

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

47516 - The Gospels that are extant nowadays were written after the time of 'Eesa (peace be upon him) and have been tampered with a great deal

the question

It is well known among us Muslims that Allaah revealed the Gospel (Injeel) to 'Eesa (peace be upon him), but when I studied some things about Christianity, they told me that the Gospel was not brought by the Messiah, rather it was written by the disciples of the Messiah after the crucifixion (or after Allaah raised him up to Him, as it says in the Qur'aan). How can we reconcile between the two views?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There is no contradiction between the two views such that we would need to ask how they can be reconciled. Rather the reason why the questioner is confused is that he is mixing up two things that we must believe in and that are both true, praise be to Allaah.

The first issue is the Gospel that was revealed from the Lord of the Worlds to the Prophet of Allaah 'Eesa (peace be upon him). Belief that Allaah revealed a Book to His Prophet 'Eesa and that the name of this book was the Gospel (Injeel), are basic principles of faith that we must believe in. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allaah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. (They say,) ‘We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers’ — and they say, ‘We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the return (of all)’”

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[al-Baqarah 2:285]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to Jibreel, when he asked him about faith, as mentioned in the well-known hadeeth: "Faith means to believe in Allaah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in His divine will and decree, both good and bad." (Agreed upon).

Disbelieving in that or doubting it is misguidance and kufr or disbelief in Allaah. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Believe in Allaah, and His Messenger (Muhammad), and the Book (the Qur'aan) which He has sent down to His Messenger, and the Scripture which He sent down to those before (him); and whosoever disbelieves in Allaah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, then indeed he has strayed far away.

137. Verily, those who believe, then disbelieve, then believe (again), and (again) disbelieve, and go on increasing in disbelief; Allaah will not forgive them, nor guide them on the (right) way"

[al-Nisa' 4:136-137]

"Verily, those who disbelieve in Allaah and His Messengers and wish to make distinction between Allaah and His Messengers (by believing in Allaah and disbelieving in His Messengers) saying, "We believe in some but reject others," and wish to adopt a way in between.

151. They are in truth disbelievers. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating torment"

[al-Nisa' 4:150-151]

The second issue is the Gospel or, more precisely, the Gospels that the Christians have today. Although one of the basic principles of our faith is to believe in the Gospel that was revealed to

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'Eesa, we also believe that there is no longer any book that remained as it was revealed by Allaah, neither the Gospel nor anything else, apart from the Qur'aan. Even the Christians themselves do not believe that the books that they have before them were revealed in that form from God, nor do they claim that the Messiah wrote the Gospel or at least that it was written during his lifetime. Imam Ibn Hazm (may Allaah have mercy on him) says in *al-Fasl fi'l-Milal* (2/2):

We do not need to try hard to prove that the Gospels and all the books of the Christians did not come from God or from the Messiah (peace be upon him), as we needed to do with regard to the Torah and the books attributed to the Prophets that the Jews have, because the Jews claim that the Torah that they have was revealed from God to Moosa, so we needed to establish proof that this claim of theirs is false. With regard to the Christians, they have taken care of the issue themselves, because they do not believe that the Gospels were revealed from God to the Messiah, or that the Messiah brought them, rather all of them from first to last, peasants and kings, Nestorians, Jacobites, Maronites and Orthodox are all agreed that there are four historical accounts written by four known men at different times. The first of them is the account written by Matthew the Levite who was a disciple of the Messiah, nine years after the Messiah was taken up into heaven. He wrote it in Hebrew in Judaea in Palestine, and it filled approximately twenty-eight pages in a medium-sized script. The next account was written by Mark, a disciple of Simon ben Yuna, who was called Peter, twenty-two years after the Messiah was taken up into heaven. He wrote it in Greek in Antioch in the land of the Byzantines. They say that the Simon mentioned is the one who wrote it, then he erased his name from the beginning of it and attributed it to his disciple Mark. It filled twenty-four pages written in a medium-sized script. This Simon was a disciple of the Messiah. The third account written was that of Luke, a physician of Antioch who was also a disciple of Simon Peter. He wrote it in Greek after Mark had written his account, and is similar in length to the Gospel of Matthew. The fourth account was written by John the son of Zebedee, another disciple of the Messiah, sixty-odd years after the Messiah has been taken up into heaven. He wrote it in Greek, and it filled twenty-four pages in a medium-sized script. End

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quote.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said in al-Jawaab al-Saheeh (3:21):

With regard to the Gospels that the Christians have, there are four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are agreed that Luke and Mark did not see the Messiah, rather he was seen by Matthew and John. These four accounts which they call the Gospel, and they call each one of them a Gospel, were written by these men after the Messiah had been taken up into heaven. They did not say that they are the word of God or that the Messiah conveyed them from God, rather they narrated some of the words of the Messiah and some of his deeds and miracles. End quote.

Moreover, these books which were written after the time of the Messiah did not remain in their original form. The original versions were lost long ago. Ibn Hazm said:

With regard to the Christians, there is no dispute among them or anyone else that only one hundred and twenty men believed in the Messiah during his lifetime... and all of those who believed in him concealed themselves and were afraid during his lifetime and afterwards; they called people to his religion in secret and none of them disclosed himself or practised his religion openly, because any of them who was caught was executed.

They continued in this manner, not showing themselves at all, and they had no place where they were safe for three hundred years after the Messiah was taken up into heaven.

During this time, the Gospel that had been revealed from Allaah disappeared, apart from a few verses which Allaah preserved as proof against them and as a rebuke to them, as we have mentioned. Then when the Emperor Constantine became a Christian, then the Christians prevailed and started to practise their religion openly and assemble in safety.

If a religion is like this, with its followers practicing it in secret and living in constant fear of the sword, it is impossible for things to be transmitted soundly via a continuous chain of narrators and

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its followers cannot protect it or prevent it from being distorted.

End quote. Al-Fasl, 2/4-5.

In addition to this huge disruption in the chain of transmission of their books, which lasted for two centuries, these books did not remain in the languages in which they were originally written, rather they were translated, more than once, by people whose level of knowledge and honesty is unknown. The contradictions in these books and their shortcomings are among the strongest evidence that they have been distorted and that they are not the Gospel (Injeel) that Allaah revealed to His slave and Messenger 'Eesa (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Allaah indeed spoke the truth when He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“Had it been from other than Allaah, they would surely, have found therein many a contradiction”

[al-Nisa' 4:82].