

The Search for Truth

Recently I received a paper being distributed by certain Muslims in Milan, explaining the beliefs of Islam (quoting many verses from the Quran), and seeking to show the Christian faith is in great error and that following Islam is the only way to paradise. While we respect these Muslims for sincerely trying to convince others of what they believe, the paper was remarkable for how it grossly misrepresented what Christians really believe. To help Muslims understand more clearly what are Christian beliefs, I am writing this paper. May God give His light and understanding, and truly direct each one of us on the right path, not on the path of those who are evil and who do evil.

True Christian faith is based upon the Bible, which is the inspired Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

What Muslims call the Torah, Zabur, and Injil is what Christians call the Bible. The Bible is made up of two main parts, the Old Testament (or old covenant) and the New Testament (or new covenant). The Torah and Zabur (Psalms) form part of the Old Testament, while the Injil is what Muslims call the New Testament. The Arabic word *Injil* comes from the Greek word *evangelion*, which translated means "good news". As it says in Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the gospel (Gr. evangelion) about Jesus Christ*, i.e. the beginning of the "good news" about Jesus Christ.

The "good news" is the message about Jesus and His wonderful free gift of salvation. This "good news", is not a book that was delivered to Jesus, but it is the good news that the Saviour came to redeem us from our sins, which all the works of law could not remove. By His death on the cross, Jesus paid our sin debt, which we could never pay by any amount of outward good works we might do. Isaiah 64:5 says *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*

Jesus spoke to some people who were outwardly clean, but inwardly unclean, comparing them to dirty cups and dishes: (Matthew 23:25-26) *Woe to you, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.*

Jesus also said, (Mark 7:14-15) *"Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"*

He explained this later to His disciples: (Mar 7:18-23) *"Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"*

God doesn't desire a mere outward show of righteousness, but actual goodness and truth in the inward parts (Psalm 51:6) *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* Jesus came to redeem us from our sins and give us a new heart, a clean and good heart. If we accept His gift of salvation we will be saved and transformed by the spirit of God, becoming not just outwardly religious, but clean inside, now having the law written upon our hearts.

The Bible tells us that there is only One God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) *The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

There is only one God; no real Christian believes there are three Gods. We agree on that.

But Scripture does tell us that this God has revealed Himself to us through His living Word, Jesus Christ. (John 1:1-5,14) *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The Word of God is eternal and divine. God's Word is not something separate or apart from God. The Word of God is not a second God, but the Word of God is the expression or revelation of God Himself. Christians believe that God has manifested Himself in Jesus, who is the living Word of God incarnate.

God is able to do all things; He cannot be limited in any way. If He chooses to reveal Himself to us by becoming incarnate in the flesh, who is to say He is not able to do so? This does not mean there is more than one God, however. I personally am a man; I am also a father and a son. But I am still just one person, not three.

More than 700 years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah prophesied about Jesus coming and His sacrificial death for our sins: (Isaiah 53:1-6) *Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Isaiah prophesied not only of His sacrificial death for our sins upon the cross, but he also foretold His resurrection from the grave: (Isaiah 53:10-12) *After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

This was fulfilled when Jesus was on the cross (Luke 23:33-34) *When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

The Bible tells us that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-25) as the Holy Spirit overshadowed her (not the angel Gabriel). This was not some crude form of impregnation like the ancient Greek gods supposedly did with human mortals; this was God Himself divinely entering into humanity by becoming Himself a man. (Phillipians 2:5-11) *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Jesus birth, life, death and resurrection fulfilled many prophecies given before in the Old Testament: (Here are just some of them: Genesis 3:15; 12:3; 18:18; 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Psalm 2:7; 16:10-11; Psalm 22; 35:11,19; 41:9; 68:18; 69:21; 72:10-11; 118:22-23; 132:11; Isaiah 7:14; 9:1-7; 28:16; 35:5-6; 50:6; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; 55:3-4; 59:16; 61:1-3; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 31:31-34; 33:15-16; Daniel 9:24-26; Micah 5:1-2; Zechariah 9:9; 11:12-13; 13:7; Malachi 3:1)

Jesus lived a completely sinless life, the only one who ever did. As He stood before His accusers and enemies, He said, (John 8:46) *Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?*

Jesus made claims about Himself that nobody else ever could. He said, (John 14:6) *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

He also said, (John 10:1-5; 9-10, 14-18, 24-30) *"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full..... I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."*

Jesus told His disciples that after His death and resurrection, He would send the Counselor, or Holy Spirit, to dwell inside the believers (John 14:16-17) *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.* This was not a prophecy about Muhammad as some Muslims say. The Greek word for Counselor is *parekletos*. Muslims say another Greek word, *periclytos*, meaning "praised one" (=Ahmed, =Muhammad) was used. The Bible is the most highly attested of any ancient literature by far, with thousands of Old Testament manuscripts and 25,000 New Testament manuscripts existing. Yet not one ancient manuscript of the New Testament has ever been found that uses the term *periclytos*.

Jesus warned people to beware of false prophets who would come. (Matthew 7:15-20) *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

He also said, (John 7:24) *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."*

As a friend, I ask you to consider with an honest heart the things that are written down on this paper. Ask God to help you to know the truth, and to show you if Jesus is who the Bible says He is. If you will call upon the Lord in sincerity, He will hear you. (Joel 2:32). God loves you!

Contact information: