

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

WHAT IS THE INJEEL?

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WAS THE ORIGINAL INJEEL LOST?

There is no convincing proof from the Quran that the 'Injeel' given to Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) referred to a lost book which Prophet Muhammad's^(pbuh) Christian contemporaries had no recourse to.

In contrast, clear verses of the Quran present the reader with an evident reality. The Quran clearly confirms the existence of the Injeel that the contemporaries of the Prophet had with them at the time of his ministry. If they were instructed to judge by the Injeel with them, this would not have been a lost book but a scripture that was being read by them.

005.047

"Let the people of the **Injeel** judge by **what God has revealed in it**. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what God has revealed, they are those who rebel (**Arabic: Fasiquna**)."

Similarly with the Torah, the Quran clearly recognised the scripture that was co-existent at the time of the Prophet.

005.043

But why do they come to you for decision, when they have (their own) Torah before them? therein is the (plain) command of God; yet even after that, they would turn away. For they are not People of Faith.

032:023

"And certainly We gave Moses the Scripture, so do not be in doubt encountering it (**Arabic: liqaihi**) and We made it a guide for the Children of Israel"

The Arabic verb 'liqa' comes from the root word 'Lam-Qaf-Ya' which means to encounter, meet, see or to come across face to face. Many commentators unduly make use of the word 'receive' to translate 'liqa' when this is not the term's correct primary rendering.

003:093

"All food was lawful to the children of Israel except that which Israel had forbidden to himself, before the Torah was revealed. **Say: Bring then the Torah and read it, if you are truthful**"

Therefore, much like the Injeel, the Torah was a coexistent reality that Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) was faced with. He was instructed not to doubt it as it was a scripture that was given to Prophet Moses ^(pbuh) from God to guide the Children of Israel.

005.048

"To thee We revealed the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that is **between the hands / before his hands (Arabic: bayna yadyhi)** (coexistent Torah and Bible), **and guarding it by determining what is true and false (Arabic: wa-muhayminan): so judge between them by what God has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that has come to thee. To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute"**

002.041

"And believe in what I reveal, **confirming the revelation which is with you (Arabic: musaddiqa-lima ma'akum)**, and be not the first to be a disbeliever of it, nor sell My verses / signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone"

Finally, verse 5.66 clearly points out that some of the Christian contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) were on the right course. Hence it is difficult to accept the assertion that their teachings were lost. They must have been able to source some guidance from their scriptures or at least, whatever they were reading.

This point is further strengthened when we take note of verse 5:68. God clearly instructs them to stand by their own Injeel in truth and the revelations which have come to them, possibly alluding to the Old Testament canon (Jewish Tanakh) as well.

005.068

"Say: "O People of the Book! you have no ground to stand upon unless you **firmly stand by (Arabic: Tuqimu) the Torah, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord.**" It is the revelation that comes to you from thy Lord, that increases in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. But do not grieve over disbelieving people"

Please see related article [1] below.

WHAT IS THE INJEEL?

The Injeel is never referred to by the Quran as a 'kitab', a 'suhuf' (87:16) or 'kitabu Isa' (Book of Jesus), but plainly as 'Injeel'. Only the Book of Moses (Torah) is recognised as an immediate 'Book' before the Quran.

046:012

"And before this, was the Book of Moses (kitabu musa) as a guide and a mercy: And this Book confirms (it) in the Arabic tongue; to admonish the unjust, and as Glad Tidings to those who do right.

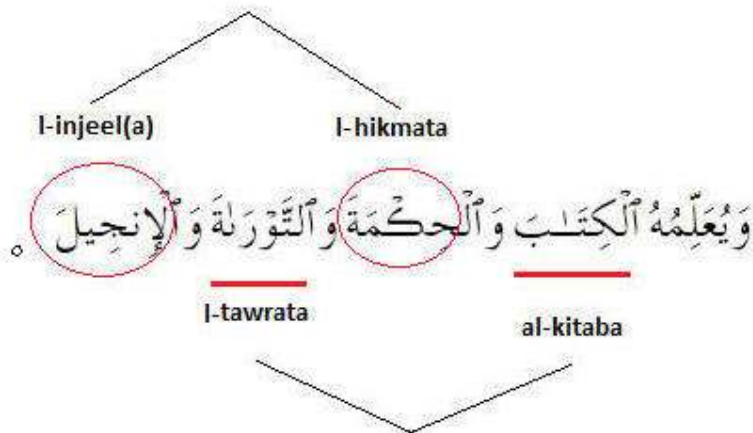
This is also confirmed in 25.35, 11:17 and in 46.30 where the Jinn also seem to have heard the Quran as a 'dialog in truth' but after the one given to Prophet Moses. ^(pbuh)

THE INJEEL WAS WISDOM GIVEN TO PROPHET JESUS ^(pbuh)

It is clear from the Quran that Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) was granted wisdom even as a child (19:29-30, 5:110). There is no proof from the Quran that he was bestowed with a separate book called the 'Injeel' at such a young age. In contrast, the Injeel seems to refer to the 'wisdom' that was granted to him.

003:048

"And God will teach him The Book (al-kitaba) and The Wisdom (I-hikmata), and The Torah (I-tawrata) and The Injeel (I-injeel)"



The significance of the above verse is evident. The 'al-Kitab' (definite noun) is strongly equated with the Torah and the Injeel with 'Wisdom'.

It is quite possible that Prophet Jesus's ^(pbuh) wisdom was later committed to writing by early Christian communities in the form of Gospel writings, albeit with differences. If this line of argumentation is accepted, the 'Injeel' would then be a reference to the **true wisdom** that Prophet

Jesus ^(pbuh) imparted which was contained in the various Biblical sources that were being read by the 7th century Christians in Arabia.

THE QURAN SOMETIMES REFERS TO NARRATIVES NOT FOUND IN THE CANON GOSPELS BUT THOSE PRESENT IN THE NON CANONICAL GOSPELS.

It is widely accepted in Biblical studies that certain Biblical scriptures were given more emphasis and remained more prevalent in certain locales than in others, especially in early Christendom.

"By the middle of the fourth century there was wide but not complete agreement on which books should be considered authoritative for Christian communities. Codex Sinaiticus, one of the two earliest collections of such books, is essential for an understanding of the content and the arrangement of the Bible, as well as the uses made of it" [1]

The Codex Sinaiticus (mid 4th century), the best earliest complete Christian Bibles known to date includes for example, two books which are not found in the Biblical canon as received today (The Epistle of Barnabas and part of The Shepherd of Hermas).

It also lacks many passages which are found in the New Testament today such as the long ending of the Gospel of Mark (16:9-20) and also other omitted verses, phrases and variants.

An example is discussed in the related article [2] below.

This is not unusual from a Quran's perspective which at times confirms statements not found in the canonical New Testament today. It is quite possible that there were also other non-canonical Gospels that were common knowledge and in circulation at the time of Prophet Muhammad's ^(pbuh) ministry in Arabia.

Whether these non-canonical Gospels were being read or rather, due to their earlier Christian suppression, the Quran was confirming by way of tacit legitimisation evident truths in those texts, remains largely an area of theological interpretation. However, we do note narratives in the Quran which are clearly common to them.

For example, in verse 5:110 of the Quran, a narrative is quoted which finds support in non-canonical Gospels such as the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. This Gospel dates to at least the 2nd and 3rd century CE.

005:110

"...and when you make out of clay the figure of a bird by My leave, then you breath into it and it becomes a bird by My leave..."

THE INFANCY GOSPEL OF THOMAS

Greek Text B

"III. 1 Now Jesus made of that clay twelve sparrows: and it was the Sabbath day. And a child ran and told Joseph, saying: Behold, thy child playeth about the brook, and hath made sparrows of the clay, which is not lawful. 2 And he when he heard it went and said to the child: Wherefore doest thou so and profaneth the Sabbath? But Jesus answered him not, but looked upon the sparrows and said: Go ye, take your flight, and remember me in your life. And at the word they took flight and went up into the air. And when Joseph saw it he was astonished." [2]

We also find mentioned in the same Quranic verse (5:110), that Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) spoke in his infancy. This is once again attested by other non-canonical Biblical sources.

005:110

"...you spoke (to) the people in the cradle and (in) maturity..."

THE ARABIC GOSPEL OF THE INFANCY OF THE SAVIOUR (ORIGINAL SYRIAC CIRCA 5th 6th CENTURY AD)

"We find what follows in the book of Joseph the high priest, who lived in the time of Christ. Some say that he is Caiaphas. He has said that Jesus spoke, and, indeed, when He was lying in His cradle said to Mary His mother: I am Jesus, the Son of God, the Logos, whom thou hast brought forth, as the Angel Gabriel announced to thee; and my Father has sent me for the salvation of the world." [3]

It seems difficult to accept any assertion that the Arabic Gospel of Thomas was written retrospectively i.e. after the Quranic revelation (by way of Muslim influence). These are relatively early sources and the concepts and terminology of the incident are very Christian orthodox. For example, one notes the mention of Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) being the Son of God and the mention of salvation which are concepts countered by the Quran.

THE QURAN CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF THE PREVIOUS SCRIPTURES AND PASSES OVER OTHER AREAS

005:015

"O People of the Book, surely there has come to you our Messenger, making clear to you much of what you used to conceal (**Arabic: tukh'funa**) of the scripture and overlooking / forgiving much (**Arabic: wa-ya'fu an kathiran**). Surely has come to you from God a light and a clear book"

The Arabic word 'tukh'funa' comes from the root **KHA-FA-YA** which carries the meaning of what is unapparent / has become imperceptible / has become dim to the sight / or suppressed, or obscured to the mind. It also carries the meaning of something which has become 'concealed'.

Therefore, the Quran within context of its Arabic usage clearly recognised that certain aspects of the previous scriptures had become gradually concealed and deemed it fit to expound on some of them. It was also not the intention of the Quran to deal with each and every narrative of the Bible hence the term '**wa-yafu an kathiran**' (forgive, pardon, pass over, relinquish or remit a whole or part or indeed pardon much).

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is no evidence from the Quran that the Injeel refers to a lost book. Rather, it refers to a coexisting reality of previous scriptures present at the time of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh).

In 7th century Arabia, the Injeel would have represented the Christian literature being read at the time of Prophet Muhammad's ^(pbuh) ministry. This would have most likely been a set of 'teachings' **based on the wisdom imparted by Prophet Jesus** ^(pbuh) and would have comprised of canonical as well as some non-canonical literature.

The Quran clearly recognised aspects of the truth that was present with the Jews and Christians at the time of Prophet Muhammad's ^(pbuh) ministry.

It confirmed areas of Biblical thought, expected a contingent of its audience to be familiar with its contents and clearly differed from certain theological interpretations that had resulted and had been '**read**' into the text.

In summary:

- Alterations of the Biblical text were acknowledged by the Quran (2:75,2:79) as well as deliberate obfuscation (5:15). However, this was not tantamount to the implication of wholesale corruption of the Bible.
- The Quran confirmed aspects of the previous scriptures and passed over other areas (5:15)
- The Quran remained a guard over the previous scriptures and to discern fundamental truths (5:48)

Therefore, it becomes pertinent to first ascertain what 'Injeel' was being read by Christian communities in Arabia, rather than to assert a lost book that Christian communities had no recourse to.

This may have included some Gospels which are no longer extant today or considered canonical. However, much of the core text of the New Testament Bible which predates Islam in Arabia has been transmitted today in much of its entirety. Indeed there are documented differences but this should be understood and not used as an excuse to completely dismiss the veracity of the New Testament.

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[2] The Apocryphal New Testament, M.R. James-Translation and Notes, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, Scanned and Edited by Joshua Williams, Northwest Nazarene College, 1995, Available [online] <http://www.gnosis.org/library/inftomb.htm> [Accessed] 30th January 2012

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Related Article:

- (1) ['Between his Hands' or 'Before It' \(Ma Bayna Yadayhi\)](#)
- (2) [The Bible Does Not Teach the Trinity](#)
- (3) [Parakletos or Periklytos?](#)
- (4) [Is the Name 'Ahmad' Found in the Bible?](#)

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