

# **Why Trust the Bible**

**God Watches  
Over His Word**

compiled by Walter Eric

Original Title: Let the Bible Speak for Itself

Revised and Adapted from “What every Muslim should know about the Old and the New Testaments” by John Gilchrist

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# Why trust the Bible

## **PREFACE**

Many Islamic publications have flooded the market in recent years. Along the East African coast Zanzibar-born Sheikh Ali Muhsin, a prolific writer with a 1300 verse poem on the Life of the Prophet, has written a widely publicised booklet “Let the Bible Speak”. Its message has been spread by tape from mosques, public service vehicles and private homes all over the Kenyan coast. Others like “Islam in the Bible”, “Jesus, a Prophet of Islam” and the widely spread “Gospel of Barnabas” likewise challenge a Christian response. This booklet does not intend to refer to each individual argument raised in these publications, but rather give reasons for the general acceptance of the trustworthiness of the Holy Bible by Christians all over the world.

We would like our Muslim friends to understand why Christians do not believe in the corruption of the Bible. This is not an emotional decision, but rather rests on sound reasoning after carefully looking at the facts. It would be foolish to pretend that anyone could fully understand every detail of the divine revelation given to us in the Old and New Testament scriptures, however we believe this to point rather to the limitations of our human mind than to shortcomings in the revealed books.

The genuine reader will certainly appreciate this clear presentation of our conviction in the trustworthiness of our book and read the evidence for himself.

# 1. An Introduction to the Old and the New Testaments

It seems like yesterday when I was visiting with a friend of mine in a predominantly Muslim village in the Western part of Kenya. Soon after a friendly chat with the village elder several younger men joined into our conversation. "You should read the Gospel of Barnabas", suggested one of them. "Why do you think so?" I asked. "It is a good book for Christians to read", he replied. "What makes you believe this? Have you read it yourself?", I wanted to find out. Well, he had not. Other people had told him about it and he had just made their opinion his own. As I knew the book quite well, I could point out in how many places this fake gospel contradicts the Qur'an, as well as many historical and geographical facts which unmistakably betrays it as a forgery composed many, many centuries after the actual happenings.

This is not a unique experience. As could be expected whenever Christians and Muslims meet together these discussions will naturally center on the Bible and the Qur'an, the revered scriptures of the two respective faiths. This has indeed strongly challenged me as a Christian, to acquaint myself with the Qur'an and its teaching. I believe that a Christian cannot carry on a meaningful conversation with a Muslim on religious topics unless he is familiar with the beliefs and customs of Islam.

At the same time, however, I have been surprised to find that there is a considerable degree of confusion among Muslims regarding the character of the Christian Bible, especially in respect to its two major sections known as the Old Testament and the New Testament. On numerous occasions I have been confronted with questions like these:

*"Why do you have an Old and a New Testament? What was wrong with the Old Testament that you had to replace it with a New Testament?"*

*“We Muslims accept the Old Testament which is basically the same as our Qur’an, but we do not accept the New Testament which you Christians have changed.”*

*“Why are there four Gospels in your New Testament?”*

*“Why did your priests change the original testament and bring out a new testament?”*

These questions have been repeatedly brought forward in conversations with Muslims. The prevailing view, generally, is that the very existence of a New Testament presupposes that the Old Testament has been changed. In other words “the New Testament is a corrupted version of the Old Testament”. So often Muslims have said to me, “Your Bible has been changed” and when I have asked for proof, the answer has invariably been, “Well, you have an Old and a New Testament.”

I have often been dismayed at the level of ignorance that exists in the Muslim community regarding the very basic character and structure of the Christian Scriptures. No doubt, this would just be as true for the majority of Christians in regard to the Islamic books of authority, the Qur’an and even more so the Hadith.

The above questions and attitudes expose a fundamental series of errors in the Muslim approach to the Christian Bible. It seems to me that the wide-spread ignorance of the Bible’s contents has made Muslims vulnerable to a number of illusions about it. There is no merit, profit or wisdom in maintaining an illusion, no matter how much such an illusion may appear to support the dogma that the Bible has been changed. But there is merit and profit in gaining a true understanding of the nature of the Christian Bible and I have no doubt that everybody will benefit from a true presentation of the facts such as he will find presented in the pages of this booklet.

## **2. What are the Old and the New Testaments?**

The Christian Bible is divided into two parts known as the Old and the New Testament. Within the Old Testament there are thirty-nine books and within the New Testament there are twenty-seven. The sixty-six books in all constitute the Christian Bible.

Let us begin with a description of the Old Testament. This is the Jewish Scripture and if you were to go into a Jewish bookroom and request a copy of their Holy Scriptures you would be given the Old Testament. The Jews themselves do not use this title for their Scriptures, it is a Christian title which we use to distinguish it from the later Scriptures known as the New Testament.

The Old Testament begins with the five books of Moses known as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These books cover the history of mankind from the beginning of creation and then concentrate specifically on the history of the Israelites from the time of Abraham through to the great exodus of the Israelites from Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

The following twelve books cover the history of the nation and the rise of its prophets well beyond the time of David when the kingdom was divided into two after the death of Solomon. Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to God eventually brought captivity and exile of them which would last for seventy years before God miraculously gathered the people in their homeland of Palestine again. Up to this point the books are all primarily historical.

Then follows the second major part of the Old Testament, namely five books that are commonly known as the wisdom or poetical books because they concentrate on teaching about the knowledge of God and true,

discerning faith in him. They include among others the Book of Job (Ayoub in the Qur'an), the Psalms, mainly written by David, the Proverbs of Solomon and the thought provoking observations in the Book of Ecclesiastes.

The Old Testament is a book which was completed nearly five centuries before the time of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Finally there are the remaining seventeen books which are known as the books of the prophets. They record the prophecies of the later prophets of Jewish history such as Jonah, Daniel and Ezekiel among others. Prophets had a dual function: They spoke on behalf of God to man and confirmed this by recording future events which only God could know. The fulfillment of these prophecies hundreds of years later proved that God indeed was the author behind these books. The Old Testament scriptures were then completed some four hundred and fifty years before the first coming of Christ to this earth.

Before moving on to the New Testament let us mention briefly the Christian attitude to the Old Testament. We accept it as the unchanged, authentic Word of God dating right from the times of the prophets it speaks about (Moses, David, etc.). Unlike so many Muslims, committed Christians do not believe that God's Word can ever be changed or corrupted and we therefore accept the Old Testament as the unchanged, genuine Word of God of pre-Christian times. In this Christians follow the example given by Christ himself who constantly quoted from the books of the Old Testament in his own teachings and personal life.

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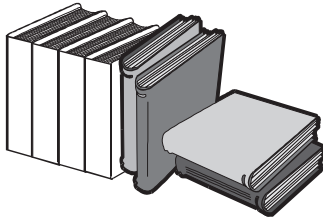
1 It needs to be noted that the Old Testament is a book defining God's dealings with the nation of Israel from the time of creation up to four hundred and fifty years before Christ. The Old Testament is thus a book which was completed nearly five centuries before the time of Jesus.

# The Books of the Holy Bible:

## *The Old Testament*



**HISTORY**  
(17 Books)



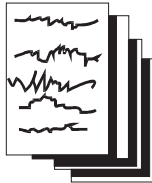
**POETRY**  
(5 Books)

**PROPHECY**  
(17 Books)

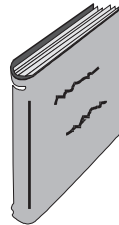
## *The New Testament*



**HISTORY**  
(5 Books)



**LETTERS**  
(21 Letters)



**PROPHECY**  
(1 Book)



What then is the New Testament? It is the Christian Scripture dating from the time of Jesus Christ. The Jews, unlike the Muslims, do not accept Jesus as the Messiah and for this reason alone they reject the New Testament. But as Christians believe that Jesus was genuinely a man sent from God, they acknowledge the scriptures of his era likewise as the authentic Word of God.

The New Testament may also be divided into three major sections. The first covers the fourfold gospel message as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They tell us about the life and teachings of Jesus and the events surrounding his birth, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to heaven. While Jesus was still with them, he had given them the special promise of the Holy Spirit who would remind them about all the things they had heard and seen. (see John 14:26) Closely attached to the gospel reports is the Book of Acts which declares itself as the companion volume of the Gospel according to Luke (see Acts 1:1 - 4). This historical book records the development of the early Church through the preaching and activities of the immediate disciples of Jesus who soon became known as apostles.

*The Old Testament is a book which was completed nearly five centuries before the time of Jesus.*

The second section covers twenty-one books of the writings of these apostles to various churches. They are written in letter style and cover the basic teachings of the Christian life and faith. Again the writers recorded these with the deep conviction that they were compelled by God's Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

The last book makes up the final section and it is a book of prophecy known as the Revelation which outlines the events to follow during the whole of the Christian era and the eternal age to come after the Day of Judgment.

***We note:***

There is a clear distinction between the Old and the New Testament. The New Testament was compiled during the first 60 years after Christ's resurrection and thus dates up to 500 years after the Old Testament. It is not a corruption, adaptation or alteration of the Old Testament. It is an entirely separate book and is placed alongside the Old Testament in the Christian Bible. In fact, the Old Testament is up to four times the length of the New Testament (the New Testament being slightly longer than the Qur'an) and there can thus be no possible suggestion that the New Testament is a changed version of the Old Testament.

### **3. Has the Old Testament ever been changed?**

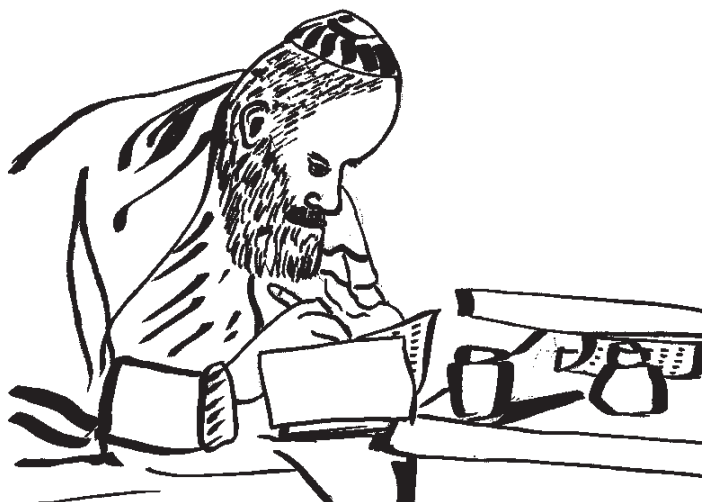
There are numerous evidences available to this day to prove that the Old Testament has never been changed. As pointed out already, the Old Testament is the text of the sacred scripture of the Jews. A Muslim who is willing to consider the implications of this fact will realise immediately that the Old Testament could never have been changed by the Christians and replaced with the New Testament. For the Jews do not believe in Jesus as Messiah at all, nor do they believe that he died for the sins of mankind. In this respect they are similar to Muslims who, while they do acknowledge Jesus as a man sent from God, do not believe that he was the Son of God or that he died for our sins. This means that their denials of Christ's divinity and atoning work are held in common with the Jews. As the Old Testament has been carefully guarded by the Jews since before the time of Jesus, it becomes quite impossible to believe that Christians could have changed it at any time in their history.

An honest assessment will bring us to these logical conclusions:

1. The Old Testament could only have been changed if the Jews and Christians at some time in history had come together and agreed to falsify it. Not only is the possibility of such a mutual conspiracy unreasonable in the light of the great differences between the two faiths, but there is no evidence anywhere in history to testify to such a perversion of the Old Testament scriptures. Muslims must seriously think about this fact - the Old Testament is held to be the Word of God by two very different religions and has been scrupulously maintained by each one independently

of the other. There is thus no possibility of a perversion of the text by either of the two faiths, for the very fact of an alteration by the one would have been immediately exposed by the other.

2. Another evidence to prove that Christians could never have changed the Old Testament is the translation of the whole text from the original Hebrew into Greek some two centuries before the time of Jesus Christ. This translation is known as the Septuagint and was widely distributed in the Greek-speaking world at the advent of Christianity. To this day it is thoroughly consistent with the oldest Hebrew Massoretic texts [Massorets were Jewish scribes who carefully copied the old Jewish handwritten scripts] that are in the possession of the Jews and various museums and archives. These texts are nearly one thousand years old and have been preserved by the Jews independently of Christian access or availability.



3. Even more striking are the findings of a number of parchment scrolls in some caves near Qumran, east of the Dead Sea. Two complete scrolls of the prophet Isaiah were among them, totally corresponding with our Bibles today. They date back two centuries before the time of Jesus Christ. We therefore not only have an independent translation into Greek but also have a number of handwritten texts in the original Hebrew likewise predating the Christian era.

***We conclude:***

There can, therefore, be no possible suggestion that the Old Testament has been changed or corrupted by the Christians; least of all that the New Testament is an altered version of it or has replaced it. The Old and the New Testament are separate books, both of which have been scrupulously preserved by the Christian church. The Old Testament, as we have seen, has also been jealously preserved free of corruption by the Jews independently of the Christians.

Would it therefore not be much wiser to read these books first rather than to be led by our own illusions about their contents to the false assumption that the Bible has been changed?

For a start we encourage the reader to turn to the appendix JOURNEY INTO THE BIBLE for a Scripture Reading Plan.

## 4. Let Us Learn From History

Why then do most Muslims today hold to the wrong belief that the Christians have changed or corrupted the Bible? We can actually determine a specific point and place in history when this accusation was developed.

As studies have shown, it was only with Ign-Khazm, who died at Cordoba, Spain, in 1064, that the charge of falsification of the Christian Scriptures was born.

In his defense of Islam against Christians, Ign-Khazm came up against the contradictions between the Qur'an and the Gospel accounts. One obvious example was the Qur'anic text "They slew him not, and they crucified him not" (Sura 4:156). "Since the Qur'an must be true", Ibn-Khazm argued, "it must be the conflicting Gospel texts that are false. But Muhammad tells us to respect the Gospel. Therefore, the present text must have been falsified by the Christians." His argument was not based on historical facts, but purely on his own reasoning and on his wish to safeguard the truth of the Qur'an. Even so, he led Muslims to accept the lie which led to the illusion that there was formerly only one scripture, the Old Testament, and that it has been substituted by the New Testament. Once he was on this path, nothing could stop him from pursuing this accusation. In fact, it seemed the easiest way to attack the opponents. "If we prove the falsehood of their books, they lose the arguments they take from them." This led him eventually to make the cynical statement "The Christians have lost the revealed Gospel except for a few traces which God has left intact as argument against them."

Against this we would do well to consider that many of the great Muslim thinkers have, indeed, accepted the authenticity and trustworthiness of the New Testament

text. Their testimony proves that Christian-Muslim dialogue need not for ever be hampered by the allegation introduced by Ibn-Khazm. Two great historians, Al-Mas'udi (died in 956) and Ibn-Khaldun (died in 1406), held the authenticity of the Gospel text. Four well-known theologians agreed with this: Ali at-Tabari (died in 855), Qasim al-Khasani (died in 860), Amr al-Ghakhiz (died in 869) and, last but not least, the famous Al-Ghazzali (died in 1111). Their view is shared by Abu Ali Husain Ibn Sina, who is known in the West as Avicenna (died in 1037). Al Bukhari (died in 870), who acquired a great name by his collection of early traditions, quoted the Qur'an itself (Sura 3:72. 78) to prove that the text of the Bible was not falsified.<sup>2</sup>

Let the reader be reminded that it has never paid to meddle around with the facts, since, as the Qur'an puts it "Truth stands out clear from Error" (Sura 2:256) or as the Holy Bible solemnly warns us: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked." (Galatians 6: 9) In the final analysis the deceiver will always have deceived himself!

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<sup>2</sup> From CAN WE TRUST THE GOSPEL? by J. Wijngaard

## 5. The Taurat and Injil in the Qur'an

A brief look at the Qur'anic teaching about the former scriptures will also help to clarify the nature of the Old and New Testaments. The Qur'an speaks of the Taurat and Injil, the "Law" and the "Gospel", of the Jews and Christians respectively. Throughout the Qur'an the Taurat is spoken of as the Jewish scripture and the Injil as the Christian scripture, and both scriptures are simply accepted as coming from God. (Sura Baqara 2:136 and others) Thus Muhammad himself was aware that the Jews and Christians possessed two different scriptures, so we should not be surprised to find this situation unchanged down to the present day. Muslims who believe that the New Testament is a changed version of the Old Testament are therefore right out of touch with their own book, the Qur'an. (compare Sura Maida 5:71)

The question, then, is whether the Taurat and Injil of the Qur'an can be identified with the Old and New Testament. While the Qur'an speaks of the Taurat as a scripture given to Moses and the Injil as one given to Jesus, which would make it appear as though it is speaking of books different to the Old and the New Testament, it does nevertheless regard both the Taurat and the Injil as those books which the Jews and Christians themselves regarded as their own holy scriptures. The Qur'an accordingly says of the Jews:

*"But how shall they make thee their judge, since they possess already the Law, in which are the behests of God, and have not obeyed it?" Surah 5.47 (J.M. Rodwell)*

The passage teaches quite plainly that the Jews (named specifically as the subjects of this passage in verse 44) have the Torah, a statement which can yield only one possible interpretation - the book was in their possession at the time of Muhammad.



Now right throughout their history, from centuries before the advent of Islam, the Jews have known only one scripture - the books of the Old Testament as we know them today. No less than 800 years before Muhammad the Old Testament was first translated into Greek known as the Septuagint. Thus the Qur'an, in speaking of the Taurat which the Jews have with them, can only be speaking of the Old Testament which it confirms as the unchanged Word of God. The same applies to the Injil, the Christian Scripture. The Qur'an says:

*"Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein." Surah 5.50*

The "People of the Gospel" (ahl-ul-Injil) throughout the Qur'an are regarded as the Christians. Just like the Jews, they are here commanded to decide matters according to their revealed scriptures. As this exhortation is addressed to the Christians of Muhammad's time, the question obviously arises - how could they judge by the Injil if they were not in possession of it? The Qur'an is clearly referring to the book in their possession which the Christians themselves regarded as their holy scripture, and throughout the history of the Church we have known and possessed only one scripture - the books of the New Testament as we know it today.

**We observe:**

The Qur'an itself acknowledges that the Old and New Testaments are the revealed scriptures of the Jews and Christians respectively. Certainly, by carefully distinguishing between the two holy books of these two major religions, Muhammad has given evidence to support the distinction found between them to this day.

## **6. The Qur'an in Relation to the Two Testaments**

At various occasions Muslims have told me they accept the Old Testament but not the New Testament. We have just seen that the Qur'an itself acknowledges both of them to be the Word of God, but here we shall briefly consider further evidences to prove that no Muslim can say he rejects the New Testament without at the same time denying key teachings in the Qur'an.

A Muslim is told to believe in all the prophets, it is one of the basic articles of "iman" in Islam. If he was asked to name some of them, he might begin with Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Isaac), Yacoub (Jacob), Dawoud (David), Suleiman (Solomon) and Yunus (Jonah). All these are key prophets in the Old Testament in whom every Muslim is commanded to believe (see following page).

Each one is a distinct Old Testament prophet. The Old Testament covers the history of mankind, and especially the history of the Jewish nation, from the time of Adam until about 450 years before the time of Jesus Christ. These prophets appear in the Old Testament in the chronological sequence we have given. No Muslim will reject these Old Testament prophets.

But what about the following prophets who are also specifically named in the Qur'an, namely Zakariyya (Zechariah), his son Yahya (John the Baptist) and Isa (Jesus)? And what about Bibi Maryam (Mary, the mother of Jesus), the only woman mentioned by name in the whole of the Qur'an? Would any Muslim dare to suggest that he does not believe in these holy personalities as well?

Now all four of these great personalities lived some 500 years after the Old Testament had already been completed. They do not appear by name in its pages. Each one of these

## Comparison between the Prophets in the Bible and the Qur'an

A comparison between the prophets in the Qur'an and the Bible shows similarities in name in many cases.

But we need to note that the Biblical qualifications for prophethood are quite different from the Qur'an (see Deuteronomy 18:21-22 and Isaiah 41:21-24). Islamic tradition gives the total number of prophets as 124,000, but the Qur'an itself refers to the following by name:

<b>Qur'anic Name</b>	<b>Surah</b>	<b>Biblical Name</b>
Adam	2:31	Adam
Nuh	4:163	Noah
Ibrahim	4:163	Abraham
Ismail	4:163	Ishmael
Ishaq	4:163	Isaac
Yaqub	4:163	Jacob
Isa	4:163	Jesus
Ayyub	4:163	Job
Yunus	4:163	Jonah
Harun	4:163	Aaron
Daud	4:163	David
Musa	4:164	Moses
Zakariya	19:2	Zacharias
Yahya	19:12	John the Baptist
Yusuf	6:85	Joseph
Ilyas	6:86	Elijah
Luqman	31:12	-
Lut	7:80	Lot
Salih	7:73	-
Shu'aib	7:85	Jethro (?)
Uzair	9:30	Ezra
Dhul-Kifl	21:85	Ezekiel(?)
Ilyasa	6:86	Elisha
Hud	7:65	-
Idris	19:56	Enoch
Sulaiman	6:84	Solomon
Muhammad	7:158	-

four, in terms of their lives and historical identification, is a New Testament personality. It is in the New Testament that a Muslim will find the stories of John the Baptist and his father Zechariah and of Mary and her son Jesus. So the Qur'an names prophets and holy personalities from both the Old and the New Testament. No Muslim, therefore, can reject the New Testament without rejecting these four holy personalities in whom the Qur'an compels Muslims to believe. Thus we have further evidence in the Qur'an to counter the illusions of those Muslims who say they will not accept the New Testament.

Nevertheless, as pointed out earlier, there are many Muslims who believe that the Old Testament is the same as the Qur'an but that the New Testament is different to both. The assumption remains that the Old Testament was the original scripture and is therefore consistent with the Qur'an, but that the New Testament is a corrupted text which therefore differs from them both.

We would urge the reader to rethink his position considering these facts:

1. The **manner of revelation** of the Old Testament, namely where holy men of God have written down the scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, compares as follows, in its character and form, with :

The New Testament : Exactly the same

The Qur'an : Substantially different

2. The Old Testament is **read right through** from Genesis to the last book Malachi, by the followers of the two religions Christianity and Islam respectively as follows:

By Christians : Millions of believers

By Muslims : Hardly anyone

3. The Old Testament has been **translated into other languages** the following number of times by Christians and Muslims respectively

By Christians : Well over a thousand

By Muslims : None at all

4. The Old Testament is **accompanied by the respective scriptures** of the Christians and the Muslims, namely the New Testament and the Qur'an, and is thus published annually as a single book

By Christians : Millions of copies  
(Old and New Testament in one book)

By Muslims : None at all  
(Old Testament and Qur'an)

5. The scriptures of the Old Testament are actually **quoted** the following number of times in the Christian and Muslim scriptures respectively

In the Christian New Testament : 244 times

In the Muslim Qur'an : Just once

6. As we read carefully through the Old Testament to identify **prophecies** to Jesus, the Messiah and Muhammad, we find prophecies

To Jesus : About 300 prophecies

To Muhammad : None at all

7. The Old Testament is **read every week** in churches and mosques, along with the New Testament and the Qur'an respectively

In Christian churches : Most of them

In Muslim mosques : None at all

8. Copies of the Old Testament are **printed, published and sold** annually worldwide

By Christian publishers: Millions of them

By Muslim publishers : None at all

***We conclude and ask:***

In the light of these undisputable facts it is impossible to understand how Muslims can continue to maintain the illusion that the Old Testament is the same as the Qur'an and unlike the New Testament. Or have we indeed been untrue or unfair in the figures and contrasts given above?

The facts speak for themselves - the Old and New Testament together make up the cherished Christian Bible, whereas the Qur'an stands by itself.

## 7. The Christian Character of the Old Testament

The reason for the Christian investment in the Old Testament as evidenced in the last section, and the Muslim disinterest in reading or publishing it, becomes apparent when one considers the fundamentally Christian character of its contents and more specifically the prophecies about the Messiah. Although it is the scripture of the Jews, it is in fact far more consistent with the message of Christ than with Judaism or Islam.

Firstly we find in the Old Testament that the coming Messiah, who is acknowledged as the Anointed One in both the New Testament (John 4: 25-26) and the Qur'an (Surah 3:45), was foretold as the coming Son of God. In a typical Messianic psalm we find the anticipated Saviour speaking through his forerunner, the prophet David, in the following words:

*"I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, "You are my son, today I have begotten you." Psalm 2:7*

On a number of occasions in the New Testament these words are applied to Jesus Christ (Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5). So likewise we find God himself speaking of the coming Messiah in the same terms:

*"He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son." 1 Chronicles 17:12-13*

Not only does the Old Testament confirm that the coming Messiah, Jesus, would be the Son of God, but it also affirms the other feature of his life which the Qur'an denies (Surah 4:157), namely his crucifixion. On numerous occasions the Old Testament predicts the crucifixion of Christ, such as in the following verses:

*“All who see me mock me, they hurl insults, shaking their heads: “He trusts in the Lord; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.”  
Psalm 22:7-8*

These words were fulfilled when the chief priests of the Jews and others stood about Jesus, mocking him:

And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying,

*“You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross”. So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, “He saved others, he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, ‘I am the Son of God’.”  
Matthew 27: 39-43*

The Psalm goes on to speak of the agonies of the Messiah, such as would commonly be experienced by a man on a cross: “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; thou dost lay me in the dust of death” (Psalm 22: 14-15), and proceeds to a plain evidence of the fact that he had been nailed to the cross: “They have pierced my hands and feet” (v. 16). Yet again it continues in these words: “They divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots” (v. 18), a prophecy which was duly fulfilled at the crucifixion of Jesus:


*“When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier, also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven*



*from top to bottom; so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be."  
John 19:23-24*

In another similar Messianic psalm which sets out the cries of the anointed one of God in his intense suffering on the cross, we find these words: "They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalm 69:21), a prediction likewise fulfilled at the crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27:48; John 19:29-29).

Elsewhere in the Old Testament there is another lengthy passage speaking of the atoning work of the Messiah to come. It contains plain statements to the effect that he would die for our sins, such as the following:



*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 53:5-6*

These words are directly applied to Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24). The next two verses, which also speak of his affliction, suffering and death, are also applied to Jesus in Acts 8:35.

The following verse, which reads “And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth” (v.9), was likewise fulfilled in Jesus as his grave was prepared among the malefactors, but a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea took him down and buried him in his own tomb instead (Mark 15:46). The second part of this verse is also applied to Jesus in 1 Peter 2:22.

The following verses speak plainly both of his willingness to die for the sins of men and his subsequent resurrection:

*“And though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. 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.”*      *Isaiah 53:10-11*

No statement in the New Testament about the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins is more emphatic than this one from the pages of the Old Testament. The whole passage concludes:

*“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”.*      *Isaiah 53:12*

Jesus himself stated that the words which declared that he would be “numbered with the transgressors” would be fulfilled in him (Luke 22:37). Elsewhere in the New Testament we find these words again quoted as being fulfilled in Jesus when he was crucified between two robbers (Mark 15:28). The last expression, “and made intercession for the transgressors”, was likewise fulfilled in Jesus when he prayed for the forgiveness of all those who

had wrongly crucified him: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

In all these texts we have abundant evidence to show that the Old Testament has a principally Christian character and that its teaching contradicts the teaching of the Qur’an about Jesus fundamentally. All the evidences prove that the Old and New Testaments are in perfect harmony with each other, while the Qur’an is found to be at variance with both of them on numerous occasions.

Some years ago a Christian speaker was invited to share the platform with a Jewish rabbi (teacher) during a public debate at Witwatersrand University in South Africa. The topic was to be “Is Jesus the Messiah?”. Being fully aware that his Jewish audience would not accept any proof text from outside of the Old Testament books, the Christian speaker simply quoted the prophecies to the coming of the Messiah as found in the 39 books of the Old Testament. After the debate one student confronted the speaker and accused him of deception since the passages had so clearly presented the person and work of Jesus Christ that he was convinced they must have been taken from the New Testament. When it was shown otherwise, he had to admit: “We have never heard these verses in our synagogue (Jewish place of worship).”

All this explains why Christians publish the Old and New Testaments together as one book, the Holy Bible, and read both of them avidly throughout the year. This is why Christians print and publish millions of copies of the Old Testament annually while Muslim make no similar attempt to do so. The Old Testament was fulfilled in the New Testament, not in the Qur’an. Just go through the books for yourself. The genuine reader will soon be persuaded that the popularly held idea that the very existence of a New Testament suggests a change in the Christian scriptures cannot seriously be maintained. There is no substance in such a belief whatsoever.

## 8. The Old and the New Covenants

We are still left with one question, however. Why, it might well be asked, do we call them the Old and New Testament respectively? The answer lies very simply in the fact that the two books deal with two distinct covenants made by God, one through Moses and one through Jesus. The former is known as the old covenant and the latter as the new covenant. A look into the early history of the Jewish people will explain this.

When the Israelites left Egypt under Moses' leadership, God made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. There he gave them the Ten Commandments, set out in the Old Testament in Exodus 20:1-17, together with a number of other laws, both ethical and ceremonial. These commandments placed the full responsibility of maintaining the covenant on the Israelites themselves with a plain warning that any disobedience of these laws would violate the covenant. Moses said:

*“Cursed be he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.” Deuteronomy 27:26*

The Ten Commandments and the other laws placed the responsibility on the Israelites by being introduced with the words “You shall” or “You shall not.” For example, God said “You shall do my ordinances and keep my statutes and walk in them” (Leviticus 18:4), “You shall be holy” (Leviticus 19:2), “You shall keep my Sabbaths” (Leviticus 19:3), and, on the negative side, “You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour” (Exodus 20:13-16), to mention just a few. (Read the books of Exodus and Leviticus in full).

When every commandment of the law had been delivered by Moses to the people, he confirmed the

covenant God had made with them in these words from the Old Testament:

*“And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people: and they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient”. And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.” Exodus 24:4-8*

Immediately after this God called Moses to come up the mountain to receive the two tablets of stone with the ten commandments on them (Exodus 24:12). When he came down from the mountain forty days later, however, he found the whole nation dancing around a golden calf which the Israelites had made. With such idol worship they had already broken in one awful act of rebellion against him virtually all the laws God had given them. Moses shattered the two tablets of stone on the ground, painfully conscious that the covenant had been decidedly broken. God ordered a slaughter of the chief perpetrators and three thousand died in a single day (Exodus 32:28).

Throughout their history the Israelites continued to break the covenant. They turned to idols, they forsook the Lord, they broke his commandments, they killed the prophets. The responsibility which they had just

committed themselves to keep the covenant<sup>3</sup> proved to be too much for human nature, prone as it is toward evil and cold toward God spiritually. Any other nation would have done the same. The covenant became a burden which, as one of Jesus' disciples later was to declare, "neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" (Acts 15:10).

Centuries later, when the Israelite nation had so extensively transgressed God's laws that he removed them out of their land and took them into Assyria, Babylon and other countries to the east of Israel, God nevertheless declared in mercy that he would make a new covenant and spoke through one of the contemporary prophets, saying:

*"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*                      *Jeremiah 31:31-34*

He promised that the new covenant would not be like the old covenant, because his people could not keep it. Instead, this time, God undertook, in his grace and mercy, to hold himself responsible for its fulfillment. Five

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3 It is important to note that the covenant was sealed by the shedding of blood, and we shall explain why when coming to the new covenant.

times he began a promise with the words “I will”. It was not so with the old covenant - “You shall, you shall not” - now it was to be “I will”. God declared that he himself would ensure that the covenant would be fulfilled and would take the responsibility for it. Formerly the law had been written on tablets of stone, now it was to be written on the hearts of his people, “Written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Corinthians 3:3). Through another contemporary prophet he made further promises regarding the new covenant:

*“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.”*

*Ezekiel 36:26-27*

The theme was maintained - “I will, I will”. God undertook to ensure that his people would keep his laws and his covenant. Up to six centuries passed before the covenant came into effect. On the last night that Jesus was with his disciples he sat at the table with them and as they were eating supper he began to speak to them.

“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them saying,

*“This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me”. And likewise the cup after supper, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”*      *Luke 22:19-20*

As he divided the cup among them he told them it was a symbol of his blood which would be shed on the cross the next day as he died for their sins and specifically spoke of it as the blood of the new covenant. Earlier we

saw how Moses enacted the old covenant and sealed it with blood. Now Jesus said that the shedding of his own blood would seal the new covenant God had promised earlier through the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Ten days after Jesus ascended to heaven the Holy Spirit, the special “Comforter” whom Jesus had promised to come, truly took hold of his disciples (Acts 2:1-4). They were so changed in every respect that they indeed became new men. They had received the power not only to joyfully witness about the Messiah (Acts 1:8), but also to keep God’s laws and they knew their sins had been forgiven.

God’s promise had been fulfilled. The old covenant made with Moses had been put aside and the new covenant, made through Jesus, had come into being for the salvation of all who believe in him. A “better hope” had been introduced “through which we draw near to God” (Hebrews 7:19). God had, by taking the responsibility upon himself, enacted a better covenant to ensure the salvation of all his people.

*“But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.” Hebrews 8:6*

This is why we Christians call our scriptures the NEW TESTAMENT - because they outline the enactment and fulfillment of the new covenant. We call the former scriptures the Old Testament for the same reason, namely that they contain the record of the old covenant. That covenant, made through Moses, was eventually abolished and the new covenant, made through Jesus, was introduced in its place. This will also explain to you why Christians do not observe the Sabbath laws



(but set aside Sunday for worship and praise), or do no longer bring animal sacrifices as commanded to Aaron, or see no need for ceremonial washing as during Moses time. These were all binding commandments to the Jewish people under the old covenant. But as Christ has introduced the new covenant for his people, it would be foolish to fall back into the rituals of the previous one.

So you can see now why we speak of the Old and New Testaments. In fact certain copies of the New Testament even begin with the words “The New Covenant, commonly called the New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

***We confirm:***

The “change”, accordingly, was not in the scriptures but in the covenant contained in the Old Testament. No alteration, corruption or substitution of the Old Testament scriptures by the New Testament has ever taken place. All that has happened is that the old covenant has been replaced by the new covenant, a replacement which the Old Testament itself declared and anticipated in the passages we have been considering from the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

## **QUESTIONS FOR THE SERIOUS READER**

Now please go through the following questions carefully. We are looking forward to hear from you and will reward your efforts with a free copy of one of the booklets mentioned at the back of this publication.

1. Give the names of the two main parts of the Christian Bible.
2. Name the three main sections of the Old Testament.
3. What do we know about Christ's relationship to the Old Testament?
4. How many years apart are the Old and the New Testaments?
5. On what grounds did Ibn-Khazm come up with the claim that the Bible had been corrupted by the Christians?
6. How does the Qur'an regard the Old and New Testament scriptures?
7. Give the names of five key prophets familiar to Jews, Christians and Muslims.
8. What are the reasons suggested by the author when he terms the Old Testament as "Christian" in its character?
9. Which is the most emphatic statement about the death of Jesus in the Old Testament?
10. Where are the Ten Commandments to be found?
11. Which words, frequently used by God Almighty, clearly distinguish the Old and the New Covenant?

## JOURNEY INTO THE BIBLE

### (A SCRIPTURE READING PLAN)

Congratulations to your decision to find out for yourself what the Bible teaches. So where do you begin with a book of that size? Right from the beginning? In the middle? Should you start in the New Testament or rather in the Old Testament? Just anywhere?

Many a person has been asking these questions. One lady described her plight like this: “I remember gazing at the new shiny Bible that had just been given to me. Before it had never occurred to me people read Bibles anywhere other than in church (and then only on Sundays of course). So where was I to start? Opening it at random, I read the word ‘Epistle’. What was that, I wondered? Reading down the page, I came across a similar-sounding word - ‘Apostle’. I wondered if an Apostle was the wife of an Epistle! I didn’t know where to begin, and I didn’t know where to end - I didn’t understand it. Perhaps, like any other book, I should start at the front!

But then a friend of mine explained that contrary to the way we read all other books, it was not a good idea to start at the beginning of the Bible. “The Scriptures are a library of many books,” she said, “and you don’t go into a public library and start at the door and work your way around.”<sup>4</sup>

Here is our advice where to start in this library called the Bible:

### **WEEK ONE: Luke 1 - 24**

Open the contents page at the beginning of your Bible and look for the page number of the third book in the

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<sup>4</sup> from “How to follow the Shepherd” by Jill Briscoe

New Testament section which is called 'THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE' or simply 'LUKE'. Reading three to four chapters each day you will cover the 24 chapters in about one week.

### **WEEK TWO: Acts 1 - 28**

Now turn to the fifth book in the NEW TESTAMENT which bears the name 'ACTS' or 'ACTS OF THE APOSTLES'. It neatly continues where you left since it was written as a companion volume by the same author, Luke, the physician. The 28 chapters cover the early history of the followers of Jesus, who soon were called 'Christians' (Chapter 11:26).

### **WEEK THREE: Genesis 1 - 11 and Romans 1 - 8**

Why not turn to the very beginning of the OLD TESTAMENT, the book of GENESIS [which is a Hebrew word meaning 'beginning']. Since it has 50 chapters this will probably be too much to read for you within one week. But you will certainly want to complete the first part (Chapter 1 - 11) covering the creation account and the course of mankind up to Abraham, the friend of God. You will probably be appalled to see how rapidly man's rebellion against his creator spoiled the beautiful original relationship between God and man.

This theme is taken up again in a very systematic way in the sixth book of the NEW TESTAMENT called 'ROMANS' As you read the first eight chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans this tragedy will be explained in much more detail.

### **WEEK FOUR: Exodus 1 - 20**

Now go back to the OLD TESTAMENT and read chapters 1 - 20 of the book of 'EXODUS' which recalls God's gracious

rescue action under the prophet Moses in response to the desperate cry of the Israelites who were in bondage under the mighty power of the Egyptian pharaoh. It also points out God's laws and commandments for his people.

By now you have been for a full month into the Bible and I am sure you have come to love it. May I suggest something new to you: roughly around the middle of the Bible you will find a collection of various songs and prayers called 'PSALMS'. As King David and others went through times of desperate need, but also of joy they put their thoughts, hopes and pleas into the form of poetry. Many believers throughout the ages have made these prayers their own using them regularly. Why not read one or two chapters every evening before you go to sleep and ask the Almighty God to answer your prayer also?

Apart from these special readings here is what we suggest to you for the second month of your journey into the Bible:

### **WEEK FIVE: John 1 - 21**

Opening at the fourth book in the NEW TESTAMENT section you will find the name 'JOHN'. He was a very close disciple of Jesus who took note of many special events, conversations and public addresses of Jesus which are not found in the other three gospel accounts. Although John uses a very limited or rather selected number of words the message of Jesus, the Messiah, is especially penetrating. But see for yourself.

### **WEEK SIX: 1Peter 1 - 5; 2Peter 1 - 3; 1John 1 - 5**

Let us stay in the NEW TESTAMENT and read through some of the smaller epistles [letters] as written by Peter and John. 1 PETER has five and 2 PETER just three chapters. You will want to add the five chapters from 1

JOHN as well. Note how vividly both writers recall their time with Jesus, the Messiah while he was still with them on earth before ascending to heaven [see 2 Peter 1: 16 - 21 and 1 John 1: 1 - 4].

### **WEEK SEVEN: *Isaiah 40 - 66***

Time to go back to another part of the OLD TESTAMENT. The prophet Isaiah shared some tremendous prophecies to the coming of the Messiah [read chapters 7:14 and 9:6 to whet your appetite]. During this week try to cover chapters 40 - 66 by reading about four chapters a day. Give special thought to the significant statements in chapter 53 which are taken up in various other places of the Bible again.

### **WEEK EIGHT: *Matthew 1 - 28***

To conclude our introductory selection of portions from the Holy Bible read the 28 chapters of the first book in the NEW TESTAMENT called 'MATTHEW', another one of the twelve close disciples of Jesus who were later given the title 'apostles'. Just watch how often this book refers back to specific sayings given several hundred years earlier in various books of the Old Testament. You may want to look up some of the over 30 references to previous prophecies and confirm this unique evidence of divine prophecy yourself.

We believe that in the meantime you are fairly familiar with the "library of the Bible" and will be able to find your own way. Many have made it a practice to read some three chapters a day plus one Psalm every evening which will bring you through the whole book in the course of just one year.

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## **A Personal Word in Conclusion**

If this booklet has challenged your thinking and you would like to learn more about the Christian scriptures, we invite you to write to us for a free copy of our correspondence course AL KITAB. This is an 18 lesson course on the Bible and its teaching prepared by Christians for Muslims who would like to look at the Biblical faith from a Christian viewpoint.

We also have a booklet entitled MAN WITH A MESSAGE giving you substantial information about the words and teachings of Jesus, the Messiah. The choice is yours.

**Booklets recommended  
for our readers:**

1. Made for a Purpose
2. Dare to compare
3. Destination unknown
4. Dear Abdallah
5. Why trust the Bible
6. Man with a message
7. Qur'an and Bible
8. Follow your heart

Al-Kitab (Bible Course for Muslims)

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