

IS TODAY'S BIBLE CORRUPTED?

DEAR MUSLIM FRIEND,

Do you believe that the Bible is corrupted? Maybe you have been taught that the Bible has been changed by man and therefore is no longer an authoritative source for truth. Let us explore the origin of these allegations against the Bible in order to understand the facts.

WHEN WAS THE BIBLE CORRUPTED?

If the Bible was changed, the question that the Muslim should be able to answer is: When was the Bible corrupted?

There are two possible answers to this question: either it was changed before the time of the Quran or much later.

BEFORE THE TIME OF THE QURAN:

For those who say the Bible was corrupted before the time of the Quran, the logical question is: Why then does the Quran instruct Muslims to acknowledge the Torah (the first five books of the Bible's Old Testament) and the Injil (the first four books of the Bible's New Testament)?

The Quran says: "It was We who revealed the Torah to Moses. Therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed to Allah's will by the rabbis and the doctors of Law, for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's book and they were witnesses to thereto." Quran 5:44

"And in their footsteps we sent Isa the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him. We sent him the Gospel [Injil] therein was guidance and light and confirmation of the Law that had come before him. A guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah." Quran 5:46

From these two verses we discover that the Quran acknowledges that Allah proclaimed the Torah and the Gospel to be "guidance and light" for his people, and that Allah sent Isa (Jesus) to confirm the Law that came before him.

In historical perspective, this means that according to the Quran, the Torah and the Gospel were still authoritative texts, uncorrupted by man, at the time the Quran was being revealed to Muhammad.

AFTER THE TIME OF THE QURAN:

Some Muslims believe that the Bible was corrupted after the Quran was revealed to Islam's prophet. There are two main reasons why this theory is incorrect:

1. By the sixth century, the Bible as we know it today had been translated into many languages including Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopian, Aramaic and Greek. Hundreds of copies of these translations circulated in Asia, North Africa, and Europe.
2. The Torah (the first five books of the Bible) was already present among the Jews, as was the entire Bible among Christians.

It would be highly improbable that someone would be able to gather all the copies and translations from all of these continents, from both Jews and Christians, to make sure that no original translation remained, and then attempt to create a new version of the Bible. An understanding of the timeline regarding these texts makes it clear that the Bible could not have been corrupted after the time of the Quran.

WHO COULD HAVE CORRUPTED THE BIBLE?

Another question that the Muslim must be able to answer is: Who made these changes to the Bible? Again, there are two possible answers: the Jews or the Christians. There are several objections to these charges.

THE JEWS

If the Jews had made changes to the Bible, wouldn't they have made changes to serve their own interests?

The Old Testament is full of stories about their kings and leaders who turned away from God, worshiped idols, and committed shameful sins. It would have made sense for the Jews to keep the good stories that would exalt their past and remove the less flattering events from their history.

In the New Testament, if the Jews had made changes, they would have likely omitted Jesus' accusations against them and changed the crucifixion story because it highlights their cruelty and responsibility.

If the Jews had tried to change any part of the Bible, the Christians would have made a stand against altering the revered Word of God. Additionally, there has not been any historical record about the Jews rewriting or changing the Bible.

WHO COULD HAVE CORRUPTED THE BIBLE? CONT.

THE CHRISTIANS

The same reasoning applies to the accusation that Christians corrupted the Bible. Why would the Christians corrupt the Old Testament when it includes hundreds of prophecies that were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ?

In the New Testament, why would Christians make changes when thousands of them were killed in the first century because they refused to abandon the very Gospel they were supposedly guilty of changing?

WHAT DOES THE QURAN TEACH ABOUT THE BIBLE?

It is worth mentioning that the Quran never says that the Bible manuscript has been changed or corrupted. What it says is that some of the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians, twisted the words of the Bible with their tongues.

"There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: (As they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, "That is from Allah," but it is not from Allah: It is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it."
Quran 3:78

THE SAME BIBLE TODAY AS IT WAS WRITTEN

The Bible today is the same as it was over 2,000 years ago. The Old Testament books were preserved and shared by communities who held the text to be sacred. Members of the religious community safeguarded the texts against any type of modification.

The Old Testament was circulated by communities of scribes who dedicated their lives to the accurate preservation of the text. Most Old Testament manuscripts have scribal notations at the end of each major section so the scribes could make sure it always stayed the same. For example, the note at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy (the last book of the Torah) says that the total number of verses in the Torah is 5,845, the total number of paragraphs is 167, the total number of words is 79,856, and the total number of letters is 400,945!

The New Testament's credibility stands up to the same scrutiny that historians would give to other ancient texts. There is documentation of at least four thousand Greek manuscripts of the New Testament from before 1200 AD and some full manuscripts from as early as 350 AD.

There are New Testament fragments with even earlier dates, from the first generation after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In fact, there is more historical documentation for the reliability of the Gospels than there is for Napoleon's battle at Waterloo (1815 AD), which no one calls into question!

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Today, there are hundreds of English translations of the Bible. You may wonder why. There are two main types of translation.

The literal translation sticks as closely as possible to every word of the original Hebrew and Greek. It is a literal transfer, word for word, of the original words into English. The Bible versions with such translations, while great for close study, are often difficult to read and comprehend for those who are not scholars. The other type of translation transfers the message, that is, the thought and emotion of the original text. To do this, scholars use as many words as are necessary to reproduce the idea.

Translations also differ to accommodate the reading level of the reader. The lower reading level translations have shorter sentences drawn from a smaller English word pool and avoid all uncommon words. No matter what translation of the Bible you read, it does have the power to transform your life. Though the structure and the terminology may differ, the voice of God can speak to you through each one.

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

GOD WARNS AGAINST CHANGING HIS WORD

Both the Old and New Testament specifically command that God's Word is not to be altered in any way.

In Deuteronomy 4:2, God says, *"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you."*

The final paragraph of the Bible, Revelation 22:18–19, says, *"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll."*

READ THE BIBLE TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH

We encourage you to read the Bible in order to see these truths for yourself. Learn about the prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus and follow the events of His life, leading up to the love God showed to the world through Jesus' death and resurrection. If you need a Bible, please write to us and we can send you one. We encourage you to start your reading in this order:

- The Gospel of Luke, which relates the full story of Jesus' life
- The Gospel of John, which reveals the love of God to the world through Jesus Christ
- The book of Acts, where the message of Christ continues through His followers
- The letter to the Romans, where God's plan of saving us from eternal hell is fully explained
- Meditate on the Psalms (in the Old Testament part of the Bible) while reading the above books. This will help you learn how to speak to God and have a close personal relationship with your Creator.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, ASK FOR GOD'S HELP EACH TIME YOU READ BY SAYING "GOD, PLEASE SHOW ME THE TRUE WAY AND REVEAL YOURSELF TO ME."

KEEP LEARNING



If you are a Muslim investigating your faith further, please read our other free resources on Islam.



If you are a Christian learning about Islam, pray with us for more Muslims will come to know Christ. You can learn more about reaching Muslims with the love of Christ on our blog.



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