahniser cast doubt on the veracity of the story. They do not present an alternative interpretation like in the previous section. Moreover, these hadiths come from two reliable collections with regard to hadiths<sup>78</sup>. The truth is that the focus of Zahniser and Parrinder arguments, specifically with regard to hadith, that it could make allowance for a follower of Isa to remain faithful to the Biblical understanding, by rejecting the hadith teachings, but accepting the Qur'an's teaching on the return of Isa.

Thus, these scholars can dismiss these hadiths as unreliable and indeed historically that maybe. However, when a follower of Isa claims that they follow Isa within a Muslim context naturally this hadith would be referenced<sup>79</sup>. Since, most Muslims believe in some form<sup>80</sup> of Substitution theory. Thus, followers of Isa who make the claim in an all Muslim context need to understand his role within Islamic eschatology.

Based on the return of Isa it appears as though it is abundantly clear that Isa's role in Islamic eschatology is to destroy Christianity. Maybe a tentative way forward could be suggested for followers of Isa in that they could dispute these hadiths in Sahih Al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim by heeding Zahniser's (2008:54-56) argument that were presented earlier. That the earlier biographers of Muhammed's life did not include this story how come it is in the hadith?

### **3.3.4 Muslim Authors Qur'an 43:61**

The return of Isa is something that is important for Muslims. As pointed out those scholars who are influenced by the substitution theory<sup>81</sup> believe that Isa never died and was thus taken up into heaven. With this verse we will just briefly look at some Muslim scholars understanding of this key verse. Furthermore, there are two main verses that deal with the return of Isa. Firstly 4:159 which was engaged with above rather modestly dealing with the death of Isa. Secondly Qur'an 43:61 is another major text. Qur'an 43:61 would be taken as a representative for those verses dealing

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<sup>78</sup>Namely Sahih-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim.

<sup>79</sup>Hassan 2008.

<sup>80</sup>see Baidawi 1976, Ali 2004, Hassan 2008

<sup>81</sup>See Ibn Kathir, Qutb, Mauadi.

with the return of Isa in this study. This section helps to answer the thesis question, namely that the return of Isa plays a major role in both Christianity<sup>82</sup> and Islam<sup>83</sup>.

There is some controversy surrounding this verse (43:61). There are two ways that this text (43:61) could be understood. Either it could be understood to imply that Isa is the knowledge of the coming hour of judgment, or it could be understood that the Qur'an is knowledge of the hour. These two variants determine if this verse is referring to the return of Isa or the Qur'an. The translation is dependent on if the personal pronoun should be rendered as either "he" or "it". The researcher exclusively focuses on the interpretation that favours Isa as a sign for the Day of Judgment because that is the most polemical position (Robinson, 1991: 92).

Abbas (2008:571) and Jalayn (2007:575) favour the view that Isa is the person who is mentioned in this verse, both indicating that what is being demonstrated by this verse is that Isa will be one of the signs that judgment day is approaching. Jalayn (2007:575) points out that Isa will be sent down from heaven. This, is naturally coming from his belief in the substitution theory, that Isa was rescued on the cross. These two authors do not even mention the other alternative in their explanation of the Qur'an.

In contrast Baidawi (1976:129) suggests two ways that the verse could be interpreted, namely that. Isa is either returning to demonstrate that the hour of judgment is coming, as both Abbas and Jalayn pointed out, or Isa is the sign that Judgment day is beginning because through him God is demonstrating his power by bringing him back to life. He also recounts a hadith without providing a source. That Isa would return over a mountain peak in the "holy land" which he does not specify, since it could be Mecca or Jerusalem. He will come with a spear and kill the Anti-Christ. He then recounts that Isa will come at a time when Muslims are busy preparing for their time of prayer and the Imam would desire to let Isa lead the prayer time. Yet, Isa would refuse and allow the Imam to continue declaring his submission to Islam.

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<sup>82</sup>Matthew 24-25.

<sup>83</sup>Bukhari 2006:657.

Baidawi (1976:129) indicates that Qur'an 43:61 should be understood as referring to the Qur'an namely that the pronoun "It", "Refers to the Qur'an, since signs of the hour are given in it and it points the way to it". However, he does not seem convinced by this argument because the space that he provides for this view is negligible. He only provides two sentences in comparison to the other position that the text 43:61 is referring back to Isa. Moreover, (1976:129) Baidawi favours the substitution theory, which was demonstrated with Isa's death.

Ibn Kathir (2013) agrees with most of the authors above that the verse is referring to Isa, except he adds that there are possibly two ways of understanding the phrase either that Isa is the sign that the hour of Judgment has arrived, or it could be understood to imply that Isa is one of the signs before the Day of Judgment arrives.

Either way all of the authors above favour the reading that Isa is returning. From the above section, with the exclusion of Baidawi's (1976:129) story, there is nothing that appears which suggests anything unbiblical, that indicates a follower of Isa cannot claim to follow him because it contradicts the scripture when engaging the return of Isa. The authors reviewed above all indicate that the verse should be understood as referring to Isa and choose the personal pronoun "he". Thus, if the issue of Isa's death is settled from the Qur'an, then the return of Isa is not a concern. However, the hadith of Bukhari and Muslim play a major role when dealing with the Islamic understanding of the return of Isa.

From the modern perspective Ali (2004:1337) just concurs with the view that Isa is returning before Judgement Day and is coming to destroy false doctrines supposedly created in his name. Ali does not add much in terms of originality. Qutb (1995:260) also agrees with the authors above that Isa is returning as one of the signs of the coming Day of Judgment. He refers back to a hadith that would be engaged within the previous section.

Overall, in engaging the Qur'an with the return of Isa, the researcher believes from the Biblical perspective that there is nothing that indicates that followers of Isa are being unfaithful to the Bible by claiming they are followers of Isa. Christians also believe that the Return of Jesus is one of the signs that the Day of Judgement is approaching. Alternatively, the return of Isa as the sign that Judgment is

commencing is equally fine. The difference that does come about, is with the purpose of why Isa is returning. This indicates if followers of Isa are being syncretistic in adopting him.

### **3.3.5 *Western authors/ Christians***

Parrinder (1965:124) says: A canonical variation allows the reading of “alam, mark or signal, for ilm, knowledge. In this reading the second coming would be signal of the last hour”. Thus, favouring the variant that he suggests, he points out that the return of Isa could be a signal of the last hour. He also progresses to argue that of equal value maybe the reading that the text is referring to the Qur’an which gives knowledge about the future day of Judgement.

Robinson (1991:92-103) begins by reviewing Tabari, Zamakhshari, Razi, Ibn Kathir and Baydawi. His conclusion after reviewing all of them is that regarding the return of Isa it is truly up for debate if the Qur’an has anything to say about the return of Isa since both Qur’an 4:159 and Qur’an 43:61 can be understood in alternative ways that are equally persuasive.

Zahniser (2008:55) also starts by reviewing the context noting rather briefly that the context surrounding Qur’an 43:61 deals with eschatological concerns. He also indicates that commentators have chosen their interpretation because Isa is the focus of the context (see 43:57-59). Zahniser (2008:55) reviews the earlier commentators like Abbas, Hurayrah, Al Tabir and comes to the conclusion that Qur’an 43:61 if understood to be referring to Isa is awkward in terms of grammar yet does not elaborate on it or explore it more. He suggests that maybe the pronoun it should be used instead, which refers to the Qur’an. However, Zahniser indicates that it does not matter what the interpretation is since this does not mean that Isa was not crucified.

With regard to the main problem of this study, the question: can an Evangelical Christian be a follower of Isa? The researcher after reviewing what the Qur’an says about the return of Isa the researcher feels that based on it there is not much that could be disagreed with theologically. It may not go far enough as demonstrated in

the chapter dealing with Biblical Christology<sup>84</sup>. The problem that arises is when the hadith (Bukhari and Muslim) declares what Isa will do when he returns.

Based on what the Qur'an says about the return of Isa from Qur'an 43:61, the researcher feels that a follower Isa can claim to follow him and be faithful to a Biblical understanding. Moreover, if the Qur'an is just referenced with focus on Qur'an 41:63, they could still claim to be contextual, since they are not compromising any Biblical belief. Additionally, there are some Muslims like Muhammed (2010)<sup>85</sup> who define themselves as Qur'an only because they reject the hadith completely, citing Qur'an 45:6, which warns against following anything but the Qur'an.

Thus, if Muslims are doing that, then surely followers of Isa can reject the Hadith and claim to follow Isa exclusively from the Qur'an, this should not be a problem. The researcher believes that one can claim to follow Isa with regard to his return if the Qur'an is used as the main source for Islamic Christology. However, if the Hadith is included it would be impossible to claim to follow Isa.

### **3.4 The purpose of Isa**

This is one of the hardest topics to engage in the purpose of Isa. The answer to the question for the researcher can only be understood in light of an Islamic understanding of prophets. It provides the clues for the purpose of Isa. Additionally, Qur'an 61:6 provides the insight to what his purpose within Islamic theology is.

#### **3.4.1 Prophets in Islam**

The general role of prophets within Islam goes a long way to determining the purpose of Isa. The researcher feels this section would be a vital building block in answering this research projects main question.

One of the key articles of faith in Islam is a belief in all the prophets. Within Islam there are two types of prophets, namely there are nabi (prophet) and there Rasul

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<sup>84</sup>Namely Jesus's role as Judge (Matthew 25:31-46).

<sup>85</sup>[http://Qur'an-islam.org/articles/a\\_dozen\\_reasons\\_\(P1153\).html](http://Qur'an-islam.org/articles/a_dozen_reasons_(P1153).html) no Name given just A Muhammed (accessed 2015/09/17).

(messengers). Every prophet is a nabi yet not every nabi is a Rasul. The Rasuls are given a new set of divine laws and books. Examples of these types of prophets are Isa, Abraham and David. (Riddell, 2003:43).

Irrespective of their role, all prophets are thought to have performed miracles. Moreover, the Qur'an (35:24) indicates that every community has had a messenger coming to them inviting them to worship God alone, according to Riddell (2003:43).

Abdul Hassan Ali Nadawi (1979:7-32) from India suggests some of the reasons why prophets are important in Islam. His whole work deals exclusively with prophethood: They are important in that they are intellectually superior to all other human beings. They are the best individuals with regard to morality. Since Islam generally teaches that the prophets are without sin according to him.

What is also interesting to note is that all the prophets are considered to be without sin. Yet, that overstatement would be challenged as indeed it is a common misconception. However, there are two major contentions that need refuting: first that prophets are without sin and that they are intellectually superior. Van Ess (1987:13) says concerning prophets generally "The prophets are only messengers, mouthpieces through whom God himself speaks. They may be chosen but they remain human beings with all their weaknesses".

He then backs up his argument with Qur'an 46:9. The researcher agrees with Van Ess that prophets are not superhuman since this denies Qur'an 46:9. Mohammed just affirms that he is but a "Warner" in Qur'an 46:9. He does not say that he is superior. Thus, Nadawi (1979:7-32) may be exaggerating when he points out that they are intellectually superior.

Secondly, strangely enough Ibn Ishaq (1955:165-166) adds a situation from Muhammad's life in agreement with Van Ess. It has become controversially known as the satanic verses<sup>86</sup> found in Qur'an 53:19-20. So what is demonstrated by this

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<sup>86</sup>Ibn Ishaq begins by indicating that Muhammad was feeling sad that his people were rejecting his message. He longed for a way to reconcile them to God. The prophet really loved his people and longed that the main obstacle (monotheism) to them accepting Islam be removed. He would often meditate and think about how this could be removed so that his people could submit.

incident is that prophets can be deceived by the Devil. That is the clear implications of Ibn Ishaq's narration related to the life of Muhammad. What this implies is that prophets can have their moments of weakness, which is in agreement with Van Ess' argument.

What is also interesting to observe is that God, according to Ibn Ishaq (1955:162-163) encourages Muhammad that all the prophets had made this mistake before and that this was not something unique. What the researcher notes is that, even though he appears to have clearly done something that was unwise or possibly deceived by Satan, it is pointed out that all the prophets have had this experience. There are no examples provided in the narrative by God, of when and where these occasions happened to other prophets. Followers of Isa need to be aware that Isa could have also been influenced by the Devil at one stage or another! If the implications of the Satanic Verses are thought through?

Thus, followers of Isa are not being contextual but rather syncretistic. Isa could have also been one of the prophets deceived by the Devil. However, maybe there was an exception made for him. Imam Abu'l Husain Asakir-ud-din Muslim (2006:30) recounts a hadith which states: "Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The Satan touches every son of Adam on the day when his mother gives birth to him with the exception of Mary and her son".

Moreover, what if this applied to Isa's whole life? Thus, within Islam could it not be plausible that maybe Isa is unique? On that same token should Mary also not be thought of as unique? After all she was also not touched by Satan at birth. However, if the researcher has to be honest the following hadith concerning Muhammad

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According to Ibn Ishaq (1955:165-166) God sent down a revelation and while the prophet was sharing the revelation with the people he added that they can pray to their gods and it would be accepted. When the Meccan's heard this they were naturally delighted and they paid attention. His followers naturally did not suspect that the prophet had made a mistake since (Muslim form of prayer) themselves. When, the non-Muslims left they proclaimed that Muhammad complimented their gods.

Furthermore, Gabriel came to him and wanted to know why he proclaimed what he had. At this he was repented and felt convicted at which point his God told him according to Ibn Ishaq (1955:165-166) that this happens to every prophet and that he should not think himself unique with regard to this failure. The verses in the Qur'an that refers to this story is Qur'an 22:53 and 53:19-20. Additionally, in agreement with this story is Ibn Abbas (2007:370), Jalalayn (2007:373).

should also be observed which keeps the roles of prophets in perspective: Muhammad Ibn Ishmail Bukhari (8:429) Narrated Jabir bin 'Abdullah:

Allah's Apostle said, "I have been given five things which were not given to any amongst the Prophets before me. These are: 1. Allah made me victorious by awe (by His frightening my enemies) for a distance of one month's journey. 2. The earth has been made for me (and for my followers) a place for praying and a thing to perform Tayammum. Therefore my followers can pray wherever the time of a prayer is due. 3. The booty has been made Halal (lawful) for me (and was not made so for anyone else). 4. Every Prophet used to be sent to his nation exclusively but I have been sent to all mankind. 5. I have been given the right of intercession (on the Day of Resurrection.)

The above hadith indicates in what way Muhammad felt that he was superior to all the prophets. The part that focuses the attention of the researcher is point four and five. The reality according to Muhammad is that he was sent for the world to call them back to worship God alone. That is why Muslims have what they call the shadaha or the statement of faith.

Moreover, Isa may be unique because he was not touched by the Devil when he was born. However, if the researcher would like to remain consistent, in accepting a hadith that mentions his uniqueness, then he should also not be willing to accept the hadith mentioned above that Muhammad's mission was pre-eminent among all prophets.

The truth is that the interrelations among the prophets are also seen at the level of both narrative and also the experiences that they share in the Qur'an. Khalidi (2001:10) in fact states it is better to speak "of a typology of Qur'anic prophets". An example is that Isa was rejected by his people and accused of witchcraft as was Muhammad. Isa is a type of Muhammed in that Isa was also misunderstood by the Jews. Qur'an (4:150) demonstrates that all the prophets are brothers and they are all share the same message.



It should be assumed that all prophets in Islam no matter how unique ultimately fall short of Muhammad. Thus, by adopting Isa as an identity pro-insiders should understand that his role as prophet is only secondary to Muhammad. Matter of fact all the prophets within Islam all assert Muhammad's purpose. Followers of Isa should be aware that, when they claim to follow Isa, his ultimate purpose within Islam is to point forward to Muhammad. However, could Isa not have other purposes? The researcher believes so and explains more at the end of the next section.

### **3.4.2 *The Qur'anic Isa***

Fonner (1992:436) correctly asserts that the Qur'an is not much concerned with Historical data. Thus, it adopts the story of Isa to encourage the Muslims in their pursuits.

He indicates, as pointed out in the literature review, that Isa belongs in "prophetology" not theology and additionally, that Isa is not unimportant in the Qur'an. Isa is in fact mentioned more times than the person of Muhammad. Isa is spoken of 99 times in the Qur'an according to Fonner. However, Noah, Abraham and Moses are mentioned more to keep things in perspective least Isa's role be exaggerated.

Nevertheless, within the Qur'an Isa is called a Word from God (3:45). He is also referred to as the Messiah (4:172). It acknowledges that he was born of a Virgin and that he spoke from the cradle (19:20-34), he also called a table down from heaven (5:112-115). He came with the gospel singular and confirmed the Torah which was before (61:6). The Qur'an emphasises that Isa is just a man and that he can only do things according to God's permission. The disciples are also mentioned in the Qur'an they are referred to as Muslims in that they submitted to the will of God (5:112-115).

Thus, there may appear to be many areas in which there are commonalities with what the Bible says of Jesus. Isa is called a Word from God and Jesus is (John 1:1) called the Word with God. The Bible indicates that Jesus (Luke 2) was born of a virgin and so was Isa.

Yet, in spite of these few examples illustrating the commonality there is still one major difference, namely Isa came to tell his people about another prophet, namely Muhammad. The key for understanding the purpose of Isa is to look at Qur'an 61:6 which states:

Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised One. Yet when he hath come unto them with clear proofs, they say: This is mere magic.

Isa declares that he is fulfilling what was brought before, namely the Torah. Yet, he is also proclaiming that he is bringing a message of another prophet. This of course sounds absurd to those who understand the concept of the Messiah in the New and Old Testaments. As Fonner (1992:436) indicates the Qur'anic content is not historical, instead it is meant to encourage the Muslims with their struggles.

Nevertheless, Isa came and told the people about Muhammad. Thus, the researcher sets forth that Isa's purpose in the Qur'an and hadith is to point to Muhammad from an Islamic perspective. Van Ess (1987:98) adds that Muhammad's experiences mirrors Isa's in that Isa is just used to support Muhammad's mission.

Ayoub (1980:91) argues that Islam has living breathing Christology and that it should not be rejected as false. He argues that Muslims have thought long and hard about him. Thus, Ayoub (1980:91) is basically asking Christians to seriously engage with the Isa of the Qur'an. However, no matter how much engagement takes place in the researcher's opinion with regard to Isa the reality is that if you remain within Islamic understanding of Isa you will have to come back to Qur'an 61:6.

The purpose of Isa is fundamentally to point to Muhammad, within Islamic theology. Indeed, there may be areas where "bridges" could be built. However, when seen within the context of the Qur'an the parallels with Muhammad are inescapable. Thus, followers of Isa should be aware that when they are referring to Isa, especially in Muslim contexts that one of the purposes of Isa is to point to Muhammad.

The danger that could come about by followers of Isa is that they could be understood as Muslims. This concept would be dealt with later<sup>87</sup>, with the case studies that Travis (2000) mentioned in his article *Messianic Muslim followers of Isa*. Additionally Khalidi (2001:13) brings an even sharper point, not only is Isa used to point to Muhammad but “the Qur’anic Jesus unlike any other prophet is embroiled in polemic”.

In that the very purpose for Isa being in the Qur’an is “set the story straight” about his life. In other words, the Bible has got the story wrong and only Qur’an has the correct story. So Isa is actually used as a polemic<sup>88</sup> attacking Christian doctrine (Khalidi, 2001:10). Not only is Isa pointing forward to Muhammad but he is also attacking Christianity, in effect saying that we are wrong following him, instead we should be following Muhammad (Qur’an 61:5-6). He is the final prophet that we should all look towards.

Isa is not only pointing to Muhammad furthermore; he is presenting a polemic against Christians. We have seen this even with his return in the hadith in that Isa’s purpose is to destroy Christianity.

For followers of Isa, this is the problem with adopting somebody from another religion. In that they have chosen a figure whose very existence denies Christianity as pointed out by Morton (2011:3207). Followers of Isa need to understand that the Isa they find in the Qur’an may have many points of continuation with the Jesus of the Bible. However, caution should be exercised as Isa’s ultimate purpose is to point towards Muhammad and to be a polemic against Christianity.

Yet, at the end of the last section the researcher suggested that maybe there is another purpose for Isa besides what Islam suggests. In this regard the researcher turns to the Bible because that is the exclusive focus of the next chapter. In Acts 14:17 Paul declares that “God has not left himself without a witness”. God has allowed various things (Sky, Moon, Stars) to declare who he is to the human race. Now the researcher suggests that maybe God allowed Jesus to be adopted by Islam

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<sup>87</sup>In the chapter on contextual Issues.

<sup>88</sup>See Qur’an 5:17, 19:89-92

and transformed into Isa, so that through this whole process God could use the person of Isa to witness to Muslims about who He is. Like a star guiding people to the true Jesus.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Another purpose from a Biblical/Evangelical perspective for Isa is to point to the Jesus of the Bible. Now this leads back to the thesis question: Can an Evangelical Christian claim to be a follower of Isa? In the researcher's opinion based on what Islamic Christology says the answer is not a simple yes or no. If one looks at the death of Isa clearly there is much in the Qur'an that a biblical Christian can hold to. Even with regard to what the Qur'an says about the return of Isa. There is much that could be in common with the Christian doctrine. In fact, you could use Qur'an 19:33 to argue that Jesus not only died but rose from the dead. The problem arises when the hadiths are interacted with that Issues begin to surface. The concept of Isa coming back to destroy Christianity is of course something that all Evangelical Christians would disagree with. Additionally, Qur'an 61:6 is also a major hurdle.

On the balance of things there is much that can be pointed out to make the case for Followers of Isa. Ultimately, the simple answer is no if the purposes of Isa are kept in few from an Islamic perspective.

## **CHAPTER 4: BIBLICAL CHRISTOLOGY: Focusing on the Gospels.**

### **4.1 Introduction to Mark**

The study now moves to the area of Biblical Christology. The same three areas that compared Isa's death, return are now highlighted, namely Jesus' death, return and purpose. Furthermore, any similarities and differences that could arise, are also duly noted. It has been stated about the Gospels that they are: "*passion stories with an introduction*" (Runia, 2001). The purpose for choosing the current periscope in Mark (15:22-37) is that it is believed to have been written first, according to most scholars (Guelich, 1992, Guthrie 1996, DeSilva 2004, Gromacki 2006, Bloomberg 2009). Additionally, the second reason for the choice of Mark's Gospel is that half of the chapters found within the book deals with the passion of Christ. The reasons for the delimitations of the text from verses 22-37 is that the trial of Jesus is concluded and the passage focuses mainly on the crucifixion and death of Jesus. The crucifixion and death are inseparably linked with the death of Christ. The objective of the exegesis of the current periscope in Mark is to pose the question: How does the death of Jesus contrast with the confusion of the death of Isa? This is done after dealing with the text. Furthermore, to preview the argument of the current periscope, there are five major divisions: introduction, context, meaning, significance and conclusion. These divisions are all in keeping with Smith's (2008) model of exegesis.

#### **4.1.1 Context**

##### **4.1.1.1 General background**

There are two questions that need to be answered during this section, namely who were the intended audience of this particular gospel and also when was the gospel written?

There seems to be acceptance that the intended audience of the Gospel of Mark was either Roman Christians or Christians in Italy (Lane, 1974:13, Grassmick, 1983:99, Desilva, 2004:196-198). The main reason for stating that Mark's Gospel was written to Roman Christians or Christians in Italy is the prevalence of Latin phrases that is used by him throughout his Gospel (Mark, 5:9, 12:5). To further

strengthen this point, the following examples are given: The Roman method of counting is adopted in Mark;<sup>89</sup> the overall tone of the Gospel (13:9-13) suggests that it was written to Christians who are facing persecution; Edwards (2002:8) theorizes that Mark 1:13 was most likely a coded message to Christians suffering persecution; Jesus' (13:9-13) also talks about how Christians would be handed over to authorities for their faith in him. Jesus is then used as a prime example of suffering with his death (Mark 15) on the cross and trial<sup>90</sup>. Thus, Mark contextualizes the life of Jesus for his audience.

The researcher suggests that Mark was written before 70 AD. The main reason for this statement is that Mark's gospel does not mention the destruction of the Temple, which would have been mentioned if written after 70 AD, since it played a significant role in the life of the Jews (Desilva 2004:196-198). The audience Mark was writing to appeared to be going through persecution. This fits well with the intense persecution Christians were experiencing under Nero during the middle of 60 AD. These two major factors lead the researcher to a pre-70 AD date for the Gospel of Mark.

However, Kirby (2014) argues that Mark was written post 70 AD<sup>91</sup>. The argument runs that chapter 13 refers to the events that happened during the Roman sacking of the temple. In verses 21-22 it tells of a false Christ arising and deceiving people. Josephus (1987:286) is then referred to, who indicates that, during the siege of Jerusalem, many false prophets arouse, deceiving the people. The basic premise of Kirby's argument with regard to the dating of Mark, is that chapter 13 refers to events that happened in the past. In contrast, Guelich (1992:514) counters that Jesus warning people to "flee to the hills", found in verse 14, would be impossible, since the Roman legions surrounded the city in 70 AD. Moreover, the key debate is whether it was possible for Jesus to speak prophetically or not, and the researcher suggests it was. Thus, a pre-70s date would be favoured and the researcher suggests a date in between 60-65 AD.

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<sup>89</sup>This is demonstrated when (6:48) four watches are mentioned whereas the Jews spoke of three watches of the night (Grassmick 1983:99).

<sup>90</sup>Of course more points could be made to strength this point but because of time and space constraints these few points are made see (Lane, 1974:15-17, Stein 2008:9-12).

<sup>91</sup>Kirby would be used as a representative of those who argue for a post-70 AD dating of Mark.

#### 4.1.1.2 *Historical context*

The historical context that surrounds the writing of the gospel relates to the intense persecution that Christians experienced during the first century.

There were two instances that could be cited. It should be noted that the division between Jews and Christians had not been visibly evident yet. Thus, there might have been a persecution of Christians as well as Jews during 41 AD, when Caligula attempted to place a statue of himself in the guise of Zeus in the temple (Edwards, 2002:7). This theory by Edwards may seem plausible in that there was some suffering for being Christian during that period and the Jews might have blamed them for divine disfavour. It is clear from Acts (7:54-60) that Christians were persecuted occasionally for their conviction.

Moreover, the Gospel was written during the early to middle 60s of the first century. During this time, according to Tacitus (1977:71), a fire swept through Rome and destroyed most of the city. There was nobody concrete to blame, so the Christians were blamed. They were “covered in the skins of wild animals, torn to death by dogs, crucified or set on fire- so that when darkness fell they burned like torches in the night”. Tacitus argues that Christians were targeted for their anti-social behaviour.<sup>92</sup> Christians would usually avoid public events because the Roman’s tended to sacrifice to their gods at these events. This was why they were thought of as anti-social. Thus, Christians in Mark’s contexts, were deeply misunderstood, as Christians in Muslim context are today.

With this historical background in mind, Mark wrote his Gospel making Christians aware that following Jesus is never easy. The people Mark wrote to had very similar struggles to what Christians/MBB are currently experiencing in the Muslim world,<sup>93</sup> in terms of persecution. Christians from the first century chose to suffer for claiming to be Christians instead of choosing an identity that was syncretistic.

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<sup>92</sup>There is debate to the extent of the persecution with Gasque (1977:71) arguing that it may not have been as wide spread as Tacitus made it appear. Persecution may have been at a local level. However, there is no denial of persecution.

<sup>93</sup>see Asad 2009

#### 4.1.1.3 *Literary context of Mark*

The literary context of Mark looks at the various outlines that are developed for viewing Mark as a whole.

Discerning the structure of Mark is no easy task. Guelich (1989:XXI) is perhaps correct in arguing that the divisions created by scholars in determining the structure of Mark are numerous. Yet, there are still certain divisions that are more plausible than others. Furthermore, it is not as though Mark gave an introduction explaining the divisions found within his text (France, 2002:7).

In suggesting an outline, it should thus be acknowledged that it is but an educated guess. The researcher takes the position that Mark should be understood as a whole narrative.<sup>94</sup> There are two major schemes for outlines of Mark's gospel: either they are topographical or thematic (Guelich, 1989:XXI). Scholars like Guthrie (1996:77) and MacArthur (1997:1454) are used as representatives of the school whose outlines favour the topographical approach in that they both divide Jesus' <sup>95</sup> ministry in Mark according to the different regions that He visited<sup>96</sup>.

The second approach comes from Blomberg (2009:130). His division has three sections, namely Introduction: The beginning of the Gospel (1:1-13), Ministry of the Christ (1:14-8:30) and The passion of the Christ (8:31-16:8). Bloomberg (2009:131) agrees with Guthrie (1996:76-77) that Mark probably depended on Peter's sermon found in Acts (10:37). The researcher suggests a structure that is similar to Bloomberg, however, as Guelich (1989:XXI) points out: "Three subsections emerge fairly neatly, although one cannot make the divisions based exclusively on either geographical or thematic criteria". Thus, the researcher suggests the following outline, based on Guelich (1992:516): Prologue (1:1-15), Part 1 (1:16- 8:26) and Part 2 (8:27-16:8). What is noticeable about all the outlines is that all have at least two

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<sup>94</sup>This is because "the gospel does not read like a hotchpotch of unconnected periscopes (sections), for although the connecting links are often vague the overall movement of events is clear enough" (Guthrie, 1996:75).

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<sup>96</sup>Guthrie divides Mark according to the following system Introduction (1:1-13), Galilean Ministry (1:14-6:13), Jesus work outside Galilee (6:14-8:26), journey to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52). Finally, with the ministry climaxing with the resurrection (11:1-16). Thus, the structure of Mark is based on the various areas that Jesus visited. Guthrie (1996:76-77) also points out that Peter's preaching in Acts (10:37) is a skeletal format that Mark may have used.



major common points of agreement: the prologue or introduction and also the passion. Thus, two views are combined by Guelich and a third view is promoted.<sup>97</sup>

#### 4.1.1.4 *Theologically Themes in Mark*

The researcher decided that, when dealing with themes found in Mark, it was advantageous to only focus on those themes that had direct correlation to the current study, namely Christological themes and themes of discipleship.<sup>98</sup>

One key theme related to the current study found in Mark is the fact of Jesus being the Son of God. This of course would be considered in theology as a high Christology. This refers to the fact that the focus is not just on Jesus' humanity, but also his deity. However, Mark does not broach the subject of the incarnation or categorical claim that Jesus is God (Hagner, 2000:127-133).

The first verse in Mark (1:1) highlights that Jesus is the Son of God. Mark does not hide the reality of Jesus' relationship to the Father but rather indicate His divine status from the first. Furthermore, Jesus is declared the Son of God by various beings in the Gospel: Demons (see 3:11, 5:7), Centurion when he is dying (15:39), also His Father who speaks from the cloud overshadowing the mountain (9:7) (Comfort, 2008:92). Thus, a key theme of the Gospel is that Jesus is divine, which is in contrast to the Isa of the Quran. Jesus demonstrates His superiority by His actions in the Gospel by healing the sick (1:22-26), casting out demons (1:27) and power over nature (4:35-41).

Jesus also calls Himself the Son of Man<sup>99</sup> (2:10, 2:28, and 9:9-12). Jesus' humanity is also demonstrated in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus does not know the hour of His return (13:32-37). Jesus prays (1:29-34) and falls asleep (4:38), all uniquely human experiences. Mark does not just highlight the divine aspect but also indicates that

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<sup>97</sup>Mark could have written with both themes in mind geographical and as well as thematic. As pointed out in the introduction of the section ultimately Mark never wrote down what his outline consists of. All scholars are taking educated guesses.

<sup>98</sup>The reason for including themes of discipleship are as follows: fundamentally, determining if a movement or an approach is contextualized or syncretic relates back to discipleship. The ultimate goal of all of missions is to make disciples and by focusing on themes that the Gospel highlights in discipleship would be beneficial to the study.

<sup>99</sup>This phrase would be explored more fully in the section dealing with the return of Christ.

Jesus was human in every way, just as we are. The hypostatic union may not be as clearly defined as in the Gospel of John, yet there is enough evidence to indicate the importance of a high Christology in Mark's Gospel. The Islamic Isa is of course exclusively human, rejecting any notion that he is even remotely divine.

Another theme that relates to the current study is Mark's emphasises on discipleship. Mark points out the weakness of the disciples. They depart from Jesus during His trial (Mark 14). We read in Mark of their frequent failure and misunderstanding. They do not grasp Jesus' parables (4:11-13, 33-34), their hearts are heartened" (Bloomberg, 2009:133). Mark demonstrates that the original disciples were not perfect. Moreover, discipleship is demanding and costs everything that you have, including your life (8:32-38).

These themes of Christ's humanity and also discipleship have direct bearing with regard to Followers of Isa in two areas: first the removal of the term Son of God from Bible translations and secondly accepting an identity that puts you in harm's way. The Christians whom Mark wrote to were facing extreme persecution because they claimed to be Christian. They could have chosen a more contextual identity that would make it easier for the Romans to understand them.

#### **4.1.2 Meaning**

##### **4.1.2.1 Preliminary analysis**

The major textual concern that affects interpretation dealing with the current periscope relates to Mark 15:28. Some major current Bible translations<sup>100</sup> omit verse 28 and just continue to verse 29. In contrast both the NASB95 and also The Holman Christian standard Bible place verse 28 within brackets. The NASB adds a footnote that verse 28 does not appear in early manuscripts. The NKJV, following the old KJV, does not omit the verse. This is due to the fact that these two texts have been influenced by the Textus Receptus.<sup>101</sup> Comfort (2008:154) points out that verse 28 is not found in any manuscript before the 6<sup>th</sup> century. He also observes that verse 28

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<sup>100</sup>See NIV, ESV, NRSV and NLT.

<sup>101</sup>The Textus Receptus refers to a body of Manuscripts that date from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Comfort, 2008).

was made to conform to Luke 22:37. It is most likely that verse 28 was added by a scribe to show how Jesus' death fulfilled the Old Testament. Based on this, verse 28 would be ignored following France (2002:646).

#### *4.1.2.2 Contextual analysis*

The first historical illusion that is made comes in verse 25. Mark just mentions that Jesus was crucified. This would undoubtedly have made perfect sense to his audience. Mark is very brief, avoiding extensive detail about the crucifixion, knowing that his audience did not require the details since they would have observed the reality: "Death by crucifixion developed into one of the world's most disgraceful and cruel methods of torture. Cicero called it the most cruel and hideous of tortures. Will Durant wrote that even the Romans pitied the victims" (McDowell, 1981:42). Furthermore, a new word had to be created to describe the process of crucifixion - "literally, excruciating means out of the cross" (Strobel, 1998:198).

What is evident from the context was the pain Jesus endured during the crucifixion. Yet, Mark reminds his readers (Mark 8:34-35) that if they truly want to follow Jesus they must be willing to face the pain of crucifixion and the public shame that accompanies the pain (Flemming, 2005:242-244). Mark's contextualization appears contradictory to IM's approach in that he makes disciples aware that part of their identity is suffering.

The context that surrounds the periscope under discussion begins in chapter 8. From this point there is a fast moving narrative (8:31, 9:31, and 10:33) towards the cross. The immediate context, namely chapter 14-15:1-24 shifts towards the cross. It commences with Jesus being anointed with perfume (14:1-10), the institution of the last supper (14:12-26) and Jesus predicting Peter's betrayal (14:27-31). Towards the end of the chapter, Jesus is arrested (14:43-51). He faces the Sanhedrin (14:53-65) and Peter denies him (14:66-72). Thus, in chapter 15, the emphasis and the climax are heading towards the crucifixion.

Jesus appears before Pilate and is condemned to death (15:1-15) and the soldiers mock Him (15:16-20). Thus, the context points to the importance of the cross and Mark is through all these different events bringing forward Jesus dying on the cross.

There is a connection between Jesus' life and suffering. Our saviour suffered - can we expect anything different?

#### 4.1.2.3 Verbal analysis

One of the key phrases that was used in the periscope is found in verse 26, *King of the Jews*. This phrase was used on the inscription written against Jesus.<sup>102</sup> The phrase undoubtedly had a political connotation. It was one of the first questions that Pilate asked Jesus (Mark 15:2). Herod was accorded the title "King of the Jews" by Emperor Augustus (Evans, 2001:503). Thus, any person claiming that he is king or Messiah would naturally put himself on a collision course with the Roman Empire.<sup>103</sup> Notice the mockery that Jesus experienced in contrast to the success that Isa experienced in terms of his victory at his final hour, according to Muslim tafsir interpretation.

The next word that is also important for the study, is the word *derided*, found in verse 29. The Greek word is in fact βλασφημέω, which would in most contexts be translated as *blasphemy*. However, the ESV, which is the main translation that the researcher used, translates βλασφημέω as *deride*. The NKJV version goes with a literal translation and points out that they *blasphemed* him. The NASB uses the phrase they "hurled abuse at him" and the NIV follows the NASB, only changing a few words "They hurled insults at him". The researcher argues that both translations indeed could be correct in a sense. If the more literal translation is kept in mind, then the NKJV version would be opted for in that they were blaspheming Jesus. Mark again highlights the public humiliation Jesus had undergone, even though He was King over the very people who were mocking him.

Verse 32 also adds another key word related to Jesus being belittled on the cross: ὀνειδίζω which the ESV translates as *reviled*. The word was used by the Jews to refer to people who could not have children. Thus, not only was their shame private

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<sup>102</sup>What is most interesting about this phrase is that it is used exclusively in the Gospels. This phrase is connected mainly with the death (Matthew, 27:11, 29, 37, Mark, 15:18,26, 29, Luke 23:3,37,38, John, 18:33,39, 19:3,19,21) of Christ. This, phrase is never uttered by Jesus he never claims to be king of the Jews in any of the Gospels (Logos 2013: Search).

<sup>103</sup>The Jews expected a political Messiah to free them. Jesus claiming that He was the messiah would be understood in a nationalist sense.

in that the family had no heir, but there was public shame as well. Public shame was due to the fact that secret sin was thought to be the cause of the infertility (Vine, 1996:526). Thus, through the word *ὀνειδίζω*, Mark is attempting to demonstrate the public humiliation of Jesus. The crowd undoubtedly thought that Jesus personal sin had created His predicament.

The next section deals with key grammatical features found within the periscope. The first one is found in verse 27 and is a common feature of the Gospel of Mark. In verse 27 the verb *σταυροῦσιν* should be translated into English in the present tense. However, In the Greek text, Mark chose to use a present tense verb. This is known as Historical present. The Lockman foundation (1995:3) explains: “Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence”. Thus, Mark was attempting in the Greek language, to move the reader to the scene of the cross and experience the sights and sounds of it. In fact, Mark used the historical present tense over a 150 times (Lane, 1974:26). Mark wanted his audience to experience the shame and humiliation of the cross because this suffering encouraged them as they faced their own battles with the Roman government. Mark’s contextualization as pointed out by Flemming (2005:242-244) was to make clear to Christians that they should expect suffering and misunderstanding like their saviour.

Furthermore, a grammatical feature of the passage is the use of conjectures. Mark from verse 25 to 37 used the conjunction *καί* over ten times. This is a characteristic that permeates all of the Gospel of Mark. Grassmick (1983:100) suggest that the reason for the abundance of conjunctions is due to Mark’s literary style, specifically with regard to his desire for his narrative to be “vivid, forceful, and descriptive”. Bloomberg (2009:128) reminds scholars that Mark was meant to be read aloud. This is the reason for the many conjectures as this would add to the speed of the narrative.

#### *4.1.2.4 Literary analysis*

Defining what type of literature, the Gospel of Mark is, is no easy task. France (2002:4) & Desilva (2004:144-147) argue that it is a biography. However, it is not a

biography in the modern understanding of the word. Instead it should be thought of in line with the Ancient understanding of dealing with histories of philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle.

Furthermore, Desilva (2004:146) points out that these biographies focused on the teachings and lives of their respected philosophers. Mark was also influenced by Jewish works that chronicle famous people's lives and that was written during his time. Some of these works chronicled the lives of important Old Testament figures like Abraham and Joseph. Thus, the broad genre of Mark Gospel is an Ancient biography.

However, Mark 15:25-37 forms within Gospel literature what is known as a Passion Narrative. These are basic retelling of the death of Christ that is found within the four canonical Gospel. This genre "begins with the Jewish plot against Jesus' life during the Feast of unleavened Bread and ends with his burial". These narratives focus on the last 24 hours of Jesus' life. So the text is part of this broader genre and has been heightening the tension from the last supper. Yet, as pointed out earlier all the Gospels have an extensive focus on the death of Christ (Patzia & Petrotta, 2002:90).

The stylistic features that Mark uses in the current periscope are irony, in that the very comments that are mentioned of Jesus are correct. This is because everything mentioned is true of Jesus, He is the King of the Jews. Furthermore, Jesus' claim that He would destroy the temple and raise it up again is true (Edwards 2002:12), not in the sense of the physical destruction of the temple but rather that His body represented the meeting place of God and man. John (2:20-22) indicates that Jesus' was talking about His physical body. Thus, Mark uses irony to bring across the reality of who Jesus is.

#### **4.1.3 Significance**

What is observed about the death of Jesus is the public shame that Jesus endured. This was demonstrated by the nailing on the cross and also the mere fact of crucifixion. Without any doubt, Mark uses Jesus to illustrate theological motive of Him dying for our sins. Yet, it should also be observed that Jesus did not choose the

easy road out. This effects our identities as Christians-we should be willing to endure similar suffering and shame if we want to follow Jesus.

Additionally, Jesus was misrepresented, those surrounding the cross did not understand the purpose of Him being there. Is that not the same with Followers of Isa? They claim that they are choosing these phrases and terminology to be understood by the surrounding culture.

There is some similarity to what Dutch (2000) complains about how Christians are misunderstood in the Muslim world, in that in Mark (15:22-37), Jesus is mocked and misunderstood in contrast to the death of Isa. All the Qur'an is willing to acknowledge is that Isa died. It does not even deal with the details of the whole process. The Tafsirs have to invent legends claiming what happened to Isa.

In strong contrast, Mark deals brutally with the death of Jesus. This is because Christian theology can deal with a saviour who dies. This of course affects our response to suffering and injustice. Since Christ suffered we can also expect the same (1 Peter). This issue of dying on the Cross affects our identity in that we are not to engage in violence when it is done against us.

#### **4.1.4 Conclusion**

Biblical Christology deals honestly with the death of Christ. It does not cover up what happened but instead lays bare the facts without being gruesome about the details. Yet, the fact remains that the death of Jesus has consequences for our identity, especially with regard to the crucifixion.

Christians can deal with suffering because Jesus overcame intense suffering and did not choose the easy road. Instead He went through the pain and came out a victor on the other side, through the choice that He made. Yet, Isa does not deal that effectively with the issue of suffering if one takes Islamic sources as the guide.

The truth is that when comparing the death of Jesus with the death of Isa, it is clear that Isa is left wanting. Thus, to answer the thesis question can an Evangelical Christian claim to follow Isa, when comparing the death of Isa with the death of Jesus from a theological point of view, the simple answer would be no.

## **4.2 The return of Jesus**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

The Islamic Christological chapter of the return of Isa was engaged with from two key Islamic sources, namely the Qur'an and hadith. The researcher observed that the Qur'an was not very polemical in its approach, however the hadith was extremely polemical. In answering the thesis question the return of Jesus must be compared with the return of Isa.

The reason for the choice of the current periscope (Matthew, 25:31-46), is that it comes within a section known as the Olivet discourse. This specific title arose in relation to an incident in which the disciples approached Jesus with an eschatological question on the Mount of Olives. All the synoptic Gospels have an Olivet discourse, however, only Matthew has such an extensive recording of it (Wenham, 1996:846). The reason for the choice of the parable of the goats and the sheep (Matthew, 25:31-46), is Jesus' eschatological role within the parable.

### **4.2.2 Context**

#### **4.2.2.1 General background**

As with the previous section, again two questions need answering: who is the intended audience and what is the date of writing? There appears to be some agreement by scholars<sup>104</sup> that the main audience of the Gospel of Matthew was Jewish. Hagner (1993:IXiv) advances the argument that Jews were the intended recipients, based on the reality that Matthew places great importance on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in his Gospel<sup>105</sup>.

Furthermore, Hagner (1993:IXIV) points out, that when dealing with Jewish customs, Matthew omits explanation of them in contrast to Mark,<sup>106</sup> in addition to this the inclusion of the story of Jesus' body being stolen (Matthew 28:12-15) indicates a Jewish audience is anticipated. Since they believed that the body had been stolen,

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<sup>104</sup>See Hagner 1993, Desilva 2004, Talbert 2010.

<sup>105</sup>See Matthew 1:21-22, 2:15.

<sup>106</sup>Mark 7:3-4 against Matthew 15:2. Again Matthew does not explain the local custom whereas Mark does.



Matthew (28:12-15) was a counter against their argument concerning the resurrection. These arguments seem convincing, that the intended audience were mainly Jews. However, Matthew was not writing exclusively to them as is evidenced by the Great Commission found in Matthew (28:18-20). His main audience was Jews but Gentiles could have also read through the Gospel and seen how Jesus' reign was not just for Jews but for everybody (Matthew 25:31-46).

Determining the date when Matthew was written, is no easy task. The key factor being Matthew's relationship to Mark. The early Church favoured the view that Matthew depended on Mark for his Gospel. However, modern scholarship<sup>107</sup> mostly agree that Matthew depended on Mark and not vice versa. There is also no doubt that Matthew made use of Mark and used him as a source when compiling his own Gospel (Keener, 2009:43, Desilva, 2004:234). Yet, the researcher argues that Mark was written either between 60AD-65 AD thus Matthew could have only been written afterwards.

There are two schools and they either argue that Matthew was written before 70 AD or after 70 AD. Firstly, those who argue that Matthew was written before 70 AD, argue that there is hardly any mention of the destruction of the temple<sup>108</sup> (Keener, 2009:43, Desilva, 2004:238-239).

The second school argues that Matthew reflects the reality of the divisions that occurred post-70 AD<sup>109</sup>. The major point if Mark was written post-70 AD, is that Matthew would then have been written in the mid-80s. Furthermore, Matthew mentions that Jews accepted the fact that Jesus' body was stolen and that this belief was still valid during his time of writing.

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<sup>107</sup>See Guelich 1992, Guthrie 1996, Desilva 2004, Gromacki 2006, Bloomberg 2009

<sup>108</sup>The inference being that if it was written after 70 AD there would have been more than the scant references found Matthew (22:7) at the overreaction by the wedding master to the rejection of the wedding invitation. Furthermore, that Jesus predicting the destruction of the city of Jerusalem was not impossible since he was the Son of God after all.

<sup>109</sup>During this time Jews become very hostile to Christians as demonstrated in the council of Jamnia when Jewish religious teachers pronounced a curse on Christians who they term Nazarenes. Thus, Jesus feuds with the religious establishment found in the Gospel was related to the Christians in the community combating the Jews who rejected them.

Desilva (2004:238) says it best: “Dating a Gospel is a tenuous exercise”. It should also be noted that there are reasonable responses to the objects of the late 80s theory: Firstly, in the Book Acts (2-5) it is obvious that Jews and Christians are already at logger heads (Carson & Moo, 2005:153-156). Thus, what happened in the 80s was already evident in a long line of protracted battles between the two faiths. Furthermore, to mention that things remained up until the time of writing, does not prove anything, since Matthew wrote his Gospel some thirty years after the death of Christ, if a pre-70 Date is chosen. The researcher believes that a date very close to 70 AD must be the most accurate date that Matthew penned his Gospel. Since the majority of circumstantial evidence points in the direction of Pre-70 AD, the researcher would suggest a date between 67 AD and 70 AD very near the destruction of the temple.

#### *4.2.2.2 Historical context*

Determining the historical context surrounding Matthew’s Gospel is more complex than determining Mark’s. The reality is that the historical context can only be understood from the inferences that are made within the text of Matthew (Bloomberg, 1992:34-37). Yet, what is clear is that Matthew wrote to demonstrate that Jesus indeed was the Messiah and the Hope of Israel.

What is assumed about the people to whom Matthew was writing, is that they were facing persecution from the Jewish community<sup>110</sup>. However, Matthew does not just focus on the Jews exclusively Matthew (28:18-20) clearly demonstrates his motive to reach all nations. Furthermore, even the parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46) there is no difference according to race group but rather according to deeds.

The Historical context includes an apologetic against the Jews. The best example: Matthew (28:11-15) attempts to explain where the tradition comes from that states Jesus’ body was stolen. This might have been part of the apologetic that could have been used by Jews against Christians. Furthermore, the inclusion of Jesus’ genealogy (Matthew 1:1-16) would have been important for the Jews, since both

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<sup>110</sup>See Bloomberg 1992, Carson 1994, DeSilva 2004.

John and Mark omit genealogies in their respective Gospels (Gromacki, 2006: 32, Hagner 1993:lix) The place of the genealogy at the beginning of the Gospel undoubtedly also plays a role if contrasted with Luke's account<sup>111</sup>.

It is clear that Jewish Christians might have been having doctrinal and also practical concerns raised by their Jewish counter-parts. It is no doubt that the Church's increase in membership of Gentiles would have made any Jew uncomfortable. As we see, even the Church struggled with the inclusion of the Gentiles (Acts 10-11). By implication this might have affected the way the Jews reacted to Jesus, since how could He have allowed all these Gentiles into His sect? Matthew was again writing in a context that was deeply polarized and thus encouraged the disciples of Jesus to follow Him even if it was not easy (Gromacki 2006:32-34, Desilva 2004:238). As was explained with Mark, the Gospel writers wrote in contexts that were hostile to the disciples of Jesus.

#### 4.2.2.3 *Literary context of Matthew*

There has been five major<sup>112</sup> structures that have been proposed over the centuries. The first is the Geographical/Biographical focusing on Jesus movements in Israel<sup>113</sup>. The second outline is known as the fivefold discourse<sup>114</sup>. The third outline is known as the Chiastic/ Concentric. This approach is connected to the principle of concentric concept, found in poetry<sup>115</sup>. The fourth approach with regard to dividing Matthew's Gospel, is the Structural approach. This approach combines both

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<sup>111</sup>Only in chapter three is Luke genealogy recounted. However, the first few verses of Matthews Gospel deal with Genealogy.

<sup>112</sup>See Mcknight (1992:529-531).

<sup>113</sup>1<sup>st</sup> is the Geographical/Biographical this approach with regard to structure focus on Jesus move from Galilee through to Jerusalem. This structural approach to Matthew was very popular in the 1800s but has fallen out subsequently. This approach grew out of an emphasis on the life of Jesus and not understanding Matthews's unique structure.

<sup>114</sup>2<sup>nd</sup> is the Fivefold discourse, this approach was mainly argued by Bacon. His proposed outline dealt with a difference between narrative and discourse. This view also was deep linked with Christology tendency in understanding the whole structure of the Gospel. Jesus is understood to replacing Moses and the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) is thought to be providing a new law.

<sup>115</sup>3<sup>rd</sup> Chiastic/Concentric this approach is normal connected with poetry. This approach in essences says: "each earlier section of the Gospel is related to a later section, which are in turn arranged in reverse order from the center" (Mcknight, 1992:529). This to illustrate best by the following symbols: Thus, if the gospel is divided according to a Chiastic structure for example it would be A, B, C, D, E, F then the switch from E, D, C, B, A. Thus, if A refers to for example the birth of Christ then sections A at the end of the Gospel would do for example with the rebirth of Jesus.

biography and theology in determining Matthew's outline<sup>116</sup>. The fifth approach which the researcher experienced with Hager (1993:1) and also Guthrie (1996:39), is that they argue that Matthew's overall structure is also very difficult to ascertain. Thus, all structural approaches should be approached cautiously. Yet, a structural approach should include the five discourses that appear in Matthew 7:28-29, 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1. Each of these sections mention: "When Jesus finished saying these things". Most key scholars acknowledge these five discourses in their respective outlines<sup>117</sup>.

#### 4.2.2.4 *Theological themes in Matthew*

This section only deals with two main Christological terms that are found throughout Matthew. The reason for the choice is that one of the main terms used with regard to Christology is the term Son of God. Comparing the use of the phrase without any reference to contexts illustrates the importance of the term for Matthew's Gospel. The English Standard Version (ESV) mentions Son of God 4 times in Mark whereas Matthew mentions the term 34 times. Thus, just from a numerical perspective we see the frequency of the term in Matthew's Gospel.

The term is so important that Hietanen (2011:70-71) argues that the whole Gospel of Matthew should be viewed in light of this Christological title<sup>118</sup>. Emphasis on the Son of God in Matthew is more focused on the obedience of Jesus to the revealed will of His Father. The main place this is demonstrated is on the cross (Matthew 27) because Jesus is taunted by the crowds to demonstrate through miraculous power that He is the Son of God. However, He demonstrates His Sonship to the Father by obeying His will (See, Matthew 3:13-17, 4:1-11). The focus of Matthew's mention of the term Son of God is "Functional" as demonstrated on the Cross (Bauer 1992). Isa, in the Qur'an (19:35), denies that God can even have a son.

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<sup>116</sup>4<sup>th</sup> structural approach is the Biographical and theological. This structural approach to Matthew focuses on the Biographical information found in the Gospel. However, the theological motive is of most importance. This approach is also according to Mcknight (1992:530) the most popular with regard to scholars. Two key figures that are important for NT have furthered this approach J. D Kingsbury and also D.R.Bauer. This, approach places great importance found in Matthew 4:14 and 16:21 with the phrase from this time Jesus began teaching.

<sup>117</sup>See Hagner (1993:1), Guthrie (1996:39), Carson & Moo (2005:141).

<sup>118</sup>He progresses to argue that six sub points are used in the Gospel of Matthew to reinforce this point: 1) Jesus birth and infancy 2) The reaction Jesus received from others 3) the indications of several prophecies 4) the features of Jesus ministry 5) Jesus teaching 6) Jesus death and resurrection. Thus, the centre of the Gospel structure according to Hietanen is Son of God.

However, Hurtado (1992:112) points out that of equal importance is the term *Messiah*, which is also another prominent phrase used in the Gospel. The term *Messiah* seems to have been a term that was considered of equal importance to the term *Son of God* during the first century (Brady 1989:101). Matthew 16:16 and Matthew 26:63 are places where there appears to be some indication that terms were understood closely together in the first century. Maybe the Insider Movement translations may have a point by dropping the phrase “Son of God” In their bible translations<sup>119</sup>?

Another Title that is used in relation to Jesus is the *Son of David* title. What is not well known, is the fact that, during this period another name for the Messiah was the Son of David. This also reveals some of the expectations that would have been around the title Son of David. According to Josephus Solomon performed exorcism<sup>120</sup> and had power over demonic beings (Brady 1989:103).

Moreover, Matthew also wants to demonstrate that Jesus is Messiah through using the Old Testament quotations, however Carson (1994: Matthew) also states:

The OT passages are often not the obvious ‘Messianic’ texts, but quite obscure verses, some of them not on the face of it intended as predictions at all. But Matthew delights to search out patterns of God’s work in the OT and to trace them to their ‘fulfilment’ in Jesus.

Matthew uses typologies with regard to the Messianic fulfilment of prophecy<sup>121</sup>. The Old Testament was of key importance for Matthew to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah. This naturally made sense since it provided guidelines throughout demonstrating what He was to be like. Matthew demonstrates the rich history that is associated with the title of *Messiah*. In contrast, Isa is called Messiah in the Qur’an (4:157) without any explanation provided in it (Waterman, 2007:58). The Qur’an

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<sup>119</sup>This argument indeed would be interrogated in the next Chapter contextual issues. This directly affects translations of the Bible that leave out the terms “Son of God” and “Father”.

<sup>120</sup> The Qur’an also in facts hints at this ability of Solomon (19:34).

<sup>121</sup>An example being that in Matthew 2 when Jesus returns from Egypt and a quote is given from the prophet Hosea (11:1) which states that God called his son out of the land of Egypt. This refers to the nation of Israel. Yet, Matthew uses that typology to demonstrate that Jesus is called out of Egypt.

assumes that the readers of the text would be aware of the nature and purpose of the Messiah.

### **4.2.3 The Meaning**

#### **4.2.3.1 Preliminary analysis**

There are two minor translation variants that are of importance within the periscope. The first translational difference is found in verse 31. This textual variant revolves around should the text read “holy angels” or should the holy be dropped and it just read “angels”. These textual variants are insignificant with regard to the greater scheme of the parable. Yet, they should be investigated. The difference is again between the NKJV and KJV and the modern translations of ESV, NIV, NASB, NLT, NET. The researcher favours the ESV reading since they depend on the older text type. Thus, the reading angels would be accepted as the authentic reading since the text type that underscores the reading is older.

#### **4.2.3.2 Contextual analysis**

The main cultural illusion that is mentioned is the separation of sheep and goats (Matthew 25:32). As a 21<sup>st</sup> century individual it is easy to overlook this task. However, some contextual information needs to be provided. The society which Jesus was a part of was deeply dependent on agriculture. Thus, the word *picture* would have made perfect sense to ancient societies. Hebrews were particularly interested in livestock, since they represented wealth for them (Job 1:3-5). The word sheep is used over 500 times in the Bible (Köhler-Rollefson 2011:94). Freeman & Chadwick provide some of the logic behind the main image of the parable (1998: Sheep): “Sheep and goats grazed in the same pasture, but it was necessary to separate the herds because male goats were often hostile toward the sheep”. Matthew’s audience might have been aware of this tendency and would have understood the word *picture* that Jesus was using.

The reality is that goats in scripture are not always painted in a bad light<sup>122</sup>. Leviticus (17:7) does indicate that there might have been certain idol worship connected with goats surrounding the nation of Israel. Ezekiel (34:17-24) also uses a similar word to the word picture, found in Matthew (25:31-46). The exception is that there are bad sheep and also good goats. The focus is only on the nation of Israel whereas Jesus is focused on the whole world (Ryken & Wilhot & Longman 2000:331-332). Thus, all of these might have contributed to Jesus' choice in selecting these particular livestock.

The parable of the goats and sheep appears in a section known as the Olivet discourse which was explained earlier on. The section begins in chapter 24 and transitions from there to the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. Chapter 25, only focuses on parables and the importance of being faithful in discipleship.

#### 4.2.3.3 *Verbal analysis*

The first phrase is analysed is the phrase *Son of Man* (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου), found in verse 31. This is one of Jesus' favorite terms when referring to Himself within the Gospels. This self-designation is used over 25 times in the Gospels. This phrase was not used by Christians in their worship of Jesus, instead it was used exclusively by Jesus (Marshall, 1992:781). In fact, it is found outside of the Gospels twice (Acts 7:56 & Hebrews 2:6). Thus, indicating the early church hardly used this phrase.

The phrase has a rich history during both the Old Testament and intertestamental period. The phrase comes from Daniel 7:13-14 where the prophet sees somebody coming into the presence of God and the "Son of Man" is then given authority over the whole world. This would have informed Jesus' use of the term (Fuller, 2011:984). The indication found in Daniel (7:13-14) indicates very ironically that Son of Man may be a divine title. The Son of Man reigns over the nations for eternity. He is given honour and glory and all the nations of the earth have to obey him. The title has divine implications since only God has complete power of the nations and rules them forever.

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<sup>122</sup>see, Genesis 15:9; Judges 13:19; Psalms 66:13-15.

This concept is deeply influenced by the Apocrypha<sup>123</sup>. Two books which deal with the Son of Man (1 Enoch 37–71, 2 Esdras 13:1-58) are of particular importance. 2 Esdras (13:1-58) demonstrates some of the thinking surrounding the Son of Man concept: first He has the ability to destroy armies with His very breath. This might have influenced the common idea of the Son of Man. What is also interesting in verse 32 of this book, is that God supposedly calls the individual His Son. Moreover, in agreement with Daniel, 1 Esdras places the Son of Man within an Eschatological setting (Marshall, 1992:778).

A similarity that is also worth noting in the reference in 2 Esdras (13:1-58) is the duality in that there are people of light who obey and people of darkness who disobey. Thus, all these historical data might have influenced Jesus' choice of words in this specific parable (Matthew 25:31-46).

More importantly, Daniel 7, 2 Esdras and 1 Enoch might have influenced Jesus use of the term *Son of Man* in the Gospels. It is plausible, as suggested by Marshall (1992), that this phrase would have been preferred by Jesus since it did not have the overtly political overtones at the time and was connected to a heavenly ruler. This is in contrast to *Messiah* which would have been understood in its more political overtones of overthrowing the Romans.

The next word that would be study is the word King. It is used twice (34,40) in the passage and it is worthwhile studying the term since it reveals some of the Christology related to Jesus' role in the current parable. The term within the Gospel of Matthew would have also been important,<sup>124</sup> since historically during this period, Israel was under occupation by Rome as indicted earlier in Mark.

The term king (βασιλεύς) is also closely related to the term Son of Man (see, Nolland 2005:1025 & Marshall 1992) because it was influenced by Daniel 7:13-14. The Son of Man is presented with a kingdom that is never-ending. Matthew's audience would

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<sup>123</sup>A body of literature from the intertestamental period. This body of literature is part of both Catholic and Orthodox Churches canonical books however, it is rejected by Evangelical (Desilva, 2004:58).

<sup>124</sup>It is used in the Gospels alone 62 times. Matthew has the most usages of the term being 22. Furthermore, in Matthew 22 the parable of the wedding guest commences by pointing out that the King desired to have a banquet for his Son's wedding and sends forth his servants. The usage of kings within Jesus parables would not have been unfamiliar to his audience.



have connected with his usage of the title *King*. This, would also have also been noted when Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Matthew 21:7) and the texts of Zachariah are quoted in fulfilment of this occasion in Jesus' life.

By contrast nowhere in the Qur'an do you sense Isa's kingship? He states he is prophet (Qur'an 19:23-33), but the Qur'an never mentions he is a king.

Verses 32-33 shows Jesus' Eschatological role to separate (ἀφορίσει) people. He determines who can gain eternal life and who should go into Judgement. Thus, the return of Jesus as found in the Bible relates to Judgment, this is not dissimilar from the Qur'an declaring that Isa is one of the "Signs of Judgment Day" (Qur'an 43). Isa and Jesus in their returns relate somehow to Judgement of those who did not believe their respective messages.

In verses 34-39 Jesus demonstrates what critique He uses to assess how the Sheep receive their designation, versus the goats. Jesus declares that this kingdom that the sheep are inheriting, was prepared for them before the world began. As King, he declares that He faced hardships and the sheep came to His aid, even though they did not recognize Him. Jesus' majors two points of interest are those who are suffering and those who are insignificant.

41-46 Jesus, in contrast to blessing the sheep, declares that the Goats are καταράσθαι<sup>125</sup>. Jesus hands them "over to ruin" eternally and He also points out that their Judgement is similar to Satan. Jesus points out, that because they did not respect His lowly brothers, they disrespected Him and therefore they are not worthy of eternal life. Jesus points out that His identity is intertwined with ours. The Goats refused to help Him when He needed them. In response, Jesus now condemns them as being cruel and wicked and worthy of punishment.

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<sup>125</sup>and N. T., with the accusative = *to give one over to ruin*. Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28; Rom. 12:14; Jas. 3:9; Mark 11:21. —Matt. 25:41, οἱ καταραμένοι, whose being cursed is a settled fact. Cf. Deut. 21:23 (Hermann. C, 1962:109).

#### **4.2.4 Significance**

The significance for the study is that Jesus at his return will demonstrate to all that He is Lord over all (Matthew 25:31-46, Phil 2:5-11). This affects how we live as the parable (Matthew 25: 34-46) demonstrates. Jesus' people should be found doing things that are in accordance with His will, namely feeding the poor, looking after the distress, "visiting those in prison". Thus, the return of Jesus has to do with the way His kingdom operates. One of the reasons why Jesus will return is to see if His teachings was implemented. The significance is that Isa is coming back to make sure that the teachings of Muhammed have been implemented successfully.

Jesus' Omniscience (Matthew 25:39-46) is on display at His return. He divides the whole world according to those who have obeyed Him and His father. Jesus' return again demonstrates His Lordship because He knows what is in each person's heart and their motivation for why they did what they did.

Yet, again when comparing Isa and Jesus, we find ourselves back at the core issue of theology, in that the return of Jesus according to the Matthew 25 (31-46) directly relates to His deity. This is demonstrated by titles like "Son of Man" and His ability to judge the nations according to the way they treat him. On a theological basis's we see that Jesus' return is central in affirming His divinity. Even during the return of Jesus, we see the issue of His deity is not excluded.

In contrast with the return of Isa we saw that he is return would demonstrate his fragility and his hate of Christian doctrine especially the Christological doctrines. Isa's coming back to submit to Islam and its way of life according to the Hadith. Jesus is coming back to rule and reign. Thus, are the followers of Isa not in danger of submitting to Islamic doctrine? Like Isa will do when he returns according to Islamic sources.

#### **4.2.5 Conclusion**

When the two figures are placed side by side regarding the return as well as death, again we see that claiming to be a follower of Isa creates major problems if the two

theologies are stacked side by side. From a theological perspective it seems that claiming to be a follower of Isa is not an easy task.

The return of Jesus demonstrates that He is divine that He has the right to judge the nations. Jesus' Kingship is demonstrated through-out Matthew's account of Jesus return. He comes to judge, reward, set up His reign and demonstrate His omniscience. Isa's return, on the other hand, in the Hadith demonstrated that he was in fact coming to destroy Christianity. On the surface they maybe both coming back but on the deeper issues, they are clearly coming with two different agendas. Thus, when comparing the return of Isa with the return of Jesus, and asking if an evangelical Christian claim to follow Isa based on both returns the simple answer is no.

### **4.3 The Purpose of Jesus**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of Isa as found in the Qur'an was to point forward to Muhammed. Thus, in coming to this section in the study it is imperative that Jesus' presents His own purpose. The best text that deals with Jesus' stated purpose is found in John 18:33-37. This passage leads up to the passion and reveals some of the heart of Jesus, highlighting how the text affects religious identity when appropriate and additionally, seeing the purpose of Jesus in light of John's Gospel and periscope. All these various strands will lead towards answering the thesis question.

#### **4.3.2 Context**

##### **4.3.2.1 General background**

During this section the researcher will deviate from separating the general background from the historical background as done throughout the chapter on Biblical Christology. The two sections will be combined. The reason for this is that general background and the historical background are connected as to why church tradition claims John wrote his gospel account.

The Gospel of John was written between 80 AD and 90 AD<sup>126</sup>. The fact that some early church fathers were already quoting the Gospel by around 150 indicates that it had to have been written earlier, due to the time needed to circulate documents during the first century. Papyri fragments coming from the second century also attest to the age of the Gospel of John (Guthrie, 1994:1022).

Church tradition holds that the Gospel arose because some members of the church read through the three Gospels and they felt that they were incomplete<sup>127</sup>. They requested that the apostle John write a Gospel and after much prayer and thought he compiled his Gospel (Westcott, & Westcott, 1908:XXXV).

Determining the audience of John's Gospel is indeed wide. The truth is that the purpose statement found in John (20:31) makes clear that the intended audience is more universal in nature. Additionally, John makes use of very common religious symbols that are found in most religions, like water, light, darkness, Children of God, bread etc. These concepts are found throughout religions the world over (Carson, 1991:59-85, Kostenberger, 2000:280). John also uses dualism, which is also a factor in most religions. Since, there are Children of God there are also Children of the devil (John: 8), light and darkness (John 1:3-5), truth and error (John 17). John uses the term Logos which is translated Word, which would have had references in both Jewish and Grecian worlds. John combines both racial groups concepts and demonstrates that logos are deeper than both understandings (Carson, 1991:59-85, Kostenberger, 2000:280).

#### 4.3.2.2 *Literary context*

Westcott & Westcott (1908: xlii) divide the Gospel of John into three parts. They start with a prologue, which begins in John 1:1-18 and introduces the Word and His role before time and His subsequent role in time. Then the second part of their division is entitled "The self-revelation of Christ to the world" from 1:19-12:50. The third part of

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<sup>126</sup>Beasley-Murray (1999:68) In fact suggests that it is not possible to know any date for the Gospel of John.

<sup>127</sup>For further discussion regarding John's historical context see Carson, 1991:58-63, Nixion, 2002:64-92. In fact, Carson dismisses this version presented about the composition of the Gospel of John. However, this tradition is found in more than three places in the early church.

the division focuses on Jesus continuation of the mission and is entitled “Preparing his new Messianic community” from chapter 13 to chapter 21.

Burge’s (1995) of the *Evangelical Bible Commentary* provides his division. Like Westcott & Westcott (1908: xlii) he also acknowledges a prologue. His second division is a “book of Signs” and stretches from prologue into (1:19-12:50). The third division is what he names “The book of glory” (13:1-20:31). He differs from Westcott & Westcott (1908: xlii) by adding a fourth section, entitled Epilogue. This same scheme is followed by Beasley-Murray (1999: xcii), just under different names.

In contrast, Kostenberg (2000:281) divides the Gospel of John into two parts. The first part stretches from the prologue to chapter 13 and demonstrates how that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. This is demonstrated through the various signs (1; 19-13) and “I am” (John 8:12) statements that are found within the Gospel. Kostenberg states that “The second half of John’s Gospel shows how the Christ ensures the continuation of his mission by preparing his new messianic community (see Church) for its mission”. Thus, the second part of John is all about preparing the disciples for their mission of making more followers of Jesus. This is from chapter 13 to chapter 21.

1. Based on all the outlines reviewed the researcher suggested the following outline 1. A prologue 1:1-18.
2. Additionally, following Westcott & Westcott “The self-revelation of Christ to the world” 1:19- 12:50.
3. Third outline, preparing the disciples for mission 13-20:31
4. Finally, finishing off with an Epilogue (21:1-25)<sup>128</sup>.

#### 4.3.2.3 *Major themes found in John*

A major theme from a Christological perspective is without a doubt the theme of the divinity of Christ. This is something that flows throughout the Gospel. It starts right from the prologue that Jesus is God. Jesus is described as the “Word of God” or

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<sup>128</sup>The reason for the outline is the belief that John does adds the epilogue to demonstrate that Jesus truly was risen in a body and that he was not spirit. Additionally, to dispel the myth about him not dying before Jesus return.

Logos. John (1:3) points out that the logos created everything and that nothing could be made without Him. Jesus is not only known as the Word He is also known as the Son of God. Nathanael declares about Jesus (John 1:49) "You are the Son of God". This phrase "Son of God" is found nine times<sup>129</sup> alone in the Gospel of John. In fact, John says the purpose of writing his Gospel (20:31) was so that people would come to believe that indeed Jesus is the Son of God. Yet, again as with all the other Gospels before the term Son of God is used frequently and without apologies.

Jesus also describes himself as the "I am"<sup>130</sup> in John 8:58. This statement of course connects with Exodus 3:14 where God said the same thing to Moses. The Jews understood the claim, because in verse (8:59) they decided they would execute Jesus by stoning. Thus, all the examples cited above demonstrate that John's Christology is a high Christology. In fact, Jesus cannot be understood in John without this higher Christology. This is the major contrast between Isa and Jesus, namely that Isa is at pains to demonstrate in the Qur'an (19:34-35) that he is exclusively a man.

Another major theme found in the Gospel of John is the theme of mission. Moreau & Corwin & McGee (2004:49) remind us that "In John's Gospel God is the center of mission; it is he who so loved the world that he sent his unique son". Thus, a central theme of sending is found in the Gospel. Both from a Christological perspective and additionally from a discipleship aspect, the theme of sending is vital. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit (14), He also sends His disciples (17). As disciples of Jesus we are sent into the world. This issue of sending is vital for the Christian Identity in that we, like our saviour are sent (17:18) into the world to proclaim the truth of our saviour. In contrast, Isa is also sent on a mission (Qur'an 61:6) to proclaim the arrival of a new prophet, Muhammed. I am not saying followers of Isa do but are they not inadvertently promoting Muhammed?

John's audience as part of the discipleship experience, were also most likely in conflict with the Jews. Fleming states (2005:269):

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<sup>129</sup>See 1:34, 1:49, 3:18, 5:25, 10:36, 11:4, 11:27, 19:7, 20:31. This is excluding references where the text says Son alone like John 3:36.

<sup>130</sup>Jesus uses the phrase seven times declaring he is the bread of life, that he is the light of the World, the way the truth and the life.

John makes extensive use of Old Testament images and themes (Abraham, Moses, the exodus, Wisdom traditions). He often refers to Jewish practices and institutions (Passover and other Jewish festivals, the temple). Jesus in John is repeatedly identified as the Jewish Messiah (e.g., Jn 1:41; 20:31), and John portrays his ministry and death as the fulfillment of Scripture (Jn 12:14–15, 37–41; 19:24, 28). In addition, John's sharp polemic against "the Jews" (used some 70 times) and the theme of expulsion from the synagogue (Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) may point to a situation in which at least some of his Jewish Christian readers are facing conflict with the Jews of the synagogue in their own time.

Similar to all the Gospels before John's audience would have undoubtedly known the cost of following Jesus. Thus, from a contextual point, the Gospels are perfect for dealing with Insider Movements issues because of the context of persecution that their audience were experiencing.

### **4.3.3    *The meaning***

#### **4.3.3.1    *Preliminary analysis***

The truth is in the current periscope found in the Gospel of John there is no major textual variant that would drastically change the interpretation of the text found in the Gospel.

#### **4.3.3.2    *Contextual analysis***

The discussion between Jesus and Pilate would have taken place in an environment that was deeply politically charged. Thus, the whole scene centres on Jesus' claim to Kingship, as indicated in a highly political context. The time of year also contributed to the atmosphere. The Jews went up three times a year to hold special festivals that were mandated for them religiously. During these feasts, having so many Jews together in one space, especially since they were under occupation, was always observed with suspicion. Riots and insurrection were always possible. Thus, the historical dialogue that takes place between Jesus and Pilate is deeply politicized.

Pilate just wants to know if Jesus has any plans to overthrow the Roman government (Kostenberger, 2000:524-528).

The biblical context is that Jesus is having this discussion with Pilate in the section known as the passion narrative which was explained earlier in Mark. This dialogue that John mentions is unique to the Apostle, in that Jesus in the Gospel in fact challenges Pilates' authority that he has over Jesus. Pointing out that authority belongs to His Father. Jesus again demonstrating His Kingship and Lordship over all things.

#### 4.3.3.3 *Verbal analysis*

In verse 33 Pilate asks Jesus if He is the "King of the Jews". In Mark, the researcher showed the importance of this phrase in the gospels. The reality is that Jesus is a King and that is something that the Qur'an as well as Islam fails to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus. The truth is that Pilate may not fully understand Jesus' Kingship because He was focusing on the worldly aspect.

In verse 35 Pilate answers "μητι ἐγώ 'Ιουδαῖος εἰμι" ("Am I a Jew?"). Pilate declares that he is not part of the Jewish nation. He further goes on to point out that Jesus' own people did not understand His cause, so how can Jesus attempt to challenge him. Also notice that: A) Pilate does not understand Jesus Kingship but B) neither does the Jews. Also notice that being misunderstood was a part of Jesus own journey on this earth. Jesus' identity was misunderstood by all around him. There is a similarity with Isa at his birth- he was misunderstood by those around him, except when he was preaching from the cradle.

In verse 36 Jesus gives Pilate a correct perspective by reminding Pilate that what he sees is not reality. Jesus in fact has a Kingdom and followers, but His Kingdom is not an earthly one, because it's authority does not derive from human government but from God. If Jesus' kingdom was based on worldly principles, Jesus' followers would be fighting to save him from Pilate. Jesus does the perfect contextualization, by dispelling the myth that He desires political power. However, Jesus also does not deny that He is truly a King.



In verse 37 Jesus declares His purpose for why He came into the world. The sole purpose for Jesus coming into the world was to testify to the truth Rogers & Rogers (1998:222) reminds us when discussing ἀλήθεια (Truth) that Jesus came to testify to the truth about Man truth about God as well as Himself. The ultimate purpose of Jesus is to demonstrate what truth really is. Jesus also states in John (14:6) that He is truth. The purpose of Jesus as demonstrated by this verse is to deal with truth. Jesus is also a King so that the dual factor of His Kingship and truth go hand in hand.

#### **4.3.3.4    *Literary analysis***

All of the Gospels have a discussion between Pilate and Jesus but John's gospel is the only gospel that goes in-depth (Kostenberger, 2004:521).

This dialogue between Pilate and Jesus takes place in the section known as the passion narrative. This is one of the few conversations that Jesus has before He is crucified (Brant, 2011:244).

The amazing thing about the discussion that takes place between Jesus and Pilate is that Jesus is in fact in the weaker position. Yet, Jesus appears as though He is putting Pilate on trial. This is demonstrated when Pilate asks the Question if He "is a Jew". Jesus admits to Pilate that He is a King. This of course is worthy of death under Roman rule (Brant, 2011:244). Pilate continues the dialogue and in fact finds Jesus not guilty of any crime. Jesus, when faced with certain death even then, as the Son of God, reminds Pilate that ultimately His authority over Jesus is delegated (John 18:35-37). As Christians, we can build on the boldness of our Saviour and know when facing tough situations, we can look back to Jesus. Knowing His identity affects the way He responds to Pilate. This also affects our Christian identity in that we can be bold and fearless because our Saviour was that way. Does the Isa in the Islamic sources engender such confidence? The researcher thinks not.

#### **4.3.4    *The significance***

A common thread that has been running through out Biblical Christology is the Kingship of Jesus, this is a central theme that is picked up throughout the gospels.

In fact, throughout the various passion narratives it was such a key issue that it was what drove Jesus to the cross. The great irony is that Jesus in fact had power of Pilate and that Jesus had power of the crowds who mocked Him while he was being crucified (John 18:30-38).

This title has been misunderstood by those around Jesus throughout His life and especially His death. There is some similarity to Isa but the difference is that Isa was apparently misunderstood in that he did not want worship (19:33-36) in the Qur'an. Thus, both are misunderstood so in some sense Isa/Jesus have as their common identity the issue of being misunderstood by those in their culture.

At a deeper level many prophecies speak about the fact that Jesus will rule on the throne of David (Is 9). Thus, Jesus' role as King plays a major part throughout biblical understanding of the Messiah. The fact that the people wanted to make Jesus King after the loaves and the fishes' miracle (John 6). Indicates that they expected the Messiah to be political. Yet his Kingship was not determined by worldly agendas. Jesus main purpose is to be King, this was demonstrated as well in the parable of the Sheep's and the Goats (Matthew 25). In terms of identity we can have Jesus as our core Identity<sup>131</sup> because of this claim. As Evangelical Christians this is central in our beliefs (Green, 2013:41). Jesus died and rose again, His purpose was to demonstrate that He is the Messiah and He will return to judge the world in righteousness. This allows us to face any tough situation we find ourselves in. Could the same be said if Isa is chosen as a self-identity? The researcher thinks not.

There is one Christological term that appeared through all the Gospels. That is the term Son of God. This term is vital for the Gospels understanding of Jesus. Muslims may misunderstand the term as they misunderstand our identity. Yet, the Gospels keep using this title in relationship to Jesus. This title links with another theme that came out in all the texts, namely that Jesus is King over all.

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<sup>131</sup>Core Identity, refers to the deepest part of our being this is explained deeper by Green.

#### **4.3.5 Conclusion**

The purpose of the Biblical Christology was so that Isa could be compared with Jesus. This is also one of the major objectives of this research project. The points of similarity are of course there during the whole chapter, they have been highlighted when they have appeared. However, when comparing Isa and Jesus and then answering the thesis question.

The fact remains that a follower of Isa cannot claim to follow Isa and remain faithful to the Biblical Jesus. The simple fact that Islam does not acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus alone is enough to disqualify the claim to adopt Isa as a personal identity.

In terms of comparing the ideologies behind the various religious figures it is clear that Isa and Jesus are on different pages all together. In that Isa's main purpose was to point forward to Muhammad. Jesus main purpose was to demonstrate His Divine Kingship over all.

The Christological theme of Jesus' Sonship is another sticky issue that confronts one constantly as one engaged with the Jesus of the Gospels.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES**

### **5. Contextual Issues**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This section of the study is really part two in that it engages more with the missiological aspects of being a follower of Isa. The previous two chapters focused mainly on the theological aspects namely, Islamic Christology and Biblical Christology. This chapter focuses more on issues related to anthropology.

This chapter answers two major objectives that have been presented in the introduction of the study. Firstly, it deals with Islamic Worldview and culture in relationship to followers of Isa and secondly it deals with Evangelical Christian identity in relation to Islamic identity and how it relates to followers of Isa. Other topics engaged within this chapter are: Muslim friendly translations known also as Muslim idiom translations (MITs). and converts from Islam not choosing Insider terms for self-identity.

#### **5.2 Islamic worldview and Culture**

The Islamic worldview is vitally important for the current study for two reasons: Firstly, for the fact that the MBBs who are implementing Insider Movements, are doing so in Muslim majority countries. Secondly in communicating the Gospel to those who in their community and who are still Muslim, there needs to be some common ground.

The key issue that needs to be established is the issue of Islamic worldview. Ultimately, all that happens with regard to culture and identity is driven by the worldview that one subscribes to. The truth is if your worldview says certain people are inferior because of skin colour, you will act according to the dictates of your worldview.

The centre piece of the Islamic worldview is the central belief in the oneness of God. This doctrine is known as the doctrine of “tawhīd”. Newby (2002:203) states how important this belief is for Muslims when discussing tawhid “The declaration that

Allah is One. This constitutes one of the most fundamental beliefs in Islam, but the details of God's unity have been debated extensively by theologians". The above quote demonstrates how important the oneness of God is for Islam. This understanding of oneness is completely different to the Christian understanding of the oneness of God. Yet, what is interesting is that Newby highlights that Islamic theologians are not all in agreement with the unity of God. Nevertheless, the doctrine of "tawhid" is extremely important.

The expression of this doctrine is found in the Shahada which is a Muslim creedal statement that is repeated as the popular saying goes: from the womb to the tomb. Newby (2002:5) states about the Shahadah:

the shahadah, which also means witnessing. The declaration that there is no deity except Allah, and that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah is part of each of the five daily prayers and is heard from minarets in the call to prayer. Pronouncing the shahadah with the intent to convert and in front of witnesses is sufficient to make one a Muslim in the eyes of most Islamic communities

The oneness of God is so important that declaring it in front of a community of Muslims makes one a Muslim. This also deals with whether Insiders should say the Shahadah<sup>132</sup>. Some Insiders see nothing wrong with declaring the Shahadah, arguing that Muhammed is a prophet in some sense (Zharmentov, 2009:15-20). Clearly there is an understanding from the Muslim community that, when you declare this it affirms that you accept Islam.

Yet, what is more valuable for the current study is the reality that Muhammed is placed alongside Allah during the Shahadah. This is uttered during all the main prayer times and main festivals of Islam. Central to the Islamic worldview is the reality that Allah has chosen to reveal himself through Prophets. The focus is to see the role that Prophets play in the Islamic worldview and more specifically, and by implication, what is Isa's role in their worldview.

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<sup>132</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to engage with this issue. However, more debate needs to engage with the topic.

Prophets are also part of the five articles of faith. These are beliefs that are mandatory for a Muslim to believe. Key to this understanding is that man is a moral being and that man is not corrupted by sin as Christians believe. In fact, Adam and Eve's sin at the start of creation was considered minor (Qur'an 20:122). They repented subsequently Allah forgave man on the spot. The problem is that man is forgetful and that God keeps sending messengers to turn man back to him (Qur'an 16:36). Muslim tradition cites that 124,000 prophets have been sent to the world to turn the world back to God. The last messenger was Muhammed who had a global mission to return the world back to Islam (Saleeb, 1998:15).

Muslims have a very high regard for prophets and this is central to their understanding and believe in God, so much so that to offend any prophet is to commit sacrilege<sup>133</sup> (Wong 2016). Some Muslims even resort to violent means when they perceive that their prophet in particular is being mocked.

This filters down to a cultural level, so much so that Mir (2005:115) states "Jesus as a healer one who can cure an illness, especially the illness of a lover's heart, is a common motif in Urdu, and also in Persian". Jesus, on a cultural level, has a very high standing among Muslims. On a contextual level it makes sense to use Isa as a self-identity.

Malloughi (2009:3-11) reminds us that most Middle Eastern Christians who live along side Muslims in the Middle East have a culture that is completely different to the Muslims they live with. In certain neighbourhoods in the Middle East, Middle Eastern Christians and Muslims live in separate suburbs. There is often a massive cultural gap between the Christian and the Muslim communities.

The separation between the two communities may also come down to the reality that: Islam already comes with its own culture. There are various practises which we in a western or even Christian context would not view inherently as religious but which in an Islamic context would be looked at as religious. The following Hadith is an example: (Bukhari 2006:245).

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<sup>133</sup> See Wong 2016. <http://mic.com/articles/131854/on-charlie-hebdo-anniversary-here-are-8-iconic-cartoon-covers-and-why-they-re-important#.wfgFmq64l>

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Allah loves sneezing but dislikes yawning; so if anyone of you sneezes and then praises Allah, every Muslim who hears him (praising Allah) has to say Tashmit to him. But as regards yawning, it is from Satan, so if one of you yawns, he should try his best to stop it, for when anyone of you yawns, Satan laughs at him".

Durie (2008:26-27) when commenting on this hadith correctly points out the logic after discussing how Islamic scholars interpret this hadith. "When a Muslim suppresses their yawn, they are not merely being polite: they are following the teaching and example of Muhammed and conforming to the dictates of Islam". In the culture of the researcher, yawning is not a good thing to do in public yet it is not viewed as a religious act. However, in Islamic culture this is a religious act as it flows from their worldview, in that Muslims attempt to follow the example of Muhammed as closely as possible.

Another example that could be cited to strengthen the point, is that Islam has rules for even going to the toilet (Durie 2008:40). Following the example of Muhammed, certain hands are used for going to the toilet and other hands are used for eating exclusively. These two points again illustrate how all-encompassing the Islamic culture is. Yawning and sneezing are not only dictated to one by theology, but also one's toilet use.

This is the problem when connecting with Islam. This small example demonstrates that Islam has its own culture. Therefore, to respond to Malloghui (2009), is it not possible that maybe Islamic culture adds to the gap that is between the two communities?<sup>134</sup> Because in Islam, even yawning has some religious connotation, that would be considered a cultural issue to most Christian communities.

There are two points being made about the Islamic culture. Firstly, that it is open to Isa<sup>135</sup>. Yet, we should be careful, because it is all-embracing and thus, even cultural practises that may seem insignificant to Christians are seen in a religious light by

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<sup>134</sup> To answer this question only empirical research would be able to answer this question effectively in the researcher's opinion.

<sup>135</sup> Please see third chapter on Islamic Christology.

Muslims. Because of this reality are followers of Isa not in danger of being seen as Muslims? Since they don't define themselves as Christians. They attempt to remain culturally the same like those in their religious community. The danger that comes to mind is that this self-identity may be seen as just a fellow Muslim who places emphasis on Isa.

The second point is that Islam can adopt religious figures like it did with Jesus and convert them into something that is totally alien to the original. Is it not possible for Islam to adopt Insider movements<sup>136</sup> and convert it into a conventional Islamic sect? Maybe not immediately yet over time. This is a possible reality that only time will tell.

The researcher is not saying that extraction is the answer. Just that adopting Isa as a self-identity may not be wise. Instead, the term Christian should be used. The truth is if you start to talk about Jesus, read the Bible and teach that He died on the cross for our sins, what would most Muslims think you are? The simple reply would be Christian (Houssney 2011).

### **5.3 Form and Meaning**

In the review of literature section, the researcher has given the example from the Tegula Bible translation where the translators wanted to translate the word *Shepherds* into the native language and the form of the word chosen communicated the exact opposite of what was intended by the translators (Hiebert, 1985:151-153).

Thus, form and meaning play a vital role in all forms of communication. The Insiders have chosen Muslim followers of Isa, or just followers of Isa as their self-identity. The question that needs to be raised is what is the meaning that the Muslim community receives through these various self-identities? Does the Muslim community not perceive Insiders as Muslims?

With regard to the meaning of words, there are two concepts that are linked, namely, a connotive understanding of meaning and a denotative understanding of meaning. The differences between the two is stated aptly as "Denotation refers to a word's

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<sup>136</sup> What I am referring to is the converts not the western missionaries. Clearly the western Missionaries would go home, yet the converts live in these majority Muslim countries.



definition, while connotation refers to the emotions associated with the word” (Lawton, 2011:136). Thus, the term *Christian* refers to in a western context in terms of denotation somebody who worships Jesus. The connotative meaning maybe, somebody who cares for the poor and loves his neighbour, does not smoke or steal. Yet in a Muslim country the connotative and denotative understanding is completely different.

A perfect illustration is what Dutch (2000:16) describes about how Muslim preachers have for generations attacked Christians and Christianity. This tirade against Christians has caused Muslims in Dutch’s specific region to be prejudiced against Christians. The connotative understanding of the word *Christian* in the average Muslim mind is that it “Means somebody who worships three gods, believes Jesus is the product of a sexual union between God and Mary, drinks wine, eats pork, defiles himself with ritually unclean habits, betrays his cultural heritage, and uses religion to procure assistance from Westerners”. The emotion that is connected with Christian in this Muslim community is no doubt erroneous and sad. These generalizations are easily dispelled by mere reading of the scripture. Yet, what this illustrates is the form of Christianity that these Muslims have been exposed to or have observed, has created the impression stated above. The reality is that the denotative meaning of Christian is simply somebody who follows Jesus. The Muslims that Dutch is dealing with in his context, are not aware of the denotative meaning of *Christian* and would need to be explained exactly what a Christian is. Followers of Isa choosing to use this self-identity in relation to the connotive meaning of the term *Christian* do appear justifiable, as many Christians living in countries that have a majority of Christians do not just state that they are Christians. They instead define what type of Christian they are to separate themselves from nominal Christians, with phrases like “Born again Christian” or the like. The reason they do this is to avoid misunderstanding (Dutch 2000:15). Yet, what is obvious by all these definitions that is that they are still clamming to be Christian.

At this point it is good to use a case study provided by Travis (2000:57-58). The case study is about a follower of Isa by the name of Soleh which was not his real name to protect his identity. Soleh worked in construction and was a deeply religious Muslim. He also lived in a rural village away from the town. Soleh was presented with an

opportunity to do some work at a Christian boarding school. While there finishing the job he built strong relationships with the staff and students of the school. During this time, he noticed how God answered their prayers and their commitment to the Lord.

Soleh without telling anybody decides that he desired the same relationship that these Christians have with the Lord. Then one day one of the Christians who had been taught contextualized evangelism decided to share the Gospel with Soleh. He agreed with what was spoken by the student and decided he desired to pray the way the Christians do. Soleh knew the cost that following Jesus would demand. Yet, he was willing to risk it all for his Lord. However, Ali encouraged Soleh to pray and ask Isa to forgive his sins (Travis, 2000:58). Travis explains what happened next (2000:58):

Ali then explained that if Soleh wished to reach his family and crew for Christ, he might consider becoming a “follower of Isa” (C5) instead of a “traditional Christian” (C1), because staying in his community as a Messianic Muslim would likely increase his ability to share his faith with them. Soleh agreed. He would remain in his Muslim community, instead of joining the C1 Christian community. The two agreed to keep this matter private until Soleh could study more about following Isa. This all took place in December, 1996.

Over time, Soleh grew in his Christian faith and began sharing the gospel with his crew. He subsequently returned home and a few of the village heads converted. In the Mosque he even changed the Islamic shahada to “God is great. God is great. There is no god but God and Isa is the Straight Path”. Soleh had a baby and named him Isa. His in-laws became worried by his recent changes that they had observed and asked him if he was a Christian? He denied this and felt guilty. Subsequently, at an important ceremony that was held for his son, Soleh, in front of many influential leaders and elected officials announced that he was a Muslim follower of Isa. He was shocked to find nobody was angry or said anything, instead the village chief became more interested and now is also a follower of Isa (Travis, 2000:58).

What is clear to the researcher, is what is communicated to the Muslims in terms of identity. What stands out is that he claims to be a Muslim who follows Isa. The

connective meaning that they would hear is that he is Muslim. After all, Muslims also claim that they love Jesus as well. Mir (2005:115) points out, Jesus is used to heal lover's hearts in other Muslim countries. The reality is that the denotative meaning of Muslim is simply somebody who submits to Islam. As has been demonstrated by the researcher through-out this researcher project, is that Muslims have no issue with Isa.

This leads back to the thesis question. Can an Evangelical Christian claim to be a follower of Isa? Based on the above case study, specifically in relation to form and meaning the simple answer would be no, since this would be communicating to Muslims that followers of Isa are fellow Muslims. From a cultural and worldview point as well as theological point. Muslims have no issue with a Muslim who claims to follow Isa. After all, they claim to follow all the prophets of God.

Moreover, with Muslims' misunderstanding of the term *Christian* can't that be changed over time? Words change meaning's all the time. The word *gay* in the early 1930's meant happy. Today *gay* is almost universally accepted among English speaking people as homosexual. Could the same principle not happen to Christians living in the Muslim World? This would not happen overnight. Yet, the Christians in Rome did so with great success.

In the section of the study relating to Biblical Christology, specifically with regard to the death of Jesus. It was clear that Jesus chose to be misunderstood by the Romans instead of choosing an easy route that would have saved His life.

#### **5.4 Muslim Identity in relation to Evangelical Christian Identity**

One of the areas that has been mentioned but not engaged with so far is the issue of identity. Defining the term *identity* is a complex subject with many disciplines define it differently (Green, 2013:44). The reality is that this study focuses on religious identity. In this way, Muslims who are coming to Christ are defining themselves.

There are three core areas that make up all identities, namely: the collective identity, social identity and core identity. Collective identity is often given at birth, without much choice attached to it. Collective identity includes more than one thing,

nationality, ethnicity and religion are part of what is termed collective identity. The following information is also provided by Green (2013:44):

“The more collectivist is a culture, the more controlling are such ascribed identities, and the harder it is to change them even in adulthood. In mono-cultural societies, religion merges with ethnicity as a group identity marker. Assumptions like “all Malays are Muslim” or “I am a Turk; I am a Muslim” run deep”. In certain countries like Pakistan religious identity is used to support the national identity. The more open and pluralistic a society is the more open the collective identities are.

An illustration of this is South Africa. Being South African does not equate to being Christian or any religion for that matter.

The second layer of identity is the social identity. Green (2013:46) explains why it is important to differentiate between collective identity and social identity. “collective identity is rooted in a symbolic group or a social category and is ascribed to a person at birth as a label, while social identity is absorbed gradually by that person through actual relationships with significant others”. The reality is that Muslim social identity is given from birth and then assumed later through the various rituals that take place throughout life. This reinforcement is done through rituals, like fasting, which cements the social identity of the individual to demonstrate outwardly that they are Muslim.

The core identity consists of the beliefs and values of the individual. These values and beliefs are adopted at childhood without much thought. However, during youth, these assumptions are challenged in various ways. One of two things either happen: children adopt their parents’ beliefs without much thought or they reject the standard all together and seek new self-identities (Green, 2013:45-46). In cultures that are more collective, these assumptions are hardly ever challenged, since collective identity is emphasised much more than individual identity. However, Muslims from birth through to adulthood assume that you are Muslim. This emphasis is specifically highlighted in the majority Muslim countries, where being Muslim is assumed (Green, 2013:45-46).

The reality is that this study focuses mainly on collective identity and social religious identity. Houssney (2010:1483-1484) points out that the key to Muslim identity is that it is very public, simply by the way Muslims dress indicates that they want to demonstrate their total otherness from those around them in western situations. In the Middle East the contrast is not so pronounced as in western countries. Additionally, Islam does not have a separation of church and state. These two concepts are deeply connected in the Islamic worldview. The reality is that to declare oneself a *Muslim* is to submit to the total Islamic system. The term Muslim clearly has a social as well as collective connotation connected to it. Muslim identity is reinforced through various rituals that promote this identity and community.

Muslim identity is also collective in that Muslims are aware that they are part of a global brotherhood of believers who all seek to submit to the will of Allah and the prophet. This connects to the fact that Muslims believe that they are the final religion and need to teach the truth of Islam. Thus, Muslim identity is something that, as Dutch (2000:16-18) correctly points out, is hard to part ways with, especially in light of all the information above.

Thus, as the case study of Soleh demonstrates, if those who are part of Islam hear anybody declaring that they are a Muslim follower of Isa, they would not have a problem. However, the question that comes to the researcher's mind is: does this not make the Followers of Isa deceptive, since they may be understood to be Muslims? And because all the followers of Isa in effect are Christian in that they believe everything we do.

The fact is that evangelical Christian identity has a social dimension as well, but it is mainly focused on an internal change. However, there are four major points of being an Evangelical<sup>137</sup> that are part of our identity, based on Calver's (2000:31) article *Our Evangelical Heritage*. These four original points are Calver's summary of David Bebbington (1989) work *Evangelicals in Modern Britain*:

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<sup>137</sup> As Evangelicals when don't look to a founder as starting it. Instead we look back to Jesus as the founder of the Christian Movement. Thus, Evangelical is just used to separate us from liberal churches. This definition of course is the researchers own understanding based on Smith (2008:183-185) and Calver 2000 (30-40).

1. It is a personal conversion to the LORD Jesus Christ. As Evangelicals we don't accept that you can be born one. This is a choice that has to be made, even at a young age. This also means that you accept that Jesus is the only way to Heaven. The opposite has been highlighted by Malloughi (2009:3-9), i.e. in terms of Islam one is born into it.
2. The second reality is that the Bible only determines our life and practise. The central place that Evangelicals look for guidance is in the scripture.
3. Evangelicals affirm that there needs to be a social dimension with regards to faith. Thus, caring for the needy, poor, sick and destitute. Part of our social identity is caring for those in need.
4. The fourth point is what is known as "cruiciecentric- the cross lies at the heart of Christianity. The atonement for our sins through crucified love means Jesus Christ alone can purchase our redemption and offer forgiveness for our sins" (Calver, 2000:31).

The main issue with regard to Evangelical identity is that it is mainly a core identity, so that the central reality is that Jesus has to be accepted as a personal reality. This does not deny social identity. Yet, the key is that a person must choose to follow Jesus.

This does raise the question that has been posed by Insiders throughout the study: is it possible to accept as a core identity Evangelical Christianity and be socially and religiously a Muslim? The researcher's first response would naturally be that would not be contextualized identity. The reality is that Islam looks at public identity as the reality of a person's beliefs, as also stated by Houssney (2010:1483-1484). To be Muslim is a public identity. Even the names that are given after one accepts Islam or is born into a Muslim family are chosen in relation to Arabic.

Thus, the person is adopting a new identity. In some Asian countries your religious belief is included on your identity document. Moreover, Islam is seen as a total way of life (Houssney, 2011:1483-1484). In Islam, yawning is seen as a religious activity. Furthermore, everybody that is born at birth is already thought of as a Muslim, Bukhari (2006, 30:440) says:

Abu Huraira, narrated that the Prophet said, "Every child is born with a true faith (i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone) but his parents convert him to Judaism or to Christianity or to Paganism, as an animal delivers a perfect baby animal. Do you find it mutilated?" Then Abu Huraira recited the holy verses: "The pure Allah's Islamic nature (true faith i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone), with which He has created human beings".

All these examples demonstrate that Islam does not allow one to see separation of a social religious identity and core identity. Thus, one can't claim to just be a cultural Muslim. This would be virtually impossible, as everything is prescribed for you.

Additionally, Evangelical Christian identity places great emphasis on obeying Jesus even when one faces misunderstanding and also persecution. In the book Acts, from chapter 1-8, the disciples who are with their Jewish neighbors experienced misunderstanding. Evangelical Christian identity is willing to suffer for the sake of following Christ. 2 Timothy, 3:12 reminds us that persecution is part of the Christian experience. We are warned that if we try to live Godly, we will face tough times. Followers of Isa are attempting to build bridges with their community, which is admirable. However, the choice of choosing to be a follower of Isa should not be driven by fear of losing connection with your community.

This fear is ever present and real. Depending on which country Muslim converts reside in, the punishment from the government or from the community could be death. This, makes the claim to be Christian for all involved a dangerous issue. Yet, our collective identity is informed by the reality that our Saviour and His disciples suffered for their confessions of faith. This choice regarding identity for an evangelical Christian can't be determined by the persecution they will be facing.

Furthermore, Evangelical Christian identity does have a social dimension, in that we are encouraged by Jesus (Matthew, 5:16) "to let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven". Good works are done in Christianity so that people outside of the Christian community can see that we care about them. This is the social aspect of our religious identity. Can followers of Isa say that, when people see their good works, that they can glorify their Father in Heaven? When Muslims see their good works

would they not think these fellow Muslims are doing a wonderful job of promoting Islam? If that is the case would these good works be glorifying our Father in Heaven?

A second question is raised by Houssney (2011) is what happens to the identity of followers of Isa's children? Would they be taught the Bible alongside the Qur'an? Additionally, what would this second generation be? Are they Christians or Muslims? The safe answer is that only time will be able to answer these questions.

The last question that needs to be raised based on Yoder & Lee & Ro Priest (2009:180-184) centered sets approach discussed in the Introduction, is followers of Isa moving closer towards the Jesus of the Bible or further away. Christian identity is not based on rules that are observed but instead on movements and individuals moving closer to Jesus. If a movement is to move closer to Jesus it must also move closer towards the Church that Jesus loves. Hebrews 10:26 warns believers that they should not give up meeting together. Are Followers of Isa not in danger of creating a homogeneous church?

Buys (2013) points out the potential dangers that exist when a homogeneous church is created. Insiders may not have the joy of fellowshiping with believers who are different from them. Buys points out that fellowship with believers who are not part of Insider movements would help followers of Isa greatly. Followers of Isa need to consider ways that they can foster ties with those who are not part of Insider movements for their growth and development as they seek to walk closer with Jesus.

## **5.5 Examples of contextualized movements among Muslims**

The truth is that Church has not had much success in starting church plants among Muslims. Many missionaries have laboured for years without seeing much success in this field. The truth is that sometimes Western missionaries imposed their specific cultures on local believers instead of allowing them through the Holy Spirit and the guiding of scripture to present a contextual approach that is Biblical. Islam is also not an easy mission field as well. Anybody who leaves Islam culture, faces the death penalty, depending on which country you reside in. The church is not exclusively at fault for having less success among Muslim people groups (Schlorff, 2006:142-144).



There are, however, two wonderful examples that the researcher has come across during his study. These two examples are from two different continents and the age difference between the two is about a hundred years. Yet, both chose to use Christianity as an identity and not any Muslim equivalent.

Parshall (2003:59-60) tells about a Muslim convert by the name of Sadrach Surapranata from Indonesia. He lived from 1835-1928. He was converted to Christ in his thirties. What he observed was that local Muslims thought of Christians as being foreign. Yet, instead of choosing to remain Muslim or keeping his Christian identity, he chose to have more contextual forms. He called his leaders imams. The church did not depend on western aid, but was totally dependent on locals. The church community followed the culture of Java Indonesia. The church building's interior and exterior design was similar to the Mosque. The only difference was that the church had a three tier roof, which represented the doctrine of the trinity. His movement was successful as indicated by the 7500 MBBs at the time of his death.

The forms and the structure were in compliance with the local Indonesian culture. Yet, the identity that was present was that of a Christian. The community had seen many things similar, yet they instantly knew that these people were Christians. They were engaged with the culture, yet different enough so that everybody was aware of the distinction. The sad reality is that the movement became extinct because the Western churches wanted to impose their ideas on the local Indonesian culture.

These Christians also had misunderstandings, but they chose, by way of their building structure as well as their type of worship, to come closer to the Muslim community. They did not choose an identity that would make Muslims think that they are Muslims.

The second case study comes from Madany (2009:50). He points out that there are Christians in North Africa who are leaving Islam in droves and instead are choosing a Christian identity:

*In March of 2007, a conference was convened in Zurich, Switzerland, by "Copts United," under the leadership of an Egyptian Christian engineer named Adli Yousef Abadir, and chaired by Dr. Shaker al-Nabulsi, a*

*Jordanian Muslim intellectual. The general theme of the conference was "The Defense of Minorities and Women". One of the lectures was entitled "The Christians of the Maghreb under the Rule of Islamists", where it must be noted that the Maghrebi converts to Christianity were called, "Masihiyyoo alMaghreb". They were not called "followers of 'Issa," the way the Insider Movement likes to refer to converts from Islam. Another term used for them is "Al-Masihiyyoon al-Judod fi Dual alMaghreb al-'Arabi", (The Phenomenon of the New Christians in the countries of the Arab Maghreb).*

These people faced a similar situation to Soleh and yet they chose to remain Christian. Additionally, they could have also been misunderstood by the Muslims that were surrounding them, though they chose to identify themselves as Christians.

What this case study demonstrate is that Christians are able to contextualize in the Muslim world without changing their identity. This does not mean that the church structure, seating arrangements and clothes that are worn to the gathering are similar to what most Evangelical Christians experience in western context.

Madany (2009:52-53) notes that the youth in Algeria are so disturbed by the violence that has been committed by the terrorist that they reject Islam in totality. These people should not be allowed to be made Followers of Isa, when clearly they seek is a total break from Islam. These people are weary of Islam. It can be, however, that these people maybe a minority and that in other parts of the world, Islam is seen in a better light.

Yet, the fact remains that Christianity can be used as a self-identity for converts in the Muslim world.

## **5.6 Muslim Friendly Bible Translations**

These Bible Translations remove the term Son of God and Father and replace them with Messiah and terms that make it easier for Muslims to understand the Bible. The desire to attempt to make the Bible easier for Muslims to understand is a noble task (Brown 2000). These translations in essences would be less offensive to Muslims

and these translations would be easier to accept by Muslims who are introduced to the Bible for the very first time. Brown, in essence, argues that the term *Messiah* is equal to the term *Son of God*. He has various reasons for why he comes to that conclusion.

The frequent use of the term *Son of God* alone (it is found 28 times in the Gospels<sup>138</sup>. If the whole New Testament is included would be much more), is a clear indication that the word is important. John 3:18, in fact, points out that believing in the name of Son of God gains one eternal life. Yet, if Brown's (2000) argument is advanced and the term *Messiah* is used instead, would the implication not be that Muslims are saved, since they accept freely that Jesus is the Messiah? The verse currently states: "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God". The word *Messiah* would be inserted without changing anything else, e.g. see the vast difference: "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Messiah".

The implications are massive. Yet, what should be kept in mind is that this is an English translation of the text. However, the theological implications are none the less grave, as Muslims would theoretically have no issue with the last adaptation of John 3:18. The reality is that the connotation maybe slightly different in Arabic, with Brown (2000:41) arguing:

In Arabic, for example, the words for son and father have a biological meaning only. The terms are not used broadly or metaphorically for other interpersonal relationships, not even for a nephew, step-son, or an adopted son, and certainly not for the king's subjects nor for God's people.

In, Arabic it is clear that Son and Father can be only understood in a biological sense according to Brown. Lingel (2011:3980) disagrees, however. He points out that Qur'an 2:177 is translated as son of the road. Yet, no Arabic speaker thinks that

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<sup>138</sup> This is found in the ESV translation. This is the standard text of this research paper.

there is a biological relationship between the individual traveller and the road. This is shocking because it comes directly from the Qur'an, of all places. Brown might be uniting Muslim theological fears with his understanding of the Arabic language to promote his view on Muslim friendly translations.

Brown (2000:51) further argues that the term *Lord* is more important for the revelation of Jesus' deity than the phrase *Son of God*. In fact, *Lord* is a term that is used to describe Jesus' deity. Matthew 22:41-45 is a perfect illustration of Jesus using *Lord* to demonstrate His deity and that He is more than a son of David. Thus, the argument is that this key term will not be changed and Jesus' deity is not compromised in any way. These translations would only remove the familiar phrase with more contextual phrases.

However, Matthew 14:33 points out, that after Jesus stilled the storm, the disciples worshiped Him and declared Him the Son of God. Clearly the worship and the title indicate that the disciples in Matthew's account understood Son of God in relation to Jesus' Divinity.

The truth is that the scripture is sufficient. The danger with translating the Bible in this way is that it removes key theological doctrines that are essential. The impression that the readers could receive might be the exact opposite of what Insider Movement proponents are trying to convey. The reality is that Brown is not attempting to be malicious, but he is rather attempting to make the Bible easier for Muslims.

The major stumbling block though, is that Muslims already view the Bible as corrupt. Imagine a translation that leaves out Son of God and Father. Various bible translations are already seen by Muslims as different versions of the Bible. The majority believe that the Bible is being corrupted by Christian scholars and that, in the past, it was corrupted. Any discovery in ancient manuscripts that sheds more light on scripture is viewed with suspicion by Muslims (Zebiri 1997:51).

Would this translation not underscore the false believe that Christians change the text to their whim, since clearly here would be a text essential in affirming their belief

(Lingel 2011)? Additionally, would this not create an even bigger gap between the MBBs and the Christian community?

Followers of Isa already have a social religious identity of Islam or something in between Christianity and Islam. The question that needs to be posed is would this bible translation lead to syncretism or contextualization? The researcher believes that, based on the arguments presented above, it would lead to syncretism.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter shifted gear, away from Christology towards missiological concerns. This chapter considered the Islamic culture and worldview. It demonstrated that Islamic cultural practices that may appear cultural in a western context, are in fact religious in an Islamic culture. Additionally, Christians have attempted contextual movements among Muslims, but they have not been highly successful. However, as two case studies found there were two attempts that bore some fruit.

Form and meaning was engaged with, in regard to the word Christian in Muslim communities. It was also argued that Muslims may misunderstand followers of Isa and think that they are Muslims.

Islamic identity was contrasted to Evangelical identity. Islamic Identity was more focused on external reality whereas Evangelical identity focused more on a core identity that had social aspect that flowed from the core identity.

## **Chapter 6. Presentations of Findings:**

### **6.1 Introduction**

- The previous five chapters were really streams in that they are separated. This chapter attempts to bring all those streams together before the conclusion.
- The facts that would be presented are all related to the following: four objectives of this study mentioned in the introduction that have been the driving force behind this study. These four objectives are the title for each section.
- Each discovery from the four objectives answers the thesis question “can an Evangelical Christian claim to be follower of Isa?”

### **6.2 Investigate the Islamic Christology that is formed by the Qur'an and Hadith in relation to Isa's death, return and purpose**

What was discovered in the chapter on Islamic Christology was that Isa's death was not as black and white in terms of the Qur'an (4:157-158, 19:33). When comparing the scholars from the classical tafsirs with modern tafsirs the modern tafsirs lead by Qutb (1995) were more willing to admit that concerning Isa's death on the cross there is the possibility he could have died. This discovery concerning the mystery about the death of Isa in the Qur'an surprised even the researcher. This seemed to prove that maybe Insiders may have a point that the Qur'an is not as anti-Christian as those who are against Insider Movements thought.

Furthermore, the return of Isa from the Qur'an was another area in which followers of Isa could demonstrate a connection to the Bible (Matthew 24:27, Acts 1:11). The Qur'an (43:61) just affirms that he would be one of the signs of the last hour. This was not contentious because you could interpret this verse in ways that Christian meaning could be brought out. However, when the hadith are brought into contention the issue became more contentious, namely because of what Isa was coming to do at his return. The hadiths demonstrated that Isa's purpose at his return will be to put an end to Christianity (Levirk, 2010:666). Isa would return and destroy Crosses and stop the system of Jizyah tax. Additionally, He is returning to make sure that the teachings of Muhammad will be implemented before the end of days. This clearly is disturbing for all those who look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus.

The purpose of Isa dealt with in the Qur'an (61:6) demonstrated that Isa's main role is to point forward to Muhammed. Furthermore, two areas were engaged to demonstrate the purpose of Isa first, the role of prophets within Islam. All Prophets of Islam with the exception of Muhammed had a local mission. With Muhammed's mission being a global mission. Moreover, Prophets in Islam experiences merely mirrored Muhammed's (Khalidi, 2001:10). Secondly, Isa pointed (Qur'an 61:6) forward to the coming of Muhammed.

The discovery was that from a biblical perspective there is much that could be absorbed about the Isa of the Qur'an. Namely in two areas Isa's death and his return from the Qur'an alone. However, on two major issues namely Isa's purpose and return from the hadith there is not much that can be connected with a Biblical perspective. Both Isa's purpose and return from the hadith are completely against the Bible's teaching. This indicates that followers of Isa can't claim to follow him based on what was discovered in Islamic Christology.

### **6.3 Compare the themes mentioned about the Isa of the Qur'an with the Jesus of the Gospels noting similarities and differences**

The chapter on Biblical Christology commenced by pointing out that Mark wrote to Christians in Rome who were experiencing severe persecution. The Roman Christians however, never comprised instead they chose to be misunderstood by Roman society. Christians in the first century never chose identities that would have made it easier to endure the persecution. Yet all of this could be linked back to Jesus who with his death demonstrated that obeying God is more important than choosing a socially acceptable identity. Additionally, Jesus and Isa were both misunderstood by their respective communities. Yet, Jesus and Isa were misunderstood for two exact opposite reasons, Jesus for claiming to be divine, Isa for stating that he was not divine just a man. Yet the discovery was Jesus chose to endure suffering over accepting an identity which would be easier for people to understand him. This linked in well with followers of Isa. In that they are choosing a self-identity which makes it easier for people to understand them yet Jesus chose the exact opposite. The question that was posed were they avoiding the persecution? If they were then claiming to be a follower of Isa was not wise.

The return of Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46) was to demonstrate that he is Lord and king over all. Jesus is returning to make sure that his teachings were implemented. Isa is returning to demonstrate (Bukhari, 2006, 4:657 & Muslim, 2006,1:289) that he submits to the teachings of Islam. Isa also is returning to destroy Christianity (Levirk, 2010:666). This affects followers of Isa in that the person they are using as a self-identity wants to destroy Christianity. Especially, since they are in regions of the world where local churches are established and other names for Jesus are used by local Christians. Furthermore, Muslims that Insiders are reaching out to, think of Isa based on their Islamic understanding of him. Additionally, it was pointed out that Isa in the Qur'an lacks the emphasis of Kingship which is so evident in the return of Jesus. Out of Jesus Kingship flows our identity to serve him.

The purpose of Jesus section, in the chapter on Biblical Christology was to demonstrate that Jesus was King. This was his stated purpose, that is why he was born and why he came into the world (John 18:33-38). Isa's purpose was to affirm Muhammad and Islam (Qur'an 61:4). Yet, how does all this information from the chapter on Biblical Christology relate to the thesis question? Can an Evangelical Christian claim to be a follower of Isa? The reality is that Islamic theology undergirds the Isa of the Qur'an, this proves that Morton (2011:3207) was correct in asserting that this is a false Christ. The trap that followers of Isa maybe falling into by mistake is that they maybe inadvertently endorsing Islam.

This is something that is highlighted more and more when Isa is compared with Jesus on a theological level. From a Biblical theological perspective this was a major concern during the study. Since the Bible warns Christians against following false Christs (Matthew 24:24). These comparisons demonstrated that it was not possible to claim to be a follower of Isa.

#### **6.4 Examine the approach to contextualization in the light of Islamic culture and Islamic worldview**

There are certain key points about Islamic culture and worldview that were discovered during this study, namely:



- Islam as a whole is very positive about Prophets. Islam has at its core articles of faith that ascribe the important role that prophets play in the Islamic faith.
- Muslims who subscribed to the Islamic worldview, naturally also have no major concern with Isa as a whole. Certain Muslims who are heart-broken appeal to the example of Isa (Mir, 2005). The worldview filters down to a cultural level.
- Choosing Isa as a self-identity would be the natural choice because Muslims have a positive understanding of him and his works. Yet when followers of Isa add the phrase Muslim followers of Isa it becomes a problem. As Muslims appear to think they are fellow Muslims.
- Additionally, are followers of Isa not being deceptive? Because they believe everything Evangelical Christians believe.
- What about converts from Islam who do not want Insider self-identity? There are some converts from the Muslim world who are choosing Christianity as a self-identity.

## **6.5 Scrutinize Insider proponent's choice of religious identity in relation to Evangelical Christian identity**

The chapter on contextual issues looked at the components of Muslim Identity. However, it was pointed out that all identities have three components, they are as follows: collective identity, social identity, core identity. The reality is that Islam emphasised more the social identity and collective identity over core identity. That does not mean that Islam does not have a core aspect of identity, they majored on the social and collective identity. This is demonstrated in Islamic societies and their emphasis on Islamic sharia law which in many ways forces conformity.

In contrast to Muslim Identity, Evangelical Christian identity was more focused on a core identity, all that we experience in conversion is done in our inner core. This is then translated into social identity and collective identity. The reality is that central to Evangelical Christian identity is a set of beliefs that transform the way we relate to the outside world.

This opposite approaches to identity namely, Evangelical Christian identity and Islamic identity affects followers of Isa, because they are converts from Islam. Moreover, they have come to accept the nature and purpose of Jesus found in the Bible. So Followers of Isa are at their core Christians. Yet they are socially and religiously Muslims. This for the researcher was deceptive. The Muslims that Insiders are trying to reach think, that the Insiders believe everything the Muslims believe in, but the Insiders are clearly teaching Christian doctrine.

Most of those who are for Insiders pointed out that there is hardly any success among Muslims in terms of conversion (Malloughi, 2009:3-7). Yet two examples were provided who had contextual movements among Muslims which kept their Christian identity. These movements were separated by over a hundred years. Yet, they illustrated that you could have a Christian identity among majority Muslim population. It would not be easy though and you need to follow of the example of Jesus who was misunderstood by the Roman and the Jews (John 1: 4-18) in terms of his identity.

There were converts from Algeria (Madaney, 2009) who are very much anti-Islam and Madaney points out that would you force them to use Insider identity? They converted from Islam because of the political situation in their country, and wanted to be Christian and not have anything to do with Islam. Another issue that was discussed was the problem of Homogenous churches. This creates a problem because (Ephesians 2:11-19) how would an Insider Church relate to Christians who are not Muslim converts. The risk was that there be an Insider Church and Evangelical Christian church (Buys 2013).

## **6.6 Summary**

When all the discoveries of the four objectives that have been discussed in this chapter are incorporated, the reality is that, from an Islamic Christological perspective, a Biblical Christological perspective, or from an anthropological and missiological view point, it is not possible to claim to be a follower of Isa. All four objectives attempted in this chapter were to demonstrate why these various disciplines illustrate why it is not possible to be a follower of Isa.

## CHAPTER 7

### 7.1 Conclusion and Recommendation

### 7.2 The Problem statement

There were two groups of scholars: one group, the Insider Movement group,<sup>139</sup> argued that a convert from Islam could claim to be a follower of Isa. A second group of scholars who were anti-IM,<sup>140</sup> argued that it was impossible. To answer this question, it must be broken down into four related questions, namely:

- How is Isa understood within the Qur'an and Hadith, dealing with three areas of his life namely his death, return and purpose found within selected passages in the Hadith and Qur'an?
- How does the Jesus of the Bible compare with the Isa of the Qur'an in the same three categories, focusing on the Gospel accounts of him (noting similarities and differences)?
- Is this approach by IM with regard to religious identity truly contextual in the light of Islamic culture and worldview?
- How do MBBs, who claim to follow Jesus in the Mosque, understand their identity as Evangelical Christians?

In the Islamic Christological Chapter, it was highlighted that certain connections indeed could bridge over to the Jesus of the Bible. Two very good examples were:

- There was some mystery surrounding the death of Isa.
- With the return of Isa from the Qur'an alone there were no problems.

The major problems arose when the hadith was engaged with. Muslims do not just rely exclusively on the Qur'an for their doctrine and practise. They use the hadith as well. The following table answers the second question and demonstrates the major differences between the Biblical Jesus and the Isa of the Qur'an, found in this study:

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<sup>139</sup>See Travis 2000, Parshall 2003, Higgins 2006, Brown 2007 and Lewis 2009.

<sup>140</sup>See Smith 2009, ed Lingel, Morton & Nikides 2011, Caner 2011, Houssney 2011.

Similarities between Isa and Jesus:	Differences between Jesus and Isa:
Both were misunderstood by their enemies.	Jesus' Kingship is vital for our identity. No mention of Isa's kingship.
Both will be returning.	Jesus is returning to see if His teachings have been implemented. Isa is returning to make sure Muhammed's teachings have been implemented.
Jesus and Isa both play important roles with regard to Judgment day.	Jesus died and that affects our identity. There is much mystery surrounding Isa's death.
Both are the Messiah.	Jesus is returning to be worshiped. Isa did not accept that he should be worshiped.
Both are the Word of Allah.	Jesus' identity as Son of God is vital to Him and to us as Christians. Isa denies he is the Son of God in any way.

In answering the third question, certain key comments should be made, that have been discovered through the course of the study. The researcher is willing to admit that maybe claiming their approach could be syncretistic, harsh, since they may be adapting to their reality. Thus, through the progress of the study, the researcher strongly came to disagree with followers of Isa, although he feels sympathy towards them from a practical point of view. Yet, the identity was not contextual in the way that Islam feels about all prophets, especially Muhammed. Additionally, Islamic culture is fine with Isa. What Islamic culture is not fine with, is the Jesus of the Bible. Isa is a Muslim and he affirms Islamic doctrine by prompting Muhammed and will one-day return to destroy Christianity. Moreover, Islamic culture is all encompassing, as demonstrated by the example of Durie (2008:40) something simple like Yawning is given religious significance, how much more a prophet from Islam who is a Muslim.

Finally, the fourth question was answered when it was noted that, the MBB's that are implementing Insider movements tend to move closer towards Islam. This was

demonstrated when Soleh pointed out to his family that he was a Muslim follower of Isa. Thus, in terms of core identity he was Evangelical, but. In terms of social religious identity, he was Muslim. As stated earlier, this created problems future generations and their family's identities of being in between two religious movements

### **7.3 Aim**

The study aimed to engage critically with MBB's claims that they are followers of Isa. This was done by evaluating Isa from the Qur'an and hadith and then contrasting that with the Jesus of the Bible. Moreover, dealing with Islamic culture and worldview and demonstrating that followers of Isa were syncretistic in their approach.

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### **7.4 Closing Comments**

All those who are working among Muslims would love nothing more than to see themselves saved. This research project is keeping up with the Spirit of what Parshall states: "I do not want to finish my life (now sixty-six years into it) as one known as a heresy hunter" (2003:76). The researcher did not want to appear to be arguing that Insider Movements are demonic, instead, he attempted to demonstrate that, at certain points, they need to consider what they are promoting. This is the spirit in which the researcher attempted to demonstrate his arguments in this thesis. He further felt that, as the project progressed, he grew in sympathy towards followers of Isa. The following warning should be heeded by those who use the Insider Movements approach:

It is wise for church in mission to Muslim settings to function unobtrusively. It is important to attempt to function with a low profile and to work in convergence with the local culture as much as possible. But my judgment is that little is gained and perhaps much is lost when Christians identify with the Muslim community in ways that can easily be interpreted as undermining the internal integrity of the Muslim community. My judgement is that it is much easier for Muslims to tolerate the presences of Christians among them when the definitions of that Christian

community are quite clear. This does not mean the definitions of community shall be obnoxious or non-contextual. But the Muslims must be able to know who are the followers of Jesus are in distinction to those seek to walk in the Sunnah (customary practice) of Mohammed (Shenk, 1994:16).

The researcher gives his 100 percent stamp of approval to the above quote. Shenk is correct in his opinion that Muslims would view Christians as deceivers if they knew what followers of Isa truly believed in Isa.

## **7.5 Recommendations and suggested topics for further research**

- The first suggestion would be that this study lacked in one area, namely that it did not have empirical evidence. The researcher did not interview followers of Isa. It is recommended for future researchers that they engage with followers of Isa and hear them on their own terms. All the work that was engaged in was taken from scholars who have engaged them. Yet, nobody who focused exclusively on followers of Isa has been come across during this limited research. Yes, other movements have been interviewed by Parshall (2003:68-70), but it was not exclusively based on the followers of Isa's movement.
- More research should be done on specific followers of Isa, and note, on such a broad group, covering many countries around the world. Instead, a more contextual study, focused on a specific group in a specific country, should bear more fruit.
- It would also be interesting to observe what happens to second generation followers of Isa. What would be their identity and would they move closer to: Biblical Christianity or Islam? A longitudinal study would be very interesting to observe. The researcher suggests that a study be made over a twenty-year period and changes in practices as well as theology be noted. The reality is that this should be considered more as a project than a master's dissertation or a doctoral thesis, naturally due to the time that the study would need to observe these particular movements.
- Another area of enquiry that maybe worthwhile to engage in, is how does the Muslim community view these individuals? This could be done through empirical evidence, not by assumption based on how Muslims normally respond to Converts.
- The question would need to be raised: how do followers of Isa relate to normal Christian believers in their community? What ways are they attempting to foster closer relationships with those Christians? The real danger is that they could find themselves in a context like South Africa, where each race group has their own unique church.
- Further studies could be undertaken on how neutral Islamic culture is, looking at ways to transform Islamic culture with Christian forms through the work of

Parshall (2003). Is it possible to transform Islamic culture or should it be totally avoided at all costs?

- The effect that the law of Apostasy in Islam has on the growth of Church movements among Muslims in Muslims majority areas, is an area that needs lots of attention and research, as this is a major issue. As Schlorff (2006:142-143) points out this is also contributed to keeping Muslims away from other religious movements, especially Christianity.
- Further studies would need to be done on how Churches have been affected by the Dhimmi System and how this affects local churches in Muslim countries and church plants among local Muslims and if this contributes to the raise of insider Movements.



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