

Why I am not a Muslim

One of my students, Altan from Turkey, asked me, "Why do Christians call Jesus the Savior? What does that word 'savior' mean?" I explained to him that Jesus Christ came to the earth to save all people from their sins. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus our sins are forgiven and we have the gift of eternal life. Altan then said, "We Muslims believe in Jesus, the Messiah. He is one of our prophets. In fact, he is one of the greatest of our prophets, just under Mohammed in importance."

I explained to Altan that God sent many prophets to the world, but He sent only one savior. He only sent one savior to provide a way for us to have our sins forgiven. Because of this, a savior is more important than a prophet. Then my Muslim friend said, "If what you say about Jesus is true, then why would Allah need to send Mohammed?" If what the Bible says about Jesus is true, then there would be no need for Mohammed! Christianity is based on three principles - 3 truths:

- a) Jesus is the Savior of the world.
- b) The Bible is the Word of God.
- c) We can know & experience forgiveness for our sins.

The Bible teaches many other things, but these three are foundational.

I. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world Jesus is the Savior because he gave his life as a sacrifice for our sins. When he died in Jerusalem in AD 29, crucified by Roman soldiers, he was dying for us, as a substitute to pay for the punishment which we deserved. His death on the cross was confirmed by ancient historians:

-Pliny, the Roman governor of Asia Minor, wrote to the Emperor in Rome asking for advice concerning the Christians who he said believed that Jesus died on a cross.

-Tacitus, the royal court historian in Rome, told about Jesus' miracles and his crucifixion in his *Annals*.

-Josephus (Jewish historian) wrote much about Jesus including his miracles, his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead.

Most importantly, the Bible tells us that Jesus' own mother was present when he was crucified. Mary, the mother of Jesus, stood watching as the Roman soldiers put the nails in her son's hands and feet and lifted him up on the cross. Jesus spoke to his mother when he was on the cross, committing her into the care of one of his disciples named John. Surely, Jesus' mother knew who was being crucified before her own eyes. There was no mistake. It was really Jesus who was being put to death on the cross, not another person. The Bible says that we all are guilty before God for our sins. Jesus' death on the cross is God's provision for our rescue from the punishment of sin. If we reject God's plan to save us, there is no other alternative plan. God has no second plan to save us. When a doctor gives us medicine to heal us from a disease, we don't re-

fuse to take it just because it tastes bad. We take it gladly because we know the medicine will heal us. God's medicine for our disease of sin does not taste bad. In fact, knowing Jesus in my life as my Savior has been the greatest blessing, the greatest joy of my life.

When Altan asked me, "If the Bible is true, then why would Allah need to send Mohammed?" he could see the answer himself. If Jesus' death on the cross provided forgiveness for all our sins, then Mohammed and Islam were not necessary. He immediately understood this and said, "Well, we know that Jesus did not really die on the cross! The Koran says, it was someone else, not Jesus who was crucified." Muslims say they believe in Jesus - but it is clear that the Jesus they believe in is not the Jesus of the Bible. They believe in a false concept of Jesus.

II. The Bible is the Word of God Is what the Bible says about Jesus true? The Bible mentions or refers to Jesus' death 137 times. The Koran says that Jesus did not die on the cross, the Bible says that he did and explains why this was God's plan to rescue us from the punishment for our sins. **Which one is right?**

The Bible, especially the New Testament, was written by eyewitnesses who actually saw what they wrote about. The Koran was written 600 years later. **Which one should we believe**, eyewitnesses or a document which was written hundreds of years later?

a) The Biblical writer Peter, wrote: *"We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."*

b) John wrote in the Gospel account with his name: *"This is the disciple who testifies to these things and wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true."*

c) Peter could even appeal to the knowledge of the Jews who were listening to him preach about Jesus' death on the cross for us. He said: *"We are witnesses of these things"* and ended by saying, *"As you yourselves know."*

Not only was the Bible written by eyewitnesses, but also archeology gives evidence that the Bible is true. Dr. William Albright of Johns Hopkins University says from archeological evidence alone, the Bible is the most true. The October 25, 1999 edition of U.S. News & World Report had a lead article entitled, *Is the Bible True?* In the article it told of all the recent discoveries of archeology to prove the Bible is accurate in what it says. The article said: *"In extraordinary ways, modern archeology has affirmed the historical core of the Old and New Testaments - corroborating key portions of the stories of Israel's patriarchs, the Exodus, the Davidic monarchy, and the life and times of Jesus."*

Early manuscripts also give evidence that the Bible has not been changed. There are over 4,000 copies of the Greek New Testament in existence today. Some of these are very old, dating from 150 - 200 years from the original writing. When scholars compare all these ancient manu-

scripts they find that over the years (about a 1000 years of copying) there is no essential difference in what was written in the year 150 and what was written in the year 1200. I've seen some of these very early manuscripts myself in the Royal British Museum in London. Leading scholars of ancient manuscripts give testimony to the trustworthiness and the accuracy of the Bible: a) Westcott and Hort were well known textual critics of ancient documents. They said: *"The words in our opinion still subject to doubt can hardly amount to more than a thousandth part of the whole New Testament."*

b) Sir Frederic Kenyon, leading British scholar of ancient manuscripts, wrote: *"The last foundation for any doubt that the [Christian] Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written have now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established"*

c) Dr. Robert Dick Wilson of Princeton University studied 45 ancient languages for 30 years. Finally he declared the Bible valid in all points.

d) Jesus as a prophet of God can not lie. He said to his followers: *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."* (Matthew 24: 35) Jesus promised that his words recorded in the *Injil* (the Bible) would never be lost or changed.

e) God also declares that He will punish anyone who tries to change the Bible: *"I warn everyone who hears of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to this message, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the heavenly city, which are described in this book."* (Rev. 21: 18 & 19) God guarantees that the Bible will never be changed. We can believe what God says.

f) Is God powerful enough to keep His message from being corrupted or changed? Of course, He is! Would God allow someone to change His words? Of course not!

g) Even the Koran (in Arabic) teaches the Christian and Jewish Scriptures are true and trustworthy. In SURA 10:94 it says: *"So if you are in doubt, O Muhammed, about that which we have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scriptures before you [the Christians and the Jews]. The truth has certainly been given to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters."* Speaking about all Scriptures God has given to mankind, the Koran says in SURA 10: 64: *"No change is there in any of the words of Allah. That is what is the great attainment."*

I showed this verse to my Muslim friend Altan and asked him if the Old and New Testament Scriptures (the *Tevrat* and the *Injil*) were the words of Allah when they were originally given. He agreed that they were originally the words of Allah, but that they had been changed later. Then I said, then that means the Koran is wrong and has a mis-

take in it. Because the Koran clearly says the words of Allah can never be changed. If the Old and New Testament have been changed then the Koran is wrong. If the Koran is right, then the Bible has not been changed. I asked Altan, "Which one is it? Has the Bible been changed or is the Koran wrong?" He didn't know how to answer this question.

Those who say the Bible has been changed usually misinterpret the Bible or they do not use the original Hebrew and Greek - they find mistakes in the English translations. I used the Arabic Koran.

III. We can know and experience forgiveness for our sins.

The message of the Bible is very clear - God loves us and He wants to give us a new life. He is willing to forgive our sins and to fill our lives with peace and joy, if we will accept His escape plan for us. What we see in the world today is not God's plan. We see war, hunger, crime, hate, murder - all these evil activities are caused because mankind is living in rebellion to God. They have rejected God's perfect plan for their lives and have chosen to live for themselves. When each person is only living for himself: he will naturally come into conflict with others who are living only for themselves. What we see happening in the world is the result. On a personal level, we see the result of man's rebellion against God, hatred, anger, envy, jealousy against others. Also, loneliness, confusion, despair, drunkenness, frustration are things we all experience in our lives. God's plan is to change all that. He wants to give us His peace, love, joy, patience and acceptance. That's why He sent Jesus. Jesus died on the cross for us to pay for our sins and to give us a new life. This is how we can know and experience in our lives God's forgiveness and acceptance.

Some people ask, **"Why do I need a savior?"** We need a savior because we are all sinful people. Everyone who lives does wrong things at sometime. The Bible clearly teaches: *"Everyone has turned away from God, all people together have become corrupt, there is no one who does good all the time, not even one person."* (Psalm 53:3) Because of our sins, we are guilty before God. He will punish us for the evil that we have done. The Bible says: *"The person who sins is the one who will have spiritual death The sin of the sinful person will be counted against him."* (Ezekiel 18:20) Jesus is the only way for us to be saved from our sins. Why is Jesus the only way? Because Jesus is the only one without sin, so he is the only one who was able to save us. Why is Jesus the only way? Because Jesus is the only one who died as a sacrifice for our sins, therefore he is the only one who can save us. Why is Jesus the only way? Because Jesus is the only one who came back alive again to prove that he really is the true Savior of the world. But the Bible offers us hope. By simple faith in Jesus Christ and believing that he died on the cross for our sins, we can know God's forgiveness and mercy and experience salvation which brings us eternal life. The Bible makes this very clear: *"For you know that it was not with temporary things like silver or gold with*

which you were saved from the sinful life you inherited from your forefathers, but it was with the life blood of Jesus Christ, who was like a lamb sacrificed for us, because he was without sin or defect in any way." (1 Peter 1: 18-19)

Every other person, even every prophet sent by God, was a sinner who needed a savior to be made right with God. The first man, Adam, sinned. Abraham, Moses and David all sinned against God. According to the Koran, even Mohammed is a sinner needing forgiveness (see SURA 47 verse 19 and SURA 48 verse 1-2). You see, Jesus is the only one who could be our Savior, because he is the only one without sin. The Bible teaches us that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus Christ to save us. This is what the Bible says: *"For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in him (and puts complete trust in him) will not be lost (or punished for his sin), but he will have the gift of eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but to save the world through him."* (John 3: 16-17)

Islam does not offer us forgiveness. Mohammed did not die for our sins. The Koran does not teach that we can know we have eternal life and are going to heaven. The Muslim religion does not give us assurance of our salvation. Only faith in Jesus can do that.

This short article was not meant to offend anyone. It was only given for the purpose of showing the differences between Islam and Christianity. Also, it was given to point out those areas where Muslims have wrong ideas about Christianity. We need to be sure we understand what Christianity teaches before we reject it. Otherwise, we will believe a lie and miss out on the greatest blessing that God has given to all people - the chance to have our sins forgiven and to have eternal life.

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