

IBN SULTAN

# CHRISTIANITY COMPARED WITH ISLAM



**JESUS**  
an overview

قَالَ رَبِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ءَأَتَيْنِي الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي بَدِيًّا

# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered who Jesus is?

Have you ever wanted to know why Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and performed amazing miracles including raising people from the dead? Have you ever been curious about why He ascended to heaven, how He is still alive today and the way in which Christians and Muslims believe He is coming back?

Are you interested to find out why He is so unique?

If so, this booklet is for you because, in the pages that follow, we are going to look at what the Bible, the Qur'an and the Hadith say about Him.

There are many differing views about His nature and His mission. We hope that by looking at some of the evidence for these differing views, we can begin to see what is true.

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# 1. WHY READ THE BIBLE?

It might be that you have read the Bible before. It might be that you have never read a single page. So, before we start looking at who Jesus is, we're going to take a short look at what the Bible is and why it is important for all of us.

The English word 'Bible' comes from the Latin, *biblia* and the Greek, *biblos* – words that simply mean 'book' or 'books'. At its most basic, the Bible is a collection of books that is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament comprises 39 books, all of which were written before Jesus. These books include the Pentateuch or Torah (known as the *Taurat* in Arabic), the historical books, the wisdom books including the book of Psalms (the *Zaboor*) and the prophets. The New Testament comprises 27 books and these include the Gospel of Jesus (the *Injil*) and the letters which were written after Jesus.

Jews believe the Old Testament is the Word of God. Christians believe the Old and New Testaments together are the Word of God. But what about you? How do you view the Bible?

The Qur'an refers to Jews and Christians as 'the people of the book', *Ahlay Kitab* in Arabic. And the Qur'an also acknowledges that the books that were sent down to the Jews and the Christians were from Allah. But it actually goes even further than that: the Qur'an instructs Muslims to believe in these books (known as the previous revelations or 'the books'). Doing so is part of the six articles of faith in Islam as we see in Sura 4:136.

The Qur'an doesn't mention all of the books in the Bible but it does specifically refer to the Torah, the writings of the prophets,<sup>1</sup> the Psalms and the *Injil*. And the Qur'an does mention some books that aren't in the Bible (eg the scrolls given to Abraham). But, broadly speaking, when the Qur'an speaks of the books (the revelations),

it is referring to the Bible. And it teaches that everyone – Jews, Christians and Muslims alike – should treat the words as the Word of God.

That might surprise you. It might raise some questions in your mind. After all, the word 'Bible' doesn't actually appear in the Qur'an – isn't that an indication that Muslims don't have to read the Bible?

We shouldn't expect an English word, 'Bible' to appear in an Arabic Qur'an. 'Bible' is not an Arabic word. But *Al Kitab* is an Arabic word and that does appear in the Qur'an. When the word *Al Kitab* is found, it is basically referring to the books of the Bible – and that is a good reason for all Muslims to read the Bible and treat it as the Word of God.

But the suggestions that you should treat the Bible as the Word of God might also confuse you. While there are definitely some similarities between the Qur'an and the Bible (they both use words such as sin, demons and angels; they both mention key prophets and they both point to the realities of judgement, heaven and hell) there are some big differences between them too. There are certainly huge differences between the Christian view of Jesus (set out in the Bible) and the Islamic view of Jesus (set out in the Qur'an and the Hadith). What are we to conclude? Is one of them wrong? Has one of them been changed?

You may have been taught that the Bible has been changed – which is why it is sometimes said that Allah sent his final messenger, to restore what had been lost. But what is the truth? It is important to look at the evidence.

## 2. WHY THINK ABOUT JESUS?

One of the most important questions you can ask is, “Who is Jesus?” There are many people who can be celebrated because of their achievements, but none are comparable to Him. He holds a special position in the history of mankind.

Jesus is extraordinary in many ways:

- His birth was astonishing. He was born of the Virgin Mary.
- His message was unlike other religions. Jesus said, “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). “Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:28). “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you” (Matthew 5:42). “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31). “Love your neighbour as yourself.” “There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31). After this, Jesus explained what it means to love our neighbour by giving us the parable of the ‘Good Samaritan’ which implies we are to love everyone regardless of their background (Luke 10:27).
- He spoke with authority and performed miracles that amazed.
- He demonstrated His power over demons with them begging Him, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me” (Luke 8:28).
- He showed His authority over nature by calming a storm with the words, “Peace! Be still!” (Mark 4:39).
- He healed the sick and had the ability to raise people from the dead. Jesus commanded a dead body to come back to life: “Lazarus, come out”. The man who had died came out’ (John 11:43-44).
- The Bible says He even rose from the dead himself.

He certainly sounds like someone to whom we should listen. But who is He? How would you respond if someone asked you the question, “Do you believe in Jesus?”

Would you say “I do. My faith is not complete unless I believe in Jesus. He was one of the great prophets who performed many miracles by the power of Allah”?

You might claim, “I love and respect Jesus more than Christians do.”

But there might be areas in which you struggle. There might be things in the Bible that don’t seem quite right to you. Maybe you can’t accept some of the things Jesus said, such as:

“I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). God didn’t just give Jesus the power to do amazing things, Jesus claimed to have the same power as God because He is equal with God.

“Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5). “All things have been committed to me by my Father” (Luke 10:22). “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matthew 11:27).

Jesus Himself predicted that He would be crucified: “The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again” (Luke 24:7). Jesus said, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Jesus said, “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels and then he will reward each person according to what they have done” (Matthew 16:27).

Verses like this show that Jesus was not just a prophet. He claimed to have a very special relationship with God and those words can be a real challenge to what you believe. In fact, it can feel so offensive, even blasphemous, to hear Christians say that Jesus is the Son of God and He died on the cross for our sins, that it might be tempting to assume that Jesus couldn’t have said it. It might be easy for you to assume that Christians invented such tales.

Maybe you find it much easier to believe the Islamic view of Jesus? Maybe you are more comfortable to see Jesus as a Muslim who

worshipped Allah? After all, the Qur'an asserts that Jesus came to preach Islam in the first century (Sura 61:14),<sup>ii</sup> that He performed many miracles with the power of Allah but He was not killed but instead ascended into heaven without crucifixion (Sura 4:157-158). The Hadith goes on to teach that Jesus will come back, not to judge the nations as the New Testament teaches but to destroy Christianity and Judaism and establish Islam instead.<sup>iii</sup> However, since the Qur'an emerged over 600 years after Jesus, and the Hadith was compiled 800 years after He walked the earth, would it not be better to consider what the eyewitnesses of Jesus said about Him – as with the Gospels of Matthew and John?

There are certainly differences, but do they matter? Some people would say we should just agree to disagree. However, there is one vital matter to consider:

The Bible warns people that if they don't put their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and accept Him as their Lord and Saviour they will never go to paradise. On the other hand, the Qur'an warns that anyone who accepts Jesus is the Son of God commits the unforgivable sin, shirk, and will go to hell.

It is crucial to ask the question, "Who is the true Jesus?" because without the accurate answer to that question, no-one can reach heaven.

# 3. COMPARING VIEWS ON THE BOOKS

## † The Christian Perspective

There are four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) in the New Testament of the Bible. These describe what Jesus taught and who He is. There is general consensus among scholars that the Gospels were written down in the 1st century. That means they were written when most of the eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry were still alive. If the Gospels had included anything false about Jesus, this would have been spotted by the Apostles and the people who had heard Jesus teach. But even with this context in mind, it is important to know if we can trust them. So we are going to look at the evidence for the Christian Gospels and compare that to the evidence for the Islamic view that the Christian Gospels are false and have replaced the true *Injil*.

## † Manuscript Evidence

Manuscripts<sup>iv</sup> (and fragments of manuscripts) from the New Testament exist in abundance – some of them date back to within 25 years of the death of the Apostle John. As the Christian view of Jesus spread across the world, many copies of the New Testament had to be made and many translations were required. This means that scholars have many manuscripts to check and compare with one another.

There are now more than 5,686 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Additionally there are over 10,000 Latin Vulgate versions, at least 9,300 other early versions, and we have close to, if not more than, 25,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today.



## The Islamic Perspective

You might think that the four Gospels in the Bible were written about Jesus by men. You might have been taught that the *Injil* was given to Jesus by Allah and that's what is truly authentic.

He [Jesus] said, "Lo, I am God's servant; God has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet" (Sura 19:30 Arberry).

Since the Qur'an does not mention the four Gospels, it is often taught that this *Injil* must have been lost and that the Gospels must have been invented by Christians at a later date. If this is true, the Gospels would not be the Word of God but merely the words of men. If we are to believe what is true about Jesus, we need to decide which revelation is the Word of God: the Bible or the Qur'an. It is therefore important to look at the evidence for the *Injil*.

## Manuscript Evidence

Scholars have discovered thousands of manuscripts for the four Gospels but no-one has ever found any manuscript called the *Injil*.

Muslims often teach that it was passed down via 'oral tradition' and simply never written down but Jesus (*Isa*) lived in a literate society. To believe that the *Injil* was never written down involves believing that Allah gave Jesus some teaching that was precious beyond measure but no-one, anywhere, thought to make a note of it.

## **† Historical Evidence**

Good theology must be rooted in accurate history. If the history written down within a document is correct, it adds credibility to the theology within a document. For example, classical historian A N Sherwin-White says of Acts, “The confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. Any attempt to reject its basic historicity, even in matters of detail, must now appear absurd.”<sup>v</sup>

Scholars such as Michael Wilkins and J P Moreland conclude that, even if we did not have any Christian writings, “we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger that:

- i.** Jesus was a Jewish teacher;
- ii.** Many people believed that He performed healings and exorcisms;
- iii.** He was rejected by the Jewish leaders;
- iv.** He was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius;
- v.** Despite this shameful death, His followers, who believed that He was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by AD 64;
- vi.** All kinds of people from the cities and the countryside – men and women, slave and free – worshipped Him as God by the beginning of the second century.”<sup>vi</sup>

## Historical Evidence

The Qur'an says a lot about Jesus, yet does not give much detail of His context. The Qur'an doesn't mention the names of any of His followers – or tell us what they did for a living. It doesn't mention any of the geography of where He lived, the political situation of Israel or the religious sects that were prominent at the time. It doesn't talk about the kinds of things other writers of Jesus' time were writing about. That means there is no evidence within the Qur'an that can be compared to other historical sources to test its accuracy.

Are you wondering if this is really important? It is very important because it shows that the Qur'anic narrative of Jesus cannot be historically verified.

﴿ فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ  
الْحَوَارِيُّونَ مَنَّا أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴾

If there is an assumption that Christians' Scripture is not reliable, then why does the Qur'an say that you ask the Jews and the Christians if you are in doubt?

So if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters. (Sura 10:94) Sahih International.

## Theological Evidence

Christians believe the *Taurat*, the prophets and the Psalms are the Word of God.<sup>vii</sup> They contain verbal pictures and metaphorical language that prepare people for the coming of the Messiah. God spoke through the prophets saying that the Messiah would come and He would accomplish a special mission which no other prophet was able to do – to set people free from the bondage of slavery to sin (Isaiah 53). When the angel Gabriel gave the news to Joseph that Mary was going to bear a son, the angel said:

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Indeed, Jesus said Himself that the Old Testament was pointing to Him: “He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44).

This internal consistency makes sense, after all. God is powerful enough to ensure that every word that is taught and written down links together well. In fact, in the Bible, Jesus promises to send a helper (the Holy Spirit) who “will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

## Theological Evidence

While the Qur'an is clear that the *Taurat*, the prophets and the Psalms (the previous revelations) are all from God – and it commands Muslims to believe in them – it does not make any theological connections with the previous revelations. For example, the Qur'an simply incorporates the idea that Jesus is the Messiah (*Al-Masei* in Arabic), without elaborating what the Messiah is supposed to accomplish. There are many prophecies in the previous revelations regarding the Messiah but the Qur'an does not make links with any of these.

You might think that the reason the Qur'an doesn't make any links is because the previous revelations have been changed or because the Qur'an supersedes these earlier writings. If so, it is worth asking the question: Did God really allow His Word to be changed?

Believing that the original *Injil* has been lost or that previous revelations in the Old Testament and New Testament have been corrupted raises questions. Why would Allah allow that to happen? Was Allah powerless to stop people (Jews and Christians) thwarting his plans?

You may also be wondering if the Qur'an is referring to a different *Taurat*, the prophets and the Psalms. But no evidence of any other manuscripts has ever been found. The Jews and Christians are in agreement on this: the previous writings (the Old Testament) are the Word of God and God has kept them safe to this day.

## 4. COMPARING VIEWS ON JESUS' DEATH

### † Historical Evidence

One of the most important events in history is Jesus' death on the cross. The Gospels give specific details about the people involved in ordering the execution of Jesus. According to Craig A Evans, "Almost all historians and interpreters of the New Testament agree that the arrest, examination, and execution of Jesus of Nazareth constitute the most important series of events in the Gospel narratives. The two most prominent figures in this drama are Caiaphas the Jewish high priest and Pontius Pilate the Roman governor."<sup>viii</sup> Were these two prominent figures real people who lived in Palestine in the 1st century or did the authors make up these names?

#### a. Caiaphas

In 1990, an ossuary (a place for human remains) was discovered in Jerusalem on which the name of Caiaphas has been inscribed. Professor Evans asserts that several archaeologists have identified the Yehoseph bar Qaipha on this ossuary as the Joseph called Caiaphas as referred to in the narratives of the historian, Josephus, and in the narratives of the New Testament Gospels. This is further confirmed by non-Christian scholars, Dominic Cross and Jonathan Reed who have said with confidence, "There should be no doubt that the chamber was the resting place of the family of the high priest Caiaphas named in the Gospels for his role in the crucifixion, and it is very likely that the elderly man's bones were those of Caiaphas himself."<sup>ix</sup> There is literary and archaeological evidence that show the Gospels were accurate when they mentioned Caiaphas.

## b. Pontius Pilate

Another prominent figure who was involved in the trial of Jesus was the Governor, Pontius Pilate. The Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus states that “Christus ... had suffered the death penalty during the reign of Tiberius by sentence of the procurator, Pontius Pilate.” In 1961, an inscription bearing the name and title of Pontius Pilate, ‘procurator’ was found on the stone at Caesarea Maritima. Again, there is literary and archaeological evidence for a Roman governor called ‘Pontius Pilate’ which corroborates the New Testament.

In addition, the Gospels give the locations of the key events, the rank of the key soldier involved and the religious sects who accused Jesus.

The four Gospels talk about real events, real people and real locations which are traceable.

## Historical Evidence

The Qur’an teaches that Jesus (*Isa*) was not crucified but rather that “another was made to resemble him” (Sura 4:157). Someone else died in his place and Jesus ascended to heaven without being crucified.

The Qur’an’s account of Jesus’ escape and this stranger’s crucifixion does not contain the specific names of the people involved in these events. Rather than giving the names of the people who tried and sentenced Jesus, it simply says ‘they’ and ‘we’ and ‘another’. It is therefore impossible to find any archaeological evidence that supports the events set out in the Qur’an.

It is generally agreed that Jesus was truly crucified. There is no evidence at all from the 1st century to support the Muslim view.

## Theological Evidence

The New Testament (including the four Gospels) always makes theological connections with the previous revelations (the *Taurat*, the prophets and the Psalms). The Gospels record the crucifixion of Jesus. This is linked with the *Taurat* where God gave instructions to Moses which said there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood (Leviticus 17:11). This is important because it means that Jesus is not doing away with previous revelation. It is also linked with the writings of the prophets where Isaiah predicted that God's servant (Isaiah 49:1,3; 52:13) must suffer for our sins:

“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering ... he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53:4,7).

John the Baptist (known as *Yahia* in the Qur'an) said this when he saw Jesus: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Jesus himself tells us the significance of his death:

“This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46-48).

Then the disciples of Jesus also preached that the forgiveness of sins is in Jesus' name:

‘Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).



## Theological Evidence

You might find it offensive to hear that Jesus was crucified. You might argue that Jesus was a great prophet and Allah would never allow one of his prophets to die on a cross. Surely Allah would save Him? That is why Allah substituted someone else to die on the cross (Sura 4:157).

There is no unanimous agreement among Muslim scholars as to who was substituted on the cross. And it is not clear when this narrative of substitution first began – there is no evidence that this teaching was believed in the 1st century.

This account assumes that Allah thinks it is just for someone to die in the place of a prophet. It assumes that Allah thinks it is just for an innocent man to be unwillingly crucified and die in agony. It assumes that it is permissible for one man to be substituted for another. But this directly contradicts the Qur'an's teaching that 'every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another ...' (Sura 6:164).

This account also assumes that even Jesus' closest disciples and relatives could not tell the difference between Jesus and the man who was crucified.

If Allah made it impossible for Jesus' companions to see that He had not been crucified, it seems strange that He could judge them for believing Jesus was crucified.

## 5. COMPARING VIEWS OF JESUS' TITLES

**One of the titles used of Jesus in the New Testament is 'Son of God.' But what does it mean?**

### † Evidence from the title: Son of God

In the *Taurat*, the Prophets, the Psalms and the *Injil*, God uses story and picture-language to communicate with human beings so they can understand what He is saying to them. It is language that helps people understand concepts that will be fully revealed in the New Testament.

In the Bible, the title 'Son of God' is used of those God appointed to be His representatives, and to rule on His behalf. So it is used of Adam the first man, it is used of God's people whom He rescued from slavery in Egypt and it is used of the king God appointed to rule over them. This was a metaphorical term to indicate both the special relationship they had with Him, and the authority He had given them, in line with His promises to bless all creation and all people through them. There was never any suggestion they were His physical offspring.

The use of this phrase 'Son of God' for God's representative man or people, appointed to rule, climaxes in Jesus. But Jesus also goes beyond this and claims to be the Son of the Father in a unique sense.

"No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matthew 11:27).

The Bible never suggests that God and Mary had a sexual relationship to make Jesus. Such teaching would be blasphemous.

## Evidence from the title: Son of God

Although the Qu'ran commands belief in the previous revelations as the Word of God (Sura 4:136) – and the previous revelations used the term 'Son of God' a great deal – the Qur'an does not use the term 'Son of God' in any positive way. Instead it claims that Jews and Christians use the term 'children of God' about themselves in ways that suggest they are more than human.

But the Jews and the Christians say, "We are the children of Allah and His beloved." Say, "Then why does He punish you for your sins?" Rather, you are human beings from among those He has created' (Sura 5:18).

However, all Christians know they are human, created by God. Christians attribute divinity only to Jesus, not themselves. It seems the Qur'an has completely misunderstood how Jews and Christians use the term:

**I -** The Qur'an suggests that a master punishes his slave but a father would not punish his son. However, this is not how most families operate. Fathers do punish their sons and doing so is an act of love. The experience of most families is more similar to the Bible: "The Lord disciplines those he loves" (Hebrews 12:6) than the Qur'an, "Then why does he punish you?" (Sura 5:18, Sahih International).

**II -** The Qur'an says that Jesus cannot be God's son because Allah has no wife (Sura 6:101). It is, of course, true that Allah has no wife. Muslims, Christians and Jews all agree on this. But no Christian is suggesting that Jesus is God's physical son, born as a product of physical relations. So why does the Qur'an make this statement?

## † Evidence from Jesus' Claims about Himself

Jesus claimed to have a unique relationship with the Father and to share His authority. He also claimed to have existed before Abraham and He used the title, 'I am' of Himself (which is one of the titles God used for Himself in the Old Testament):

*"Very truly I tell you", Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds" (John 8:58-59).*

*'God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14)*

It was precisely because Jesus did claim to be God that He was arrested and charged with the crime of blasphemy by the Jewish authorities.

He also predicted that He was going to die and rise again on the third day. No human being is capable of that. But that is what his disciples – and the governing authorities of the time – believed really happened. There were many eyewitnesses to these events.

## Evidence from Jesus' Claims about Himself

The Qur'an says that Jesus was a Muslim. He was just a human being who was involved in spreading Islam in the 1st century (Sura 61:14).

We are Allah's helpers, meaning 'We will support you with regard to the Message you have been sent with and will help you convey it.' Whereby, 'Isa sent the disciples to the various areas of Ash-Sham to call the Greeks and the Israelites to Islam'.<sup>x</sup>

However, there is no evidence from outside of the Qur'an that Jesus ever described himself as a Muslim. There is no evidence that his disciples spread Islam in the 1st century. There is no evidence that Jesus described Himself as merely a prophet.

And, as for the suggestion that such evidence was lost when the *Injil* was corrupted: there is no verse in the Qur'an which suggests that the *Injil* has been changed.

If you think the Injil has been changed, then why does the Qur'an say to the Christians and the Jews that they must follow their Scripture?

Chapter (5) sūrat I-māidah (The Table spread with Food)

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُقِيمُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ  
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۗ وَلْيُزِيدِكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُم مَّا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَيْنًا وَكُفْرًا ۗ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى  
الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

Say, "O People of the Scripture, you are [standing] on nothing until you uphold [the law of] the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to you from your Lord." (Sura 5:68) Sahih International.

# 6. HOW CAN ONE DETERMINE WHAT IS TRUE?

**To determine truth we need to compare the Christian and Islamic view of Jesus.**

## **† The Christian View**

### **i. Preservation of God's Scripture**

In order to justify that the New Testament is the Word of God, Christians start with the premise that the previous revelations (the *Taurat*, the writing of the Prophets and the Psalms), the entire Old Testament is the unchanged Word of God. By doing so, we hold that God is sovereign and powerful to preserve His Scripture. It is very important for God to preserve His Scripture, so that any new revelation (which claims that it is the continuation of the previous revelation) can be tested against the previous revelations. That's why the New Testament always invites us to look back to the prophets and see how their words are fulfilled in Jesus.

### **ii. Credibility of the claims**

Anyone can make a claim. The four Gospels say a lot about Jesus. It is legitimate to ask: How do we know what is written in the four Gospels is true? One of the ways we can check its credibility is to test the claims. For example, the Gospels claim that Jesus was crucified, He was buried and He was raised from the dead. The ultimate evidence to prove that Christianity is true is to show that Jesus was crucified and He was raised from the dead.

## The Islamic View

### i. Preservation of God's Scripture

In order to justify that the Qur'an is the Word of God, Muslims start with the premise that the previous revelations have been changed. Such an assumption raises some big questions. The Islamic view suggests that:

- a. Allah did not preserve the previous revelations.
- b. Man can change God's Word.
- c. Finally Allah preserves the final revelation 'The Qur'an'.

It is worth asking the questions: Why would Allah allow the revelations to be changed? How can it be possible for God's Word to be lost or corrupted? Why weren't the books kept safe?

### ii. Credibility of the claims

How do we know what is written in the Qur'an regarding Jesus is true? The Qur'an claims the *Injil* was given to Jesus. The Qur'an claims Jesus was spreading Islam in the first century (Sura 61:14). Jesus claimed He was a prophet. What do you think – is there any evidence for such claims?

### **iii. Credibility of historicity**

Careful reading of the four Gospels show they contain lots of information about geography, politics, religious sects, names of specific people, their ranks and their professions. It names specific locations and gives information about currency. The Gospels are so rich in detail. These details are testable, and they are proven to be true.



### iii. Credibility of historicity

It is impossible to find any historical or archaeological evidence that supports the events set out in the Qur'an. For example, Sura 4:157 does not give any detail about those who were responsible for accusing Jesus, it simply says 'they' and 'we' and 'another'.

# 7. CONCLUSION

Which view is correct – the Christian view of Jesus which is described in the Bible or the Islamic view of Jesus which is defined in the Qur'an and the Hadith?

Logically speaking, both can't be true because they each hold opposing views.

How will you decide who is telling the truth? What reasoning are you going to use? Where do you think the weight of evidence can be found?

Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" (John 11:25).

Should you believe Him?

It is an important decision. It is a decision with consequences.

The decision is yours.

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- i The Qur'an does not explicitly mention the writing of the prophets but it does say that Allah sent many prophets. If Allah sent the prophets, it would be reasonable to assume Allah sent revelations to the prophets to guide people. The prophets wrote down these revelations and these are found in the Bible.
  - ii Whereby 'Isa sent the disciples to the various areas of Ash-Sham to call the Greeks and the Israelites to Islam'. Please see Ibn Khathir Tafsir commentary. ([www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1365&Itemid=117](http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1365&Itemid=117))
  - iii Sahih Bukhar, Volume 4 – Book 55, Number 657.
  - iv Manuscript means a book, document, or piece of music written by hand rather than typed or printed.
  - v A N Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p 189.
  - vi Michael J Wilkins and J P Moreland, Jesus Under Fire p 222. Cited in Josh McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict p 60.
  - vii That is, the Old Testament.
  - viii Charlesworth, James H Jesus and Archaeology 2006 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p 323.
  - ix Ibid, p 328.
  - x Commentary of one of the renowned Sunni Muslim Scholars Ibn Kathir. ([http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1365&Itemid=117](http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1365&Itemid=117))

'Christianity compared with Islam' is part of a series of booklets exploring these two faiths.

For more information visit [www.cmdiscussions.org.uk](http://www.cmdiscussions.org.uk).

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**H**ave you ever wondered why you believe what you believe? How do you know what you believe is true? Is it just a leap of faith or can it be verified with evidence?

It's important to examine what we believe. Eternity depends on it! If you are sure that what you believe is true then there should be no fear of examining it more closely.

In this booklet the Christian and Islamic views of Jesus are compared and contrasted. It sets out the rational, logical reasons that are found behind each view. As it does so, our hope is that it will help us all to answer the important question: Who is Jesus?

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