

The Gospel of Barnabas

Short Version

We have only three copies of the Gospel of Barnabas¹ (GOB) whereas we have 24,000+ portions manuscripts and minuscules² of the rest of the New Testament (NT). There are only two doubtful pre-7th century references to the GOB, whereas we have 36,000+ references to NT verses until 325 A.D.³

The Italian Manuscript of the GOB sports a 16th century Italian writing with Tuscan dialect, in an Islamic style, with Arabic notes/headings, the occasional Turkish word, and Turkish binding⁴. Someone lost the Spanish Manuscript but copies and notes survive. The Turkish Book discovered in 2000 has not been closely inspected.

The GOB both references and contradicts both Muslim and Christian doctrine, and make serious geographical and historical blunders like Jesus sailing to landlocked Nazareth, and Jesus referring to a 100 year length Jubilee which only existed in the 1st half of the 14th century.⁵

The aforementioned all strongly suggest the Gospel of Barnabas (GOB) is “a Muslim forgery.”⁶

Long Version

-
- 1 The Gospel of Barnabas – hosted at <http://www.answering-christianity.com/barnabas.htm> which is an Islamic site promoting it's authenticity as a challenge to the Bible.
 - 2 Josh McDowell Answers Five Tough Questions – hosted at <http://joshmcdowellmedia.org/FreeBooks/JoshMcDowellAnswersFiveToughQuestions.pdf> Chapter 3 “The Making of the New Testament”
 - 3 DatingTheNewTestament.Com – www.datingthenewtestament.com/Fathers.htm
 - 4 Wikipedia's summary – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Barnabas
 - 5 Answering-Islam.Org – <http://answering-islam.org/Green/barnabas.htm>
 - 6 LetUsReason.Org – <http://www.letusreason.org/Apolo34.htm>

The Gospel of Barnabas (GOB) has made headlines recently with discovery of a 3rd copy being held by the Turkish government, since being discovered in 2000 among items recovered from smugglers.⁷

Like all forgeries, the GOB (not to be confused with 2nd century "Epistle of Barnabas" or "Acts of Barnabas") reveals it's a fraud by making a series of [historical, linguistic, and geographical blunders](#).

So what's wrong with the GOB, that gets me thinking it is a fraud?

Contradictions

The GOB contradicts both the Qur'an and the NT and the OT, so it agrees with entirely with neither Islam nor Judaism nor Christianity.

The GOB claims 9 heavens, while the Qur'an claims 7. GOB Chapter 178 says, “*... Truly I say to you that the heavens are nine, among which are set the planets...*” In contrast, the Qur'an 65.12 says, “*Allah is the one who created seven Heavens and from Earth like them (of corresponding type)...*”

The GOB chapter 3 claims Mary had no pain when birthing Jesus, while the Qur'an says she did, “*The virgin was surrounded by a light exceeding bright, and brought forth her son without pain, whom she took in her arms...*” But Qur'an 19:22-23 says, “*And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. She said, "Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten."*”

Exactly why Muslims point to the GOB as truthful opposition to the NT, despite it's contradictions against the Qur'an, [seems to be answered at this link](#). Since if the GOB “is true” then when the

⁷ ChristianPost.com – <http://www.christianpost.com/news/turkeys-1500-year-old-28m-bible-linked-to-gospel-of-barnabas-70148/>

GOB contradicts the Qur'an, it is also truthful opposition to the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an calls Jesus the Messiah⁸ saying in 5:75, "*The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger; messengers before him had indeed passed away.*" But the GOB 42:2 says "*Jesus confessed, and said the truth: 'I am not the Messiah.'*"

Since the GOB contradicts both the Christian Bible's New and Old Testaments, it was not inspired by [the infinite God who knows everything, is everywhere, and knows the future](#), since there are no contradictions in the Bible per John 10:35 saying, "...*the scripture cannot be broken*".⁹

Also, the GOB echoes the Muslim view which denies the divinity of Jesus, while the [divinity of Messiah is well documented in the NT and OT](#), even [as early as Genesis](#).

Only Three Copies Exist

We have 24,000+ copies across many languages of the NT¹⁰, and there is no doubt about what any of the NT verses say when confirming major Christian doctrines. A large number of surviving copies over a wide area is strong evidence that the document saw wide circulation. In sharp contrast we know of three GOB manuscripts: one of each in Italian, Spanish, and Syriac.

No Existing Old Copies

8 IslamReligion.Com – <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/230/> under the section "The Descriptive Titles of Jesus in the Quran".

9 The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties – <http://www.amazon.com/Encyclopedia-Bible-Difficulties-G-Archer/dp/0310435706>

10 Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry – <http://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>

Whereas we have copies of the NT that go back to the 1st century¹¹ or 2nd century¹², the three existing copies of the GOB look like they were made about 1400+ years after Jesus walked the earth. That's a terribly long time for no one to have made a copy.

Blunders

The GOB makes the kind of mistakes someone would make if they didn't speak Aramaic or Greek, and were writing more than 1400 years after the fact, in another country, and didn't know what the Bible or Qur'an said.

Geographical Blunder: in chapters 20-21 of the GOB, Jesus sails to Nazareth and is welcomed by the seamen of that town, but Nazareth is 14km from the Sea of Galilee:

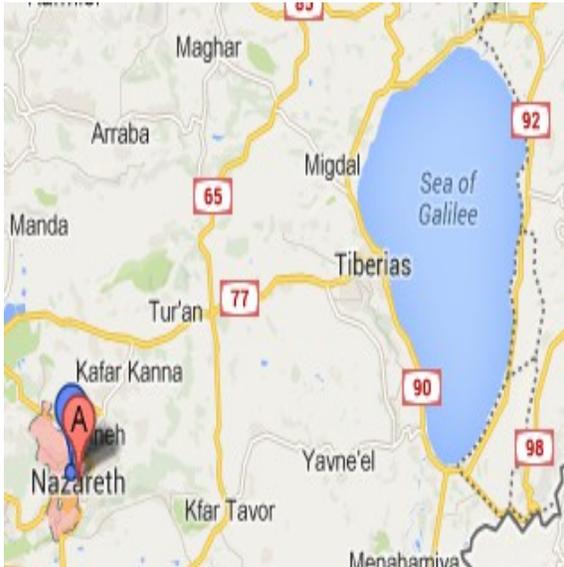
"Jesus went to the sea of Galilee, and having embarked in a ship sailed to his city of Nazareth; whereupon there was a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was nigh unto sinking. And Jesus was sleeping upon the prow of the ship. Then drew near to him his disciples, and awoke him, saying: 'O master, save thyself, for we perish!' They were encompassed with very great fear, by reason of the great wind that was contrary and the roaring of the sea. Jesus arose, and raising his eyes to heaven, said: 'O Elohim Sabaoth, have mercy upon thy servants.' Then, when Jesus had said this, suddenly the wind ceased, and the sea became calm. Wherefore the seamen feared, saying: 'And who is this, that the sea and the wind obey him?'" Having arrived at the city of Nazareth the seamen spread through the city all that Jesus had wrought, whereupon the

11 British-Israel.Ca – <http://www.british-israel.ca/manuscripts.htm>

12 Bible.Ca – <http://www.bible.ca/ef/topical-the-earliest-new-testament-manuscripts.htm>

house where Jesus was, was surrounded by as many as dwelt in the city.”

Now we turn to a zoomed in map of Israel where “A” points to Nazareth, and the “Sea of Galilee” is the body of water to it's right.



This kind of mistake I call a Geographical Blunder, whereby it's difficult to believe the writer truly knows the land of Israel, as one would strongly suspect Barnabas would.

Does the GOB make other blunders that betray it as a fraud? Yes.

Linguistic Blunder: In Chapter 217 the GOB says, *“Whereupon, they took him down from the cross with such weeping as assuredly no one would believe, and buried him in the new sepulcher of Joseph; having wrapped him up in an hundred pounds of precious ointments.”* Problem is, the unit of weight “pound” came into existence in the 14th century.¹³

Historical Blunder: Leviticus 25:10-11 says a Jubilee is to take place every 50 years. In 1300 A.D. Pope Boniface VIII changed it to every 100 years. Then at some point his successor, Pope Clement VI changed it back to every 50 years, so it was celebrated in 1350 A.D.. Therefore, there was a period of time when it was considered to be every 100 years between 1300 A.D. and 1350 A.D..

13 Citizendium.Org – http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Pound_%28mass%29

The GOB says in Chapter 82¹⁴, "*And then through all the world will God be worshiped, and mercy received, insomuch that the year of jubilee, which now comes every hundred years, shall by the Messiah be reduced to every year in every place.*" So we ask, why does the GOB present a 1st century Jesus that's quoting the 100 year Jubilee of the 14th century?

I call this a Historical Blunder, and a revealing one at that since this one tells us that the GOB, or at least Chapter 82 was written during or after the 14th century.

Never Referenced by Any Writers

Perhaps more seriously, the GOB was never found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, nor was it quoted in any of the 36,000+ Christian letters written between Christians before 325 A.D., which quote the NT. If we pulled all the NT verses from those letters, we could reconstruct a NT, and lack only 11 verses¹⁵. So, why can't we do that with the GOB?

If the GOB really existed in the 1st century and saw wide circulation, why isn't it mentioned a single time in all those writings which quote the rest of the NT 36,000+ times?

The plain answer is, the GOB did not exist in the 1st century, otherwise it would have been quoted. So the next question is, if the GOB is a forgery written after the 1st century, who would do such a thing? The [“Italian Manuscript” provides some hints](#):

- 1) “written within red frames in an Islamic style”
- 2) “There are chapter rubrics and margin notes in ungrammatical Arabic; with an occasional Turkish word, and many Turkish

14 The Gospel of Barnabas – <http://www.answering-christianity.com/barnabas.htm>

15 British-Israel.ca – <http://www.british-israel.ca/manuscripts.htm>

syntactical features.”

3) “Its binding is Turkish, and appears to be original”

4) “The same scribe wrote both the Italian text and the Arabic notes”

Indeed, the GOB is looking a lot like [“a Muslim forgery”](#).

The [Spanish Manuscript](#) of the GOB has [some minor, and one moderate difference](#) between it and the Italian Manuscript. The Syriac copy recovered by the Turkish government in 2000 reportedly has too terribly and too obviously bad diction and grammar to be the work of anyone literate in Syriac.¹⁶

Conclusion

If someone has already written a superlative conclusion to the matter of the GOB which I call “perfection”, why would I write another one? Behold:

As regards the “Gospel of Barnabas” itself, there is no question that it is a medieval forgery. A complete Italian manuscript exists which appears to be a translation from a Spanish original (which exists in part), written to curry favor with Muslims of the time. It contains anachronisms which can date only from the Middle Ages and not before, and shows a garbled comprehension of Islamic doctrines, calling the Prophet “the Messiah”, which Islam does not claim for him. Besides its farcical notion of sacred history, stylistically it is a mediocre parody of the Gospels, as the writings of Baha'Allah are of the Koran.¹⁷

- Cyril Glassé, Muslim scholar

16 VaticanInsider.LasTampa.It – <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/world-news/detail/articolo/bibbia-bible-biblia-13182/>

17 Answering Islam.Org – <http://www.answering-islam.org/barnabas.html>