170649 - Quran Contradictions Refuted

the question

A Christian posed this question to me, and I would like an answer for it so that I can send it to him: why do you base your life and your destinies on a book that is filled with contradictions and mistakes?

He is referring thereby to the Quran. This Christian goes on to say: You say that Allah says: “Then do they not reflect upon the Quran? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction” [an-Nisa 4:82], but in fact it is filled with contradictions, therefore it is not from Allah.

There follow some examples of that: for example, we find in Surah ash-Shu‘ara that it says that Pharaoh died by drowning, whereas in Surah Yunus it says: “So this day We shall deliver your body (out from the sea) that you may be a sign to those who come after you.” [Yunus 10:92]

Which of them is correct?

Summary of answer

The Quran is free from all varieties of contradictions, and what may appear to be a contradiction in fact comes under the heading of differences that are in harmony with one another; these are differences of situation, time or character.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Misconceptions about the Quran

This is not the first attempt to try to undermine the Book of Allah , may He be exalted, and claim

that there are contradictions in its verses. Many have tried to do that before, and everyone who tried to do that ended up in clear loss and defeat.

If there was in our Book that we believe was sent down from our Lord, may He be exalted, even a little of what one finds in the books of the Jews and Christians of distortion and contradictions, we would be the first to reject it. But how can that be the case when Allah Himself has guaranteed to preserve His Book until the onset of the Hour, so as to be a clear proof for people of what it contains of truth (and so that no one has any excuse for rejecting it).

If that Christian, and others, had read and reflected upon the beginning of the verse that he quoted about there being no contradiction in the Quran , he would not have needed to come up with all these specious arguments on which to base his criticism of the Quran .

There are among the earlier and contemporary Arabs scholars, wise men, men of letters and eloquence men who read the Quran , and they did not see any contradiction in such verses. They may pause and wonder about the meaning of some of the verses, but their confusion is quickly dispelled when one of them reflects on the verses of the Quran or consults the mufassirin (scholars of Quranic exegesis) and those who are well-versed in knowledge.

In the beginning of the verse quoted by this Christian, Allah, may He be exalted, urges people to reflect on the verses of the Quran, as He says (interpretation of the meaning): “Then do they not reflect upon the Quran ? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction” [an-Nisa 4:82]. If he had reflected on the verses of the Quran, he would not have found any contradiction, great or small, in them; if he had made the effort to refer to the explanations of people who are well-versed in knowledge, he would not have found any contradiction in the Quran.

Hence, anyone who reads the Quran without reflection – especially if he is one who follows his whims and desires – will naturally find what he thinks are contradictions in its verses. But in fact, this contradiction is only in his mind, and stems from his misunderstanding; it is not in the verses of Allah, which are precise and sound.

“This is the Book about which there is no doubt”

Anyone who writes a book has no option but to give an apology at the beginning of the book, saying that whoever finds any shortcomings should excuse the author, and whoever finds any error should conceal it from others and inform the author only. Hence you find some serious and sincere writers who will publish their books more than once, and later editions will be tagged as “new and revised”.

As for the Book of Allah, may He be exalted, the one who opens the first page of it will find the words (interpretation of the meaning): “Alif, Lam, Mim. This is the Book about which there is no doubt” [al-Baqarah 2:1-2].

This introduction was a reason why some wise and rational Christians became Muslim, when they saw this great opening which indicates that the one who said that is not human, for no human could ever make such a statement in any book he authored.

After reading the verses of the Quran, they realized that it is the word of the Lord of the Worlds. Therefore the problem stems from lack of reflection and understanding. Thus we realize that when the beginning of the verse urges people to reflect, that is not without purpose; rather there is an important reason behind it.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Hence Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, urged His slaves to reflect upon the Quran, for whoever who reflects upon it, his reflection will inevitably lead him to realize and be certain that it is truth and sound, and indeed it is the most true of any truth, and that the one who brought it is the most sincere and the most righteous of Allah’s creation, and the most perfect of them in knowledge, action and understanding, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Then do they not reflect upon the Quran? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.” [an-Nisa 4:82]

“Then do they not reflect upon the Quran, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?” [Muhammad 47:24]

If the locks were removed from people’s hearts, then the truths of the Quran would have an impact on them, the light of faith would shine in their hearts and they would realize, just as they experience all feelings and emotions such as joy, pain, love and fear, that it is indeed from Allah; Allah indeed spoke it and His Messenger Jibril conveyed it to His Messenger Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).” (Madarij as-Salikin, 3/471-472)

The Quran is free from contradictions

The Quran – for the one who reflects upon it – is free from all varieties of contradictions, and what may appear to be a contradiction in fact comes under the heading of differences that are in harmony with one another; these are differences of situation, time or character.

In that way, you can easily reconcile between the verses of the Quran. If the researcher does that, he will find another aspect of the miraculous nature of the Book of Allah.

Abu Bakr al-Jassas (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Differences are of three types:

1. Differences that are contradictory, in which one of the two will rule out the other.
2. Differences in quality, which is where one part is more eloquent and another is poorly composed. These two types of differences are not found in the Quran; this is one of the signs of its miraculous nature, because the words of all eloquent people, if they speak at length – like the lengthy surahs of the Quran – cannot be free of variations in quality.
3. Differences that are in harmony with one another, but all are equal in terms of beauty, such as the different modes of recitation, variations in the length of verses, and variations in the rulings on an-nasikh wal-mansukh (what abrogates and what is abrogated).

The verse (an-Nisa 4:82) urges people to refer to the Quran because in it there is evidence of the

truth that compels one to believe in it and act upon it.” (Ahkam al-Quran, 3/182)

The clearest example of these differences that are in harmony with one another – and perhaps if that Christian had come across it, he could have added it to his list of so-called contradictions – is when Allah, may He be exalted, mentions in His Book the creation of Adam . Sometimes He says that He created him from water, sometimes from dust, a third time from clay, and a fourth time from sounding clay (salsal).

Does this come under the heading of contradiction? Rather these are the stages of the creation of Adam – we have discussed that in detail in the answer to question no. 4811 .

If that was a contradiction, it would have been pointed out and criticized by the most eminent scholars of language and rhetoric among the disbelievers at the time it was revealed, but it was beneath their intellectual dignity to do so, so they did not object to the Quran with regard to its eloquence and miraculous style; rather its verses were the reason why many became Muslim, and how could it be otherwise when it is “guidance for mankind”?

The Story of Pharaoh Explained

What this proponent of specious arguments thought was contradictory in what Allah, may He be exalted, tells us about the story of Pharaoh , that he died by drowning, yet Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “So this day We shall deliver your body (out from the sea) that you may be a sign to those who come after you. And indeed, many among the people, of Our signs, are heedless” [Yunus 10:92] is very strange.

The fact that Pharaoh drowned is certain, beyond a doubt; he definitely died as a result of this drowning. So our question for this Christian is: is everyone who drowns in the sea eaten by sharks, or is his body lost in the bottom of the sea, or is it possible that he could drown, then his body may float and be saved from disintegrating or being lost?

The answer is definitely the latter, and this is what we see in the case of those who drown as a result of plane crashes over the sea, shipwrecks and so on. We say to him: this is exactly what happened in the case of Pharaoh. He died by drowning in the sea, then Allah, may He be exalted, caused his body to float on the surface of the sea, so that the Children of Israel could be certain that he had died.

There is great wisdom in that, as that liar used to claim that he was their “lord most high”. Therefore it was appropriate that his corpse should be shown to the people, so that they could be certain of the true nature of this so-called “lord”, and so as to put an end to fear in the hearts of weak people who may have believed that he had gone away in order to return after some time. How great is the number of people who are lacking in faith and reason, and believe in such things.

What is meant by the words “We shall deliver your body” in the verse is: We shall cause it to rise to the surface and float. What was meant by delivering him was definitely not saving him from death; rather it was saving his body from being lost at the bottom of the sea, or being eaten by sea creatures. If [this Christian] had reflected on the words “We shall deliver your body”, he would have realized that this phrase cannot be used to refer to saving someone from death; rather it is used to refer to saving or retrieving the corpse. If what was meant was saving Pharaoh from death, then mentioning his body would have been superfluous, and that cannot be the case with regard to the words of Allah, may He be exalted.

For more information, please see this answer: 72516 .

And Allah knows best.