

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Has the Quran been perfectly preserved?

Has the Quran been perfectly preserved? - posted by Renoncer, on: 2015/3/4 13:59

Has the Qur    an been perfectly preserved?

Surah 15:9 of the Qur    an proclaims:

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).

Muslim scholars interpret this ayah (verse) as a divine promise that the text of the Qur    an would be preserved perfectly, down to the smallest detail. The Qur    an therefore offers us a way to test its divine origin, based on whether Allah    s promise in Surah 15:9 was fulfilled. In this pamphlet, we will review the history of the Qur    an according to Muslim sources, allowing us to see if this book has Allah    s stamp of approval.

I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE QUR    AN

The first Qur    anic revelation came to Muhammad around the year 610. Muhammad delivered many more verses to his scribes and companions for memorization and recording over the next two decades. These verses were written on stalks of palm leaves, bones of dead animals, flat stones, and other materials. There was no complete manuscript of the Qur    an during this time.

Qur    anic revelation ceased when Muhammad died. Shortly after Muhammad    s death, Caliph Abu Bakr needed to suppress a rebellion, and he sent many huffaz (people who had memorized portions of the Qur    an) to fight at the Battle of Yamama. Many of these huffaz died, and Muslim sources tell us that portions of the Qur    an were lost: Ibn Abi Dawud, Kitab al-Masahif    Many (of the passages) of the Qur    an that were sent down were known by those who died on the day of Yamama . . . but they were not known (by those who) survived them, nor were they written down, nor had Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman (by that time) collected the Qur    an, nor were they found with even one (person) after them.

Abu Bakr decided that it was time to gather what remained of the Qur    an in order to prevent more from being lost, and he appointed Zaid ibn Thabit to this task. After Zaid completed his codex around 634 AD, it remained in Abu Bakr    s possession until his death, when it was passed on to Caliph Umar. When Umar died, it was given to Hafsa, a widow of Muhammad. (For a fuller account see Sahih al-Bukhari 4986.)

During Caliph Uthman    s reign, approximately 19 years after the death of Muhammad, disputes arose concerning the correct recitation of the Qur    an. Uthman ordered that Hafsa    s copy of the Qur    an, along with all known textual materials, should be gathered together so that an official version might be compiled. Zaid ibn Thabit, Abdullah bin Az-Zubair, Sa      id bin Al-As, and Abdur-Rahman bin Harith worked diligently to construct a revised text of the Qur    an. When it was finished,     Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur    anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt     (Sahih al-Bukhari 4987). The Qur    an we have today is descended from the Uthmanic codex.

II. DISPUTES AMONG MUHAMMAD    S SCHOLARS

Not all Muslims approved of the new Qur    an. Indeed, some of Muhammad    s top teachers rejected Zaid    s version.

Muhammad once told his followers to     Learn the recitation of the Qur    an from four: from Abdullah bin Masud    he started with him    Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hudhaifa, Mu      adh bin Jabal and Ubai bin Ka           (Sahih al-Bukhari 3808). Interestingly, Ibn Masud (first on Muhammad    s list) held that the Qur    an should only have 111 chapters (today    s version has 114 chapters), and that chapters 1, 113, and 114 shouldnt    t have been included in the Qur    an.

Because of this (along with hundreds of other textual differences), Ibn Masud went so far as to call the final edition of the Qur    an a deception! He said,     The people have been guilty of deceit in the reading of the Qur    an. I like it better to read according to the recitation of him whom I love more than that of Zayd Ibn Thabit     (Ibn Sa      d, Kitab al

-Tabaqat al-Kabir, Vol. 2, p. 444).

Should Muslims submit to this ~~deceit~~? Not surprisingly, Ibn Masud advised Muslims to reject Zaid's Qur'an and to keep their own versions ~~even to hide them so that they wouldn't be confiscated by the government!~~ He said:

Jami at-Tirmidhi 3104 ~~O you Muslim people! Avoid copying the Mushaf and recitation of this man. By Allah! When I accepted Islam he was but in the loins of a disbelieving man~~ ~~meaning Zaid bin Thabit~~ and it was regarding this that Abdullah bin Mas'ud said: ~~O people of Al-Iraq! Keep the Musahif that are with you, and conceal them.~~

But Ibn Masud wasn't the only one of Muhammad's trusted teachers who disagreed with Zaid's Qur'an. Ubayy ibn Ka'b was Muhammad's best reciter and one of the only Muslims to collect the materials of the Qur'an during Muhammad's lifetime. Yet Ibn Ka'b believed that Zaid's Qur'an was missing two chapters! Later Muslims were therefore forced to reject some of Ibn Ka'b's recitation:

Sahih al-Bukhari 5005 Umar said, ~~Ubayy was the best of us in the recitation (of the Qur'an), yet we leave some of what he recites.~~ Ubayy says, ~~I have taken it from the mouth of Allah's Messenger and will not leave it for anything whatever.~~

Due to these disputes among Muhammad's hand-picked reciters, Muslims are faced with a dilemma. If Muslims say that the Qur'an we have today has been perfectly preserved, they must say that Muhammad was horrible at choosing scholars, since he selected men who disagreed with today's text. If, on the other hand, Muslims say that their prophet would know whom to pick regarding Islam's holiest book, they must conclude that the Qur'an we have today is flawed!

III. MISSING CHAPTERS

Simply knowing the facts about such disputes is enough to dismiss the claim that the Qur'an has been perfectly preserved. Nevertheless, we may go further by briefly considering certain other problems.

When Ibn Umar's son of the second Muslim caliph heard people declaring that they knew the entire Qur'an, he said to them: ~~Let none of you say, 'I have learned the whole of the Koran,' for how does he know what the whole of it is, when much of it has disappeared? Let him rather say, 'I have learned what is extant thereof'~~ (Abu Ubaid, Kitab Fada'il-al-Qur'an).

One of Muhammad's companions, Abu Musa, supported this claim when he said that the early Muslims forgot two surahs (chapters) due to laziness:

Sahih Muslim 2286 Abu Musa al-Ash'ari sent for the reciters of Basra. They came to him and they were three hundred in number. They recited the Qur'an and he said: You are the best among the inhabitants of Basra, for you are the best reciters among them. So continue to recite it. (But bear in mind) that your reciting for a long time may not harden your hearts as were hardened the hearts of those before you. We used to recite a surah which resembled in length and severity to (Surah) Bara'at. I have, however, forgotten it with the exception of this which I remember out of it: ~~If there were two valleys full of riches, for the son of Adam, he would long for a third valley, and nothing would fill the stomach of the son of Adam but dust.~~ And we used to recite a surah which resembled one of the surahs of Musabbihat, and I have forgotten it . . .

This shows that entire chapters of the Qur'an were forgotten.

IV. MISSING PASSAGES

We know further that large sections of certain chapters came up missing. For instance, Muhammad's wife Aisha said that roughly two-thirds of Surah 33 was lost:

Abu Ubaid, Kitab Fada'il-al-Qur'an ~~Aisha~~ . . . said, ~~Surat al-Ahzab (xxxiii) used to be recited in the time of the Prophet with two hundred verses, but when Uthman wrote out the codices he was unable to procure more of it than there is in it today.~~

According to Aisha, the collectors simply couldn't find all of Surah 33. Why not? As we've seen, many Huffaz were killed at the Battle of Yamama. Apparently, no one who knew the entire chapter survived.

V. MISSING VERSES

Aisha also tells us that individual verses of the Qur    n disappeared, sometimes in very interesting ways:

Sunan ibn Majah 1944    It was narrated that Aishah said:     The Verse of stoning and of breastfeeding an adult ten times was revealed, and the paper was with me under my pillow. When the Messenger of Allah died, we were preoccupied with his death, and a tame sheep came in and ate it.    

The verses on stoning and breastfeeding an adult ten times are not in the Qur    n today. Why? Aisha    s sheep ate them.

VI. MISSING PHRASES

Since entire chapters, large portions of chapters, and individual verses of the Qur    n were lost, it should come as no surprise that short phrases were forgotten as well. Let    s consider two examples.

First, Surah 33:6 declares that     The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers.     Ubayy ibn Ka    b and other early Muslims held that a phrase (    and he is a father of them    ) is missing from this verse. Even the great translator Yusuf Ali admits this in his commentary. Ali writes:     In some Qira    h    s, like that of Ubayy ibn Ka    b, occur also the words     and he is a father of them,     which imply his spiritual relationship and connection with the words     and his wives are their mothers         (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur    n, Note 3674). It seems that Muslims have been left with an incomplete verse.

Second, if we open a modern edition of the Qur    n, we find that Surah 2:238 commands Muslims to     Guard strictly your (habit) of prayers, especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind).     According to Aisha, Muhammad recited this verse as follows:     Guard strictly (the five obligatory) prayers, and the middle Salat, and Salat Al-Asr. And stand before Allah with obedience     (Jami at-Tirmidhi 2982). Hence, the phrase     and Salat Al-Asr     is missing from modern editions.

VII. ASSESSMENT

Obviously, the Qur    n has changed significantly over the years. The evidence shows that entire chapters were lost, that large sections of chapters came up missing, that individual verses were forgotten, and that phrases have been left out. Muhammad    s best teachers and reciters couldn    t even agree on which chapters were supposed to be in the Qur    n.

This raises an obvious question. What    s the difference between a book that    s been perfectly preserved, and one that hasn    t been perfectly preserved? If Muslims are right, there    s no difference at all. The typical characteristics of a book that hasn    t been perfectly preserved are (1) missing phrases, (2) missing passages, (3) missing chapters, (4) disagreements about what goes back to the original, etc. But the Qur    n has all of these characteristics. Thus, Muslims who are aware of the evidence but who also want to maintain the perfect preservation of the Qur    n must say something like this:     Yes, the Qur    n has all the characteristics of a book that hasn    t been perfectly preserved, but it    s been perfectly preserved anyway.     Can anyone make sense of such a claim?

We must also take note of the obvious. Anyone who has read the Muslim sources (e.g. Hadith, Tafsir, etc.) knows that the Qur    n has not been perfectly preserved. Muslim scholars are well aware of the fact that the Qur    n has been changed, and yet they tell less-educated Muslims that the Qur    n has always been exactly the same. Why are Muslim scholars and leaders deceptive about the history of their book?

For an honest look into these issues, please look up these resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhTSwTH0gUU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIGZdiSnuxU>

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=52414204249>

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=5241420123010>

Re: Has the Quran been perfectly preserved? - posted by Heydave (), on: 2015/3/4 15:25

Who cares!

Even if it has or has not, it is a false demonic book.

Re: Heydave - posted by Renoncer, on: 2015/3/5 8:47

Dear Heydave,

If you love your fellow Muslim neighbors, you will want to speak the truth in love. The text that I have copied is a step in that direction. You can share that with Muslims to make them rethink whether they should really believe the Qur'an.

Thankfully, the Lord has given us plenty of resources that we can use to be fruitful for His glory, if we are willing to invest the time and effort to be His instruments.

If you're interested, you can look up Dr. James White, who has done wonderful work in those areas, defending the Christian Faith before Muslims. May the Lord use such people to bring the light of the knowledge of God to those who are in darkness.

But, just remember: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

(1Co 13:1-6)

"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? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

(Mat 5:44-48)

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2015/3/5 9:13

Renoncer, yes sorry, I suppose it came across a bit harsh.

What I mean is, does it really matter if it is or isn't. It's like their saying if we can prove that the Qua'ran they have is not a reliable translation then that undermines their religion. The flip side would mean by implication that if it is reliable then it is a book they can trust, That is not the case! I just think it is a faulty line of reasoning to go down. In fact they have been taught exactly the same about the bible. They say it has been corrupted from the originals. I think it is fruitless discussion.

I have a do speak to Muslim's on occasions. I just came back from my haircutters and he is a nominal Muslim and I have witnessed to him on different occasions. He uses the superiority of the Qua'ran and Islam to try and rebuff me, but when I get into sharing the gospel, he reveals he doesn't really believe in 'God' anyway. I think we just share the gospel as we are led.

No need to judge me with scriptures about loving your enemy, though I can understand you could have taken it that way by my first reply. I would not say that to a Muslim's face, but I'm stating the truth about Qu'ran to Christians.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/3/5 11:09

Dave-

I agree with you. Apologetics has its place, but this is sort of "reverse" apologetics, i.e. If we can prove your Quran is faulty, then your faith is without basis. I could see that discussion leading nowhere.

I think we are instructed to preach the gospel and rely on its power and the power of the HS to open hearts. I think we have to be prepared to defend our faith, but I am not sure if this also means tearing down someone else's. Paul didn't ridicule the Greek philosophers; indeed he called them religious men. He just told them what God required and let the chips fall where they may, and in that case the response was not very favorable.