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IS THE QUR'AN CREDIBLE?¹

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“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (Heb. 1:1-3).²

According to Islam, the Qur’an is not only credible; it is God’s *only* uncorrupted revelation. Thus, according to Muslim scholars, if it is to be compared with anything in Christianity it is to be compared with Christ rather than the Bible. In truth, however, the Bible can be demonstrated to be divine rather than human in origin. The same cannot be said for the Qur’an. Moreover, unlike the Bible, the Qur’an is replete with faulty ethics and factual errors.

First, unlike the Qur’an, the Bible is replete with prophecies that could not have been fulfilled through chance, good guessing, or deliberate deceit. Surprisingly, the predictive nature of many Bible passages was once a popular argument among liberals against the reliability of the Bible. Critics argued that various passages were written later than the biblical texts indicated because they recounted events that happened sometimes hundreds of years after they supposedly were written. They concluded that subsequent to the events, literary editors went back and “doctored” the original nonpredictive texts. But this is simply wrong. Careful research *affirms* the predictive accuracy of the Scriptures. Since Christ is the culminating theme of the Old Testament and the Living Word of the New Testament, it should not surprise us that prophecies regarding Him outnumber all others. Many of these prophecies would have been impossible for Jesus to deliberately conspire to fulfill—such as His descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:3; 17:19; Matt. 1:1-2; Acts 3:25); His birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6); His crucifixion with criminals (Isa. 53:12; Matt. 27:38; Luke 22:37); the piercing of His hands and feet on the cross (Ps. 22:16; John 20:25); the soldiers gambling for His clothes (Ps. 22:18; Matt. 27:35); the piercing of His side (Zech. 12:10; John 19:34); the fact that His bones were not broken at His death (Ps. 34:20; John 19:33-37); and His burial among the rich (Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57-60).

In sharp contrast, predictive prophecies demonstrating the divine origin of the Qur’an are conspicuous by their absence. While the Qur’an contains a number of self-fulfilling prophecies such as Muhammad’s prediction that he would return to Mecca (Sura 48:27), this is very different from the kinds of prophecies outlined above. Other prophecies such as Muhammad’s prediction that the Romans would defeat the Persians at Issus (Sura 30:2-4) are equally underwhelming. Unlike the biblical examples presented above this prophecy is not fulfilled in the far future and thus can be easily explained through good guessing or an accurate apprehension of prevailing military conditions.

Furthermore, the Qur’an is replete with questionable ethics—particularly when it comes to the equality of women. For example, in Sura 4:3 Muhammad allegedly received a revelation from God allowing men to “marry women of your choice, two, three, or four.” Ironically, in Sura 33:50 Muhammad receives a divine sanction to marry “any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her.” Thus while other men were only permitted to marry up to four wives, Allah provided Muhammad with a divine exception for his marriage to at least 12 women—including Aishah, whom he married at the tender age of 11 (see the *Life of Muhammad* by Muhammad Husayn Haykal). Also troubling

is the fact that the Qur'an allows men to "beat" (lightly) their wives in order that they might "return to obedience" (Sura 4:34). When we compare the personal morality of Muhammad in the Qur'an with that of Jesus in the Bible, the difference is remarkable. The Qur'an exhorts Muhammad to ask "forgiveness for thy fault" (Sura 40:55). Conversely, Christ's ethics with regard to every aspect of life—including his treatment of women—was so unimpeachable that He could rightly ask: "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 John 3:5).

Finally, unlike the Bible the Qur'an is riddled with factual errors. A classic case in point involves the Qur'an's denial of Christ's crucifixion. This denial, chronicled in Sura 4:157, is explicit and emphatic: "They killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them...for of a surety they killed him not." In reality, however, the fatal suffering of Jesus Christ as recounted in the New Testament is one of the most well-established facts of ancient history. Even in today's modern age of scientific enlightenment, there is a virtual consensus among New Testament scholars, both conservative and liberal, that Jesus died on a Roman cross. Recent archaeological discoveries not only dramatically corroborate the Bible's description of Roman crucifixion but authenticate the biblical details surrounding the trail that led to the fatal torment of Jesus Christ—including the Pilate Stone and the burial grounds of Caiaphas, the high priest who presided over the religious trials of Christ. These discoveries have been widely acclaimed as a compelling affirmation of biblical history. Not only so but the earliest Jewish response to the death and burial of Jesus Christ presupposes the reality of the empty tomb. Instead of denying that the tomb was empty, the antagonists of Christ accused His disciples of stealing the body.

One final point should be made. The Qur'anic denial of Christ's crucifixion has led to a host of other errors as well. From a Muslim perspective, Jesus was never crucified and, thus, never resurrected. Instead, in Islam, God made someone look like Jesus and the look-alike was mistakenly crucified in His place. The notion that Judas was made to look like Jesus has recently been popularized in Muslim circles by a late medieval invention titled *The Gospel of Barnabas*.

In short, the distance between the Muslim Qur'an and the Christian Scriptures is the distance of infinity. Not only does the prophetic prowess of the Bible elevate it far above the holy books of other religions, but as new archeological nuggets are uncovered the trustworthiness of Scripture as well as the unreliability of pretenders is further highlighted. Faulty ethics and factual errors demonstrate that the Qur'an is devoid of divine sanction. In sharp distinction, ethics and factual evidence demonstrate that the Bible is divine rather than human in origin.

— Hank Hanegraaff

NOTES

1. Adapted from Hank Hanegraaff, *The Bible Answer Book* (Nashville: J. Countryman, 2004).
2. All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

For further study, see Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002).