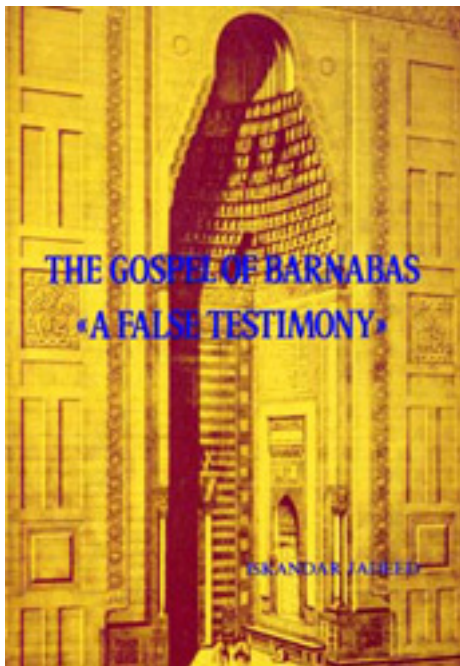


# THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS

## A FALSE TESTIMONY

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## 1. THE QUESTION: Why don't Christians recognize the Gospel of Barnabas?

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It has been established that the book known as the Gospel of Barnabas has no relationship whatsoever to Christianity. It is a counterfeit testimony about the holy gospel and an attempt to misrepresent the Christian religion. In this respect it is equated with that version of the Qur'an written by Museilma, the Liar, or that composed by al-Fadhil Ibn Rabi'. The book attributed to Barnabas was translated into Arabic by Dr. Khalil Sa'adah, from an English copy in the year 1907 at the request of Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Ridha, the founder of Al-Manar magazine. It was rejected completely by Christians because it was a forgery.

Those who accepted it were a sect of Muslims. They did so for the very simple

reason that portions of it support the statement that Christ was not crucified, but His likeness fell upon Judas Iscariot who was crucified in His place.

### 1.1. The Views of Scholars

Scholars who have carefully studied the matter are unanimously agreed that this book, which has been falsely attributed to Barnabas, did not exist before the 15th century. This is almost 1500 years after the death of Barnabas. If it had been available before that period, Muslims scholars like al-Tabari, al-Baidhawi, and Ibn Kathir would not have been divided in opinion about the end of Christ, nor about specifying the person who is said to have been crucified in His place.

If we refer to reputable Muslim writings like "Golden Pastures" by al-Mas'udi, "The Beginning and the End" by Imam 'Imad Al-Din and "Ibrizi's Version" by Ahmad al-Magrizi, we notice that these prominent scholars stated in their writings that the gospel of the Christians is that which was recorded by the writers of the four Gospels, namely Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Al-Mas'udi writes, "We have mentioned the names of the twelve and the seventy disciples of Christ, their dispersal in the land, and other news concerning what they did and their burial places. The writer of the four Gospels including John and Matthew were among the twelve, while Luke and Mark were among the Seventy" (Al-Tanbih wal-Ishraf, page 136).

If we refer to old manuscripts of the Holy Bible dating back to pre-Islamic times and to which the Qur'an refers and testifies to their truth, we do not find the so-called Gospel attributed to Barnabas. Neither is

there any mention of it in the table of contents, prepared by the Church fathers, of the books which constitute the Holy Bible.

A study of history reveals that the original manuscript of this forged Gospel appeared for the first time in 1709, in the possession of Craemer, the advisor to the King of Prussia. It was taken from him and deposited in the Vienna Library in 1738. All the scholars who examined it noted that its cover was oriental in style and that it contained marginal notes in Arabic. From an examination of the paper and ink used, it appears that it was written in the 15th and 16th century.

The English scholar, Dr. Sale, says he found a copy of this book in the Spanish language written by Mustafa al-'Arandi of Aragon (Spain), who claimed he had translated it from Italian. The introduction to this copy stated that a monk named Marino, who was close to Pope Sixtus V, visited the Pope's library one day in 1585, and found a letter by St. Irenaeus criticising the apostle Paul and basing his criticism on the Gospel of Barnabas. Thereafter Marino strongly desired to find this Gospel. One day he met Pope Sixtus V in the papal library, and as they were conversing, the Pope fell asleep. The monk seized the opportunity, searched for the book, found it and hid it in one of his sleeves. He waited until the Pope awakened and then left, taking the book with him. However, anyone reading the writings of St. Irenaeus will find no reference to the Gospel of Barnabas and no criticism of any kind directed against the apostle Paul.

There is, however, a fact which everyone can know. It is written in the Acts of the

Apostles that Barnabas himself was a companion of Paul during the time he preached the gospel in Jerusalem, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Barnabas also preached the gospel in company with his nephew on the island of Cyprus. This indicates that Barnabas was a believer in the gospel of the cross which Paul, Mark and other apostles preached, and which can be summarised in one brief sentence: Christ died on the cross as an atonement for the sins of the world and rose again on the third day for the justification of everyone who believes. Since the Gospel of Barnabas denies this basic fact, it is clear that the book is a forgery.

Some scholars regard the writer of the Gospel of Barnabas to be the monk Marino himself, after he had embraced Islam and was named Mustafa Al-'Arandi. Others are inclined to believe that the Italian version is not the original version of this book but it was translated from an Arabic original. Anyone reading the alleged Gospel of Barnabas can see that the writer has a wide knowledge of the Qur'an and that most of the texts are almost a literal translation of Qur'anic verses. Among the first to hold this view was the scholar Dr. White, in 1784.

## **1.2. The Author: A Christian who Embraced Islam**

Whatever the views of scholars may be, it is certain that this book relates the history of Jesus Christ in a manner coinciding with the texts of the Qur'an and contradicting the true contents of the Gospel. This leads us to believe that the writer is a Christian who embraced Islam. We notice this in the following instances.

There is a preference for Muhammad over

Jesus in the Gospel of Barnabas. It records that Jesus said, "When I saw him I was filled with consolation and said, O Muhammad, may Allah be with thee and may He make me worthy to unloose the lachet of thy shoe, for if I attain to this I will become a great and holy prophet" (44:30-31). It also says, "And Jesus said, Although I am not worthy to unloose the lachet of his shoe, I have found grace and mercy" (97:10).

The book contains phrases identical with old Muslim writings. "Jesus answered, 'The name Messiah is wonderful because God himself named Him when he created His soul and placed it in heavenly glory and said: 'O Muhammad, wait because for thy sake I want to create the heaven and the earth and multitudes of creatures which I give unto thee, so that whosoever blesses thee shall be blessed and whosoever curses thee shall be cursed. When I send thee to the world I will make thee my messenger for salvation and thy word shall be true. Heaven and earth shall wane but your faith shall never wane. His blessed name is Muhammad.' Then the congregation raised their voices saying, 'O God, send us your messenger. O Muhammad, come soon for the salvation of the world'" (79:14-18).

"And when Adam rose to his feet he saw, shining like the sun in the air, some writing, the text of which was 'There is none other God than Allah. Muhammad is the apostle of Allah.' And Adam said, 'I thank thee, O Lord, my God, because Thou hast been gracious and created me. But I pray Thee, tell me what is the meaning of the words 'Muhammad is the apostle of Allah?'" Allah replied, 'Welcome, my servant Adam. Verily I tell thee that thou art the first of mankind whom I have created. This one whom thou

hast seen is your son who will come into the world many years hence. He will be my messenger for whom I have created all things. When he comes he shall give light to the world, whose soul was placed in heavenly glory for sixty thousand years before I created anything.' Adam implored Allah saying: 'O Lord, give me this writing on the nails of the fingers of my hands.' So God granted unto the first man that writing on the nail of the thumb of the right hand the words, 'There is none other God than Allah,' and on the nail of the thumb of the left hand, 'Muhammad is the apostle of Allah'" (39:14-26).

"God then vanished and the angel Michael expelled them both (Adam and Eve) from paradise. When Adam turned back and saw written on the floor: 'There is none other God than Allah. Muhammad is the apostle of Allah,' he wept and said: 'Peradventure God wants to come soon (O Muhammad) and you save us from this wretchedness'" (41:29-31).

These statements coincide, both in word and spirit, with old Muslim writings, such as "*Al-Ithafat al-Saniyya bil Ahadith al-Qudusiyyah*" and "*Al-Anwar al-Muhammadiyah min al-Mawahib al-Laduniyyah*" and "*Al-Isra Mu'jiza Kubra*," and others.

### 1.3. Contradictions to the Holy Gospel

There is abundant proof that the writer had no connection whatsoever with the apostles of Christ, or His disciples who wrote their books inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The first proof is the author's ignorance of the geography of Palestine and the country

that was the stage of the religious narratives. He says, "And Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee and boarded a boat travelling to Nazareth, His own town. There was a great storm and the boat was about to sink" (20:1-2). It is well known that Nazareth is on a hill in Galilee and not a coastal town, as the writer said. In another place he says, "Remember that God decided to destroy Nineveh because there was no one in that town who feared Him. He (Jonah) tried to escape to Tarsus, being afraid of the people, but God threw him into the sea and a fish swallowed him and cast him out near Nineveh" (63:4-7). It is well-founded that the town of Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire and was erected on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, on an outlet known by the name of al-Khisr. Therefore, it does not lie in the Mediterranean area as it is stated by the writer.

Secondly, the writer was ignorant about the history of the life of Jesus Christ. In the third chapter of this forged gospel, it was written, "When Jesus was born, Pilate was Governor at the time of the Rabbinical leadership of Ananias and Caiaphas" (3:2). This is not true because Pilate was governor from AD 26 to 36. Ananias was chief rabbi from AD 6, and Caiaphas from AD. 8 to 36. In chapter 142 it is written that the Messiah will not come from the seed of David but from the seed of Ishmael, and that the promise was given to Ishmael and not to Isaac (124:14). This is a gross error because anyone reading the chronology of Christ in the true Gospel will see that, according to the flesh, He descended from the house of David, from the tribe of Judah.

Thirdly, the author included stories which had no foundation in the Christian

religion. The following excerpts are examples of these stories. "When God said to the followers of Satan, "Repent and acknowledge that I am your Creator," they answered, "We turn from worshipping Thee because Thou art unjust, but Satan is just and innocent and he is our Lord." Then Satan, as he left, spat on a small heap of dust and Gabriel lifted the spit with some of the dust, with the result that man came to have a navel in his belly" (35:25-27).

"Jesus answered saying to them, 'Verily I sympathised with Satan when I knew of his fall and I sympathise with mankind whom he tempts to sin. I have therefore fasted and prayed to our God Who spoke to me through His angel Gabriel saying, 'What do you want, Jesus, and what is your request?' I replied, 'Lord, Thou knowest what evil Satan has caused and that he, who is your creation, ruins many through his temptation. Have mercy on him, O Lord.' God replied, 'Jesus, behold I forgive him. Only let him say, Lord, my God, I have sinned, have mercy on me and I will forgive him and restore him to his original state.' Jesus said, 'When I heard this I was glad believing that I had made this reconciliation. I therefore called Satan, and he came asking, 'What must I do for you, Jesus?' I replied, 'You are doing it for yourself, because I do not desire your service, but have called you for that which is to your advantage.' Satan replied, 'If you do not wish for my service, I do not want yours, for I am nobler than you. You are not worthy of serving me. You are from dust but I am a spirit' (51:4-20)."

No man could believe that this superstitious story is from a Gospel inspired by God. First of all, God was displeased with Satan when he fell and

drove him from His presence. It is not consistent with God's divine holiness to negotiate a reconciliation with Satan. Secondly, from the beginning Christ had entered into a relentless war with Satan. The Bible says, "The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Thirdly, in his warfare with Christ, Satan did not venture to say that he was nobler than Christ. On the contrary, in the congregation at Capernaum when he was ordered to leave a man, he cried with a loud voice saying, "Let us alone! What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are the Holy One of God!" (Luke 4:34).

There is absolute certainty that the writer was a Muslim. Anyone carefully reading the so-called Gospel of Barnabas will find many Islamic touches in it. First, this book contains a narrative of the resemblance of Christ. In chapter 112 it says: "Know, therefore, Barnabas, that for this I have to be wary. One of my disciples will betray me for thirty pieces of silver. Furthermore, I am sure that he who betrays me will be killed in my name, because God will lift me up from the earth and change the appearance of the one who betrays me so that everyone will think him to be me. And when he dies a very awful death, I will remain in that shame a long time in the world. But when Muhammad, the holy apostle of God, comes, this disgrace will be removed from me" (112:13-17). This story coincides with Islamic teaching of the Middle Ages.

Secondly, there is the allegation that Scripture has been corrupted. In the 12th

chapter it quotes Christ as saying: "Verily I say unto you, that if the truth had not been eradicated from the Book of Moses, God would not have given David, our father, the Second Book. And if David's book had not been corrupted God would not have entrusted His Gospel unto me, because the Lord our God is unchangeable and He had uttered one message for the whole of mankind... When the messenger of God comes, he will come to purify that of my book which has been corrupted by the profligates" (124:8-10).

This statement is a slander against the authenticity of all Holy Scriptures and cannot possibly have come from Christ, Who said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

#### **1.4. The Gospel of Barnabas is a Forged Testimony against Qur'an**

The book attributed to Barnabas is a false witness against the gospel because most of its text contradicts the gospel. Below are some of the texts contained in that forged Gospel which, in fact, are also a false witness against the Qur'an:

1. "Joseph went from Nazareth, a town in Galilee, with his wife who was pregnant... to be registered according to Caesar's command. When he reached Bethlehem, he found no resting place because the town was small and full of visitors. He went outside the town to a place where shepherds stayed. While Joseph was there Mary's days came to deliver her child. The virgin was encircled with very bright light, and she gave birth to her son without suffering any pangs of child-birth" (3:5-10).

The Qur'anic text affirms that Mary went through the pangs of child-birth like any other woman for it says, "And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place. And the pangs of child-birth drove her unto the trunk of the palm tree. She said: 'Oh, would that I had died ere this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten!'" (Surat Maryam 19:22-23).

2. "How wretched are ye, human beings, for God hath chosen thee as a son and given thee paradise. But ye wretched one fell under the wrath of God, through Satan's act, and hast been expelled from paradise" (102:18-19).

The Qur'an considers belief in the fatherhood of God as blasphemy, deserving of punishment in hell fire. It voices a warning to "those who say: Allah hath chosen a son" (Surat Al-Kahf 18:4-5).

3. "Man shall be content with the woman which His Creator has given him and shall forget every other woman" (116:18); whereas the Qur'an teaches polygamy saying, "Marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice then one..." (Surat Al-Nisa' 4:3).
4. "When God created man He created him free so he might know that God has no need of him, just as a king who gives his slaves freedom to demonstrate his wealth, so that his slaves may love him more" (155:13). This contradicts the Qur'an, which says, "and every mans augury have We fastened to his own neck..." (Surat Al-Isra' 17:13). Al-Jalalayns commentary, quoting Mujahid as the

supporting source, explains this verse thus: "No one is born without a paper tied to his neck on which it is written that he is neither wretched or happy."

5. "Then the apostle of Allah says: "Lord, there are believers in Hell who have been there seventy thousand years. Where is your mercy, O Lord? I beseech thee, Lord, to free them from this bitter punishment." God then commands the four most favoured angels to go to hell and bring out everyone who belongs to the religion of the apostle of Allah, and lead him to paradise" (137:1-4). This text contradicts the Qur'an, which totally denies the question of pardon, for it says: "Lo! Allah hath cursed the disbelievers, and hath prepared for them a flaming fire, wherein they will abide forever. They will find (then) no protecting friend or helper" (Surat Al-Ahzab 33:64-65).
6. "And Jesus admitted and said, 'Verily I say unto you that I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'Art thou Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets of old?' Jesus replied 'No'. Then they said unto him, 'Who art thou that we may witness to those who sent us?' Jesus said, 'I am the voice of one crying in Judea, Prepare ye the way of the apostle of the Lord'(42:5-11).

The Qur'an says: "The angels said: 'O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, Whose Name is the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the hereafter, and one of those brought near (unto Allah)'" (Surat Al Imran 3:45).

Is there, in fact, a worse forged

testimony against the Gospel and the Qur'an than this testimony? Is there a Muslim who believes this fabrication that "the Messiah" is Muhammad son of 'Abdallah and not Jesus son of Mary?

**BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER  
AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS  
FOR THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED.**

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