

The Qura'n mentions one Gospel [*Injil*] Why then do Christians talk about four Gospels?

By Abu Atallah

Dear Friend, thank you for your question. Let me explain to you first what the word *Injil* means. I am glad that the Qura'n uses the word *Injil*. Actually this is not an Arabic word but a Greek one. It is taken from the Greek word *Eu-Anglion* which means the good news or good tidings. It is basically the good news of the coming of Jesus to save the world from sin and its domination over the human race. It is good news because God loves the world and wants the world to come back to him in obedience.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus announced that he had been commissioned specifically to preach the gospel; later he charged the apostles [his followers] to continue his ministry by spreading the gospel. "Now after John (Yhaya) was arrested, Jesus (Isa) came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel'". He also said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

It is important to observe that Jesus thought of himself not only as declaring, but also as constituting the good news. Jesus was the message as well as the messenger (he was the Risaalat and the Rasul). So the message of salvation is connected with the coming of Jesus.

So you wonder, what is the good news? The good news is what Jesus said and did. Jesus has come to redeem us; to bring salvation (Fida' and Najat) from sin and death, and give whoever believes in him eternal life—a relationship with God that will never be broken: "That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

The gospel is a message of hope to those whose relationship with God is severed, what Christians call spiritual death. This subject will be answered in another article because it is an important one and many Muslims like you ask why Jesus has come and how could he die. Because I am limited to space I will address this particular subject later.

But to get to your main question. If the gospel is what Jesus said and did, who saw and heard it? Four of Jesus' followers were inspired by the spirit of God (Wahi) to write what they have seen and heard. Luke, the articulate doctor, was very careful in his account. The terms that he put down were very historically accurate, and his audience was the Gentiles, Romans, Greeks, etc. Matthew was an accountant, and his audience was Jewish, Mark was the vibrant young man and John an elderly wise and quiet man. Though these four are different people, the core message was the same: the good news.

Now you ask why not only one? Let me use this illustration. If you were involved in a car accident, the police would come to ask questions of those who witnessed the accident and find who was at fault. Then the case would be sent to the court for the Judge to deliver a verdict. Let me ask you the question: if you have four witnesses to say that you were not at fault, would not this be better than only one witness? You see, the four perspectives do all agree on the major facts. Do you not think that the witness of four is better than the witness of one? The four accounts also work as a way to make sure that each would say the truth. I encourage you to read the gospels to see the four portraits of Jesus (Isa). I would like to leave you with these words of the gospel (*Injil*) called Matthew (5:1-15):

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. “