

Discussions on the Christ in Kashmir Claim

The following discussions are, in order:

1. A letter to my internet seeker **Aravind**, who asked me to comment on the claim that Jesus went to Kashmir to learn from the Hindu mystics, which became part of His teaching, and later died there.
2. A letter to my internet disciple **Anand**, who as a new follower of Jesus, had also asked whether it is true that Jesus' tomb is in Kashmir. I quoted my response to Anand as I wrote to Aravind.
3. These questions from my internet contacts spurred me to ask my son **Jimmy**, then working in Kashmir, to visit the alleged tomb of Jesus near Srinagar, and to research the issue on location. I quote Jimmy's lengthy report to me in my response to Aravind.
4. I add my own final comments on Jimmy's report, closing my letter to **Aravind**.

1. Hello Aravind,

I am glad to see that you are still thinking about your question and eagerly waiting for an answer.

Since last week I have indeed been trying to research this question about Jesus coming to India. By God's providence my son is in North India where he is doing cultural research and I asked him to actually go and visit for me that alleged tomb where Jesus is said to be buried in Srinagar. He agreed and will be going there next week. As several inquirers have asked me this question I thought it will be useful to say my son has been there and what he has seen.... I am also trying to locate a book that was recommended which addresses that question but haven't got it yet.

To satisfy your interest, I will start with an answer for you today, which is closely related to your question. I am going to copy for you the question which another counselee asked me some months ago, and the answer I gave him. It may completely satisfy you, or it may not completely satisfy, in which case I will follow up with more information when I hear back from my son and read that book. I am a qualified Bible teacher and counselor, and to get to that point I have of course studied and read. I am not what you would call a research scholar doing firsthand historical and anthropological research, and maybe you are not either. But I'm sure that we both know that to prove a historical claim it takes more than just words - historians look for hard evidence, such as when a claim or legend first appears in written records. How many different sources make the same claim? I would want to know, when is the first written claim that Jesus appeared in India? How can it be proved that such a named person was the very same Jesus who is written about in the Bible? If claims appear only centuries after the life of Jesus (which is well attested in all kinds of biblical and Roman records to be first century AD), then they are not very reliable.

If you are interested in the whole subject of historical authenticity of the Bible's claims, Aravind, then I recommend a book called 'The Case for Christ' by Lee Strobel. Now he is a true firsthand researcher. He was an atheist and aggressive investigative journalist who became a Christian. His own story of his journey of faith is very interesting, as well as the well-researched question which he answers in the book, Is the Bible reliable? Is Jesus really who the Bible says He is? Do try to get this book at a Christian bookstore. If you cannot find this book, let me know and I will gladly send you a copy personally.

2. Now here is the question from my other counselee, Anand (already a follower of Jesus), and my answer to him:

Dear Sister Asha,

Praise the lord....

I do have question with me. I want to know that in the bible, Jesus is discussing with some people in temple in his childhood [age 12]. Then suddenly the next appearance is in the desert [age 30]. I couldn't understand the time in between the two stages. Where he was? What he did? How much he prayed????????????? And all????? If possible please give reply.

ANAND

Dear Brother Anand,

I'm glad to hear from you again. You have asked a good question. Many people in fact have asked me this, it is something that makes us curious: Why is the Bible silent about those years of Jesus' life? In fact, there are many theories circulating around India that Jesus came to India and learned from some gurus before going back to Israel and preaching. Some say He went to India after His preaching in Israel and then died in Srinagar.

These theories are completely false. I feel they are motivated more by ego than by any fact or supporting evidence! It is much like someone saying, 'I went to school with Gandhiji when we were just little boys'. As if that gives us some claim to fame. Does the Lord Jesus, who created the world, need to learn from someone He created? Of course not! See Isaiah 40:13-14: 'Who has understood the mind of the Lord, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?' No, Jesus came from God to earth to teach us; that is why He could amaze the priests with His wisdom when He was just a boy! See John 16:28, Luke 2:46-47. Not only did He teach, but more importantly, He died for us and came to life again, in order to accomplish our salvation. No philosophy can do that. Philosophy cannot save us or change us from being sinners. We need a Saviour to do that.

I have started answering your question by denying the popular myth that tries to 'fill in the gap' with an imagination which cannot be true. Now, without that, all we have left to give us information about Jesus is the biblical record. And as you have noticed, the Bible is indeed silent about those years of Jesus' life from age twelve to thirty (Luke 3:23). All it says in 2:51 after the temple incident is that Jesus went back to Nazareth with His parents and was obedient to them. Joseph was a carpenter and raised Jesus in that trade. He must have gone to synagogue and school as other Jewish boys. But as for personal habits, we are not told anything and we do not need to know anything. The Bible does not intend to give us a full biography of Jesus' life, as we would write a biography of Mahatma Gandhi today. The Bible presents the message of Jesus as saviour, and we are told just what we need to know in order to prove that Jesus is indeed worthy of being called the Son of God, the Saviour, Redeemer, Lord, and Coming King.

While He was still a child and youth His divine attributes were not active because it would not be proper for a child to show such things, he could not be accepted in his mission. While fully God in the flesh, Jesus accepted the limitations of being born as a baby and growing through childhood to adulthood. Only when He was ready to begin real ministry and had the age to have credibility and respect in society could the Bible record in more detail His life and activities.

And we have to be content with this, Anand. From the Bible's record of Jesus' three years of ministry we can see that He was morally perfect, He fulfilled prophecies, He taught the truth about God with authority, He performed miracles, He displayed unlimited knowledge, He demonstrated complete love while not tolerating sin. Again the absolute most important thing He did which no other religious leader has done or could do was to die for our sins and get up alive again in the same body to prove He has the power to give us eternal life, forgiveness, and salvation. I cannot think that knowing anything about His early years would add anything important to our knowledge of Jesus or give us more reason to put our faith in Him as Son of God and Saviour. John 20:30-31 says, 'Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name'. What we have is enough.

God bless you as you keep on searching His Word and increasing your faith as you believe and obey it. Acts 17:11 says that the Bereans showed honourable character by receiving Paul's preaching and searching the Scriptures afterward to make sure what he said was true....

END OF ANSWER TO ANAND

Aravind, as we continue to discuss and think about who Jesus is and whether there is evidence for the claim that He went to India, we have to realise something very important: if the claim that Jesus went to India and died there is

true, then all of the Bible's claims about Jesus are false. Both cannot be true, because the Bible clearly states that Jesus lived and died in Israel, and came alive again 3 days later, and 40 days after that, left the earth by bodily rising into heaven in the full view of His disciples (Acts 1:1-11). Nothing that the Bible records about Jesus can allow for the possibility that He went to India. He did not need to go to India any more than He needed to go to Europe or Africa or any place else. He is creator of the whole world and everything in it and has no need to be taught by any human. So if the claim of Jesus going to India is true, then the 'Jesus' who went there is not the Jesus of the Bible, because that very claim denies the truth of the Bible! Do you understand what I am trying to explain here, Aravind? Whoever is buried in that tomb in Srinagar is then of no consequence to me. Just another man who lived and died like anyone else. Being dead himself, he cannot promise me eternal life.

The Bible tells us that once Jesus had finished His mission on earth, He left it to His Jewish disciples to write down and proclaim that message to all people. They started from where they lived - Jerusalem - and expanded from there eventually throughout the known world. The message of salvation by faith in Jesus is for all people, for all time. So even those of us like you and I who are not Jewish can know peace with God, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life through knowing that Jesus is true, though He is not physically present on the earth any more. He is alive and reigning as God in heaven, waiting for the right time to come back and conclude history, bring about the Day of Judgement, eliminate evil, and re-create heaven and earth.

Yours truly,
Asha
Response Center staff

3. REPORT ON ROZABAL TOMB (ALLEGED TOMB OF JESUS IN SRINAGAR) BY JIMMY DOUGLASS

Here is all I have learned about the 'Jesus tomb' in Srinagar. I visited the tomb/shrine ('ziarat' in Urdu) myself last week. You're not allowed to take pictures inside, but I've attached two pictures of the outside from someone else's camera (unfortunately the pictures are not very good quality). The shrine, which is known as 'Rozabal', is located in the heart of the old city of Srinagar. There are literally dozens of shrines within a kilometer of Rozabal, many of which are of greater importance. By Kashmiri standards, Rozabal is a relatively small and nondescript shrine, a small building with a sign on the outside which you can read in the pictures I've attached. Inside there was a foyer area that I went into, and then a locked metal-bar gate (which would usually be opened, but it was after hours when I visited), beyond which I could see the actual tomb. It was really long, about 12 feet long, and of course was covered in beautiful cloths and flowers and stuff. All around people had tied their little 'prayer-strings', pieces of red yarn to represent their prayers/help their prayers reach up to Heaven.

Because I visited the shrine in the late afternoon, the inner part by the tomb itself was already closed (although I could easily see it through the metal bars), and the only other person there was a caretaker. We asked the caretaker whose tomb this was and he didn't answer. We asked if it was Jesus' tomb, and he still didn't answer. I think he was kind of annoyed at us for coming so late in the day. One thing that's supposed to be at the shrine but which I did not see, probably because the inner part was locked up, is a set of gigantic foot imprints (apparently like 18 inches long) in stone, which are supposedly the footprints of the person who's buried there.

There is a popular English book called "Christ in Kashmir" by Aziz Kashmiri, which I'm sure you could find on the internet. I have not read it.

Below is a summary of the information I have gleaned from a different book. It is not precisely clear what the author's religious background is, although my guess is he is a secular Hindu (other chapters especially make it seem that way). He does say "I believe that Jesus died on the cross, was buried, rose on the third day and ascended bodily to heaven . . . and yet the evidence [of Jesus' being buried in Srinagar] is too plentiful, too solid, to ignore", also he considers himself not part of the "Christian establishment." Comments in italics are my own, everything else is my quotation or summary of both the information and the reasoning that the author presents.

Parvez Dewar, "Kashmir: Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh; Travel, trekking, culture, history, wildlife, almost everything," Manaz Publications, New Delhi, 2004

Chapter 27, pp447-460, "Lord Jesus Christ in Kashmir and Ladakh"

The Muslim establishment of Kashmir neither supports nor is hostile to the idea of Rozabal being Jesus' tomb. The Quran rejects the idea of Jesus dying on the cross (4:157) and affirms his ascension to Heaven (3:55; 4:158). Thus, the Muslim position could at best claim that Jesus did not die on the cross in Palestine, but went to live in Kashmir but did not die there, and later ascended into Heaven. Any Muslim who accepts the validity of the Quran, which denies both any death and by implication any resurrection of Jesus, cannot believe that Jesus is buried in Srinagar.

The clincher is a passage from the Sanskrit 'Bhavishya Maha Puran' (lit, The Great Scripture about the Future), believed to have been written by Vyas in A.D. 115. Bracketed phrases '[']' are by Parvez Dewar. The passage reads:

"There [while in a country in the mountains, Raja Shakewahin] saw [what appeared to be] a Raja of Sakas at Wien, who was fair and wore white clothes. ['Wien' is 18km from Srinagar] He asked the man who he was. His reply was that he was Yusashaphat [Youz Asouf or Yuz Aasaf], and had been born of a woman . . . [The man also said:] 'O Raja, when truth had disappeared and there

was no limit [to evil practices] in the malechha [infidel] country, I appeared there and through my work the guilty and the wicked suffered, and I too suffered at their hands.' The Raja asked him what his religion was. He replied, 'It is to establish love and truth and to purify one's heart and for this I am called Isa Masih.'"

This quotation is according to a 1910 edition published under the authority of a Hindu Maharaja. Dewan goes on to comment that 'the Sanskrit text' (it is unclear to me what exactly this refers to, since it obviously doesn't refer to simply the above quotation) has four 'incredible references.' Verse 22 (whatever that refers to) mentions 'Ish Putram' which Dewan translates as 'the Son of God,' explaining that 'Ish' is 'close to' the Indo-Islamic version of the name of Jesus. Two verses later the speaker says 'Masiho Ahem,' 'I am the messiah', and the next verse begins with the name 'Isha Maseeh', Jesus the Messiah.

In other words, according to the 1910 publication of the Sanskrit document supposedly written in A.D. 115, whose validity is not discussed by Dewan except to mention that his "first reaction . . . was . . . this must be a forgery. Or at least the book wasn't originally written in A.D. 115. This could be a later interpolation", there was a fair man in Kashmir in white clothes who called himself Jesus the Messiah and the son of God. [Ever since the Aryan invasion the people of Kashmir have always been fair in complexion.] Dewan follows up this summary statement by adding that "'Ish' is the Hindu word for God." This is confusing to me since there is 'Ish' which is translated as 'God,' and 'Isha' which is translated as Jesus. Anyway, Dewan also notes that the concept of 'messiahs' is unknown to Hinduism, implying that Hindus would not have made all this up. It seems to me that a Jesus appearing to Sanskrit speakers unfamiliar with the concept of 'anointed one' presumably would not have chosen to borrow an unfamiliar Hebrew expression to express his identity, even the meaning of which would also have been unclear to the audience. Additionally, the passage from the Bhavishya Maha Puran does not discuss Jesus' death or burial in Kashmir.

It is widely accepted that Rozabal is the grave of a non-Muslim saint or prophet or king, who was/is known by the name of Youz Asouf (the main point in question is the identity of this Youz Asouf and whether he was actually Jesus Christ). Hazrat Youz Asouf's feet face west, the same direction as Mecca; and the stone used, the architecture, the impression of the giant feet on stone, and the decorative motifs in the tomb are all pre-Islamic Hindu elements, according to Dewan. The architecture and decorative motifs seemed to my untrained eye to be just the same as all the other shrines around South Asia of Muslim saints, many of which are also frequented by Hindus. Dewan then points out that since Hindus are cremated, this Youz Asouf must have been Jewish or Christian. Dewan then spends two pages describing early Kashmiri beliefs about "Christ-like saints" taken from the Persian "Rajatarangini", written in 1148-1150, showing similarities between a couple of different accounts of ancient characters in

Kashmir, and aspects of Jesus' life/death/resurrection according to the New Testament.

Dewar concludes this part by saying that “some historians, like Hassan (19th century), list Yuz Aasaf among the Muslim saints of Kashmir. Sufi, the 20th century historian, pooh-poohs the Christ in Kashmir theory. He says that Yuz Aasaf was merely the Egyptian ambassador at the court of Budshah [the 15th century king of Kashmir]. . . Dr. Sufi . . . points out that the name Yuz Aasaf, if written in the Arabic script, can be read as ‘Bodhisattva’ [the Buddha].”

Origins of the Belief.

Before the 1900s, the belief that Jesus came to/was buried in Kashmir was limited mainly to folk beliefs. Then in 1908, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement [a sect of Muslims who believe in a series of Messiahs, including one yet to come; they are considered apostates by mainstream Islam] sent an envoy to Srinagar to research the Jesus belief. The envoy, Khalifa Noor-ud-Din of Gujrat district, Punjab, published a book of his findings entitled “Maseeh Hindustan Mein” (“The Messiah in India”), in which he cites “Islamic sources” to show that Jesus traveled through Iran and Afghanistan to Kashmir, and also that then ten lost tribes of Israel migrated to and settled in Kashmir. In the next fifty years other accounts by Muslims and Christians were published with claims of Jesus, mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, “Judas Thomas” and Moses all living and dying in northern Pakistan, northern India, and Xinjiang (western China). Dewar does not mention what evidence any of these authors provide.

In 1967 a group of top ranking Kashmiri Muslim clerics and journalists went to Rozabal in Srinagar and interviewed the residents of the surrounding neighborhood (obviously Muslims). Every person said that the person buried in the tomb was a Prophet by the name of Yuz Aasaf who had come to Kashmir during the reign of Raja Gopanand [probably A.D. 79-109].

Dewar concludes his account of the theory's history with “thus . . . the theory was propounded, and has been kept alive, by the Ahmadiyya movement throughout the Indian sub-continent.”

Dewar mentions that one of the main supporters of the theory today, Aziz Kashmiri, uses a verse in the Quran as evidence of Jesus living in Kashmir: “And we made the son of Mary and his mother as a Sign: We gave them both shelter of high ground, affording rest and security and furnished with springs.” (23:50). Dewar mentions that Aziz uses a commentary on the Quran which adds the words “and due to greenery” after “high ground”, and comments that “for Aziz Kashmiri the place referred to in verse 23:50 is obvious: Kashmir.” Dewar says he himself uses the official translation published by the King of Saudi Arabia, which has a footnote on this verse: “there is no need to look far for the place where the mother and child were given secure shelter . . . there was a fruitful

palm-tree . . .” Dewar points out Kashmir has no palm trees, and that his version of the Quran implies that the sojourn occurred immediately after Christ’s birth, whereas Aziz assumes it took place “after the event of the Cross.” Dewar mentions that another of Aziz’s sources is “oral testimony saying that the people of Kashmir believe that Yuz Aasaf, the prophet buried at Rozabal, had come to Kashmir from the West 200 years ago.”

As far as the tomb itself goes, Dewar mentions only one source that Aziz presents: a “10th or 11th century Arabic book, Shaikh Al-Said-us-Sadiq’ Ikmal-ud-Din.” The book says that Yuz Aasaf, prior to his death, directed one of his disciples to raise a tomb over him. Yuz Aasaf then stretched his legs towards the west and died. The tomb the disciple made was “in the style of the Israelites and kept the window in the same manner.” The mark of Yuz Aasaf’s feet were inscribed on a stone. This is the extent of the information Dewar provides about the tomb.

Who was Hazrat Yuz Aasaf?

16th and 19th century scholars accepted that Yuz Aasaf was from the West and was a prophet/king, but none described a date as early as the beginning of the Christian era. Yuz is “similar to several non-English pronunciations of the name of ‘Jesus’. It is one of the Persian names of Jesus.” The oldest extant historical records about Yuz Aasaf are from Syed Naseer-ud-din Baihaqi, a 15th century saint who is buried next to Yuz Aasaf. He wrote (in Persian) that Yuz Aasaf had died “several centuries earlier” and was a “prophet” and a “sultan”. Another early history of Kashmir, “Vaqeyat-e-Kashmir,” says that “God appointed Yuz Aasaf as “the prophet of Kashmir”, so Yuz arrived and “invited the people to [accept] the truth.” Another source, a contemporary of Kashmir’s 15th century king Budshah (Zain-ul-Abidin), mentions a “Yuz Asaf” [spelling Dewar’s] as an Egyptian envoy in Budshah’s court. One 19th century historian, Hassan, believes that the prophet “Yuz Aasaf” and the 15th century Egyptian envoy “Yuz Asaf” are the same. Hassan claims a certain Hindu temple in Kashmir [which I’ve been to] used to have an inscription describing an Egyptian youth who came to Kashmir and claimed to be a prophet, and that the Sikhs erased the inscription during their rule of Kashmir.

There is another source quoted by Aziz Kashmiri, the 15th century Mulla Nadiri who was the first Muslim historian of Kashmir. Nadiri says:

“During [Raja Gopdatta’s] reign [i.e. probably A.D. 79-109] . . . Hazrat Yuz Asaf from Baitul Muqaddas [Jerusalem – this is indeed the Persian/Urdu/Quranic word for Jerusalem] [came] to the holy Valley, proclaimed his prophethood . . . further, [a Persian minister named Sulaiman built a temple and] on one of the stones . . . he inscribed, ‘In these times Yuz Asaf proclaimed his prophethood’ and inscribed on the other stone of the stairs that he was Yusu, Prophet of Children of Israel.”

Dewar mentions that Aziz quotes Nadiri as elsewhere saying, "I have seen in a book of Hindus that this prophet [Yuz Aasaf] was really Hazrat Isa [Jesus] Ruh Allah"

As for the validity of Aziz's source Nadiri, Dewar has this to say: "No one has seen a copy of [Nadiri's] book in the last four hundred years. The only remnants that we have of Nadiri's work are excerpts and quotations from it in Syed Ali's history, which was written in A.D. 1579."

Well, that's a basic summary of Parvez Dewan's chapter on 'Jesus in Kashmir'. I have purposely tried to just present you with all the information, and let you take it from there. I personally see no reason to doubt that the Rozabal shrine was somehow associated with a historical character by the name of Yuz Aasaf / Youz Asouf), quite possibly pre-Islamic (Islam came to Kashmir in the 1300s/1400s from Persia). What is astounding to me is the almost complete lack of anything even claiming to be evidence that Youz Asouf was indeed Jesus of Nazareth. As far as I can tell, Dewan talked about claims that Jesus himself came to Kashmir (based on almost nothing), claims of 'Christ-like saints' in Kashmir, and claims that Yuz Aasaf was a pre-Islamic saint from West Asia. However, as far as I can tell, the only two things presented to suggest that Jesus actually died in Kashmir, in other words that Jesus was Youz Asouf who died in Kashmir, were the statement that "Yuz" (or "Youz") is similar to several non-English pronunciations of 'Jesus', and that the current historian Aziz Kashmiri quoted the 15th century Mulla Nadiri (whose book has not been seen in 400 years) as saying that "I have seen in a book of Hindus that this prophet [Yuz Aasaf] was really Hazrat Isa [Jesus] Ruh Allah."

A Muslim cannot accept that Jesus died in Kashmir and say that the Quran is the true and final revelation of God. Any Hindu should know that the theory of Jesus' death in Kashmir was propagated by Muslims, and if someone wants to believe rationally, then the credibility of Nadiri and his unspecified 'book of Hindus' and any other sources one may find claiming that Yuz Aasaf was Jesus Christ should be compared with the credibility of the New Testament.

All right, I hope that at least some of this is useful to you and the person who was asking about it. That's if for now.

END OF JIMMY'S REPORT

4. MY CLOSING COMMENTS:

Aravind, my own conclusion is to add to what Jimmy said: that any Muslim or Hindu claims that that is the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth must be compared to the credibility of the claims of the New Testament. That is a whole different topic about which books and books have been written. I could recommend one which

makes extremely interesting reading: 'The Case for Christ' by Lee Strobel. It is likely available online or in any Christian bookstore in India. The historical and archaeological evidence for the New Testament being true and reliable are extensive compared with the scanty evidence for this claim about the Srinagar tomb. Whoever is buried in that tomb is no god who can give eternal life, but just another dead man who may or may not have been a revered saint in his lifetime, like so many other mystic saints honoured by Hindus and Muslims.

Let us give our attention and worship only to the one who deserves it and who can give back to you the spiritual life I hope you are longing for.