

One Gospel: What Gospel did Jesus preach?

Christians believe that, in the light of all the available evidence, the Gospel accounts, in what we know as the New Testament, are the most reliable historical records of what Jesus taught and did as witnessed by his first disciples. However, while some Muslims agree that what Jesus taught was the Gospel, they deny that it was the same Gospel as we have today.

Ahmad Deedat, a prominent Muslim protagonist, asks, “The Gospel is a frequently used word, but what Gospel did Jesus preach?” (*Is the Bible God’s Word?*, p.8). The Christian answer is that the Gospel is the good news of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached (Matthew 24:14), telling people that the Kingdom was near (Matthew 9:35) and that the only way to enter this spiritual Kingdom was through himself (John 14:4).

Some Muslims argue that the existence of the four gospels in the New Testament section of the Bible is evidence of corruption and unreliability. Christians respond that the Gospel of Jesus is indeed one. It is presented in four ways under the guidance of God’s Spirit so that the message remains the same.

The Qur’an itself has at least two narratives of Jesus’ birth and several narratives of some stories of Abraham, Adam, and Noah within its one collection. Yet Muslims still accept that it is reliable scripture. Accordingly, finding four narratives of what Jesus said and did should not be a problem.

Authenticity of the Gospel message

Questioning the authenticity of the Gospel, some Muslim friends raise the point illustrated in Ahmad Deedat’s statement: “In his lifetime, Jesus never wrote a single word, nor did he instruct anyone to do so.” (ibid., p.8.) However, we know that Jesus could and did write (John 8:6-8). It is true to say that Jesus did not write down the Gospel himself, but if such a charge is sufficient to discredit the validity of the Christian scriptures, this can also be leveled against Muhammad and the

Qur’an. Muhammad did not write nor instruct Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman to collect and compile one official Qur’an. For example, Bukhari states that when Umar and Abu Bakr asked Zaid Bin Thabit to collect and compile the first Qur’an, he said, “How would you do something which Allah’s Apostle did not do?” Abu Bakr replied, “By Allah, it is a good project” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 6, p. 477).

It is noteworthy that, before Jesus’ crucifixion, he told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would remind them of all the things he had said and done (John 14:26 - 16:13) and, before his resurrection, he instructed them to spread the message to all nations (Matthew 28:19,20). Just as the Qur’an was collected into a fixed form after Muhammad’s death, the Gospel narratives were put together after Jesus’ ascension. Muslim friends often

tell Christians that Muhammad's companions (*ashab*) remembered what he told them or narrated so that the Qur'an could be put together after him in one volume. Then, it is also possible that the disciples of Jesus remembered what Jesus said, thus explaining why the Gospel is available to us today in its four complementary forms.

"The Qur'an testifies that the disciples of Jesus were inspired. No such promise was given to the disciples of Muhammad who put the Qur'an together."

Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come down and lead them. Furthermore, as mentioned before, the Qur'an testifies that the disciples of Jesus were inspired. No such promise was given to the disciples of Muhammad, who put the Qur'an together. The Holy Spirit is the

reason why the messages of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John came to be and are still available to us today.

Strictly, these gospels are not called those "of" Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; in Greek, the title is "the Gospel according to ". It is only for brevity that the shorter title is employed. So Christians claim that **there is indeed 'One Gospel' just as there is one Christ**, who claimed that his teaching was from God (John 7:16; 8:28; 12:49,50). Christians proclaim that the Gospel encompasses the teachings of Jesus and recounts his actions. The proclamation that led to the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles was the good news that he came specifically to give his life for many; he died on the cross to bring about the forgiveness of sins. He rose to demonstrate his victory over death, and he lives to grant eternal life to whoever believes in him. (Steven Masood)

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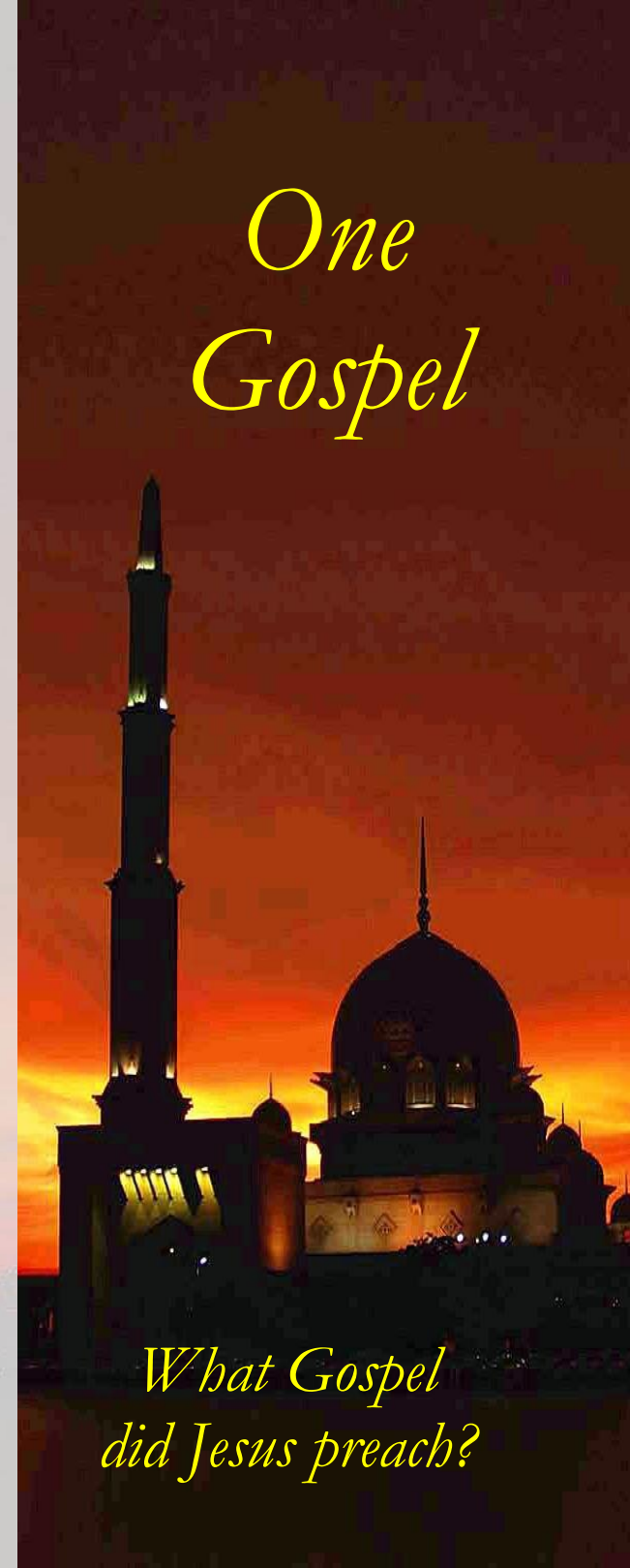
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