

ԿՐՕՆԱԿԱՆ**SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
THE HOLY BIBLE AND THE HOLY QUR'AN****Introduction**

The Holy books of the two largest religions in the world, Christianity and Islam, have several similarities as well as differences between them! Christianity, a religious tradition that started almost 2000 years ago by Jesus of Nazareth, considered by Christians as the awaited Messiah of the Jewish faith,¹ and Islam,² a religious tradition founded in AD 610 by the Prophet Muhammed, considered by the Muslims as the last of the prophets, are two religious traditions that have their roots in the Jewish faith, as Abrahamic faith.³

Christianity⁴ has the most followers of any religion in the world. Based on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, it has developed into many different sects with differing interpretations of Jesus and his message. The Christian Bible⁵ has been interpreted in many ways, from divinely inspired word of God to various text-critical readings. The Eastern Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, and many forms of Protestant Christianity exemplify varying interpretations of Jesus' message, varying forms of institutional structure and leadership, and varying approaches to social issues.

The Bible

Christian churches use the Bible⁶ which contain the Hebrew Bible (known to Christians as the Old Testament), the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, and in some cases the Apocrypha, and Deuterocanonical books. **Hermeneutics**⁷ is the field of theological study which seeks to interpret scripture. Some Christian thinkers have stressed literal meanings of the texts; others have emphasized allegorical meanings. In medieval times, a fourfold approach to interpretation included literal readings, allegorical readings, moral readings, and heavenly readings. In eighteenth century, Western Europe, critical historical study of the Bible began, and many Christians now accept this approach, which uses the literary method of addressing historical context, intended audience, and desired effect.⁸

Outside the Bible, there are but a few shreds of evidence for the life of Jesus. Christian

¹ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 302–375.

² *Ibid*, pp. 377–432.

³ Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, p. 155.

⁴ Richards, Chris (ed.), *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of World Religions*, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 124–149.

⁵ Coogan, Michael (ed.), *The Illustrated Guide World Religions*, London, 2003, pp. 52–58.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 68–70.

⁷ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, pp. 423–424.

⁸ Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, p. 165.

belief about the life of Jesus is largely derived from biblical texts, especially the first four books of the New Testament called the **gospels** (good news⁹). The gospels are based on oral transmission of stories and discourses. Thought to be pseudonymous, the gospels are named after Jesus's followers Matthew and John, and Paul's companions Mark and Luke. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the **synoptic**¹⁰ (seen together) gospels since they present similar views of Jesus. The gospel of Luke seems to have been written for a Gentile rather than Jewish audience. The gospel of John emphasizes Jesus¹¹ as the eternal son of God and may reflect Greek influences. In addition to the four gospels included in the New Testament, other gospels circulated in the early Christian church as well.

Islam,¹² on the other hand, is the second largest religious tradition in the world, stretching from western Africa to Southeastern Asia and other parts of the world, like Europe, North America, and Oceania.

The Qur'an¹³

The Qur'an¹⁴ ["Koran" is an alternate, less preferable spelling] contains the revelations Muhammad received, which affirm God's unity and direct life in human society. Muhammad dictated the revelations to scribes, and they were carefully recorded. Qur'anic study and recitation became central for Muslims, with recitation understood to have a healing and protective effect. The authoritative written version of the Qur'an was established around 650 CE. It is divided into 114 **suras** or chapters.¹⁵ Qur'anic passages may be understood to have multilayered meanings. Jewish and Christian figures appear frequently in the Qur'an, for the sacred history of Judaism and Christianity is considered part of Islam. The prophets of those faiths are said to have brought the same message, but humans added to and distorted God's message.

While Muslims revere Jesus as a prophet, they do not accept the notion that he may pardon sin or atone for others' sins, for only God can do so. The Qur'an is understood to be the final and complete version of the teachings of all the prophets. Muslims believe that Jesus prophesied the coming of Muhammad when he promised that the **Paraclete** or advocate would come after him to assist humanity. In the Qur'an, God is known by the Arabic name **Allah**.¹⁶

I. The life and teachings of Jesus

The gospels do not provide a single chronology of Jesus's life, nor do they provide much information about what happened before he began his ministry.

⁹ Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, p. 166.

¹⁰ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, pp. 422–423.

¹¹ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 302–375.

¹² Richards, Chris, ed. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of World Religions*, 1997, pp. 150–177.

¹³ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, pp. 471–474.

¹⁴ Coogan, Michael (ed.), *The Illustrated Guide World Religions*, London, 2003, pp. 104–105.

¹⁵ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 377–432.

¹⁶ Cook, Michael, *The Koran: A very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 10–17.

1. *Birth*¹⁷

The Christian doctrine of **incarnation** teaches that Jesus is the divine Son of God who was conceived and born as a human being. Christian monks may have miscalculated in figuring time in relationship to Jesus's life; most historians now believe that Jesus was born a few years before the beginning of the Common Era. Christian tradition states that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, thereby fulfilling the rabbinic interpretation of prophecies that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Some scholars believe that Jesus was actually born in Nazareth. According to the gospels, Jesus's mother Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph was a carpenter from Bethlehem.

2. *Preparation*

The gospels have little to say about Jesus' childhood; according to Luke, at twelve, Jesus astounded the rabbis at the Temple in Jerusalem with his knowledge of the Torah. The gospels describe the ministry of John the Baptist, who cited Isaiah's prophecies of the Kingdom of God to come and baptized people in the Jordan River. **Apocalyptic** expectations were high at the time. All four gospels report that at about the age of thirty, Jesus came to John to be baptized. Jesus' baptism is interpreted in different ways; after the baptism, he retreated to the wilderness for forty days where he was tempted by Satan.

3. *Ministry*¹⁸

After his wilderness retreat, Jesus began to attract disciples such as Simon, Andrew, James, and John. He taught them that to follow him meant leaving one's possessions and attachments behind and emphasized the importance of spiritual rather than material wealth. Jesus performed many miracles as part of his ministry, which Christians have interpreted in many different ways.

In contrast to the patriarchal society of his time, Jesus taught people of all classes and welcomed women as disciples. Jesus preached a challenging ethic that required loving not only one's neighbors, but also one's enemies. Indeed Jesus taught that the two great commandments of Judaism were to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself. The **Beatitudes** are a famous set of statements in which Jesus promises blessings for the poor in spirit, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness and spreading the gospel. Jesus commonly taught using **parables** which used familiar situations to make a spiritual point.

In an era of high messianic expectations, Jesus is reported in the gospels as having made many references to the Kingdom of God, sometimes suggesting that the kingdom was expected in the future, sometimes suggesting that it had already arrived.

4. *Challenges to the authorities*¹⁹

A local leader appointed by the Romans feared that Jesus might be one of the **Zealots** who were planning an uprising against the Romans. As Jesus gathered more disciples, some members

¹⁷ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, pp. 421–422.

¹⁸ Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, pp. 293–294.

¹⁹ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, pp. 421–422.

of other groups, such as the **Pharisees** (shapers of rabbinic Judaism) and **Sadducees** (temple priests and upper class), grew suspicious of him. Jesus seems to have challenged some of the evolving interpretations of Mosaic law.²⁰ Some modern scholars believe that apparent anti-Jewish sentiments in the New Testament date to the time after Jesus's death when rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity were competing for followers.

Jesus is also said to have challenged the commercial enterprises at the Temple of Jerusalem. The gospels record that Jesus appropriated to himself Second Isaiah's messianic prophecies, and his followers understood him to be the Christ ("anointed one") or Messiah.

The gospels also report that three disciples witnessed the **Transfiguration**, when Jesus climbed a mountain and Moses and Elijah appeared. Jewish apocalyptic tradition believed that Elijah and Moses would appear at the end of the world; their presence linked Jewish prophecy to the claim that Jesus is the Christ or Messiah.

Jesus taught that John the Baptist was Elijah come again. John the Baptist had been killed by the authorities, and Jesus predicted that he too would meet a similar fate. Foreshadowing the **Crucifixion**, he said he would offer his own flesh and blood for humanity, marking a new covenant in which his blood would be shed for the forgiveness of sins.

5. *Crucifixion*²¹

Jesus returned to Jerusalem at Passover, riding on a donkey. He warned his disciples that the end was near, and at a Passover meal gave instructions for a ceremony using bread and wine to continue communion with him. He predicted that one of his disciples would betray him, and indeed Judas had already done so. According to the gospel of Mark, after praying at Gethsemane, Jesus said, "it is all over," and was led away for questioning.²²

The four gospels all include "**passion narratives**" which relate Jesus's sufferings during his betrayal, trial, and crucifixion. A crown of thorns on his head, Jesus was marched to Golgotha and put on the cross. He called out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me," the first line of Psalm 22. Jesus's death is believed to have occurred sometime between 27 and 33 CE. The disciple Joseph wrapped Jesus's body in a shroud and placed it in a guarded tomb.

6. *Resurrection and Ascension*²³

The following Sunday, some of Jesus's female followers went to prepare his body for burial, but they found the tomb empty. Angels appeared and informed them that Jesus had risen from the dead. The women brought male disciples who also witnessed the empty tomb. Christ then appeared to a number of his disciples to dispel their doubts about the **Resurrection**; accounts of these appearances differ in the gospels. Some scholars have argued that there is some truth to the resurrection story because having women, who had little status in the patriarchal society of their time, as first witnesses would not have been an effective way to make the case for the resurrection.

²⁰ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 302–375.

²¹ Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, pp. 294–295.

²² Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 302–375.

²³ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, p. 422.

Two of the gospels reports that after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to his followers to encourage them to carry the gospel worldwide, and then ascended into heaven. The **Ascension** is an article of faith for Christians whether it is understood metaphorically or literally.²⁴

II. The life and teachings of Muhammed²⁵

1. *Life*²⁶

Muslims consider Muhammad to be the final prophet in a chain of prophets who brought monotheism. The Qur'an, Islam's most sacred book as revealed to Muhammad, traces the ancestry of the faith to the patriarch Abraham and his son (Isma'il) with the Egyptian slave Hagar. Abraham and Isma'il together built the Ka'bah, Islam's holiest sanctuary.²⁷ The monotheism established by Abraham was not maintained, and Muhammad eventually was sent to restore it. Born in about 570 CE in Mecca,²⁸ Muhammad was raised by his uncle.²⁹

While God is the focus and sole authority within Islam, Muhammad's life story is important as a model of Qur'anic teachings. The story of Muhammad's life is found in the **hadith** literature, which reports Muhammad's sayings and actions, or **sunnah**. As a young man, Muhammad went to work for a wealthy woman named Khadijah, and the two married when Muhammad was forty and Muhammad twenty-five. With Khadijah's support, Muhammad increasingly devoted himself to spiritual contemplation.

2. *Calling*

When Muhammad was forty, the angel Gabriel came to him and instructed him to recite. Thus began the revelation of the Qur'an. The revelations asserted that there was one true God who called people to complete, trusting surrender, or **Islam**. After initially sharing the revelations only with close relatives and friends, Muhammad was called to preach publicly, and met with great opposition.

3. *Ministry*³⁰

Many of Muhammad's earliest followers were persecuted. The Abyssinian slave Bilal was imprisoned, his captors insisting that he worship the old gods. He refused, and became the first **muezzin** (one who calls people to prayer). Muhammad and his followers were forced to leave Mecca for several years, but then were invited to return.³¹ Still, however, they were persecuted. At the same time, Muhammad's uncle and wife Khadijah died. During this difficult period, the "Year of Sorrows," Muhammad experienced the Night of Ascension [also called the Night

²⁴ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 302–375.

²⁵ Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, pp. 337–339.

²⁶ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, p. 462.

²⁷ Mahmoud, S.F., *A Short History of Islam*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1988, pp. 15–25.

²⁸ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 377–432.

²⁹ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, p. 464

³⁰ Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, pp. 464–468.

³¹ Mahmoud, S.F., *A Short History of Islam*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1988, pp. 15–25.

Journey], when he traveled [from Jerusalem] into God's presence and met the prophets who had preceded him.

4. *Pilgrimage to Medina*³²

Residents of Yathrib, north of Mecca, invited Muhammad to live in their city. Muhammad and his followers accepted the invitation in 622 CE. The migration or **hijrah** to Yathrib³³ (subsequently renamed Medina) marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.³⁴ In Medina, Muhammad instituted a constitution which later became the basis for Islamic social administration. Meccan leaders feared that Muhammad posed a threat, and conflict broke out between the two cities.³⁵ After an initial success, the Muslims were badly defeated. Eventually Muhammad negotiated a truce. The Qur'anic revelations emphasize the basic religious unity of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and that Jews and Christians have distorted Abraham's pure monotheism.³⁶

5. *Return to Mecca*

In 630 CE, Muhammad and his followers were able to return to Mecca with such strength that they were not challenged. The Ka'bah, which Muslims understand to have been built by Abraham and Ishmael on Adam's original place of worship, was purged of idols. Many Meccans converted to Islam. Muhammad went back to Medina from where he undertook campaigns to spread Islam further. In 632 CE Muhammad made a final pilgrimage to the Ka'bah to demonstrate the proper form of worship there.³⁷ Recognizing that he was at the end of his life, he gave final instructions to his followers.

6. *Death and Successors*³⁸

Prior to his death in 632 CE, Muhammad had given no instructions as to who should succeed him. His close friend Abu Bakr was elected as the first **caliph** (successor to the Prophet), but this election later caused controversy. **Shi'ite** Muslims believe that Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law 'Ali (married to Muhammad's daughter Fatima) should have been the first caliph. According to one tradition, Muhammad transferred his spiritual light to Fatima before his death, but neither she nor 'Ali took part in the selection of the caliph because they were making funeral arrangements. Muhammad's life became a model for Muslims to follow; those who knew him commented on his nobility, humility, and kindness.³⁹ The revelations of the Qur'an speak not of a contemplative life of withdrawal, but of the need for Muslims to fight oppression and corruption and establish moral order in the world.

Many people think of the Qur'an⁴⁰ as a radically different book from the Bible. Moreover,

³² Parrinder, Geoffrey (ed.), *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983, pp. 467–468.

³³ Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, p. 139.

³⁴ Mahmoud, S.F., *A Short History of Islam*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1988, pp. 15–25.

³⁵ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 377–432.

³⁶ Cook, Michael, *The Koran: A very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 15–17.

³⁷ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 377–432.

³⁸ Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, pp. 348–349.

³⁹ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 377–432.

⁴⁰ Van Voorst, Robert, *Analogy of World Scriptures*, Wadsworth, 2007, pp. 141–151.

according to this view, even though Muslims and Christians (and Jews) all believe in the same God, these religions are different, distinct traditions.

An argument can be made, however, that the similarities between the Bible and the Quran are actually much more intimate than one might think, and that Islam, Judaism and Christianity are closer to being different interpretations of a shared religious culture than totally distinct traditions.⁴¹

According to Muslim belief and scholarly accounts, the history of the Qur'an began in the year AD 610, when the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad⁴² in a cave near Mecca, reciting to him the first verses of the Qur'an.⁴³

The angel Gabriel is, of course, an important character in the Hebrew Bible (where he appears to and explains visions to the prophet Daniel) and the New Testament (where he appears to Zechariah, telling him of his son-to-be, John the Baptist⁴⁴).

Beyond Gabriel, the Qur'an is filled with characters from the Hebrew Bible: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David and Goliath, Jonah, Mary, and John the Baptist all appear, among others — including Jesus.⁴⁵

Those shared characters also participate in many shared narratives between the Quran and the Bible. Among them are the Garden of Eden, the Flood, the choice of Abraham and the creation of the people of Israel, Abraham's near sacrifice of one of his sons, Moses and the liberation of Israel from Egypt, the life and death of Jesus, and the idea that God repeatedly sends prophets to humanity to warn and instruct them.⁴⁶

As similar as all these stories and characters are, many fascinating differences exist among the texts. These differences appear to have two explanations: First, Muhammad could not actually read the texts of the Hebrew Bible and Christian New Testament (Islamic tradition claims he was illiterate). Instead, he heard traveling Jews and Christians tell oral renditions of Biblical stories, liberally mixed with folklore. Second, Muhammad altered some of the stories' details to fit his own cultural and theological perspective.⁴⁷

Here are examples that reveal the crucial similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam, some of whose followers find themselves increasingly at odds with one another:

I. Similarities between the Bible and the Qur'an

1. Belief in A supreme deity⁴⁸

Christians as well as Muslims believe in One God, the creator of heaven and earth and the creator of each single individual. God has put down his will in writing in his holy book. On the

⁴¹ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 302–375, 377–432.

⁴² Matthews, Warren, *World Religions*, Wadsworth, 2013, p. 134.

⁴³ Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions*, 9th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 377–432.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 302–375, 377–432.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 377–432.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 302–375, 377–432.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 302–375, 377–432.

⁴⁸ Abu-Hamdiyyah, Mohammad, *The Qur'an – an Introduction*, Routledge, London AND New York, 2000, p 5.

Day of Judgement, he will call everybody to account at the end of the times.

Both the Bible and the Qur'an in a single God.⁴⁹ The Bible calls the deity God, while the Qur'an call the supreme deity Allah.

“Allah is the creator of the universe and of every single individual, but he is transcendental, i.e., he is separated from creation. There is no connection between creator and creature (sura 55,1-78; 6,100-101).”

“God created man in His image and made him His counterpart. He revealed his character in His creation. Jesus is the bridge between God and man (John 1,14-15).” Mark, 12.28-30: Qur’an, 2.255

2. Belief in Angles:⁵⁰

Angels are a creation of Allah. They were created from light. “The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from smokeless fire, and Adam was created from that which has been described to you.”⁵¹”

- The Bible: Exodus 23.20; Luke 1.11-13, Luke 15.10, Revelation 7.11
- The Qur'an 6.61, Quran 86.4, Quran 42.5, Quran 3.39

3. Belief in Prophets:⁵² **Qur'an 2.285, Qur'an 21.25:** The Qur'an mentions twenty-five prophets, most of whom are mentioned in the Bible as well. Who were these prophets, where did they live, who were they sent to, what are their names in the Quran and the Bible, and what are some of the miracles they performed? We will answer these simple questions.

a. The Prophets⁵³

1) Adam: Aadam or Adam is the first prophet in Islam. He is also the first human being according to traditional Islamic belief. Adam is mentioned in **25** verses and **25** times in the Quran. God created Adam with His hands and created his wife, Hawwa or Eve from Adam's rib. He lived in Paradise and was expelled from there to earth for disobedience. The story of his two sons is mentioned once in Chapter 5 (Al-Maidah).

2) Enoch (Idrees): is mentioned twice in the Quran. Other than that, little is known about him. He is said to have lived in Babylon and migrated to Egypt and that he was the first one to write with the pen.

3) Noah (Nuh): is mentioned 43 times in the Quran. He is said to be from Kirk, Iraq. Polytheism (shirk) appeared for the first time among his people who lived close to the present-day city of Kufa, in the south of Iraq. His wife was an unbeliever as mentioned in Chapter 66 (At-Tahrim). His son also chose disbelief and drowned in the flood. The story is found in Chapter 11 (Hud). One of his great miracles was the Arc which he built on God's command that rested on Mt. Judi which is said to be between the Syrian-Turkish border today near the city of Ayn Diwar.

⁴⁹ Cook, Michael, *The Koran: A very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Abu-Hamdiyyah, Mohammad, *The Qur'an – an Introduction*, Routledge, London AND New York, 2000, p. 39.

⁵¹ Aziz, Shawana, Faith in the Angels, Quran Sunnah Education Programs, p. 5.

⁵² Cook, Michael, *The Koran: A very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 29–32.

⁵³Abu-Hamdiyyah, Mohammad, *The Qur'an – an Introduction*, Routledge, London AND New York, 2000, p 40–53.

4) Hud is said to be Heber in English. He is mentioned 7 times in the Quran. Hud is the first person to have spoken Arabic and was the first Arab prophet. He was definitely sent to the people of Aad in the area known as Al-Ahqaf which is around Hadramaut in Yemen and the Ar-Rub al-Khali (the Empty Quarter). God destroyed them by a fierce wind that blew for 8 days and seven nights.

5) Salih: is mentioned 9 times in the Quran. He was an Arab prophet sent to the people of Thamud who lived in an area known as Al-Hijr between Hijaz and Tabuk. Al-Hijr was the ancient name.

6) **Abraham (Ibrahim):** is mentioned 69 times in 25 chapters of the Quran. His father's name was Aazar. They lived in the city of Ur in the Chaldean kingdom. He escaped Ur to Harran, in the north of the Arabian Peninsula, in today's Syria, when Nimrod, the king tried to burn him alive. From Harran he went to Palestine with his wife Sarah and the son of his brother, Lot (Loot in Arabic) and his wife. Due to a famine, they were forced to move to Egypt. He later returned with Lot to the south of Palestine, Ibrahim settling in Bir Sab'a and Lot settled close to the Dead Sea. Abraham then moved his second wife, Hagar, to Mecca with his son Ishmael and left them there at God's command. Mecca was a barren land and the well of zamzam was provided by God for their survival. The ancient tribe of Jurhum settled there due to Zamzam. Abraham is said to be buried in Hebron, Palestine.

7) Ishmael (Ishmael): God ordered Abraham to sacrifice Ishmael. He went to Mecca with his parents and was left there with his mother. Abraham visited Ishmael several times in Mecca, one of those times, God ordered Abraham and Ishmael to build the Ka'bah (the Holy House). Ishmael died in Mecca and was buried there. Issac is the forefather of the Jews and Ishmael is the forefather of the Arabs.

8) Issac (Ishaq): is mentioned 16 times in the Quran whereas Ishmael is mentioned 12 times. Issac lived with his father, Abraham, and died in Hebron, Palestine

9) Lot (Lut): is mentioned 17 times in the Quran. He is the nephew of Abraham, the son of Abraham's brother. Lot lived towards the southern tip of the Dead Sea. His people were from Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot believed in Abraham and after their return from Egypt, they settled in separate locations. People of Sodom were the first to commit homosexuality. That is why homosexuals are sometimes called sodomites. His wife was not a believer. She did not commit the sin but accepted it. Rocks rained down on the people of Sodom and Gomorrah that crushed them.

10) Jacob (Yacoob): the son of Issac and the grandson of Abraham is mentioned 16 times in the Quran. Jacob's other name was Israel. The "Bani Israel," Children of Israel, or Israelites are named after him. All the Hebrew prophets came from him, the last of whom was Eesa or Jesus. Jacob is the father of the twelve tribes known as Al-Asbaat (7:160) in the Quran. He is said to have traveled to north of Iraq, returned to Palestine and then settled in Egypt and died there. He was buried in Hebron, Palestine, along with his father according to his last will. The Bible mentions that Isaac married Rebecca and his son Jacob married Rachel (Rahil in Arabic).

11) Joseph (Yusuf): the son of Jacob or Israel is mentioned 17 times in the Quran.

He was left in a Jerusalem well by his brothers, and then taken to Egypt where he attained a high rank in the government. Later, his father, Jacob, and brothers settled in Egypt.

12) Shuaib or Jethro, mentioned 11 times in the Quran, was sent to the people of Madyan, who was one of the sons of Abraham. Shuaib lived between the time of Lot and Moses and was an Arab prophet. His people worshipped a tree called AlAykah (15:78, 26:176, 38:13, 50:14). They were highway robbers and cheated in business dealings. Several punishments came down upon them: an awful cry combined with an earthquake that destroyed them.

13) Job (Ayyub): is mentioned 4 times in the Quran. He is said to have lived close to either the Dead Sea or Damascus. He was an affluent prophet who was tested by God with poverty and sickness, but he was patient and was helped by his loyal wife who stayed by him in every hardship. Eventually, they are immensely rewarded by God for their patience.

14) **Moses (Moosa)**: is the most frequently mentioned prophet in the Quran, appearing 136 times. Before Moses, Joseph had started spreading the message of monotheism (tawhid: worship of One, true God) among the people of Egypt. His mission was strengthened when his father, Jacob, and his brothers also settled in Egypt, slowly converting all of Egypt. After Yusuf, the Egyptians turned back into polytheism (shirk) and the children of Jacob, the Israelites, multiplied and gained prominence in the society. Moses was the first prophet sent to the Israelites at a time when the Pharaoh of Egypt was enslaving them. Moses fled to Madyan to flee persecution. God made him a prophet at Mt. Toor, situated in the Sinai and he was given nine great miracles.

15) Aaron (Haroun): is the brother of Moses and is mentioned 20 times in the Quran.

16) Ezekiel (Thul-kifl): is mentioned twice in the Quran. Some scholars say he was the son of Job, others say he is Ezekiel of the Bible.

17) David (Dawud): is mentioned in the Quran 16 times. He led the Israelites in war and won and had many miracles. He is buried in Jerusalem.

18) Solomon (Sulaiman): is mentioned 17 times and was also a king with great miracles. He is buried in Jerusalem.

19) Alijah (Elias or Ilyas) is mentioned two times each in the Quran and lived in Baalbek.

20) Elisha (Al-Yasa): is mentioned two times each in the Quran and lived in Baalbek.

21) Jonah (Yunus): also known as “Dhun-Noon,” is mentioned 4 times in the Quran. He lived in Nineveh, close to Mosul, in Iraq. He left his people before God allowed him to, headed towards modern day Tunisia, but possibly ended up in Yafa. He was swallowed by the whale, repented to God and went back to his people in Iraq where all 100,000 of them repented and believed in him.

22) Zachariah (Zakariyyah): is mentioned 7 times. He was a carpenter. He raised Mary, the mother of Jesus.

23) John (Yahya): is the son of Zechariah and is mentioned 5 times. He was killed in Jerusalem, and his head was taken to Damascus.

24) **Jesus (Issa)**: is mentioned 25 times, Messiah 11 times, and the ‘son of Mary’ 23 times. He was born in Bethlehem, Palestine. He is said to have visited Egypt with his mother. He is the last prophet among the Children of Israel.

The five bold lettered prophets are considered to be arch prophets, the prophet of prophets, in Islam.

4. Belief in God’s Omniscience and Omni⁵⁴

a. **John 1.3; 1 Cor. 3.7; Quran 57.22, 63.64**

5. Belief in Afterlife⁵⁵

a. **Matt. 5.12, 12.33, 13.41-43; Mar 5.28-29; Rev. 21.8; Quran 3.185, 39.68, 21.47**

6. Belief in Prayer, Fasting, Charity, and Alms⁵⁶

a. **Mat. 9.14, 23.36; Mark 1.35; Luke 2.37, 3.11; Acts 10.2; 1 Tim. 5.8; Qur’an 20.14, 2.183, 9.60, 2.219, 19.55,**

7. The Prophetic standing of Jesus:⁵⁷

a. **Mat. 13.57, 21.10-11, 45; Luke 7.316, 24.19.**

b. The Quran’s transformation of the story of Jesus shows both borrowing from Christian apocrypha (non-scriptural legends) and Muhammad’s editorializing.

c. As an example of the former, the Quran relates that Jesus brought clay birds to life by breathing on them (from the Apocryphal Infancy Gospel of Thomas) and could speak as a prophet in the cradle (from the Apocryphal Arabic Infancy Gospel). However, Jesus’ ethical teachings, his parables, and the narratives of his life as an itinerant rabbi and healer — which make up so much of the Bible — do not appear in the Quran.

8. Mary:⁵⁸

The Hebrew Bible mentions 133 women by name in its approximately 1,000 pages; the New Testament mentions 33 in around 300 pages; the Quran, at around 500 pages in English, names one: Mary, the mother of Jesus. Women in the Quran generally play a smaller role than in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. For example, in the Hebrew Bible, several women converse directly with God: Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rebecca, Hannah, and Deborah. In the New Testament, several named women have close relationships with Jesus, and several are described as leaders and “prophetesses” in the early Church. However, the Quran depicts Mary as the only woman who talks to the divine, when she speaks to the angel Gabriel before her conception of Jesus through “the divine breath” (Quran 66:12).

9. Tolerance for others⁵⁹

Both the Hebrew Bible and the Quran command and restrict violence in defense of the

⁵⁴ Cook, Michael, *The Koran: A very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 36.

⁵⁵ Van Voorst, Robert, *Analogy of World Scriptures*, Wadsworth, 2007, p. 150.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 158–163.

⁵⁷ Khaklidi, Tarif, *The Muslim Jesus*, Harvard, 2003, p. 5–10.

⁵⁸ Abu-Hamdiyyah, Mohammad, *The Qur’an – an Introduction*, Routledge, London AND New York, 2000, p. 70.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 88–90.

creation and protection of their respective religious communities. The Hebrew Bible commands all-out warfare in order to establish the Jewish religious community in Israel but then commands that non-Jews be free to live in Israel unmolested. The Quran likewise commands warfare to protect the early Islamic community in Arabia but then limits warfare to those who break treaties or persecute Muslims. The New Testament is distinct here in that Jesus commands non-violent resistance and love of enemies, even when the individual or the religious community is threatened (admittedly a precept that many of his follower's neglect).

As for treatment of outsiders, the Hebrew Bible says that God gave other religions to other people (Deuteronomy 4:19) and assumes that there are righteous and pious people among non-Jews (like Noah, Enosh, Enoch, Malchizedek, etc.). The Quran presents more explicit and tolerant statements on the subject:

“We (God) have appointed a law and a practice for every one of you. Had God willed, He would have made you a single community, but He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So, compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to God and He will inform you regarding the things about which you differed.” (Quran 5:48)

II. Differences between the Bible and the Qur'an

1. Composition:

a. The Bible is a composition of two testaments, the Old one and the New one, made up of 66 books (39 of the books are in the Old Testament, while 27 books are in the New Testament).

b. The word “Bible” means books, while the “Qur'an” means recitation.

c. The Bible is written in Hebrew (Old Testament) and in Greek (New Testament). The Qur'an is written and read in Arabic.

d. The books of the Bible are organized in a chronological order, while the chapters of the Qur'an (114 of them), are organized from the longest to the shortest. The only other identifier is the location of when these chapters were revealed to Muhammed, in Mecca or in Yathrub (Medina).

e. The Bible has many authors for its books, and it was written over 1000-year period. The Qur'an, on the other hand, is a single book, written by one author, between 610 – and 632. Muhammed is not the author of the Qur'an, because according to Islamic tradition, he was illiterate.

f. The Bible had several editions until an authorized version for several Christian denominations were finalized. The Qur'an was finalized in 644, during the time of Caliph Uthman.

g. The Bible is believed to be inspired by God, but written by humans. The Qur'an is believed to be the literal word of God.

2. Rejection of Jesus' divinity:

a. Whereas in the New Testament Jesus is the crucified and resurrected son of God, the Jesus of the Quran is a holy prophet and messenger of Allah whom God saves from crucifixion (and thus does not need to be resurrected⁶⁰). This revision reflects Muhammad's rejection of the divinity of any being except Allah:

- i. *“And they said we have killed the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God. They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them; those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him. On the contrary, God raised him unto himself. God is almighty and wise.” (Quran 4:157-158).*
- ii. *“Allah has no children. Jesus may not be worshipped as God. To believe in the trinity is polytheism. To worship more than one God is the most evil sin in Islam which can't be forgiven, since there is only one God (Allah means 'the God' or 'the goddess') (5,72-73+ 75; 4,171-172).”*
- iii. *“God's only Son is Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth as a human being and is himself God. Father, Sohn and Holy Spirit are a single, triune God (John 1,1-2).”*
- iv. *“Allah is not the father of Jesus Christ. He is the omnipotent and merciful God. The Qur'an accuses the Christians to worship three gods: God, Jesus and Mary. This was probably Muhammad's perception of the trinity as it was described to him by the Christians of his lifetime (9,30-31).”*
- v. *“God is the father of Jesus Christ and the father of His children (Romans 8,15-17). The trinity consists of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Mary was a mere human being and does not belong to the trinity (Matthew 28,19).”*

3. Sin⁶¹

The Bible says that sin entered the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sin brought death into the world (Romans 5:12, Genesis 2:16-17, 3:6) The Bible says that everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23), and that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23).

The Qur'an uses different words for sin, depending on their nature.⁶² *Dhanb* refers to great sins such as pride that prevents faith, and these sins are worthy of hell fire. (3:15-16) *Sayyi'a* are minor sins that can be forgiven if one avoids serious *dhanb* sin. (4:31) *Ithm* are intentional sins, such as falsely accusing one's wife. (4:20-24) *Shirk* is an *ithm* sin that means joining other gods with Allah. (4:116) The Qur'an teaches that if one sins, they should ask Allah for forgiveness and turn back to him. (11:3) The Qur'an teaches that Allah will overlook the sins of those who

⁶⁰ Khaklidi, Tarif, *The Muslim Jesus*, Harvard, 2003, pp. 13-18.

⁶¹ Van Voorst, Robert, *Analogy of World Scriptures*, Wadsworth, 2007, p. 52.

⁶² Abu-Hamdiyyah, Mohammad, *The Qur'an – an Introduction*, Routledge, London AND New York, 2000, pp. 10–19.

have faith in the teachings of Muhammad and do good deeds. (47:2) If they have wronged someone, they must make amends for Allah to forgive. (2:160).

4. Satan⁶³

In the Quran, Iblis (Satan) is in opposition to humankind rather than to Allah. Moreover, Iblis is considered subordinate to God, who has no rivals as He is “the Lord of the Creation” (McAuliffe 1:2). Another essential characteristic of Allah is that in Islam, God forgives all sins, which means that sin does not restrict mercy within the Islamic religion. On the other hand, the Bible suggests that Satan is the rival of God and not humanity. In some passages of scripture, Satan is described as having the ability to tempt Jesus and therefore challenge his power: “then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (*The Bible*, Matthew 4:1). In this example, Satan is capable of demonstrating that his power is comparable to God’s. While in Islam, God forgives all sins, in Christianity, sin significantly restricts God’s mercy. In these ways, drawing simple parallels between Satan in Christianity and Iblis in Islam shows that some differences cannot be ignored (Ahmad).

In the Muslim tradition, God next commanded all of the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam, to honor God’s new creation, and to display obedience to God. All of them did so except for Shaitan, a jinni (spirit) who refused to comply because he viewed Adam as inferior to him. Shaitan (the Muslim equivalent of Satan) subsequently swore to mislead mankind from the path of God, who responded by expelling him from the Garden (Qur’an 7:11-12). This story appears to be a development of a Christian legend present in the Life of Adam and Eve (around 100–300 CE), which recounts the Archangel Michael bringing Satan, then still an angel, to bow to Adam, with Satan refusing to bow. In Muhammad’s understanding, evinced several times in the Quran, angels are too lofty to rebel in this way, so he makes Satan a jinni,⁶⁴ a kind of spirit being from Arab folklore who can be either good or bad.

5. Adam, Eve, and the Fall⁶⁵

In the Hebrew Bible,⁶⁶ God forms Adam from the soil, blows the breath of life into him, and places him and a female companion, Eve, in a garden to “keep and guard it.” According to the creation narrative in the Qur’an, before God made Adam, He informed the angels of His divine plan to “create a vicegerent on earth.”

The angels, however, objected to creating humans because they believed that humans would become violent (Qur’an 2:30). This same detail about the angels occurs in the Jewish Talmud, a then-circulating piece of Jewish folklore.

It is described that Adam was created from a handful of soil that the Angels were instructed to take from the earth. This soil varied in colors of red, brown, black, and white; ranging in textures of soft, gritty, silky, and hard; and varying in attributes such as fertility. This indicates that the progeny of Adam was destined to be diverse.

⁶³ Abu-Hamdiyyah, Mohammad, *The Qur’an – an Introduction*, Routledge, London AND New York, 2000, pp. 21–22.

⁶⁴ Van Voorst, Robert, *Analogy of World Scriptures*, Wadsworth, 2007, p. 144.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 146.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 52.

The Quran also describes that Adam was created from clay (Quran 38:71) or dust (Quran 3:59). This range of descriptions brings to light the history and fundamental attachment that humankind has with the earth.⁶⁷

Genesis 1-27 – 3.25.

Qur'an 2.30-37

6. Cain and Abel⁶⁸

In the Bible, Cain murders his brother Abel after God favors Abel's sacrifice above his own. In the Quran, the details are almost identical, but then the Quran offers the following lesson: "We ordained for the children of Israel that if anyone slew a person...it would be as if he slew the whole of mankind: and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole of mankind" (Quran 5:32).

At the same time, in the Jewish Mishna (the religion's first major redaction of oral traditions), which predates the Quran by centuries, we find the following text in reference to the story of Cain and Abel:

"Man was created single in order to show that to him who kills a single individual it shall be reckoned that he has slain the whole race, but to him who preserves the life of a single individual it is counted that he has preserved the whole race"
(Mishnah Sanhedrin, 4:5).

7. Sodom and Gomorrah⁶⁹

In the Biblical story, Abraham is resting in the heat of the day when he sees three mysterious strangers, whom the Bible identifies as an appearance of God. Abraham feeds them/God and they/God converse with him and his wife, Sarah, promising the couple that they will have a child in their old age.

Afterward, Abraham goes for a walk with the three men, where God tells Abraham that He is about to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (the Bible elsewhere says [Ezekiel 16:49] that this was because of their pride, wealth, and mistreatment of the poor, not, as according to a later Christian tradition, because of their embrace of homosexuality). Abraham argues with God, bartering for the people of the cities, and God agrees that if Abraham finds even ten righteous among them, He will spare it. The cities don't pass the test and thus God destroys them.

In the Qur'an, Abraham receives the same message as above from angels, not identified as God Himself, as that would seemingly provide theological discomfort to have God be so intimate and familiar with humans. Thus, when Abraham attempts to argue with God, he is simply silenced, once again conveying a more transcendent notion of God at a greater distance from human beings.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Abu-Hamdiyyah, Mohammad, The Qur'an – an Introduction, Routledge, London AND New York, 2000, p. 22.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 22–23.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 23–25.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 33–34.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an are the sacred scripture of the two largest religious traditions of the world. Both are believed to be inspired by God. Believers of both religious traditions read those inspired words and seek guidance and advice from them. Both scriptures believe in a supreme deity, angels, prophets (25 in number), afterlife, God's Omniscience, Mary, and tolerance for others. Despite these similarities, both scriptures differ in their understanding and acceptance of composition of the scriptures (one author versus many authors), the divinity of Jesus, understanding of Sin, Satan, Adam, Eve, and the Fall, Cain and Abel, and Sodom and Gomorrah.

It is sufficient to say, though, that despite those differences, the Bible and the Qur'an inspire over 4.4 billion of the world's 8 billion followers. It is highly recommended that scholars from both faiths study the opposing religious tradition's holy scripture and with an open mind, try to understand the unifying message behind both scriptures: God/Allah created men to be stewards of the creation and to love his/her neighbor as himself/herself.

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