

Text: Various

Title: Answering Islamic Objections to Christianity

Date/Location: Sunday March 20, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

I was inspired to respond to some material covered in chapter 14 of Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. As this is the main source material for these notes, there may be variant Islamic beliefs that are not covered here. I am also drawing on personal experience speaking with Muslims.

I. Similar Beliefs Held by Muslims and Christians

- A. Jesus was a prophet.
- B. Jesus was sinless.
- C. Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.
- D. Jesus worked miracles like healing and raising people from the dead.

I say that these are “similar” beliefs because the entire body of Christian theology and preaching that we have learned colors these doctrines so that to us, they seem “more” or more significant than they do to followers of Mohammed, because he is their main focal point. Jesus is secondary to them, but primary to us.

II. Subtleties of Islamic Theology

- A. Islamic believers say, that like Christianity, in Islam works have no part in whether one is saved. But this is not in fact a similarity between the two belief systems.
 - 1. In Islamic theology, works reportedly play no part in whether one is saved because Allah will permit a person into heaven without regard for their works, but utterly based on his own decision and mercy. Yet some people will go into a fire for a while, and then—after paying for their sins—will go to heaven. This is an inherent contradiction to “salvation without works” because paying for your own sins in fire is a type of work and it is required work for at least some people.

2. In Christianity, works are opposite of grace, and grace is the basis of our salvation. Indeed, God exercises grace upon His people apart from their works. There is no doctrine of purgatory in the Bible where sins are “purged” or “burned off” before salvation can be achieved. That doctrine exists in Catholic theology, because it, like Islam, is a system that relies on works.

III. Contradictions to the Bible in Islamic Theology

A. **Islam: The Bible is a book created by men.** It is like their Hadith, which have more or less reliability depending on the level of authentication of their source. Some Hadith are certain or nearly so, and others are suspect or rejected. **Christianity: The Bible is the only book from God, and it was written ultimately by God.** This issue is about the origin of God’s word—later we will consider briefly about the transmission of that word to us today. The origin of God’s word is spoken of throughout Scripture as the word of God. Some key verses:

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
2. 2 Peter 1:19-21
3. The Holy Spirit spoke by David, the prophets in general, and Isaiah (2 Samuel 23:2, Acts 1:16, 1 Peter 1:11—the Spirit of Christ, Acts 28:25).
4. God spoke by the prophets (Acts 3:18, Luke 1:70, Hebrews 1:1).

B. **Islam: Jesus does not share deity with God** (the Father).
Christianity: Jesus is God.

1. An Islamic argument goes like this: “Jesus never said, ‘I am God.’” This is a clever trick to throw you off into looking for a Bible verse that says that statement in order to disprove the objection. But there is no verse in which Jesus says that. There are only 8 or 9 verses in the whole Bible that have the text “I am [the/Almighty] God” and there are 3 more in the New Testament that are quotations of the Old Testament. None are spoken by the man Jesus.
2. But such a statement is not the only possible proof of the deity of Christ. A particular set of words is not required to express a

truth. For example, I could say, “I went to the store today.” Then you object: “You never said you went to Kroger’s.” True, I never said that, but I did say I went to the store, and the security cameras—external witnesses—will testify that I was at Kroger’s.” A truth can be expressed with multiple different phrases or words, and from different observers, without a first-person statement like “I am God” having to be made.

3. In fact, Jesus did say things that are in substance the same as saying “I am God.” In John 18:5, Jesus said to them, “I am.” The word *he* is added for English clarity, but Jesus only said the two words I am. John 8:58 - “I AM.” This reflects Exodus 3:14. Jesus is making the claim of deity. All of the other “I am” statements build on this one. In that same verse, He said “Before Abraham was...” speaking of His pre-existence.

He made himself equal to God—so said his adversaries—in John 5:17-18. John 10:30, “I and my Father are one.” In context, this is obviously of a much greater nature than the “oneness” of John 17:11, 21 where the Lord is talking about the unity of believers among themselves and with God. It is invalid to try to say that “one” in John 17 explains “one” in John 10:30. The contexts do not permit that whatsoever.

4. Furthermore, His followers and the text breathed out by God in the New Testament makes it clear that Jesus is deity, worthy of all worship and praise. Where could you find such texts? Consider these: Hebrews 1:6 “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Psalm 2:12 “Do homage to the Son, let He become angry, and you perish in the way...” (NAS). Revelation 5:8-13 is a heavenly scene of worship of the Lamb where numerous residents of heaven fall down before the Lamb and worship. Philippians 2:10-11 explain how every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
5. Jesus Himself said, “I am the first and the last, the living One...” (Revelation 1:17-18).
6. New Testament texts declare His deity. Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1, Romans 9:5. Romans 10:9-10 teach that the very foundation of

salvation starts with the believer acknowledging that Jesus is **Lord** and that He arose from the dead.

7. New Testament texts explain the likeness of the Son to the Father in ways that can only be taken to show their equality. Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:16-19.
8. John declares that the Word which became flesh is **God** and is the Creator of all things, John 1:1-3.

C. Islam: Jesus was just a man. Christianity: Jesus was a man, and God also.

1. “Proofs” are marshaled by the Islamic tradition that Jesus slept, was hungry, tired, died, (finite, weak, and mortal), etc. These are all characteristics that do not at all characterize God, who is infinite, omnipotent, and immortal). Further, God and man are entirely different and cannot “overlap” in any way.
2. “God is not a man.” Numbers 23:19. That is indeed true. And at that time, God the Son had not yet taken upon Himself human flesh, so it was true in an absolute sense. The text does not say, however, that God cannot become a man in the sense of taking human nature / flesh upon himself.

D. Islam: The Bible we have today is not God’s word. It has been corrupted. Christianity: The Bible we have today is indeed God’s word.

1. This is stated over and over again in Islamic objections to Christianity, but proof is not offered. What happens with this statement is that doubt is cast on the history of Biblical manuscript transmission, and this satisfied the mind of the Muslim so that they can dismiss everything the Bible says that they do not find agreeable.
2. If it is true that it has been changed many times throughout history, then bring the evidence of that. We have manuscripts going back over centuries to within one or two generations of the apostolic author that show tremendous accuracy in transmission of the text. We have full confidence in the Bible that we have.

E. **Islam: It was unnecessary that Jesus die.** God (Allah in Arabic) can forgive sins as he pleases based solely on his mercy. The substitution and swoon theories are expressed as ways to explain that in fact Jesus did *not* die. **Christianity: It was necessary that Christ die and rise again.**

Luke 9:22 "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected...and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."

Luke 24:26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

Luke 24:46 - "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day."

Luke 24:7 "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." If Jesus is sinless, then he told the truth!

Acts 17:3 "explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

1 Peter 1:11 "the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow."

Hebrews 9:22 - "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

F. **Islam: Jesus calls himself son of man, meaning that he is a human man. Christianity agrees, but there is a big difference.** When a Muslim says that Jesus is son of man, they add an implicit word and change it slightly, making it mean something it does not. Here's what the statement means in their minds: "Jesus is a son of man only." Notice that the word a is substituted for the. The Biblical phrase is "The Son of Man" about 80 times. Jesus is not just "a" but "the" Son of Man. He is a representative of humanity, like Adam was. He is the representative man, not just any man.

In addition, in the mind of the Muslim, the word only is added to the phrase. Christians have no problem recognizing the humanity of Christ, and that He is a son of Man. But He is not only that because He is God also.

Furthermore, the phrase "son of man" has implications for His deity also. He is the perfect man who comes before the Ancient of

Days to receive the kingdoms of the world (Daniel 7:13-14). The Son of Man is a heavenly person who descends to the world to be king and judge. John 3:13 says “No one has ascended to heaven by He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” The title is one of exaltation, not humility. Remember, “the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Luke 6:5) and “the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins” (Luke 5:24) which truly is a prerogative that belongs to God (Luke 5:21). He came forth from God, from Heaven. He is not from earth. He is far beyond a mere man.

G. Islam teaches that Allah has no son. In Christianity, Jesus said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ Matthew 27:43 records those words as a mocking accusation of Jesus by the chief priests. They accused Jesus of blasphemy because He said, “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36). Obviously, they understood Jesus to mean more than “I am a child of God by faith” like Christians think of themselves, or that the nation of Israel is the son of God (Exodus 4:22). They understood this, like in John 5:18, to be a claim to deity.

I think that Islamic theology might be OK with saying that Jesus as son of God is no different than believers being sons of God, as in somehow “related” to God in a loose sense, as opposed to being like “sons of the devil.” But Christianity recognizes that there are two very different senses to the word “son” when it comes to Jesus, on the one hand, and Christians on the other hand. 1 John 5:2 says we are children of God, but we are obviously not sons in the infinite, sinless, exact-representation-of-God way Jesus was.

Matthew 11:27 contains Father and Son six times. There definitely is a Son related to the divine Father. There can be no question at all—and these are the words of Jesus.

H. Islam: Jesus could not do miracles at certain times. Christianity: Jesus did and could do miracles, but only in the will of the Father.

1. The claim is that in Mark 6:5, Jesus could do no mighty works there, no miracles. Therefore, He is not God, because God can do miracles. Sounds solid. Except...

2. The lack of miracles is because of the truth conveyed in verse 6 that the people were filled with unbelief. “Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” (Matthew 13:58) That makes it sound a lot different.
 3. Jesus was perfectly submitted to the Father’s will in His human life. As such, He may well “could not” do miracles because God did not want him to. And, in the face of unbelief, that is no surprise.
 4. And finally, in the remainder of Mark 6:5, it says that Jesus could do no mighty work there, **except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.** So in fact, He **did** do miracles there! The lesson: do not let the uninformed person dictate your understanding of the verses of Scripture. Turn to the passage and read it out loud and think it through.
- I. Other limitations of Jesus can be attributed to other factors, that is, other than He was a man and not at all deity.
1. He did not know who touched him in a crowd when power went out of Him (Mark 5:30). He either knew and was just asking the “who” to come forward, or the Logos did not tell the human consciousness of the Lord who it was, and he found out using regular human means.
 2. In other cases, the Logos simply did not disclose that information to the human nature of Christ (Mark 13:32).
 3. “No one is good but One, that is, God.” True. And He himself was that “good” but it was not His time to manifest that. He was in his humiliation. Deity and its exalted status was not something that He grasped onto (Philippians 2:5-11).
 4. John 14:28 says that “My Father is greater than I.” Indeed, in Christ’s humility, he was not just “playing” servant. He was servant of God and humanity.

Conclusion

The Christian can successfully answer Islamic objections to Christianity, including to the Bible and to the person and work of

Christ. We can do so by careful attention to the context of words, and to the theology of the person of Christ.

MAP

Resources

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/The-Quran-and-the-New-Testament-Bible-A-Comparison-of-Textual-Histories>. This article compares Quranic and NT textual transmission and notes the advantages of the uncontrolled transmission history of the Biblical text.

The few men who had a hand in the Quranic revision process (the collection by Zaid, three other scholars, and Uthman) could have altered the text, and we will never know. Prior to Zaid, many who had memorized portions of the Quran were killed after Mohammed's death. Some of the men who were experts in the Quran rejected Zaid's version

For the New Testament, the lack of centralization means that there is a downside—many textual variants in the manuscript data. The advantage of this is that no single authority could alter the text in a way that is undetectable. The texts can be examined and see which ones are more faithful. The original text can be obtained with near certainty even in the presence of many variants, something that cannot be done with the Quran.

Questions

We are unclear as to what makes a sin “major” in Islam, versus what kinds of sins are minor. Are the specific revelations in the Koran about this, or is the “list” of such sins pieced together from the various Hadith? The question arose when we discussed