

3 The Bible and The Qur'an

Mohammed: Moslems believe that:

- Mohammed (or Muhammad) was a good man, a wealthy but illiterate merchant, aged 40 when he had his first revelation.
- he was told that he had been called to be a prophet and must warn the people around him that their lives were corrupt and full of sin.
- Mohammed's job would be to tell people this and record accurately Allah's messages so that the revelation would be available to all people.
- each time he received a message he was made to learn it by heart and recite it and then he made others do the same.
- the Qur'an is the word of Allah, exactly as Mohammed received it.

Mohammed is said to have kept kuttah (writers) with him so that whenever a revelation was made it would be written down. Mohammed never claimed to have written the Qur'an. Mohammed died in Medina in Saudi Arabia in 632 AD, and his grave is there.



The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Moslems believe that it was Ishmael whom Abraham was asked to sacrifice, probably on the rock inside. The Bible tells us that it was Isaac.



Like many Islamic buildings, the Taj Mahal in India is decorated with verses from the Qur'an

At first glance

The Qur'an (or Koran) is about the same length as the New Testament. It consists of 114 Surahs (chapters) and 6616 ayats (verses). It does not have the same kind of 'story-line' approach of parts of the Bible, nor does it have a real beginning, middle or end. It is more like a set of answers to questions that have been put. Apart from the first surah it is arranged in order from longest to shortest. The shorter surahs come from Mohammed's earlier days in Mecca, his birthplace, while the longer ones are from later, in Medina. As well as a number, each surah is given a name: 'The Cow', 'The family of Imran', 'Women', and so on.

The Bible and the Qur'an

The Qur'an describes the purpose of creation, Adam and Eve, the destiny of humanity, the relationship between Allah and the rest of creation, the duties and responsibilities we all share, the concept of good and evil and the Last Judgement. Four divine books are mentioned in the Qur'an: Tawrah (Torah) revealed to Musa (Moses), Zabur (Psalms) revealed to Dawud (David), Injil (Gospel) revealed to Isa (Jesus) and Qur'an revealed to Mohammed.

The Qur'an

Moslems (or Muslims) call their most holy book the Qur'an (or Qur'an), which means 'recitation'. They believe it to be a collection of many messages received by Mohammed from Allah (the one God) through the angel Jibril (Gabriel), over a twenty-three year period beginning in 610 AD. The first duty of all Moslems is the reading and study of the Qur'an.

Hadith

In addition to the Qur'an, Moslems use the Hadith (sayings). They contain guidance and advice given by Mohammed which helps to explain and interpret the Qur'an. Some of the Hadith are regarded as having almost the same weight as the Qur'an, and in general hadith are regarded as essential supplements to and clarifications of the Qur'an. The two main denominations of Islam, Shi'ism and Sunnism, have different sets of Hadith collections.

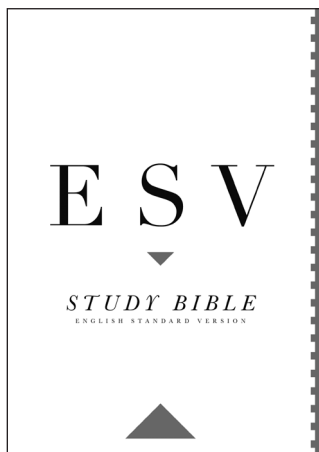
In practice

Moslems always show great reverence for the Qur'an because they view it as the revealed word of Allah to guide individuals in life. They read it, recite it and meditate upon it to determine what Allah wants them to do. Moslems believe that no day can be complete without reading or reciting from the Qur'an. It is specially treasured and recited during festivals like Ramadan when the whole Qur'an is read. Before reading, Moslems need to be in wudu, a state of ritual cleanliness. "When you prepare ... wash your faces and hands up to the elbows, rub your heads with water, and your feet up to the ankles" (Surah 5:7). Next the heart is prepared by becoming aware of Allah's presence and Moslems sit in a special position so that they are aware in their bodies that the Qur'an is not just an ordinary book. They sit cross-legged on the floor with the Qur'an on a rehl, a wooden stand, in front of them. When not in use, the Qur'an is kept wrapped in a cloth and placed on a high shelf so that nothing is above it. It is treated with the greatest respect and never placed upon the floor.



The Bible and the Qur'an

So which is the true word of God - or are they two books that say the same thing in different ways? Compare what they say. In what follows, the quotations from the Bible are from the English Standard Version; the quotations from the Qur'an are from the 'official' English version, translated by Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall.



How should we treat other people?

The Bible teaches that we should love our enemies; the Qur'an tells Moslems to fight against 'infidels'.

The Bible

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, **Love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Matthew 5:43-47

...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Colossians 3:13

The Qur'an

Then, when the sacred months have passed, **slay the idolaters** wherever ye find them, and take them captive and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush

Sura 9:5

Fight against such of those who have been given the scripture as believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, and forbid not that which Allah hath forbidden by His messenger, and follow not the religion of truth, until they pay the tribute readily, being brought low.

Sura 9:29

O Prophet! **Strive against the disbelievers** and the hypocrites! Be harsh with them. Their ultimate abode is hell, a hapless journey's end.

Sura 9:73

Is Jesus the Son of God?

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Son of God, but the Qur'an denies this.

The Bible

And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How will this be, since I am a virgin? And the angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the **Son of God**.

Luke 1:30-35

but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the **Son of God**, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 20:31

The Qur'an

Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, **Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah**, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him.

So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three" - Cease! (it is) better for you! - Allah is only One God.

Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender.

Sura 4:171

Was Jesus crucified?

The Bible teaches that Jesus died on the cross; the Qur'an teaches that he was not crucified.

The Bible

And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there **they crucified** him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.
Luke 23:33

There **they crucified him**, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

John 19:18

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, **you crucified** and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Acts 2:23

The Qur'an

And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger - **They slew him not nor crucified him**, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain, But Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah is ever Mighty, Wise. There is not one of the People of the Scripture but will believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them

Sura 4:157-159

Salvation

The Bible teaches that salvation is a gift that comes through association with the Lord Jesus; the Qur'an teaches that paradise is a reward for good works.

The Bible

I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

John 10:9

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:12

Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Acts 16:30-31

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

The Qur'an

As for those that have faith and do good works, We shall admit them to gardens watered by running streams, where, wedded to chaste virgins, they shall abide for ever. We shall admit them to a cool shade.
Sura 4:57

On that day no soul shall suffer the least injustice. You shall be rewarded according only to your deeds.
Sura 36:54

Proclaim good tidings to those who have faith and do good works. They shall dwell in gardens watered by 'This is what we used to eat before,' for they shall be given the like. Wedded to chaste virgins, they shall abide there for ever.
Sura 2:25

He that believes in Allah and does good works shall be admitted to gardens watered by running streams where he shall dwell for ever. Allah has made for him a generous provision.
Sura 65:10

Some Questions

What do the Bible and the Qur'an have in common?

What are the differences between them?

Some people think that all religions serve the same God, so there is no difference. What would you say to someone who thought that?

How would you justify believing the Bible rather than the Qur'an?

What can we learn from the way Moslems regard the Qur'an?