

# Christmas at the Kaaba

## Introduction

At the heart of Christmas is the birth of Christ. According to the Bible he was sent by God from heaven to save his people from their sins.<sup>1</sup> Astonishingly, a similar story is found in Mecca at the Kaaba, the holiest site in Islam. The Black Stone (Hajre Aswad) is located at its eastern corner. Authentic Islamic traditions report that it was sent by God from paradise. Whoever touches it would have their sins forgiven. This is an amazing illustration of the Christian Gospel message right in what for Muslims is the most sacred place on earth! It deserves closer scrutiny.

## Sahih Hadith confirming analogy of Christmas at the Kaaba

*Ibn Abbas reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "The black stone descended from Paradise and it was whiter than milk, but it became black due to the sins of the children of Adam."* (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 877, Grade: Sahih (authentic) according to Al-Tirmidhi)<sup>2</sup>

*Narrated Salim that his father said: I saw Allah's Apostle arriving at Mecca; he kissed the Black Stone Corner first while doing Tawaf and did ramal in the first three rounds of the seven rounds (of Tawaf).* (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 26, Number 673)

*Narrated Zaid bin Aslam that his father said: "I saw 'Umar bin Al-Khattab kissing the Black Stone and he then said, (to it) 'Had I not seen Allah's Apostle kissing you, (stone) I would not have kissed you.'" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 26, Number 679)*

*It was narrated that Ibn 'Umar said: I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say: "Touching them both [the Black Stone and al-Rukn al-Yamani] is an expiation for sins."* (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 959. This hadeeth was classed as hasan by al-Tirmidhi and as saheeh by al-Haakim (1/664). Al-Dhahabi agreed with him).<sup>3</sup>

*It was narrated that Ibn 'Abbaas said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said concerning the Stone: "By Allaah, Allaah will bring it forth on the Day of Resurrection, and it will have two eyes with which it will see and a tongue with which it will speak, and it will testify in favour of those who touched it in sincerity."* (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 961; Ibn Maajah, 2944. This hadeeth was classed as hasan by al-Tirmidhi, and as qawiy by al-Haafiz ibn Hajar in Fath al-Baari, 3/462)

*Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Whoever performs Hajj for Allah's pleasure and does not have sexual relations with his wife, and does not do evil or sins then he will return (after Hajj free from all sins) as if he were born anew."* (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Number 596)

## Yes, ... but ...

Muslims agree that everyone who performs the Hajj kisses the black stone, or blows a kiss from afar if he is unable to touch it. In doing so they follow the example of Muhammad, their prophet. Those hadiths that say "Hajre Aswad" came from paradise, being as white as milk, but turning black due to the sins of those who touched it are rated authentic. All Muslims perform the Hajj according to those rules. They believe, that based on this act, they will have their sins forgiven and be like born again.

There are similarities in those Muslim beliefs regarding the Kaaba to what the Christians believe, starting with the birth of Jesus, celebrated on Christmas: Jesus was sent from heaven. He was sinless (whiter than milk) and took the sins of the people upon himself. He became "black" in the sense described in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

*"God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

That means God put our wrong on Jesus who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God by having our shame removed and our sins forgiven. Jesus, being without sin, was treated as if He were not. While He remained holy, He was seen as guilty of all the sin in the world. Through this exchange of our sin to Him, Jesus became our substitute and received death, God's judgment against sin. Those who reach out to him in faith (kiss and touch) are forgiven, receive the Holy Spirit of God and are thereby born again to new, eternal life. They are empowered to live here, now and forever a life that pleases God by doing what he says, out of thankfulness. Everything that they

have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

But Muslims do not believe in the Christian teachings because the Qur’an says Jesus did not die. This is indeed a dilemma. The Qur’an rejects most of the core teachings of the Bible. Yet, at the same time it confirms at the time of Muhammad that the Christian Scriptures were given and protected by God:

*“... We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our Allah and your Allah is One, and unto Him we surrender.”* (Surah 29:46)<sup>5</sup>

*“... There is none who can change His (God’s) words.* (Surah 18:27)

The promise of preservation of God’s word also applies to the Torah and the Injeel. They were present and not changed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. We know that because Jews and Christians were asked to observe them, and Mohammad was asked to consult them, if he or his followers were in doubt. That would certainly not be possible if only part of the Scriptures remained unchanged:

*“Say O People of the Scripture! Ye have naught (of guidance) till ye observe the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed unto you from your Lord ...”* (Surah 5:68)

*“Let the People of the Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are evil-livers.”* (Surah 5:47; see also Surah 7:157)

*“And if thou (Muhammad) art in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture (that was) before thee.”* (Surah 10:94)

The last verse commands Muhammad and his followers to ask the Christians in case they have doubt about the message of the Qur’an. In other words, the Bible judges the Qur’an not the other way around. Christians explain that while the true meaning of the Torah was sometimes distorted, either orally<sup>6</sup> or in writing<sup>7</sup> by some Jews, the text itself was preserved in the light of the wider context mentioned above. The only charge brought against the Christians is that they forgot parts of their Scriptures.<sup>8</sup> That means, what they had in their possession was unchanged. Surah 3:55 mentions that those who follow Jesus are superior until the day of resurrection. That would not be the case if they had corrupted Scriptures.

Historical research has shown that a Syriac (Aramaic) translation of the Bible, known as Peshitta (= “simple” or “common” or “straight”) was used in the 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia Mohammad lived in.<sup>9</sup> When compared with today’s Bibles, it is essentially comprising the same message. It can be summarized like here in 1 Corinthians 15:1-7:

*“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”*

### **More problems with the Qur’an**

The Qur’an does not confirm the story of the black stone, yet Muslims still hold it to be true. Moreover, the Qur’an agrees that the Bible is the unchanged word of God. On the other hand, however, it contradicts the main message of the previous Scriptures. Muslims find themselves in another unsolvable predicament: If the Bible is God’s unchanged word then Islam is false because it contradicts the Biblical teaching. If the Bible is changed then Islam is still false because it confirms our Scripture to be from God.

### **Narrative of preservation of Qur’an has holes**

2020, the year of Covid-19 despair will also be remembered for sensationally deconstructing the commonly held narrative of the preservation of the Qur’an. Dr Yasir Qadhi, one of the world’s leading Islamic scholars, stated in a candid interview regarding this contentious subject, in June:

*“The standard narrative has holes in it. That’s what I am gonna say. The standard narrative does not answer some very pressing questions.... This is no longer hidden news. This issue of Ahruf (“editions”, “styles”, “ways”, “forms” and “modes ” of the Qur’an)<sup>10</sup> and Qira’at (recitations or readings of it)<sup>11</sup> has troubled the Ulema (religious scholars) from the very beginning of time. It’s nothing new. And there are 15 opinions about this. None of them answer fully the questions that are raised. Some of them answer more than others. ...I have never brought up this issue myself...It should never be brought up in public...I don’t like these idiots and they are idiots (walhai, Arabic: I swear to God) because they are the ones that caused it. In this issue they are utter idiots who did something haram. I don’t like saying this. This is not something you discuss among the masses...it is not wise. If you don’t understand Qira’at, let it be. That’s why I never did it. And that’s why even when they accused me, I didn’t defend myself because I would rather people have doubt about me than the Qur’an...”<sup>12</sup>*

In another video Dr Yasir Qadhi summed up the issue, *“The moment you start to historicize (treat as historical, to present events in a historic context) the Qur’an, in my opinion, you have nothing left.”<sup>13</sup>*

### **Current Qur’an contains thousands of scribal errors**

Two Articles published by Muslims in January and July 2020 in the Saudi press call to revise thousands of scribal errors in the current Qur’an and to re-examine Islamic texts in the light of new insights.<sup>14</sup> How much the times have moved from when it was claimed by Muslims that the Qur’an was perfectly preserved with not one word having changed.<sup>15</sup> Christians do not make such extreme statements about the Bible. They maintain the fact that it has a history of development, like all books.

The well-known textual scholars Westcott and Hort came to the conclusion that *“only one-sixtieth of all variant readings in the New Testament would rise above ‘trivialities’. This leaves a text 98.33 percent pure.”<sup>16</sup>* The famous historian Philip Schaff said that none of these variant readings that are clearly marked in the footnotes affected, *“an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching.”<sup>17</sup>*

### **Earliest Arabic Qur’an manuscripts have thousands of corrections**

Dr Dan Brubaker has found thousands of corrections in very old Arabic Qur’an manuscripts.<sup>18</sup> Many of these were arguably made to conform to the Hafs reading of the Arabic Qur’an, that became “canonized” in today’s standard Qur’an text published by the Azhar University of Cairo in 1924.

Those corrections concern consonantal variants and NOT different Qira’at, or Ahruf variants. Consonantal variants have to do with the bare Arabic words themselves, better known as the *rasm*, or the actual lettered Arabic script which make up the Arabic words. The Arabic skeletal script are letters without diacritical marks (dots above and below the letters added decades later).<sup>19</sup>

### **Qur’an dilemma causes doubts in many Muslims**

We are truly living in unprecedented times! The Internet has enabled high quality scholars from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds to make known their research to the masses. Gone are the days when Muslims had to muster their courage and ask questions about Islam to the Imam of their local mosque. Many of those are out of touch with the young people in their community, having been educated in Islam and brought up in the country of their parents.

As young Muslims increasingly turn to high profile scholars found on YouTube and the Internet, their eyes are more and more opened to all the inconsistencies found in Islam. Being in a position to check Muslims sources themselves, many have started to doubt their religion, asking themselves: “What else have I not been told by my leaders?”

As a result, Muslims leave Islam in droves<sup>20</sup>. Inside their hearts they are done with it. While a growing number of them publicly announce their decision to follow Jesus according to the Bible<sup>21</sup>, many of them are still held back by fear of what will happen to them within their own families and communities. What is to be done to overcome that life crippling anxiety?

One lesson can be learnt from public lobbying methods, without condoning what others promote as their convictions. Here is one example: Often it is very difficult for families, neighbors and friends to accept it when somebody is “coming out” and now publicly identifies as a homosexual person. They

are confronted from different people with suspicion, rejection, contempt, even hatred. It took many years for homosexuality to become “generally accepted” in numerous secular Western societies. Nevertheless, it is still difficult on a personal level, within families for many of them. The annual “pride marches” where homosexual persons publicly identify themselves as such, certainly contributed to this change of opinion among unbelievers.

Even though sexual orientation and choosing a faith are vastly different issues and cannot be equated for many reasons, maybe it would help ex-Muslims to have similar, annual “coming out” marches. This would raise awareness of their plight and rejection, hatred and persecution that they are suffering. People’s perception can change by being confronted visually and regularly with the plight of converts in the open. Their stand is then recognized as valid and necessary to support. This could perhaps help to one day protect ex-Muslims in the face of threats and persecution from their families or radical elements in the Muslim community.

Others who doubt Islam are driven into the arms of agnosticism and atheism. What if there was an alternative way out of the Qur’an dilemma for them? Would they take it?

### **A way out of doubt**

The Qur’an essentially denies the major Christian teachings necessary to build the bridge between the hadith about the black stone and the similarities of the Gospel. Since the preservation of the Qur’an and the reliability of its message are increasingly proven to be non-existent, what about the concept of “redemptive analogies”<sup>22</sup> as a way out of this impasse?

A redemptive analogy can be defined as a story or symbol<sup>23</sup> found in a certain culture or worldview which may be used as an illustration of the Gospel or an explanation of some of its parts. Such commonalities can be used to build bridges between communities rather than putting up walls.

The black stone story of God providing a way to get rid of shame and sins by faith in his gift alone is found in pre-Islamic times already.<sup>24</sup> It was then accepted by Muslims, confirmed in the hadith and acted upon in their pilgrimage to Mecca. For those who have begun to doubt the Qur’an the black stone could be a profound way out of Islam into the truth of the Gospel. The centre of the Christian message is also confirmed by the desire of all human beings for company in their suffering. When the pain increases everyone longs to have loved ones present with them. Unlike all other religions where God is remote and absent, that is exactly what He offers through Jesus Christ!

He promises to be with all those who accept him into their hearts by faith. Through the presence of God’s Holy Spirit, they are then also empowered to conquer temptations. These enticements to all kinds of sinful behaviours that lead to shame quickly offer themselves to relieve the pain caused by life. God’s presence and enabling stand in stark contrast to what all religions have to offer against an immoral and greedy lifestyle: “don’t do it!” That is similarly unsuccessful like constantly putting a biscuit in front of a child and saying, “you mustn’t eat it.”

Shameful passions can only be fought against by replacing them with a greater passion: a love for God who saves us from our sins through Jesus and invites us to reach out for his offer by faith. There is no other way for God to remain true to His attributes of perfect love, justice and holiness. Only through Jesus at the cross could they have all been met so that His and our honour can truly be restored. Only then we are free to do good deeds that are pleasing to God, in His strength, out of thankfulness for what He has already done for us. Followers of Jesus alone have assurance of eternal life with God because it depends on Him alone. If in doubt try Him out!

Do please address your questions and comments to the author here:

[Oskar1@live.co.uk](mailto:Oskar1@live.co.uk)

Merry Christmas!

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 1:21

<sup>2</sup> <https://abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2014/03/14/al-hajar-al-aswad-sins-bani-adam/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://islamqa.info/en/answers/1902/the-black-stone>

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30

<sup>5</sup> All Quran passages are taken from the Pickthall translation found here: <https://quran.com/29>

<sup>6</sup> Surah 3:78, 5:13,41

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<sup>7</sup> Surah 2:79. This verse does not talk about the established Christian and Jewish scriptures. They address those who write false books, while neglecting the true scripture. In Surah 4:46 some Jews are accused of changing, writing down wrongly, what Muhammad said.

<sup>8</sup> Surah 5:14

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S2305-08532017000200010](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2305-08532017000200010)

<sup>10</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahruf#Etymology>

<sup>11</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qira%27at>

<sup>12</sup> The about 25 minutes of Dr Qadhi's interview under discussion were later deleted because it upset many Muslims and was seized upon by Christians. However, the interview was downloaded prior to that and a detailed analysis of the main points can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vstGbZkjUcw&t=754s>

In this video, Ahmed Deedat, Zakir Naik, Shabir Ally, Mohammed Hijab, Ali Dawah, Mufti Abu Layth, Yasir Qadhi, Adnan Rashid, Shehzad Saleem, Hamza Yusuf, Adnan Abdul Qadir, Haitham al-Haddad, Abdulrahman Hassan, Muhammad Salah, and Aslam Abdullah add to the discussion: all! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANo6dXc2i-0&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmOjJNN72qY&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmOjJNN72qY&feature=emb_logo) (at 1:42 mins) Dr Yasir Qadhi frankly admits further, *"the Shubu-hat" (doubtful matters) that I was exposed to at Yale, some of that I still do not have answers to"* (at 0.01 mins) and, *"at the end of the day, not every "Ul-um" (sciences) is beneficial. Sometimes, yes ignorance is bliss"* (at 2:45 mins).

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.memri.org/reports/articles-saudi-press-call-amend-thousands-scribal-errors-quran-reexamine-islamic-texts-light>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5opKCSgvQ0&t=129s>

<sup>16</sup> 'General Introduction to the Bible' by N.L. Geisler and W.E. Nix, Moody Press, Chicago, 1986, page 365

<sup>17</sup> 'Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version' by Philip Schaff, Harper, New York, 1883, page 177

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEBfRGa6Er4&t=11s>

<sup>19</sup> To learn more about the latest developments in the work of Dr Dan Brubaker click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP-g6LEOwXpMwu5PhMC1xhw> and <https://www.danielbrubaker.com/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBLuAUI2Taw&feature=youtu.be>

<http://www.unashamedofthegospel.org/the-accelerating-exodus-from-islam.cfm>

<http://www.answeringmuslims.com/2016/09/leaving-islam-volume-one.html>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAMd21K2Nrl2pC2ILFR3ERSTsrV3DH3J>

<sup>22</sup> It has been popularised by Don Richardson: <https://www.peacechildlegacy.com/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://munsonmissions.org/2011/08/15/fallacies-and-questions-surrounding-redemptive-analogy/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arabian-religion/Sanctuaries-cultic-objects-and-religious-practices-and-institutions>