JESUS, COMMUNITY, THE BIBLE AND THE KORAN

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> *Jesus made provision for the communication of the gospel by choosing and forming a community to bear the gospel in every nation to the ends of the earth. The significance of this initial act of Jesus stands in contrast to Islam. In Islam, provision is made for the communication of the prophet Mohammed's message by committing the revelation to writing. The Koran is the apostle and bearer of the message. By contrast, Jesus did not write a book; he formed a community. To be sure, the Bible plays an authoritative role in unfolding God's story of redemption. Nevertheless, Jesus formed a community to be primary bearer of the gospel. Not only is a book the bearer of the message in Islam, but also one must learn Arabic in order to embrace its message. It cannot be translated into another language or culture for fear that the message will be altered and contaminated. Conversion to Islam is cultural as well as religious: to be Muslim, one must welcome the culture of the Koran. In contrast, the church is sent to the ends of the earth to embody and communicate the gospel within each culture of the world. The nature of the gospel and of the church's mission requires that it be translated into the idiom of many cultures. The question of the relationship of this one gospel to the various cultures into which it has come is the issue of contextualization.*

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