

Contextualizing Eschatology in Abrahamic Religions

Tariq Ahmadbutt*

Corresponding author: Tariq Ahmadbutt

ABSTRACT: *Man has always been curious about the future perhaps out of its uncertainty. His inquisitiveness about it has provoked him to seek even a glimpse of it from mystics, spiritualists, prophets and seers. In spite of tremendous scientific advancements coupled with modern philosophies this urge of his has continued over ages and stands even today unabated. Even a small guess about future inspires a person to know more and more. This inquisitiveness on his part to know maximum about future as also the ultimate destiny of humankind and Universe has given rise to a separate branch of knowledge - the science of Eschatology. Eschatology over a period of time has emerged as a distinct branch of theology that addresses the issues relating to the final events in the history of mankind. Given the drastic changes that have engulfed the human life across its all spheres during the last century, a new era envisaging revolutionary turn of events at the global level have made people to seriously ponder over these global events as an indication of the beginning of end or the final phase of human history where mankind would find itself surrounded and finally consumed by catastrophes of the largest order ever since the world came in to being. Accordingly an attempt has been undertaken to highlight the Eschatology and its relevance today in light of the three Abrahamic religions of the world that are in agreement on major issues of eschatology for general awareness of public at large and Muslim world in particular to guide mankind in the hardest of the situations that are ahead.*

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I. PRELUDE

Curiosity about the future and beyond has been in the nature of man ever since he began his journey of life in the world and this urge of his has all along inspired him to know more and more beyond life and death. His pursuit of knowledge to know the unknown has fetched him a huge inventory of knowledge over a period of time. His endeavour has not gone unanswered and today while being on earth he is able to judge the movement of galaxies and heavenly bodies beyond his habitat with fair amount of accuracy and precision. Ultimate destiny of his own and that of the universe around him has been all along a matter of interest to him. His quest and endeavour in this area has resulted in the development of a separate branch of knowledge commonly now known as Eschatology. Eschatology is a doctrine that spells out the ultimate destiny of the mankind and the universe with an emphasis on last time eventualities.

The word ‘*eschatology*’ comes from the Greek *eschatos/eschatē/eschaton* meaning extreme, last, or least (Rushdoony: 2005)¹ and “logy” meaning “the study of.”² It envisages that this branch of theology is concerned with the study of the last part of life or death. According to Link (1976)⁴ it is designated as “the end-point of a continuously conceived succession of circumstances.” While as some conceive it as the ‘study of last things, some others describe it as ‘the last age’. In other sense, whatever is in the future can generally be subsumed under Eschatology. Since eschatological things are generally those things which are ahead, and specifically those which are at the very end-time⁵, it concerns both personal eschatological issues such as death etc. as well as things having a general or corporate focus. Eschatology as such, according to Grenz (1992)⁶ is the word concerning or the

* Mr. Tariq Ahmad Butt is the Research Scholar (Ph.D) in the Shah-e-Hamadan Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar

study of, what is ultimate or last, that is, what is final in the program of God”. While summing up the discourse it could be inferred that eschatology is an end time doctrine that studies the last time events of the man kind and the universe. Since divine bestowed knowledge is claimed in various religions, it shall be appropriate to study it in light of three major religions of the world viz; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam which share a common lineage of Prophet Abraham. An attempt shall be therefore be made to study various concepts of eschatology as they exist in Abrahamic religions which makes more than half of the world population enumerating its modern connotations too.

II. RATIONALE FOR PRESENT STUDY

Global events are bringing the world into overlap with the predictions made in various religions of the world. The present and the predicted are merging together as one, in what is becoming an ever clearer pattern for discerning minds, that we are all, willingly or unwillingly, part of Allah's Divine Plan for the final scene currently on display in the world. Although we do have some literature here and there in a fragmented manner on the topic yet it has to be admitted that almost no serious effort has gone in researching upon the topic in a manner that could come up with balanced eschatological bunch of inferences and guidelines for people in general and Muslim in particular. The concept of the end times or more technically eschatology varies from religion to religion. The Hindus, Buddhists and Zoroastrians have different thought regarding the end times. However there are certain common beliefs on end times among the Muslims, Christians and Jews as they share major ingredients of eschatology. According to Leonard (2010)⁷ 'all three faiths believe they are the heirs or benefactors of those promises, and even modern adherents think about the world around them in terms of how those promises and the prophecies that followed will play out'. Since Judaism, Christianity and Islam share a common lineage on the subject, a study shall be made to assess eschatological signs as described in these religions to find out the possible linkages with the events happening currently across the globe.

III. OBJECTIVES

- to study the concept of eschatology with a focus on its modern connotations; and
- to assess the relevance of Eschatology to the modern times in general and
- to study Abrahamic eschatology through the study of Jewish, Christian and Islamic eschatologies.

IV. ESCHATOLOGY-A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

In its essence eschatology has its origins in religious perceptions. Phan (1997)⁸ notes, "as a rule, religions claim to offer answers to questions regarding the beyond and to help their followers attain ultimate happiness variously referred to as heaven, paradise, eternal life, or nirvana." Yet today eschatology has modern connotations too which are secular in nature and are also based on various scientific theories. Following the eighteenth-century enlightenment, eschatology has been 'reinterpreted in terms of philosophical, ethical, social, political, economic, and historical categories (Russell;2012).⁹ Physical eschatology is a sub-discipline of cosmology, which is the study of the large-scale structure and evolution of the universe. Cosmology has two parts: Cosmogony is the sub-discipline which studies the origin and past history of the universe. Eschatology, by contrast, is the sub-discipline which explores the future and final fate of the universe. Just as physical cosmogony looks back in time to retrodict the history of the cosmos based on traces of the past and the laws of nature, so physical eschatology looks forward in time to predict the future of the cosmos based on present conditions and laws of nature. Modern Eschatology relates to the end time assessments of events by Scientists who maintain that the universe had a beginning in "Big Bang" and will end in a "Big Crunch" which will create super black hole that will explode to create a brand new universe. Others say the universe will become too cold to "Big Freeze."

V. ESCHATOLOGY - CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Eschatological dispositions if on one hand reveal the God's grand plan for the entire universe including mankind, these have all along served as the conceptual guiding phenomena that have helped man to aspire for and ensure smooth sailing through the ages. More often than not God's plan having been revealed in advance individual and corporate policy making has had its due consideration especially those revealed through the Prophet Abraham and this practice continues up till now. Leonard (2010)⁷ says "Over the course of the last two centuries, American politicians have pursued a vision of the United States as a beacon to the rest of the world. Presidents on both the political right and left have spoken of a world devoid of crime, war, pollution, and want. Opponents have attacked these lofty goals as unachievable and a colossal waste of resources. What you may not know is that both views are rooted in ancient prophecies about the end times, and that differences in political views today emanate from differences in Biblical interpretation from two thousand years ago." Even today when the west has distanced itself of religious dogmas the policy making of the super powers is among others highly influenced by the end time prophecies. Commenting on it Leonard (2010)⁷ maintains that "Our world is shaped, influenced, and in some cases governed by age-old prophecies recorded in the sacred literature of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Quite apart from the theological question of whether a divine being has a hand in world affairs, believers and their views on prophecies indisputably affect our world".

It is not true of Jews or Christians alone, the Muslim regimes though of late have also started to anticipate the future events in light of the eschatological dispositions of their sacred literature and plan their policies accordingly. This phenomena has become more dominant during the last 100 odd years when the age old shape of things has overturned with such a speed of events that has completely changed not only the balance of power across the world against them but has also put the entire Muslim community across the globe at the

receiving end incurring heavy losses and damages since the abolition of the UsmaniKhilafah in 1924. The turn of events since then has completely smashed the Muslim world. Taking due cognizance of these events and the implications thereof the Muslimummah has started rethinking on the possible alternatives. America as the ruling state of the world has played a fundamental role in the situation that has erupted in the middle eastafter the world war II. One can never undermine the significance the Judo-Christian lobby that has all along impacted the American foreign policy visa vis middle east conflict. Leonard (2010)⁷having closely watched the situation remarks, “As I examined the subject more closely I found strong eschatological themes expressing themselves in American foreign policy. Both right- and left-wing agendas, both conservative and liberal ministers, both hawks and doves have recourse to Biblical expressions, symbols, and themes as they shape the course of foreign relations”.

VI. ABRAHAMIC LINEAGE—THE UNIFYING FACTOR

The common factor among three faiths - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - is that all of them descent from Abraham and as such are related to each other. Each of the three Abrahamic faiths has a body of foundational literature that is considered by most or at least by many believers to be sacred being of divine origin. Besides having a common descent they share some fundamental eschatological dispositions including end of the world, replacement of earth by a new one, resurrection of humans, reward and punishment, 2nd coming of Jesus and coming of Messiah, Golden age etc. According to Leonard (2010)⁷ ‘it should not surprise us... that all three beliefs contain compelling and controversial visions of how human history will end’. Since all the three faiths have their origins in the Abrahamic religion taken together, we shall now study the eschatological dogmas in the three faiths under reference separately.

VII. JEWISH ESCHATOLOGY

In Judaism, the main textual source for eschatology is the *Tanakh* or Hebrew Bible which has been elaborated through Talmudic commentary. However since Jewish end time events are subject to interpretation of various schools of thought, they vary widely according to their four major schools: Orthodox, Conservative, Reformed, and Reconstructionist. The Hebrew Bible includes three major subdivisions: (1). the Torah which includes the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; (2). the Nevi'im includes the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; and (3). the Ketuvim which includes Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. Hebrew tradition took the first letters of these three divisions and derived the word TaNaKh (or Tanakh) to describe the entire collection. In addition to it Judaism has a collection of rabbinical teachings known as the Talmud, which is a record of oral law and the Gemara which constitutes supplemental teachings. The main tenets of Jewish eschatology, in no particular order, include¹⁰:

- The Sanhedrin will be re-established (Isaiah 1:26)
- Once he is King, leaders of other nations will look to him for guidance (Isaiah 2:4)
- The whole world will worship the One God of Israel (Isaiah 2:17)
- He will be descended from King David (Isaiah 11:1) via King Solomon (1 Chron. 22:8–10)
- The messiah will be a man of this world, an observant Jew with "fear of God" (Isaiah 11:2)
- Evil and tyranny will not be able to stand before his leadership (Isaiah 11:4)
- Knowledge of God will fill the world (Isaiah 11:9)
- He will include and attract people from all cultures and nations (Isaiah 11:10)
- All Israelites will be returned to their homeland (Isaiah 11:12, Zechariah 10:6)
- Death will be swallowed up forever (Isaiah 25:8)
- There will be no more hunger or illness, and death will cease (Isaiah 25:8)
- The dead will rise again (Isaiah 26:19)
- The house of David shall be as God (Zechariah 12:8)¹¹
- God will seek to destroy all the nations that go against Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:9, Isaiah 60:12)
- Israel and Judah will be made into one nation again (Zechariah 11:12-14, Ezekiel 37:16-22)
- The Jewish people will experience eternal joy and gladness (Isaiah 51:11)
- He will be a messenger of peace (Isaiah 53:7)
- Nations will recognize the wrongs they did Israel (Isaiah 52:13–53:5)
- The peoples of the world will turn to the Jews for spiritual guidance (Zechariah 8:23)
- The ruined cities of Israel will be restored (Ezekiel 16:55)
- Weapons of war will be destroyed (Ezekiel 39:9)
- The Temple will be rebuilt (Ezekiel 40) resuming many of the suspended *mitzvot* (commandments)

- He will then perfect the entire world to serve God together (Zephaniah 3:9)
- He will take the barren land and make it abundant and fruitful (Isaiah 51:3, Amos 9:13–15, Ezekiel 36:29–30, Isaiah 11:6–9)¹²

According to Reagan,¹³ we are living in exciting times when we can witness Bible prophecy being fulfilled before our very eyes. Many of these prophecies relate to the Jewish people and their nation. Below is a summary of prophecies concerning the Jews that are currently being fulfilled and those that are yet to be fulfilled?

VIII. PROPHECIES CURRENTLY BEING FULFILLED

- The Jewish people will be regathered in unbelief from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:11-12). Fulfillment: 20th Century and continuing.
- The state of Israel will be re-established (Isaiah 66:7-8 & Ezekiel 37:21-22). Fulfillment: May 14, 1948.
- The Jews will once again re-occupy the city of Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:4-8), Fulfillment: June 7, 1967.
- The land of Israel will be reclaimed from its desolation, becoming once again a land of agricultural abundance (Ezekiel 36:34-35). Fulfillment: 20th Century and continuing.
- The Hebrew language will be revived from the dead (Zephaniah 3:9). Fulfillment: 19th & 20th Centuries.
- All the nations of the world will come together against Israel over the issue of the control of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:1-3). Fulfillment: Currently occurring.

IX. PROPHECIES YET TO BE FULFILLED

- The Arab nations of the world will attack Israel in a coordinated effort to annihilate the state (Psalm 83).
- Israel will soundly defeat the Arab alliance (Zechariah 12:6).
- Israel will dwell in security and prosperity (Ezekiel 38:11).
- A Russian coalition consisting mainly of Muslim nations will invade Israel (Ezekiel 38:1-17).
- The Russian coalition will be destroyed supernaturally by God (Ezekiel 38:18-23 & 39:1-8).
- The Antichrist will intervene and guarantee the security of Israel, enabling the Jews to rebuild their Temple (Daniel 9:27).
- At the end of three and a half years, the Antichrist will enter the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem and declare himself to be God (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15-18, & 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).
- The Jews will reject the Antichrist, and he will respond with an attempt to annihilate them, killing two-thirds of them in the process (Revelation 12:13-17 & Zechariah 13:8-9).
- At the end of the Tribulation, when the Jews have come to the end of themselves, they will turn to God and receive Yeshua as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10, Romans 9:27-28, & Romans 11:25-27).
- Jesus will return and regather all believing Jews to Israel (Deuteronomy 30:1-9).
- Israel will be established as the prime nation in the world (Isaiah 2:1-4 & Micah 4:1-7).
- The Lord will bless the Jewish remnant by fulfilling all the promises He has made to Israel (Isaiah 60:1-62:7).
- The blessings of God will flow out to all the nations through the Jewish people during the Millennial rule of Jesus (Zechariah 8:22-23).

Leonard (2010)⁷ says “Across our world today, Jewish beliefs about the end of human history influence politics, diplomacy, and, within Israel, domestic policy. Problems in the Middle East that have seemed intractable for decades have roots in Jewish eschatology. The questions about Jewish settlement in the occupied territories and the fate of Jerusalem hinge upon ancient prophecies and how various sects within Judaism interpret those prophecies.

X. CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

Christian Eschatology deals with the biblical study of end times prophecies and events of the 2nd coming of Jesus, the Resurrection, Judgment Day, and the Eternal state and the ultimate consummation of all of God's purposes. Christianity's sacred text is the Bible, which includes the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament' which comprises four Gospels entitled Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In addition there is considerable supplementary literature. Christian eschatology traditionally includes death, judgment, heaven, and hell. In the words of Richard P. McBrien: Eschatology, in the traditional sense of the word, is the area of theology which is directly concerned, with the 'study of the last thing(s)' The 'last things' (*eschatata*) are various moments or stages in the final manifestation process: death, particular judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory. Second Coming of Christ, resurrection of the body, general judgment, consummation of all things in the perfection of the Kingdom of God.⁴ Most of these articles of faith are commonly believed by most Christians.

Reagan¹⁴ while assessing the causes for terming the current era as the end times identifies six major categories of the signs with 1) The Signs of Nature, 2) The Signs of Society, 3) The Spiritual Signs, 4) The Signs of World Politics, 5) The Signs of Technology and 6) The Signs of Israel and finally concludes by specifically listing following 50 prophecies which already have been fulfilled:-

1) Increasing instability of nature. (Matthew 24:7 & Luke 21:11)	18) Increasing apostasy in the Church. (2 Timothy 4:3-5)	35) Re-establishment of Israel. (Isaiah 66:7-8)
2) Increasing lawlessness and violence. (Matthew 24:12)	19) Increasing attacks on Jesus. (Romans 1:18-19)	36) Reclamation of the land of Israel. (Ezekiel 36:34-35)
3) Increasing immorality. (Matthew 24:37)	20) Increasing attacks on the Bible. (Romans 1:18-19)	37) Revival of Biblical Hebrew. (Zephaniah 3:9; Jeremiah 31:23)
4) Increasing materialism. (2 Timothy 3:2)	21) Increasing persecution of Christians. (Matthew 24:9)	38) Re-occupation of Jerusalem. (Luke 21:24)
5) Increasing Hedonism. (2 Timothy 3:4)	22) Increasing occultism. (1 Timothy 4:1)	39) Resurgence of the Israeli military. (Zechariah 12:6)
6) Increasing influence of Humanism. (2 Timothy 3:2)	23) Wars and rumors of wars. (Matthew 24:6)	40) Re-focusing of world politics on Israel. (Zechariah 12:3)
7) Depraved entertainment. (2 Timothy 3:4)	24) Weapons of mass destruction. (Luke 21:26)	41) Russian threat to Israel. (Ezekiel 38 and 39)
8) Calling evil good and good evil. (2 Timothy 3:3 & Isaiah 5:20)	25) Increasing famine. (Luke 21:11)	42) Arab threat to Israel. (Ezekiel 35 and 36)
9) Increasing use of drugs. (2 Timothy 3:3)	26) Increasing pestilence. (Luke 21:11)	43) Denial of the Second Coming. (2 Peter 3:3-4)
10) Increasing blasphemy. (2 Timothy 3:2)	27) Computer technology. (Revelation 13:7)	44) Denial of creation by God. (Romans 1:18-22)
11) Increasing paganism. (2 Timothy 3:1-4)	28) Television. (Revelation 11:8-9)	45) Outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (Joel 2:28-29)
12) Increasing despair. (2 Timothy 3:1)	29) Satellite technology. (Revelation 11:8-9)	46) Translation of the Bible into many languages. (Matthew 24:14)
13) Signs in the heavens. (Luke 21:11,25)	30) Virtual reality. (Revelation 13:14-15)	47) Preaching of the Gospel worldwide. (Matthew 24:14)
14) Increasing knowledge. (Daniel 12:4)	31) Unification of Europe. (Daniel 2 & 7)	48) The revival of Messianic Judaism. (Romans 9:27)
15) Increasing travel. (Daniel 12:4)	32) Far Eastern military powers. (Revelation 9:16 & 16:12)	49) The revival of Davidic praise worship. (Amos 9:11)
16) The explosion of cults. (Matthew 24:11)	33) Movement toward world government. (Daniel 7:23-26)	50) The understanding of Bible prophecy. (Daniel 12:8-9)
17) The proliferation of false christs. (Matthew 24:5)	34) Regathering of the Jews. (Isaiah 11:10-12)	

This list could be greatly expanded, but the 50 examples above should be sufficient to show that we are living in the season of the Lord's return. The Bible clearly teaches that God never pours out His wrath without warning for He is a just and loving God who does not wish that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). That's why He has provided so many signs to alert us to the fact that we are living on the threshold of the Tribulation.

According to Reagan¹⁵ the Bible clearly teaches that a new temple-which will be called The Third Temple - will be built in the future. The First Temple was the one that Solomon built and which was destroyed in 586 BC. The Second Temple (516 BC to 70 AD) was built after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity....The Third Temple will exist during the Great Tribulation. Daniel refers to this temple when he says that "*the prince who is to come*" (the Antichrist) will enter it and stop the sacrifices in the middle of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27)....the temple will be in existence when the Antichrist reveals himself (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), and that will be in the middle of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27). Since this will be only three and a half years into the Tribulation, many have concluded that the temple will likely be rebuilt before the Tribulation begins...the temple can be literally resurrected overnight! That's because the Jews plan to erect a tent temple like the Tabernacle of Moses, and they are ready to do so at any moment. Everything has been prepared. Currently there are two major obstacles to the reconstruction of The Third Temple. One pertains to its location. The next temple can only be built where the two previous temples stood because the Holy of Holies must be on the exact same spot. But no one knows for sure where the previous temples were located on the Temple Mount...there is no way to prove the exact location without conducting archaeological excavations on the Temple Mount...Nevertheless there is definitely going to be a third temple. It will most likely be erected at the beginning of the Tribulation....The Antichrist will desecrate this temple in the middle of the Tribulation. The Third Temple will be destroyed at the Second Coming of Jesus. The great earthquake at that time will radically change the topography of Jerusalem and all the earth (Revelation 6:12-17). In Jerusalem it will result in the provision of a very large level area where the Millennial Temple will be constructed. This is the temple from which Jesus will reign over all the earth. It is described in detail in Ezekiel 40-46.

To sum up, Christian eschatology while believing the speedy fulfillment of the end time signs anxiously awaits the 2nd coming of the Jesus which according to them would be aimed either to establish his kingdom on earth or to conduct the final judgment. These two opinions have all along influenced the policy of the Western powers in general and for Middle East in particular.

XI. ISLAMIC ESCHATOLOGY

Islam's most sacred text is the Qur'an, which Muslims believe to be the word of Allah – the all Almighty- that was revealed to prophet Muhammad (SAW) over a period of about 23 years. The Qur'an includes many references to Jewish and Christian literature and contains the details of biblical Prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Josef and Jesus to be prophets of eminence, of whom Muhammad (SAW) was the last and greatest. Supplementing the Qur'an are hadiths and the Sunna. Hadiths are written traditions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) which are classified according to various levels of authenticity by Muslim scholars.

Islamic eschatology is the branch of Islamic scholarship that studies the changes at the end times and is referred to as *Ilm al-Akhir al-Zaman*. Islamic eschatology is documented both in Quran and the Sunnah. According to Leonard (2010)⁷, 'About one-third of the Qur'an relates to matters of eschatology, with the main focus on warnings and encouragement concerning God's final judgment of man and the perpetual bifurcation of the human race into those suffering perdition and those enjoying the blessings of heaven'. However, most of the literature concerning the end time events is found in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Islam teaches that only Allah-the Almighty- knows the timing of the end time events. However, there are signs that will indicate the season and the time for all these events. There are both major and minor signs. Many of the minor signs have to do with general trends in society; others relate to specific events that will occur before the appearance of the Mehdi and Antichrist. The major signs relate to specific prophesied events that will occur between the time of the appearance of the Antichrist and "the Hour" of resurrection and judgment. The Prophet's sayings on the subject have been traditionally divided into Major and Minor Signs. Regarding the Major Signs, a Companion of the Prophet (SAW) narrated: "Once we were sitting together and talking amongst ourselves when the Prophet appeared. He asked us what it was we were discussing. We said it was the Day of Judgment. He said: 'It will not be called until ten signs have appeared : Smoke,Dajjal(the Antichrist), the creature (that will wound the people), the rising of the sun in the West, the Second Coming of Jesus, the emergence of Gog and Magog, and three sinkings (or cavings in of the earth): one in the East, another in the West and a third in the Arabian Peninsula.'" One of the most notable Islamic scholars and philosophers is Sheikh Imran NazarHosein who dedicated his whole life to study this subject and improve the understanding of Islamic eschatology by taking a different epistemological approach than the salafi (who stick to the literal interpretation of the holy scriptures), unlocking the symbolism behind the major signs.

There are a number of major and minor signs of the end of days in Islamic eschatology. There is debate, however, over whether they could occur concurrently or must be at different points in times. Islamic scholars typically divide them into three major periods also. The three periods before the Day of Judgment are known as *ashratu's-sa'ah* or *alamatuqiyami's-sa'ah*. A general opinion provides that the first period began at the passing of Muhammad (SAW) and the second began with the passing of his companions. We are currently in the last phase of second period waiting the 'end days' beginning with the appearance of Mahdi. Following the second period, the third will be marked by the major signs known as *alamatu's-sa'ah al-kubra* (The major signs of the end) which include;

1. Advent of the Mahdi;
2. Battle of Malhamat al-Kubra (Armeggadon)
3. Emergence of 'The false messiah, Masih ad-Dajjal';
4. Desolation of Medina with true believers leaving to follow Mahdi and sinners to follow Dajjal;
5. Return of Isa (Jesus) to kill *Dajjal*, wipe out all falsehood and religions other than Islam and rule the world till his death;
6. A huge black smoke cloud will cover the earth;
7. Incursion of *Ya'jooj* and *Ma'jooj*;
8. A pleasant breeze will cause all believers to die;
9. Quran will be forgotten and no one will recall its verses;
10. All Islamic knowledge will be lost to the extent where people will not say "*La Illah Illa Allah*" (There is no god, but Allah), but instead old people will babble "Allah, Allah" without understanding it;
11. Assault on Mecca and demolition of Kaaba;
12. People will fornicate in the streets 'like donkeys' ;
13. The sun will rise from the west ;
14. *Dabbat-al-ard* or 'the Beast' that will come out of the ground to talk to people;
15. The first trumpet blow will be sounded by *Israfil*, and all that is in heavens and earth will be stunned and die except what God wills;
16. The second trumpet blow will be sounded, the dead will return to life and a fire will start that shall gather all to the *Mahshar al-Qiy'amah* (The Gathering for Judgment).

Islamic prophecies also anticipate a golden age, but the length and causality of it differs in that it is the Mahdi - i.e., the final and greatest caliph—who brings it about, and most Muslim scholars believe that he will rule for seven years prior to the kingdom of the Prophet Isa. The Islamic golden age also features universal peace and prosperity under Islamic law (sharia). Religious beliefs concerning the golden age affect believers' perspectives on world history, international affairs, and foreign policy. Although all three faiths concur upon the advent of the future Golden Age, yet various denominations within the various sects in the three faiths handle those prophecies differently. During the end of the time there will be a great amount of corruption, the spread of injustice, the strong usurping the rights of the weak, wars, economy will be based on riba, hedonism, pleasurism, feminism, killings everywhere and the prevalence of evil people. The believers will hope for a new dawn that will relieve them from this darkness which would have filled the world. This will set the situation for arrival of Imam Al Mahdi who will bring about justice, equality and barkah which the world would not have witnessed ever before. Mahdi is believed to be a future Muslim world leader who will not only rule over the Islamic world, but also the non-Muslim world as well. Mahdi is said to lead a world revolution that will establish a new Islamic world order throughout the globe which would be in conformity with the Khilafat of the khulfa-e-Rashidun and eliminate evil and corruption. He will reappear on the appointed day and fight against the forces of evil, lead a world revolution and set up a new world order based on justice, righteousness and virtue. This will involve multiple military campaigns or holy wars (*jihad*). He will receive a pledge of allegiance as a caliph for Muslims. He will be joined by the army of Muslim warriors carrying black flags from Khorasan. Mahdi will then lead this army to Israel and re-conquer it for Islam. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: "Armies carrying black flags will come from Khorasan. No power will be able to stop them until they reach Eela (Baitul-Maqdas in Jerusalem) where they will erect their flags.¹⁶ Most of the Jews will be killed and Jerusalem will become the seat of rule for Mehdi and will abolish the leadership of the Jews and domination of the Satans 'who spit evil into people and cause corruption in the earth, making them slaves of false idols and ruling the world by laws other than the Shari'a [Islamic Law] of the Lord of the worlds'¹⁷. The killing of Dajjal (Anti Christ) will be followed by the natural death of Mehdi where after, Isa (Jesus A.S) will take over the reins of the Khilafah and take the rule of Khilafah to the optimum level of Justice, peace, equity, fairness in every aspect of life to a level well deserved to be termed as the Golden period of mankind through the institution of 'the kingdom of God' as enumerated in Bible in old as well as in New Testament.

XII. EPILOGUE

While about 'one-third of the Qur'an relates to matters of eschatology - with the main focus on warnings and encouragement concerning God's final judgment of man and the perpetual bifurcation of the human race into those suffering perdition and those enjoying the blessings of heaven'⁷ - a reasonable portion of the Bible in old as well as in New Testament lays down in specific terms the events of the end times. End times doctrine of Islam envisaging the signs of 'the end' in terms of Quran and Hadith makes out a huge treasure of literature on the subject which even by Non-Muslims is considered as most authentic. 'Although Islam has endured many religious upheavals and changes over the past millennium-and-a-half, it has not suffered on a scale similar to the Jewish Diaspora or the Christian wars of religion in the 16th and 17th centuries. For Jews and Christians, these disasters fundamentally changed their religions and served as catalysts for significant denominational splits. The violence that they both perpetrated and suffered was transformational, leading to previously unheard-of concepts, including the privatization of religious beliefs, freedom of religion and conscience, and the separation of church and state. It also led to the development of dramatically different schools of interpretation concerning apocalyptic prophecies. Muslims have likewise suffered catastrophes throughout their history, but none of them led to permanent and fundamental changes that altered the way the faithful think about the end of history. Similarly, although many Muslim communities exist within modern, democratic societies, a majority of believers do not hold to the "sacred tenet of secularity" within the Western world. Instead, they believe that governance and Islam should be connected, and this idea is a major theme of Islamic eschatology'⁷. An eye bird's view of the end time events all over the globe today makes it amply clear that the humanity today has landed in to the end times and the probability of the most wretched war situation as predicted in all the three Abrahamic religions is very high in as far as the current volatile situation in middle east is concerned. As Western leaders strive to find credible solutions to the turmoil in the Middle East, it is clear that they must understand the role of religion and the competing views of the three Abrahamic faiths about the end times. All the three faiths anticipate a series of dramatic episodes on earth prior to the final judgment. In order to grasp how those prophecies affect the modern world, we need to examine how adherents to the three faiths relate to those prophecies.

All the three beliefs-Judaism, Christianity, and Islam claim descent from Abraham and contain enthralling and contentious visions of how human history will end. They foresee the arrival of God's agent who will bring about a Golden Age on earth. They do have much in common yet they organize themselves into two opposing camps by understanding their eschatologies entirely opposite ways.

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