

Answering the Objections of Islam

There are a number of objections that Muslims commonly present in opposition to Christian teaching. Those objections raise questions that every believer ought to be able to address.

The Bible Has Been Corrupted

Muslims have been taught that the early texts of the Bible have been corrupted. In support of that view they point to the following passages from the Qur'an:

“A party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.”

Surah 2:75

“And there are among them [the Jews] illiterates, who know not the Book, but (see therein their own) desires, and they do nothing but conjecture. Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: “This is from Allah,” to traffic with it for a miserable price!”

Surah 2:78—79

These passages speak of misinterpreting Scripture and of passing something off as Scripture that is not Scripture. They do not speak of altering the actual biblical manuscripts.

The Qur'an considers the revelations contained in “the Book” — their term for the Bible — to be authoritative and authentic revelations from God (Surah 2:136; 4:163). It encourages Jews and Christians to “stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from our Lord” (Surah 5:68). It uses the Torah and the Gospel to authenticate Muhammad as the prophet (Surah 7:1 57), and it encourages those who doubt Muhammad's teachings to “ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee” (Surah 10:94). The Qur'an also urges belief in the previous Scriptures (Surah 4:1 6).

Given that the Qur'an talks so much about the previous Scriptures as being revealed from God, the contention that Jews and Christians have altered those Scriptures flies in the face of its own statement that, “None can change His words.” (Surah 6:115).

Consider also the impossibility of corrupting the biblical texts. The world-wide community of Jews would have had to agree the changes. The Christians of the world would also have had to assent to them as well making and agreeing their changes to the New Testament texts.

Further, the Dead Sea Scrolls (c100BC) confirm in an astounding way the accuracy of the Masoretic manuscripts (900AD). That is significant for it confirms that the manuscripts that existed after the Muslim accusation of corruption are identical to those that existed long before Muhammad lived.

With respect to the New Testament, 3,157 Greek manuscripts containing either portions or all of the New Testament and that date from the second century on have been found. Of the differences between them, 95% have to do with trivialities, such as a letter being omitted. No Christian doctrine rests solely on, or is even affected by, a disputed text.

You Worship Three Gods

In light of the Muslim sin of *ishrak* — associating a partner with God — Muslims raise several objections to the doctrine of the Trinity. They will claim, for example that Christians worship three gods. There are several things you should do in response to this.

- Affirm your agreement that there is only one God and point to biblical passages that prove it: Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:29—32, 1 Corinthians 84.

- Point out that the Bible speaks of a complex unity rather than a simple undivided unity. There is one God but there is a plurality in His oneness: Genesis 2:24: Exodus 24:3: Judges 20:1, 8, 11; Romans 12:3.
- Explain that it is not surprising that as God's creatures we cannot fully understand the nature of our Creator. The difficulty of explaining the concept of the Trinity is evidence in its favour for it is unlikely that such an idea would be invented by humans.
- Clarify who makes up of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Some Muslims believe, on the basis of the following verse from the Qur'an, that it consists of God, Jesus and Mary.

“And when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?”

Surah 5:116

- Consider the biblical evidence for the tri-unity of God. In the Bible the Father is referred to as God (Matthew 11:25, John 6:27, 8:54, Ephesians 4:6), Jesus is recognised as God (Like 5:17 – 26: John 1:1, 20:28) and the Holy Spirit is identified as God (Acts 5:3 – 4) nevertheless the Bible does not speak of three gods but one.

“Baptising them in the name (singular) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”

Matthew 28:19

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all identified as having attributes unique to God. Each existed before anything was created, and each was active in the creation of all things (Psalm 146:5 6, Mark 13:19, Acts 4:24, John 1:1 – 3, 14, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1: 16 – 17, Genesis 1: 1 – 3). Each possesses the attribute of omnipresence (Jeremiah 23:24, Acts 17:24 – 25, Matthew 18:20, 28:20, Ephesians 1:23, Psalm 139:7—8).

Another way to approach the Muslim's difficulties with the doctrine of the Trinity is to point out how practical it is in meeting the needs of humanity.

- Love: God the Father demonstrated this love for us historically by sending His Son to save us: John 3:16, Romans 3:8, 1 John 4:9 –10.
- Freedom from guilt and sin: the Son took our sins upon himself, paid the penalty of death on our behalf, and rose from the dead to give us victory over sin and death: Romans 3:8, 1 Corinthians 5:21, 15:3 – 4, 1 John 1:9.
- Sympathy: because Jesus became a man we know that God understands our suffering: Philippians 2:6 – 8; Hebrews 4:13.
- Hope: because Jesus physically rose from the dead, we have the hope of personal survival after death.
- Transformation: God the Holy Spirit indwells us (Romans 8:9 – 11, 1 Corinthians 3:16) and makes our spirit, which was dead, alive (John 3:3 – 7, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Titus 3:5); and gives us the power to submit to God (Romans 8:5 – 17).

Many Muslims will have difficulty with the idea of Christians referring to Jesus as the Son of God. They understand the term “Son of God” to imply that God had physical relations with a woman in order to have a son.

“Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (It is) a statement of truth, about which they dispute. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son

Surah 19:34 – 35

In the Arabic language there are two words for son. One denotes becoming a son through the union of man and woman, the other, *ibn*, can be used metaphorically. Arabs talk, for example, about a traveller as being a “son of the road”. It is in this wider sense that Jesus is understood as being the Son of God. When Jesus referred to God as His Father” and to himself as the Son He was not talking about His physical birth, He was claiming to have a special relationship with God: as a son He is of the same order as and has the same qualities as God and that was how the Jews of Jesus day understood it (John 5:18, 10:33).

This subject also touches on how God has communicated with humanity (Hebrews 1:1 – 2).

God Would Allow His Chosen Prophet to Be Dishonoured By Crucifixion

Muslims believe that the God of the Qur'an would not have dishonoured his chosen prophet by allowing him to be crucified. They deny that Jesus was crucified but believe instead that He was caught up into heaven and that someone (some say Judas) took His place on the cross. They will quote the following:

“They said, “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah—but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not — nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself.”

Surah 4:157 – 158

However, this does not deny that Jesus was crucified; it merely denies that the Jews crucified Him, which is true; the Romans did it.

More importantly, God was ultimately responsible for Jesus being crucified (Romans 8:3 – 4 1 Peter 1: 18 – 20). Even the Qur'an alludes to that:

“When Allah said: “O Jesus, I will cause thee to die and exult thee in My presence.”

Surah 3:54

In light of the above passage, it is helpful to refer to Isaiah 53:4, to see why God caused Jesus to die, and consider it together with the story of God ordering Abraham to sacrifice his son in Surah 37:101 – 107.

“Then when (the son) reached (the age of serious) work with him, he [Abraham] said: “O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!” The son said: “O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou wilt find me, if Allah so wills, one practicing patience and constancy!” So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah) and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out to him, “O Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision! — Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial and We rewarded him with a momentous sacrifice”

There are three questions to ask a Muslim with respect to this passage from the Qur'an:

- If salvation is only a matter of rewarding those who do good, and if God's purpose was only to test Abraham's obedience, why then was there a need for “a momentous sacrifice”? Was it not sufficient that Abraham went as far as he did?
- Who provided the momentous sacrifice?
- Is a goat enough to ransom humanity?

In this light, read what Jesus said concerning His mission:

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20:28

It is also helpful to point out the verses in which Jesus predicted His death: Matthew 12:39 – 40, 16:4, 21, 17:22 – 23, 20:17 – 19, 26:2, Mark 8:31, 9:31 10:33 – 34, Luke 9:22, 44, John 10:11, 17 – 18, 12:32 – 33.

Rather than dishonouring Christ, Muslims should see the Crucifixion as resulting in the highest honour and epitomising what it means to be a Muslim. The word “Islam” means obedience or submission.” and it is obedience to God that Jesus demonstrated all the way to the Cross!

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.”

Philippians 2:8 – 9

Questions for Discussion

1. Some would say that Christians, Jews and Muslims worship the same God. How would you respond to that idea?
2. What difficulties might you encounter when you try to explain Christianity to a Muslim?
3. How might you present the gospel to a Muslim?