

# The Word of God: The Bible or the Koran?

(Transcribed from the debate, Islam vs. Christianity, produced by The John Ankerberg Show. Featured guests: Dr. Jamal Badawi, Dr. Hussein Morsi, Dr. Gleason Archer, Dr. Anis Shorrosh.)

**Dr. John Ankerberg:** Tonight our topic is very, very controversial; a very interesting one, I am sure that you will find. Which book is the word of God—the Bible or the Koran? What's the evidence for the position that you take. Speaking first will be Dr. Jamal Badawi.

**Dr. Jamal Badawi:** Thank you, John. I would like to address two issues. One is the relationship between the Koran and previous Scriptures and secondly, why Muslims accept the Koran as the final arbiter and criteria. On the first question there are six basic points:

(1) One of the articles of faith in Islam is not only to believe in the prophets of God, but to believe in the original Christian revelation given to them for guidance and benefit of mankind. They all came from the same source, and that explains the parallels between the Koran and the Bible—the same source, God.

(2) None of the Scriptures, according to Muslim belief, prior to the Koran remain fully intact and can be objectively traced back to its prophet without interruption in the chain of narration in the original language that that prophet taught and spoke and with ample evidence that, indeed, it was not subjected to any major change.

(3) There was a critical need, as such, for fresh authoritative and authentic revelation to help mankind sift through the common religious heritage to make sure which is God's revelation and which is later theology that developed.

In that respect, (4) the Koran sees its function as four-fold: (1) the Koran confirms and verifies whatever remains intact of previous Scriptures; (2) to correct human misinterpretation and dogmatic addition to the original revelation, such as the exaggeration about the status of prophet Jesus, peace and blessing be upon Him; (3) to reveal crucial information which might have been lost throughout history, concealed or misunderstood, such as the climatic role of prophet Muhammad, peace be upon Him, as the ultimate climax for the era of prophethood; (4) for the Muslim also the Koran is the guardian over previous Scriptures; i.e., it is the criteria as the Koran calls itself in Sura 67. Anything that is consistent with the Koran a Muslim has no problem with that. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God" is mentioned in the Old Testament, New Testament. It is emphasized in the Koran. There is no difficulty with that at all.

To conclude; in that sense, it is my humble understanding that the title Koran and Bible which is the word of God is a misnomer, it's not correct. Because according to Muslims the Bible does contain, in part, the word of God, but it contains the words of Peter and the writer of the book of Revelation and many others. And, we make a distinction between both of these. It does contain partly the word of God; the only source or criteria for judgment for us is the Koran.

Now, why do Muslims accept the Koran as the word of God? (1) The internal evidence within the Koran is consistent that it is God's word. (2) There are more than enough reasons to accept the truthfulness of the claim of the prophet as we discussed in the topic of prophethood. (3) The literal and scientific challenge in the Koran is unquestioned, except for those who are not familiar with the language of the Koran or its sciences. For example, Dr. Keith Moore, an internationally known authority on human embryology in his book The

Developing Embryo makes it quite clear that he is amazed as to the exact accuracy of the statement made in the Koran about early embryonic stages. The book by Dr. Maurice Pokai, The Bible, the Koran and Science, conclude that nowhere in the entire Koran is there any statement that comes into clash with any established scientific fact, but not theory, we are not talking theory. None of the prophecies made in the Koran, and there are many of them unlike what was mentioned in a previous program, was ever proven to be wrong, even until now 1400 years after the revelation of the Koran. (5) The Koran is free from any contradiction and the challenge is there in the Koran, and I have seen many alleged contradictions that shows poor scholarship and lack of understanding. (6) The Koran is the only Scripture that was simultaneously written down and fully memorized during the lifetime of its prophet under his supervision over a period of twenty-three years. And, that the major way of preserving the Koran actually was more than writing; memorization by generation after generation. Even William Wares, a Western Christian scholar, cannot help but admit the accuracy of the Koran. Most significantly, the message of the Koran testifies to its source—faith in the one true God; love of Him; devotion to Him; respect to all prophets, emphasis on human brotherhood, universal justice and comprehensive guidance in all aspects of life.

Finally, for 1400 years the Koran has been the most significant influence in changing the lives of countless individuals and nations. It is responsible for millions of people embracing Islam all the way from Amar, who was going to kill the prophet and embraced Islam after hearing the Koran, to Cat Stevens, to the boxer Muhammad Ali, to Karem Abdul Jabbar and thousands of others in Western Europe and America. In fact, the Koran established a whole new civilization that lasted for 1000 years and was the Genesis of European renaissance.

**Ankerberg:** Thank you very much. Dr. Anis Shorrosh, you may begin.

**Dr. Anis Shorrosh:** Thank you, Sir. The teachings of the Koran concerning God, creation, Adam, Eve, sin, the Fall, angels, heaven, hell, Abraham, Moses, the Hebrew race, and prophets had already been revealed and proclaimed in the Old Testament. Muhammad brought nothing new. Perhaps some of this was new to his hearers, but Jews and Christians knew even more from their own Bibles. Muhammad's revelations were in no way superior to the revelations given by earlier prophets and neither did they unquestionably provide evidence of a fresh divine revelation. All the above mentioned proofs and more had been revealed and taught for centuries before the birth of Muhammad. Theological authorities demand that six conditions be fulfilled before any supposed revelation can be accepted as true revelation.

First, it must satisfy the yearning of the human spirit to obtain eternal happiness. Second, it must coincide with the conscience, which is the moral law written in man's mind. Third, it must reveal God's true attributes. Fourth, it must confirm man's reasoning that God is one. Fifth, it must make very plain the way of salvation. Sixth, it must reveal God Himself in books, through prophets, and in person. Neither Muhammad nor the Koran fulfill all of these six requirements. The Koran may fulfill the fourth partially and perhaps the sixth criteria.

The Bible itself is the most extraordinary book in all the world. It has 66 books written over a period of 1500 years by over 50 persons—some were shepherds, kings, philosophers, fishermen, others were rich, poor, young and old. It shows itself as an inspired word of God because the author is One, the Holy Spirit. I read from 2 Peter 1:20-21. "Knowing

this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not... by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We know that the Bible is inspired because of the fulfillment of prophecies after centuries before the events took place. It has also influenced uplifting of human society whenever it has been believed and practiced. Furthermore, the Bible's accuracy has been challenged, but never proven. Its accuracy has been substantiated by historical documents, archaeological finds, and ancient manuscripts. There are nearly 25,000 copies of the Scripture available for anybody's investigation in museums around the world.

How many available copies of the Koran do we have and how old are they, I ask my friends? Why did Othman order the burning of the other copies except Kapsa fifty-three years after the so-called revelation? Alexandria's codes dates back to 350 A.D. Codes vedicanus dates back to 325 A.D. The Dead Sea Scrolls of the entire Old Testament go back to 250 B.C. Some of you are well informed about the fantastic discoveries at Ugaret and at Ebla. Both have increased our faith in biblical authority and divine inspiration. Jesus said, "Heavens and earth shall pass away, but my word shall stand forever."

Now, we ask the question about the authenticity. Archaeologists declare that if the material or discovery has been already known, recorded, and verified as prior to what is claimed as new, there are two simple scientific solutions or answers. First, geographical location kept the two separated, thus neither knew what the other discovered. Second, one borrowed from the other since one chronologically preceded the other. There you have it, friends. The Old Testament was concluded 1000 years before the Koran. The New Testament was concluded by over 500 years before the Koran. Therefore, authenticity stands firmly with the Holy Bible, not the Koran from a scientific and archaeological viewpoint. Therefore, whenever the Koran does not agree with the Holy Bible one must conclude that the Koran is inaccurate.

Now, as to the matter of accuracy. Ladies and gentlemen, they have it in the Koran that Zechariah was speechless for three days, when the Bible tells you he was speechless till John the Baptist was born. We are told that Moses was picked up by the mother of Pharaoh, whereas in the Bible it is the daughter of Pharaoh. We are told that it was a Samaritan who made the golden calf, when the Bible tells you it was none other than Aaron, his brother. We are told time and again of stories of this magnitude such as Gideon. Gideon's story in the Bible is, in the Koran, King Saul having the 300 eat their water. And amazing as it is, dear friends, we discover that the word of God is true, and I would challenge anybody to study the Bible and discover that every personality of biblical nature mentioned in the Koran is more detailed and clarified in the Bible, the Word of God.

**Ankerberg:** We have just had statements from both sides, and now I would like to come to Hussein Morsi. Dr. Morsi, I would like to ask you this: according to the Bible, all of Noah's sons were saved from the Flood, but according to the Koran, in Sura 11:45 it teaches that Noah's son was drowned in the Flood. So, there is a disagreement between the Koran and the Bible. But worse, then the Koran in Sura 21:75 says, "We saved him, Noah, and all his kinfolk from the great calamity." So, now you have a contradiction in the Koran itself, where in one spot, Noah's son is said to have drowned and in the other spot it says that everybody was saved, and then the disagreement with the Scripture itself. You say there is no contradiction in the Koran. How would you straighten that one out?

**Dr. Hussein Morsi:** The assumption here is an unfair assumption made with the presuppositions that the Bible is an absolutely perfect, complete, accurate historical record

which is debated within the Christian community and that anything that differs from the Koran means the Koran is wrong rather than the other way around, which is a very....

**Ankerberg:** Wait, you made the claim that the Koran does not contradict itself. I'm still waiting for an answer.

**Morsi:** There is no contradiction because when it says we say that Noah and his people, it does not necessarily mean each and everyone. And there is a rule in the Arabic language that if 99 persons said that one drowned, for example, you can state that we saved him and his people, there is absolutely no contradiction.

**Ankerberg:** It says all were saved.

**Morsi:** No, read it carefully.

**Ankerberg:** I did, in three translations.

**Morsi:** ....translation, not the original words.

**Ankerberg:** The question that is at stake right here is the accuracy of the text. You have said that there are no contradictions. We have pointed out one. Dr. Archer, you have said that there is a problem with the textual transmission, that it is not pure. In fact, if I understand correctly, there is one Koran in Cairo in the museum there. There is another Koran in another one, I think it's, where is it at?

**Dr. Gleason Archer:** Damascus and Cairo.

**Ankerberg:** Then the one that is commonly used, and all three are different. They all contradict each other. Now, why is that so?

**Badawi:** I can explain it to you. There are lots of allegations that are not correct. I mentioned in my presentation that the main means of preservation of the Koran was through memorization generation after generation. There are people today who memorized the entire Koran who can trace it generation after generation right to the prophet. Number one.

**Ankerberg:** But was it only memorized—it seems to me that all the scholars, even Muslim scholars, are saying that some were written on palm leaves, some were written on meat, some were written on rocks....

**Badawi:** I said not the only one. I said the main way of preservation was through memorization, and until today, you will find children whose mother tongue is not Arab— young children who memorized the entire Koran from A to Z. There is no problem with that. Secondly, about the written manuscripts; the prophet, peace be upon him, whenever any portion of the Koran was revealed, he instructed people to write it down in the material that you described. Number one. So, there was one official copy. And the entire Koran was written fully during the lifetime of the prophet. But aside from the official copy, the prophet also indicated that he was permitted to allow some tribes who find some words difficult in the Koran to use some alternative words. And that was allowed only as a temporary way because these people were already grown up in this kind of dialect, even though it is exactly the same meaning, the same theological concept. What he did actually, with the approval of all the companions and memorizers of the Koran, is that he said instead of people differing—since Islam spread and it doesn't make a difference whether you recite in the official dialect in which the Koran was revealed or others—he said it is better actually to burn those documents or this people, that the personal collections of people and restrict ourselves to the official document as uttered by the prophet under his supervision.

**Ankerberg:** All right, hold it right there. The Koran, translated from the Arabic by J. M. Rodwell, in this preface, he has a different idea. He says in the copies that were made from it, various readings naturally and necessarily sprang up, and these led to much serious

dispute between the faithful that it became necessary to interpose, and therefore, he burned the ones that did not agree that caused the....

**Badawi:** That was his statement, not justified by history. The most important authentic reference to the Koran that all scholars referred to is the authentic collection of Hadis and they tried to contradict that opinion. In the meantime, I mentioned to you William Ware who is a Christian missionary himself who admitted after very detailed and elaborate analysis of the history of the Koran that the Koran, as we have it today, is the same.

**Ankerberg:** Why is it so serious, Anis, to say that Allah cannot abrogate a verse that's been given and give another one?

**Shorrosh:** Because, Sir, it would sound like God has two Korans in heaven and giving him one to change his mind about this, about that and the other. For this reason, you have a very doubtful sensation that the Koran is really the word of God. If he forgot a verse, he is going to bring another one. Where are the verses that he forgot? And where are the ones that God gave him better?

**Ankerberg:** All right, what do you do with this thing that you have certain things that are said and it seems, now, again, please don't take any disrespect to this, but it seems that when Muhammad needed a revelation concerning a new wife, concerning a war, concerning a town, concerning he didn't want to be disturbed, all of a sudden he got a revelation talking to those issues. What do you say about that to a person?

**Badawi:** The answer to that is simple. First, we take exception of saying when Muhammad needed that, because that accuses him of being an impostor claiming something coming from God, and we have given enough evidence in a previous program of his absolute truthfulness, number one. Number two: there is complete misunderstanding of the so-called abrogation. The Koran gives a good example of that. When people were drinking at the time of the beginning of Islam, it was not wise or possible to try to change them immediately. So one verse came to discourage them from drinking. The other one said don't pray when you are under intoxication. Then came another verse saying now stop it. So, this was a gradual moving of people from their drinking habits in a practical way that they can give up this particular thing.