

THE BIBLE AND THE QUR'AN
(Part 6)

1. When we come to the study of and comparison between the Bible and the Koran, we come to the crucial question of *authority*;

2. **Principle**: “*Everything we believe, we believe on the basis of some authority.*”

- “Science says...”
- “Historians say...”
- “Theologians teach...”
- “Archaeology proves...”
- “Economists are saying...”
- “My church believes...”
- “My parents taught me...”
- “I personally believe...”
- “CNN says...FOX news reports...ABC, CBS, NBC commentators say...”
- Etc.

3. **Question**: “*What is your basis of authority?*”

- For the Moslem, their supreme base of authority is the Koran. Therefore, every faithful Moslem would say: “*Muhammed says...the Koran says... Allah says...*”
- Conversely, the Christian would say: “*The Bible says...God says...Jesus said...Paul said...*”
- And the ultimate question – on which literally hundreds of millions of eternal destinies hangs is...
 - “*Which one is right – the Bible or the Koran?*”
 - “*Which authority can I trust my eternal destiny with?*”
 - “*Since both proclaim to be a direct revelation from God – one God called ‘Jehovah’ and the other god called ‘Allah’ – which one can I trust my life with?*”
 - “*Which revelation can I literally ‘bet my life’ on?*”

4. So there can be no more important question than this one of *revelation authority!*

5. And both the Koran and the Bible claim “divine inspiration.” The Arabic word for this ‘inspiration’ is *waby*. And one of the key Biblical words is *theopneustos*, or ‘God breathed.’ Consider one example from each:

A. Sura 42:51

B. II Tim. 3:15; II Pet. 1:19-21

- Peter tells us here that “...prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were *carried along by the Holy Spirit.*”

Note: The word here for “*carried along*” (*pheromenoi*) was also used by Luke to refer to a ship “carried along by the wind” (Acts 27:17,17). So the human authors of the Bible were “carried along” by the Divine Author, the Holy Spirit. However, they were consciously involved in the process, and their individual personalities clearly come through as they reveal the personality of God. So they were not in a ‘state of ecstasy’ as they received their revelation. Neither were they just mindlessly ‘taking dictation’ or ‘transcribing’ what God was revealing.

- By contrast, that is exactly what the Muslims claim for Muhammed. The Koran tells little or nothing about how Muhammed received his reputed revelations from Allah. As Sura 85:21-22 says: “Nay, this is a glorious Quran, inscribed in a tablet preserved.”
- Therefore, since both the Bible and the Koran claim to be revelations from God or Allah, we would rightly expect that both give warnings about making any changes:
 - Both Sura 6:34 & 10:64 say: “*None can alter the words of Allah.*”
 - Likewise, Rev. 22:18-19 says: “*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: ‘If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book or prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.’*”

6. Since it is an accepted historic fact that Muhammed was illiterate, and could not read or write, the searching question is HOW did an “Illiterate Prophet” receive and write down with any degree of trustworthiness, these ‘revelations’ from Allah? There are several theories:

- That his early companions memorized the words that Muhammed told them;
- That his secretary, Zaid ibn Thabit, wrote them down as Muhammed recited them;
- And since Muhammed did not foresee his death, or plan for his successor, he made no preparations for his revelations to be written down and preserved;

- Another great problem here is the fact that many of his “reciters” were killed at the Battle of Yamama, and as a result large portions of Muhammed’s revelations were lost (More about this problem of ‘standardizing’ or ‘codifying’ the Koran later in this study).
- Early Moslem scholars said that when Muhammed was receiving his ‘revelations,’ and ‘fell into a trance,’ his ‘revelations’ were quickly written down on anything that was at hand – whether the leg or thigh bone of a dead animal, a palm leaf, an animal skin, mats, stones or bark (*Unveiling Islam*, Caner, p. 86).
- During his trances, Muhammed also experienced a number of physical phenomena:
 - He had dreams and visions;
 - He saw angels;
 - He had seizures during which time he sweat profusely;
 - He heard bells ringing;
 - He shivered and his mouth foamed;
 - He roared like a camel;
- And as we have already quoted from Sura 42:51, through all of this Muslims believe that God was speaking to Muhammed ‘from behind a veil.’
- It is interesting that Mohammed told his first wife, Khadija, that he feared he was ‘possessed by demons’ (Al Waqidi).
- Even more instructive is the fact that Muhammed had an extreme phobia about the *cross*, and broke or destroyed anything that had that image!

6. With those words of introduction, let me share some more basic facts about the Koran:

A. The Koran was written about 6 centuries after Christ, or between 646 – 650 by Mohammed before his death in 632 AD. So it is a MUCH younger book than either the Old Testament or New Testament.

B. The word *Qur’an* comes from the root *qara’a* which is the Arabic word for “recite” or “recitation.” It is considered by Muslims to be “The Perfect Word of Allah” (The Anglicized word is *Koran*). Since it is considered the literal dictated words of Allah, it is also called in Arabic...

- ‘Al-Kitab’ (The Book)
- ‘Al-furkan’ (The Distinction)

- ‘Al-dikhr’ (The Warning)

C. The Koran contains:

- 114 chapters or “Suras” (86 suras were ‘revealed’ in Mecca; 28 in Medina)
- 6,616 verses or “ayas”
- 77,943 words;
- 338,606 Arabic letters

D. The Koran is broken into two basic categories: the *beliefs* (Iman) and the *duties* (Din), or “behavior.”

7. By contrast the Bible has 1,189 chapters and is about 3 times longer than the Koran. So the Koran is about *two thirds the size of the New Testament*.

- Muslims believe that the Koran is an exact word-for-word copy of Allah’s heavenly Koran;
- They believe it was sent down by Allah during the month of Ramadan – thus their most sacred month of fasting;
- They believe that Arabic is the “heavenly language,” so no translation of the Koran is trusted excepted one in the original Arabic.
- Since Arabic is the “sacred language,” great emphasis is placed on the correct pronunciation of it when it is read or chanted – regardless of whether or not you understand the Arabic.
- Muslims believe that the written verses of the Koran have the power to cure diseases...ward off evil spirits...exorcise demons...bring prosperity. So words of the Koran may be displayed, worn, or consumed.
- As we have already seen, the Koran is called the “Mother of all Books” (Sura 43:3), and no other book or revelation can compare with it;
- Because the Koran is believed to be “Allah’s Book,” it must be printed and published in a “dignified format.” That means...
 - It must be hardbound with an ornately decorated cover;
 - It must be printed with “dignified script”;
 - The script must be set apart by framing with special borders;
 - Nothing but the verse numbers can be inside the borders;
 - No comments or illustrations can be inside the borders alongside the text;
 - It can only be handled by believers who are ritually clean;

- Muslims greatly revere the Koran and both kiss it and place it against their foreheads as an act of reverence and respect. It is never carried below the waist. And they always put it on the highest shelf in their house – and never place another book on top of it;
8. It is also important to note that the 114 chapters of the Koran are NOT arranged according to *chronology*, but according to *size*, or *length*.
- A. That means that the Suras are compiled from the *largest* and *longest* to the *shortest*.
 - B. This is also very similar to the way the Pauline Epistles are arranged in the New Testament from Romans to Philemon.
 - C. However, the only exception to this is the first chapter of the Koran which is not the longest, but one of the shortest – only 7 verses. It is known as the “Opening” of the Koran and serves basically as the “Introduction” to the whole book:
 1. *“In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.*
 2. *Praise be to Allah, The Cherisher and Sustainer of the Words;*
 3. *Most Gracious, Most Merciful;*
 4. *Master of the Day of Judgment*
 5. *Thee do we worship, And Thine aid we seek,*
 6. *Show us the straight way,*
 7. *The way of those on whom, Thou hast bestowed The Grace, Those whose (portion) Is not wrath, And who go not astray.”*
9. Islam teaches that Allah speaks through prophets that he has raised up in every age – beginning with Adam. However, Muhammed is the last and greatest prophet, or the “Seal of the Prophets.”
10. Supposedly there were some 124,000 prophets from Adam to Muhammed – including Jesus Christ. Allah gave some 104 sacred books to mankind – most of which have been lost. He gave 100 of these to the first prophet, Adam, and to Seth, Enoch and Abraham – but they were all lost.
11. The 4 books that remain are:
- The *Books of Moses (Torah)*;
 - The *Psalms of David (Zabur)*;
 - The *Gospels of Christ (Injil)*;
 - The *Koran of Muhammed (Qu’ran)*;
12. Muhammed believed that each book was *pre-existent in heaven* and was sent down to each prophet from God as needed.

13. Obviously Moslems strongly believe that the Koran is “100% pure and true” because it came directly from Allah to Mohammed through the angel Gabriel.

“We have without doubt, sent down the message, and we will assuredly guard it from corruption” (Sura 15:9).

- Therefore, Muslims basically believe in the “dictation theory” of revelation – meaning that the Koran was directly *dictated* to Muhammed by the angel Gabriel, and he just wrote it down.
- So in Islamic thought, Muhammed was not the *author* of the Koran, just the *channel* or *conduit* through which Allah gave the Koran. He was totally *passive* in the receipt of the Koran and did not influence its message in any way.
- To Muslims, this receiving of the Koran from Allah is the greatest miracle of Muhammed’s life – especially since he was basically illiterate.
- In the Koran itself, Muhammed is often compared to the Virgin Mary, who was also a young person who was an unlikely candidate to be the vessel to bring Jesus Christ into the world. In like manner, Muhammed was an unlikely person to be chosen by Allah to “give birth” to the Koran.
- By contrast, Moslems believe that *both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures have been radically corrupted* – especially at every place where it does not fully agree with the Koran.
- So many Muslims believe that *the Bible was changed for the express purpose of creating an anti-Islamic bias.*
- Therefore, wherever the Bible agrees with the Koran it is to be believed; wherever it disagrees, it is to be rejected.

14. Muslims believe that since the Koran came *after* the Bible, it corrects the mistakes in the earlier revelations God gave to man that had become corrupted:

“And We sent down the Book to thee for the express purpose, that thou shouldst make clear to them those things in which they differ, and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe” (Sura 16:64).

- The Koran then, was given by Allah to correct all of the corruptions in the Bible (Sura 4:82; 6:34; 10:65).

15. Here then are some of the problems and arguments that Muslims bring up about the Bible...

- The fact that the Bible was written over 1,600 years (60 generations) by some 40 authors makes it suspect to Muslims who revel in the *sole authorship* of the Koran by Mohammed – directly revealed to him by the angel Gabriel.
 - The fact of so *many different Bible translations* makes it suspect to Muslims.
 - The fact that the Bible was written in 2 major languages: *Hebrew and Greek*, along with some *Aramaic*, makes it suspect to Muslims since the Koran was only written in *Arabic* – the “sacred language” of Islam.
 - Also, the fact that Mark, Luke and Paul wrote much of the New Testament and were not part of Jesus’ original Apostles, further make it very suspect to Muslims.
 - So Muslims believe that God’s message through Jesus was greatly adulterated by the church – and especially by the Apostle Paul – because its teaching about Jesus are so different from the Koran.
 - However, in due time the “Comforter” promised by Jesus appeared in the person of Muhammed and set the record straight. Truth was restored, and Muhammed eclipsed Jesus as God’s last word to mankind.
16. It is also very important to understand an important concept in Islamic interpretation known as *abrogation*. That means that an *earlier revelation* can be *abrogated* or *overturned* by a later revelation. This is especially difficult to understand and follow since sometimes the *abrogation* will come in the Koran earlier simply because it is in a shorter Sura. This is why there are so MANY contradictions in the Koran between earlier teachings of Mohammed and later ones.
17. As we have often seen in this study, *Moslem theology is clearly largely drawn from both Judaism and Christianity* – and Mohammed initially considered himself an heir of both religions and traditions.
- Therefore, we find what we would expect – a LOT of similar stories in the Koran to ones in both the OT and NT. They are so similar that most objective scholars see them as blatant plagiarism – and not very good plagiarism at that because Mohammed made so many mistakes and contradictions!
 - Initially Mohammed decreed that both the Jews and Christians were to be given protection under Moslem rule as *Al Qatab*, or the “People of the Book” – which the Koran calls them some 40 times. So as “People of the Book,” Mohammed told Jews and Christians to “stand fast” to what God had revealed to them (Sura 5:68-71);

- He proclaimed them as “dhimmi,” or “protected persons.”
- The pagans living under him were given a more stark choice: “Convert or die!”
- In Medina he even extended hospitality to Christians and invited them to meet in the mosque there and allowed them to “pray facing Jerusalem,” as was the Christian custom.
- In his earlier proclamations, Mohammed commanded his followers not to dispute the Bible with Jews or Christians (Sura 21:7; 29:46);
- However, over time Mohammed became less and less tolerant of the Jews in Medina and ultimately forced them to leave after their rejection of his prophetic claims. That’s why the Koran accuses them of corrupting the Bible (Sura 3:71, 78).
- Ultimately all Jews and Christians who received the revelations of the Koran and rejected them are called *Kafir*. So this word is used to describe all people who are no longer *ignorant* of the revelation of the Koran – but have heard and rejected its message. They are then considered “apostates” and candidates for execution.
- The early portions of the Koran express the clear hope that the “People of the Book” would fully accept Mohammed as their final prophet. When this did not happen, his opposition of them intensified.
- However, later portions of the Koran speak against the Jews for their unbelief in Islam, and against the Christians for their wrong views about Jesus.
- As a result, both the Jews and Christians were reduced to the state of being “second” or “third class citizens” in every country where Islam is in a majority.
 - A. They could not build new places of worship;
 - B. They could not repair old ones;
 - C. They were prohibited from any form of evangelism;
 - D. While Moslem men could marry both Jewish and Christian wives – and raise their children as Moslems – Christians had to marry only other Christians.
 - E. Gradually Islam wins the day in predominantly countries, and both Jews and Christians are either reduced to “second class citizens” or have to flee the country.

CONCLUSIONS

1. As I briefly noted earlier, one of the major problems with the ‘authority of the Koran’ is this: *“How can we be sure that the current Arabic versions of the Koran is the correct one?”*
2. As we saw earlier, Mohammed died without ever making any adequate preparation for either a successor or the preservation of his ‘revelations.’ Therefore, in some of the many “battles of succession” that took place after his death, some of his original “reciters” were killed – especially at the Battle of Yamama.
3. As a result, his successor, Abu Bakr – the ‘First Caliph’ after Mohammed’s death, begin the process of trying to gather the existing copies of the sayings of Mohammed. These were entrusted to one of Mohammed’s wives, who was the daughter of ‘Umar, the ‘Second Caliph.’
4. By the time of the ‘Third Caliph,’ Uthman, a major controversy broke out over which were the true and trustworthy sayings of Mohammed among the many copies that were now being spread in the ever-growing Muslim world. So he set about to collect all extant copies he could find. Apparently no two copies were exactly alike. So Uthman rather arbitrarily picked one particular set in the ‘Qoraishi dialect’ which was spoken by Mohammed – and dubbed it “standard Arabic.” But since it is no longer an extant dialect, linguistic scholars cannot distinguish it from modern Arabic.
5. Copies of this particular line of the Koran was chosen as the official “canon.” All other copies were burned – some 24 different codices.
6. So the final “authorized version” of the Koran was chosen rather arbitrarily with little concern for historicity or authenticity. So in one fell swoop, Caliph Uthman issued an edict concerning the “canonical Koran’ – and destroyed all the rest!
7. As a result, no Moslem scholar can say with ANY degree of certainty that he is reading the “original words” of Mohammed, or the ‘revelation’ of Allah!
8. By contrast, we Christians have more than 24,000 extant copies in whole or portion of the Bible to undergird our various translations. So Christian scholars are able to enjoy a level of *historical-linguistic-exegesis* that no Islamic scholar ever can!
9. So I close again with the words of II Pet. 1:16-21...

Prayer

Next Session: *“Jesus & Jihad”*