

WHO GOD IS

“Who is God except the LORD (YHWH = He Who Is)” – Psalm 18:31 (NLT)

The Qur'an's Teaching About God Compared With The Bible

A 537 Page Comparative Study Of God (His person and attributes)

Copyright 2019 by Rev. Richard P. Bailey

INDEX:

TITLE & INDEX	page 1
<u>PREFACE & INTRODUCTION</u> –	page 2
<u>APPENDIX 1</u> – ISLAM'S 99 “MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES” OF GOD	page 8
<u>CHAPTER ONE</u> – THE ONENESS OF GOD	page 17
<u>APPENDIX 2</u> – BIBLE VERSES ON THE ONENESS OF GOD	page 32
<u>APPENDIX 3</u> – FULLER EXPLANATION OF THE TRINITY	page 34
<u>APPENDIX 4</u> – BIBLE VERSES REVEALING THE TRINITY	page 39
<u>APPENDIX 5</u> – BIBLICAL INDICATIONS OF CHRIST'S DEITY	page 44
<u>CHAPTER TWO</u> – THE POWER OF GOD	page 60
<u>APPENDIX 6</u> – PROPHECIES & TYPES OF JESUS' RESURRECTION	page 84
<u>CHAPTER THREE</u> – THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD	page 95
<u>CHAPTER FOUR</u> – THE TRANSCENDENCE & IMMANENCE OF GOD	page 122
<u>APPENDIX 7</u> – DETAILS OF THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT PARADISE	page 147
<u>APPENDIX 8</u> – COVENANTS IN THE BIBLE	page 156
<u>CHAPTER FIVE</u> – THE INSCRUTABILITY OF GOD	page 160
<u>CHAPTER SIX</u> – THE NAME & GLORY OF GOD	page 171
<u>CHAPTER SEVEN</u> – THE MERCY & GRACE OF GOD	page 189
CHAPTER EIGHT – THE FORGIVENESS & SALVATION OF GOD	
<u>(a) THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD</u>	page 208
<u>(b) THE SALVATION OF GOD</u>	page 228
<u>APPENDIX 9</u> – ISLAMIC ARTICLES ABOUT SALVATION & FORGIVENESS	page 261
<u>APPENDIX 10</u> – THE BIBLE'S TEACHING ON MAN'S PART IN OBTAINING SALVATION	page 292
<u>CHAPTER NINE</u> – THE COMMUNICATION OF GOD	page 297
<u>APPENDIX 11</u> – PROPHETS IN THE BIBLE	page 333
<u>APPENDIX 12</u> – THE REVELATION OF JESUS' FULL IDENTITY	page 348
<u>APPENDIX 13</u> – THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT JESUS	page 357
<u>APPENDIX 14</u> – THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT ITSELF	page 361
<u>APPENDIX 15</u> – THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT THE BIBLE BEING CHANGED	page 363
<u>CHAPTER TEN</u> – THE WORK OF GOD	page 365
CHAPTER ELEVEN – RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE, WRATH & PATIENCE OF GOD	
<u>(a) THE RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE OF GOD</u>	page 382
<u>(b) THE WRATH & PATIENCE OF GOD</u>	page 394
<u>CHAPTER TWELVE</u> – THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD	page 417
<u>CHAPTER THIRTEEN</u> – THE LIFE & IMAGE OF GOD	page 434
<u>APPENDIX 16</u> – GOD'S CREATION VS. SCIENTIFIC PROOF	page 466
<u>CHAPTER FOURTEEN</u> – THE LOVE OF GOD	page 467
<u>CHAPTER FIFTEEN</u> – THE FAITHFULNESS (ETERNALITY & IMMUTABILITY) OF GOD	page 487
<u>CHAPTER SIXTEEN</u> – THE TRUTHFULNESS OF GOD	page 501
<u>CHAPTER SEVENTEEN</u> – THE HOLINESS OF GOD	page 513
<u>CHAPTER EIGHTEEN</u> – THE PEACE & JOY OF GOD	page 523
<u>CONCLUSIONS</u>	page 531

PREFACE

I would suggest that the best way to understand the nature of this study is to begin by carefully reading the beginning (Introduction) and then skim the ending (Conclusions). These are both short and will give you a comprehensive view of the whole.

It is important to know that the format I have used in each of the sections (A., B., C., etc.) of each chapter is to first present what Islam (mostly the Qur'an) says about the subject and then present what the Bible says.

INTRODUCTION

NOTES:

- 1. Qur'an And Bible Quotations:** All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's (sometimes abbreviated as "Y.A.") translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted.
- 2. Highlighted Words And Phrases:** Words or phrases highlighted in **bold** and/or *italics* are my own. I have done this for emphasis and/or to point out the pertinent parts of the verses and paragraphs.
- 3. "Sura:"** There are 114 "Suras" (like chapters) in the Qur'an and they each have Arabic names. Instead of including those names, I have given the number of the Sura as they are arranged in the Qur'an followed by the number of the verse(s). For example, "(Sura 2:76)" instead of "(Baqara:76)"

MY OBJECTIVES: My three basic objectives in this comparative study of the teaching about God in the Qur'an and the Bible are the following:

- 1. To Know God More Intimately Myself:** My primary objective is not to try to convince someone else about who God is, but to know God myself. This comparative study has brought me new insight into the Bible's revelation of God. For example, the difference between His "**works**" and His "**ways**."

"they sang the song of Moses ... the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!'" (Revelation 15:3 – NASB)

From this I see that God's character (His ways) is the source of how and what He does (His works). God's working in creation and in human history is quite visible, but His ways, while less obvious, are more important. From His works we can realize and praise His awesome power; but only by His ways can we truly know Him, enabling us to trust in Him and walk in fellowship with Him:

[Moses prayed] "*please **show me now your ways, that I may know you ... show me your glory.***" (Exodus 33:13,18)

[Micah prophesied] "*... that he may teach us **his ways** and **that we may walk in his paths** ..."* (Micah 4:2)

The purpose of this study is not just to discover what God has done and is able to do, but most of all to examine every attribute or characteristic of God's Person revealed in Scripture and in Christ, and to compare it with what the Qur'an says. It is not insignificant that God Himself declares His "name" in Hebrew as YHWH ("He Is" or "I Am"). It's His being – His character – that is Who He is!

*“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but **let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.** For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.’” (Jeremiah 9:23,24)*

*“so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord; fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and **increasing in the knowledge of God.**” (Col. 1:10)*

So my desire is to grow in my personal relationship with my heavenly Father through knowing Jesus, Who is the greatest revelation of God to mankind:

*“No one has ever seen God. But **the unique One**, who is himself God, [or “the one and only Son”] is near to the Father’s heart. **He has revealed God to us.**” (John 1:18 – NLT)*

At the same time, I realize all too well the limitations of my capacity to know God:

*“Oh, **the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!**” (Romans 11:33)*

2. To Enhance My Understanding Of The Teachings Of The Qur’an On The Subject Of Who God Is: I do not claim to be a scholar of Islam, but I hope to increase my understanding through this study. The Bible and the Qur’an agree on a number of aspects of God’s attributes, but sadly, there are significant areas of disagreement. I intend to look at both.

In this study I have limited my study of Islam mostly to the Qur’an with only a few quotes from the *Hadith*. I realize that the Islamic religion is not based solely on the teaching of the Qur’an, but largely on the **Hadith** (several collections of oral traditions about Muhammad’s teachings and actions) and to a lesser degree on superstitious and unorthodox ideas and practices of what is called, “**Folk Islam.**” My reason for focusing mostly on the Qur’an is that the majority of **Islam’s teaching about God** come from the Qur’an while the traditions in the Hadith are primarily focused on the **Islamic practices of Muslims**. Even though the average Muslim has not read or studied the Qur’an for himself, his **concepts and beliefs about God** are shaped by what is taught in the mosque and in his community by those who do study the Qur’an.

As a Christian, I am convinced that only the Bible is God’s Word, but nevertheless I have made every effort to be as objective as possible in my research of the Qur’an and to base my conclusions primarily on actual verses of the Qur’an.

3. To Help Other Believers In Christ Understand The Limitations Of Islam’s Teaching About God: Hopefully this study will also help Christians realize how to approach Muslims with the positive and redemptive teachings about God’s being and character which are uniquely found in the Bible:

THIS STUDY IS FOR CHRISTIANS, NOT FOR MUSLIMS! Initially I thought this material might be useful in sharing with Muslims who want to know more about the Bible, but more and more I realize the best way to share God’s Good News with Muslim friends is to open the Bible itself and discuss its truths with them. So **please do not think of this study as material for debate with Muslims.**

Here are some of the values for Christians from this study:

a. To help believers in Christ, who may be struggling with questions in the face of Islam’s seemingly profound proclamation of the greatness of God: This study should help such a person better understand what the Qur’an actually says about God and realize the absolute superiority of the Bible’s revelation of our awesome and omnipotent God.

b. To aid us in better understanding Muslims and the cry of their hearts: Dr. J. Dudley Woodberry writes in Fuller Magazine 2016, Issue #5, Integration:

“As Christians, we are enjoined to love God and love people. Part of the love of both is sharing the gospel, drawing more people to God through Jesus Christ. Muslims are people – they are people God loves. It’s not that God will

*love them when they become Christians; God loves them now. We are called to do the same. **How can we love them if we don't know about them?***

c. To discover what points of the Bible's teaching about God we need to emphasize in sharing the good news with Muslim friends: This may be the greatest value of this study for strong believers in Christ who wish to share the Good News with Muslims.

EFFECTS OF OUR BELIEFS ABOUT GOD: What a person believes about God affects everything else he/she believes, because it is the primary building block of his/her personal worldview, from which character and behavior develop. For this reason the study of God ("theology" proper) is potentially a life changing effort for anyone who will seriously undertake it.

JESUS, THE REVELATION OF GOD: The Bible teaches that Jesus is God revealed in human flesh:

*"... **Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily ..."** (Colossians 2:8-10)*

*"and to **know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**" (Ephesians 3:19)*

And so I have attempted to include in each chapter a section about Jesus being the revelation of that particular attribute of God.

INCLUSION OF VERSES FROM THE QUR'AN AND BIBLE: I know that most people put quotations into footnotes, but I have chosen to include verses from both the Qur'an and the Bible into the text itself. If these verses were put in footnotes, most readers would not bother to read them. **Please read them. They validate what I have written and are the basis of this study.** [Please remember that **bold** and *italics* in these verses are mine]

"ALLAH" OR "GOD": Many Christian leaders have sincerely begun saying that "*Allah*" is a different god from the God of the Bible. At the same time, current Islamic teachers have begun insisting that Muslims use the Arabic name "*Allah*" for God even in English, implying either that they don't believe in "God" or that "God" is an idol. Nevertheless I have chosen to avoid both of these extremes and to use "God" throughout this study in reference to both the God of the Bible and the God of the Qur'an because it is the English word for deity and I am writing in English.

I have used Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Qur'an for this study, and I am disappointed that although he used the English word, "God" when he originally translated the Qur'an into English in 1934, current Islamic scholars have changed his translation after his death by replacing the English word "God" with the transliterated Arabic "Allah." When I first began this study I copied from a printed copy of Yusuf Ali's translation published in 1983, which uses "God." Later I began copying from a revision of his translation found on more recent websites, which uses "Allah." I am sorry for any confusion.

Our Lord Jesus has given us an example to follow in His choice of a name for God when He was speaking to the Samaritan woman:

*"Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship **the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship **the Father** in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. **God** is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.'**" (John 4:21-24)*

Notice that Jesus plainly told her that her people, the Samaritans, “*worship what you do not know*” – that they did not know God even though they worshipped Him. **He didn’t say, “You worship a false God”** nor did He use some different Samaritan word for God. Instead **He taught her different truth about God, not a different name.** Namely that He is “*the Father,*” that “*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth,*” and He referred to God with the same word the Jews used. We know that the Samaritans had a mixed-up religion with some Assyrian religious ideas intertwined with Old Testament truth. This is strikingly similar to Islam today, which is a composite of the monotheistic teaching of the *Haniifs* and Muhammad’s own confused ideas together with truncated truth from both the Old and New Testaments.

PLURAL PRONOUNS FOR GOD: According to the Qur’an, when God is speaking, he often refers to Himself as “We” and “Us.” This is called the “royal plural” often used by kings, and no Muslim believes it indicates the Trinity.

ISLAM’S 99 “MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES” OF GOD: I have included these names in this study because Muslims repeat them as a means of worship, using a rosary-like string of beads. Although they seem to be attributes of God, **they are more like a multi-faceted description of His power and greatness, which Islam stresses as God’s basic attribute!** Most of these names are deduced from adjectives and verbs in the Hadith and/or the Qur’an.

*[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam’s 99 “most beautiful names” of God

THEOLOGIANS’ LISTS OF GOD’S ATTRIBUTES: I was amazed when I first realized the lists of God’s attributes compiled by a few Islamic scholars did not contain many of the attributes Christian theologians list (even though they believe in most of them). The first two lists I got from *Hughes Dictionary of Islam* (pp 144-147 under the topic of “God”). The third is from a Shi’ite website and the fourth from the Islamic High Council of Australia (<http://www.darulfatwa.org.au/en/the-attributes-of-allah-2/>). I have compared them with my own list. **Notice what is missing in some Muslims’ lists:**

a) **Al-Ghazzali** in his book, *al-Maqsaduk ‘I-asad* lists eight attributes of God (1st column):

b) **Muhammad al-Barqawi** gives a similar list of seven attributes (2nd column):

c) **Shaykh Saduq** (Shia) has a list of ten attributes (3rd column):

d) **Darul Fatwa** (Islamic High Council of Australia) has 13 attributes (4th column):

<u>Al-Ghazzali</u>	<u>Muh’d al-Barqawi</u>	<u>Shaykh Saduq</u>	<u>Darul Fatwa</u>	<u>My Study</u>
-	-	One,	Oneness,	Oneness – Chapter 1
Essence,	-	-	Uniqueness, Incomparableness	Uniqueness, Essence – Chapter 1
Power	Power	Omnipotent,	Power,	Omnipotence – Ch 2
-	-	-	Needs Nothing	Omnipotence – Ch 2
What God is Not	-	-	-	-
Knowledge	Knowledge	Omniscient, Wise	Knowledge, Omniscience	Omniscience – Chapter 2
Hearing	Hearing	Hearer	Hearing	Omnipresence – Chapter 2
& Seeing	Seeing	See’er	Seeing	Omnipresence – Chapter 2
Will	Will	-	Will, Sovereignty	Sovereignty – Chapter 3
-	-	Having power	-	Transcendence – Chapter 4
Word	Speech	-	Speech, Word, Communication	Communication – Chapter 9
Works	-	-	-	Work – Chapter 10
-	Life	Living,	Existence, Life,	Life & Image – Chapter 13,
-	-	Eternal, Self-existent	Eternity, No Beginning	Eternality – Chapter 15
-	-	-	Everlastingness, No Ending	Eternality – Chapter 15

Attributes Missing From These Islamic Theologians’ Lists But Included In This Study:

Immanence – Chapter 4,
Inscrutability – Chapter 5,
Name & Glory – Chapter 6,
Mercy & Grace – Chapter 7,
Forgiveness & Salvation – Chapter 8,

Righteousness, Justice, Wrath – Chapter 11,
 Fatherhood – Chapter 12,
 Love – Chapter 14,
 Faithfulness & Immutability – Chapter 15,
 Truth – Chapter 16,
 Holiness – Chapter 17,
 Peace and Joy – Chapter 18

REASON FOR LISTING ATTRIBUTES IN THIS ORDER: Christian theologians divide God's attributes into two types; His "Natural" attributes (His nature, such as His Unity, Sovereignty, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Transcendence, Eternality, etc.) and "Moral" attributes (such as His Grace, Righteousness, Justice, Mercy, Faithfulness, Peace, Joy, etc.). It seems that Islamic theologians primarily focus on God's "Natural" powers but give little thought to His "Moral" attributes. They believe calling them "attributes" would be comparing God with human beings, and God is beyond such comparison. This is "an educated guess" on my part.

In chapters 1-6 I have listed the attributes or characteristics of God that Islam stresses, emphasizing His greatness:

- Chapter 1 – THE ONENESS OF GOD – His Absolute Singleness (The Only God)
- Chapter 2 – THE POWER OF GOD – His Omnipotence
- Chapter 3 – THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD – His Limitless Authority
- Chapter 4 – THE TRANSCENDENCE (& IMMANENCE) OF GOD – His Absolute Uniqueness
- Chapter 5 – THE INSCRUTABILITY OF GOD – His Complete Incomprehensibility
- Chapter 6 – THE NAME & GLORY OF GOD – His Exaltation Above All Else

In Chapters 7-11 I have listed the attributes of God which Islam presents more as actions of God governed by His will than as attributes of His being:

- Chapter 7 – THE MERCY (& GRACE) OF GOD – His Will To Forgive Or Condemn Whom He Chooses
- Chapter 8 – THE FORGIVENESS & SALVATION OF GOD – Whom God Chooses To Reward With Paradise
- Chapter 9 – THE COMMUNICATION OF GOD – What God Chooses to Say to Mankind
- Chapter 10 – THE WORK OF GOD – What God Chooses to Do in the World
- Chapter 11 – THE RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE AND WRATH OF GOD – How God Chooses To Respond To Us

In Chapters 12-18 I have listed the Biblical attributes of God's personal character, which Islam teaches (*t*), simply mentions (*m*), or in some cases completely denies (*d*):

- Chapter 12 – THE FATHERHOOD (*d*) OF GOD
 - Chapter 13 – THE LIFE (& IMAGE) (*t*) OF GOD
 - Chapter 14 – THE LOVE (*m*) OF GOD
 - Chapter 15 – THE FAITHFULNESS (*m*) ETERNALITY (*t*) & IMMUTABILITY (*t*) OF GOD
 - Chapter 16 – THE TRUTH (*t*) OF GOD
 - Chapter 17 – THE HOLINESS (*m*) OF GOD
 - Chapter 18 – THE PEACE AND JOY (*d*) OF GOD
- [God's IMMANENCE (*d*) and GRACE (*m*) are included in Chapters 4 & 7 but belong in this group.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Books that I have found useful in this study (**website links** are quoted within the study itself):

- ALLAH, THE GOD OF ISLAM, by Georges Housney; Reach Out to the Muslim World, Vol. 6, No. 3&4, 1983, published by Horizons International
- DICTIONARY OF ISLAM, by Thomas Patrick Hughes; Munshiram Manoharial Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi; 1995 edition
- GOD IS ... dialogues on the nature of God, by Kenneth E. Bailey; FFM, Toronto; 2005
- JIHAD IN ISLAM, by S. Abul A'la Maududi, 5th Edition 1991; Islamic Publications Limited, Lahore, Pakistan
- The MOSLEM DOCTRINE OF GOD, by S. M. Zwemer; American Tract Society; 1905

NO GOD BUT ONE; ALLAH OR JESUS, by Nabeel Qureshi; Zondervan, 2016

WHY ISN'T GOD MORE OBVIOUS? Finding the God Who Hides and Seeks, by Paul K. Moser;
RZIM; 2000

APPENDIX 1

ISLAM'S 99 "MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES" OF GOD"

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

A. BACKGROUND: In accordance with the teaching of the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (several collections of Muhammad's sayings according to tradition), Muslim scholars have formulated a list of 99 "names" of God. Although they seem to be more attributes than names, Muslims justify calling them "names" because of what the Qur'an and Hadith say about them. Muslims memorize and recite these "names" repeatedly (some many times each day) in order to worship God or "remember" Him. They do this in obedience to the common interpretation of the following verses, using a rosary of 99 or 33 beads (repeated 3 times):

*"Such as **remember Allah**, standing, sitting, and reclining ..."* (Sura 3:191 – Muhammad Pickthal translation)

*"**The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on him by them ...**"* (Sura 7:180 – Yusuf Ali translation; see also 17:110)

*"Allah! There is no god but He! **To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.**"* (Sura 20:8 – Y.A.; also 59:24)

*"O ye who believe! **Remember Allah with much remembrance.**"* (Sura 33:41 – Muhammad Pickthal)

AbuHurayra reported that, *"Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: 'Allah has **ninety-nine names**, one-hundred less one; and he who memorized them all by heart will enter Paradise.' 'Allah is Witr (one) and loves the odd numbers.'"* (such as 99) – [Bukhari's Hadith collection: Book 93 #489 & Book 75 #419]

Except for "Allah" and "Al-Rab," which are sometimes added at the beginning or end of the 99 names (but are not included in the 99), these "names" do not appear as names *per se*. Instead many of them seem to be derived by Muslim scholars from adjectives, verbs or nouns, which describe God's actions. These actions mainly describe what God does, not so much Who He is. Some Muslims call them "attributes," but others question that, saying attributes describe or compare and God is indescribable and incomparable.

Here is an example of "names" taken from a verse in the Qur'an:

*"He is Allah, **the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower** of Forms (or Colours). To Him belong the Most beautiful names: whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare His Praises and Glory: and He is **the Exalted in Might, the Wise.**"* (Sura 59:24)

From this verse we see His name is Allah, but we also see six "names" derived from adjectives and verbs in this verse. Verbs describe things He does (He creates, evolves and bestows), and adjectives describe things done to Him (He is exalted) and capabilities He has (He is mighty and wise).

Some Islamic scholars have divided God's "99 beautiful names" into several categories; especially two - His "**beautiful attributes**" (The Merciful, The Kind, etc.) and His "**glorious**" or "**terrible attributes**" (The Avenger, The Powerful, etc.).

One website (<http://www.harekrsna.de/artikel/Allah-names.htm>) has listed them in the following six categories. Notice that the "beautiful" and "terrible" categories (the last two categories) contain two thirds (65 out of 99) of the "names:"

1. First category has seven names, which describe the absolute being and unity of Allah;
2. Five names present Him as the Creator of all;
3. Four names present His special moral attributes;
4. Eighteen names refer to His general attributes;
5. Twenty four names, known as **isma-e-jamaliya (beautiful names)** show Him as merciful and gracious;
6. Forty one names, known as **isma-e-jalaliya (glorious and awe-inspiring names)** show Him as the all powerful and absolute Sovereign God. –

Allah is al-Qadir (the Powerful), al-Jabbar (the Strong), al-Hassib (the Reckoner), al-Kabir (the Great), al-Adil (the Just), al-Rabb (the Lord) and al-Qabiz (the Controller). All these names of Allah are of the category of isma-e-jalaliya (glorious names) also translated as terrible names. (22, pp. 35-39)”

Muslim scholars have created different listings of 99. The published lists are not consistent because some names appear in some lists but not in others. Although the first 54 and all but 10 of the next 55 are the same in all lists, there is not an official agreed-upon list which includes only 99 names,. Altogether there seem to be a total of at least 109 different “names” or attributes found in the different lists.

The following is a compiled listing of the 99 “names” in the most popular order (including the others found only in some lists and inserted in this list preceded by an *). This list is then followed (at the bottom of page 4) by the same “names” listed under each chapter of my comparative study of God’s Attributes:

[see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/99_Names_of_Allah (3/16/2018)

<http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/99names.htm>

<http://www.whyislam.org/god/names-and-attributes-of-allah/>

<http://www.aljazeeraah.info/Islamic%20Editorials/2010/October/Allah,%20As%20He%20Described%20Himself%20in%20the%20Holy%20Quran%20By%20Hassan%20Ali%20El-Najjar.htm>]

B. LIST OF ISLAM’S 99 “MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES” OF GOD:

0. **Allah** = “The (one) God” - God’s name, listed more than 3,000 times
0. **Al-Rab (Rubb)** = “The Lord” “Master” – mentioned many times
1. **Ar-Rahman (Rahmaan)** = “The Beneficent,” “Gracious” – Chapters 6 & 7
2. **Ar-Rahim (Raheem)** = “The Merciful” “Mercy Giver” – Chapter 7
3. **Al-Malik (Maalik)** = “The King,” “Sovereign Lord,” “Master,” “Possessor,” “Owner,” “Absolute Ruler” – Chapter 3 (see also 84 **Malik al-Mulk** = “King of the worlds”)
4. **Al-Quddus (Qudoos)** = “The Holy,” “Pure,” “Sacred” – Chapter 17
5. **As-Salam (Salaam)** = “The Peace,” “Source of Peace,” “Peace Maker” – Chapter 18
6. **Al-Mu’min** = “The Faithful,” “Trustworthy,” “Inspirer of Faith” – Chapter 15
7. **Al-Muhaymin (Muhaimin)** = “The Dominant,” “Protector,” “Vigilant,” “Caretaker” – Chapter 3
8. **Al-Aziz (Azeez)** = “The Rare in Power,” “Almighty,” “Powerful,” “Victorious” – Chapter 2
9. **Al-Jabbar (Jabaar)** = “The Compeller,” “Oppressor,” “The Irresistible” – Chapter 2
10. **Al-Mutakabbir** = “The Greatest,” “Majestic,” “Haughty” – Chapter 3
11. **Al-Khaliq (Khaaliq)** = “The Creator” – Chapters 4 & 13
12. **Al-Bari (Baaree)** = “The Maker of order,” “Curer” – Chapters 4 & 13
13. **Al-Musawwir** = “The Fashioner,” “Shaper” – Chapter 4
14. **Al-Ghaffar (Al-Ghafaar)** = “The Forgiver” “Oft Forgiving” – Chapter 8
15. **Al-Qahhar [or Qahaar]** = “The Subduer,” “Dominant,” “Crusher” – Chapters 10 & 11
16. **Al-Wahhab (Wahhaab)** = “The Bestower,” “Grantor” – Chapter 10
17. **Ar-Razzaq (Razzaaq)** = “The Sustainer” “Provider” – Chapter 10
18. **Al-Fattah (Fattaah)** = “The Opener,” “Judge,” “Revealer” – Chapters 9,10 & 11
19. **Al-Alim (Aleem)** = “The All-Knowing,” “Omniscient” – Chapter 2
20. **Al-Qabidh (Qaabidh)** = “The Restrainer,” “Constrictor,” “Grasper” – Chapter 10

21. **Al-Basit (Baasit)** = “The Expander,” “Spreader,” “Releaser,” “Reliever” – Chapter 10
22. **Al-Khafid (Khaafidh)** = “The Abaser,” “Humbler” – Chapter 10
23. **Ar-Rafi (Raafee)** = “The Exalter,” “Ennobler” – Chapters 10 & 12
24. **Al-Mu’izz** = “The Honorer,” “Exalter,” “Strengthener” – Chapters 10 & 12
25. **Al-Mudhill (Muthill)** = “The Dishonorer,” “Humiliator,” “Abaser,” “Misleader,” “Leader Astray” – Chapters 10, 11 & 16
26. **As-Sami (Samee)** = “The All-Hearing” – Chapter 2
27. **Al-Basir (Baseer)** = “The All-Seeing” – Chapter 2
28. **Al-Hakam** = “The Wise One,” “Judge,” “Perfect in Judgment” – Chapters 2, 10 & 11
29. **Al-Adl (Adil)** = “The Just,” “Equitable” – Chapter 11
30. **Al-Latif (Lateef)** = “The Subtle,” “Mysterious” – Chapter 5
31. **Al-Khabir (Khabeer)** = “The All-Aware,” “All-Informed” – Chapter 2
32. **Al-Halim (Haleem)** = “The Forbearer,” “Indulgent,” “Clement” – Chapter 8
33. **Al-Azim (Azeem)** = “The Magnificent,” “Incomparably Great,” “Mighty” – Chapter 3
34. **Al-Ghafur (Ghafoor)** = “The Oft-Forgiving,” “Pardoner,” “Hider of Faults” – Chapter 8
35. **Ash-Shakur (Shakoor)** = “The Appreciative,” “Acknowledger and Rewarder of Thankfulness” – Chapters 10 & 12
36. **Al-Ali (Aly)** = “The High,” “Exalted” – Chapters 4 & 6
37. **Al-Kabir (Kabeer)** = “The Great One,” “Greatest” – Chapter 2
38. **Al-Hafiz** = “The Preserver,” “Guardian” – Chapters 10 & 12
39. **Al-Muqit (Muqteet)** = The Sustainer,” “Nourisher” – Chapter 10
40. **Al-Hasib (Haseeb)** = “The Reckoner,” “Accounter” – Chapters 10 & 11
41. **Al-Jalil (Jaleel)** = “The Majestic,” “Exalted,” “Glorious” – Chapter 6
42. **Al-Karim (Kareem)** = “The Most Generous,” “Bountiful” – Chapter 12
43. **Al-Raqib (Raqeeb)** = “The Guardian,” “Watchful” – Chapter 10
44. **Al-Mujib (Mujeeb)** = “The Responder to prayer,” “Answerer” – Chapter 10
45. **Al-Wasi’u (Waasee)** = “The All Embracing,” “Vast” (in knowledge, forgiveness & knowledge), “Omnipresent” – Chapter 2
46. **Al-Hakim (Hakeem)** = “The Wise,” “Most Just,” “Judicious” – Chapter 11
47. **Al-Wadud (Wadood)** = “The Affectionate,” “Kind,” “Loving” – Chapter 14
48. **Al-Majid (Majeed)** = “The Glorious One” (in power, compassion & kindness), “Illustrious,” “Majestic” – Chapter 6
49. **Al-Baith (Baaith)** = “The Resurrector,” “Awakener,” “Raiser from the dead” – Chapter 10
50. **As-Shahid (Shaheed)** = “The Witness,” “All Seeing” – Chapter 2
51. **Al-Haqq (Huqq)** = “The Truth,” “Reality” – Chapters 15 & 16
52. **Al-Wakil (Wakeel)** = “The Defender,” “Trustee,” “Patron” – Chapter 10
53. **Al-Qawiy (Qawwee)** = “The Powerful,” “Strong,” “Inexhaustible” – Chapter 2
54. **Al-Matin (Mateen)** = “The Forceful One,” “Authoritative” – Chapter 2
- *54.5. **Al-Mawla** = “Guardian,” “Protector” – Chapter 10
55. **Al-Waliy (Walee)** = “The Protector,” “Defender” – Chapter 10
56. **Al-Hameed** = “Praised,” “Praise Worthy,” “Laudable” – Chapter 6
57. **Al-Muhsi (Muhsee)** = “The Accountant,” “Appraiser” – Chapter 10
58. **Al-Mubdi (Mubdee)** = “The Originator,” “Initiator” – Chapter 4
59. **Al-Mu’id (Mu’eed)** = “The Restorer,” “Resurrector” – Chapters 10 & 13
60. **Al-Muhyi (Muhyee)** = “The Giver of Life,” “Quickener” – Chapters 2 & 13
61. **Al-Mumit (Mumeet)** = “The Taker of Life,” “Slayer” – Chapter 2 & 13
62. **Al-Hai (Hai’yyu)** = “The Ever Living,” “Living One” – Chapter 13 & 15
63. **Al-Qayum (Qayyoom)** = “The Sustainer,” “Eternal,” “Self-Existing” – Chapter 15
64. **Al-Wajid (Waajid)** = “The Finder,” “All-Perceiving” – Chapter 10
65. **Al-Maajid** = “The Glorified One,” “Illustrious,” “Magnificent” – Chapter 6
- *65.5. **Al-Mugheeth** = “The Refuge,” “Helper” – Chapter 10
66. **Al-Wahid (Waahid)** = “The One,” “United,” “Incomparable” – Chapter 1
67. **Al-Ahad** = “The Only,” “Uniquely One” – Chapter 1
68. **As-Samad** = “The Eternal,” “Ultimate” – Chapter 15

69. **Al-Qadir (Qaadir)** = “The Omnipotent,” “All-Powerful,” “Able” – Chapter 2
70. **Al-Muqtadir** = “The All-Powerful,” “Prevailing,” “Overcomer” – Chapter 2
71. **Al-Muqaddim** = “The Expeditor,” “Advancer,” “Forewarner” – Chapter 10
72. **Al-Mu’akhir** = “The Delayer,” “Deferrer” – Chapter 10
73. **Al-Awwal** = “The First” – Chapter 15
74. **Al-Aakhir** = “The Last” – Chapter 15
75. **Az-Zahir (Zaahir)** = “The Manifest One,” “Apparent” – Chapters 4 & 5
76. **Al-Batin (Baatin)** = “The Hidden One,” “Latent,” “Unobvious” – Chapter 5
77. **Al-Wali (Waalee)** = “The Patron,” “Protector,” “Governor” – Chapter 3
78. **Al-Muta’ali or Mut’aal** = “The Higher,” “Supreme,” “Most Exalted” – Chapter 4
79. **Al-Barr** = “The Source of Kindness,” “Doer of Good” – Chapter 12
80. **Al-Tawwaab** = “The Acceptor of Repentance,” “Relenting” – Chapter 8
81. **Al-Muntaqim** = “The Avenger,” “Vindictive” – Chapter 11
82. **Al-Afuw** = “the Pardoner,” “Forgiver,” “Eraser of sins” – Chapter 8
83. **Ar-Ra’ouf (Ra’oof)** = “The Kind,” “Indulgent,” “Compassionate” – Chapter 7
84. **Malik al-Mulk** = “King of the Worlds,” “Owner of all” – Chapter 3
85. **Dhu’l-Jalal-Wal-Ikram** = “Lord of Majesty & Generosity” – Chapter 6
86. **Al-Muqsit** = “The Just,” “Equitable,” “Requirer” – Chapters 10 & 11
87. **Al-Jami (Jaami)** = “The Collector,” “Gatherer” – Chapter 10
88. **Al-Ghani (Ghanee)** = “The Generous,” “Wealthy,” “All-Sufficing” – Chapter 12
89. **Al-Mugni (Mughnee)** = “The Sufficer,” “Bestower,” “Enricher” – Chapter 10
- *89.5. **Al-Mu’ti** = “The Giver” – Chapter 10
90. **Al-Mani (Maani)** = “The Prohibiter,” “Preventer of Harm,” “Defender,” “Withholder” – Chapter 10
91. **Ad-Darr (Adh-Dhur, Adh-Dhaarr)** = “The Afflicter,” “Distresser,” “Creator of Harm” – Chapters 10, 11 & 13
92. **An-Nafi (Naafi)** = “The Benefactor,” “Profiter,” “Creator of Good” – Chapters 10 & 13
93. **An-Nur (Noor)** = “The Light” – Chapter 16
94. **Al-Hadi (Haadee)** = “The Guide” – Chapter 16
95. **Al-Badi (Badee’)** = “The Creative One,” “Originator” – Chapters 4 & 13
96. **Al-Baqi (Baaqee)** = “The Everlasting,” “Enduring,” “Immutable” – Chapter 15
- *96.5. **Al-Azali** = “The Eternal in the Past” – Chapter 15
- *96.6. **Al-Abadi** = “Eternal in the Future” – Chapter 13
97. **Al-Warith (Waarith)** = “The Heir,” “Inheritor of All” – Chapter 2
98. **Ar-Rashid (Rasheed)** = “The Guide,” “Provider,” “Infallible” – Chapter 11
99. **As-Sabur (Saboor)** = “The Most Patient,” “Enduring” – Chapters 8 & 11
- *99.5. **Al-Fatir** = “The Originator” – Chapter 4
- *99.6. **Al-Khair** = “The Good” – Chapter 12
- *99.7. **Al-Abqa** = “The Everlasting” – Chapter 15
- *99.8. **Dhul Ma’aarij** = “The One Above,” “The Highest” – Chapter 4
- *99.9. **Dhu Al-’Arsh** = “Possessor of the Throne” – Chapter 3

C. THE 99 NAMES RELATED TO EACH OF GOD’S ATTRIBUTES IN THE 18 CHAPTERS OF MY STUDY:

(Highlighted references seem to be the more important ones)

Chapter 1 - Unity, Oneness of God

0. **Allah** = “The God” – (used more than 3,000 times)
66. **Al-Wahid (Waahid)** = “The One,” “United” – (22 times – e.g., 2:133,163; 4:17; 5:73; 6:19; 9:31; 12:39; **13:16**; **14:48**; 18:110; **38:65**; **39:4**; 40:16)
67. **Al-Ahad** = “The Only,” “Uniquely One” – (1 time – **112:1,2**)

Chapter 2 - Greatness, Power of God

8. **Al-Aziz (Azeez)** = “The Rare in Power,” “Almighty,” “Powerful,” “Victorious” – (64 times – e.g., 2:129; 3:6; 4:158; 9:40; 42:2,3,18; 46:1; 48:7; 59:23)
9. **Al-Jabbar (Jabaar)** = “The Compeller,” “Oppressor,” “Irresistible” – (1 time - 59:23)
19. **Al-Alim (Aleem)** = “The All Knowing,” “Omniscient” – (179 times, e.g. 2:29,32; 2:158; 3:92; 4:35; 5:109,116; 6:73; 9:78; 24:41; 33:40; 34:3,48; 35:38; 72:26)
26. **As-Sami (Samee)** = “The All-Hearing,” (46 times – e.g., 2:127,137,256; 8:17; 17:1; 40:20; 42:11; 49:1)
27. **Al-Basir (Baseer)** = “The All Seeing” (46 times – e.g., 4:58; 17:1; 40:20; 42:11,27)
28. **Al-Hakam** = “The Wise,” “Perfect in Judgment” – (39 times – e.g., 2:32,129,209,220; 7:87; 10:109; 12:80; 22:69)
31. **Al-Khabir (Khabeer)** = “The All-Aware,” “All-Informed” – (45 times – e.g., 6:18; 17:30; 49:13; 59:18)
37. **Al-Kabir (Kabeer)** = “The Great one,” “Greatest” – (5 times – 13:9; 22:62; 31:30; 34:23; 40:12)
45. **Al-Wasi’u (Waasi)** = “The All Embracing,” “Vast” (in knowledge, forgiveness & wisdom), “Omnipresent” – (9 times – 2:115,247,261; 2; 268; 3:73; 4:130; 5:54; 53:32)
50. **As-Shahid (Shaheed)** = “The Witness,” “All Seeing” – (20 times – e.g., 3:98; 4:33; 4:166; 22:17; 41:53; 48:28)
53. **Al-Qawiy (Qawwee)** = “The Powerful,” “Strong,” “Inexhaustible” – (9 times – 8:52; 11:66; 22:40,74; 33:25; 40:22; 42:19; 57:25; 58:21)
54. **Al-Matin (Mateen)** = “The Forceful One,” “Firm,” “Authoritative” – (1 time – 51:58)
60. **Al-Muhyi (Muhyee)** = “The Giver of Life,” “Quickener” – (5 times – 7:158; 25:23; 30:50; 41:39; 57:2)
61. **Al-Mumit (Mumeet)** = “The Taker of Life,” “Slayer” – (10+ times – 2:28,258,259; 3:156; 7:158; 15:23; 40:11; 53:44; 57:2; 80:21)
69. **Al-Qadir (Qadir)** = “The Omnipotent,” “All-Powerful,” “Able” – (12 times – 6:37,65; 17:99; 23:18,95; 36:81; 46:33; 68:25; 70:40; 75:4,40; 86:8)
70. **Al-Muqtadir** = “The All-Powerful,” “Prevailing,” “Overcomer” – (5 times – 18:45; 43:42; 54:42,55; 77:23)
97. **Al-Warith (Waarith)** = “The Heir,” “Inheritor of All” – (5 times – 15:23; 21:89; 23:10; 28:58; 57:10)

Chapter 3 - Sovereignty of God

0. **Al-Rab (Rubb)** = The Lord” “Master” – (many times – e.g., 1:1,2; 2:131; 5:28; 7:54; 10:3; 12:100; 13:2; 21:22; 19:65; 23:86,116; 26:24; 27:26; 35:5; 38:66; 39:75; 40:7; 43:82; 44:7; 70:40; 78:37)
3. **Al Malik** = “The King,” “Sovereign Lord,” “Master,” “Possessor,” “Owner,” “Absolute Ruler” – (6 times = 1:4; 20:114; 22:56; 23:116; 59:23; 62:1) **Malik al-Mulk** = “King of the Worlds,” “Owner of all” – (3 times = 3:26; 6:73; 17:111)
7. **Al-Muhaymin (Muhaimin)** = “The Dominant,” “Protector,” “Vigilant,” “Care Taker” – (1 time - 59:23)
10. **Al-Mutakabbir** = “The Greatest,” “Majestic,” “Haughty” (1 time – 59:23)
33. **Al-Azim (Azeem)** = “The Magnificent,” “Incomparably Great,” “Mighty” – (8 times – 2:255; 42:4; 9:129; 27:26; 56:74,96; 69:33,52)
77. **Al-Wali (Waalee)** = “The Patron,” “Protector,” “Governor” – (13:11; 22:7)
84. **Malik al-Mulk** = “King of the Worlds,” “Owner of all” – (1 time – 3:26)
- 99.9. **Dhu Al-‘Arsh** = “Possessor of the Throne” – (2 times – 40:15; 88:15)

Chapter 4 - Transcendence of God

11. **Al-Khaliq (Khaaliq)** = “The Creator” – (8 time – 6:102; 13:16; 23:14; 36:81; 37:125; 39:62; 40:62; 59:24)
12. **Al-Bari (Baaree)** = “The Maker of Order,” “Curer” – (4 times – Maker in 2:54; 59:24 & Curer in 3:49; 5:110)
13. **Al-Musawwir** = “The Fashioner,” “Shaper” – (1 time – 59:24)
36. **Al-Ali (Aly)** = “The High,” “Exalted” – (8 times – 2:255; 4:34; 22:62; 31:30; 34:23; 40:12; 42:4,51)
58. **Al-Mubdi (Mubdee)** = “The Originator,” “Initiator” – (surmised from verbs in 7:29; 10:4,34; 21:104; 27:64; 29:19,20; 30:11,27; 32:7; 85:13)
75. **Az-Zahir (Zaahir)** = “The Manifest One,” “Apparent” – (1 time – 57:3)
78. **Al-Muta’ali or Mut’aal** = “The Higher,” “Supreme,” “Most Exalted” – (1 time – 13:9)

95. **Al-Badi (Badee)** = “The Creative One,” “Originator” – (2 times – **2:117; 6:101**)
 99.5. **Al-Fatir**: “The Originator” – (6 times – 6:14; 14:10; 35:1; 39:46; 42:11)
 99.6. **Dhul-Ma’arij** = “The One Above,” “The Highest” – (1 time – **70:3**)

Chapter 5 - Inscrutability of God

30. **Al-Latif (Lateef)** = “The Subtle,” “Mysterious” – (7 times, e.g., **6:103; 12:100; 22:63; 31:16; 33:34; 67:14**)
 75. **Az-Zahir (Zaahir)** = “The Manifest One,” “Apparent” – (1 time – **57:3**)
 76. **Al-Batin (Baatin)** = “The Hidden One,” “Latent,” “Unobvious” – (1 time – **57:3**)

Chapter 6 - Name and Glory of God

0. **Allah** = “The God” – (more than 3,000 times)
 0. **Al-Rab (Rubb)** = “The Lord” – (many times)
 1. **Ar-Rahman (Rahmaan)** = “The Beneficent,” “Gracious” – (169 times; intro to almost all suras)
 36. **Al-Ali** = “The Exalted,” “High,” – (6 times – 2:255; **4:34; 31:30; 42:4,51; 34:23**)
 41. **Al-Jalil (Jaleel)** = “The Majestic,” “Exalted” – (3 times – **7:143; 55:27; 55:78**)
 48. **Al-Majeed (Majid)** = “The Glorious One,” “Majestic” (in power, compassion & kindness) – (1 time – **11:73**)
 56. **Al-Hameed** = “Praised,” “Praise Worthy,” “Laudable” – (17 times – 2:267; 4:131; 11:73; **14:1,8; 22:24,64; 31:12,26; 34:6; 35:15; 41:42; 42:28; 57:24; 60:5; 64:6; 85:8**)
 65. **Al-Maajid (Majid)** = “The Glorified One,” “Illustrious,” “Magnificent” (2 times – **11:73; 85:15;**)
 85. **Dhu’l-Jalal-Wal-Ikram** = “Lord of Majesty & Generosity” – (2 times – **55:27,78**)

Chapter 7 - Mercy of God

1. **Ar-Rahman** = “The Beneficent,” “Gracious” – (169 times; intro to almost all suras)
 2. **Ar-Rahim** = “The Most Merciful” “Mercy Giver” – (114 times; intro to almost all suras)
 83. **Ar-Ra’uf (Ra’oof, Ra’uuf)** = “The Kind,” “Indulgent,” “Compassionate” – (11 times – 2:143,207; 3:30; **9:117,128; 16:7,47; 22:65; 24:20; 57:9; 59:10**)

Chapter 8 - Forgiveness and Salvation of God

14. **Al-Ghaffar (Al-Ghafaar)** = “The Forgiver,” “Oft-Forgiving” – (5 times – **20:82; 38:66; 40:3; 39:5; 71:10**)
 32. **Al-Halim (Haleem)** = “The Forbearer,” “Indulgent,” “Clement” – (10 times – e.g., **2:225,235; 17:44; 22:59; 35:41**)
 34. **Al-Ghafur (Al-Ghafoor)** = “The Oft-Forgiving,” “Pardoner,” “Hider of Faults” – (91 times – e.g., **2:173; 8:69; 16:110; 41:32**)
 80. **Al-Tawwaab** = “The Acceptor of Repentance,” “Relenting” – (11 times – **2:37,54,128,160; 4:16,64; 9:104,118; 24:10; 49:12; 110:3**)
 82. **Al-Afuw** = “the Pardoner,” “Forgiver,” “Eraser of Sins” – (5 times - **4:43,99,149; 22:60; 58:2**)
 99. **As-Sabur (Saboora)** = “The Most Patient,” “Enduring” – (3 times – **2:153; 3:200; 103:3**)

Chapter 9 - Communication, Word of God

18. **Al-Fattah (Fattaah)** = “The Opener” (6:59; 7:89; 35:2), “Revealer” (**34:26**)

Chapter 10 - Work of God

15. **Al-Qahhar (or Qahaar)** = “The Subduer,” “Dominant,” “Crusher” (6 times – **12:39; 13:16; 14:48; 38:65; 39:4; 40:16**)
 16. **Al-Wahhab (Wahhaab)** = “The Bestower,” “Grantor” – (3 times - **3:8; 38:9; 38:35**)
 17. **Ar-Razzaq (Razzaaq)** = “The Provider,” “Sustainer” – (5 times – 22:58; 23:72; 34:39; **51:58; 62:11**)
 18. **Al-Fattah (Fattaah)** = “The Opener” (6:59; 7:89; 35:2), “Revealer” (**34:26**)
 20. **Al-Qabidh (Qaabidh)** = “The Restrainer,” “Constrictor,” “Grasper” – (one time - **2:245**)
 21. **Al-Basit (Baasit)** = “The Extender,” “Spreader,” “Releaser,” “Reliever” (one time - **2:245**)
 22. **Al-Khafid (Khaafidh)** = “The Abaser,” “Humbler” (one time - **56:3**)

23. **Ar-Rafi (Raafee)** = "The Exalter," "Ennobler" – (20 times – 2:62,93; 3:55; 4:158; **6:83**,165; 4:154,158; 12:76; 13:2; 19:57; 24:36; 43:32; 52:5; 55:7; **58:11**; 79:28; 80:14; 88:28; 94:4;)
24. **Al-Mu'izz** = "The Honorer," "Exalter," "Strengtheners" – (one time – **3:26**)
25. **Al-Mudhill (Muthill)** = "The Dishonorer," "Humiliator," "Abaser," "Leader Astray" – (1 time – **3:26**)
28. **Al-Hakam** = "The Wise," "Judge," "Arbitrator" (one time – **22:69**)
35. **Ash-Shakur (Shakoor)** = "The Appreciative," "Acknowledger and Rewarder of Thankfulness," "Thankful" – (4 times - **35:30,34; 42:23; 64:17**);
38. **Al-Hafiz (Hafeedh)** = "The Preserver," "Guardian" – (4 times in singular – **11:57**; 12: 64; **34:21**; **42:6** and 2 times in plural – 15:9; 21:82)
39. **Al-Muqit (Muqteet)** = The Sustainer," "Nourisher" – (1 time – **4:85**)
40. **Al-Hasib (Haseeb)** = "The Reckoner," "Accounter" – (4 times – **4:6,86**; 6:62; **33:39**)
43. **Al-Raqib (Raqeeb)** = "The Guardian," "Watchful" – (2 times – **4:1**; **5:117**)
44. **Al-Mujib (Mujeeb)** = "The Responder to Prayer," "Answerer" – (2 times – **11:61**; 37:75)
49. **Al-Baith (Baaith)** = "The Resurrector," "Awakener," "Raiser from the Dead" – (3 times – 6:36; **22:7**; 64:7)
52. **Al-Wakil (Wakeel)** = "The Defender," "Trustee" – (13 times – e.g., **3:173**; 4:81,132,171; **28:28**; **73:9**)
- *54.5. **Al-Mawla** = "Guardian," "Protector" – (1 time – 47:11)
55. **Al-Waliy (Walee)** = "Protector," "Defender" – (many times – e.g., 2:107,120,257; 3:68,122; **4:45**; **7:196**; 12:101; 13:11; 22:78; **42:9,28**; **45:19**)
57. **Al-Muhsi (Muhsee)** = "The Accountant," "Appraiser" – (7 times – 19:94; 58:6; **72:28**; **78:29**; 82:10-12)
59. **Al-Mu'id (Mu'eed)** = "The Restorer," "Resurrector" – (11 times – 7:29; **10:4,34**; 17:51; 20:29; 21:104; **27:64**; **29:19**; 30:11,27; **85:13**)
64. **Al-Wajid (Waajid)** = "The Finder," "All-Perceiving" – (2 times – **38:44**; 93:6)
- *65.5. **Al-Mugheeth** = "The Refuge," "Helper" – (not in the Qur'an)
71. **Al-Muqaddim** = "The Expeditor," "Advancer," "Forewarner" – (2 times – **16:61**; 50:28)
72. **Al-Mu'akhir** = "the Delayer," "Deferrer" – (6 times – 14:10,42; 16:61; 35:45; 63:11; **71:4**)
87. **Al-Jami (Jaami)** = "The Collector," "Gatherer" – (2 times – **3:9**; 4:140)
86. **Al-Muqsit** = "The Just," "Equitable," "Requiter" – (4 times – **3:18**; 5:42; 49:9; 60:8)
89. **Al-Mugni (Mughnee)** = "The Sufficer," "Bestower," "Enricher" – (4 times – 4:130; **9:28**; 24:32,33)
- *89.5. **Al-Mu'ti** = "The Giver" – (1 time – 108:1)
90. **Al-Mani (Maani)** = "The Prohibiter," "Preventer of Harm," "Defender," "Withholder" – (2 times – 21:43; 59:2)
91. **Ad-Darr (Adh-Dhur, Adh-Dhaarr)** = "The Afflicter," "Distresser," "Creator of Harm" – (5 times – **6:17**; 10:18; 22:10; 25:55; 48:11)
92. **An-Nafi (Naafi)** = "The Benefactor," "Profiter," "Creator of Good" – (10:18; 22:10; 25:55; **30:37**; 48:11)

Chapter 11 - Righteousness, Justice, Wrath and Patience of God

98. **Ar-Rashid (Rasheed)** = "The Righteous Guide," "Provider," "Infallible" – (6 times – 2:186,256; 18:10,17; 19:24; 21:51; **72:10**)
15. **Al-Qahhar (Qahaar)** = "The Subduer," "Dominant," "Crusher" – (6 times – **12:39**; **13:16**; **14:48**; **38:65**; **39:4**; **40:16**)
18. **Al-Fattah (Fattaah)** = "The Opener," "Judge," "Revealer" (6:59; 7:89; 35:2)
28. **Al-Hakam** = "The Wise One," "Judge," "Arbitrator" – (one time – **22:69**)
29. **Al-Adl (Adil)** = "The Just," "Equitable" – (not in the Qur'an)
40. **Al-Hasib (Haseeb)** = "The Reckoner," "Accounter" "bringer of judgment" – (3 times – **4:6**; **4:86**; **33:39**)
46. **Al-Hakim (Hakeem)** = "Exalted In Might," "Most Wise," "The Best To Decide" – (39 times – e.g., 2:32,129,209,220,260; 7:87; 10:109; 12:80; 22:69; **31:27**; **46:2**; **57:1**; **66:2**; 95:8)
86. **Al-Muqsit** = "The Just," "Equitable," "Requiter" - (1 time - **3:18**)
25. **Al-Mudhill (Muthill)** = "The Dishonorer," "Humiliator," "Abaser," "Leader Astray" – (1 time – **3:26**)
81. **Al-Muntaqim** = "The Avenger," "Vindictive" – (3 times – 32:22; **43:41**; **44:16**)

91. **Ad-Darr (Adh-Dhur, Adh-Dhaarr)** = “The Afflicter,” “Distresser,” “Creator of Harm” – (5 times – 6:17; 10:18; 22:10; 25:55; 48:11)
99. **As-Sabur (Saboor)** = “The Most Patient,” “Enduring” – (Sura 2:153; 3:17,200; 103:3)

Chapter 12 - Fatherhood of God

38. **Al-Hafiz (Hafeedh)** = “The Preserver,” “Guardian,” “Caretaker” – (6 times – 11:57; 12: 64; 15:9; 21:82; 34:21; 42:6)
42. **Al- Karim (Kareem)** = “The Most Generous,” “Bountiful” – (3 times – 23:116; 27:40; 82:6)
79. **Al-Barr** = “The Source of Kindness,” “Doer of Good” – (1 time – 52:28)
88. **Al-Ghani (Ghune)** = “The Wealthy,” “Self-Sufficient,” “Generous” – (19 times – e.g., 2:263,267,273; 6:133; 10:68; 39:7; 47:38; 57:24)
- *99.6. **Al-Khair** = “The Good” – (1 time – 20:73)
23. **Ar-Rafi (Raafee)** = “The Exalter,” “Ennobler” – (2 times – 6:83; 58:11)
24. **Al-Mu’izz** = “The Honorer,” “Exalter,” “Strengthened” (1 time – 3:26)
35. **Ash-Shakur (Shakoor)** = “The Appreciative,” “Acknowledger and Rewarder of Thankfulness” – (4 times – 35:30,34; 42:23; 64:17)

Chapter 13 - Life and Image of God

11. **Al-Khaliq (Khaaliq)** = “The Creator” – (3 time – 23:14; 37:125; 59:24)
12. **Al-Bari (Baaree)** = “The Maker of Order,” “Curer” – (4 times – Maker in 2:54; 59:24 & Curer in 3:49; 5:110)
59. **Al-Mu’id (Mu’eed)** = “The Restorer,” “Resurrector” – (7:29; 10:4,34; 17:51; 20:29; 21:104; 27:64; 29:19; 30:11,27; 85:13)
60. **Al-Muhyi (Muhyee)** = “The Giver of Life,” “Quickener” – (5 times – 7:158; 25:23; 30:50; 41:39; 57:2)
61. **Al-Mumit (Mumeet)** = “The Taker of Life,” “Slayer” – (10+ times – 2:28,258,259; 3:156; 7:158; 15:23; 40:11; 53:44; 57:2; 80:21)
62. **Al-Hai (Hayy)** = “The Ever Living” “Living One” – (3 times – 20:111; 25:58; 40:65)
91. **Ad-Darr (Ad-Dhaar)** = “The Afflicter,” “Distresser,” “Creator of Harm” – (6:17; 10:18; 22:10; 25:55; 48:11)
92. **An-Nafi (Naafi)** = “The Benefactor,” “Profiter,” “Creator of Good” – (5 times – 10:18; 22:10; 25:55; 30:37; 48:11)
95. **Al-Badi (Badee’)** = “The Creative One,” “Originator” – (2 times – 2:117; 6:101)
- *96.6. **Al-Abadi** = “Eternal in the Future” – (Sura ?)

Chapter 14 - Love of God

47. **Al-Wadud (Wadood)** = “The Affectionate,” “Loving” – (2 times – 11:90; 85:14)

Chapter 15 - Faithfulness and Eternality of God

6. **Al-Mu’min** = “The Faithful,” “Trustworthy,” “Inspirer of Faith” – (1 time = 59:23)
51. **Al-Haqq (Huqq)** = “The Truth,” “Reality” – (10 times – 6:62; 10:30,32; 18:44; 20:114; 22:6,62; 23:116; 24:25; 31:30)
62. **Al-Hai (Hai’yyu)** = “The Ever Living,” “Living One” – (5 times – 2:255; 3:2; 20:111; 25:58; 40:65)
63. **Al-Qayum (Qayyoom)** = “The Sustainer,” “Eternal,” “Self-Existing” – (3 times – 2:255; 3:2; 20:111)
68. **As-Samad** = “The Eternal,” “Ultimate” – (1 time – 112:2)
73. **Al-Awwal** = “The First” – (1 time – 57:3)
74. **Al-Aakhir** = “The Last” – (1 time – 57:3)
96. **Al-Baqi (Baaqee)** = “The Everlasting,” “The Enduring,” “Immutable” – (1 time – 28:88; 55:27)
- *96.5. **Al-Azali** = “The Eternal in the Past” – (Sura ?)
- *99.7. **Al-Abqa** = “The Everlasting” – (1 time – 20:73)

Chapter 16 - Truthfulness of God

51. **Al-Haqq (Huqq)** = “The Truth,” “Reality” – (10 times – 6:62; 10:30,32; 18:44; 20:114; 22:6,62; 23:116; 24:25; 31:30)
25. **Al-Mudhill (Muthill)** = “The Misleader,” “Leader Astray” – (1 time - 3:18)

93. *An-Nur (Noor)* = "The Light" – (2 times – **24:35**; 39:69)
94. *Al-Hadi (Haadee)* = "The Guide" – (2 times – **22:54**; 25:31)

Chapter 17 - Holiness of God

4. *Al-Quddus (Qudoos)* = "The Holy," "Pure," "Sacred" – (2 times = **59:23**; **62:1**)

Chapter 18 - Peace and Joy of God

5. *As-Salam (Salaam)* = "The Peace," "Source of Peace," "Peace Maker" – (1 time = **59:23**)

CHAPTER ONE

THE ONENESS OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Oneness:

A. God's Oneness/Unity

B. God's Uniqueness

C. My Reactions

Under each topic we will look first at what the Qur'an teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S ONENESS OR UNITY

ISLAM:

The usual English translation of the Arabic word *tawheed* is "unity" or "oneness," However, I believe Islam's teaching about God's *tawheed* is more "singleness" or "oneness," but certainly not "unity."

1. GOD'S SINGLENES FOUND AMONG HIS "NAMES:" Islam has listed *99 "most beautiful names" of God, for use in worship as instructed in the Qur'an:

"The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on him by them ..." (Sura 7:180)

In doing so, they recite these "names" as they thumb through a rosary of 33 beads 3 times. These "names" are mainly attributes of God.

Out of the 99 the following three relate directly to God's oneness:

Allah = *The God* [appears about 3000 times in the Qur'an] "**Allah**" is considered to be **God's personal name**. Many scholars say it is a contraction of the definite article "Al" with "*ilah*," the generic Arabic word for a deity. Thus "*Al ilah*," became "*Allah*," meaning "The (one) God." The Muslim profession of faith is, "There is no *ilah* except *Allah*," or "There is no god except *The God*." This name expresses God's singleness and is a rejection of the many idols worshipped by the pagan Arabs before Islam.

Al-Wahid = The One, United [22 times in Qur'an; e.g. 13:16; 14:48; 38:65; 39:4]

Al-Ahad = The Only, Unique One [appears 1 time in the Qur'an – 112:1]

*[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

2. GOD'S SINGLENES IN HIS BEING OR ESSENCE: One Islamic theologian defines *tawheed* like this:

*“Tawheed in Arabic means attributing Oneness to Allaah and describing Him as being **One and Unique, with no partner or peer in His Essence and Attributes.**”* (<https://islamqa.info/en/49030>)

There are several facets in this definition, which we will look at both here and in part B. So first we see that His *tawheed* means **He is the only God and He has no partners**:

God’s ***tawheed*** is considered by most as **Islam’s foundational doctrine**:

“... no god is there but the one God, supreme and irresistible... a message supreme...” (Sura 38:65,67)

“Tawhid constitutes the foremost article of the Muslim profession of faith ... Muslims believe that the entirety of the Islamic teaching rests on the principle of Tawhid.” - (wikipedia.org/wiki/Tawhid)

“Tawheed is the main foundation upon which the religion of Islam stands ... the entire Qur’an is only a call to Tawheed ...” – (<https://beginnerinislam.wordpress.com/2011/09/24/the-essence-of-tawheed-explained-part-3-importance-of-tawheed/>)

Tawheed refers not only to God’s being (i.e., Who He is), but also to the nature of Islam as a religion. *Tawheed* not only means one God (*Allah*); it also means one final prophet (*Muhammad*), one law (*Shariah*), one people (*Ummah*), one government under one *Caliph*, etc. So **there is no room for questioning or diversity of opinion. Tawheed is not unity within diversity. It is dogmatic singleness.**

3. GOD’S SINGLENESSE SEEN IN ISLAM’S CONFESSION OR CREED: Islam’s basic declaration is, *“There is no god but The God (*Allah*); Muhammad is the apostle of God (*Allah*).”*

Making this confession is one of the “five pillars” (duties) of Islam. It is spoken into the ear of a newborn infant, is recited during the call to prayer 5 times daily, is hung or written on walls and vehicles, is chanted by *Sufi* Muslims repeatedly with the hope of bringing themselves into a mystic oneness with God, is repeated as the public confession of a non-Muslim converting to Islam and is the last thing spoken in the ear of a dying Muslim (to help him repeat it correctly at the demand of the two inquisition angels they believe will confront him in the grave).

This creedal confession has two parts. Our concern now is only with the first part (*“There is no god but The God ...”*) which states Islam’s monotheistic (Unitarian) belief in one single God.

4. GOD’S SINGLENESSE SEEN IN THE QUR’AN’S TEACHING: The Qur’an’s emphasis on God’s singleness includes:

a. God, The One And Only: Many verses stress God’s absolute oneness:

“He is God, the one and only.” (Sura 112:1 see also 6:22; 16:22; 37:4)

“And your God is one God. There is no god but He, most gracious, most merciful.” (Sura 2:163 – also see 2:255; 3:2,6,18; 40:3; 59:22,23)

b. God Has No Partners. Significantly the Muslim “confession” is essentially a negative statement, repudiating both paganism and Christianity. It puts a lot of emphasis on what God is not. The Qur’an repeatedly denounces the Christian “Trinity” as being belief in three gods, and the only unforgivable sin in Islam is *“shirk”* (“partnership”) – believing God has **partners**, i.e., polytheism.

“... We shall say to those who ascribed partners (to us), ‘Where are the partners whom ye (invented and) talked about?’ ...No partner hath He...” (Sura 6:22,163; see also 23:91,92)

“Do they indeed ascribe to Him as partners things that can create nothing, but are themselves created?” (Sura 7:191)

*“And I follow the ways of my fathers,- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and **never could we attribute any partners whatever to Allah ...**” (Sura 12:38)*

*“... **Far is He above having the partners they ascribe to Him!**” (Sura 16:3)*

*“**They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah ...**” (Sura 5:73)*

c. The One Allah Is The Same God Worshipped By The Jews:

*“Will ye dispute with us about **Allah**, seeing that **He is our Lord and your Lord ...?**” (Sura 2:139)*

*“And **dispute ye not with the People of the Book ... but say, ‘We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).’**” (Sura 29:46)*

d. Jesus Is Not God Or The Son Of God. The Qur’an says anyone who believes that Jesus is God or the Son of God is blaspheming and cursed by God:

*“**They do blaspheme who say: ‘Allah is Christ the son of Mary.’ ... Whoever joins other gods with Allah,- Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode ...**” (Sura 5:75)*

*“... **the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth ... Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!**” (Sura 9:30)*

THE BIBLE: The oneness of God is not unique to Islam. In fact God repeatedly revealed this truth to the patriarchs and prophets of Israel at least 1800 years before Muhammad:

*“Hear, O Israel: **The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5)*

This key verse, which the Jews call, *Shema Yisraeil* (“Hear, O Israel”) was revealed to the prophet Moses in the Torah (called the *Taurat* in the Qur’an). It is a simple creedal statement in which we find two truths and one command. The two truths are:

*“The Lord” (is) “**our God,**”
“**the Lord is one**” (united).*

And the command is:

*“You shall **love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**”*

1. E’HAD: First let us notice that the word translated, “**one**” in the original Hebrew is **e’had**. It can also be translated, “**united**” and is similar to “*tauheed*” in Arabic. This word is used to describe **other things that are united**. For example God used the same word in the following verses:

*“God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. **And there was evening and there was morning, one** [e’had] **day.**” (Genesis 1:5, RSV) [uniting both morning and evening as “one day”]*

*“Therefore a **man** shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to **his wife**, and they shall become **one** [e’had] **flesh.**” (Genesis 2:24). [uniting both man and wife as “one flesh”]*

2. ONLY ONE GOD: The Bible certainly does not teach that there are three gods! In fact, the Bible dogmatically declares at least *35 times that God is one! Here are four of them written out plus the references for all the others:

*[for a complete list of all 35 verses written out see Appendix 2]

- a. **In the Torah (*Taurat* in Qur'an):** “know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; **there is no other.**” (Deuteronomy 4:39) [see also Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4; 32:39]
- b. **In the Psalms (*Zabur* in Qur'an):** “For you are great and do wondrous things; **you alone are God.**” (Psalm. 83:18) [see also Psalm 86:10]
- c. **In other books of the prophets (*Sahifat-ul-Anbiya* in Arabic):** “Thus says the LORD... **‘I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god... you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.’**” (Isaiah 44:6,8) [see also ; 2 Samuel 7:22; I Kings 8:60; 2 Kings 19:19; Nehemiah 9:5; Isaiah 37:16,20; 43:10,11; 44:24; 45:5,6,18,21,22; 46:9; 48:12,13; Hosea 13:4]
- d. **In the New Testament/Gospel (*Injil* in Qur'an):** “... ‘an idol has no real existence,’ and ... **‘there is no God but one.’**” (I Corinthians 8:4) [see also Mark 12:29; John 5:44;17:3; Romans 3:29,30; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; I Timothy 1:17; 2:5 James 2:19; Jude 25]

3. GOD’S ONENESS IS UNITY NOT SINGLENESS. The Bible teaches that God’s unity is not singleness or Monism, but that God is united within Himself. He lives in community and communicates within Himself.

See in the following verses how God expresses His unity with His own “right hand,” His “arm,” His “righteousness” and His own “self” as if they were other beings:

“My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and **my right hand spread out the heavens.**” (Isaiah 48:13)

“The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice ... then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.” (Isaiah 59:15,16)

“... and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD...” (Genesis 22:16)

And note the unity of God with His own Spirit (“*Spirit of God*”) and His Word (“*said*,” “*mouth*”) in His work of creation, and how He refers to Himself as “*us*” and “*our*”:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ... And the Spirit of God was hovering [brooding or incubating] over the face of the waters. And God said [God’s Word], “Let there be light,” and there was light... “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image...’” (Genesis 1:1,3,26)

“For the mouth of the LORD has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them.” (Isaiah 34:16)

4. GOD’S TRIUNE BEING: While God Is One Being, He Is A Triune Being. Christian scholars have created the term “Trinity” in order to describe what they believe the Bible teaches about God’s triune being. Although the word, “Trinity” itself is not found in the Bible, God’s tri-unity is found many times!

[For a further explanation of the Trinity, see Appendix 3]

a) Three “Persons” Of The Trinity Seen Together: The Bible contains many references to God (the Father), His Spirit (Holy Spirit) and His Word (the Son), and I have found at least *44 passages where all three “persons” of the trinity are named. Here are five:

*[For a complete list see Appendix 4]

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

Notice that all three have *one* “name” (not “names”) because they are one.

*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same **Spirit**; and there are varieties of service, but the same **Lord**; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same **God** who empowers them all in everyone.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)*

Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for service to the Lord Jesus and are empowered by God the Father. They are one so all three work in unity.

*“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, ... according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, in the sanctification of **the Spirit**, for obedience to **Jesus Christ** and ...” (1 Peter 1:1,2)*

Peter was foreknown by “God the Father” and sanctified by God “the Spirit” for the purpose of obedience to “Jesus Christ” Who is God the Son. All three are working together in the lives of His people.

*“The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)*

The Triune God blesses believers with grace, love and fellowship.

*“In the beginning, **God** created the heavens and the earth ... And **the Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters. And God **said**, ‘Let there be light, ...’ (Genesis 1:1-3)*

Even in the beginning, all three “persons” created everything together in unity. God the Father “created,” The Holy Spirit was “hovering” or brooding over what was being created and everything was brought into being through God’s Word (Jesus).

b) Three Nouns Describing God’s Triune Nature: In describing the three “persons” of the triune God we can say He is the source of all things, the communication with all things and the power for all things:

i) THE SOURCE (God, the Father): One reason He is called, “Father” is because He is the invisible source of all things:

*“... **there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things** ...” (1 Corinthians 8:6)*

*“... And **all things are from God.**” (1 Corinthians 11:12)*

The Bible also says no human has ever or can ever see the Father, the source:

*“**No one has ever seen God** ...” (John 1:18)*

[God] *“who alone has immortality, **who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion.**” (1 Timothy 6:16)*

ii) THE WORD OR COMMUNICATION (God, the Son): God’s Word comes out from God the Father, the source of all things. Through His Word God **created the universe, spoke to the prophets and reveals salvation to us:**

*“**By the word of the LORD the heavens were made** ...” (Psalm 33:6)*

*“After these things **the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision** ...” (Genesis 15:1)*

*“**so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth**” (Isaiah 55:11)*

*“... **the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**” (James 1:21)*

Notice that God’s Word is **eternal**, and only God is eternal:

*“**Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.**” (Psalm 119:89)*

*“**but the word of the Lord endures forever** ...” (1 Peter 1:25 - NASB)*

God sent His Word into the world to become a man called “Jesus” Who took our place and died for our sins (“Jesus” in Hebrew means “**God** is salvation”):

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father ...” (John 1:1-3,14)

So, Jesus is God communicated to us; God in human flesh:

*“... the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the **Son of the Blessed?**’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power ...”* (Mark 14:61,62)

“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:9)

One reason He is called “the Son of God” is because **He came out from His Father**, (What other man ever came out from God in heaven?):

“Jesus said to them, ‘... I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.’” (John 8:42 - NASB)

“For I have come down from heaven ...” (John 6:38)

A second reason He is called “the Son of God” is that **He is just like His Father** (We say, “Like father, like son”) and came to reveal His Father:

*“Jesus said to him, “... **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father** ...”* (John 14:9)

*“So Jesus said to them, ‘... **the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise... For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.**”* (John 5:19,21-23)

The third reason He is called the Son of God is that **He is loved by the Father:**

[speaking to Jesus] *“a voice came from heaven, ‘You are **my beloved Son** ...”* (Mark 1:11)

*“... a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is **my beloved Son** ... listen to him.’”* (Matthew 17:5)

*“**Father**, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am ... because **you loved me before the foundation of the world.**”* (John 17:24)

**[See Appendix 5 for a more complete list of verses showing Jesus is God]*

iii) THE POWER (God, the Spirit): The Holy Spirit expresses the power of God. By His Spirit, He: i) **created the world**, ii) **caused the virgin Mary to miraculously become pregnant** and iii) **now is empowering believers to be born of God, to witness for Him and to live godly lives:**

i) *“In the beginning, **God created the heavens and the earth... And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**”* (Genesis 1:1,2)

ii) *“And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered her, ‘**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.**”* (Luke 1:34,35)

iii) *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and **that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** ...”* (John 3:6);
“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my

witnesses ..." (Acts 1:8); "that ... he may grant you to **be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being**" (Ephesians 3:16)

So God's Spirit is God Himself. **God is Spirit**. But God's Spirit is not an angel or a separate being, any more than my spirit is a second being from myself:

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

*"who knows a person's thoughts except **the spirit of that person, which is in him**? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except **the Spirit of God**. Now **we have received ... the Spirit who is from God**, that we might understand the things freely given us by God."* (1 Corinthians 2:11,12)

*"Now **the Lord is the Spirit**, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom ... this comes from **the Lord who is the Spirit**."* (2 Corinthians 3:17,18)

Notice that all three "persons" of the "Trinity" are the "Spirit:"

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

*"inquiring what person or time **the Spirit of Christ** in them was indicating ..."* (1 Peter 1:11)

*"But you will receive power when **the Holy Spirit** has come upon you ..."* (Acts 1:8)

[For a further explanation of the Trinity, see Appendix 3]

5. AMAZING DIVERSITY WITHIN GOD'S ONENESS/UNITY: This is reflected in God's creation. We know little about the diversity within God other than God's triune being, but His creation of the universe with an immeasurable diversity of objects, dimensions and facets is beyond amazing and certainly indicates how He Himself must be! Snowflakes are an example. It is said that no two are identical. Also God made all mankind out of one man:

"And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth ..." (Acts 17:26)

Science has now discovered humanity's incredible genetic diversity. Out of Adam's body have been born many billions of human beings and not one of them has the same identical genetic structure as another! And He created man as male and female:

*"So God created man **in his own image ... male and female he created them**."* (Genesis 1:27)

I recently heard an amazing report on the radio of experiments being conducted and funded by the US government, on what is being called "**Quantum Entanglement**." They had found a way in which two separate atoms in two completely separate locations, as far as 80 miles from each other, are being simultaneously and identically affected by a stimulus affecting one of them. They are surmising that this probably happens all the time on earth. In other words, they are saying that there is a law of physics which permits two separate things to be one while at the same time being two. Where did all this come from? – It comes from **God, who is Three In One – unity in diversity**:

"... It thus appears that one particle of an entangled pair "knows" what measurement has been performed on the other, and with what outcome, even though there is no known means for such information to be communicated between the particles, which at the time of measurement may be separated by arbitrarily large distances." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_entanglement – 10/2017)

6. HOW GOD'S' ONENESS/UNITY SHOULD AFFECT US:

a. It Should Lead Us To Love And Live For God Exclusively:

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. **You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5)*

From this verse we understand that those who truly believe that there is a God and that there is only one God cannot logically divide or share their love for Him with another, but must give Him nothing less than their full devotion and love. His oneness must go beyond being simply a mental concept; it must involve our entire being by invoking a love for Him with heart, mind and body! Our hearts should be singing in worship something like:

Loving You! All my being; All the time; Only You!

Notice that in Deuteronomy 6:4,5 quoted above God didn't say to “**serve**” the Lord your God with all our heart, soul and mind. He is more than simply a master who demands a slave's full obedience and service. If we truly love our Heavenly Father, we will joyfully want to obey Him instead of just serving Him out of fear.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)

b. It Should Enable Us To Know God Personally Through Jesus. We can't know God through philosophy or wisdom, or by gaining knowledge about Him. We can know God only through Jesus, Who is the revelation of God to us. Jesus Himself prayed to the Father:

*“And this is eternal life, that they **know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**” (John 17:3)*

c. It Should Lead Us To Join The Triune God In His Work. There are three things prophesied about Jesus by Old Testament prophets that He said had to be fulfilled in the work **the Father** gave Him. The first two **Jesus** Himself completed when He died and rose again for us. The third part (sharing the message of salvation with all people groups) was given to us to do “in His name.” This means He won't; but we will do it by the power of **the Holy Spirit**:

*“Thus it is written, **that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.**” (Luke 24:46-48)*

*“But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and ... to the end of the earth.**” (Acts 1:8)*

B. GOD'S UNIQUENESS

ISLAM:

Now recall the definition of Tawheed we looked at earlier:

*“Tawheed in Arabic means attributing Oneness to Allaah and describing Him as being **One and Unique, with no partner or peer in His Essence and Attributes.**” (<https://islamqa.info/en/49030>)*

Having looked at God's **oneness** we now look at His **uniqueness**. He is unique both in His **person or essence and also in His attributes**:

1. THERE IS NO ONE LIKE OR SIMILAR TO GOD. Islam says that God is totally unique and cannot be compared to anything or anyone. He is completely distinct from all created beings. Nothing and no one is similar to God:

“... there is nothing whatever like unto Him ...” (Sura 42:11)

“He is God, the One and Only ... there is none like unto Him.” (Sura 112:1,4) [According to the Hadith, Muhammad said Sura 112 (just 4 verses) is equal in value to a third of the whole Qur’an.]

Islam says we should not make any picture, image or form to represent God because God cannot be like whatever we might compare Him to. So says a children’s song:

“Whatever your mind can conceive, that Allah is not, you may well believe.”

Islam also believes God does not do or act like anything we do. For example, He could not have any of our emotions, such as anger, joy, grief, love, etc. Thus nothing we do (positive or negative) could possibly affect Him (grieve Him or make Him happy):

“... If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah ...” (Sura 3:144)

2. GOD IS NOT A FATHER WITH A SON NOR IS HE “BEGOTTEN.” The Qur’an repeatedly denounces the Bible’s teaching that Jesus is the “Son of God” (deity) and also the supposed Christian teaching that Mary is the “Mother of God.” To Muslims calling God, “Father” implies He has a wife (Mary) and “begets” children:

“God begetteth not, nor is he begotten; and there is none like unto him.” (Sura 112:3,4 & 23:91)

“... Allah is one Allah: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son.” (Sura 4:171)

“... O Jesus, the son of Mary. Didst thou say unto men, ‘Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God’? He will say, ‘Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say).’” (Sura 5:119)

“They say, ‘God hath begotten a son!’ Glory be to Him! He is self-sufficient. ...” (Sura 10:68)

“It is not befitting to (the majesty of) God that He should beget a son...” (Sura 19:35 & 92)

The very first Muslim I met in Pakistan asked me if I believed Jesus was God’s Son, and when I said, “Yes” he countered with, “Then **who is God’s grandfather?**” I thought he was being “smart,” but later realized that is a very logical response to what they think the Bible teaches (but doesn’t).

THE BIBLE:

1. NO ONE IS EQUAL TO OR FULLY LIKE GOD. The Bible clearly teaches that God certainly is unique; that there is no other being equal to Him:

“To whom, will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” Says the Holy One.” (Isaiah 40:25)

“To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?” (Isaiah 46:5; see also Deuteronomy 33:26)

“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.” (Isaiah 46:9)

2. BUT MANKIND WAS CREATED TO MIRROR GOD’S CHARACTER. Of all the things God created, He chose to create only mankind *like* Himself by creating us “*in His own*

image.” **God is the Original** and we were created to be like (a reflection of) Him in certain ways:

*“Then God said, ‘Let us make man **in our image, after our likeness**. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea... the birds of the heavens... the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ **So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**” (Genesis 1:26,27)*

This does not mean we are equal to or exactly like God. Muslims accuse us of believing that God is like a human being with two arms and two legs, but **the Bible does not say God was created in our image. It says we were created in His image! That is a totally different thing! God is not physical so His “image” is something else than physical features.**

Here are at least seven ways we are created in God’s image – with the qualities of His character:

a. God Gave Us The Ability To Speak Words Like He Does. God has “word” (communication); and He created us to be able to communicate with speech like He does. For example, God spoke the universe into existence with words:

*“By faith we understand that **the universe was created by the word of God ...**” (Hebrews 11:3)*

God repeatedly sent His Word to us through the prophets:

*“**at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets**” (Heb. 1:1)*

And then He caused His eternal Word to take the form of a man, living among us:

*“**In the beginning was the Word ... All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...**” (John 1:1,3,4,14) **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard ... seen ... and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life”** (1 John 1:1)*

Mankind is the only created being that has the ability to communicate with words. Some creatures are able to communicate emotions with sounds, but only mankind can speak words like our creator.

b. God Gave Us The Ability To Reason And Understand Like He Does.

Human beings are not just animals who operate by instinct. God gave us the ability to think, reason, understand and decide, mirroring our Creator:

*“**Who has put wisdom in the inward parts or given understanding to the mind?**” (Job 38:36)*

*“**Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord**” (Isaiah 1:18)*

*“**And he [Jesus] called the people to him and said to them, ‘Hear and understand’**” (Matthew 15:10)*

c. God Gave Us A Measure Of Sovereignty Like He Has. God also created us His viceroy on earth to rule and have dominion like He has:

*“**Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”** (Genesis 1:26-28)*

*“**What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ... you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.**” (Hebrews 2:6-8)*

Authority or dominion is different from power. A tiger has great power which enables it to overpower other animals. Authority or sovereignty, however, is imputed or given and is not the same as power. A tiger has no authority to control other animals. He can only make them flee out of fear because of his power. Mankind, on the other hand, does not have physical power equal to a tiger, but we are the only created beings able to exercise authority, which is given to us by God.

d. God Gave Us A Will To Make Decisions As He Does.

*“And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, **choose this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**” (Joshua 24:15)*

*“... **Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.**” (Romans 12:9)*

e. God Intended Us To Be Moral In Character Like Him. Sadly, because of our sin the moral image of God in us has been largely corrupted and distorted. Nevertheless, He still wants us to be like Him in character; in holiness, righteousness, love, faithfulness, mercy, etc.:

*“For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and **be holy, for I am holy ... You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.**” (Leviticus 11:44,45)*

*“... put on the new self, **created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness ... Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.**” (Ephesians 4:24; 5:1)*

*“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 ...” (Matthew 5:44,45)*

*“But **love your enemies, and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.**” (Luke 6:35,36)*

f. God Gave Us The Ability To Be Creative Like He Is. While we do not have the ability to create things out of nothing like God, we do have the ability to create new things out of existing materials. For example:

*“... Tubal-cain; **he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron ...**” (Genesis 4:22)*

But this God-given ability was corrupted by sin so our sinful nature misuses it:

*“And they said to one another, ‘Come, **let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.**’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, ‘**Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.**’ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and **this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.**’” (Genesis 11:3-7)*

This includes the ability to multiply and procreate children just as God created us:

*“...God blessed them [Adam & Eve]. And God said to them, ‘**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth ...**’”
*“... God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.**’” (Genesis 1:28; 9:1)**

[See chapter 12 – the Fatherhood of God]

g. God Gave Us The Same Emotions He Has. All our emotions are a reflection of God's. The real reason we have emotions is because He has emotions. He has built into us the ability to experience His emotions. Because of our sin our emotions are perverted and not pure as God's. Nevertheless, we love because God loves, even though God's love is 100 times more genuine and unselfish than ours. The same is true of all other emotions.

As I study the Scriptures I see more and more that God is emotional. In fact, He is a very emotional being! Here are verses mentioning some of God's emotions:

i) God's Negative Emotions in Response to our sin:

grief, weeping – “the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it **grieved him to his heart.**”

(Genesis 6:6) “**My heart weeps** for Moab. Its people flee ...” (Isaiah 15:5 - NLT)

affliction (distress) – “In all their affliction he was **afflicted** ...” (Isaiah 63:9 – “**suffered**” in NLT)

wrath, indignation – “On account of these the **wrath** of God is coming.” (Colossians 3:6); “God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels **indignation** every day.” (Psalm 7:11)

hatred – “For I the LORD ... **hate** robbery and wrong.” (Isaiah 61:8); “**I hate** divorce,’ says the Lord ..., ‘and I **hate** a man’s covering himself with violence.” (Malachi 2:16 NIV)

vengeance – “For we know him who said, “**Vengeance** is mine; I will repay.” (Hebrews 10:30); “in flaming fire, inflicting **vengeance** on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (2 Thessalonians 1:8)

jealousy – “... I the LORD your God am a **jealous** God.” (Exodus 20:5); “... the LORD, **whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God** ...” (Exodus 34:14; also Deut. 4:24, Zech. 8:2 & 2 Cor. 11:2)

laughter in derision – “He who sits in the heavens **laughs**; the Lord holds them **in derision.**” (Psalm 37:13)

ii) God's Positive Emotions in Response to our Faith and Trust in Him:

rejoicing – “and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God **rejoice** over you.” (Isaiah 62:5); “The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will **rejoice** over you with gladness.” (Zephaniah 3:17)

singing for joy – “The LORD ... will **exult over you with loud singing.**” (Zephaniah 3:17)

delight – “Great is the LORD, who **delights** in the welfare of his servant!” (Psalm 35:27); “Behold my servant ... my chosen, in whom my soul **delights.**” (Isaiah 42:1)

pleasure – “but the LORD **takes pleasure** in those who fear him...” (Psalm 147:11) “For the LORD **takes pleasure** in his people...” (Psalm 149:4); “... discern what is **pleasing to the Lord.**” (Ephesians 5:10)

zeal – “Look down from heaven ... Where are your **zeal** and your might?” (Isaiah 63:15)

compassion – “How can I give you up, O Ephraim? ... **my compassion grows warm and tender.**” (Hosea 11:8); “... your **compassion** are held back from me.” (Isaiah 63:15)

pity – “... in his **love** and in his **pity** he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.” (Isaiah 63:9)

patience – “The Lord is merciful and gracious, **slow to anger** ...” (Psalm 103:8)

love – “... **love is from God**, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God ... because **God is love.**” (1 John 4:7,8); “... those who hope in his **steadfast love.**” (Psalm 147:11); “For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only Son...” (John 3:16)

So we sing, laugh, cry, get angry, grieve and rejoice because God does! God has these emotions, and we have them because we were created in His image. So what is His purpose in creating us in His own image? As far as I can understand, **God's basic purpose in creating us in His own image** must be **to make us capable of knowing Him enough to have a personal and loving relationship with Him, thus enabling us to jubilantly glorify and worship Him for eternity.**

*“A deep and mutual love relationship is only possible because of sufficient similarity between the partners. That is exemplified by the story when God brings to Adam all the animals but none is satisfactory as a companion and Adam is only satisfied when he receives Eve: finally bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. **It is the likeness that makes her sufficient as a true companion and love partner.** I think this is the biblical illustration for what is the purpose of “being created in God’s image”, so that we can have a genuine love relationship with our Creator.” - Jochen Katz*

[See also Chapter Thirteen, part C – God’s Image]

3. BELIEVING IN ONE GOD IS NOT ENOUGH:

a. The *Shema Yisrael*: One of the most famous verses in the Hebrew Old Testament is called the “*Shema Yisrael*” and it states:

*“Hear, O Israel: **The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5)*

By stating two facts together in one sentence (“*The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*”) God implies they are inseparable. **It is not enough to simply believe God is one. He must also be our God, and in order for Him to be our God, we must have a personal love relationship with Him.** That’s why God added the one command at the end of the *Shema*, saying, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*” Believing there is only one God is no big deal! God tells us even the devils believe in one God, but they do not honor or obey Him as *their* God, and they certainly do not love Him!

*“**You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!**” (James 2:19)*

As we grow in knowing Him, our relationship with God should involve a deep and genuine love. That is why the one command in the *Shema* is:

*“**You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**”*

b. But How Is It Possible For Us To Know And Love Him? Sadly, although we should have a deep desire to know and love God and to be more like Him, we are spiritually “dead” to God in our natural state. Our human nature has fallen far from what God created us to be. It is depraved because of the spiritual death that resulted from our sin. We have no natural desire or ability to know and love Him:

*“And you were **dead in the trespasses and sins...**” (Ephesians 2:1)*

*“... None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; **no one seeks for God.** All have turned aside ... no one does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:10-12)*

But God wants us to be spiritually alive so we can know Him intimately. Since we have no natural desire or ability to know Him, He chose to pursue us and to reveal Himself to us through His Son, Jesus, who became one of us and lived among us:

*“**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**” (John 3:16)*

*“**For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.**” (Luke 19:10)*

By sending our Lord Jesus to conquer death for us, God has made it possible for us to be spiritually alive in knowing Him and truly loving and trusting Him:

“But God, being rich in mercy ... even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4,5)

[Jesus said] *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)*

C. MY REACTIONS

1. GOD’S SINGLENES. The Qur’an clearly expects us to respond to the fact that there is one, totally unique God by **believing** in Him and **obeying** His dictates without being able to know Him personally. This indicates a **slave/master relationship** with God, which involves no personal thinking, no companionship, no shared responsibility and no emotional feeling. This relationship is also seen in some of the most common Arabic Muslim names and words: *Abdullah* = “slave of Allah”; *Islam* = “submission” (to Allah); *Muslim* = “submitted” (one). The Qur’an describes believers this way:

“The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise.” (Sura 9:71)

But why would an absolutely single God create everything in couples and multiples? – couples of people, animals, birds and fish; people groups, species of animals and plants, and multiples of stars, mountains, rivers and even atoms? Nothing is single. Doesn’t plurality in nature indicate God’s preference for relationships and community?

2. IS GOD COMPLETELY INCOMPARABLE? Islam’s belief that God is incomparable is inconsistent with the Qur’an itself, which compares God with others. Not only does it use the oft repeated comparative words, **most** (“*most merciful, most gracious*”) and **greater** (“God is greater” – *Allah-u-Akbar*), but it even states 32 times that He is “**the best**” sustainer, planner, provider, protector, etc. (even including “*the best of Creators*” in Sura 37:125). If God is incomparable, then how is He “greater,” “most” or “best”? Greater than whom? The most compared to whom? The best among whom? One writer tries to explain this away [*This quotation has since been altered on Wikipedia*]:

*“Allahu Akbar literally means, “Allah is Greater” with the comparative mode. Yet, **this does not mean ... that there is anything that is put in comparison with Him.** This ... means He is “Greater” than anything else, which, consequently, means He is the Greatest.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takbir>)*

Furthermore, the Qur’an also uses anthropomorphic expressions which compare God to human beings, such as sitting on a “throne” (Sura 2:255; 7:54), His “face” (Sura 55:27), His “hands” (Sura 38:75), His “eye” (Sura 20:39) etc. It also speaks of God’s actions by using expressions which are comparative to human actions, such as “sent down” (Sura 2:22), “loves” (Sura 2:222), “comes” (2:210), His “wrath” (Sura 2:61), etc. Although these expressions are clearly not used of God in a physical sense, they do in fact indicate ways in which we are compared to Him.

The Bible, however, shows repeatedly how we are created in God’s image and have many characteristics and attributes that are His.

3. UNBALANCED ATTRIBUTES. In Islam, **the works of God** (His **unlimited power** to do whatever He wills to do, His **total transcendence** above and beyond all creation, His **superior**

wisdom to see and hear all things whether hidden or open, His **unlimited mercy** to forgive or not forgive as He wills, His **absolute sovereignty** to control all things as He wills) are greatly emphasized.

But **the ways of God** (His love, grace, immanence, faithfulness, righteousness, justice, peace, joy, etc.) are largely ignored. This may be due primarily to the Islamic teaching that God cannot be compared or likened to anything we know or are.

Nabeel Qureshi in his best seller book, No God But One: Allah Or Jesus, wrote:

*“Tawhid teaches that Allah is absolutely one; and the conclusion naturally arose among some thinkers that **since Allah is absolutely one, he cannot have attributes. Attributes would curb his absolute unity, being things he has as opposed to things he is.**”* (page 50)

We need to know both God’s works and His ways in order to know Him and walk in His paths:

*“... the God of Jacob, **that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths ...”*** (Is. 2:3)

4. NO RELATIONSHIP. What is lacking in the Qur’an’s description of God is any emotional feelings and any intimate relationship with His people; truths taught throughout the Bible:

*“He will tend his flock **like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.**”* (Isaiah 40:11)

*I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and **they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.**”* (Jeremiah 24:7)

*“... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘**Know the LORD,**’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD”* (Jeremiah 31:33,34)

*“**The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.**”* (Zephaniah 3:17)

*“**Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him ...”*** (Lamentations 2:19)

[see also God’s Immanence in chapter 4]

APPENDIX 2

COMPLETE LIST OF BIBLE VERSES MENTIONING THE ONENESS OF GOD

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

The Bible's Emphasis On The Oneness Of God Is Overwhelming. 35 Times In The Bible It Is Dogmatically Stated That There Is Only One God:

IN THE TORAH (Arabic, TAURAT):

1. "To you it was shown, that you might know that **the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.**" (Deuteronomy 4:35)
2. "know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that **the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.**" (Deuteronomy 4:39)
3. "Hear, O Israel: **The LORD our God, the LORD is one.** You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deuteronomy 6:4,5)
4. "See now that I, even I, **am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.**" (Deuteronomy 32:39)

IN THE PSALMS (Arabic, ZABUR):

5. "that they may know that **you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth.**" (Psalm 83:18)
6. "For you are great and do wondrous things; **you alone are God.**" (Psalm 86:10)

IN THE BOOKS OF OTHER PROPHETS:

7. "There is none holy like the Lord: for **there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.**" (1 Sam. 2:2)
8. "Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and **there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.**" (2 Samuel 7:22)
9. "that all the peoples of the earth may know that **the LORD is God; there is no other.**" (:60)
10. "So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that **you, O LORD, are God alone.**" (2 Kings 19:19)
11. "**You are the Lord, you alone.** You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you." (Nehemiah 9:6)
12. "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, **you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.**" (Isaiah 37:16)
13. "So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that **you alone are the LORD.**" (Isaiah 37:20)
14. "'You are my witnesses,' declares the LORD, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that **I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.**" (Isaiah 43:10,11)
15. "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: '**I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no God.**'" (Isaiah 44:6)
16. "Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! **Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.**" (Isaiah 44:8)

17. "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: **"I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself."** (Isaiah 44:24)
18. **"I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God ..."** (Isaiah 45:5)
19. "... that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that **there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.**" (Isaiah 45:6)
20. "For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): **"I am the LORD, and there is no other."** (Isaiah 45:18)
21. "Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And **there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.**" (Isaiah 45:21)
22. "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For **I am God, and there is no other.**" (Isaiah 45:22)
23. "... for **I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me**" (Isaiah 46:9)
24. "Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! **I am he; I am the first, and I am the last.** My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together." (Isaiah 48:12,13)

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (Arabic, INJIL):

25. "Jesus answered, 'The most important is, "Hear, O Israel: **The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**"' ... And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that **he is one, and there is no other besides him.**" (Mark 12:29,32)
26. "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from **the only God?**" (John 5:44)
27. "this is eternal life, that they know you **the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3)
28. "Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since **God is one**—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith..." (Romans 3:29,30)
29. "Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an idol has no real existence,' and that **'there is no God but one.'**" (1 Corinthians 8:4)
30. "For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords" – yet for us **there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist...**" (1 Corinthians 8:5,6)
31. "**one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**" (Ephesians 4:6)
32. "To **the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God**, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17)
33. "For **there is one God**, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5)
34. "You believe that **God is one**; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (James 2:19)
35. "to **the only God, our Savior**, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 25)

APPENDIX 3

FULLER EXPLANATION OF THE TRINITY

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[This Material Includes Excerpts From Part Four Of,
 “Answers To Questions Muslims Ask,” Which Is Found At,
http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/bailey/questions_god.html]

[Qur’an references are from A. Yusuf Ali’s translation; Bible references from English Standard Version translation]

Answers to the Muslim Question, “**HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE IN THE ‘TRINITY’?** **God is one, not three! You are guilty of idolatry!”**

WHY DO MUSLIMS OBJECT TO THIS? See The Qur’an’s Teaching:

- *“Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him. So believe in God and His apostles. Say not, ‘trinity.’ Desist! It will be better for you, for God is one God ...”* (Sura 4:171)
 [from Yusuf Ali’s notes 675 & 676: “... the Christian attitude is condemned, which ... invents the doctrine of the trinity ... Christ’s attributes are mentioned: (1) that he was the son of a woman, Mary, and therefore a man; (2) but an apostle, a man with a mission from God, and therefore entitled to honour; (3) a Word bestowed on Mary, for he was created by God’s Word ‘Be’ (*kun*) and he was; (3:59); (4) a spirit proceeding from God, but not God ... The doctrines of Trinity, equality with God, and sonship are repudiated as blasphemies ...”]
- *“Shirk”- the unforgivable sin, “God forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth. To set up partners with God is to devise a sin most heinous indeed ... God forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him, but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this.”* (Sura 4:48,116)
- *“They do blaspheme who say, ‘God is one of three in a trinity: for there is no god except One God... O Jesus, the son of Mary. Didst thou say unto men, ‘Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God’? He will say, ‘Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say) ...’”* (Sura 5:73,116)
- *“And your God is one God: There is no god but He ...”* (Sura 2:163 - see also Sura 16:22; 16:51; 37:4-5; 38:65)

ANSWER #1: Messiah Jesus Himself Said That There is Only One God:

- *“Jesus answered, ‘The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: **The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**’”* (Mark 12:29)

ANSWER #2: Christianity Does Not Teach That There Are Three Gods! The Bible Categorically States at Least 35 Times That There is Only One God:

- **In the Torah (Taurat):** *“know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; **there is no other.**”* (Deuteronomy 4:39) [See also Deuteronomy 4:35; 32:39]

- **In the Psalms (*Zabur*):** *“For you are great and do wondrous things; **you alone are God.**”* (Psalm 86:10) [See also Psalm 83:18]
- **In the books of the prophets (*Sahifah-ul-Anbiya*):** *“Thus says the LORD... ‘**I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god... you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.**’”* (Isaiah 44:6,8) [See also ; 2 Samuel 7:22; 1 Kings 8:60; and 2 Kings 19:19; Nehemiah 9:5; Isaiah 37:16,20; 43:10,11; 44:24; 45:5,6,18,21,22; 46:9; 48:12,13; Hosea 13:4]
- **In the New Testament (*Injil*):** *“... we know that ‘an idol has no real existence,’ and that ‘**there is no God but one.**’”* (1 Corinthians 8:4) [See also Mark 12:29; John 5:44; John 17:3; Romans 3:29,30; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Timothy 2:5 James 2:19; Jude 25]

ANSWER #3: The Trinity Is Clearly Seen in God’s Act of Creation. Although the word, “trinity” itself does not appear in the Bible, the triune (three in one) nature of God appears repeatedly. As an example, look at what is written about God’s method of creation:

First of all, the Bible Says That God Created all Things Alone:

- *“I am the Lord, who has made all things, who **alone** stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth **by myself.**”* (Isaiah 44:24).

And yet, in the *Torah*’s account of creation we see the triune nature of God’s creating work:

- *“In the beginning, **God** created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. **And the Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters. **And God said,** ‘Let there be light.’ **And there was light ...**”* (Genesis 1:1-3)

The three “members” of the “Trinity” involved in creation seen in these verses are:

- God the Father (“**God**”),
- God the Spirit (“**the Spirit of God**”) and
- God the Son, who, according to John 1:1-14, is the Word of God (“**God said**”)

Secondly, God Uses Several Human Metaphors to Describe the Means He Used to Create Everything. These metaphors are used not only to explain to us God’s meaning, but they also indicate the “members” of the “Trinity” involved in creation. God created everything alone **by means of Four “Parts” of Himself:**

1) by His Right Hand - His hand of Power: God also said,

- *“**My own hand laid the foundations of the earth and my right hand spread out the heavens.**”* (Isaiah 48:13)

Does this mean that God's right hand is the creator and not God, or that God’s right hand is a second God in addition to God Himself? Of course not! **God alone created everything but He did it by His own right hand,** which is a human metaphor for **His Power.** Thus we read that God,

- *“... made the earth **by his power;** he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.”* (Jeremiah 10:12)

When Mary was told by an angel that she would have a son, she asked how that could be possible:

- *“**And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.’**”* (Luke 1:35)

It is clear from this verse that **God the Holy Spirit is also called God’s Power.** We also see from this verse that Jesus the Messiah (God’s eternal Word) was brought into

this world by God's Power. Remember that we have already seen that the Spirit of God was present and involved in creation:

- *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. **And the Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was light ..."* (Genesis 1:1-3)

And we read that **Messiah Jesus also is God's power:**

- *"... **Christ the power of God** and the wisdom of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:24).

2) by His Wisdom:

- *"I, **wisdom**, dwell together with prudence ... **The Lord brought me forth** as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed **from eternity, from the beginning**, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth ... **I was there when he set the heaven in place ... Then I was the craftsman at his side ...**"* (Proverbs 8:1-31)

Did God ever exist without His wisdom? Of course not! Did God create his own wisdom? No! Is God's wisdom a second God in addition to God Himself? Absolutely not! God says that his wisdom is "*from eternity, from the beginning.*" God's wisdom was "*brought forth,*" (brought into use) and "*appointed*" (selected for use) at the time of creation, and so **God alone created everything but He did it by His own wisdom.**

Then we read that **Messiah Jesus is also God's wisdom:**

- *"... **Christ the power of God** and **the wisdom of God.**"* (1 Corinthians 1:24).

3) by His Word: God further said,

- *"**By the word of the Lord were the heavens made ... For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.**"* (Psalm 33:6,9)
- *"And **God said**, 'Let there be light,' and there was light ..."* (Genesis 1:3)
- *"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and **the word was God.** He was with God in the beginning. **Through him all things were made;** without him nothing was made that has been made."* (John 1:1-3)

These verses clearly show that **God alone created everything by His Word.** The Word of God is the communication or manifestation of God. God's Word is God Himself; not a second God. God created everything simply by commanding it to "Be!" Yes, **God alone created everything, but He did it by His Word.**

Messiah Jesus is the eternal Word of God, who "*became*" a human being by the power of God:

- *"In the beginning was **the Word**, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.** He was with God in the beginning. **Through him all things were made;** without him nothing was made that has been made... **The Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us ..."* (John 1:1-3,14)

4) by The Breath of His Mouth; The Breath of Life: God also said,

- *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host **by the breath of his mouth.**"* (Psalm 33:6)
- *"Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**, and the man became a living being."* (Genesis 2:7)

These verses clearly show that **God alone created everything, but He did it by breathing into it the Breath of Life.**

Many Verses Indicate that Jesus the Messiah is God's Life:

- *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies ...'"* (John 11:25)
- *"Jesus answered, 'I am ... the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"* (John 14:6)
- *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us."* (1 John 1:1,2)

ANSWER #4: Two Illustrations From Nature:

Human beings: When we humans talk about ourselves we refer to ourselves as "I." When a man dies, his body goes into the grave, but his soul doesn't. Which one is the real person - his body or his soul? A man might say, "I said I would do it." or "I gave you my word." In the first statement he identifies his word ("said") as himself ("I"). In the second statement he distinguishes his word ("my word") from himself ("I"). He is one person, yet he exists in several entities – word, body, spirit and soul, mind, etc. and he talks about his spirit, his mind, his word, etc, as if they are all separate entities, although he is only one being. Human beings are triune beings – body, soul/mind and spirit – three in one.

The sun: When I look toward the sun I might say, "I see the sun," but I actually see only the light of the sun which makes things visible on the earth. In the same way, when I feel the warmth of the sunshine I might say, "I feel the sun," but I actually feel only the heat of the sun which gives life to the plants and animals of the earth. Science tells me that in reality the sun is burning gases, which I can neither see nor feel. What I see is the light from the burning gases and what I feel is the heat from the burning gases. The one sun has three distinct entities – gas (source), light and heat – all existing simultaneously, and I refer to each of them as "the sun." We could say that the sun is a triune being – gas (source), light and heat – three in one.

We could compare God "the Father" to the gas, which is the source of the light and the source of the heat. God the Father is the source, whom we cannot see nor feel:

- *"No one has ever seen God."* (John 1:18)
- *"And the Father...His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen."* (John 5:37)
- *"... who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see ..."* (1 Timothy 6:16)

We could compare God "the Son" to the light of the sun, which reveals the sun so that we can see it:

- *"No man has ever seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him."* (John 1:18 - ASV)
- *"He is the image of the invisible God."* (Colossians 1:15)
- *"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature."* (Hebrews 1:3)

And we can compare God "the Holy Spirit" to the heat of the sun, which we feel and which has power to give life to plants, animals and mankind:

- “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ...*” (Acts 1:8)
- “*And the angel answered her [Mary], ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.’*” (Luke 1:35)

All three are one God, but they each have their functions. For example, the only way we can know about the sun’s source is through the sun’s light and heat, but without the source there could be no light or heat. **Likewise the only way we can know God is by His revelation of Himself to us through His Word (Jesus) and the only way we can know God’s power for living is through His Holy Spirit.**

[Other illustrations from nature are:

- **Space** is a trinity with three dimensions (height, length, and depth). Without all three dimensions, there is no space.
- **Time** is a trinity with three aspects (future, present, past). Without all three aspects, there is no time.]

ANSWER #5: God’s Oneness (*Tauhid*) Is Not As Much Singleness As It Is Uniqueness And “United-ness”:

In the well-known “*Shema*” found in the Torah we read,

- “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5)

When the Bible says that “God is One” it doesn’t mean simply that He is the *only* God, which He certainly is. The *Shema* clearly shows that **His oneness means, 1) He is totally distinct or unique from all other entities – one of a kind; and 2) He is completely united in Himself:**

1) **He is Totally Distinct and Unique.** Notice that what the Lord is saying in this passage is not a command to *believe* that God is one. His oneness is stated as a fact, not to be disputed. Instead the command is to *love* God with all of our being! It is a logical deduction that if there is only one God – the Almighty Creator of all that exists – **we must respond by loving Him with all of our being (heart, soul and strength)!** To say we believe there is one God, and yet share our love for Him with several other entities (self interests, idols, personal beliefs, etc.), is **not only idolatry, it is an open act of rebellion**, putting ourselves in the same state as Satan and his demons:

- “*You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.*” (James 2:19)

2) **He is Completely United in Himself.** In the original text, the Hebrew word for “one” is *e’had*, which is used to describe **other things that are united**. For example: God used the same word in the following verses:

- “*God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one (e’had) day.*” (Genesis 1:5, RSV)
- “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one (e’had) flesh.*” (Genesis 2:24).

APPENDIX 4

Bible Verses Revealing The Trinity

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All verses are from the English Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated]

1. TERMS: Theologians talk about the “three persons of the Trinity.” Even though the word, “**Trinity**” is not found in the Bible nor is the term, “**persons**” ever used in the Bible in reference to God, theologians use these terms to try to explain this complex Biblical truth. The three “persons” of the “Trinity” are:

- (1) **The “Father”** – also called “God,” “Lord,” “Most High,” etc.
- (2) **The “Son”** – also called, “Son of God,” “Word of God,” “Lord,” “Jesus Christ”
- (3) **The “Spirit”** – also called, “Holy Spirit,” “Spirit of God,” “Spirit of Christ”

2. VERSES CONTAINING ALL THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY: There are a number of passages mentioning all three “persons” of the “Trinity” together:

*“In the beginning, **God** [the Father] created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And **the Spirit of God** was hovering [to brood or incubate] over the face of the waters. And God **said** [God’s Word], “Let there be light,” and there was light.” (Genesis 1:1-3)*

*“The **Spirit of the Lord** [the Father] speaks by me; **his word** [the Son] is on my tongue.” (2 Samuel 23:2)*

*“... For **the mouth** [God’s Word] of **the Lord** has commanded, and **his Spirit** has gathered them.” (Isaiah 34:16)*

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of **the Father** and of **the Son** and of **the Holy Spirit**.” (Matthew 28:19)*

*“And the angel answered her, ‘**The Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of **the Most High** [the Father] will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—**the Son of God**.’” (Luke 1:35)*

*“For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives **the Spirit** without measure. **The Father** loves **the Son** and has given all things into his hand.” (John 3:34,35)*

[Jesus said] *“But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit**, whom **the Father** will send in **my** [Jesus the Son] name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that **I** have said to you.” (John 14:26)*

[Jesus said] *“But when the Helper comes, whom **I** [Jesus the Son] will send to you from **the Father**, the **Spirit of truth**, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.” (John 15:26)*

[Jesus said] *“When **the Spirit of truth** [God’s Spirit] comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify **me** [the Son], for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that **the Father** has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:13-15)*

*“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As **the Father** has sent me, even so **I** [Jesus the Son] am sending you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive **the Holy Spirit**.’” (John 20:21,22)*

*“He [Jesus] said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that **the Father** has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when **the Holy Spirit** has come upon you, and you will be **my** [Jesus the Son] witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” (Acts 1:7,8)*

- “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from **the Father** the promise of **the Holy Spirit**, **he** [Jesus the Son] has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.” (Acts 2:32,33)*
- “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of **Jesus Christ** for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of **the Holy Spirit**. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom **the Lord our God** calls to himself.’” (Acts 2:38,39)*
- “**God** exalted **him** [Jesus the Son] at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is **the Holy Spirit**, whom **God** [the Father] has given to those who obey him.” (Acts 5:31,32)*
- “But he, full of **the Holy Spirit**, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of **God**, and **Jesus** standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55)*
- “testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward **God** and of faith in our **Lord Jesus Christ**. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by **the Spirit**, not knowing what will happen to me there,” (Acts 20:21,22)*
- “For **God** has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending **his own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to **the Spirit**.” (Romans 8:3,4)*
- “If **the Spirit** of **him** [the Father] who raised **Jesus from the dead** dwells in you, **he** who raised **Christ Jesus** from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through **his Spirit** who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:11)*
- “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in **the Holy Spirit**. Whoever thus serves **Christ** is acceptable to **God** [the Father] and approved by men.” (Romans 14:17,18)*
- “to be a minister of **Christ Jesus** to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of **God**, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by **the Holy Spirit**.” (Romans 15:16)*
- “I appeal to you, brothers, by our **Lord Jesus Christ** and by the love of **the Spirit**, to strive together with me in your prayers to **God** on my behalf,” (Romans 15:30)*
- “None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified **the Lord of glory** [Jesus]. But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him’— these things **God** has revealed to us through **the Spirit**. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:8-10)*
- “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same **Spirit**; and there are varieties of service, but the same **Lord** [Jesus]; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same **God** [the Father] who empowers them all in everyone.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)*
- “And it is **God** who establishes us with you in **Christ**, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us **his Spirit** in our hearts as a guarantee.” (2 Corinthians 1:21,22)*
- “And you show that you are a letter from **Christ** delivered by us, written not with ink but with **the Spirit of the living God**, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” (2 Corinthians 3:3)*
- “Such is the confidence that we have through **Christ** toward **God**. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from **God**, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of **the Spirit**. For the letter kills, but **the Spirit** gives life.” (2 Corinthians 3:4-6)*
- “The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** [the Father] and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)*
- “And because you are sons, **God** has sent **the Spirit of his Son** into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Galatians 4:6)*

- "In **him** [Jesus the Son] you also are being built together into a dwelling place for **God** by **the Spirit**." (Ephesians 2:22)*
- "For this reason I bow my knees before the **Father**, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through **his Spirit** in your inner being, so that **Christ** may dwell in your hearts through faith ..." (Ephesians 3:14-17)*
- "There is one body and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **one Lord** [Jesus], one faith, one baptism, **one God and Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-6)*
- "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with **the Spirit**, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to **the Lord** [Jesus] with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to **God the Father** in the name of our **Lord Jesus Christ**," (Ephesians 5:18-20)*
- "remembering before our **God and Father** your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our **Lord Jesus Christ**. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in **the Holy Spirit** and with full conviction." (1 Thessalonians 1:3-5)*
- "But we ought always to give thanks to **God** for you, brothers beloved by the **Lord** [Jesus], because **God** chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the **Spirit** and belief in the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:13)*
- "But when the goodness and loving kindness of **God our Savior** appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of **the Holy Spirit**, whom he poured out on us richly through **Jesus Christ our Savior**," (Titus 3:4-6)*
- "how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by **the Lord** [Jesus], and it was attested to us by those who heard, while **God** also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of **the Holy Spirit** distributed according to his will." (Hebrews 2:3,4)*
- "how much more will the blood of **Christ** [Jesus the Son], who through **the eternal Spirit** offered himself without blemish to **God**, purify our conscience from dead works to serve **the living God**." (Hebrews 9:14)*
- "How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot **the Son of God**, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged **the Spirit of grace**? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of **the living God**." (Hebrews 10:29-31)*
- "according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, in the sanctification of **the Spirit**, for obedience to **Jesus Christ** and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you." (1 Peter 1:2)*
- "If you are insulted for the name of **Christ**, you are blessed, because the **Spirit of glory** and of **God** rests upon you." (1 Peter 4:14)*
- "And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of **his Son Jesus Christ** and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in **God** and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by **the Spirit** whom he has given us." (1 John 3:23,24)*
- "By this you know **the Spirit of God**: every spirit that confesses that **Jesus Christ** has come in the flesh is from **God**," (1 John 4:2)*
- "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of **his Spirit**. And we have seen and testify that **the Father** has sent **his Son** to be the Savior of the world." (1 John 4:13,14)*
- "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in **the Holy Spirit**, keep yourselves in the love of **God**, waiting for the mercy of our **Lord Jesus Christ** that leads to eternal life." (Jude 20,21)*
- "... Grace to you and peace from **him who is and who was and who is to come** [the eternal God the Father], and from **the seven spirits** [the seven-fold Holy Spirit] who are before his throne, and from **Jesus Christ** the faithful witness, the*

firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” (Revelation 1:4,5)

3. VERSES SHOWING TWO “PERSONS” OF THE “TRINITY” TO BE SYNONYMOUS:

a. The “Holy Spirit” Is Synonymous With “God” The Father:

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

*“And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)*

b. The “Holy Spirit” Is Synonymous With The “Spirit of Jesus:”

*“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by **the Holy Spirit** to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus** did not allow them.” (Acts 16:6,7)*

*“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God** dwells in you. Anyone who does not have **the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him. But if **Christ** is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, **the Spirit** is life because of righteousness.” (Romans 8:9-10)*

4. VERSES SHOWING THE “TRINITY” ACTING SYNONYMOUSLY:

a. The Triune God Reveals Himself To Mankind. Jesus said that He and the Holy Spirit both have “proceeded” from and have been “sent” by the Father:

*“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is **the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father.**” (John 15:26)*

*“Jesus said to them, ‘... **I proceeded forth and have come from God**, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but **He sent Me.**’” (John 8:42 – NASB – see also John 16:28)*

b. The Triune God Speaks To Mankind. All of the Father’s truth also belongs to Jesus the Son, and the Spirit takes that truth and teaches it to believers. They do this together and not on their own initiative:

*(Jesus said) “But when He, **the Spirit of truth**, comes, **He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak**; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for **He will take of Mine** and will disclose it to you. **All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.**” (John 16:13-15)*

c. The Triune God comes to live with believers. Jesus interchangeably said that He, the Father and the Holy Spirit will each come to live with believers:

*“I will not leave you as orphans; **I will come to you ...**” (John 14:18)*

*“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and **My Father** will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our abode with him.**” (John 14:23)*

*“but you will receive power **when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.**” (Acts 1:8)*

d. Jesus is united with the Father in various divine actions:

1) Sending the Holy Spirit to live in believers: He interchangeably says “The Father will send Him,” “I will send Him,” “The Father will send Him in my name” or “whom I will send ... from the Father.”

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever ... But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name ...” (John 14:16,26)

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father ...” (John 15:26)

“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” (John 16:7)

2) Providing grace, peace, love and mercy:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:7 - also 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 3; Titus 1:4)

“Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 6:23)

“Grace, mercy (and) peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” (1 Timothy 1:2 – also 2 Timothy 1:2; 2 John 3)

3) Commissioning apostles:

“Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father)...” (Galatians 1:1)

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, (who) is our hope...” (1 Timothy 1:1)

4) Being the Lord:

“James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (James 1:1)

5) With whom believers have fellowship:

“... our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3)

6) Providentially enabling his servants to serve him:

“Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.” (1 Thessalonians 3:11)

APPENDIX 5

BIBLICAL INDICATIONS OF THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

Rev Richard P Bailey

[Bible verses are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated

[See also “Answers to Questions about the Deity of Jesus Christ”
http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/bailey/questions_jesus.html]

Before we get started on the subject of the Bible’s indications of **the deity of Jesus Christ**, we need to also understand **the humanity of Jesus**:

A. THE HUMANITY OF JESUS: Although Jesus is God, the eternal “second person” of the Trinity, He did not come to earth to declare or magnify that fact. Instead, **He came to earth to become a man – an absolutely genuine, perfect man. In other words, to be one of us so He could be our substitute in death in order to save us from eternal death.** He was God but He chose to set aside and not use His powers as God in order to die as a man. His deity was hidden from most people because He did not look or act like God. **His humanity is clearly seen in the following:**

1. JESUS ACCEPTED THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMANITY. Being fully a man He not only looked like a man, but He willingly accepted the limitations of humanity. It is beyond amazing that God subjected Himself to such limitations for us! Here are several:

a. He Got Sleepy And Tired, But God Never Does:

Jesus: “as they sailed **he fell asleep ...**” (Luke 8:23); “... so **Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well ...**” (John 4:6)

God: “... **he who keeps you will not slumber ... he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**” (Psalm 121:3,4); “... **The LORD ... He does not faint or grow weary ...**” (Isaiah 40:28)

b. He Suffered Need (Thirst, Hunger, Relief from pain, etc.), But God Needs Nothing:

Jesus: “... **Jesus ... said ... ‘I thirst.’**” (John 19:28); “**And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**” (Luke 22:44); “**God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death**” (Acts 2:24 – NASB)

God: “**If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?**” (Psalm 50:12,13); “**nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything ...**” (Acts 17:25 – NASB)

c. He Was Tempted, But God Cannot Be Tempted:

Jesus: “**Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.**” (Matt. 4:1)

God: “**Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.**” (James 1:13)

d. He Died, But God Is Eternal And Cannot Die:

Jesus: "... *Christ Jesus: "... Who ... being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of **death, even death on a cross.**"* (Philippians 2:5,6,8)

God: "... *the living God.*" (Psalm 42:2); "... *the King **eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory forever and ever.***" (1 Timothy 1:17 - NIV)

e. He Was Limited In Both Space And Time, But God Is Not:

Jesus: "Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, '*Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a **body have you prepared for me***'" (Hebrews 10:5); "*But when **the fullness of time** had come, God sent forth his Son, **born of woman, born under the law**" (Galatians 4:4); *And **from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon ...***" (Mark 7:24)*

God: "***Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? ... Do I not fill heaven and earth? ...***" (Jeremiah 23:23,24); "... *the One who is high and lifted up, **who inhabits eternity ...***" (Isaiah 57:15)

2. JESUS PRAYED TO GOD AS A MAN SAYING, "MY GOD." Because He fully became a man He prayed as a man to God the Father, addressing Him as "My God."

*"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, '**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**'"* (Mark 15:34); "... *go to my brothers and say to them, '**I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.**'"* (John 20:17)

3. JESUS VOLUNTARILY ENTERED INTO HUMAN DEATH IN OUR PLACE IN ORDER TO REDEEM US. Because He chose to become a man living in a human body He was able to be our substitute in human death. Only a perfect and sinless man could die as a substitute for another human being:

"... ***Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!***" (Philippians 2:5-8 - NIV)

"But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone ... That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers ... Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." (Hebrews 2:9,11,14-15)

Yes, Jesus Became Man, But He Was, Is And Always Will Be God.

B. THE DEITY OF JESUS:

The teaching of Christians that Jesus the Messiah is God has always caused a good deal of disagreement and dispute. This is partly due to the fact that, although the apostles of Jesus wrote and preached a lot about the deity of Jesus, He Himself did not emphasize it [*]. After all, why would He try to prove that He was God when He had come to earth to become a genuine and sinless human being, qualified to be a sacrifice for the sins of human beings?

Most Christians believe in the deity of Christ but find it very difficult to fully understand, much less to explain it. In this appendix I am not trying to explain it, but merely to list what I believe are some of the many indications of his deity found in the Holy Bible.

While these indications may not “prove” the deity of Jesus the Messiah (at least not to skeptics), they certainly will leave an honest student with lots to consider. The full, bright light of God’s being is more than we can possibly take in (as He told His prophet Moses), but these indications of Jesus’ deity are something like glimmers of that light shining through tiny cracks in the human vessel of Jesus’ humanity.

* [see Appendix 11, “*The Revelation Of Jesus’ Full Identity and Why He Seemed To Hide It*”]

[Bible verses are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated]

1. JESUS EXISTED BEFORE THE PROPHETS JOHN THE BAPTIST, DAVID AND ABRAHAM, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS BORN AFTER THEM. IN FACT HE EXISTED BEFORE THE WORLD WAS CREATED:

- “*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*” (Micah 5:2)

[The first part of this Old Testament verse was quoted in Matthew 2:4 by the religious leaders of Israel when King Herod asked them where the prophets had indicated the Messiah was to be born.]

- “... *he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said, ‘... This is He on behalf of whom I said, “After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.”*” (John 1:29,30 – NASB)
[Jesus was born several months after John the Baptist (the prophet *Yahyah* in Arabic), but He existed before him as God’s eternal Word. He is both before and after John; both God and man!]
- [Jesus said] “... *I am the root and the descendant of David ...*” (Revelation 22:16)
[As a man, Jesus was a direct descendant of David (who lived about 1000 BC - see Luke 3:23-31); As God He was the creator or “root” of King David. He was both before and after David. He is both man and God!]
- “*Jesus said ... before Abraham was born I AM.*” (John 8:58 - NASB)
[Jesus existed before the creation of the world as the eternal Word of God. As man Jesus was born at least forty generations after the prophet Abraham (who lived about 2000 BC)]
 - [Jesus prayed] “*And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed ... because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*” (John 17:5,24)
[Jesus existed and was loved by the Father before the world began. He is both God and man!]

2. JESUS GAVE PEOPLE THE RIGHT TO BE SPIRITUALLY BORN OF GOD:

- “*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*” (John 1:12,13)
[Only God can give the right to believers to spiritually “become children of God.” In other words to be “born ... of God”?]

3. JESUS HAD THE POWER TO CONQUER DEATH AND RAISE HIMSELF FROM THE DEAD:

- “*So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ... But he was speaking about the temple of his body.*”

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this ...”
(John 2:18,19,21,22)

- [Jesus said] “... ***I lay down my life that I may take it up again.*** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and ***I have authority to take it up again ...***” (John 10:17,18)
[Can even the greatest prophet raise himself from the dead? God has given power to prophets to raise dead people, but no prophet has ever raised himself from the dead.]
- “***Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,*** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Heb. 2:14,15)
- “... ***our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death*** and brought life and immortality to light ...” (2 Timothy 1:10)
[Who else but God has the power to destroy death and Satan and rise from the dead?]

4. JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER THE JUDGMENT, AND POWER TO RESURRECT THE SAVED AND CONDEMN THE LOST:

- “***The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***” (Matthew 13:41,42)
[Most of the time the Lord Jesus referred to himself as “The Son of Man.” Who else but God has authority to send out angels and to throw people into hell?]
- ***But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.***” (Philippians 3:20,21)
- [Jesus said] “***And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.*** For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and ***I will raise him up at the last day ... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day ... and I will raise him up at the last day.***” (John 6:39,40,44 – NIV)
- [Jesus said] “***Many will say to me on that day*** [judgement day], ‘***Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?***’ Then ***I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’***” (Matthew 7:22,23 – NIV)
- “***Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne ...’***” (Matthew 19:28)
[Who else but God has authority to subject all things to Himself, to transform our bodies, to raise us from the dead in the resurrection and to sit on the throne of heaven as judge?]

5. JESUS CAME FROM HEAVEN (OUT FROM GOD):

- [What John said about Jesus] “***He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.***” (John 3:31)
- [What Jesus said about himself]: ***No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.***” (John 3:13);... “***For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world ... I am the bread of life ... For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me ... not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.***” (John 6:33,35,38,46,51);

“You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world”; ... ***“If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God”*** ... ***“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”*** (John 8:23,42 – NASB); ***“I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”*** (John 16:28)

[Can a mere man, or even a great prophet say He has come from heaven, from above, or out from God the Father? Adam and all of his descendants have come out from the dirt of this earth. Only the eternal Word of God Who became the Son of Man can say He has come out from God and from heaven, instead of out of the earth.]

6. JESUS IS THE SOURCE AND GIVER OF ETERNAL LIFE AND REST:

- ***“And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.”*** (Hebrews 5:9 – see also 2:10)

[It doesn't say Jesus became the “means” or the “model” of eternal salvation for all who obey God. It says **He Himself is the “source”** of eternal life to all who obey “him.”]

- ***“Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water’*** ... ***‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’*** (John 4:10,13,14)
- ***“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise ... For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will ... Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out ...’*** (John 5:19,21,25-29)

[Can anyone but God give eternal life? Jesus does not say that He will ask God to give this living water, but He says He Himself will give it!]

- ***“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”*** (John 10:27,28);
 - ***“... Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.”*** (John 17:1,2)
- [Jesus does not say that He will ask God to give them eternal life, but He says He Himself will give it!]
- ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*** (Matthew 11:28-30 – NIV)

[Jesus does not say “Go to God and He will give you rest for your souls.” He says, “Come to me ...”!]

7. JESUS SPOKE WITH AND GAVE THE AUTHORITY OF GOD:

7a. JESUS TAUGHT WITH THE AUTHORITY OF GOD:

- [Jesus said] ***“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven ... Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them ... Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them ... for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”*** (Matthew 7:21,24,26,29)

[Jesus clearly uses the title, “*Lord*” of himself, and expects his followers to obey him. That title may be used for a man. But when He talks about his instructions, he refers to them interchangeably as “*the will of My Father*” or “*these words of Mine*.” So He is saying His words and the Father’s will are the same. He is saying if we obey the Father we obey Him, and if we obey Him we obey the Father. Therefore, he is using the title, “*Lord*” (meaning “*God*”) for Himself.]

In His teaching, Jesus 42 times used the expression, “*Truly I say to you ...*” instead of, “*The Lord God says*” as the other prophets did): Here is one of them:

- “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart ...*” (Matthew 5:27,28)

[In verses 27-48, Jesus quotes the Word of God given to the prophet Moses regarding five different subjects in the Mosaic law, and then further amplifies them, contradicting the common interpretation. Notice that He doesn’t say, “*but God has revealed to me that...*” Instead, he says, “*but I say to you...*” Who but God dares to speak like this?]

Here are the references for the others:

- Matthew 5:18,26; 6:2,5,16; 8:10; 10:15,23,42; 11:11; 13:17; 16:28; 17:20; 18:3,13,18; 19:23,28; 21:21,31; 23:36; 24:2,47; 25:12,40,45; 26:34; Mark 3:28; 8:12; 9:41; 12:43; 13:30; 14:9,25,30; Luke 4:24; 11:51; 12:37; 13:35; 18:17; 23:43; John 13:21

7b. JESUS PERFORMED MIRACLES WITH THE AUTHORITY OF GOD, saying, “*I say to you, get up!*” “*be cleansed,*” or “*I command you,*” instead of saying, “*In God’s name,*” “*By God’s permission*” or “*By God’s authority*”:

- “... *there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon ... Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent and come out of him!’ ... And they were all amazed and said to one another, ‘What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!’*” (Luke 4:33-36)
- [Jesus said] “*I am willing; be cleansed.*” (Mark 1:41 – NASB)
- [Jesus said] “*I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.*” (Mark 2:11 – NASB)
- “...*he [Jesus] rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, ‘You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.’*” (Mark 9:25)
- “*He [Jesus] said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.*” (Mark 3:5)
- “*And He [Jesus] said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise!’*” (Luke 7:14)
- “*He [Jesus] rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Hush, be still.’*” (Mark 4:39 – NASB)
- “*For He [Jesus] was saying to him, ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!’*” (Mark 5:8)
- [Jesus said] “*Little girl, I say to you, get up!*” (Mark 5:41 – NIV)
- “*Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe I am able to do this?’*” (Matthew 9:28)

7c. JESUS GAVE AUTHORITY THAT ONLY GOD CAN GIVE:

- “*And he (Jesus) called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.*” (Matthew 10:1)

8. JESUS IS “YAHWEH.” (the name that God told Moses was his own personal name – Exodus 3:13-15):

8a. OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO “YAHWEH” ARE QUOTED IN REFERENCE TO JESUS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

a. Prepare The Way For YAHWEH:

O.T.: “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness **prepare the way of the LORD** [YAHWEH in Hebrew]; **make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**” (Isaiah 40:3)

N.T.: “The beginning of **the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written** in Isaiah the prophet, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: “**Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,**” John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins ... And he preached, saying, ‘**After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**’ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” (Mark 1:1-4,7-9)

b. Calling On The Name Of YAHWEH:

O.T.: “I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, ... And ... **everyone who calls on the name of the LORD** [YAHWEH in Hebrew] **will be saved ...**” (Joel 2:30-32)

N.T.: “if you confess with your mouth that **Jesus is Lord** and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘**everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**” (Romans 10:9-13)

c. Bowing Before YAHWEH:

O.T.: “... **Was it not I, the LORD** [YAHWEH in Hebrew]? **And there is no other God besides me**, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘**To me every knee shall bow; every tongue will swear allegiance.**” (Isaiah 45:21-23)

N.T.: “that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord ...**” (Philippians 2:10-11)

d. The heavens are temporary but YAHWEH is eternal:

O.T.: “But **you, O LORD** [YAHWEH in Hebrew], **are enthroned forever**; you are remembered throughout all generations... Of old **you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.**” (Psalm 102:12,25-27)

N.T.: “... **But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. ... You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.**” (Hebrews 1: 7-12)

e. YAHWEH The Only Savior:

O.T.: “I, I am the **LORD** [YAHWEH in Hebrew], and **besides me there is no savior.** (Isaiah 43:11)

N.T.: "... a **Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**" (Luke 2:11); "Jesus said to him, '**I am the way** ... **No one comes to the Father except through me.**'" (John 14:6); "And **there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**" (Acts 4:12); "... **our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** ..." (2 Peter 3:18)

8b. JESUS SPOKE OF HIMSELF AS "I AM," WHICH IS GOD'S NAME ("YAHWEH" IN HEBREW): "Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, '**I AM WHO I AM.**' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "**I AM has sent me to you.**"'" (Exodus 3:13-14):

- "... unless you **believe that I am He**, you will die in your sins." (John 8:24)
- "I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, '**before Abraham was born, I am**.'" (John 8:58 – NIV)
[Only God can call Himself, "I am." No wonder the crowd of Jews picked up stones and tried to stone him for blasphemy. - see verse 59]
- "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place **you may believe that I am he**." (John 13:19) [Here and in 8:24 the Greek words ego eimi simply mean "**I am**"]
- "... Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' And Jesus said, '**I am**' ..." (Mark 14:61,62); "They all asked, 'Are you then the Son of God?' He replied, '**You are right in saying I am**.'" (Luke 22:70,71 – NIV)

8c. JESUS' FAMOUS "I AM" STATEMENTS:

- "For the bread of God is **he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world ... Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life**. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty... **I am the bread of life**. Your Forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever..." (John 6:33,35,48-51 – NIV)
- "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, '**I am the light of the world**. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)
- "... Truly, truly, I say to you, **I am the door of the sheep**. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **I am the door**; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. (John 10:7-9)
- "**I am the good shepherd**; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep...**I am the good shepherd**, and I know My own and my own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." (John 10:11,14,15)
- "... **I am the resurrection and the life**; whoever believes in Me though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25,26)
- "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life**; no one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)
- "**I am the true vine**, and my Father is the gardener... **I am the vine**; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:1,5 – NIV)
- "... **I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One**; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." (Revelation 1:17,18 – NIV)
[Only God is called "the First and the Last." Only God is the eternally "Living One"!]
- "I, Jesus, ... **I am the root and the descendant of David**, the bright morning star." (Rev. 22:16)

[Jesus is both the “root” of David (the Creator of David) and his “descendant” (son of David).]

9. JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE SENDER OF THE PROPHETS:

- [Jesus said] *“Therefore **I send you prophets** and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar ... O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! **How often would I have gathered your children together** as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”* (Matthew 23:34-37)

[How can a mere prophet claim to be the One who sends all the prophets and righteous teachers from the beginning?]

10. JESUS CLAIMED HE IS ONE WITH GOD THE FATHER:

- [Jesus said] *“**that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.** Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.”* (John 5:23)
- *“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’ This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but **he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.**”* (John 5:17,18)
- *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and **no one will snatch them out of my hand.** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and **no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.**”* (John 10:27-30)
- *“Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘**Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?”**’* (John 14:8,9)

11. THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST ABOUT JESUS:

- *“John answered them all, saying, ‘I baptize you with water, but **he who is mightier than I is coming**, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.** His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but **the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.**”* (Luke 3:16,17)

[Who but God can baptize people with His own Holy Spirit? Who but God can judge with “unquenchable fire”? – See also Jeremiah 15:7 and Matthew 25:41]

12. JESUS IS ONE TRIUNE GOD TOGETHER WITH THE FATHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. (John 14,15,16):

12a. JESUS IS ONE WITH THE FATHER IN SENDING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BELIEVERS (He interchangeably says *“the Father ... will give you another Helper”, “whom The Father will send in my name,” “whom I will send to you from the Father” and “I will send him to you,” and “the Spirit ... who proceeds from the Father.”):*

- *“And I will ask **the Father**, and **he will give you another Helper**, to be with you forever, But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, **whom the Father will send in my name**, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”* (John 14:16,26)

- “But when the Helper comes, **whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.**” (John 15:26)
- “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, **I will send him to you.**” (John 16:7)

12b. JESUS IS ONE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BEING SENT FROM THE FATHER (He says that both He and the Holy Spirit have come from/ been sent by the Father):

- “But when **the Helper** comes, whom I will send to you **from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.**” (John 15:26)
- “My food is to do the will of **him who sent me** ... If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I **proceeded forth and have come from God ...**” “... **I came forth from the Father and have come into the world.**” (John 4:34; 8:42; 16:28 – NASB)

12c. JESUS, THE FATHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT ALL COME TO BELIEVERS (Jesus interchangeably says “I,” “My Father” and “the Holy Spirit” will come to you.):

- “I will not leave you as orphans; **I will come to you** ...” (John 14:18)
- “... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and **My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.**” (John 14:23)
- “but you will receive power **when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.**” (Acts 1:8)

12d. THE TRIUNE GOD SPEAKS ONE TRUTH FROM WITHIN HIMSELF:

- [Jesus said] “But when He, **the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.**” (John 16:13-15 – NASB)

13. JESUS HAS TITLES AND ATTRIBUTES ONLY GOD HAS:

a. “The Lord”: (The Hebrew word, *ADONAI* translated, “Lord” or “Master” is plural and is found 322 times while the singular *ADON* occurs 211 times, making a total of 533 times. This Hebrew word is used in the Old Testament almost always for God. However, **The Greek word, *KURIOS* also translated “Lord” occurs 696 times** in the New Testament, sometimes referring to God the Father, but **usually referring to Jesus the Messiah.** In fact, the title, “*Lord Jesus Christ*” occurs 63 times and “*Lord Jesus*” 102 times):

About Jesus: “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess **that Jesus Christ is Lord** [*Kurios*], to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10,11)

About God: “Blessed be **the Lord** [*Kurios*] **God of Israel, for he has ... redeemed his people**” (Luke 1:68)
“Holy, holy, holy, is **the Lord** [*Kurios*] **God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!**” (Revelation 4:8)

b. “Lord of glory”:

About Jesus: “None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified **the Lord of glory.**” (1 Corinthians 2:8)

About God: “... **The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!**” (Psalm 24:10)

c. “Lord of the Sabbath”:

About Jesus: “I tell you that **one greater than the temple is here**. If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. **For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**” (Matthew 12:6-8)

About God: “but during the seventh year the land must have a Sabbath year of complete rest. **It is the Lord’s Sabbath ...**” (Leviticus 25:4)

d. “Lord of lords and King of kings”:

About Jesus: “... the Lamb will conquer them, for he is **Lord of lords and King of kings ...**” (Revelation 17:14)

About God: “... he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, **the King of kings and Lord of lords**, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light ...” (1 Timothy 6:15,16);

“For the Lord your God is **God of gods and Lord of lords**, the great, mighty and the awesome God ...” (Deuteronomy 10:17)

e. “Lord of all”:

About Jesus: “... through **Jesus Christ (he is Lord of All)**.” (Acts 10:36)

f. “The Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”:

About Jesus: “... Fear not, **I am the first and the last**, and the living one ...” (Revelation 1:17,18);

“**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**”

(Revelation 22:13)

About God: “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: **I am the first and I am the last**; besides me there is no god.” (Isaiah 44:6);

“**I am the Alpha and the Omega**,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’” (Revelation 1:8);

“He who is seated on the throne said ... ‘It is done. **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End ...**’” (Revelation 21:5,6)

g. “Mighty God” & “Everlasting Father”:

About Jesus: “For to us a child is born ... and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**” (Isaiah 9:6)

h. “Author of Life”:

About Jesus: “You killed the **author of life**, whom God raised him from the dead ...” (Acts 3:15)

i. He before whom every knee will bow and every tongue acknowledge:

About Jesus: “**at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.”

(Philippians 2:10,11)

About God: “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn ... **To me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.**” (Isaiah 45:22,23)

j. Emmanuel (God with us):

About Jesus: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name **Immanuel**’ (**which means, God with us.**)” (Matthew 1:22-23)

k. “the Holy One”:

About Jesus: “and we have believed, and have come to know, that you [Jesus] are **the Holy One** of God.” (John 6:69 – found 7 times in the N.T.)

Jesus, ... the Holy and Righteous One ...” (Acts 3:13,14)

About God: “For thus said the Lord GOD, **the Holy One** of Israel ...” (Isaiah 30:15 – found 44 times in the Bible)

*“But you have been anointed by **the Holy One**, and you all have knowledge.” (1 John 2:20)*

I. “the Righteous One”:

About Jesus: *“... And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of **the Righteous One**, whom you have now betrayed and murdered.” (Acts 7:52)*

About God: *“From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise, of glory to **the Righteous One**....” (Isaiah 24:16)*

14. IN THE COMMON SALUTATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS JESUS IS SPOKEN OF AS BEING THE SOURCE OF DIVINE GIFTS AND POWERS (JOINTLY WITH GOD THE FATHER): They speak of Jesus as: [all

Bible references in #14 are from New American Standard Bible (NASB)]

a. the author of (with God the Father) grace, peace, love, mercy and faith [Can these things come from a man?]:

- Rom. 1:7 – **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- 1 Cor. 1:3 – **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- 1 Cor. 16:23 – **“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.”**
- 2 Cor. 1:2 – **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- Gal. 1:3 – **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- Gal. 6:18 – **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit ...”**
- Eph. 1:2 – **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- Eph. 6:23 – **“Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- Phil. 1:2 – **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- Phil. 4:23 – **“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”**
- 1 Thess. 1:1 – **“To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.”**
- 1 Thess. 5:28 – **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”**
- 2 Thess. 1:1,2 – **“To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- 2 Thess. 1:12 – **“... according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- 2 Thess. 3:16,18 – **“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all ... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”**
- 1 Tim. 1:2 – **“Grace, mercy (and) peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”**
- 2 Tim. 1:2 – **“Grace, mercy (and) peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”**
- Philemon 3 – **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- Philemon 25 – **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”**
- 2 Pet. 1:2 – **“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”**
- 2 Pet. 3:18 – **“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**
- 2 John 3 – **“Grace, mercy (and) peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”**
- Rev. 22:21 – **“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”**

b. the sender and appointer (with God the Father) of His apostles [Who else but God can appoint apostles?]:

- Gal. 1:1 – **“Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father) ...”**

- 1 Tim. 1:1 – **“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, (who) is our hope ...”** [notice there is only one “commandment”]

c. our Savior (in the same sentence where God is called our Savior):

- Titus 1:3,4 – **“... according to the commandment of God our Savior ... Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.”**

d. the one who is given glory for ever and ever [Who else but God can receive glory for ever and ever?]:

- Heb. 13:21 – **“working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”**
- 2 Pet. 3:18 – **“... Jesus Christ. To him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity.”**

e. our Lord, just as God the Father is our Lord:

- James 1:1 – **“James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- 1 Pet. 1:1,2 – **“who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ ...”**

f. the one with whom we presently have fellowship, just like we have fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit:

- 2 Cor. 13:14 – **“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”**
- 1 John 1:3 – **“... our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”**

g. the one by whose mercy we have eternal life. [Can anyone but God give us eternal life?]:

- Jude 21 – **“Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.”**

h. the one who providentially enables and directs his servants to serve him:

- 1 Thessalonians 3:11 – **“Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear [direct] the way for us to come to you.”** [Notice there is only one director clearing the way]

15. JESUS RECEIVES AND ACCEPTS WORSHIP BY MEN, BY ANGELS, AND BY ALL CREATION. No prophet or godly man would ever accept this:

- [the wise men from the east] **“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea ... behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’ ... And going into the house, they saw the child ... and they fell down and worshiped him ...”** (Matthew 2:1-2, 11)
- [the man born blind] **“He said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him.”** (John 9:38)
- [when Jesus enabled Peter to walk on the water] **“He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus ... And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”** (Matthew 14:29-33)
- [when the disciples of Jesus saw him risen from the dead] **“And behold, Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him ... And when they saw him they worshiped him ...”** (Matthew 28:9,17)
- **“Then He said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; and do not be unbelieving, but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”** (John 20:27,28)

[Thomas not only called Jesus “Lord,” but also clearly called Him “God” as distinct from “Lord.” Jesus did not refuse this description of Himself nor did he rebuke Thomas for saying this. He accepted Thomas’ adoration of Him as God!]

- [His disciples at his ascension into heaven] *“Then he led them out as far as Bethany ... While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And **they worshiped him** and returned to Jerusalem with great joy”* (Luke 24:50-52)
- *“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**”* (Philippians 2:9-11)
- *“**the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb** [Jesus] ... And they sang ... saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’ **Then ... I heard around the throne ... the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’** And I heard **every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’** And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ and **the elders fell down and worshiped.**”* (Revelation 5:8-14)

16. AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION TO HEAVEN:

16a. JESUS SPOKE FROM HEAVEN WITH AUTHORITY, GIVING REVELATION:

- [to the Apostle Paul before his conversion] *“... a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, ‘**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?**’ And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting** ... Saul rose from the ground, and ... they led him by the hand ... into Damascus ... there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. **The Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias, ... rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man ... named Saul ... he is praying ... that he might regain his sight. ... Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine ...’.** So Ananias ... entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, ‘**Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.**”* (Acts 9:3-5,8,10-12,15,17)
- [to the Apostle Paul] *“... **the gospel that was preached by me ... I did not receive it from any man, ... I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.**”* (Galatians 1:11,12)
- [to the Apostle John] *“I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me ... When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, **I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.**”* (Revelation 1:12,17,18)
- [to the seven churches through the Apostle John] *“to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words **of the first and the last, who died and came to life.** I know your tribulation and your poverty ... Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.’”* (Revelation 2:8-10)

16b. JESUS RECEIVED PRAYERS FROM GOD’S PEOPLE:

- [from Stephen as he was dying] *“And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘**Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.**”* (Acts 7:59)

17. JESUS IS THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD:

17a. GOD CREATED EVERYTHING (except Adam & Eve) OUT OF NOTHING SIMPLY BY COMMANDING IT TO BE BY HIS WORD:

- “Then **God said**, ‘Let there be light’; **and there was light** ... And **God said**, “Let there be ...’ And **God said**, ‘Let there be ...’ **And it was so.**” (Genesis 1:3,6,9)
- “**By the word of the LORD** the heavens were made, and **by the breath of his mouth** all their host ... **he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.**” (Psalm 33:6,9)

17b. AND GOD CREATED EVERYTHING BY HIMSELF, ALONE:

- “... *I am the LORD, who made all things, who **alone** stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth **by myself***” (Isaiah 44:24)

17c. JESUS IS CALLED THE ETERNAL “WORD” OF GOD BY AND THROUGH WHOM GOD CREATED EVERYTHING. That Word became a man, living among us:

- “**In the beginning was the Word**, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God** ... All things were made through him, and **without him was not anything made that was made**. In him was life, and the life was the light of men ... **The true light, which gives light to everyone**, was coming into the world. **He was in the world, and the world was made through him**, yet the world did not know him ... **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us** ...” (John 1:1-4,9,10,14)

[This is clearly referring to Jesus. It says, “the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh ...” which means Jesus is God. Obviously, the Word of God is God’s own communication or expression of Himself; not some other God! Only God could be the “true light which ... gives light to (enlightens) every man” and only God could cause his light/ his own word to become a human being and live among us. The light and Word of God can be none other than God Himself.]

- “**That which was from the beginning**, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have ... touched with our hands, concerning the **Word of life** – The life was made manifest, and we have seen it ... **the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us** ... so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his **Son, Jesus Christ.**” (1 John 1:1-3)
- “... who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses and ministers of the word** ...” (Luke 1:2)
[The only way anyone can **see** or **serve** the Word (Jesus) is if He is present in a human body.]

17d. THAT IS WHY GOD’S WORD SAYS ALL THINGS CREATED BY GOD WERE CREATED THROUGH, BY AND FOR JESUS:

- “In the beginning was the Word ... and **the Word was God** ... **All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**” (John 1:1-3)
- “He was in the world, and **the world was made through Him.**” (John 1:10)
- “... Jesus Christ, **through whom are all things** and through whom we exist.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)
- “... his Son ... **through whom also he created the world.**” (Hebrews 1:2)
- “He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God ... **For by him all things were created**, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... **all things were created through him and for him**. And he is before all things, **and in him all things hold together.**” (Colossians 1:15-17)
- “... **God, for whom and through whom everything exists** ...” (Hebrews 2:10 - NIV)

17e. JOHN 1:1-3 (17c above) IS ONE OF SEVEN PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHICH CLEARLY CALL THE LORD JESUS “GOD.” Here are the other six:

- *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and **they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means, ‘God with us.’**”* (Matt. 1:23 - NASB)
[This prophecy from Isaiah 7:14 is fulfilled in Jesus. He is God with us – God in human flesh]
- *“Then he [Jesus] said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands ... Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘**My Lord and my God!**’”* (John 20:27,28)
- [Notice that Jesus did not rebuke “doubting Thomas” for calling Him God.]
- [Jesus] *“Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.”* (Philippians 2:6 – This is from the 2011 NIV translation)
- *“For **in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.**”* (Colossians 2:9 - NASB)
- *“But of the Son He says, ‘**your throne, O God, is forever and ever ...**’”* (Hebrews 1:8)
- *“... by the righteousness of **our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.**”* (2 Peter 1:1)
- *“waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of **our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**”* (Titus 2:13)

[Other verses that may or may not call Him God: Acts 20:28, Romans 9:5, 1 John 5:20]

18. HE CLAIMED AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS:

- *“And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ‘**Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?**’”* (Mark 2:5-7)
- *“But that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**’ – he then said to the paralytic- ‘Rise, pick up your bed and go home.’”* (Matthew 9:6)

19. HE IS GIVEN EQUAL HONOR WITH GOD THE FATHER. Notice that the same things given to God the Father in worship (“glory,” “honor,” “power,” “might,” “blessing” and “wisdom”) are also given to Jesus, God’s Lamb:

About God:

*“**Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.**”* (Revelation 4:11)

*“saying, ‘Amen! **Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.**’”* (Revelation 7:12)

About Jesus:

*“saying with a loud voice, ‘**Worthy is the Lamb** [Jesus] **who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!**’”* (Revelation 5:12)

About Both:

*“And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘**To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!**’”* (Revelation 5:13)

CHAPTER TWO

THE POWER OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Greatness:

- A. God's Greatness (Omnipotence)
- B. God Knows Everything (His Omniscience)
- C. God Is Present Everywhere (His Omnipresence)
- D. God's Power In His Holy Spirit
- E. My Reactions

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S GREATNESS (Omnipotence):

ISLAM:

Although the Unity/Oneness (Chapter 1) of God is usually considered Islam's primary doctrine, in my opinion God's Greatness is truly more foundational in Islam's overall view of God. God's Greatness is seen especially in His Omnipotent Power (Chapter 2), His Sovereignty (Chapter 3), His Transcendence (Chapter 4), His Inscrutability (Chapter 5) and His Glory (Chapter 6) but is also an underlying emphasis seen in almost all aspects of Islam's teaching.

1. GOD'S GREATNESS IS SEEN IN HIS "NAMES." 17 of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God relate to this subject: [See Appendix 1 for the complete list]

Al-Aziz = The Almighty, Victorious
Al-Jabbar = The Compeller, Irresistible
Al-Alim = The All Knowing, Omniscient
As-Sami (Samee) = The All Hearing
Al-Basir (Baseer) = The All Seeing
Al-Hakam = The Wise, Perfect in Judgment
Al-Khabir (Khabeer) = The All Aware
Al-Kabir (Kabeer) = The Greatest
Al-Wasi = The All Embracing, Omnipresent

As-Shahid = The Witness, All Seeing
Al-Qawee = The Powerful, Inexhaustible
Al-Matin = The Forceful One, Authoritative
Al-Muhyi = The Giver of Life, Quickener
Al-Mumit = The Taker of Life, Slayer
Al-Qadir = The Omnipotent, All Powerful
Al-Muqtadir = The All Powerful. Prevailing
Al-Warith = The Heir, Inheritor of All

2. ISLAM'S MOST BASIC CONCEPT OF GOD: I believe the most fundamental contrast between the Qur'an's and the Bible's teaching about God is: "**God is the Greatest!**" vs. "**God, our Father.**" It seems to me that these contrasting basic concepts permeate and fundamentally influence all aspects of theology in Islam and Christianity. For example, a

portion of the prayer, *Dua Kumayl*, which was often recited by Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad and the fourth Caliph, illustrates Islam's primary emphasis on God's greatness:

*"by Thy **majesty** against which nothing can stand up
by Thy **grandeur** which prevails upon all things
by Thy **authority** which is exercised over all things
by Thy **knowledge** which pervades all things"* (<http://www.islamicity.com/Articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0112-380#sthash.ax0Vm7d6.xhkOUgfl.dpuf>)

3. "ALLAH-U-AKBAR":

Probably the most commonly repeated phrase in Islam is "Allah-U-Akbar" ("God is greater/greatest"). This expression of praise to God, called the "*taqbeer*" in Arabic, may be the most frequently used religious expression in the entire world! It is repeated between 110 and 335 times daily by devout Muslims during their five daily formal prayers (I have gathered the following details with the help of the 1995 edition of Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, pp. 464-469):

4 times in the call to prayer before each of the 5 daily prayers: $(4 \times 5) = 20$

Each of the 5 daily prayer times has a designated number of cycles (*rak'at*) of prayer totaling 17 cycles (2 in early morning, 4 at noon, 4 midafternoon, 3 at sun down and 4 in the evening). These are **obligatory** (*fard*) cycles of prayer. The "*taqbeer*" ("*Allah-U-Akbar*") is repeated once at the start of each of the 5 prayer times, plus 5 times in each of the 17 cycles: $(17 \times 5 = 85 + 5) = 90$

Total times "*taqbeer*" is said within the obligatory repetitions $(20 + 90) = 110$

There are 14 **recommended** but unrequired additional cycles of prayer that can be added $(2+4+4+0+4)$ following Muhammad's example (*sunna*). $(14 \times 5) = 70$

And there are 6 $(0+2+0+2+2)$ **optional** (*nafil*) cycles with 5 each: $(6 \times 5) = 30$

Plus, there are three other **voluntary prayer times** (during the early morning, mid-morning and after midnight), in addition to the usual 5 times, when prayers can be said, involving 25 $(8+8+9)$ additional cycles: $(25 \times 5) = 125$

Total recommended, optional and voluntary repetitions $(70 + 30 + 125) = 225$

Total of all possible repetitions of "*Allah-U-Akbar*" $(110 + 225) = 335$

"*Allah-U-Akbar*" is also the war cry of Muslim soldiers as they attack their enemy in battle. And it is written on the walls of buildings and on busses and trucks all over the Muslim world.

4. GOD CAN DO ANYTHING (HIS OMNIPOTENCE). According to Islam, God is so great that He can do anything He wills to do. He doesn't need any reason for what He does. Miracles are performed without any specific purpose other than to show God's power. No one can question what He does or object to His will:

"O Allah! **Lord of Power** (And Rule) ... **Verily, over all things Thou hast power.**" (Sura 3:26)

"... **Nor is Allah to be frustrated by anything** whatever in the heavens or on earth: **for He is All-Knowing. All-Powerful.**" (Sura 35:44)

"The Lord of the heavens and the earth ... **exalted in might, able to enforce His Will** ..." (Sura 38:66)

"**Lord of the throne of glory, doer (without let) of all that He intends.**" (Sura 85:16)

The Qur'an says: **"for God hath power over all things"** (39 times), **"to God belongeth the dominion ..."** (25 times), **"exalted in power"** (39 times), **"exalted in might"** (42 times), **"for to God belongeth all ..."** (12 times), etc.. Here are some of the ways God's power is seen:

a. God's Power Is Seen In His Essence/Being. His omnipotent power is evident in His complete sovereignty (chapter three), His transcendence over all things (chapter four), His un-knowableness (chapter five), etc.

b. God's Power Is Seen In What He Can Do According To His Will:

1) In His Creation:

"... Allah createth what He willeth ... He but saith to it, 'Be,' and it is!" (Sura 3:47)

2) In His Decisions and Judgments (Forgiveness/Mercy): He can decide to forgive us, punish us or lead us astray:

"To God belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth and punisheth whom He pleaseth; but God is oft-forgiving, most merciful." (Sura 3:129)

"... If He please, He granteth you mercy, or if He please, punishment ..." (Sura 17:54)

"... if it be that Allah willeth to leave you astray: He is your Lord! ..." (Sura 11:34)

3) In His "Signs." The word "signs" is used to mean an **indication or proof of God's power**. God's "signs" are mentioned over **400 times** in the Qur'an. The term "signs" seems to refer most often to the natural provisions and forces He designed in creation, but also to miracles God performed through His prophets:

"Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean ...; in the rain which Allah Sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds ... are Signs for a people that are wise." (Sura 2:164)

"Among His signs are the Night and the Day, and the Sun and the Moon ..." (Sura 41:37)

"...of no profit to them were their (faculties of) hearing, sight, and heart and intellect, when they went on rejecting the Signs of Allah ..." (Sura 46:26)

"... We gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear (Signs) ..." (Sura 2:87)

4) In His sending His Word to the prophets:

"... For each period is a Book (revealed). Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth: with Him is the Mother of the Book." (Sura 13:38,39)

c. God's Power Is Seen In His Actions Related To Jesus:

1) Jesus' Birth/Creation: According to the Qur'an Jesus was **"created"** by God simply saying **"Be!"** and yet he was **"conceived"** by the virgin Mary seemingly without the normal nine months of pregnancy. All by God's great power:

"She said: '... How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?' He said: 'Even so, God createth what He willeth. When He hath decreed a plan, He but saith to it, "Be," and it is!'" (Sura 3:47)

"The similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: 'Be' and he was." (Sura 3:59)

"She said, 'How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me' ... **Thy Lord saith, 'That is easy for me ...'** So she conceived him and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree... At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him ..." (Sura 19:20-23, 27)

2) Jesus' Death: Islam implies that since God is omnipotent, **His enemies could never have humiliated one of God's greatest prophets by crucifying Him.** Instead God changed Jesus' appearance with someone else (Judas?), so they crucified the wrong man while God took Jesus to heaven without dying:

"They said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God' **but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them ... For of a surety they killed him not. Nay, God raised him up unto Himself.**" (Sura 4:157,158)

(Sadly, **the resurrection of Jesus** from death and hell, which is the greatest display of God's power, **is completely missing in Islam.**)

5. GOD'S SUPERIORITY OVER ALL: He Is "Exalted," "Supreme," "Above," and "Best" In Everything:

a. "Exalted": 90 times the Qur'an says God is "exalted in power" or "exalted in might." Also there are other expressions of exaltation:

"... **the Exalted in power, worthy of all praise!**" (Sura 14:1)

"He is high above all that they say!- **exalted and great (beyond measure)!**" (Sura 17:43)

b. "Supreme": There are 12 references to God being "Supreme":

"Allah! ... for He is **the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).**" (Sura 2:255)

"... He is **the Creator Supreme ...**" (Sura 36:81)

"... truly my Lord is Free of all Needs, **Supreme in Honour!**" (Sura 27:40)

c. "Above": 19 times the Qur'an says God is "above" all.

[See chapter 4 – God's Transcendence]

d. "Best": The statement that God "**knows best**" appears 36 times. In addition there are 17 ways in which God is stated to be the "best":

Best planner: "And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, **and God too planned, and the best of planners is God.**" (Sura 3:54)

Best protector & helper: "... God is your Protector - **the best to protect and the best to help.**" (Sura 8:40)

Best disposer of affairs: "... **He is the best disposer of affairs.**" (Sura 3:173)

Best sustainer: "... and provide for our sustenance, for **thou art the best sustainer (of our needs).**" (Sura 5:114) "... **He is the best of those who give sustenance.**" (Sura 23:72)

Best judge: "... God: He declares the truth, and **He is the best of judges.**" (Sura 6:57)

Best to decide: "... for **He is the best to decide.**" (Sura 7:8)

Best to forgive: "...for **Thou art the best of those who forgive.**" (Sura 7:155)

Best to take care: "... **But God is the best to take care (of him)**" (Sura 12:64)

Best giver of reward & success: "... *He is the best to reward, and the best to give success.*" (Sura 18:44)

Best mercy giver: "... *Thou art the best of those who show mercy!*" (Sura 23:109)

Best commander: "... *until ...God commands me; and He is the best to command.*" (Sura 12:80)

Best inheritor: "... *leave me not without offspring, though thou art the best of inheritors.*" (Sura 21:89)

Best creator: "... *God, the best to create!*" (Sura 23:14) "... *the best of Creators*" (Sura 37:125)

Best enabler: "... *Thou art the best to enable (us) to disembark.*" (Sura 23:29)

Best hearer of prayer: "... *We are the best to hear prayer.*" (Sura 37:75)

Best knower: "*That is as far as knowledge will reach them. Verily thy Lord knoweth best those who stray from His Path, and He knoweth best those who receive guidance.*" (Sura 53:30)

Best determiner: "...*for *We are the best to determine (things).*" (Sura 77:23)

6. GOD IS IRRESISTIBLE. God is so great and powerful that man's will and power are nonexistent; so great that He is "irresistible." This word is used 9 times both as an adjective and as a descriptive name for God. Here are a few of them:

"*He is **the irresistible**, (watching) from above over His worshippers; and He is the Wise, acquainted with all things.*" (Sura 6:18)

"... *Say: 'Allah is the Creator of all things: He is the One, the Supreme and **irresistible**.'*" (Sura 13:16; see also 12:39; 14:48; 38:65; 40:16)

"*Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;- the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, **the irresistible**, the Supreme ...*" (Sura 59:23; see also 6:61; 39:4)

7. GOD NEEDS NOTHING. He is totally self-sufficient and lacks nothing:

"*The Lord is self-sufficient ...*" (Sura 6:133; see also 10:68)

"*God! There is no god but He – the living, **the self-subsisting** ...*" (Sura 2:255; also 3:2; 20:111)

"... *truly my Lord is free of all needs ...*" (Sura 27:40, also 2:263; 14:8; 29:7; 31:26; 35:15 & 47:38)

"... *and Allah is free of all wants ...*" (Sura 4:131 – also 60:6)

Islam teaches God has no need of our worship or of our obedience. In fact, our submission to His will cannot benefit Him nor can our rebellion against Him harm Him in any way. They only hurt ourselves:

"... *If any did turn back on his heels, **not the least harm will he do to Allah** ...*" (Sura 3:144)

"*Those who reject Allah ... **will not injure Allah in the least** ...*" (Sura 47:32)

"... *(But they rebelled); **to *us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.***" (Sura 2:57; 7:160) [*Allah often refers to Himself as "We" and "Us." This is called the "royal plural" often used by kings, and no Muslim believes this indicates the Trinity.]

Muslim scholars emphasize this. For example, Muhammad al-Burkawi, once wrote:

"*He received neither profit nor loss from whatever happens. If all the infidels became believers and all the wicked pious, He would gain nothing. And if all believers became infidels it would not cause Him loss.*" (Taken from The Moslem Doctrine Of God by S.M. Zwemer, p.56, copyright 1905)

This teaching is not unique to Islam. In fact, it has been around for a long time! We hear the same human reasoning from the “friends” of the ancient prophet Job:

*“Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: ‘**Can a man be of benefit to God? ... What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous? What would he gain if your ways were blameless?**’” (Job 22:1-3)*

Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram said: *“**If you sin, how does that affect him? If your sins are many, what does that do to him? If you are righteous, what do you give to him, or what does he receive from your hand? Your wickedness affects only a man like yourself, and your righteousness only the sons of men.**”* (Job 35:6-8)

Therefore, Islam logically insists that God could never *need* anyone to die for us or any sacrifice to be offered to forgive our sins. God needs nothing! He is all powerful, and able to do what He wants. If He wills to forgive us without any atonement, He just forgives us! We have no right to question what He does, nor does He need any reason for what He does! Our duty is simply to be in submission (“*Islam*”) to the will of God, even to fight and kill the unbelievers who resist God:

*“**Fight those who believe not in God ...**, (even if they are) of the people of the Book [Christians & Jews], **until they pay the jizya** [poll tax] **with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued ...**” (Sura 9:29)*

*“... when ye are asked to go forth in **the cause of God ... Go ye forth ... and strive and struggle** [jihad] **with your goods and your persons, in the cause of God ...**” (Sura 9:38,39,41)*

Strangely, even though God needs nothing, Muslims seem to believe (illogically) that God needs Muslims to protect the honor of His prophet and book by attacking and even killing those who defame Muhammad or Islam. Even the Qur’an denies this:

*“... **Nor (needs) He any to protect Him from humiliation ...**” (Sura 17:111)*

Nevertheless, the Qur’an seems to tell Muslims to exalt God’s honor by fighting and killing unbelievers; and it also **refers to jihad as “the cause of God.”**

THE BIBLE:

1. GOD’S GREAT POWER: The Bible, like the Qur’an, repeatedly exalts God’s greatness. **30 times** the words “**great**,” “**greater**” and “**greatness**” are used of God. His greatness is incomparable, immeasurable, and unsearchable:

*“... **you are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you ...**” (2 Samuel 7:22)*

*“... **my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty.**” (Psalm 104:8)*

*“**Great is the LORD ... and his greatness is unsearchable ... On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.**” (Psalm 145:3,5,6)*

a. Two Dimensions Of God’s Greatness. God’s greatness includes both His almighty power (omnipotence) and the greatness of His character:

1) The Greatness Of His Almighty Power. We can know only a “whisper” of His omnipotence compared to the awesome “thunder” of the whole of it:

*“Behold these are but **the outskirts** of his ways, and how small **a whisper** do we hear of him! But **the thunder of his power who can understand?**” (Job 26:14)*

*“... **Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.**” (Revelation 19:6)*

“All the nations are as nothing before him ... less than nothing and emptiness ... by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power ...” (Isaiah 40:17,26)

“For nothing will be impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37 – also Jeremiah 32:17)

The Hebrew word, ***Shaddai*** (“Almighty”) is used of God 48 times in the Old Testament, often combined with *El* (“God”) to form, ***God Almighty***. He is also called ***“mighty,” “The Mighty One”*** and ***“mighty God”*** 60 times:

“... I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac ... as God Almighty [El-Shaddai] ...” (Exodus 6:2,3)

“The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth ...” (Psalm 50:1)

“... O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts” (Jeremiah 32:18)

2) The Greatness Of His Moral Character: The greatness of God’s goodness, righteousness, grace, mercy, love, etc are also beyond understanding:

“Great is the LORD ... and his greatness is unsearchable ... They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.” (Psalm 145:3,7-9)

It is important to realize that **God’s omnipotent power is in perfect harmony with His moral character. Technically God could do whatever He wants to do, but His moral character forbids him from wanting to do anything that would violate or contravene His own character; Who He is. In fact God’s Word says He cannot lie, be tempted, or be unfaithful.** Not because He is unable to, but because He would violate His very being and cease to be God:

“... it is impossible for God to lie...” (Heb. 6:18);

“... for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.” (James 1:13)

“If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” (2 Tim. 2:13)

God will do all He **purposes** to do, but not necessarily all He **desires** to do:

“... My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose ... I have purposed, and I will do it.” (Isaiah 46:10,11)

“The Lord ... is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.” (2 Peter 3:9 – NLT)

b. How Great Is God? Here are a few of the many things that could be listed,:

1) God Is So Great He Created Things Out Of Nothing (Islam agrees):

“In the beginning ... God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light ...” (Genesis 1:3)

“Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.” (Jeremiah 32:17)

But the physical universe is only temporary, while the things of God’s character and being – His attributes and works; His **“ways”** – are eternal:

“The heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment...but my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.” (Isaiah 51:6 NIV)

In fact, God’s greatness is infinitely greater than Islam’s ***“Allah-u-Akbar,”*** which focuses primarily on God’s great power over all of His physical creation!

2) God Is So Great He Sustains The Universe By His Power (Islam agrees):

*"You are the Lord ... **You have made heaven**, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, **the earth** and all that is on it, **the seas** and all that is in them; **and you preserve all of them...**" (Nehemiah 9:6)*

*"And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together.**" (Colossians 1:17)*

3) God Is So Great He Caused His Own Eternal Word To Become A Human Being And A Descendent Of Adam. (Islam does not agree) Most people can't or won't believe this because it seems so impossible! He sent His eternal Word out from Himself into the womb of a virgin without any man touching her. That human/divine baby is both the Son of Man and the Son of God, Who came from God and also descended from Adam, Abraham and David:

*"... **you will conceive in your womb and bear a son ... And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David ...**' And Mary said to the angel, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' And the angel answered her, '**... the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.**'" (Luke 1:31-35)*

*"Jesus said, '**For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven ...**'" (John 6:38,51)*

4) God Is So Great He Destroyed Death Forever By Raising Jesus Out Of Death And Hell In Order To Provide Eternal Life For Us. (Islam does not agree). He deliberately allowed the Lord Jesus to voluntarily be crucified **so that he could enter death in our place and destroy it from the inside by His own indestructible life** and come back from the grave as **the Lord of life**:

*"**God raised him** [Jesus] **up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.**" (Acts 2:24)*

[Jesus said] *"For this reason the Father loves me, because **I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again ...**" (John 10:17,18)*

*"... **the immeasurable greatness of his power ... according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion ... And he put all things under his feet ...**" (Ephesians 1:19-22)*

*"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, **that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**" (Hebrews 2:14,15);*

*"... **by the power of an indestructible life.**" (Hebrews 7:16)*

[see Appendix 6 for the many Bible predictions of Jesus' resurrection from the dead]

5) God Is So Great That Through The Death And Resurrection Of Jesus He Transforms Believers Into His Own Image, As He Originally Intended. He Empowers Us By His Holy Spirit In Us To Live Holy Lives For His Glory:

*"... so that **by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**" (Romans 15:13)*

*"**I can do all things through him who strengthens me.**" (Philippians 4:13)*

“being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy” (Colossians 1:11)

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3)

6) Perhaps Greatest Of All, The Infinite, Omnipotent And Unknowable Creator Of The Universe Is So Great That He Has Made It Possible For Us Mere Specks Of Created Dust To Have An Intimate, Personal Fellowship With Him For Eternity!
How could we possibly know Him personally?

“says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity ... I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit” (Isaiah 57:15)

“... our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3)

“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God” (John 17:3)

In fact, He not only lives *with* us, He has put His own Spirit *in* us:

“For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:11,12)

c. How Should We Respond To His Greatness?

“... May those who love your salvation repeatedly shout, ‘God is great!’” (Psalm 70:4)

Psalm 76:11 refers to God as He *“who is to be feared”* (in NLT, *“the Awesome One”*)

2. IS GOD IRRESISTIBLE? We often reason that God’s will must be irresistible because He is God, and who can resist God or His will?

“You will say to me then, ‘Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?’” (Rom. 9:19)

Nevertheless, God in His sovereignty has deliberately created us in His own image, with a will of our own because He wants us to *want* to love and serve Him, rather than be forced to. And so He allows us to resist Him and His Holy Spirit:

“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.” (Acts 7:51)

We know, however, that the omnipotent God will ultimately fully accomplish His perfect will even though He has allowed us to exert our own wills. In fact, He even uses our resistance to accomplish His own purposes:

“... according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,” (Ephesians 1:11)

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Ephesians 1:5 – KJV)

3. GOD NEEDS NOTHING?

a. God Certainly Does Not Need Anything:

“and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.” (Acts 17:25 - NLT)

b. God Is No One's Debtor:

[God said] *"Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? ..."* (Job 41:11)

"Or who has given a gift to him [the Lord] that he might be repaid?" (Romans 11:35)

c. But In His Sovereignty, God Has Chosen To "Need" Certain Things And People In Order To Fulfill His Promises And Prophecies. Otherwise he would be a liar and unfaithful to his word:

"For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs." (Romans 15:8)

For Example:

*"... Jesus sent his disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and ... you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that **the Lord needs them** ... This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet [Zechariah 9:9]: **Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'**"* (Matthew 21:1-5 - NIV)

When God put these words in the mouth of the prophet Zechariah 500 years before Jesus was born, **He bound Himself** to fulfill them. Thus, He **needed** a donkey and its colt to fulfill His promise!

Another example is the following prophecy of Jeremiah:

*"This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years**. Then after **seventy years** are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation ... for their iniquity, declares the Lord ..."* (Jeremiah 25:11,12)

*"In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, **that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled**, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation ... **'Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.**"* (Ezra 1:1-3)

And Jesus Himself spoke of God's need to fulfill Old Testament prophecies:

*"Then he said to them, '... **everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, **'Thus it is written, that [1] the Christ should suffer and [2] on the third day rise from the dead, and that [3] repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.**"* You are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:44-48)

Because God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah saying that after 70 years the people of Israel would return to their land, He **needed** King Cyrus to send them back at that time. Likewise, the Lord Jesus said there were three prophecies God has made through the prophets, which *"must be fulfilled."* In fulfillment of the first two promises God **needed** Jesus to be put to death and raised from the dead, and He Himself has done those two things. The third one He has chosen to be done *"in his [Jesus'] name."* Certainly God could have done this Himself, but because He said it would be done in Jesus name, He **needs** us to do it! **He needs us because He has chosen to need us!** Therefore...

d. God Has Chosen To "Need" Us And Depend On Us As His Junior Partners in His work of providing salvation for the peoples of the world! It must be understood, however, that being God's junior partners is certainly not the same as being

another God. It means that Almighty God has chosen to allow us to have a part in what He is doing, which is not only beyond amazing, but is also an astonishing and miraculous privilege! Our God not only wants to bless us, **He has chosen to have us join Him in His work of providing salvation to the peoples of the world:**

i) God Originally Made Adam His Junior Partner Or Viceroy To Rule The World For Him And To Name All The Animals:

*“And God blessed them. And God said to them, **“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”** (Genesis 1:28)*

*“Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And **whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.** The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.” (Genesis 2:19,20)*

ii) Later God Made His Prophets And Messengers His Junior Partners To Speak For Him And To Share In His Counsel:

*“I am the LORD... **who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers...**” (Isaiah 44:24,26)*

*“**For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.**” (Amos 3:2)*

iii) And Now Today God Is Making All His Believers His Junior Partners:

*And Jesus came and said to them, **‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’** (Matthew 28:18-20)*

*“And they went out and preached everywhere, while **the Lord worked with them** and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.” (Mark 16:20)*

*“**For we are God’s fellow workers.**” (1 Corinthians 3:9)*

*“**Working together with him, then, we appeal to you...**” (2 Cor. 6:1)*

iv) But God Does Not Need Us To Defend His Honor By Fighting [Jihad] Against Unbelievers. He Defends Us; Not We Him:

*“Then the men of the town said to Joash, **‘Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it.’** But Joash said to all who stood against him, **‘Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down.’**” (Judges 6:30,31)*

v) And God Does Not Need Us To Defend Ourselves Or The Gospel, But To Depend On Him To Accomplish His Purposes As Jesus Did Before His Crucifixion At The Hands Of Evil People:

*“He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, **‘Where are you from?’** But **Jesus gave him no answer.** So Pilate said to him, **‘You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?’** Jesus answered him, **‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above...’**” (John 19:9-11)*

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. **Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?’**” (Matthew 26:52-54)

“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,” (2 Timothy 2:24)

e. Although God Does Not Need Our Worship And Praise, He Desires It And Is Blessed By It. That is why He chose in His sovereignty to create and later to regenerate believers with an inbuilt desire to glorify, praise and bless Him:

“... the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise...” (Isaiah 43:21)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:11-12)

“on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.” (2 Thessalonians 1:10)

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ... Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!” (Psalm 103:1,2, 20,21,22)

4. GOD’S POWER IS SEEN IN HIS “SIGNS.” The word “signs” is used to mean *indicators or proofs* of God’s power. The terms, “sign,” “signs” and “signs and wonders” are used of God **55 times in the Old Testament** and **33 times in the New Testament** (88 times compared to over 400 times in the Qur’an). **The Bible uses the term “signs” almost entirely in reference to supernatural miracles while the Qur’an mostly speaks of things God created in nature as His “signs.”**

In the Old Testament the term, “signs” is used 38 times in reference to **supernatural miracles or fulfilled prophecies**:

“...the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness ...” (Numbers 14:22)

And only 17 times are **the physical things God created in nature** called “signs:”

“... my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.” (Genesis 9:13)

“And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years’” (Genesis 1:14)

In the New Testament most (26) are **supernatural miracles** done by Jesus and His followers and only a few (3) are **natural signs** in nature:

“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory ...” (John 2:11)

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22)

“by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ...” (Romans 15:19)

B. GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING (HIS OMNISCIENCE):

ISLAM:

God's omniscience is repeatedly stated and emphasized in the Qur'an to the point that it becomes almost meaningless. Statements that God *knows*, *sees* and *hears* everything are expressed, often in the same identical words, a total of 325 times, always emphasizing God's almighty power:

1. GOD KNOWS ALL. Expressions such as, "knows all things," "full of knowledge," "full of wisdom," "All-Wise," "I know what ye know not," "All-Knowing," and many others are found 253 times throughout the Qur'an:

"I know what ye know not... Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?" (Sura 2:30,33)

"From God, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens. ... Say, 'Whether ye hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, God knows it all'" (Sura 3:5,29)

"... Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise ..." (Sura 4:11)

"... Such is the judgment and ordering of (Him), the Exalted in Power, the Omniscient." (Sura 6:96)

2. GOD SEES ALL (23 times) AND HEARS ALL (49 times). A total of 72 times God's omniscience is seen in the use of oft repeated phrases like "All Hearing" and "sees well all that ye do":

"... For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing." (Sura 2:127)

"... And do not forget Liberality between yourselves. For Allah sees well all that ye do." (Sura 2:237)

"... for God is He that heareth and seeth (all things)." (Sura 4:134)

"And God will judge with (justice and) Truth: but those whom (men) invoke besides Him, will not (be in a position) to judge at all. Verily it is God (alone) Who hears and sees (all things)." (Sura 40:20)

3. ONLY GOD KNOWS WHO WILL BE IN PARADISE. Islam teaches that God is so great no one but He can know who is going to be sent to Paradise. If we say we know we have eternal life and the forgiveness of sins and will be with the Lord in eternity we are arrogantly claiming knowledge only God has:

"That the People of the Book [Christians & Jews] may know that they have no power whatever over the grace of God, that (His) grace is (entirely) in His hand, to bestow it on whomsoever He wills. For God is the Lord of grace abounding." (Sura 57:29)

Because Muslims don't know for sure that even Muhammad is in Paradise, they pray for his peace and blessing in a prayer (known in Arabic as *durood-e-ibrahimi*) in each of the 17 obligatory cycles of their five-times-daily formal prayers, plus they say or write, "peace be upon him" every time they mention his name!

4. WE RECEIVE TRUE GUIDANCE ONLY THROUGH GOD'S BOOKS AND PROPHETS. Since Muhammad is the final prophet, he especially is the vehicle through whom God gives us such guidance:

"This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah" (Sura 2:2)

"Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book,-on them shall be Allah's curse ..." (Sura 2:159)

"... was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong) ..." (Sura 2:185)

"It was We who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light ... If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers." (Sura 5:44)

"And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah." (Sura 5:46)

"Those were the (prophets) who received Allah's guidance ..." (Sura 6:90)

THE BIBLE:

1. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE IS PERFECT AND UNMEASUREABLE:

"Do you know ... the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge?" (Job 37:16)

"Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure." (Psalm 147:5)

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Romans 11:33)

2. THE BIBLE, LIKE THE QUR'AN, STATES THAT GOD SEES, HEARS AND KNOWS EVERYTHING. Bible verses are very similar to the Qur'an on this subject. The Qur'an, however, emphasizes God's almighty power over those who oppose Him and try to hide their evil, while the Bible emphasizes God's love in His knowledge:

"And the angel of the LORD said to her [Hagar], 'Behold, you ... shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, [meaning, God hears] because the LORD has listened to your affliction.' ... So she [Hagar] called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, 'You are a God of seeing,' for she said, 'Truly here I have seen him who looks after me ...'" (Genesis 16:11-13)

"You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence." (Psalm 90:8)

"O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether ... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ... If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me ... even the darkness is not dark to you ... For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works ... My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! ... awake, and I am still with you ... Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me ...'" (Psalm 139:13-24)

“... the LORD says ... **‘I know every thought that comes into your minds.’**” (Ezekiel 11:5 - NLT)

“no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13)

3. GOD HAS PERFECT WISDOM. God has both complete knowledge and perfect wisdom, which is more than knowledge. It’s his **ability to use all knowledge perfectly**. God’s wisdom includes perfect insight, discernment and decisiveness:

“With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding ... With him are strength and sound wisdom” (Job 12:13,16)

“O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all ...” (Psalm 104:24)

“... God ... to whom belong wisdom and might.” (Daniel 2:20)

“to the only wise God [or, “God, alone wise”] be glory forevermore ...” (Romans 16:27)

4. GOD REVEALS MYSTERIES TO US WE COULD NEVER KNOW. These secret things are revealed by God’s Holy Spirit Through His Word:

a. Assurance Of Salvation Through Faith In Jesus Christ: In contrast to Islam, the most important mystery is that we can know we have eternal life with Him if we receive His gift of salvation from sin and eternal death by believing in Jesus His Son. That is because God has promised that to everyone who receives Christ as Savior. Therefore if we believe what God has promised us, we know for sure that we have eternal life. If we refuse to believe God’s promise we are calling Him a liar:

“... for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” (I John 5:9-13)

“Jesus said to them ... I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day ... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:35,38-40,44)

[Jesus said]: **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”** (John 10:27-29)

“Now Jesus did many other signs ... but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30,31)

“... the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ... that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel ... to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known” (Ephesians 2:4,5,6,9,10)

b. God's Own Secret Thoughts Revealed By God's Spirit In Us:

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever ..." (Deuteronomy 29:29)

"these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God ..." (1 Corinthians 2:10-13)

5. GOD GIVES US HIS WISDOM THROUGH JESUS WHEN WE RECEIVE HIM.

While Islam tells us God gives guidance and wisdom through the messages (books) He has given to His prophets, the Bible tells us we receive God's wisdom and guidance through our Lord Jesus the Messiah. He is not only "God's Wisdom" personified in human form, but He has become "wisdom from God" for us. **If we accept only God's written Word, but do not receive the living Word Who is revealed in it, we are fools:**

*"... be encouraged ... to reach all the riches of ... the knowledge of **God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**" (Colossians 2:2,3)*

*"... Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in **the wisdom of God**, the world did not know God through wisdom ... we preach **Christ ... the wisdom of God ... you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God ...**" (1 Corinthians 1:20,21,23,24,30)*

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me," (John 5:39)

C. GOD IS PRESENT EVERYWHERE (HIS OMNIPRESENCE):

ISLAM:

The Qur'an says **God's "presence" is everywhere**. He is "near," "with" and "in the midst" of all people. **However, this does not mean we have a relationship with Him, but only that He knows, sees and hears everything**, as seen in the context of these verses:

*"To God belong the East and the West: **Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of God. For God is all-Pervading, all-Knowing**" (Sura 2:115)*

*"It was We Who created man, and **know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for *We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.**" (Sura 50:16)*

*"... **He knows what enters within the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wheresoever ye may be. And God sees well all that ye do.**" (Sura 57:4)*

*"Seest thou not that **God doth know (all) that is in the heavens and on earth? There is not a secret consultation between three, but He makes the fourth among them ... but He is in their midst, wheresoever they be ...**" (Sura 58:7)*

Some Muslim scholars in articles on the internet make a great effort to deny that God is personally everywhere. They insist that God in His essence is only in the heavens. One person quotes Al-Qaadhi Abu Bakr Al-Baaqillaani Ash-Shaafi'i, who said:

"If Allah the Almighty was indeed everywhere, He would be in the stomach and mouth of humans, inside places where the body's waste is expelled and other spots that must not even be graced with a mention... Muslim scholars unanimously agree that this is totally wrong."

Others say: [from: <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090728161929AABJ4W7>]

*"Sunnis believe that **He is NOT everywhere... but His knowledge and power is.**"*

*"Malik bin Anas said: 'Allah is above the heavens, but **His knowledge encompasses everything. Nothing escapes His knowledge.**"*

And: [from: <http://in.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100106005326AAKaEf7>]:

"Islam does not believe that God is all around us (because we believe that if God is right next to us we would notice). We believe that he's in heaven but that he knows everything that's going on at anytime,"

*"But when it is said that Allah is everywhere, it means that there's no place or time or thing that can ever escape it. **However, this doesn't require him to be in the creation, for this would equate to him living in it and being part of it.**"*

"If a person claims that Allah the Almighty is with us in His essence, he becomes an apostate."

If God's omnipresence means that only His knowledge and power are present everywhere but He Himself ("His essence") is on His throne in heaven, then **there is certainly no possibility of human beings having a personal relationship and fellowship with Him.** Also I would think that these quotes would create a question in the minds of Muslims as to what God's "essence" is. The Bible tells us that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). However, a Muslim once told me "Spirits are created beings, so God is not spirit, He is God!"

THE BIBLE:

Biblical teaching concerning God's omnipresence is different from that of Islam. Among the religions of the world, there are three main views concerning God's omnipresence:

- God is not a personal being. God is a force present in everything, including all material objects, all animals and all people (Star Wars = "May the force be with you"). We are all part of God. This is pantheism and is the belief of **Hinduism** and "new age" religions.

- God is a personal being who created all things and exists above the heavens. He is totally unique and separate from all created things. He is so great that He Himself has no need to be directly involved anywhere in His creation. He sees, hears and knows all things and in that sense "His presence" is everywhere. This is the basic view of **Islam**.

- God is Spirit and a personal being. Although He is distinct from and greater than His creation He has chosen to directly involve Himself in it. He not only sees and knows everything, but He lives in the lives of His people in a special, spiritual presence whereby He has intimate and loving communication with them. This is the **Biblical view**.

1. GOD'S PRESENCE EVERYWHERE (HIS OMNIPRESENCE): He is present throughout all of creation, and yet all of creation cannot contain Him:

“Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.” (Jeremiah 23:23,24)

[God's prophet David wrote:] ***“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!”*** (Psalm 139:7,8)

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27)

2. GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE: In addition to God being present everywhere, there is a special presence and personal relationship of God with His own people – His believers:

[God's prophet David wrote:] ***“If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.”*** (Psalm 139:9,10)

“The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.” (Psalm 145:18)

“Thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit ...’ (Isaiah 57:15)

“where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. 18:20)

“... he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5)

D. GOD'S POWER IN HIS HOLY SPIRIT.

ISLAM:

In the Qur'an there are 18 mentions of the word, “spirit” in connection with God. I have divided them into the following three groups:

1. The Angel Gabriel (8 references): Most Muslim scholars (including Yusuf Ali) believe that the terms and phrases, “the Holy Spirit,” “the spirit of inspiration,” “the spirit of Faith and Truth” and “a spirit from Himself” all refer to the angel Gabriel. This is based largely on the following verse:

“... Gabriel-for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe,” (Sura 2:97)

It seems obvious to me that the Bible's influence is evident in the expressions, “something of His spirit” and “of Our spirit,” which seem to indicate something more than an angel – perhaps something Muhammad heard from Christians but did not fully understand. Muslims believe the angel Gabriel (the “Holy Spirit”) has been sent to strengthen and inspire the prophets (including Jesus and Muhammad) with messages from God in order to provide God's strength and guidance to believers. Here are 5 of those references:

“Then will Allah say: “O Jesus the son of Mary! ... Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity ...” (Sura 5:110)

“Say, the Holy spirit has brought the revelation from thy Lord in Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a Guide and Glad Tidings to Muslims.” (Sura 16:102)

“... concerning **the spirit (of inspiration)**. Say: **The spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord ...**” (Sura 17:85)

“**With it came down the spirit of Faith and Truth**” (Sura 26:193)

“... For such He has written Faith in their hearts, and **strengthened them with a spirit from Himself**. And He will admit them to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow” (Sura 58:22)

2. A Spirit From God (6 references): The phrases, “**something of My spirit,**” “**something of His spirit**” or “**My spirit**” are found 3 times in reference to God’s creation of Adam and 3 times in reference to the birth of Jesus from Mary.

The meaning of these phrases is not so clear, but according to Yusuf Ali this “spirit” is “*the faculty of God-like knowledge and will, which, if rightly used, would give men superiority over other creatures*” (footnote #1968 in reference to Sura 15:29), and certainly not God Himself nor some other being. Here are some of those verses:

[God said to the angels at creation] “*When I have fashioned him [Adam] (in due proportion) and **breathed into him of My spirit**, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.*” (Sura 15:29)

“*But He fashioned him [Adam] in due proportion, and **breathed into him something of His spirit**. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding) ...*” (Sura 32:9)

[at the time of Jesus’ birth] “**Mary the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit ...**” (Sura 66:12)

“... **Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not "Trinity": desist: it will be better for you ...**” (Sura 4:171)

3. “The Spirit” (4 references): The meaning of these references is even more uncertain. Yusuf Ali, however, treats them the same as those in 2. Above, saying they refer to the Spirit breathed into mankind at creation:

“**The angels and the spirit ascend unto him in a Day the measure whereof is (as) fifty thousand years**” (Sura 70:4) [YA footnote 5677: “Man is gifted with the Spirit of God: 15:29. In the spiritual kingdom we are all raised to the light of the countenance of God and His glory transforms us.”]

“**The Day that the spirit and the angels will stand forth in ranks, none shall speak except any who is permitted by (Allah) Most Gracious, and He will say what is right.**” (Sura 78:38)

“**Therein come down the angels and the spirit by Allah’s permission, on every errand:**” (Sura 97:4)

“**And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit: (Eschew Evil).**” (Sura 75:2)

One thing is clear, Islam believes that the “Holy Spirit” is the angel Gabriel and not God. Islam also believes that mankind was endowed with “a spirit from God” at creation, which is a part of our soul and gives us knowledge and will superior to all other created beings. So there is no power of God given to us in the Holy Spirit as seen in the Bible. It seems obvious to me that the Bible’s influence is evident in these expressions, which may well reflect things Muhammad heard from Christians but did not fully understand.

THE BIBLE:

Because “God is Spirit” (John 4:24), God’s Holy Spirit is God Himself. Because He is called, “the Spirit of God,” “the Spirit of Christ,” “the Spirit,” and “God’s Spirit.” God the Spirit is both one with but also distinct from God the Father and God the Son.

Because God is omnipresent, **He is everywhere at all times, so the specific mention of His Holy Spirit speaks of the presence of God in power.** The Holy Spirit not only empowered creation and His many miracles since then, but He is present in and among His people to empower godly living.

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERED CREATION:

*“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ... And **the Spirit of God was hovering** [or “brooding” as a hen on her eggs] **over the face of the waters.**” (Genesis 1:1,2)*

*“It is **he who made the earth by his power**, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.” (Jeremiah 10:12)*

2. GOD THE SPIRIT DELIVERED ISRAEL FROM SLAVERY IN EGYPT:

*“And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and **brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power,**” (Deuteronomy 4:37)*

3. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD EMPOWERED O.T. PROPHETS, JUDGES AND KINGS:

*“But **the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon**, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.” (Judges 6:34 - KJV)*

*“Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and **the Spirit of the Lord came upon David** from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. (1 Samuel 16:13 - KJV)*

*“But as for me, **I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord**, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.” (Micah 3:8)*

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERED MARY TO CONCEIVE SUPERNATURALLY:

*“...**the angel Gabriel** was sent from God ... to a virgin ... and the virgin’s name was **Mary** ... And the angels said to her ... ‘you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus’ ... And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered her, ‘**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.**” (Luke 1:26,27,30,31,34,35) [Notice that the angel Gabriel speaks of the Holy Spirit as other than himself]*

5. GOD’S SPIRIT EMPOWERED JESUS TO HEAL AND TEACH:

*“And **Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit** to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.” (Luke 4:14)*

*“how **God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power**. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” (Acts 10:38)*

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERED JESUS TO CONQUER DEATH AND RISE FROM THE GRAVE:

*“and was declared to be **the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,**” (Romans 1:4)*

*“For he was crucified in weakness, but **lives by the power of God ...**” (2 Corinthians 13:4)*

7. THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD EMPOWERS EVERY BELIEVER:

a. God Saves Believers By The Renewing Power Of His Spirit:

*“**he saved us ... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit**” (Titus 3:5)*

b. The Holy Spirit Indwells And Empowers All Believers:

*“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.**” (Romans 8:9)*

*“**But we have this treasure in jars of clay** [our human bodies], **to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.**” (2 Corinthians 4:7)*

c. God’s Spirit Empowers The Witness And Ministry Of Believers:

*“**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses ...**” (Acts 1:8);*

*[Apostle Paul said] “... **by the power of the Spirit of God—so that ... I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;**” (Romans 15:19)*

d. God’s Spirit Empowers Believers to Endure Suffering:

*“**for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control ... but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,**” (2 Timothy 1:7,8)*

*“... so that **by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**” (Romans 15:13)*

e. God The Spirit Empowers Believers For Daily Living:

*“**For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**” (Romans 8:13)*

*“**For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power.**” (1 Cor. 4:20 - NLT)*

*“... to **be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,**” (Ephesians 3:16)*

f. Believers Worship God By The Power Of The Holy Spirit:

*“**God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**” (John 4:24)*

g. God’s Spirit Assures Us Of The Resurrection And Eternal Life:

*“... **he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you**” (Romans 8:11)*

*“... that **by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**” (Romans 15:13)*

8. GOD’S SPIRIT IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, THE POWER OF GOD. God is one and He is Spirit, so the Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. **The Spirit of Christ in us is God’s power present in us:**

*“**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while***

*and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **In that day you will know that I am** in my Father, and you in me, and **I in you.**" (John 14:16-20)*

*"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.**" (Romans 8:9-11)*

*"... You must call a meeting of the church. **I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus.**" (1 Corinthians 5:4 - NLT)*

E. MY REACTIONS:

1. A DISTORTED EMPHASIS ON GOD'S GREATNESS: Islam focuses on the Greatness of God to such an extent that all His other attributes are diminished and made subject to it. God's grace, immanence, salvation, justice, holiness, faithfulness, joy, peace, etc. are all underappreciated and misunderstood because they have been made subservient to His great power. I don't mean Islam has overemphasized God's greatness. That would be impossible! I mean Islam has largely de-emphasized God's other attributes in order to focus PRIMARILY on His greatness. Dr. Samuel Zwemer sees this as deism:

"... the popular thought of Him ... is deistic. God stands aloof from creation; only His power is felt; men are like the pieces on a chessboard and He is the only player." (p 69,70 – The Moslem Doctrine Of God)

Some have pointed out that Islam seems to have absorbed the Old Testament's heavy emphasis on the awesome power of God:

*"For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, **so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.**" (Joshua 4:23,24)*

*"O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant **your greatness and your mighty hand.** For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?" (Deuteronomy 3:24)*

... but it has left out the Old Testament's equal emphasis on God's demand for and provision of blood atonement to cover our sins.

2. THE REVELATION OF GOD'S "WAYS" IS MISSING. One reason for Islam's distorted emphasis on God's greatness is its failure to focus on God's character and being. Instead of revealing **God's "ways" (who He is)**, the Qur'an primarily stresses **His "works" (what He can do)**. **The only way we can know God personally is by knowing and following His ways:**

*"And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, '**Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!**'" (Revelation 15:3 – NASB)*

[Moses prayed] "**please show me now your ways, that I may know you ... show me your glory.**" (Exodus 33:13,18)

[David prayed] "**Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**" (Psalm 25:4)

*"... the God of Jacob, **that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths ...**" (Isaiah 2:3)*

*“Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for **the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them ...**” (Hosea 14:9)*

This means Muslims cannot know Him, but can only know about His power. In contrast the Bible is a revelation of God’s being – Who He is – His attributes of righteousness, justice, faithfulness, etc. God’s declaration of His name to Moses is significant:

*“God said to Moses, ‘**I AM WHO I AM.**’ And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, “**I AM has sent me to you.**”” (Exodus 3:14)*

We might say the Qur’an’s name for God is “I CAN DO WHATEVER I WILL TO DO” instead of “I AM WHO I AM.”

3. IS GOD’S KNOWLEDGE LIMITED? With such an emphasis on God knowing everything, it seems strange that He had to “abrogate” many earlier decrees in the Qur’an and replace them with later ones. Translators differ a bit, so here are Mohsin Khan’s and Yusuf Ali’s translations of Sura 2:106. (See also Sura 16:101):

*“**Whatever a Verse (revelation) do *We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, *We bring a better one or similar to it. Know you not that Allah is able to do all things?**” (Sura 2:106 – Mohsin Khan) [*Allah often refers to Himself as “We,” “Our” and “Us.” This is called the “royal plural” often used by kings, and no Muslim believes this indicates the Trinity.]*

*“**None of *Our revelations do *We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but *We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?**” (Sura 2:106 – Yusuf Ali)]*

Either way, many earlier commands have been replaced or nullified by later ones. Muslim scholars themselves list at least 224 such replaced statements in the Qur’an!

For example, God’s commands regarding *jihad* (“struggle”) develop through four stages with the instructions of each stage abrogating the instructions of the previous one:

- a) While still in Mecca, Muslims were told not to retaliate, but to **patiently endure the opposition** of unbelievers. (e.g., see Sura 73:10,11; 52:45,47,48; 109:1,2,6)
- b) After moving to Medina the Muslims received **permission to defend themselves** by fighting and killing unbelievers. (e.g., see Sura 22:39-41; 22:58).
- c) A few months later, the command was given making **war in self-defense a religious requirement**. (e.g., see Sura 8:12,13,15-18; 8:57-61; 8:70,71)
- d) After conquering Mecca Muslims were commanded to **aggressively attack all unbelievers** (whether or not they attack first), which is in force today. (e.g., see many verses in Suras 9 and 5)

[for a more complete description of Jihad in Islam see <http://www.answering-islam.org/Bailey/jihad.html>]

4. GOD’S OMNIPRESENCE LIMITED TO MECCA: It seems strange that a religion that greatly emphasizes God being omnipresent (everywhere) and able to hear and know everything should limit its people to pray only in the direction of the Kaba in Mecca. Islam has regressed back to the limited understanding of Old Testament Israel who focused their prayers in the direction of the temple in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus later gave a fuller teaching when he said,

*“... the hour is coming when **neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem** will you worship the Father ... But the hour is coming, and is now here, when **the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. **God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**” (John 4:21,23,24)*

For that reason the followers of Jesus do not face Jerusalem, Rome, Mecca or any other physical location when they pray, but they face the Spirit of Jesus in their midst, as He said:

*“For where two or three are gathered in my name, **there am I among them.**”* (Matthew 18:20)

5. WORSHIP OUT OF FEAR WITHOUT JOY: Phrases such as, *“I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal,” “From God, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens,” “He, the Knower of all things, hidden and open,” “God sees well all that they do,” “He knoweth all that ye hide,”* etc. are found **over 100 times** in the Qur’an. Such warnings have to result in people worshipping God only out of fear. Therefore, the phrase *“He is in their midst, wheresoever they be”* (Sura 58:7) doesn’t bring comfort, but fear! Whereas the Bible’s promise *“where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matt. 18:20 – KJV) brings comfort and security, resulting in people worshipping and revering God with joy and thankful praise.

6. CONTRAST WITH THE BIBLE’S “BATTLE CRY”: Muslims go out to fight **shouting about God’s power and greatness** in their war cry, “Allah-o-Akbar” (God is the greatest), but God’s people in the Bible went out to fight against their enemies **singing about God’s fatherly love:**

“And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, ‘Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.” (2 Chronicles 20:21-22)

And we today likewise face opposition and attacks from Satan and his followers with **praise, thanksgiving and joy:**

“See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:15-18)

7. DEFENDING GOD’S HONOR: As mentioned above, why do Muslims seem to believe that God Almighty needs them to attack those who insult the Qur’an or Muhammad? Is He unable to defend Himself or His prophet? As Gideon’s father, Joash said after Gideon had destroyed Baal their idol,

*“Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? ... **If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down.**”* (Judges 6:31)

APPENDIX 6

BIBLE PROPHECIES & TYPES (pictures) OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

(Bible verses from ESV translation unless otherwise indicated)

We will be looking at:

- A. 19 Old Testament Prophecies And Types Of Jesus' Resurrection
- B. Six Of Jesus' Clearest Predictions Of His Own Resurrection

A. 19 OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES AND TYPES OF JESUS' RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD:

Have you ever wondered what Old Testament prophecies of His resurrection Jesus shared with his two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:25-27) and with all his disciples just before his ascension (Luke 24:44-47)? The Apostle Peter also refers to them in Acts 17:2,3 and 1 Peter 1:10,11, as does the Apostle John in John 20:9. Here are a few of them that I have found:

1. – JOB'S REDEEMER: The ancient **Prophet Job**, who probably lived about 2,050 BC (about the time of the prophet Abraham), spoke this prophecy about his eternal Redeemer, who "**lives**" and "**at the last will stand upon the earth.**" Then he boldly proclaimed that he also would be raised from the dead and **in his flesh** see Him:

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another ..."
(Job 19:25-27)

2. – THE PROMISED BLESSING OF ABRAHAM: Early in the life of the **Prophet Abraham**, the Lord God promised him that,

"... I will make you a great nation ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:2,3)

Shortly after the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah **the Apostle Peter** explained how **God's promised blessing in Abraham** (i.e., specifically in his "offspring;" one of his descendants) was being fulfilled in the resurrection of **Jesus, the son of Abraham**:

"And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your

*offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God, **having raised up his servant** [Jesus], **sent him to you first, to bless you** by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” (Acts 3:24-26)*

This was further confirmed by **the Apostle Paul** as he preached a few years later:

*“But **God raised him from the dead**, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you **the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus** ...” (Acts 13:30-33)*

Again the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians, confirms to us that His promised blessing for “all the families of the earth” in Abraham’s descendant, is fulfilled in Jesus:

*“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— so **that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles**” (Galatians 3:13-14)*

3. – ABRAHAM’S RESURRECTED SON: The **Prophet Abraham**'s sacrifice of his son Isaac on Mount Moriah (about the same time – 2,050 BC) gives us a prophetic picture or type of the resurrection of Jesus. When Abraham arrived at the base of the mountain, he told his servants,

“... ‘Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.’” (Genesis 22:5)

In saying that, the Prophet Abraham displayed his belief that after he sacrificed his son God was going to raise him from the dead and that they both would come back alive from the mountain. Then as they were climbing up the mountain Isaac asked his father,

“... Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Genesis 22:7)

Abraham's answer (in verse 8) was,

“God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.”

Without himself understanding, the Prophet Abraham spoke the words God put in his mouth, prophesying what God would do about 2,080 years later on the same mountain. At the last minute Almighty God provided Abraham a ram to sacrifice in the place of his son, and in the book of Hebrews we find a description of Abraham’s faith on that occasion:

*“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ **He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.**” (Hebrews 11:17-19).*

So we see that this is a type and a prophecy of Jesus' death and resurrection. The **Apostle John the Baptist** gave further reference to this when he pointed to Jesus the Messiah and said,

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

Jesus is that lamb that God Himself has provided for us, of which Abraham’s offering was a prophetic type or picture. When this Scripture says, *“the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world,”* it implies the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, because **taking away sins** involves more than simply forgiving them by not punishing. Jesus paid the full payment for our sins both on the cross and in hell, but He did more than that. He conquered the power of death in His victorious resurrection on the third day. Thus **in His resurrection He totally took away** (removed, wiped out, cancelled, blotted out, erased, washed away) **our sin forever!**

4. – AARON’S ROD THAT BUDDED:

“Moses spoke to the people of Israel. And all their chiefs gave him staffs, one for each chief, according to their fathers’ houses, twelve staffs. And the staff of Aaron was among their staffs. And Moses deposited the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the testimony. On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds.” (Numbers 17:6-8)

In about 1450 BC, this prophetic picture or type of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus was recorded by the Prophet Moses in the Torah (Numbers chapters 16 & 17). Because some of the leaders of the Israelites had questioned God’s choice of both Moses and Aaron, Almighty God gave this miraculous sign to the leaders of Israel in order to prove that He had indeed chosen Aaron, the brother of the prophet Moses, to be the high priest of His people Israel.

God had told them to **cut off** twelve branches from almond trees, to make twelve staffs from those **dead** branches and to write the name of the chief of each of the twelve tribes on them. Then He caused the one of those dead almond branches that had Aaron’s name on it to come back to life, to bud, to grow blossoms and to produce full grown almonds all in one night! This was **life out of death!** That staff that budded was kept in the Ark of the Covenant along with the Ten Commandments and some of the manna. God not only gave **resurrected life** to that cut off almond branch, but He caused it to continue to live as long as Israel had the Ark of the covenant; making it a picture of **resurrected eternal life out of death:**

“having ... the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.” (Hebrews 9:4)

Thus it was a picture of **resurrected, eternal life**. In the same way that Almighty God gave continual life to that almond branch, which had been cut off from its source of life, God later raised up our Lord Jesus out of death to live forever. And this is a picture of the eternal life out of death that God gives to each of us who believe in His Son Jesus.

5. – THE BRONZE SNAKE IN THE WILDERNESS: Here is another powerful type or picture of Jesus’ resurrection in the days of the Prophet Moses:

“And the people spoke against God and against Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.’ Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.” (Numbers 21:5-9)

The **Lord Jesus** many years later explained that the bronze serpent was a picture or type of His own death and resurrection which He was about to experience for all humanity. He would take upon Himself all our sin, becoming sin itself (the serpent, the cause of death) ...

“For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin ...” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

... and then be lifted up on a pole (the cross) for us. Thus He also would be the provider of **eternal, resurrected life** for all who would look to him by faith:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” (John 3:14,15)

The deadly serpents brought death to the Israelites, but faith in the bronze serpent on the pole symbolizing sin and death brought life for those who looked at it with believing faith: But because the Jewish people knew from the Scriptures of the Old Testament that God had promised **the Messiah would “remain” (live) forever** as their king, they did not understand how He could die (“be lifted up”) and still live forever:

“So the crowd answered him, ‘We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up?’ ...” (John 12:34)

There are many prophecies saying the Messiah will live and rule forever. For example:

*“**Of the increase of his** [Messiah's] **government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore ...**” (Isaiah 37:25)*

They didn't realize that only by **entering into death and conquering it by rising again could He save us from death while also living and reigning forever** on David's throne.

6. – THE LIVING ONE – A PRIEST FOREVER:

*“**The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’**” (Psalm 110:4)*

Who was Melchizedek? In Genesis we are told that he was the king of Salem (meaning “peace”) and priest of the Most High God, who appeared to Abraham about 2,050 BC, and who is clearly a type or prophecy of **Jesus the Prince of Peace** (Isaiah 9:6) **and our high priest** (Hebrews 2:17):

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’ And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” (Genesis 14:18-20 - NLT)

The writer of the book of Hebrews explains how Melchizedek, who was “a priest forever” because he had “neither beginning of days nor end of life,” was a type of Jesus the Messiah, whose “**indestructible life**” was revealed in his resurrection:

*“... where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name king of righteousness, [the meaning of Melchizedek], and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace [the meaning of Salem]. **He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever** ... “This becomes even more evident when **another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.** For it is witnessed of him, **‘You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.’** ... “The former priests were many in number, because they were*

prevented by death from continuing in office, but he [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 6:20 - 7:3; 7:15-17; 7:23-25)

It is no wonder He could say,

“I am... the life” (John 14:6);

“I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25);

“... Because I live, you also will live.” (John 14:19) and

“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish” (John 10:28)

7. & 8. – GOD’S PROMISED BLESSING THROUGH DAVID’S SON:

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Samuel 7:12-13)

In this prophecy, God specifically promised **King David** that his “offspring” would reign forever. Yes, King Solomon reigned for 40 years and built the temple in Jerusalem, but he died and the temple was later destroyed. Later the Holy Spirit, speaking through the **Prophet Isaiah**, encouraged His people by reminding them of His everlasting promise of blessing through King **David’s Son, the Messiah**:

“Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.”
(Isaiah 55:3)

We know this promise of the Messiah, the son of David, reigning forever speaks specifically of Jesus’ resurrection because the Apostle Paul in about 50 AD quotes this prophecy of Isaiah in reference to Jesus’ resurrection:

“And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’ (Acts 13:34)

Messiah Jesus is often referred to as the “son of David” (10 times in Matthew alone). How could Jesus, the son of David, reign forever if he did not rise from the dead?

9. – GOD’S BEGOTTEN SON: Many generations later in about 1000 BC the Lord God spoke through the **Prophet David**, saying,

“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed [Messiah], saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.’

“He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ‘As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.’ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’” (Psalm 2:2-9)

In about 35 AD the **Apostle Paul** quoted this prophecy in reference to the victorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus over death and Satan:

“But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’” (Acts 13:30-33)

It seems that God once again verified Jesus to be His Son by raising Him from death, and later the Apostle Paul again affirmed this truth in his letter to the Romans:

“which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 1:2-4)

10. – GOD’S PROMISE TO DAVID: The Holy Spirit again spoke through His servant, the Prophet David, saying,

“Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life ...” (Psalm 16:9-11)

The Holy Spirit later speaking through the **Apostle Peter** in about 30 AD explains how this prophecy could not be about King David, but is a prophecy about Jesus’ resurrection from death:

“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, ‘... my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ [Messiah], that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.” (Acts 2:24-32)

A short time later the **Apostle Paul** also quoted this same prophecy in reference to Jesus’ resurrection:

“And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way ... ‘You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’” (Acts 13:34-35)

11. – SET FREE FROM THE GRAVE: God’s promise through the Sons of Korah:

“This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. Selah. Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell. But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol [the spiritual place of death for the soul], for he will receive me.” (Psalm 49:13-15)

Although this verse does not say how God would deliver the Messiah from the power of death, we know from the verses listed below that this prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus’ Spirit went and

destroyed Satan's power in Sheol in "the lower parts of the earth" and He rose in His body victorious over the grave:

*"it says, 'When **He** [Jesus] **ascended on high**, He led captive a host of captives ...' (Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that **He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens**, so that He might fill all things.)" (Ephesians 4:8-10 - NASB)*

*"... that through death he [Jesus] might **destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**" (Hebrews 2:14,15)*

12. – THE CORNERSTONE: Sometime after 1000 BC, **one of the writers of the Psalms**, inspiration by the Spirit of God, wrote in a song for the worship of Almighty God that,

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." (Psalm 118:22)

The Holy Spirit, speaking through the mouth of the **Apostle Peter**, some 1035 years later, tells us that the stone rejected by the builders refers to Jesus the Messiah whom the elders of the nation of Israel rejected by demanding his crucifixion, and instead God made him the cornerstone of His building by raising Him from the dead:

"let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone." (Acts 4:10-11)

13. – THE SIGN OF JONAH: The **Prophet Jonah** was swallowed by a fish for three days in about 780 BC. The experience of Jonah is a prophetic sign of Jesus' resurrection. First, we see the clear prophecy of death and resurrection in Jonah's words, where we read,

"I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God." (Jonah 2:6)

Secondly, we know that his experience was a type of Jesus' resurrection because more than 800 years later the **Lord Jesus** Himself said,

"For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:40)

14. – THE STING OF DEATH: In about 750 BC the Holy Spirit prophesied the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah through the **Prophet Hosea** saying,

"Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol [the grave]? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plaques? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes." (Hosea 13:14)

This is verified through the Apostle Paul some 800 years later when he wrote,

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive ... When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come

to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' **'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:20-22,54-57)

15. & 16. – THE EVER REIGNING SON: About 700 BC the Lord God also spoke about the promised Messiah through the **Prophet Isaiah**, saying,

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

How could the reign of the Messiah have **"no end"** and be **"forevermore"**? Wouldn't He be a man who would live and die like all men? A little later the Lord spoke about this again through His servant Isaiah, explaining that the Messiah must die as an offering for our sins and then be resurrected from the dead to live forever:

"Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." (Isaiah 53: 10).

700 years later **God's angel** told Mary, the mother of Jesus, that the son she would bear would actually be the Son of God and the Messiah King promised to the prophet Isaiah, and that His reign would be **forever**:

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31-33)

Again, the question is, How could he live forever? When Mary's son, the **Lord Jesus the Messiah** grew up and began his public ministry He made a claim that seemed beyond comprehension. He not only claimed that He would rise from the dead, but that **He Himself is the resurrection personified** – the source of eternal life, able to raise believers out of death and give them life forever!:

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11:25,26)

Yes, He not only came back from the dead Himself, but He lives forever to give eternal life to all who believe in Him.

17. – THE SWALLOWING OF DEATH FOREVER: the Holy Spirit again gave the **Prophet Isaiah** another prophecy of the resurrection of the Messiah saying,

"And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the

reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.” (Isaiah 25:7,8).

Many years later in about 30 AD the Lord God destroyed death on that mountain (Mount Moriah; Jerusalem) by sending Jesus the Messiah, the Lord of life, to enter into death for our sins. **He overcame death by swallowing it and then rising from the grave.** He thus has removed the shroud of death that enfolds all peoples. This is confirmed by the Holy Spirit speaking through the **Apostle Paul** in about 55 AD saying in reference to these prophecies,

“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ... through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 15:54,57)

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

18. – THE EXALTED MESSIAH: Again, through the **Prophet Isaiah**, the Holy Spirit said,

“Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.” (Isaiah 52:13)

This exaltation of the Messiah involved three things: His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven alive and His being seated at God’s right hand – the highest position of authority and exaltation. God, speaking through His apostles, mentions this several times in the New Testament:

“... about the resurrection of the Christ ... This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.” (Acts 2:31-33)

“... his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.” (Ephesians 1:19-22)

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:8-12)

19. – THE THIRD DAY: In about 725 BC the Prophet Hosea wrote,

“Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.” (Hosea 6:1,2)

This sounds very much like the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 53 referred to earlier:

“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days.” (Isaiah 53:10)

Could this mention of the third day be a reference to what Jesus later said about His own resurrection?:

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Matthew 16:21)

Also the reference to "us" and "we" reminds us that when Jesus died for us, we died with Him and when He rose victorious over death and sin, we rose with Him:

*"Now if **we have died with Christ**, we believe that **we will also live with him**. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him." (Romans 6:8,9)*

B. SIX OF JESUS' CLEARER PREDICTIONS OF HIS OWN RESURRECTION IN THE ORDER IN WHICH HE GAVE THEM:

1. – "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?' But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said." (John 2:19-22)

2. – "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Matthew 16:21)

3. – " ... he said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.'" (Matthew 17:22,23)

4. – " ... Jesus said, ... 'The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord I have authority to lay it down and authority ... to take it up again.'" (John 10:7,17,18)

5. – " ... Jesus ... said to them, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!'" (Matthew 20: 17-19)

6. – "Then Jesus told them, 'This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be

scattered" But after I have risen I will go ahead of you into Galilee." (Matthew 26:31,32)

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

Definition of Sovereignty = Sovereignty is absolute authority over people and property. In order to understand the difference between God's sovereignty (authority) and omnipotence (power) think of a king and his army. The king has sovereignty (authority, ownership) over his realm, but he himself does not have enough power (physical strength) to control the people in it. That is why he has an army to force the people to obey his orders. God, of course, has both complete power (omnipotence) and supreme sovereignty (authority). In Chapter two we studied God's power. Now we will look at His sovereignty.

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Sovereignty:

- A. God's Names And Titles Related To His Sovereignty**
- B. Aspects Of God's Sovereignty**
- C. Sovereignty And Fatalism**
- D. Fatalistic Use Of God's Name**
- E. Jesus, The Sovereign Lord**
- F. My Reactions**

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S NAMES AND TITLES RELATED TO HIS SOVEREIGNTY:

ISLAM:

God's Sovereignty is combined together with His power (Chapter 2), transcendence (first part of Chapter 4) and un-knowableness (Chapter 5) to form what I believe is Islam's major emphasis about God – His awesome and absolute GREATNESS.

According to Islam, God's sovereignty includes His total ownership and governance over all of creation. Therefore, He not only owns and rules, but also controls all things. **God's will is supreme.** Nothing happens apart from His will and nothing can prevent the fulfillment of His will. All law and existence is built on the same foundation – God's will.

1. SEVEN OF ISLAM'S 99 "MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES" OF GOD SPEAK OF HIS SOVEREIGNTY:

Al Malik = The King, Absolute Ruler
Al-Muhaymin = Dominant, Care Taker
Al-Mutakabbir = Greatest, Majestic
Malik al-Mulk = “King of the Worlds,”

Al-Azim = The Magnificent, Great
Al-Wali = The Patron, Governor
Dhu Al-Arsh = Possessor of the Throne

*[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam’s 99 “most beautiful names” of God]

2. GOD’S MAJESTIC TITLE: The title most commonly used in the Qur’an in reference to God’s Sovereignty is **Al-Rabb (Rubb)** meaning “**The Lord,**” or “**Master,**” which occurs 975 times in the Quran, including “*Lord of the worlds*” 27 times and “*Lord and cherisher of the worlds*” 7 times. The heavy emphasis on this title in Islam is seen in the fact that the expressions **Subhana Rabbiya Al-Azeem** (“**praised be my mighty Lord**”) and **Subhana Rabbiya Al-A’la** (“**praised be my Lord, the most great**”) are repeated 51 and 102 times respectively in the 5 required *Salat* (worship prayer) each day. That’s 153 times a day!

Also God is called “**king**” three times in the Qur’an:

“*High above all is Allah, the king ...*” (Sura 20:114)

“*Therefore exalted be Allah, the king ... the Lord of the Throne of Honour!*” (Sura 23:116)

“*The king (or Ruler) of Mankind,*” (Sura 114:2)

THE BIBLE:

THE HEBREW AND GREEK NAMES FOR THE SOVEREIGN GOD: In the Old Testament the Hebrew word, **Adonai**, meaning **Sovereign Lord and Master**, is used more than 400 times for God. The Hebrew words, **Elyon**, meaning **Most High** and **Melek**, meaning **King** are used 31 and 38 times of God. In the New Testament the Greek word, **Kurios (Lord or Master)** is used of God hundreds of times (see E.).

[See chapter six for a fuller description of God’s Names]

B. ASPECTS OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY:

ISLAM:

1. GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY DECLARED IN THE QUR’AN: His sovereignty is clearly seen in many verses of the Qur’an, such as:

“*To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and all between them, and all beneath the soil.*”
 (Sura 20:6; see also 3:109, 3:129, 4:126, 30:26 and 53:31)

“*Knowest thou not that to God belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth? ...*” (Sura 2:107; see also 5:43, 9:116, 25:2, 42:49 and 43:85)

“*God is He, than Whom there is no other god; the sovereign ... the irresistible, the Supreme ...*” (Sura 59:23; see also 38:65 and 12:39)

“*... Allah: to Him belongs dominion*” (Sura 64:1)

2. GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL: According to Islam the very foundation of God's sovereignty is His absolute sovereign **will**. Dr. Warren Larson wrote to me about this:

*"I suppose what Muslims would say is you cannot define God by attributes; **the only thing you can say about him is that he is power, one and will, and again that will is the bottom line.** If you say more, rest assured he is not that!" – Dr. Warren Larson*

Here are a few of the multitude of verses emphasizing God's sovereign will:

*"... whom Allah **willeth**, He leaveth to wander: whom He **willeth**, He placeth on the way that is straight."*
(Sura 6:39)

*"For to anything which ***We have willed, *We but say the word, 'Be', and it is.**"* (Sura 16:40)

*"To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: He forgives whom He **wills** and He punishes whom He **wills** ..."* (Sura 48:14)

God's sovereign will applies not only to what He has chosen to do, but also to **what He could have done if He had so willed, whether that choice seems good or bad**. This type of statement is found a number of times. Here are a few:

"... if Allah had willed, succeeding generations would not have fought against each other, ... but Allah does what He likes." (Sura 2:253)

"... And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one Ummah [community, people group] but they will not cease to disagree." (Sura 11:118,119)

"... had Allah (so) willed, He could have guided all mankind (to the right)? ..." (Sura 13:31)

"... And if We had willed, surely We would have given every person his guidance, but the Word from Me took effect (about evil-doers), that I will fill Hell with jinn and mankind together." (Sura 32:13)

3. GOD IS SEATED ON HIS THRONE AND NO ONE CAN DO ANYTHING APART FROM HIS SOVEREIGN WILL.

The following "Throne Verse" (Sura 2:255) is one of the most popular and famous verses of the Qur'an. It is framed and hung on the wall of many Muslim homes. They believe it will protect them from evil because it declares that they trust in God, Who is on His throne guarding and controlling all things in the heavens and on earth:

*"Allah. There is no god but He, -the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. **Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth?** He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. **Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).**"* (Sura 2:255)

Mention of God's throne is found in 12 other verses in the Qur'an. For example:

*"Allah ... is **firmly established on the throne (of authority);** He has subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law)! Each one runs (its course) ... **He doth regulate all affairs** ..."* (Sura 13:2)

4. TWO VERY COMMON ARABIC EXPRESSIONS DECLARING ISLAM'S BELIEF IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY:

a. "Insha-Allah" ("If God has willed it" or "God willing"):

This expression is used repeatedly by Muslims when speaking of future plans ("*I will meet*

you tomorrow, Insha-Allah”). It is a confession or witness that even though we intend to do something, everything is dependent upon what God has predestined (“*Qadar*”) and so we have no guarantee that we will be able to carry out our intention. It is a confession of depending on the sovereign will of God, and it is based on the following instruction in the Qur’an:

“Nor say of anything, ‘I shall be sure to do so and so tomorrow’- Without adding, ‘If God wills!’”
(Sura 18:23,24)

Sadly, many Muslims misuse “*Insha Allah*” to excuse themselves when they have no firm intention of doing what they say they will do. Too often what they really mean is, “*I have little intension of meeting you, but I will if God causes me to.*”

b. "Masha-Allah" ("What God has willed "):

This phrase reflects a belief in God’s providence with the sense of "It was done by God's permission." It is used in conjunction with any statement of praise or celebration regarding a person's accomplishments or received benefits (e.g., "*He is a very beautiful baby, Masha-Allah!*" or "*Masha-Allah, you received the highest grade in the examination!*") An article on one website says,

“This is an expression that Muslims say whenever they are excited and surprised. When they wish to express their happiness The meaning of ‘Ma sha’ Allah’ is: ‘Whatever Allah wants.’ or ‘Whatever Allah wants to give, He gives.’ This means that whenever Allah gives something good to someone, blesses him, honors him, and opens the door of success in business, a Muslim says this statement of ‘Ma Sha’ Allah.’ It has become a tradition that whenever a person constructs a building, a house, or an office, he puts a plaque on the wall or the entrance with this statement. It is a sign of thanks and appreciation from the person to Almighty Allah for whatever he was blessed with.”

(from “Ma Sha’ Allah” <http://www.latinodawah.org/library/english/commonterms.html>)

Although the expression, “*Masha Allah*” is intended to acknowledge God’s goodness in our lives, it seems that most Muslims have a superstitious fear of any compliment or praise given without adding this phrase. It is believed that such compliments may be spoken out of jealousy (“the evil eye”) in order to bring a curse on them by bringing this good thing to the attention of bad jinn (a kind of evil spirit), who might then bring harm. Many Muslims therefore believe that adding “*Masha-Allah*” to the compliment cancels out the possibility of any curse, so it has become an incantation or mantra used to ward off evil.

THE BIBLE:

1. GOD IS ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN OVER ALL OF CREATION, INCLUDING THE NATIONS AND THEIR RULERS:

“... for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all ... and you rule over all ...” (1 Chronicles 29:11,12)

“... Blessed be the name of God ... He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge ...” (Daniel 2:20,21)

“... he who is the ... only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,” (1 Timothy 6:15)

2. NOTHING HAPPENS APART FROM HIS COMMAND OR PERMISSION. So no circumstance, person, or force can prevent Him from doing what He purposes:

*"I know that you can do all things, and that **no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**" (Job 42:2)*

*"**Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.**" (Psalm 115:3 – also 135:6)*

*"... **the Most High ... who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion ... he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"**" (Daniel 4:34,35)*

*"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined **according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will**" (Ephesians 1:11)*

3. BUT GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS GOVERNED BY HIS CHARACTER. Even though God has absolute sovereignty and can do anything He wants, **He will not (cannot!) do something that would violate Who He is. If He did He would self-destruct and no longer be God. So He will never do anything that would violate Himself, i.e., any of the attributes of His own character:**

*"if we are faithless, **he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.**" (2 Timothy 2:13)*

*"... **it is impossible for God to lie...**" (Heb. 6:18)*

*"... the Lord ... he is good; for **his steadfast love endures forever!**" (1 Chronicles 16:34)*

*"**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.**" (Psalm 89:14)*

4. GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL HAS THREE DIMENSIONS: The Qur'an teaches that everything happens according to God's will – period!, but from what the Bible teaches we can see that God's will has three dimensions. **His determined will, His desired will and His permissive will:**

a. God's Determined Will: What God does regardless of whatever may be involved or whatever anyone else does or chooses. For example, the heavens and the earth were created by God's **determined will**:

*"In the beginning, **God created the heavens and the earth.**" (Genesis 1:1)*

And Jesus was crucified by God's **determined will** regardless of whatever Pilate, the Jewish leaders or the followers of Jesus wanted or intended:

*"... there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus ... both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, **to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.**" (Acts 4:27,28)*

And it is absolutely certain that according to God's **determined will** everyone who believes in Jesus will be saved eternally:

*"For **this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.**" (John 6:40)*

b. God's Desired Will: The **Ten commandments** are an expression of His **desired will**, but He permits us to disobey them. It is also God's **desired will** that all people be saved from being in hell (even though all will not be saved because many refuse to repent and accept God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus):

*"**The Lord ... is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**" (2 Peter 3:9 – KJV)*

“... As I live, declares the Lord God, **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live ...**” (Ezekiel 33:11)

c. God’s Permissive Will: He permits people to reject His gift of salvation and do evil things because He wants us to *voluntarily seek* to do His will:

“**So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.**” (Ps. 81:12)

“... **his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**” (John 1:11,12)

God also sometimes allows Satan to do evil to good people. In the case of the prophet Job, God in His **permissive will** allowed Satan to destroy all that Job had in order to test Job’s faithfulness to God. God had told Satan, “**Behold, all that he has is in your hand.**” (Job 1:12) so Satan destroyed Job. Later God said, “**He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.**” (Job 2:3), meaning God did not initiate the destruction nor did destruction come from God, but by allowing Satan to destroy Job He Himself is ultimately responsible for Job’s destruction. Therefore, God, who is absolutely sovereign, used Satan’s evil work to accomplish His own good purposes.

Another example is God permitting Joseph’s jealous brothers to sell him into slavery in Egypt. Later Joseph himself explains to his brothers how God Himself “sent” him there because in His permissive will. He “*meant it for good*”:

“*I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because **you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life ... As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive ...***” (Genesis 45:4-5; 50:20)

In both cases God is not the author of evil, but He permits evil (and in that sense is responsible for it) in order to accomplish His eternally good purposes. We know God does not *desire* or initiate evil, but He uses evil for good.

“**For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses. For he doth not afflict willingly ...**” (Lamentations 3:32,33 - ASV)

It is hard for us to understand why God allows good people to suffer, but we do understand that God Himself causes everything (even evil) to ultimately work out for our good and for His good purposes:

“**And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**” (Romans 8:28 - NASB)

“**Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.**” (Psalm 76:10)

[God said to Pharaoh] “**But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.**” (Exodus 9:16 – ESB)

The Bible tells us we should always give thanks and praise to God in and for all situations and circumstances – both for the “good” and also for the “evil” things:

“**Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God ... for you.**” (1 Thess. 5:18)

“... **giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father ...**” (Ephesians 5:20)

5. IN SPITE OF GIVING MANKIND FREEDOM TO DISOBEY, GOD FULLY ACCOMPLISHES ALL HIS PURPOSES. No disobedience can thwart His will:

“... he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand ...” (Daniel 4:35)

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28 – NIV)

C. SOVEREIGNTY AND FATALISM:

ISLAM:

There Are Several Fatalistic Aspects Of Islam’s Belief About God’s Sovereignty And Irresistible Will:

1. THE QUR’AN’S OVERWHELMING EMPHASIS ON THE IRRESISTIBLE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD:

It is very evident that God’s will is absolutely supreme and that nothing can be done without or against it. **God’s “will” is mentioned 146 times in the Qur’an, and it is also referred to in other terms. Altogether God’s irresistible will is mentioned a total of at least 186 times.** No doubt the reason for this is to exalt God’s greatness. Here are several facets:

a. God Has Predestined Everything That Happens And No One Can Change It. The Qur’an says:

“Nor can a soul die except by God’s leave, the term being fixed as by writing.” (Sura 3:145)

“Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us ...” (Sura 9:51)

“No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence. That is truly easy for God.” (Sura 57:22)

God’s predestination is one of the seven (some say six) articles of faith every Muslim must believe in. They are belief in the following: 1) One God (Allah), 2) His angels, 3) the books He has sent, 4) His prophets, 5) the day of judgment, 6) God’s predestination of everything, and 7) the resurrection and judgment after death.

In popular usage, the expressions *“Insha Allah”* and *“Masha Allah”* reflect a very fatalistic viewpoint, almost removing all responsibility from people to do what they can or should do. Repeatedly throughout the Qur’an phrases such as, “by God’s permission,” “by God’s leave,” or “by God’s will” are used. For example:

“By God’s will they routed them; and David slew Goliath ...” (Sura 2:251)

“No kind of calamity can occur, except by the leave of God.” (Sura 64:11)

“... come down the angels and the Spirit by God’s permission, on every errand.” (Sura 97:4)

When bad things happen, Muslims commonly say, *“It was written!”* and, *“Even if we knew in advance this was going to happen we couldn’t have prevented it”*.

b. God Is Absolutely Able To Enforce His Will:

“The Lord of the heavens and the earth ... Exalted in Might, able to enforce His will, forgiving again and again.” (Sura 38:66)

"Gracious is Allah ... and He has power and can carry out His will." (Sura 42:19)

"... For Allah is One full of strength, able to enforce His will." (Sura 58:21)

c. God Guides To The Straight Path Or Leads Astray Whomever He Wills By Making Their Hearts To Comply With His Will!

"And whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expandeth his bosom unto the Surrender, and whomsoever it is His Will to send astray, He maketh his bosom close and narrow as if he were engaged in sheer ascent ..." (Sura 6:125 – Pickthal)

"... Allah verily sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will ..." (Sura 35:8 - Pickthal)

"... Such is Allah's guidance, wherewith He guideth whom He will. And him whom Allah sendeth astray, for him there is no guide." (Sura 39:23 – Pickthal)

d. God Forgives Or Punishes Whom He Wills Whether Those People Choose To Repent Or Not! Many verses indicate this:

"... He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and He punisheth whom He pleaseth: and to God belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between ..." (Sura 5:20)

"... but He admits whom He will to His Mercy ..." (Sura 42:8)

"... Grace is (entirely) in His Hand, to bestow it on whomsoever He wills ..." (Sura 57:29)

e. In Fact God Created Some People For His Mercy And Others He Created Specifically To Fill Hell. Notice that the Qur'an doesn't say that God created hell for unbelieving people; it says he created people for hell:

[See Chapter thirteen for God's Purpose In Creating Mankind]

"If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute. Except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them: and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: 'I will fill hell with jinns and men all together.'" (Sura 11:118,119)

"Many are the jinns and men we have made for hell: ..." (Sura 7:179)

"But those who swerve,- they are (but) fuel for hell-fire" (Sura 72:15)

f. Even Our Own Wills Are Set By God's Will – Either To Follow Him Or To Stray From Him. He Is Supreme And Irresistible!

"No soul can believe except by the will of God ..." (Sura 10:100)

"... Allah is the Creator of all things: He is the One, the Supreme and irresistible." (Sura 13:16)

"This is an admonition: Whosoever will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord. But ye will not, except as God wills; for God is full of knowledge and wisdom" (Sura 76:29-31)

"... a message to (all) the worlds (with profit) to whoever among you wills to go straight, but ye shall not will except as God wills – the Cherisher of the Worlds." (Sura 81:27-29)

2. THE HADITH FURTHER TEACHES FATALISTIC PREDESTINATION. The following are quotes found in volume #8 under Book #77 in *Sahih Al-Bukhari's* nine volume listing of the reported sayings of Muhammad:

594 *"... Allah puts an angel in charge of the uterus and the angel says, 'O Lord ... (will it be) a male or a female? A wretched (an evil doer) or a blessed (doer of good)? How much will his provisions be? What will his age be?' So all that is written while the creature is still in the mother's womb."*

595 "... **'Everyone will do the deeds for which he has been created to do or he will do those deeds which will be made easy for him to do.'** (i.e. everybody will find easy to do such deeds as will lead him to his destined place for which he has been created)." [Hell or Paradise]

602 "... **There is none of you but has his place assigned either in the fire or in paradise.**"

609 "... **Allah has written for the son of Adam his inevitable share of adultery** whether he is aware of it or not: The adultery of the eye ... adultery of the tongue ... innerself wishes and longs for (adultery) and the private parts turn that into reality or refrain from submitting to the temptation."

Now notice the result of this type of extreme fatalistic belief:

611 "... Adam and Moses argued with each other. Moses said to Adam, 'O Adam! You are our father who disappointed us and turned us out of paradise.' Then Adam said to him, 'O Moses! ... **Do you blame me for action which Allah had written in my fate forty years before my creation?**' **So Adam confuted Moses,**" the Prophet [Muhammad] added, repeating the statement three times."

3. DEFENSIVE ARTICLES ABOUT GOD'S WILL AND FATALISTIC

PREDESTINATION: It is apparent that although most Muslims living in the Muslim world have little difficulty with what we might call "fatalism," Muslims in the West are especially sensitive to non-Muslims' criticism of it. Therefore they try to interpret what the Qur'an says by saying God does not really force us against our wills and human beings are responsible for their actions and cannot blame God for what they do.

In an article on the Al-Islam website (<http://www.al-islam.org/godattributes/fate.htm>) the author defensively and dogmatically states,

"Not a single verse can be found in which God's will has supplanted man's will..."

And he backs that up by quoting several Qur'anic verses that seem to allow a more liberal interpretation, including:

"Those who do wish for the (things of) the Hereafter, and strive therefore with all due striving, and have Faith,- they are the ones whose striving is acceptable (to Allah)" (Sura 17:19)

"Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds." (Sura 74:38)

"We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)." (Sura 76:3)

Here are a few excerpts from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predestination_in_Islam, a Wikipedia article on "Qadar" (God's power in predestination) in which the author struggles to explain how man's free will is not overcome by God's sovereign will. He says that God's predestination is based on His foreknowledge of what humans will do, which is a valid explanation of the Bible's teaching on God's predestination, but hardly explains the repetitive and extreme fatalism taught in verses of the Qur'an :

"Some Muslims believe that the divine destiny is when God wrote down in the Preserved Tablet ('Al-Lahw-al-Mahfooz) all that has happened and will happen, which will come to pass as written. According to this belief, a person's action is not caused by what is written in the Preserved Tablet but, rather, the action is written in the Preserved Tablet because God already knows all occurrences without the restrictions of time... Again Allah does not need to force anyone to do good or evil by interfering in his will ... human knowledge of the future is limited, and ... all that may or may not come to pass is under the control and knowledge of God."

"The Qur'an makes it clear that the man goes to Hell because he chose to do bad deeds, he goes to Heaven by doing good deeds and even if Allah had chosen to guide them to the truth they themselves would choose to reject the faith."

*“However it is made clear that **no person has the power to benefit or harm himself or others, and that guidance is only given by Allah, no one else has the power to give guidance.**”*

In chapter 4 of the article “Concept of God in the Qur’an” by Dr. Muhammad Sharif Chaudhry, (http://www.muslimtents.com/shaufi/b20/b20_4.htm) we read that this conflict is very old and has always had proponents on both sides (which we must admit is also true of Christianity):

*“... If God guides a man or leads him astray then why a man should be held responsible for his actions? These are the questions which in the ultimate analysis lead to one major issue and that is **pre-destination versus freedom of action or God’s will versus man’s choice.** Is man free to act and achieve his objectives or his fate has already been decreed? **This is the issue which is being debated since time immemorial but has not been satisfactorily resolved till now ...**”*

THE BIBLE:

1. GOD’S “PREDESTINATION” AND MAN’S FREE WILL ARE BOTH TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE:

a. God’s Predestination: God’s sovereign selection of people for His own purposes is mentioned a total of **264 times** in the Bible. That can be broken down into His **choosing, calling, appointing, electing** and **setting apart** people 103, 87, 48, 18 and 8 times respectively:

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I **consecrated** you; I **appointed** you a prophet to the nations.”* (Jeremiah 1:5)

*“But know that the Lord has **set apart** the godly for himself ...”* (Psalm 4:3)

*“Paul ... **called** to be an apostle, **set apart** for the gospel of God,”* (Romans 1:1)

*“**God chose** what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are”* (1 Cor. 1:28)

*“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of **the elect**, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”* (2 Timothy 2:10)

All of those 264 times clearly occurred in the mind of God before the people involved were even born. In other words, from our human perspective, all God’s appointing, calling, choosing and electing are **foreknown** and **predestined** by God. (His **predestination** is specifically mentioned 7 times, His **foreknowledge** 3 times and the phrases “**before/from the foundation of the world**” or “**before time began**” are mentioned 7 times.). Here are four conclusions:

1) Our Whole Lives Have Been Pre-Recorded By God. Before the exact cells of the earth (dirt) from which my body was to be formed and the number of days I would live were being determined, God my Maker wrote them all in His book:

*“... My frame was not hidden from you, **when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.** Your eyes saw my unformed substance; **in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.**”*
(Psalm 139:15,16)

2) We Are Chosen Or Not Chosen By God Before Creation:

“And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it depends not on human will or exertion [Greek: “not of him who wills or runs”], but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you ... So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, ‘Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?’” (Romans 9:10-19)

“even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world ...” (Ephesians 1:4)

3) God Will Accomplish His Pre-Destined Will In Our Lives:

“declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’” (Is. 46:10)

“he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.” (Ephesians 1:5)

“... having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,” (Ephesians 1:11)

4) We Should Acknowledge God’s Sovereignty. Because God is sovereign over everything affecting us, and we can do only what the Lord allows us to do, we should acknowledge that by saying, *“God willing, I will ...”*:

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring... Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that ...’” (James 4:13-16)

b. Mankind’s Free Will And Responsibility: While the Bible clearly teaches God’s sovereign predestination, it also teaches mankind’s freedom of choice and responsibility to do God’s will:

1) Our Freedom To Choose: Invitations like, *“Whoever ...”* or *“If anyone ...”* or *“He who...”* are found 200+ times in the Bible, showing God is inviting us and has given us a free will to choose. The word, “whosoever” (i. e., “whoever”) appears 162 times in the KJV (King James Version) of the Bible:

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33 - KJV)

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:14 - KJV)

2) Our Responsibility To Obey: There are **hundreds of laws and commands in Scripture**. How can God command us to obey His laws if He gives us no freedom to do so? For Example:

“... walk in love ... And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit ... giving thanks always ... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:2,18,20,21)

Every one of these commands makes us responsible to obey, and that clearly shows **God has given us free will to choose either to obey or to disobey.**

3) Our Responsibility To Believe: Many verses in God's word include instructions to us such as, "**believe ...**" or "**whoever believes ...**" and "**whoever does not believe ...**" Such instructions also show we have both a choice and a responsibility to believe.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

*"God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life ... Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already ...**"* (John 3:16-18)

*"... his own people did not receive him. But **to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**"* (John 1:11,12)

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36)

But it does not say, "if you are **predestined ...**" or "whoever is **chosen ...**" (which of course we cannot possibly know until after the fact). God is inviting us to choose to believe or to disbelieve, and that clearly shows we have been given free will to choose.

All of mankind is responsible to believe or face the consequences. We can't blame God for our unbelief even though He knew before creation what we would choose.

c. Can Both Be True? Logically it would seem that If God is absolutely sovereign, mankind cannot have any freedom to do what he wants, and if man has complete free will God could not be sovereign. It would seem that either God is simply making puppets of us by telling us to do things while He pulls the strings that make us do them, or God is just an imaginary king we have invented to amuse us while we do what we want. **Jesus said,**

*"For this is the will of my Father, that **everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day ... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God' ... Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life ...**"* (John 6:40-47)

In saying "*no one could come to*" him unless he is drawn by the Father Jesus shows God's sovereignty. But in saying, "*everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life*" and "*whoever believes has eternal life*" He also shows our responsibility. They are both there together.

d. Many Scholars Agree That Both Are Taught In God's Word:

1) Dr. Ravi Zacharias speaks about this balance in Scripture:

"Anyone who denies sovereignty is unbiblical; anyone who denies responsibility is unbiblical. The Bible writers hold both of these truths in balance." (<http://rzim.org/just-a-thought-broadcasts/sovereignty-and-responsibility/>)

2) Charles H. Spurgeon, the Baptist preacher of the 19th century, agrees:

*"The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. **No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once.** I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow I shall reap: I am taught in another place, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure ... **That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the***

fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.” – (<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/adrianwarnock/2005/12/spurgeon-on-predestination-and-free-will/>)

2. WHY WE HAVE TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING THIS: I believe we find God’s predestination difficult to understand because **we are creatures of time**. To understand the significance of this we need to see first of all that in contrast to God, Who is eternal, **time did not always exist but is a part of God’s creation:**

*“... we declare God’s wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory **before time began.**” (1 Corinthians 2:7 – NIV)*

*“to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, **before all time** and now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 1:25)*

Try to imagine existing outside of time, where there is no past and no future; in fact, no change. We can’t even think or speak without words like “when” “before” and “might.” In fact, every verb tense in our language is submerged in time.

Secondly, it will help us if we **think of all of God’s creation as a sphere or globe which God is holding in His hands**. Because time was created by God it is a part of that sphere, and since God is the Creator, **He is separate from and outside of that sphere. Thus He is able to see all of that sphere at once, including all of time. He sees all of the eons of man’s history in a single glance!** In other words, **He sees all our decisions, motives and actions as well as all of His own plans and purposes for us simultaneously.**

Since God exists outside of time, He is not affected by time. He exists in what C.S. Lewis called “the eternal now” with no “yesterday” or “tomorrow.” **Nothing is actually “pre”-destined or “fore”-known.** It is all there in front of Him, eternally present. **So AS FAR AS GOD IS CONCERNED it all exists simultaneously by His will!** That’s why God says for Him there is no difference between **a thousand years and one day:**

“... with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (2 Peter 3:8)

It is obvious, however, that God speaks to us in our time-oriented language with words like “when,” “before,” “predestined,” etc. to enable us to understand enough to trust Him. **BUT, because we are inside that sphere and subject to time, we have no way of knowing what God knows and destines for us in eternity. So, AS FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED, we have free will to choose to believe or not.** Of course after we are saved, we can look back, rejoice and be amazed by the truth revealed to us that God predestined and chose us from before the foundation of the world.

3. THE BASIS OF GOD’S PREDESTINING: How did God choose the people whom He predestined to eternal life? What is the basis of that decision? Did God throw dice or randomly choose? Did He choose some and reject others without any basis or reason? Obviously not! Everything God does He does for a reason. So why does God predestine us? The Bible says:

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ... And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” (Romans 8:29,30)

This verse seems to say that God’s basis for His predestination is **His foreknowledge** – “those whom he **foreknew** he also predestined ...” Because we are subject to time, we automatically read this verse as, “whom he foreknew He **then** predestined ... and whom he predestined he **then** called” etc. But it doesn’t say “**then**,” it says “**also**.” **So there is no time sequence in this verse. One thing did not happen before the other.** God is outside of time (see above) and so **He knew, destined, called, justified and glorified all simultaneously. But there is a sequence here.** It is not a time sequence; **it is a cause and effect sequence.** How does God in His sovereignty decide which people He destines, calls, justifies and glorifies? **By His knowledge of each individual.** It says, “**Whom He foreknew he also predestined ... called ... justified ... glorified.**”

4. SO WHAT IS THE MEANING OF GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE? What does it mean, that God “foreknew” us?

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect [chosen] exiles of the Dispersion ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father ...” (1 Peter 1:1,2)

The Bible uses the word “know” in a unique way in this regard. It is often used to mean an **intimate relationship** with people; more than just knowing facts about them:

a. Knowing Other People: Our knowledge of people varies from a very limited observable knowledge of some facts about a person to the thorough and intimate knowledge of our mate in the marriage relationship:

“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” (Genesis 4:1)

b. Knowing God: The Bible uses this term in the same way (not regarding a physical relationship but) regarding **the spiritual relationship that God wants us to have with Him.** In fact, “**knowing God**” intimately is what eternal life is all about:

“this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God ...” (John 17:3)

[the prophet says] *“Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn ... [God says] ‘I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.’” (Hosea 6:3,6 – NLT)*

“so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;” (Colossians 1:10)

c. God Knowing Us: I believe I am correct in saying God’s knowing us is not simply knowing facts about us; **it is knowing us intimately and fully. He knows the deepest motives and desires of our hearts;** things even we do not know about ourselves. **Because of His complete foreknowledge of us He has predestined, called, justified and glorified us::**

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you ...” (Jeremiah 1:5)

“But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you ...” (Jeremiah 12:3)

[Jesus said] *“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,” (John 10:14)*

“... some of you who do not believe.’ (For **Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.**)” (John 6:64)

5. WHAT IN PARTICULAR DOES GOD “FOREKNOW” (know beforehand)

ABOUT US? What specifically does God know that causes Him to destine, call, justify and glorify only certain ones of us?

It can't be **our good works**, because God has clearly declared that all our works are basically evil and an abomination to His holiness. It also can't be **our choice to believe in and follow Him**, because we don't earn or deserve salvation by our choosing it, and also because our will is held captive to our fallen sinful nature, making it impossible for us to choose to do even the good we want to do:

“... **I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.**” (Romans 7:18)

It seems to be what I would call “**a mystery element**,” the nuances of which are known only to God, but the general meaning seems clear. God repeatedly refers to this mystery element as **our “heart,”** not meaning our physical heart or simply the seat of our affections, but something much deeper. **He knows what is in the very core of my being; what down deep I really want to do and be – the real “me.”** Thus God sees **those who want to love Him and live for Him with all our hearts** and those who don't. This is what God foreknows – **what only God can know:**

“the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those **whose heart is blameless toward him** ...” (2 Chronicles 16:9; – The NASB says “**whose heart is completely His**” and The NLT says, “**whose hearts are fully committed to him**”)

“Blessed are those ... who seek him **with their whole heart.**” (Psalm 119:2)

Some will object and say there is nothing in us that God might consider worthy of His choosing to predestine us because the Apostle Paul writes:

“For I know that **nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out**” (Romans 7:18)

Notice, however, that the Apostle Paul says he has a “*desire to do what is right*” even though there is “*nothing good*” in him. So, while his heart's desire is not “*good*” or meritorious in God's sight, nevertheless it is what God looks for and uses for His glory:

“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but **the LORD weighs the heart.**” (Proverbs 21:2)

“As a face is reflected in water, so **the heart reflects the real person.**” (Proverbs 27:19 - NLT)

“... I have found in David the son of Jesse **a man after my heart** ...” (Acts 13:22)

Notice also that God uses the phrase “*all your heart*” to indicate something deeper than the general seat of our affections – something beyond anything we can recognize about our own hearts – namely that specific **mystery element** He alone can know:

“... you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him **with all your heart** and with all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 4:29)

“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me **with all your heart.**” (Jeremiah 29:13)

“You shall **love the Lord your God with all your heart** and ... soul and ... might.” (Deut. 6:5)

And finally notice how God links our heart (“*love*”) with His destining (“*called*”) us:

“And we know that **for those who love God** all things work together for good, **for those who are called**

according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

So what God has done is **to predestine, call, justify and glorify those whom He knows from eternity will truly desire in their heart of hearts to love and trust Him**, and in my judgment **that knowledge is the underlying basis (the mystery element) that determines His predestination.**

Of course, only God knows who those people are. Even we cannot know whether or not our own heart is *"completely His"* – whether or not it truly desires to love and know God – because **it deceives us:**

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can know it?"

So [using our human time related words] before He created the world, God knew our hearts perfectly, and accordingly He predestined us, called (chose) us and even wrote down our names in the book of life of the Lamb (Jesus):

*"... everyone whose name has ... been **written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.**"* (Revelation 13:8)

This is truly a mystery. God has not taken away our free will, but **He knows our heart** – what we will want to choose or reject, and on that basis He *"predestined"* us. Of course we can't know that until after we believe and are saved. Then we can look back, rejoice and be amazed by the truth revealed to us in God's Word that He knew us and chose us from before the foundation of the world:

*"even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world** ..."* (Ephesians 1:4)

Three illustrations come to mind. First the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Out of the 18 references (in Exodus and 1 Samuel) to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, 4 of them clearly say that **Pharaoh hardened his own heart** while 6 others say that **God hardened Pharaoh's heart.** From God's timeless perspective, those two things happened simultaneously. God, knowing Pharaoh's hard heart destined him to harden his heart so He could use him for His purposes. That does not mean, as we incorrectly think, that Pharaoh had no choice but was forced to harden his heart.

Secondly, Herod, Pilate and the Jewish leaders chose to crucify Jesus, but God foreknew what they would choose and used that to fulfill His eternal purposes:

*"... there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus ... both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, **to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.**"* (Acts 4:27,28)

Thirdly, God, knowing both their hearts, destroyed King **Belshazzar** (Daniel chapter 6) but restored King **Nebuchadnezzar** (Daniel chapter 5).

6. BUT OUR HEARTS ARE EVIL. But we have an even greater problem! **Our hearts are not only deceitful, but they are intrinsically evil and incapable of loving or obeying God. We have no power to make our hearts do so, even if we want to.** Thus the mystery – the same heart that wants to serve God is so evil it can't!

The Apostle Paul writes about his struggle between wanting to do God's will and his own inability to do it. His "want to" was not strong enough to overcome his evil heart:

*"... **For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ... So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do***

not want is what I keep on doing." (Romans 7:15,17-19)

But there is **GOOD NEWS!** God's Word tells us that:

*"The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth **in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him ...**" (2 Chronicles 16:9 – NLT; The ESV says "to give strong support to")*

*"**the Lord your God will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your offspring, **so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul ...**" (Deuteronomy 30:6)*

*"I will **heal their waywardness** [apostasy] and love them freely ..." (Hosea 14:4 – NIV)*

Our sovereign God wants to **"strengthen" us!** He **partners with us by enabling us to do what we truly want to do – to repent, believe, and obey His will.** What an amazing blessing! **Although we are in ourselves impotent to carry out our heart's deepest desire, we are empowered by God's omnipotence to do His sovereign will in repenting, believing, and glorifying our Lord throughout our lives!**

So we see God does not predestine us because we choose to believe (our own merit), but because **He knows our heart; that we really want to believe and obey Him and that we will do so if He enables us to. Therefore He empowers us by His grace!**

*"Therefore, my beloved ... **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**" (Philippians 2:12,13)*

*"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, **I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.**" (1 Corinthians 15:10)*

For example, here are some pretty **impossible commands**, which God says He will "surely" enable believers to obey; but only through His Holy Spirit living in us:

*"And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them **all.** See that **no one** repays anyone evil for evil, but **always** seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice **always**, pray **without ceasing**, give thanks **in all circumstances**; for **this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you ... Abstain from every form of evil ... He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.**" (1 Thessalonians 5:14-18,24)*

In another example the Apostle Paul was given the responsibility to preach Christ to the nations. But God also gave him the grace needed to enable him to carry it out.

*"Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me ... **this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ**" (Ephesians 3:7,8)*

This grace is possible only through the death and resurrection of Jesus our Savior:

*"concerning his Son ... declared to be the Son of God in **power ... by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace ...**" (Romans 1:3-5)*

*"But God ... even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—**by grace you have been saved—**" (Ephesians 2:4,5)*

D. FATALISTIC USE OF GOD'S NAME:

ISLAM:

SIMPLY REPEATING GOD’S ARABIC NAME HAS CERTAIN POWERS. On the website, <http://islamicink.wordpress.com/basic-islamic-phrases-terms/> I found **24 common Arabic expressions containing God’s name (Allah)**, which Muslims are encouraged to repeat constantly. They include these 10 (translated): “*May Allah preserve your life,*” “*In the name of Allah, most Gracious most Merciful,*” “*May Allah reward you with blessings,*” “*May Allah protect you,*” “*Glory be to Allah,*” “*If Allah wills,*” “*I beg Allah for forgiveness,*” “*As Allah has willed,*” “*Thanks be to Allah,*” “*To Allah we belong and to Him is our return.*” These Arabic phrases, while expressing very good thoughts, are meaningless for many Muslims because 80% of the Muslims in the world don’t understand Arabic. Even for those who do, these phrases are generally repeated habitually without thinking about their meaning. Muslims are socially expected to repeat them (similar to Americans saying “God bless you” when someone sneezes). Thus they become parrot-like mantras.

Also most Muslims think that the meaning is not as important as simply repeating the Arabic name *Allah* because **they believe ...**:

a. The Use of God's Name Has Purifying And Protective Powers. The Qur’an instructs Muslims to pronounce God’s name over an animal when slaughtering it to make it holy and pure (“*Halaal*” – similar to kosher) for food:

“So eat of (meats) on which God's name hath been pronounced, if ye have faith Eat not of (meats) on which God's name hath not been pronounced ...” (Sura 6:118, 121)

Many Muslims believe there is protective power in the name of Allah and it should be repeated to protect themselves from evil. Religious expressions containing Allah’s name are written everywhere and spoken upon every occasion.

Another website (http://www.namesofallah.com/prev_site/eng/html/n052.htm) says,

“The name of Allah ... should be recited 66 times each with Durood [a prayer for peace for Muhammad and Abraham and their families] in the beginning and the end. This is very beneficial ... particularly for protection from unforeseen calamities and accidents. This Holy Name is recited to be safe from enemies, burning and drowning. If recited a great deal the person will be saved from all sorts of sins. If this Holy Name is written with saffron and kept on person, the person will be saved from all sorts of accidents ... This name suffices all purposes, and Almighty God will stand security for all his/her affairs and litigation.”

b. Repeating God’s Name Brings Spiritual Blessing. *Sufi* Muslims even have special *dikr* (“remembrance”) worship services where they chant God’s name and His attributes hundreds of times while sitting or moving in a circle. By doing this they hope to feel some mystical sense of being closer to God and gaining His blessing. They also believe they may have blessed dreams at night:

“But keep in remembrance the name of thy Lord” (Sura 73:8)

“... call Allah in remembrance much (and often); that ye may prosper” (Sura 8:45)

THE BIBLE:

NOT USING GOD’S NAME IN VAIN: In contrast to Muslims’ frequent and repetitive use

of God's name the Bible warns us to use God's name carefully and only with reverence and meaning. Nevertheless many nominal Christians frequently use God's name in vain by swearing, as a curse word or as an expletive ("I swear by God", "Oh God!", etc.). Even devoted Christians sometimes repeat culturally acceptable expressions or prayers in which they use God's name in vain without thought or meaning, e.g., saying, "God bless you" when someone sneezes or saying, "Oh my God!" when amazed. Many habitually and thoughtlessly rattle off memorized prayers such as, "Our Father, who art in heaven ...", etc. To many this seems harmless, but God thinks otherwise about the use of His name "in vain" (thoughtlessly):

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain." (Exodus 20:7)

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words." (Matthew 6:7)

"But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven ... or by the earth ... or by Jerusalem ... And do not take an oath by your head ... Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." (Matthew 5:34-37)

The Jews, however, went too far in their attempt to avoid using God's name in vain. They stopped using it all together by substituting *Adonai* (Lord) in place of *YHWH* (He Who Is) when reading out loud or quoting scripture. As a result, we no longer know the Hebrew pronunciation of *YHWH*. Is it "*Jehovah*," "*Yahweh*," or something else?

E. JESUS, THE SOVEREIGN LORD:

ISLAM:

The teaching of the Qur'an about Jesus is essentially that He is no more than a human prophet of God. There is no way He could be called "Sovereign" or "Lord":

"O People of the Book [Christians]! Commit no excesses ... Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary ... Say not 'Trinity': desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son ..." (Sura 4:171)

"And behold! Allah will say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, "worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah"?' He will say: 'Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say) ...'" (Sura 5:116)

"... Jesus, the son of Mary, said: 'O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.' [Muhammad] ..." (Sura 61:6)

THE BIBLE:

Jesus is often called "Lord" in the Bible, and Christians commonly refer to Him as "The Lord Jesus Christ." Muslims, however, consider that blasphemous because the Qur'an uses the word "Lord" (*Rubb* in Arabic) only for God and they believe Jesus is only a man.

1. JESUS IS THE SOVEREIGN “LORD.” In English both God and people are called “Lord”. In England the accepted way of addressing a judge in the court is “My Lord” and it is a title bestowed on men by the Queen. Some assume this is how it is used for Jesus in the Bible.

In the Old Testament God is called **Adonai**, meaning “Lord,” well over 400 times. It is primarily used of the Lord God (the Father). Sometimes, however, it is clearly speaking of God’s Messiah:

“The LORD [JHWH] says to my Lord [Adonai]: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’”
(Psalm 110:1)

In the New Testament, the Greek word, **Kurios**, is almost always translated “Lord” in English, but is also translated “Master” or “Sir.” It occurs 747 times. Of these 117 are used of ordinary men, **175 are clearly used in reference to the Lord God (the Father) and 315 are clearly used in reference to the Lord Jesus. It is not really clear whether the remaining 140 uses of the Greek word, Kurios are referring to God the Father, to the Lord Jesus or to both.** This seeming difficulty is because Jesus is both God (see above) and man. He is the Sovereign Lord Who became a man and is therefore “Lord” both as God and as man, as the following verses illustrate.

a. God (The Father) Is The “Lord”:

1) God the Father is called “Lord” (at least 175 times). For example:

“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord [Adonai] God [Elohim] made the earth and the heavens.” (Genesis 2:4)

“O LORD [Yahway], our Lord [Adonai], how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:1)

[Psalm 8 begins with the declaration that He is both Yahway and Adonai. That declaration is repeated at the end in verse 9. Notice that He is addressed by both names and these two names are called, “your name” (singular)]

[Moses said] *“The Lord [Kurios] your God [Theos] will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers ...”* (Acts 3:22)

2) God is called the one Lord:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” (Mark 12:29)

3) God is called the “Lord of lords”:

“... he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.” (1 Timothy 6:15,16)

4) God is called “Lord” in distinction from Jesus the Christ:

“... he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s [Father] Christ [Jesus].” (Luke 2:26)

“that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,” (Acts 3:20)

“... The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15) [notice “he” refers to both of them]

5) Jesus Himself calls God the Father “Lord”:

“... Jesus declared, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth ...’ (Matthew 11:25)

*“Jesus answered, ‘The most important is, “Hear, O Israel: **The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**””*
(Mark 12:29)

b. But Jesus Also Is Called “Lord”:

1) Jesus is clearly called “Lord” (at least 315 times):

*“... preaching good news of peace through **Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),**” (Acts 10:36)*

*“men who have risked their lives for the name of our **Lord Jesus Christ.**” (Acts 15:26)*

*“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but **Jesus Christ as Lord ...**” (2 Corinthians 4:5)*

2) Jesus is called both “Lord” and “God” in the same sentence:

*“Thomas [speaking to Jesus] answered him, “**My Lord and my God!**” (John 20:28)*

3) Jesus is even called the “only Lord”:

*“... and deny **our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**” (Jude 4)*

4) Jesus, the “Lamb” is called the “Lord of lords”:

*“They will make war on the Lamb, and **the Lamb** will conquer them, for **he is Lord of lords and King of kings ...**” (Revelation 17:14)*

5) Jesus is called “Lord” in distinction from God the Father:

*“for us there is **one God**, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and **one Lord, Jesus Christ**, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)*

*“and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of **God the Father.**” (Philippians 2:11)*

*“to **the only God**, our Savior, **through Jesus Christ our Lord**, be glory ...” (Jude 25)*

6) Jesus speaks from heaven and accepts being called “Lord”:

*“And I [Apostle Paul] answered, ‘Who are you, **Lord?**’ And he said to me, ‘**I am Jesus** of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting’ ... And I said, ‘What shall I do, **Lord?**’ And the **Lord** said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus ...’ ... “And I said, ‘**Lord**, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in **you.**” (Acts 22:8,10,19)*

7) God The Father Calls Jesus “Lord” and Creator of heaven and earth:

*“But **of the Son he** [God] **says ...** ‘You, **Lord**, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands’” (Hebrews 1:8,10)*

8) God The Father Calls Jesus “Lord” in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies using the Hebrew word, “Adonai” (“Sovereign Lord” or “Master”). This reference is mentioned twice in the N.T.:

*“He [Jesus] said to them, ‘How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him [Messiah] **Lord**, saying, “The **LORD** [YHWH] said to my **Lord** [Adonai], ‘Sit at my right hand ...’ [quoting Psalm 110:1]? If then David calls him **Lord** [Adonai], how is he his son?’” (Matt 22:43-45)*

*“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says [in Psalm 110:1], “The **LORD** [Yahwah] said to my **Lord** [Adonai] –, “Sit at my right hand,” (Acts 2:34)*

c. God The Father And Jesus Are Together The “Lord.” It becomes obvious that the Lord Jesus is the revelation of God in human flesh. He is called “God with us” (“*Emmanuel*” – see Matthew 1:22,23).

“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.” (Colossians 2:9,10)

d. In Fact Jesus Is “God Over All.” Jesus is God and therefore **totally sovereign** over all things:

*“To them [the Jews] belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is **the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.**”* (Romans 9:5)

2. BUT JESUS “EMPTIED HIMSELF” OF HIS SOVEREIGNTY. In the beginning God created everything through His eternal Word (“**God said**, ‘Let there be ...’”). After mankind rebelled and sinned against God He sent His Word into the world as a man (Jesus) to be a substitute for mankind in death. In order to become fully one of us, Messiah Jesus “emptied Himself” of His divine “form” (i.e., He put aside His own sovereignty and omnipotence) and accepted the lowly “form” of a human being. As a man He totally subjected Himself to the will of God the Father even to the point of entering into the shameful and cursed death of crucifixion for us:

*“... Christ Jesus, who, **though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God** [His sovereignty] **a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**”* (Philippians 2:5-8)

*“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by **becoming a curse for us**—for it is written, ‘**Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree**’”* (Galatians 3:13)

Not as God, using His own omnipotent powers, **but as a godly man** totally submitted to God the Father, **He was given authority over demonic powers and sicknesses** as seen in the following verses:

*“And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, ‘**Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘I will; be clean.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed ...** When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ‘**Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.**’ And he said to him, ‘**I will come and heal him.**’ But the centurion replied, ‘**Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, “Go,” and he goes, and to another, “Come,” and he comes, and to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.**’ When Jesus heard this, he marveled ...”* (Matthew 8:2,3,5-9)

2. BUT JESUS “EMPTIED HIMSELF” OF HIS SOVEREIGNTY. In the beginning God created everything through His eternal Word (“**God said**, ‘Let there be ...’”). After mankind rebelled and sinned against God He sent His Word into the world as a man (Jesus) to be a substitute for mankind in death. In order to become fully one of us, Messiah Jesus “emptied Himself” of His divine “form” (i.e., He put aside His own sovereignty and omnipotence) and accepted the lowly “form” of a human being. As a man He totally subjected Himself to the will of God the Father even to the point of entering into the shameful and cursed death of crucifixion for us:

*“... Christ Jesus, who, **though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God** [His sovereignty] **a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**”* (Philippians 2:5-8)

*“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by **becoming a curse for us**—for it is written, ‘**Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree**’” (Galatians 3:13)*

Not as God, using His own omnipotent powers, **but as a godly man** totally submitted to God the Father, **He was given authority over demonic powers and sicknesses** as seen in the following verses:

*“And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘I will; be clean.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed ... When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ‘Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.’ And he said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ But the centurion replied, ‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but **only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, “Go,” and he goes, and to another, “Come,” and he comes, and to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.’** When Jesus heard this, he marveled ...” (Matthew 8:2,3,5-9)*

3. GOD THE FATHER HAS CROWNED JESUS THE MAN AS SOVEREIGN LORD IN HEAVEN BECAUSE OF HIS HUMILITY AND SACRIFICE, BY WHICH HE GAINED VICTORY OVER DEATH AND SATAN:

a) The Man Jesus Exalted As Sovereign Lord Above All Others:

“... he [God] raised him [Jesus] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority ... and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” (Eph. 1:20-21)

“... God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord ...” (Phil. 2:9-11)

b) The Man Jesus Crowned With Glory And Honor Because Of His Death:

“... we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death ...” (Hebrews 2:8,9)

“... Christ Jesus, who ... humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him ...” (Philippians 2:5,8,9)

“... He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,” (Colossians 1:18,19)

c) All Things Subjected Under The Feet Of The Man Jesus:

“... he [God] raised him [Jesus] from the dead ... And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things ...” (Ephesians 1:20,22)

“... Now in putting everything in subjection to him [Jesus], he [God] left nothing outside his [Jesus] control ...” (Hebrews 2:8)

d) The Man Jesus Caused To Ascend Far Above The Heavens In Order To “Fill All Things.” (Note that He did not simply ascend to visit the “seven heavens” and lead the prophets there in prayer as Islam believes Muhammad did in his “night journey”), but He is exalted **above the heavens**, as well as above all the prophets, angels, powers and everything else in creation):

“... He ... is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.” (Ephesians 4:9,10)

*“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and **exalted above the heavens.**” (Hebrews 7:26)*

4. EVEN THOUGH WE DO NOT YET SEE JESUS EXALTED AS KING AND SOVEREIGN LORD ON EARTH, HE ALREADY IS IN FACT KING OF KINGS, AND IN GOD’S TIME THAT WILL BECOME EVIDENT:

*“... **At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus ...**” (Hebrews 2:8,9)*

*“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one [Jesus] sitting on it **is called Faithful and True ... His eyes are like a flame of fire ... He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ... From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.**” (Revelation 19:11-16)*

*“... I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus ... They came to life and **reigned with Christ for a thousand years ... they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.**” (Revelation 20:4,6)*

5. AND BECAUSE JESUS HAS ETERNALLY BECOME “THE SON OF MAN,” HE WILL ULTIMATELY PUT HIMSELF IN SUBJECTION TO GOD THE FATHER:

*“... **Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.**” (1 Corinthians 15:23-28)*

*“... so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, **to the glory of God the Father.**” (Philippians 2:10,11)*

6. NEVERTHELESS, AS OUR LORD AND KING HIS KINGDOM ON THE NEW EARTH WILL LAST ETERNALLY AND HIS GLORY AND DOMINION WILL LAST FOREVER:

*[the angel’s words about the birth of Jesus] “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob **forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.**” (Luke 1:32,33)*

*“For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into **the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**” (2 Peter 1:11)*

*“... **To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom ... to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**” (Revelation 1:5,6)*

F. MY REACTIONS What are the differences between Islam's and the Bible's teaching about Predestination?

1. EMPHASIS: Because a similar debate exists in Christianity between “Calvinists” (followers of the teaching of John Calvin) and “Arminians” (followers of James Arminius) regarding God’s election and predestination, I am hesitant to judge Islam too harshly on this subject. However, it seems to me that the Qur’an, in an honorable attempt to exalt God’s sovereignty and greatness, has essentially over-emphasized predestination to the negation of mankind’s ability to choose. Thereby Muslims become **fatalistic** and believe they are nothing more than **slaves** of God’s sovereign will, rather than beloved “**children**” of God, to whom He gives authority, responsibility and partnership in His work. The Bible has a balanced emphasis on both God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility to choose.

2. OUR WILL: Islam teaches that people choose to do God’s will only because God sovereignly wills them (forces them) to will to do so:

“... a message to (all) the worlds (with profit) to **whoever among you wills to go straight, but ye shall not will except as God wills ...**” (Sura 81:27-29)

But the Bible teaches that God works in those of us whose “heart” wants to obey Him **to enable us** (not force us) to will to do His will and to “work out” and “confirm” God’s calling by choosing to believe and acting accordingly:

“... **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**” (Philippians 2:12,13)

“... be all the more diligent to **confirm your calling and election ...**” (2 Peter 1:10)

3. GOD’S CHARACTER: The Qur’an does not indicate that God’s character could affect His sovereign will in any way, but the Bible clearly shows that God will not and cannot carry out His will in a way that would violate His character of justice, righteousness, truthfulness, faithfulness, love, etc.

4. HELL FOR MAN OR MAN FOR HELL? Also, the Bible does not say that God created some people just to fill hell as the Qur’an does:

“**And surely, We have created many of the jinn and mankind for hell.** They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and ... They are like cattle, nay even more astray ...” (Sura 7:179)

“If We had so willed, We could ... have brought every soul into true guidance, **but the word from Me will come true, ‘I will fill hell with jinns and men all together.’**” (Sura 32:13)

Rather it says hell was created for Satan and his angels, and people will go there only because they follow Satan and reject God’s provision of salvation:

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into **the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.**’” (Matthew 25:41)

These are people whom God in His sovereign foreknowledge and predestination has adjusted from His original general intent in creation and has “prepared” them to be destroyed in hell instead of being “prepared” for glory:

“Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with

*much patience **vessels of wrath prepared** [Greek *katertizo* = to adjust] **for destruction**, in order to make known the riches of his glory for **vessels of mercy, which he has prepared** [Greek *proetomazo* = to fit up in advance] **beforehand for glory.**" (Romans 9:21-23)*

5. GOD'S WILL OR GOD'S LOVE? Islam tells us that God chooses people for Paradise or Hell and even causes them to doubt simply because it is His will to do so:

*"But **God will choose for His special Mercy whom He will** ..." (Sura 2:105)*

"No soul can believe except by the will of God, and He will place doubts (or obscurity) on those who will not understand." (Sura 10:100)

*"... **For Allah leaves to stray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills** ..." (Sura 35:8)*

"To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills: but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Sura 48:14)

The Bible, however, says God, because of His love, invites all people to receive His gift of salvation whether or not they will, and He chooses those who receive His love, no matter how great a sinner they may be:

*"For **God so loved** the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever believes in him** should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)*

*"but **God shows his love for us** in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us ... **while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son** ..." (Romans 5:8,10)*

***"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us** and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10 - NIV)*

6. GOD IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY PARTNERS WITH MAN. Islam totally rejects any thought of partnership with God because that would seem to mean there is more than one God. The Bible, however, teaches that God, by His own sovereign will, chose to create mankind in His own image and to give him authority as His junior partner. He did this initially at creation, thus revealing the nature of His fatherhood:

*"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And **let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**' ... And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and **have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**'" (Genesis 1:26,28)*

Although Adam abdicated his sovereignty (thereby making Satan the "god of this world"), God continues to restore believers to this partnership with Himself:

*"For **we are God's fellow workers** ..." (1 Corinthians 3:9)*

*"Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us ... Working together with him, then, we appeal to you** not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Corinthians 5:20,6:1)*

Jerry Bridges does an excellent job of explaining this partnership in his Navigators "Holiness Day by Day" internet devotional for Tuesday, January 29, 2019, entitled "Desperately Dependent" and based on the verse, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25). Here are some excerpts:

Progressive sanctification is not a partnership with [God] the Spirit in the sense that we each—the believer and the Holy Spirit [of God]—do our respective tasks. Rather, we work as he enables us to work. His

work lies behind all our work and makes our work possible ... we're dependent on him to do our work; we cannot do anything apart from him. In the process of sanctification there are certain things only the Spirit can do, and certain things he has given us to do ... So we must depend on the Spirit to do within us what only he can do. And we must equally depend on him to enable us to do what he has given us to do. Whether his work or our work, we're dependent on him. We aren't just dependent on him; we're desperately dependent ..."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRANSCENDENCE & IMMANENCE OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to this subject:

- A. God's Transcendence**
- B. God's Immanence**
- C. My Reactions & Conclusions**

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE: (The Creator, Who is distinct from, above or greater than, and outside of His creation):

ISLAM:

God's omnipotence (Chapter 2), sovereignty (Chapter 3), transcendence (Chapter 4), and inscrutability (Chapter 5) together form what I believe to be Islam's major belief about God – His greatness. This heavy emphasis is evident in the fact that 34 of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God relate directly to these four attributes and the rest indirectly.

9 of those names relate specifically to His transcendence:

<i>Al-Khaliq</i> = The Creator	<i>Al-Muta'ali or Mut'aal</i> = Higher, Supreme
<i>Al-Bari</i> = The Maker, Curer	<i>Al-Badi</i> = The Creative One, Originator
<i>Al-Musawwir</i> = The Fashioner, Shaper	<i>Al-Fatir</i> : The Originator
<i>Al-Ali</i> = The High, Exalted	<i>Dhul Ma'aarj</i> = The One Above, Highest
<i>Al-Mubdi</i> = Originator, Initiator	

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

1. GOD THE CREATOR OF ALL: Islam teaches that God created and established the universe with all its laws, sent his complete set of instructions to mankind through the prophets, and now is sustaining, governing and watching over things from behind the scenes. Here are a few of the many verses describing God's self-sufficiency and governance over His creation:

"It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens" (Sura 2:29)

"Thy Lord is self-sufficient ..." (Sura 6:133)

"Your Guardian-Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly

established on the throne (of authority): He draweth the night as a veil o'er the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession: He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, (all) governed by laws under His command. Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!" (Sura 7:54)

"Say: 'Who is the Lord and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth?' Say: '(It is) Allah.' ... Say: 'Allah is the Creator of all things: He is the One, the Supreme and Irresistible.'" (Sura 13:16)

[For a more detailed description of God's creation see chapter 13 – The Life & Image of God]

2. GOD IS "ABOVE" ALL: 19 times the Qur'an says God is "above" all:

Above all (2 times): "... For **Allah** is Most High, great (**above you all**).“ (Sura 4:34); **"High above all is Allah, the King, the Truth! ..."** (Sura 20:114)

Above all comprehension: "... **He is above all comprehension**, yet is acquainted with all things." (Sura 6:103)

Above all the partners (gods) ascribed to Him (8 times): "... but **Allah** is exalted high above the partners they ascribe to Him." (Sura 7:190); "... **Glory to Him! and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!**" (Sura 10:18 and also 16:1,3; 28:68; 30:40; 39:67; 59:23)

Above what (gods) people attribute to/associate with Him (4 times): "... Praise and glory be to Him! (for He is) **above what they attribute to Him!**" (Sura 6:100; 21:22); "... High is Allah **above what they associate with Him!**" (Sura 27:63; 52:43)

Above all that people say are gods: "Glory to Him! **He is high above all that they say** [are gods]!- **Exalted and Great (beyond measure)!**" (Sura 17:43)

Above having a son (2 times): "... for **Allah** is one Allah: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) **above having a son ...**" (Sura 4:171 – also 39:4)

Above ranks (once): "**Raised high above ranks (or degrees), (He is) the Lord of the Throne (of Authority) ...**" (Sura 40:15)

3. GOD IS MOST HIGH: God is called "most high" 15 times in the Qur'an. Here are a few examples:

"Allah! ... His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the most high, the Supreme (in glory)." (Sura 2:255)

"... For Allah is most high, great (above you all)." (Sura 4:34)

"To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: and He is most high, most Great." (Sura 42:4)

"Saying, 'I am your Lord, most high.'" (Sura 79:24)

THE BIBLE:

1. THE FATHER'S TRANSCENDENCE: Unlike Hinduism, and similar to Islam, the Bible teaches that God is an eternally living being who is "above" and distinct from all His created things. He always existed and He created all things out of nothing:

"Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!" (Ps. 57:5,11; 108:5)

"Let them praise the name of the LORD ... his majesty is above earth and heaven." (Psalm 148:13)

*“It is **he who sits above the circle of the earth**, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in.” (Isaiah 40:22)*

*“For thus says **the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity**, whose name is Holy: **‘I dwell in the high and holy place...’**” (Isaiah 57:15)*

The sun or stars are not God, mountains or animals are not God, nor is any other created entity God. Creation is temporal, but God is eternal, immortal and unchangeable. God is uniquely different and distinct from creation:

*“you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. **They will perish, but you will remain**; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and **they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.**” (Psalm 102:25-27)*

*“... **who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.** To him be honor and eternal dominion.” (1 Timothy 6:16)*

And God is also called the “**Most High**” **54 times**. Here is one of them:

*“... you alone, whose name is the Lord, are **the Most High over all the earth.**” (Psalm 83:18)*

2. THE SON’S TRANSCENDENCE: The following is written about Jesus:

*“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and **exalted above the heavens.**” (Hebrews 7:26)*

The Bible teaches that **God is Transcendent** (far greater than and distinct from creation), **and yet He is also Immanent** (involved with His creation).

B. GOD’S IMMANENCE: (God operating within and being personally interactive with His creation; especially with mankind):

[See also section C. of Chapter 12 – God’s Fatherhood]

ISLAM:

We will look at the following:

- God’s Names Related To His Immanence
- Islam’s Understanding Of Our Relationship With God
- The Qur’an’s Description Of God’s Relationship With Mankind In Paradise

1. GOD’S NAMES RELATED TO HIS IMMANENCE: Only 1 of Islam’s 99 “most beautiful names” for God seems related to this subject:

Az-Zahir (Zaahir) = “The Manifest One,” “Apparent”

2. ISLAM’S UNDERSTANDING OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: As far as I can understand, Islam holds to a kind of deism which teaches that God is far too exalted to reveal Himself to us, and even if He chose to, we are much too weak to understand or know Him, so **He communicates with us indirectly:**

[See also chapter 9 – God’s Communication]

a. God's Communication Through Many Veils: God's will is revealed to mankind in His Word, which is taken from the "Mother of the book" and given to the angel Gabriel, who dictates it to God's messengers (prophets), who reveal it to mankind. Thus mankind hears from God indirectly **through three veils or layers of mediation:** [See chapter 9 for further information about the "Mother of the Book"]

God dictated "step by step" from

- i) the "Mother of the Book" (His total message for mankind - Sura 43:4) ...
- ii) to the angel Gabriel, who dictated it piece by piece ...
- iii) to the prophets, who then dictated it ...
to mankind.

Even Muhammad received the Qur'an indirectly through the angel Gabriel:

"...Gabriel – for he brings down the (revelation) to thy [Muhammad's] heart ..." (Sura 2:97)

According to Islam, it would be extremely arrogant for us created beings to think we could ever have any kind of personal or direct relationship with Almighty God. Islam teaches that **God does not reveal Himself to us, He reveals only His will:**

"It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise." (Sura 42:51)

But, some Muslims say that Sura 50:16 (the following verse) proves God's closeness to us by saying He is nearer to us than our jugular vein:

"It was We who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him, for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein." (Sura 50:16)

Other verses also mention "*the presence of God*":

"... whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of God. For God is... all-knowing." (Sura 2:115)

"... Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them ..." (Sura 2:255)

But clearly these verses say that God sees and knows everything about us, not that we could possibly know Him or have a close relationship with Him. Again, the emphasis is on His greatness!

Islam does teach that God is both "*the evident*" and "*the immanent*" (*Az-Zahir*) in His creation and is "*with you wherever ye may be.*" However, it uses those words only to mean that He sees both outside (evident) and inside (immanent) of all things, and thus "*has full knowledge of all things.*" And again, the emphasis is on His greatness:

"He is ... the evident and the immanent, and He has full knowledge of all things ... He knows what enters within the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wherever ye may be. And God sees well all that ye do ... He has full knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts." (Sura 57:3-6)

There is a difference between **the presence of God** and **communion with God!**

b. God's Communication Has Been "Sent Down": 96 times the Qur'an mentions that **God "sent down"** His Word and His blessings, meaning God relates to mankind only indirectly:

"...they deny (the revelation) which Allah has sent down ..." (Sura 2:90)

"We have **sent down** to thee Manifest Signs ..." (Sura 2:99)

"It is He Who **sent down** to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book [Qur'an], confirming what went before it; and He **sent down** the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He **sent down** the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong)." (Sura 3:3)

"... then Allah **sent down** His peace upon him ..." (Sura 9:40)

"... We **sent down** to you Manna and quails" (Sura 20:80)

But it never says that God Himself "came down," or "appeared to" people like we find in the Bible. Clearly this is **indirect communication not involving God Himself, but only His will through His Word being conveyed by angels.**

Nabeel Qureshi in his bestselling book, No God But One: Allah Or Jesus?, writes,

"Allah does not enter into this world in Islam, whereas Yahweh has repeatedly done so. Allah remains behind a veil and sends messengers, whereas Yahweh is intimate and walks among us." (page 21)

c. God's Communication To Mankind In The Qur'an: The Qur'an is not a revelation of God Himself, but only **a revelation of facts about God and His will for us.** Yes, **Muslim scholars teach that we can know God through the attributes revealed in His names.** However, those names reveal only facts about God, not God Himself. Those facts are only in our minds, but knowing God involves an intimate relationship beyond facts. There are 186 verses in the Qur'an indicating God chooses to do things only because He **pleases** to do them and because it is **His will** to do so (God's will is specifically mentioned in 146 of these verses).

d. Man's Communication With God In Prayer: Muslims say they "pray" both before and after eating. Before, they say, "*Bismillah, ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim*" ("In the name of Allah, the gracious and merciful") and after they eat they say, *Al-Hamdu lil-lāh*" ("all praise be to God"). In both cases they are not speaking directly **to** God, giving thanks for their food, but are indirectly declaring praise **about** God.

Muslims here in the west sometimes claim that Islam is superior to Christianity because they can pray directly to God (while we have to come to God through Jesus, and in the case of Catholics, through saints). However, **Islam tells us there is a veil between us and God** (see Sura 42:51 above). According to one tradition (*Hadith*), Muhammad said there are 70,000 veils between God and us but only four between God and His angels:

"Between God (mighty and sublime) and creation are 70,000 veils. The nearest of creatures to God ... are Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael, and between them and Him are four veils ..." (Ibn al-Jawzi, Mawdu'at. Narrator Sahl ibn Sa'd al-Sa'id. Translated by Cyrus Ali Zargar. 1/166.)

While Muslims sometimes voice personal requests **of** God in extemporaneous, personal prayer (*Duaa*) and constantly talk **about** God in their everyday speech, (See a list of many common expressions at <http://livingthemuslimlife.wordpress.com/key-expressions-and-terms>), only the unorthodox Sufis (see the following) expect to have any intimate communication **with** God or to **know** God personally.

e. "Remembrance" Of God: One group of Muslims known as "Sufis" hold regular "Dikr" (remembrance) worship services, in which they chant God's name, "*Allah*" or phrases containing God's name while rotating or whirling around in a circle. They do this hundreds of times hoping they will be mystically drawn into an intimacy or nearness to God. They do this in obedience to the 19+ verses in the Qur'an directing them in the "**remembrance of God:**"

“... **Bring thy Lord to remembrance in thy (very) soul**, with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings ...” (Sura 7:205)

“... **call Allah in remembrance much (and often)**; that ye may prosper.” (Sura 8:45)

“Those who believe, and **whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah**: for without doubt **in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction**.” (Sura 13:28)

“... and **remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt ...**” (Sura 29:45)

f. Jesus Not The Revelation Of God To Us: Islam adamantly denies that Jesus is the Word or revelation of God to us – God in human flesh. Instead it teaches that Jesus told people to worship only God as He Himself did, that He was God’s servant (slave) and a prophet. In addition, the Qur’an says He was no more than a human being created by God, called the “Son of Mary”:

“**They do blaspheme who say: ‘Allah is Christ the son of Mary.’ But said Christ: ‘O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.’** Whoever joins other gods with Allah, - Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode ...” (Sura 5:72)

“He [Jesus] said: **‘I am indeed a servant [slave] of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet.’**” (Sura 19:30)

“And remember, **Jesus, the son of Mary, said: ‘O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you**, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad [Muhammad] ...” (Sura 61:6)

“And behold! Allah will say: **‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?’ He will say: ‘Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say).** Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. **Thou knowest what is in my heart, Though I know not what is in Thine.** For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden. Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, **“worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord”** ...” (Sura 5:116,117)

“The similitude of **Jesus** before Allah is as that of Adam; **He created him from dust, then said to him: ‘Be.’ And he was.**” (Sura 3:59)

g. God Is Unknowable. The logical conclusion of all of this is that God is unknowable by us created human beings: [Also see chapter 5 – God’s Inscrutability]

“**No vision can grasp Him**, but His grasp is over all vision; **He is above all comprehension [Latif]**, yet is acquainted with all things.” (Sura 6:103)

One contemporary Islamic scholar expressed the mainstream Islamic thinking:

“He [God] **does not reveal Himself to anyone in any way. God reveals only His will.** Remember one of the prophets asked God to reveal Himself and God told him, **‘No, it is not possible for Me to reveal Myself to anyone.’ ... This is God’s will and that is all we have, and we have it in perfection in the Qur’an. But Islam does not equate the Qur’an with the nature or essence of God. It is the Word of God, the Commandment of God, the Will of God. But God does not reveal Himself to anyone.** Christians talk about the revelation of God Himself - by God of God - but **that is the great difference between Christianity and Islam.** God is transcendent, and **once you talk about self-revelation you have ... immanence, and then the transcendence of God is compromised. You may not have complete transcendence and self-revelation at the same time.**” – (Isma`il al-Faruqi, *Christian Mission and Islamic Da`wah: Proceedings of the Chambèsy Dialogue Consultation* held 1976 in Chambèsy, Switzerland; Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1982, pp. 47-48)

According to Islam, God knows us completely, but we can never know Him in any personal or intimate way! In fact, thinking we could have “fellowship” with God amounts to “*shirk*” (partnership), the unforgivable sin of attributing to God a partner (Sura 6:21-30) by making ourselves partners (equal) with God.

Since Muslims do not know the joy of a personal relationship with God, there is no singing in their five times daily worship (*salat*), either individually or in the mosque, and there is no mention of singing even in Paradise. As someone has said, **“Islam is a religion without a song.”** (There is a lot of singing about religion by professional musicians but it is limited to non-religious settings such as movies, weddings, television, radio, etc.)

3. THE QUR’AN’S DESCRIPTION OF GOD’S RELATIONSHIP WITH

MANKIND IN PARADISE: One would think that believing Muslims would enjoy personal fellowship with God at least in Paradise, but the Qur’an’s description of Paradise is dominated by believers being rewarded with **earthly material blessings rather than personal fellowship with God.**

a. Number Of Passages In The Qur’an: In my research I have located **389 different verses in 82 (out of 114) Suras** in the Qur’an which contain some description or mention of Paradise.

b. Paradise Is Earned. According to these verses, **Paradise is described 81 times as being a “reward,” “recompense,” “repayment,” etc. for those who have earned it by doing “good deeds” which they will boast about:**

“For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens with rivers flowing underneath ... a recompense for those who work (and strive)!” (Sura 3:133-136)

“gardens of Eternity which they will enter: beneath which flow (pleasant) rivers: they will have therein all that they wish: thus doth Allah reward the righteous.” (Sura 16:32)

[on the Day of Judgment] ... *Then he that will be given his Record in his right hand [believers] will say: ‘Ah here! Read ye my Record!’”* (Sura 69:18,19)

c. God’s “Presence” In Paradise: Although God’s **presence** in Paradise is specifically referred to 15 times (Here are a few:) ...

“... Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord”. (Sura 3:169)

“... Verily in God’s presence is a reward, the greatest (of all).” (Sura 9:22)

“... a reward from the presence of God and from His presence is the best of rewards.” (Sura 3:195)

“... gardens, with rivers flowing beneath. Therein are they to dwell (forever) – a gift from the presence of God; and that which is in the presence of God is the best (bliss) for the righteous.” (Sura 3:198)

... nevertheless, God’s “presence” seems to be referring to rewards being given “*in* God’s presence” (meaning in the sight or knowledge of), or rewards coming “*from* the presence of God.” It says, “*the greatest*” and “*the best of rewards*” is that which is given “*in* God’s presence.” It doesn’t say **God’s Fellowship is the greatest of rewards.** So while the Qur’an says God will be present in Paradise, **it doesn’t say He will be sharing Himself with the righteous in any kind of intimate, personal relationship or fellowship** – a subtle but important difference!

Also there is mention of believers being “*those nearest to God,*” being “*in nearness to their Lord,*” being “*in nearness to thee,*” having “*the good pleasure of God,*” of “*God well pleased*”

with them and they with Him,” receiving their reward *“with God,”* being *“in God’s sight,”* and having all that they wish for *“before their Lord.”*

Although these references might be interpreted otherwise, they do not seem to mean believers enjoying intimate fellowship with God, but perhaps can be summed up in a statement in Sura 9:72: **“the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of God. That is the supreme felicity.”**

d. Worldly, Physical Pleasures In Paradise: It’s important to notice the sheer number of references to earthly pleasures. Here are eleven of the most commonly mentioned rewards in Paradise:

- *Luxuriant gardens* (116 times),
- *rivers flowing beneath* (53 times),
- *lasting eternally* (44 times),
- the **fulfillment of all desires** (29 times),
- *beautiful mansions or homes* (27 times),
- *total bliss* (24 times),
- *at ease reclining on lofty jewel encrusted thrones of dignity* (22 times),
- **all kinds of fruits in abundance** (19 times),
- *many companions* (19 times),
- **joined to chaste virgins** *whom no man or jinn before them has touched, who restrain their glances and have beautiful, big and lustrous eyes* (13 times),
- *rivers of non-intoxicating wine* (9 times).

To see this heavy emphasis on physical rewards and the absence of any clear statement of an intimate fellowship with God, see a recent article about Paradise from an Islamic web site, (<http://www.islamicity.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=IR1209-5254>).

e. Women In Paradise: Although the Qur’an’s description of Paradise seems to be a place designed for men, it does mention the presence of **righteous women** in 17 verses. Here are a couple of them:

*“God hath promised to believers, **men and women**, gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss...”* (Sura 9:72)

*“... And those who believe and whose **families** follow them in faith, **to them shall we join their families**...”*
 “(Sura 52:21)

One wonders, however, how these righteous women will *“be joined”* to the **“chaste virgins, whom no man or jinn before them has touched, who restrain their glances and have beautiful, big and lustrous eyes”!**

f. Ranked By Merit: There are several verses that seem to indicate differences of honor and merit among believers in Paradise:

*“And **those Foremost (in Faith) will be Foremost** (in the Hereafter). These will be **those Nearest to Allah: In Gardens of Bliss:**”* (Sura 56:10-12)

*“... Unto all (in Faith) Hath Allah promised good: But **those who strive and fight** Hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward,- ranks specially bestowed by Him ...”* (Sura 4:95,96)

*“They will recline (with ease) on Thrones (of dignity) **arranged in ranks** ...”* (Sura 52:20)

g. Personal Thrones Of Honor And Dignity: The major focus of Paradise seems to be on the righteous receiving personal bliss and dignity as they recline on their own

personal thrones. (in contrast to the Bible's picture of saints worshipping God on His throne):

"... they (shall enjoy) honour and dignity ... facing each other on thrones ..." (Sura 37:40,41)

"They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade. They will recline therein on raised thrones ..." (Sura 18:31)

"Truly the righteous will be in bliss. On thrones (of dignity) will they command a sight (of all things) ... in their faces the beaming brightness of bliss." (Sura 83:22,23)

Yusuf Ali in his translation of the Qur'an states plainly that he interprets much of the Qur'an's teaching about Paradise allegorically and not literally (see his note #5617 and appendix 12). Undoubtedly other Muslim scholars believe likewise.

[For more complete details of the Qur'an's teaching about Paradise, see Appendix 7]

THE BIBLE:

The Bible's Emphasis On God's Immanence Is All Pervasive:

1. GOD'S PURPOSE IN HIS IMMANENCE: First of all, we human beings in our sinful, natural state could never imagine almighty God living with or in us:

[The magicians of Babylon said to the king] *"The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."* (Daniel 2:11)

[Solomon prayed] *"But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!"* (2 Chronicles 6:18)

But why should God want to be interactive with mankind? He certainly does not *need* us, so why did He *choose* to create us and why in His "own image"? The only answer I can see is **He created us in His own image so we would have the ability to know Him (not just know about Him) and to live in an intimate relationship with Him.**

However, Adam sinned and brought "death" upon himself and all his descendants, cutting us off from any relationship with God. Nevertheless, God's purpose for us to have fellowship with Him was still evident after mankind became estranged from Him:

"For thus says the One who ... inhabits eternity ...: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit ...'" (Isaiah 57:15)

"... let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me ..." (Jeremiah 9:24)

Therefore, God, in His love, sent Christ to conquer sin and death for us so any sinner who repents and receives Christ can now be in full fellowship with Him:

"For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that ... we might live with him." (1 Thessalonians 5:9,10)

"... as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'" (2 Corinthians 6:16)

Finally, God's objective will be realized in the new heaven and earth at the end of time:

"... Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God." (Revelation 21:3)

2. SEVEN FACETS OF GOD’S IMMANENCE: Like a priceless, beautiful gem this truth has many facets, all of which reveal the truth of His immanence:

a. The Eternal God Reveals Himself To Mankind, even to those who are not looking for Him:

“So I will ... make myself known in the eyes of many nations ...” (Ezekiel 38:23)

“God spoke to Moses ... ‘I am the LORD [YHWH - He (Who) is]. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [Hebrew El Shaddai], but by my name the LORD [YHWH] I did not make myself known to them.’” (Exodus 6:2,3)

“I, the LORD, [YHWH - He (Who) is] the first, and with the last; I am he ... fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God” (Isaiah 41:4,10)

“I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am’ to a nation that was not called by my name.” (Isaiah 65:1)

b. God’s “Presence” With His People: God designed His people to relate to Him in an intimate relationship. In fact, **God’s presence with His people is what is uniquely different about the God of the Bible:**

“Moses said to the LORD ... ‘If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?’ And the LORD said to Moses, ‘This very thing that you have spoken I will do ...’” (Exodus 33:12,15-17; see also 2 Samuel 7:22-24)

The Lord’s “*presence*” is mentioned 61 times in the English Standard Version of the Bible in reference to God’s immanence. Here are two more examples:

“... brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power” (Deuteronomy 4:37)

“Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him ...” (Lamentations 2:19)

God’s “*presence*” is not Him sitting on His throne in heaven and seeing and hearing everything going on in our lives (as in Islam), but God repeatedly says He will “*dwell with,*” be in the “*midst*” of, “*live among,*” and be “*right beside*” His people:

“He shall dwell with you, in your midst ...” (Deuteronomy 23:16)

“... you live among your people ...” (Numbers 14:14 - NLT)

“My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God ...” (Ezekiel 37:27)

“The LORD is my shepherd ... I will fear no evil, for you are with me” (Psalm 23:1,4)

“I know the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me. No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice.” (Psalm 16:8-9 - NLT)

c. God Wants His People Of All Ages To “Know Him” In An Intimate Way.

This is not just knowing about Him. It is “*walking with*” Him in such an intimate way that we become like Him in our behavior:

“Enoch walked with God ... 300 years and had other sons and daughters ... Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” (Genesis 5:22-24)

“... **the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord** ...” (Isaiah 11:9)

“... **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD** ...” (Jeremiah 31:33,34 – also Hebrews 8:10,11)

d. God Does This Because He Wants Us To Be His Own People. God’s immanence is expressed in His desire for a close relationship with His people. We see this in the **possessive pronouns** God uses for us, such as “**my**,” “**your**,” “**mine**,” “**his own**” etc, and He further emphasizes it with words such as “**inheritance**,” “**treasured**,” “**chosen**” and “**possession**”:

“... **I brought you to myself**. Now therefore ... **you shall be my treasured possession** among all peoples, for all the earth is mine.” (Exodus 19:4,5) [See also Deut.7:6, 14:2, 26:18 & Mal. 3:17]

“**But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance**, as you are this day.” (Deuteronomy 4:20)

“**But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself** ...” (Psalm 4:3)

“... they consult together against **your treasured ones**.” (Psalm 83:3)

“a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. ‘**They shall be mine**,’ says the LORD of hosts ...” (Malachi 3:17)

“... So then, whether we live or whether we die, **we are the Lord’s**.” (Romans 14:8)

“**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession** ... you were not a people, but **now you are God’s people** ...” (1 Peter 2:9,10)

What an awesome truth that God created us and redeemed us for Himself!

e. And God Wants To Be Our God: God not only desires **us to be His** but also that **He would be ours**. He is truly a covenant making God:

“**I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God** ...” (Exodus 6:7) [See also Lev.26:12; Psalm 50:7; 100:3; Jer.7:23; 11:4; 30:22 & Ezek.36:28]

“**I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**” (2 Corinthians 6:16)

143 times in the Bible God’s people have spoken of God as “**my God**” (77 of which are spoken directly to God in prayer), “**my Lord**” is used 13 times (of which 7 are spoken directly to Him), and God speaks of us as “**my people**” over 200 times!

By comparison the Qur’an never uses “**my God**,” but it does use “**my Lord**” (master) about 150 times (about one third are spoken directly to Him by prophets). In the Qur’an God never speaks of “**my people**,” but only of “**my slaves/servants**” (20 times), “**my messengers/prophets**” (4 times) and “**my worshippers**” (1 time).

f. And He Wants Us To Be Called By His Name:

“**if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven** ...” (2 chronicles 7:14)

“... Yet you, O LORD, are in the midst of us, and **we are called by your name;**” (Jer. 14:9)

g. This is Such An Intimate Relationship That God Compares It To:

i) Husband and His Wife:

*“For **your Maker is your husband**, the LORD of hosts is his name” (Isaiah 54:5)*

*“And in that day, declares the LORD, **you will call me ‘My Husband,’** ...” (Hosea 2:16)*

ii) Father and His Child:

*“... in the wilderness, where you have seen how **the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son**” (Deuteronomy 1:31)*

*“**When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son ... Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk ... I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love ... and I bent down to them and fed them.**” (Hosea 11:1,3,4)*

iii) Shepherd and His sheep:

*“He will tend his flock **like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom**, and gently lead those that are with young.” (Isaiah 40:11)*

iv) Senior and Junior Partners: God shared His authority and work with Adam and Eve and He does the same with us as His junior partners:

*“... And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and **fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**’” (Genesis 1:28)*

*“For we are **God's fellow workers** ...” (1 Corinthians 3:9)*

v) King and His Co-Regent:

*“if we endure, **we will also reign with him** ...” (2 Timothy 2:12)*

*“and you have made them **a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.**” (Revelation 5:10)*

vi) Owner and His Home:

*“you are ... **members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple** in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22)*

*“**you ... like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house** ...” (1 Peter 2:5)*

*“but Christ is faithful over **God's house** as a son. **And we are his house** ...” (Hebrews 3:6)*

*“Do you not know that **you** [plural] **are God's temple** and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ... For God's temple is holy, and **you are that temple.**” (1 Corinthians 3:16,17)*

*“What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make my dwelling among them** ...” (2 Corinthians 6:16)*

A Sample (King David) Of The Intimacy God Wants With Us:

“O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory. Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I praise you! I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer. You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy.

“I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night. Because you are my helper, I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your strong right hand holds me securely.” (Psalm 63:1-8 - NLT)

This intimacy does not mean that God’s people do not respect or are not awed by God’s greatness and omnipotence. To the contrary, **God’s glory causes us to shout with joy and to praise and rejoice in awe. It is out of joy (not terror) and inexpressible awe that we worship and praise our great Savior God:**

“Though we are overwhelmed by our sins, you forgive them all. What joy for those you choose to bring near, those who live in your holy courts ... [We] stand in awe of your wonders. From where the sun rises to where it sets, you inspire shouts of joy ... Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth! Sing about the glory of his name! Tell the world how glorious he is.” (Psalm 65:3,4,8 and 66:1,2 – NLT)

3. SEVEN STAGES OF GOD’S IMMANENCE: These are stages in the chronological development of God’s intimate relationship with his people. We will see:

God and us
 God away from us
 God visiting us
 God among us
 God, one of us
 God in us and we in Him
 God forever with us

a. God And Us – God’s Intimate Fellowship With Man Initially: God’s original purpose in the creation of humanity was to have eternal intimate fellowship with us, so we could “know” Him. For that reason God regularly came (apparently in some physical form) to “walk” and talk with Adam and Eve. Soon after they sinned by disobeying Him, He came again to question and rebuke them and they heard the audible sound of his physical footsteps:

*“they heard **the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God ...**”* (Genesis 3:8)

b. God Away From Us – Mankind’s sin destroyed that fellowship:

Mankind’s sin made it impossible for them to “know” God as before, so our first ancestors were sent away from the presence of God. Then mankind, instead of regularly walking and talking with God, began “calling on the name of the Lord,” hoping He would hear them:

*“Then Cain **went away from the presence of the LORD** and settled in the land of Nod... To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time **people began to call upon the name of the LORD.**”* (Genesis 4:16,26)

c. God Visiting Us – God’s Fellowship With Individual Believers: Even after humanity rebelled against God He continued to visit certain individual believers. Although the Bible also mentions numerous times that angels were sent by God to different people with a message, He Himself visited people directly in three ways:

1) He “Appeared” To People: He “came to,” “appeared to” or “walked with” people in order to speak to them directly. God is Spirit and invisible so He must have taken on some physical form in order to “appear” to them. We don’t know what form or forms He may have chosen, but we know that one time he appeared to Abraham and Sarah as

one of three men (The other two were angels). Another time He appeared to Moses as a fire burning in a bush. He appeared to Jacob in a dream. He also appeared to Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon and Jeremiah. This truly staggers the imagination! This is a clear contrast to the Qur'an's frequent mention of God indirectly "**sending down**" His will (in His revelations) through an angel:

i) God walked with **Enoch**:

*"**Enoch walked with God ... all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.**"* (Genesis 5:22-24)

ii) God appeared to **Abraham**:

*"And **the LORD appeared to him** (Abraham) ... He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, **three men were standing in front of him**. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, 'O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.' ... **The LORD said**, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year ...'"* (Genesis 18:1-3,10)

iii) God spoke to **Isaac** (Abraham's son) promising to **be with** him:

*"And **the Lord appeared to him and said ... I will be with you** and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father." (Genesis 26:2,3)*

iv) When **Jacob** (Isaac's son) was a young man and was about to go to Paddan Aram God appeared to him in a dream:

*"**I am with you** and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For **I will not leave you** until I have done what I have promised you.' ... Than Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it ... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God ...'"* (Genesis 28:15-17)

v) God appeared and spoke to **Moses** "face to face":

*"God also said to Moses, ... Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, '**The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me...**'"* (Exodus 3:15,16)

*"Then Moses brought the people out of the camp **to meet God** ... Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because **the LORD had descended on it in fire**. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. **The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain**. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up." (Exodus 19:17-20)*

*"Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses **face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.**"* (Exodus 33:11)

vi) God appeared to **Solomon**:

*"Then **the Lord appeared to Solomon** ... and said to him: 'I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice.'" (2 Chronicles 7:12)*

2) God's Word Came To The Prophets. In fact, the Bible says **101 times** that "**the word of the Lord came to ...**" (Abraham, Samuel, Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, David, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jonah, and several others are specifically mentioned)! **God's Word cannot itself "come" to people; it has to be sent. Only a living being can "come**

to” someone. Clearly this is the pre-incarnate Son of God, the eternal Word of God, through Whom God created everything in the beginning:

*“After these things **the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision ...**” (Genesis 15:1)*

*“And **the word of the Lord came to me, saying ...**” (Ezekiel 22:1)*

We don’t know whether that Word was audible or a voice in their hearts, but at least a few times it was an audible voice from heaven:

*“and behold, **a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son ...’**” (Matthew 3:17)*

3) “The Angel Of The Lord” Came To Many People. The title “Angel of the Lord” is mentioned more than 50 times. He is more than a created angel because He is referred to as God and He speaks as God. Again, it seems this is the pre-incarnate Son of God appearing in the form of an angel:

*“**The angel of the LORD found her** [Hagar] *by a spring of water in the wilderness ... The **angel of the Lord also said to her, ‘I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.’**” (Genesis 16:7,10)**

*“And **the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed ... God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’**” (Exodus 3:2-4)*

d. God Among Us – God Lived In The Middle Of His People: God chose the nation of Israel to be His special people. He wanted to have a relationship with them as “*their God*,” so He chose to be “*with*” them, “*in their midst*” in order to live “*among*” them and have them live “*with*” Him:

*“And **let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.**” (Exodus 25:8)*

*“... Here is how you shall know **that the living God is among you ...**” (Joshua 3:10)*

*“**I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.**” (Exodus 29:45-46 – see also Ezekiel 37:27,28)*

*“And he said [to Moses], **‘My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’ And he [Moses] said to him, ‘If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here ... Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?’**” (Exodus 33:14-16)*

*“**I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.**” (Leviticus 26:11-12 – see also Exodus 25:8; 29:45; and Deuteronomy 23:14)*

*“Shout, and sing for joy ... for **great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.**” (Isaiah 12:6)*

e. God, One Of Us – God Becoming A Human Being: Then God entered more fully into human affairs by causing His eternal Word to become a man with a human body made of flesh and blood, born of the virgin Mary and named “Jesus” the Messiah. Thus He went from only putting His spiritual presence among us to becoming one of us!

Some will ask how it is possible for the eternal, almighty God to become a human being. One answer is that it is just as possible as it was for God to send His Word to mankind, which He did repeatedly through the prophets over the ages. Think about it! In order for God to communicate with mankind through prophets, He had to translate His

eternal and limitless thoughts into man's language with all of its limited concepts, its depraved associations, its changing meanings and its dependency on time terminology. How did God do that? **By His omnipotent and limitless power!** Who dares to even think He couldn't do that? Likewise God by that same omnipotent and limitless power sent His eternal Word, through Whom He created all things, to become a human being, living among us as one of us. **Wow!**

Jesus, the eternal "Word of God," and "image of the invisible God" is "God with us:"

*"He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and **the name by which he is called is The Word of God.**"*
(Revelation 19:13)

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together ... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:15-19)

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and **they shall call his name Immanuel'** (which means, **God with us.**)" (Matthew 1:23)*

As a man living among us, He told us where He came from: He said several times that He "came down from heaven:"

*"For **I have come down from heaven ... to do ... the will of him who sent me.**"* (John 6:38)

God did this in Jesus so He could be our perfect substitute in removing our sin from us, reconciling us to Himself and restoring us to His eternal, intimate fellowship:

*"... **God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself...**"* (2 Corinthians 5:18)

*"... when **you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God ..."*** (Gal. 4:8,9)

*"... **our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.**"* (1 John 1:3)

*"this is eternal life: **that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**"* (John 17:3)

This is quite different from the Qur'an's description of God communicating with mankind. God "**coming down**" is very different from God "**sending down.**"

f. God In Us and We in Him – God Intimately Related To Us Today: Not only did God become *one of us*, but God also has chosen to live *in us* and have us live *in Him!* When we truly trust in Jesus, God's **Holy Spirit** (Who is the Spirit of Christ) comes into our lives and unites us with Himself in a constant and intimate fellowship. He in us and we in Him, even though we are still on this earth:

*"... **the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him... If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he ... will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you... For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God ... you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.**"* (Romans 8:9-11, 14-16)

*"... **you are God's temple and ... God's Spirit dwells in you ... your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God ..."*** (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19)

*"Whoever keeps his commandments **abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.**"* (1 John 3:24)

g. God Forever With Us – In The Presence Of God Eternally: Those who receive God’s gift of salvation in Jesus Christ will spend eternity enjoying a far more intimate fellowship with God than is possible in this life:

“... Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes ... ‘I will be his God and he will be my son.’” (Revelation 21:3,4,7)

This is the culmination of God’s work in our lives – restoring us to His original purpose of being forever in His image and in perfect fellowship with Him. **Eternal life means eternal love and fellowship with God:**

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus ...” (Romans 8:38-39)

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12)

“... and so we will always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

“... we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2).

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.” (Psalm 73:25)

4. SEVEN BLESSINGS OF GOD’S IMMANENCE: We have many amazing, life transforming benefits from God living with and in us. Here are seven of them:

a. God Gives Us Himself. Notice phrases like “I am your –,” “he is my –,” etc. He doesn’t just **give** us His blessings (as in Islam), but He Himself **is** our blessing:

“And the LORD said ... ‘I am your portion and your inheritance ...’” (Numbers 18:20)

“The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.” (Exodus 15:2)

“my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior ...” (2 Samuel 22:3 - NIV)

“I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” (Psalm 18:1,2)

“The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.” (Psalm 118:14)

“he is my steadfast love ...” (Psalm 144:2)

“... the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’” (Jeremiah 23:6)

b. God Takes Pleasure In Us. How amazing is this?

“Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! **For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.**” (Psalm 149:3,4)

“The LORD your God is in your midst, ... he will quiet you by his love; **he will exult over you with loud singing.**” (Zephaniah 3:17)

[the LORD says] “**you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you** ...” (Isaiah 43:4)

He does this so God's people also experience great joy in such an intimate fellowship with their maker and Savior:

"... in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16:11)

"... I am continually with you; you hold my right hand ... Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psalm 73:23-26)

c. Our God Is Transforming Us Into His Own Image So We Can Know

Him Intimately. God originally created us in His own image, but because of sin that image has been deeply marred. God is in the process of restoring that image through His Spirit in us:

"And we all ... are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

No one can completely know another person like his or her own spirit does, but because we have God's Spirit in us we can have **a relationship with Him more intimate than any human relationship:**

"... who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God." (1 Corinthians 2:11-12)

"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3)

d. We Can Have God's Power In Our Lives.

God's Spirit fills us with indescribable joy and peace. He enables us to overcome temptation and to live for the glory of God. When we trust in Christ we are not simply given a promise of salvation in the next life. We are also blessed in this life by God living in us and empowering us to become more like Jesus here and now:

"He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength ... they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:29,31)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ... and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:12)

"... walk by the [power of the] Spirit ... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ..." (Galatians 5:16,22,23)

"... the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe" (Ephesians 1:19)

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us." (Ephesians 3:20)

e. God Partners With Us. As we become more like Jesus, His purposes become our desires – to pray for and "remind" Him about them:

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4)

"who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers." (Isaiah 44:26)

"You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; And give Him no rest until He establishes And

makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” (Isaiah 62:6,7)

f. God Feeds Us From The Sacrifices We Offer To Him. The Old Testament priests in the tabernacle (later in the Temple) had the privilege of sharing with God by eating part of the animal sacrifices being offered to Him:

*“... **the portion of Aaron and of his sons from the Lord's food offerings ...**” (Leviticus 7:35)*

*“The Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance [of land] with Israel. **They shall eat the Lord's food offerings as their inheritance.**” (Deuteronomy 18:1)*

Likewise, we New Testament believers have received a spiritual priesthood:

*“**you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priest-hood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**” (1 Peter 2:5)*

And as priests, we have the right to “eat” (receive) spiritual blessing from the spiritual sacrifices we offer to God on the spiritual altar in His presence:

*“**We have an altar from which the priests in the Tabernacle have no right to eat.**” (Hebrews 13:10 – NLT; also Hebrews 9:23)*

There are various kinds of **spiritual sacrifices** we New Testament priests can offer to God, in which **we are blessed as we sacrifice to Him**. They include:

i) The sacrifice of a broken spirit and a contrite heart:

*“**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart ...**” (Psalm 51:17)*

ii) The sacrifice of love:

*“**And to love him (God) with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.**” (Mark 12:33)*

iii) The sacrifice of praise:

*“**Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.**” (Hebrews 13:15)*

iv) The sacrifice of our body:

*“**I appeal to you therefore, brothers ... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**” (Romans 12:1)*

v) The sacrifice of our money:

*“**... I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.**” (Philippians 4:18)*

*“**... share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**” (Hebrews 13:16)*

vi) The sacrifice of our thanksgiving:

*“**Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving ...**” (Psalm 50:14)*

*“**The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me ...**” (Psalm 50:23)*

g. God Joins Us In Both Our Suffering And Joy. Just think how the prophet Noah must have felt when God told him He was going to send a great flood to destroy all mankind except those in the ark (ship) Noah was to build for his immediate family. What about his brothers and sisters, his aunts and uncles and cousins, and his father and

grandfather, who were still living at that time? Although nothing is written about his feelings, we certainly can imagine the grief he must have felt as he pleaded with them to repent and join him in the ark. **But God's grief was far greater!** We don't read about God's wrath in response to all mankind's sin and rebellion against Him. Instead we read about His ***grief***, the grief He shared with Noah at that time:

*"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth ... And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and **it grieved him to his heart** ..."* (Genesis 6:5,6)

Likewise, when many years later the people of Israel turned away from God and began worshipping idols, the Lord was **deeply broken hearted** and disciplined them by allowing their enemies to ravage and destroy them. When Israel in their misery repented and turned to the Lord again, **He felt their misery and shared in their grief**, allowing them to be saved from all their oppression:

*"then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, **how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols**"* (Ezekiel 6:9)

*"And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and **his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.**"* (Judges 10:16 – KJV)

Imagine how God must have been grieved for His people as He disciplined them by allowing others to destroy them because of their rebellion and sin against Him! As someone has written, this is not the picture of "some heavenly General Patton" finding our acts of insubordination intolerable. Rather, this is the image of a parent. Every father and mother has experienced a similar grief while watching a son or daughter disobey and do foolish and harmful things. Clearly, God's suffering with us is not because He is weak, but because He is love!

*"In all their suffering **he also suffered** ..."* (Isaiah 63:9 – NLT)

God also **rejoices** with His people when they trust and follow Him:

*"as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God **rejoice over you.**"* (Isaiah 62:5);

*"The LORD your God is in your midst ... he will **rejoice over you with gladness.** He will quiet you by his love; he will **exult over you with loud singing.**"* (Zephaniah 3:17)

5. GOD'S IMMANENCE SEEN IN HIS NAME, "YHWH": There are three major Hebrew names for God (***Elohim***, ***Adonai*** and ***YHWH***) used in the Old Testament of the Bible: [See chapter 6 – God's Name & Glory]

- ***Elohim*** means "God." [see also Chapter 2 – God's Power]

- ***Adonai*** means "Lord" or "Master." [see also Chapter 3 – God's Sovereignty]

- ***YHWH***, His major name, is what we want to focus on in this study. It is a name with great significance in the Bible.

YHWH (pronounced, ***Yahweh*** or ***Jehovah***) unfortunately is translated, "***the LORD***" in most English translations. It is the primary Hebrew name of God and is found about **7,700 times!** God introduced this name when He commissioned the prophet Moses:

*"Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say ..., "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "**What is his name?**" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, '**I AM WHO I AM.**' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, "**I AM has sent me to you.**" ... Say this to the people of Israel, "**The LORD** [YHWH = "He Is"] the God of your fathers ... **has sent me to you.**" **This is my name***

forever' ..." (Exodus 3:13-15)

Yahweh is technically not a name, but is a form of the Hebrew verb "to be" (*hayah*). When God used that name for Himself, speaking in the first person, it is properly translated, "*I Am*" or "*I Am Who I Am*," but when that name was spoken in the third person about God by people it should be translated, "*He Is*" or "*He Who Is*" (instead of "*The LORD* ").

The most important thing to understand about the name *YHWH* is that **it speaks of God revealing Himself to us**. It shows us that God is not interested in simply making us understand His power or His will, but **He wants to make Himself known to us. It's like saying, "Here I am!" or "Let me show you who I am so you can know me."** One of the greatest differences between the teaching of the Qur'an and the Bible about God can clearly be seen by comparing their primary names for God:

Allah, meaning "**The God**" = The only God.

Yahweh, meaning "**I Am**" or "**He Who Is**" = the God Who reveals Himself.

Even though God, the great omnipotent Creator, is transcendent (above, distinct and separate from His creation), and although it seems totally impossible for us mere created mortals to ever have any kind of personal relationship with the Almighty Creator, **God has Himself chosen to enter into our lives and to be "near"** (Psalm 119:151) **to us**. This is His immanence, which has many facets:

6. GOD'S IMMANENCE SEEN IN HIS COVENANTS:

a. What Is A Covenant? What Are the Components?

1) A Covenant Involves Two Parties In A Relationship. When God makes a covenant with people, He puts Himself into a relationship with them. This is seen initially by the fact that a covenant is always made "**with**" someone, whereas a promise is made "**to**" someone. Thus by making covenants with people, God established relationships with Adam & Eve, with King David, with the nation of Israel and even with believers today.

2) A Covenant Is A Pledge By The Two Parties To Each Other. In God's covenant with Adam and Eve, for example, He pledged Himself to provide unhindered fellowship, a beautiful garden in which to live, all the food they could possibly want, perfect health and eternal life. In exchange Adam and Eve were pledged to fulfill God's directives to be fruitful and replenish the earth, to take care of the garden, to exercise dominion for God over the earth and all the creatures and to refrain from eating the fruit from the tree of The Knowledge Of Good and Evil (See Genesis chapters 1 & 2).

3) A Covenant Is In Force As Long As Both Parties Honor Their Pledges. For example, God's pledge to make Abraham a great nation, to give the land of Canaan to his descendants, and to make his Son a blessing to all the nations of the world (Genesis 12) would never have happened if Abraham had not been willing to leave his home and family and follow the Lord wherever He led him.

b. A Sampling Of The Covenants God Has Made With Mankind: In addition to God's covenants with Adam and Eve, and with Abraham, which we have already mentioned, there are at least 12 others mentioned in the Bible. The details and Bible references for each of these covenants are far too numerous to include here, but here are the names of several:

[See Appendix 8 for a complete listing with all the details of most of God's Covenants]

- **God's Covenant With Noah And His Descendants**
- **God's Covenant With Hagar And Her Son Ishmael**
- **God's Covenant With The Nation Of Israel Through Moses**
- **God's Covenant With David And His Son**
- **God's Covenant With King Solomon**
- **God's New Covenant With Believers From The Nations**

Just imagine! Almighty God, the omnipotent Creator, has chosen to obligate and pledge Himself by making covenants, just so He can create a relationship with us mere created mortal human beings! **How awesome is His immanence!**

7. JESUS, THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S IMMANENCE: God, in His Immanence, chose to become one of us so He could live among us:

a. As A Fellow Human Being: How is it possible for God to become a man? What better way is there for the Almighty to reveal Himself to us mere mortals?

"... Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Colossians 2:8,9)

"In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God ... All things were made through him ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ..." (John 1:1-3,14)

"No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." (John 1:18 - NRSV)

"Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.'" (John 14:9)

"He is the image of the invisible God ..." (Colossians 1:15)

"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature ..." (Heb.1:3)

b. As A Friend And Brother: How can our great Creator become our friend and brother? Because of love, Jesus became family, living in community with us:

"... That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will tell of your name to my brothers ...'" (Hebrews 2:11,12)

"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might ... make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:17)

His amazing **love** for His friends and brothers is obvious:

"By this we know love, that he ^[Jesus] laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16)

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

Just imagine the love that caused ...

The Creator to choose to enter into His own creation in a created body,
 The One worthy of all honor and glory to be a relatively unknown common man,
 The Unchanging One to be born in a human body,
 The Omnipotent One to become a helpless baby, unable to talk, eat or walk,
 The Sovereign King of kings, Who is infinitely high above all, to become a village carpenter,
 The Righteous One to live in a world of shameless evil,
 The Sovereign Lord of Lords to become a servant of all mankind,
 The Omniscient One to have to grow in wisdom and knowledge,
 The Eternal One to be restricted by the limitations of time,

The Omnipresent One to be confined to one location at a time,
 The Owner of all the universe to find no room in the inn and be born in a stable,
 The Owner of the cattle on a thousand hills to become poor,
 The One Who never slumbers or sleeps to become weary and overcome by sleep,
 The One Who cannot be tempted by evil to be tempted by the Devil.
 The Lord of Lords humbling Himself to become a servant of all mankind,
 The Lord of Life to submit Himself to enter death in our place,
 The King of Glory to joyfully embrace the shame of crucifixion.

c. As One With Us: Using very graphic metaphors, He invites us to be united with Him in an even more intimate relationship:

1) To Follow Him And Join Him In His Death To Self:

*“And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and **take up his cross daily and follow me.**” (Luke 9:23 & Matthew 16:24)*

2) To Feed On Him, i.e., to be united with His death and resurrected life for us:

*“I am the bread of life ... **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. **If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.** ... **Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,** and I will raise him up on the last day ... **Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.**” (John 6:48-56)*

3) To Put Him On (like a garment) And Be United With Him:

*“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have **put on Christ.**” (Galatians 3:27)*

*“But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ,** and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” (Romans 13:14)*

*“**In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses ... **In him** we have obtained an inheritance ... **In him** you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance ...” (Ephesians 1:7,11,13,14)*

d. So, If We Don't Receive And Believe In Jesus, God's Revelation Of Himself, We Can't Know Or Believe In God:

*“that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. **Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.**” (John 5:23)*

*“**I and the Father are one.**” (John 10:30)*

*“Jesus said to him, **I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.**” (John 14:6,7)*

*“**Whoever hates me hates my Father also.**” (John 15:23)*

*“**No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.**” (1 John 2:23)*

But when we turn to God through the Lord Jesus, see what happens:

*“But their [Israelites] minds were hardened. For to this day, **when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.** Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But **when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.**” (2 Corinthians 3:14-16)*

[For many more verses revealing the deity of Jesus see Appendix 5;

Also see chapters 29 to 32 in Nabeel Qureshi's book, No God But One Allah or Jesus?

8. THE COST OF GOD'S IMMANANCE – HIS HUMILITY: “Bending down” in humility to talk with, fellowship with and listen to the thoughts of His created mortal children is part of the “price” God pays in his immanence: [see also chapter 14 section D]

“... I bent down to them ... for I am God ... the Holy One in your midst,” (Hosea 11:4,9)

[God said to Moses] *“And I will come down and talk with you ...”* (Numbers 11:17)

[Abraham's reasoning with God about the city of Sodom] *“... Abraham still stood before the LORD. Then Abraham drew near and said, ‘Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it?’ ... Then he said, ‘Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose [only] ten are found there’ He answered, ‘For the sake of [even just] ten I will not destroy it.’* (Genesis 18:22-24,32)

God Himself is self-sufficient, so His only reason for being intimately involved with us is His fatherly **love** for us. He wants to make us great! But in doing so the omnipotent, almighty and sovereign God humbles Himself. This is most evident in His causing His eternal Word to become a man in order to conquer death for us. That eternal Word stooped down to become a servant of mankind, bearing the guilt of all our sin:

“... Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:5-8)

“... the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life ...” (Matthew 20:28)

Jesus also talked about His humility in becoming a human being as our substitute:

“... learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart ...” (Matthew 11:28-30)

“... I am among you as one who serves.” (Luke 22:27)

God's humility in bending down to listen and in wanting to partner with us should make us want to pray and praise Him even more!

“Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!” (Psalm 116:2 – NLT)

C. MY REACTIONS & CONCLUSIONS:

1. GOD NOT IMMANENT: Islam exalts God's transcendence so much that His immanence is denied.

2. CONTRAST WITH BIBLE'S DESCRIPTION OF HEAVEN: Although there are some noticeable similarities between the Qur'an's description of Paradise and things mentioned in the description of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 of the Bible (e.g., “a bride adorned for her husband,” “radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper,” “pearls,” “pure gold,” “the river of the water of life,” “the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit,” etc.), nevertheless the major focus in the Bible's description is **God on His throne**, surrounded by believers totally focused on worshipping and exalting Him and **being with Him**:

“... there before me was **a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne**.... And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our **God, who sits on the throne**’ ... **they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night**.... “ (Revelation 7:9-15)

“... and so **we will always be with the Lord**.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

“... **the throne of God...will be in it, and his servants will worship him**.” (Revelation 22:3)

Contrast this with the Qur’an’s description of **believers reclining in honor and dignity on their own thrones totally focused on the ecstasy of their own rewards:**

3. DIRECT OR INDIRECT PRAISE: While Islam teaches Muslims to praise God well by speaking *about* Him (“*God is the greatest!*”), their lack of a personal relationship with Him means they are not able to praise Him by speaking directly *to* Him as in Revelation 4: “*You are worthy, O Lord!*” “... we thank you!”, etc.

4. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD? Here’s one young Muslim’s reaction to the idea of us having a personal relationship with God:

“This idea that God is personal is ridiculous. There’s no way that can be true. Any good Muslim knows Allah is far removed from us and is to be feared. He is the Almighty! How could any Muslim believe such a blasphemous thing as a personal God?”

In our human understanding it would seem impossible for us created human beings to achieve a personal relationship with God; even far more impossible than it would be for an ant to be able to have a personal relationship with a human being. But it is not at all impossible for the omnipotent God to create us in such a way as to make a personal relationship with Him more than possible – and that is what He Has done!

APPENDIX 7

DETAILS FROM THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT PARADISE

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'anic quotations are from Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted]

I have been able to find 389 verses (in 82 of the 114 Suras of the Qur'an) that mention or describe Paradise. Here are the topics in this study:

- 1) Paradise Described As An Earned "Reward"
- 2) Those Who Earn Paradise
- 3) The Presence Of Women Believers In Paradise
- 4) The "Presence" Of God In Paradise
- 5) Complete List Of Rewards In Paradise
- 6) Complete List Of 389 References In Traditional Order
- 7) Article, "The Pleasures Of Paradise" From IslamiCity Web Site

1) Paradise Described As An Earned Reward: A total of **91 times** the following words are used to describe Paradise being obtained as a reward or an achievement (The number preceding each word or phrase is the number of times that it is mentioned in this way):

(61) a "reward," (7) a "recompense," (4) an "inheritance," (4) an "end," "object" or "goal," (1) the race for forgiveness from your Lord," (9) the highest or supreme "achievement," and (2) that which was "sent forth/before you," and (3) "earned"

2) Those Who Earn Paradise: The following are the words or phrases used to describe those who earn Paradise. (The number preceding each word or phrase is the number of times that term is mentioned):

(102) "the righteous who work or do good deeds of righteousness," (69) those who "believe" or are "believers," (9) "those well pleasing to God," (7) "those who fear God," (2) "those who fear the judgment," (5) "servants of God," (5) "who are patient and constant and patiently persevere," (5) "who obey God and the apostle," (4) Those who "repent," (4) "devotees, devoted to God," (2) "who bow to God and in Islam," (4) those who suffered harm or fought or been slain in God's cause [jihad]," (4) "Those who have left their homes or been driven out there from," (3) "the martyrs, who believe and suffer exile and strive"

3) The Presence Of Women Believers In Paradise: The Qur'an's description of Paradise seems to be a place especially designed for men. However, it mentions the presence of righteous **women** 17 times. Here are 7 of them:

*"And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them, 'Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, **be he male or female**. Ye are members one of another.'" (Sura 3:195 – see also 4:124)*

*"God hath promised to believers, **men and women**, gardens ..." (Sura 9:72 – see also 33:35)*

*"... promised to them, and to the righteous among their fathers, **their wives**, and their posterity!" (Sura 40:8)*

*"... enter ye the garden, **ye and your wives** ..." (Sura 43:70)*

*"That He may admit the **men and women who believe**, to gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein for aye"*

(Sura 48:5)

“... And those who believe and whose families follow them in faith, **to them shall we join their families** ...” (Sura 52:21 – see also 53:15)

“One day shalt thou see **the believing men and the believing women** ...” (Sura 57:12 – see also 57:18)

4) The “Presence” Of God In Paradise: There are 15 specific mentions of the “presence,” “pleasure” or “countenance” of God in Paradise. This does not mean believers will have a personal fellowship with God. Gifts given “in” or “from his presence” seem to mean only that God is present – seeing, knowing and giving all rewards. Seeking “his countenance” and receiving the “good pleasure of God” seem to mean only that believers are seeking His approval:

“Think not of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance **in the presence of their Lord**”. (Sura 3:169)

“And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them, ‘Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female. Ye are members one of another. Those who have left their homes or been driven out there from, or suffered harm in My cause, or fought or been slain – verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath – a reward **from the presence of God** and **from His presence** is the best of rewards.” (Sura 3:195)

“... for those who fear their Lord, are gardens, with rivers flowing beneath. Therein are they to dwell (for ever) – a gift **from the presence of God**; and that which is **in the presence of God is the best (bliss)** for the righteous.” (Sura 3:198)

“And We should then have given them **from our presence** a great reward” (Sura 4:67)

“For them will be a home of peace **in the presence of their Lord**: He will be their friend, because they practised (righteousness).” (Sura 6:127)

“Those who believe and suffer exile and strive [jihad] with might and main in God’s cause with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of God. They ... will achieve (salvation). Their Lord doth give them glad tidings of a mercy from Himself, of **his good pleasure**, and of gardens for them, wherein are delights that endure. They will dwell therein for ever. **Verily in God’s presence is a reward, the greatest (of all)**.” (Sura 9:20-22)

“Those who patiently persevere, **seeking the countenance of their Lord**; Establish regular prayers; spend, out of (the gifts) We have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly; and turn off Evil with good: for such there is the final attainment of the (eternal) home,” (Sura 13:22)

“They shall have all that they wish for, **in the presence of their Lord**: such is the reward of those who do good.” (Sura 39:34)

“And the garden will be brought nigh to the righteous – no more a thing distant. (A voice will say), ‘This is what was promised for you – for every one who turned (to God) in sincere repentance, who kept (His law), enter ye therein in peace and security. This is a day of eternal life!’ There will be for them therein all that they wish, and more besides, **in our presence**.” (Sura 50:31-35)

“As to the righteous, they will be in the midst of gardens and rivers, in an assembly of truth, **in the presence of a sovereign Omnipotent**.” (Sura 54:54,55)

“Your riches and your children may be but a trial: But **in the Presence of God**, is the highest reward.” (Sura 64:15)

“Verily, for the Righteous, are gardens of Delight, **in the Presence of their Lord**.” (Sura 68:34)

“Those who spend their wealth for increase in self-purification and have in their minds no favour from anyone for which a reward is expected in return but **only the desire to seek for the countenance of their Lord Most High**; and soon will they attain (complete) satisfaction. ” (Sura 92:18-20)

In addition to the above verses, there are 16 other expressions that could be interpreted to mean some kind of nearness to God in Paradise:

“... For the righteous are gardens **in nearness to their Lord**, with rivers flowing beneath. Therein is their eternal home with companions pure (and holy) and **the good pleasure of God. For in God's sight** are all his servants.” (Sura 3:15)

“Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (Us) to Faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and **take to Thyself our souls** in the company of the righteous.” (Sura 3:193)

“Their Lord doth give them glad tidings of a mercy from Himself, of **his good pleasure**, and of gardens for them, wherein are delights that endure” (Sura 9:21)

“God hath promised to believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss. **But the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of God. That is the supreme felicity.**” (Sura 9:72)

“... But those who believe and work righteous needs will be in the luxuriant meads of the gardens. They shall have **before their Lord** all that they wish for. That will indeed be the magnificent bounty (of God).” (Sura 42:22)

“These will be **those nearest to God**, in gardens of bliss.” (Sura 56:11)

“Thus, then, if he be of **those nearest to God** ... ” (Sura 56:88)

“And Allah sets forth, as an example to those who believe the wife of Pharaoh: Behold she said: ‘O my Lord! Build for me, **in nearness to Thee**, a mansion in the garden, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from those that do wrong.’” (Sura 66:11)

“Truly the righteous will be in bliss ... a spring from (the waters) whereof drink those **nearest to God.**” (Sura 83:22,28)

“**Come back thou to thy Lord**, well pleased (thyself), and **well-pleasing unto Him**. Enter thou, then among my devotees. Yea, enter thou my heaven.” (Sura 89:28-30)

“Their reward is **with God**; gardens of eternity, beneath which rivers flow. They will dwell therein for ever, **God well pleased with them**, and they with Him. All this for such as fear their Lord and cherisher.” (Sura 98:8)

5) A Complete List Of Rewards In Paradise: Here are the rewards promised to the righteous in Paradise (The number preceding each word or phrase is the number of times that element is mentioned):

God's gifts qualifying believers for Paradise:

- (15) **forgiveness** (I will **blot out from them their iniquities**);
- (8) **grace from their Lord**;
- (4) **mercy** from Himself;

God's Rewards In Paradise (almost entirely physical, earthly):

(116) **garden /gardens** [in a; on high; luxuriant meadows; dark green in colour; whose width is that of the heavens and of the earth]

(53) **rivers / fountains /springs** [flowing beneath /whereof they drink]

(44) **eternal**, lasting forever; that endures; ever open

(29) **fulfillment of all desires:** (22) **all that they wish, call for, desire or delight in** [their entertainment] (7) **the great *salvation** [to attain; achieve; place of]

*[Yusuf Ali's note #833: “*Fauz* = felicity, happiness, achievement, salvation, the attainment or fulfillment of desires.”]

(27) **mansions** [dwell in; hospitable; lofty; beautiful; one above another] & **homes** [eternal; that will last; in the hereafter; of peace; final; of the righteous; in heaven; hospitable]

(24) **bliss** [gardens of; life of]

- (22) **rest** (5) **recline**; (4) **rest & repose** [at complete /at ease]; (11) on **jewel encrusted thrones** [raised; (of honor & dignity); arranged in ranks]; (2) on **couch**
- (19) **fruits** [all kinds of; in abundance; every kind available; any that they may select, including dates and pomegranates; whose season is not limited, nor (supply) forbidden; the bunches hang low in humility; near (easy of reach)]
- (19) **companions** (13) **of the garden**; (6) **of the right hand** [in an assembly of truth; he that will be given his record in his right hand]
- (13) **honor/dignity** (4) **honor**; (9) **dignity** [thrones of]
- (11) **companions (virgins)** [of special creation; virgin-pure (and undefiled); to be joined to; fair; good; beautiful; pure and holy; chaste; restraining their glances; in (goodly) pavilions; beloved (by nature); with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes; (maidens); whom no man or jinn before them has touched; Like unto rubies and coral; like unto pearls; well-guarded, as if they were (delicate) eggs closely guarded; of equal age]
- (11) **delights** [that endure; gardens of; mead of; rivers of; of the eye]
- (11) **salutations of peace**; '**Peace be upon you!**'; '**Peace! Peace!**' [will greet one another with]
- (11) **supreme felicity; happiness**;
- (9) **wine** [rivers of; from clear-flowing fountains; crystal-white; of a delicious taste; free from headiness or after-ache; nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom; a (loving) cup of; mixed with kafur; mixed with zanjabil; sealed [with] musk; a fountain where the devotees of God do drink; flowing in unstinted abundance; a fountain there called Salsabil; pure and holy; full (to the brim); thirst slaked with]
- (9) **sustenance & provision** [determined morning and evening; most excellent; with full satisfaction]
- (7) **joy, enjoyment, joyful; (blissful) joy** in all they do
- (6) the **good pleasure of God**; being **well-pleasing unto Him** [God]; of **his good pleasure**
- (6) **peace & security**
- (6) **light** [their; of beauty]
- (6) **cool shade** [in groves of; ever deepening; long-extended]
- (5) **other companions** (1) **associates** (3) **youths** (handsome) [round about them who will serve (devoted to them); as pearls; well-guarded; of perpetual (freshness)] (1) **brothers** [facing each other; questioning each other]
- (5) **all kinds of trees, palms & vines** [among lote-trees without thorns; among talh trees with flowers; piled one above another]
- (5) **(complete) satisfaction; all that they wish**
- (4) **dishes, goblets of gold, vessels of silver, beakers, & cups of crystal**
- (4) **gold & pearls & silver** [bracelets of]
- (3) **carpets** [on rich; of beauty; whose inner linings will be of rich brocade]
- (3) **profit** [from truth; with health]
- (2) **green cushions** [on; of beauty; set in rows]
- (2) **green garments of fine silk** and heavy brocade [wearing]
- (2) **meat & flesh of fowls** [any that they may desire]
- (1) **rivers of milk** [the taste of which never changes]
- (1) **rivers of honey** [pure and clear]

Absence of negative elements:

- (4) **no grief** (memory of hurts; blame; injuries)
- (4) **free of all taint of ill**
- (3) **no fear**
- (3) **no intoxication** (from wine)

- (2) **no vanity** shall they hear therein
- (2) **free of frivolity**
- (1) **no limits or restrictions**
- (2) **no toil or sense of fatigue**
- (2) **not the least injustice or wrong** will be done to them
- (1) **no evil**
- (1) **no blame**
- (1) **nor untruth**
- (1) **no excessive heat** from the sun **or cold** from the moon
- (1) **nor** will they there **taste death**, except the first death
- (1) **no burden**

6) Complete List Of 389 References In Qur'anic Order:

Here is a list of those references, in which one or more of these elements are found: I have arranged them in the order in which they appear in the traditional order of the Qur'an:

- Sura 2 verses 25, 82, 110, 202, 207, 212, 214, 221, 226, 244-245
- Sura 3 verses 15, 133-136, 145, 148, 157-158, 169-171, 185, 193, 195, 198-199
- Sura 4 verses 13, 31, 57, 67, 69, 77, 122, 124, 146, 162
- Sura 5 verses 12, 65, 72, 85, 88, 119, 122
- Sura 6 verses 16, 32, 127
- Sura 7 verses 40, 42-44, 46, 49-50, 169
- Sura 8 verse 28
- Sura 9:20-22, 38, 72, 89, 100, 111
- Sura 10:9-10, 25-26, 64
- Sura 11 verses 23, 108, 115
- Sura 12 verse 57
- Sura 13 verses 22-24, 35
- Sura 14 verse 23
- Sura 15 verses 45-48
- Sura 16 verses 30-32, 41, 96-97
- Sura 17 verses 20-21
- Sura 18 verses 2-3, 30-31, 88, 107-108
- Sura 19 verses 60-63
- Sura 20 verses 65, 76
- Sura 22 verses 14, 23, 56, 58-59
- Sura 23 verses 11, 102, 111
- Sura 24 verses 31, 51
- Sura 25 verses 10, 15-16, 24, 75-76
- Sura 26 verses 85, 90
- Sura 27 verse 89
- Sura 28 verses 80, 83-84
- Sura 29 verses 7, 9, 27, 58, 64
- Sura 30 verses 15, 44-45
- Sura 31 verse 8
- Sura 32 verses 17, 19
- Sura 33 verses 29, 35, 44
- Sura 34 verse 37
- Sura 35 verses 7, 32-35
- Sura 36 verses 26-27, 54-58

Sura 37 verses 40-49, 58-60, 80
 Sura 38 verses 25, 40, 49-54
 Sura 39 verses 20, 34-35, 61, 73-75
 Sura 40 verses 8, 39-40
 Sura 41 verses 30-32
 Sura 42 verses 7, 22-23, 26, 36
 Sura 43 verses 35, 68-73
 Sura 44 verses 51-57
 Sura 45 verse 30
 Sura 46 verses 14, 16
 Sura 47 verses 6, 12, 15
 Sura 48 verses 5, 17, 29
 Sura 49 verse 3
 Sura 50 verses 31-35
 Sura 51 verses 15-16, 22
 Sura 52 verses 17-28
 Sura 53 verse 15
 Sura 54 verses 54-55
 Sura 55 verses 46-77
 Sura 56 verses 10-38, 88-91
 Sura 57 verses 12, 18-19
 Sura 57 verse 21
 Sura 58 verse 22
 Sura 59 verse 20
 Sura 61 verse 12
 Sura 64 verses 9, 15-17
 Sura 65 verse 11
 Sura 66 verses 8, 11
 Sura 67 verse 12
 Sura 68 verse 34
 Sura 69: verses 8-24
 Sura 70 verses 35, 38
 Sura 74 verses 39, 40
 Sura 76 verses 5, 6, 11-22
 Sura 78 verses 31-36
 Sura 79 verses 40-41
 Sura 81 verses 13,14
 Sura 82 verse 13
 Sura 83 verses 22-28, 35
 Sura 84 verses 7-9
 Sura 85 verse 11
 Sura 88 verses 8-16
 Sura 89 verses 27-30
 Sura 92 verses 5-7, 17-20
 Sura 93 verses 4,5
 Sura 95 verse 6
 Sura 98 verses 7-8

7) Article, “The Pleasures Of Paradise” From IslamiCity Web Site: As an example of Islamic teaching about Paradise, see the following article from *IslamiCity*, an Islamic web

site, which contains a heavy emphasis on physical rewards and is void of even a hint of fellowship with God:

The Pleasures of Paradise

9/13/2012 - Religious - Article Ref: IR1209-5254

From IslamiCity web site: <http://www.islamicity.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=IR1209-5254>

As for the life of the Hereafter, there will be no hardship nor suffering in it, and people will live therein in pure joy and delight. All the causes of sorrow, pain and suffering which people experience in this life will be absent in the Hereafter.

The reality of Paradise is something which people will never be able to understand until they actually enter it, but God has shown us glimpses of it in the Quran. He has described it as a place essentially different to the life of this world, both in the very nature and purpose of life, as well as the types of delights which people will enjoy therein. The Quran tells people about Paradise, which God offers to them, describes its great blessings, and proclaims its beauties to everyone. It informs people that Paradise is one of two ways of life prepared for them in the afterworld, and that every good thing will be theirs in Paradise to a degree that surpasses our present ability to imagine. It also shows that Paradise is a place where all blessings have been created perfectly and where people will be offered everything their souls and hearts will desire, and that people will be far removed from want and need, anxiety or sadness, sorrow and regret. Every kind of beauty and blessing exists in Paradise and will be revealed with a perfection never seen or known before. God has prepared such blessings there as a gift, and these will be offered only to people with whom He is pleased.

But what is the nature of these delights in Paradise, and how will it be different from the delights of this world? We will try to highlight a few of these differences.

Pure delight without pain and suffering

While people in this world experience some delight, they also face much toil and suffering. If one was to scrutinize the life which they live, they will find that the amount of hardship they face is much more than the ease and comfort. As for the life of the Hereafter, there will be no hardship nor suffering in it, and people will live therein in pure joy and delight. All the causes of sorrow, pain and suffering which people experience in this life will be absent in the Hereafter. Let's take a look at some of these causes.

Wealth

When one thinks of success in this life, they usually conjure the image of big houses, fine jewelry and clothing, and expensive cars; financial stability is seen to be the key to a happy life. To most people, success is inseparably related to wealth, even though this is the furthest from the truth. How many times have we seen the wealthiest of people living such miserable lives, that it sometimes even leads them to commit suicide! Wealth is something which humans in their very nature desire at any cost, and this desire has been created for a great and wise purpose. When this desire is not satiated, it causes some extent of grief in a person. For this reason, God has promised the inhabitants of Paradise that they will have all that they imagined as far as wealth and belongings are concerned, both for those who were extremely poor, experiencing even hunger and thirst, to those well-to-do but who desired even more. God gives us a glimpse of this when he says:

"... there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that the eyes could delight in ..." (Quran 43:71)

"Eat and drink at ease for that which you have sent forth (good deeds) in days past!" (Quran 69:24)

"... They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade. They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good [is] the recompense! How beautiful a couch [is there] to recline on!" (Quran 18:31)

Disease and Death

Another cause of pain and suffering in this life is the death of a loved one or disease, which are both non-existent in Paradise. None will feel any sickness or pain in Paradise. The Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy

and blessings of God be upon him, said about the people of Paradise:

"They will never fall ill, blow their noses or spit." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

None will die in Paradise. All shall live eternally enjoying the pleasures therein. The Prophet Muhammad said that a caller will call out in Paradise when people enter it:

"Indeed may you be healthy and never be sick again, may you live and never die again, may you be young and never grow feeble again, may you enjoy, and never feel sorrow and regret again." (Saheeh Muslim)

Social Relationships

As for the remorse felt due to a rift in personal relationships, people will never hear any evil or hurting comments or speech in Paradise. They will only hear good words and words of peace. God says:

"They will not hear therein ill speech or commission of sin. But only the saying of: Peace! Peace!" (Quran [56:25-26](#))

There will be no enmity between people nor ill-feelings:

"And We shall remove from their breasts any (mutual) hatred or sense of injury (which they had, if at all, in the life of this world)..." (Quran [7:43](#))

The Prophet said:

"There will be no hatred or resentment among them, their hearts will be as one, and they will glorify God, morning and evening." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

People will have the best of companions in the Hereafter, who were also the best people in the world:

"And whoever obeys God and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom God has bestowed favor - of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions!" (Quran [4:69](#))

The hearts of the people of Paradise will be pure, their speech will be good, their deeds righteous. There will be no hurtful, upsetting, offensive or provocative talk there, for Paradise is free of all worthless words and deeds. If we were to discuss all the causes for anguish in this life, we would surely find its absence or opposite to be true in Paradise.

The Eternalness of the Hereafter

The Pleasures of this world are transient whilst the joys of the hereafter are lasting and eternal. In this life when a person enjoys something, it is only a short while before they get bored with it and proceed to search for something they feel is better, or they may not feel a need for it altogether. As for the delights of Paradise, a person will never feel bored with anything, but rather, its goodness will increase each time they indulge in it.

Also, the life of this world is very short. Humans only live on this earth for a short while, and very few people reach the age of seventy.

"...Say: Short is the enjoyment of this world. The Hereafter is (far) better for him who fears God..." (Quran [4:77](#))

As for Paradise, people will live forever. God says:

"...its provision is eternal and so is its shade..." (Quran [13:35](#))

"What is with you must vanish, and what is with God will endure ..." (Quran [16:96](#))

"(It will be said to them): This is Our Provision, which will never finish" (Quran [38:54](#))

Superior Delights

The delights of the people of Paradise, such as their clothing, food, drink, jewelry and palaces, will be far superior to their counterparts in this world. There is in fact no room for comparison, as even the smallest space in Paradise is better than this world and all that is in it. The Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

"The space of the bow of any one of you in Paradise is better than all that the sun rises upon" (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh 3/85, no. 5615)

Free from all Impurities

Paradise is free from all the impurities of this world. Eating and drinking in this life results in the need for excretion and its associated unpleasant odors. If a person drinks wine in this world, he loses his mind. Women in this world menstruate and give birth, which are sources of pain and hurt. Paradise is free from all of these discomforts: its people will not urinate, defecate, spit or suffer from catarrh. The wine of Paradise, as described by its Creator, is:

"Crystal-white, delicious to those who drink (thereof), free from intoxication, nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom" (Quran 37:46-47)

The water of Paradise does not become brackish, and its milk never changes in flavor:

"...rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes..." (Quran 47:15)

The women of Paradise are pure and free from menstruation, postnatal bleeding and all the other impurities suffered by women in this world, and all are free from stool and feces. God says:

"...and they shall have therein purified mates..." (Quran 2:25)

The prophet answered a person when they asked how the people of Paradise will relieve themselves:

"They relieve themselves by perspiring through their skins, and its fragrance will be that of musk, and all stomachs will have become lean." (ibn Hibbaan)

What we have mentioned has been a mere comparison in order to understand the nature of Paradise, but as God said, its delights are truly hidden:

"No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do." (Quran 32:17)

Paradise: There is Nothing Like It

The delights of Paradise surpass the imagination and defy description. They are like nothing known to the people of this world; no matter how advanced we may become, what we achieve is as nothing in comparison with the joys of the Hereafter. As is mentioned in several reports, there is nothing like Paradise:

"It is sparkling light, aromatic plants, a lofty palace, a flowing river, ripe fruit, a beautiful wife and abundant clothing, in an eternal abode of radiant joy, in beautiful soundly-constructed high houses". (Ibn Maajah, Ibn Hibbaan)

The Sahabah asked the Prophet about the buildings of Paradise and he replied with a wonderful description:

"Bricks of gold and silver, and mortar of fragrant musk, pebbles of pearl and sapphire, and soil of saffron. Whoever enters it is filled with joy and will never feel miserable; he will live there forever and never die; their clothes will never wear out and their youth will never fade." (Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, ad-Daarimee)

God says:

"And when you look there (in Paradise) you will see a delight (that cannot be imagined), and a great dominion." (Quran 76:20)

What God has kept hidden from us the delights of Paradise is beyond our ability to comprehend. The Prophet said that God said:

"I have prepared for My slaves what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart can imagine." Recite if you wish:

"No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do." (Quran 32:17)

In another report:

"Never mind what God has told you; what He has not told you is even greater." (Saheeh Muslim)

APPENDIX 8

COVENANTS IN THE BIBLE

A List Of The Covenants God Made With Various Individuals And Groups

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

ARE THE OLD TESTAMENT COVENANTS FOR US? IF SO, IN WHAT WAY?

“That is why his [Abraham’s] faith was ‘counted to him as righteousness.’ But the words ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord” (Romans 4:23,24)

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

*“For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.’ **Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake**, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.” (1 Corinthians 9:9-10)*

“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11)

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16,17)

[covenants in red bold are those that apply to us today]

	With Whom?	References	Commands, Ordinances, Promises, Judgments	Condition	Sign	Valid Today ?	For Us?
1.	EDEN: 1. Adam & Eve 2. all descendants 3. animals	- Genesis 1:26-30; 2:8-9,15-17; 3:8,9	COMMANDS: 1. be fruitful, multiply & fill the earth 2. subdue & rule over the earth and all living things. PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. created in image of God 2. live in Garden of Eden with fruit trees, including the Tree of Life and Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil 3. eat all seed bearing fruits and vegetables 4. daily fellowship with God	do not eat fruit from Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil	none	NO, they violated it, so it was cancelled	NO, no longer valid today
2.	The CURSE: 1. Adam & Eve 2. all descendants	- Genesis 3:14-24 - Rom. 5:12-19; 6:23 - 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 - Heb.2:14,15; 9:27; 10:26-31	JUDGMENTS: 1. cut off from the Garden and God’s fellowship; facing eternal judgment – spiritual death 3. cursed, innocence lost & shame in nakedness 4. serpent to crawl on belly; be hated by man – to bruise man’s heel; man to crush its head 5. women to have pain in childbirth, but still desire their husband 6. husbands to rule over wives 7. earth cursed & men to labor to grow plants	none	none	YES	YES

			8. slavery to sin, diseases and death, returning to dust – physical death				
	With Whom?	References	Commands, Ordinances, Promises, Judgments	Condition	Sign	Valid Today?	For Us?
3.	<u>CAIN:</u> 1. Cain	- Genesis 4:12-16 - Hebrews 11:4 - 1 John 3:12 - Jude 11	JUDGMENTS: 1. cursed from the ground, unable to grow plants 2. fugitive and wanderer in the earth 3. hidden from the presence of God PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. God's protection from being murdered	none	a "mark" or "sign"	NO, Cain is dead	NO
4.	<u>NOAH:</u> 1. Noah 2. all descendants 3. all creatures	- Genesis 6:8,15-22; 7:1-16; 8:15-22; 9:1-17 - Matt. 24:37-39 - Acts 15:20 - Romans 14:1-23 - 1 Timothy 4:1-5 - Hebrews 11:7 - 1 Peter 3:20	COMMANDS: 1. be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. No more world-wide floods or destruction of all living things (as long as the earth remains) 2. animals will now fear mankind 3. man can now eat meat, but not with blood 4. institute capital punishment for murderers	1. build ark' 2. preach to warn people 3. receive animals into the ark	rainbow	YES	YES
5.	<u>ABRAHAM A:</u> 1. Abraham 2. Isaac 3. Jacob 4. Israel; physical descendants through Isaac and Jacob; especially those who love Him and keep His commands	- Genesis 11:31,32; 12:1-3,7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-16,21; 18:10-19; 21:12; 22:17,18 - Deut. 1:10; 10:22 - Psalm 105:8-11 - Daniel 9:4 - Acts 7: 7:2-8 - Hebrews 11:8-12	COMMANDS: 1. leave home, relatives and family 2. follow to the land where God leads PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. you will become a great nation as numerous as stars and sand through a son from your own body 2. you will be father of many nations and kings 3. you will have a son by Sarah named Isaac, and my covenant will be with him and his descendants 4. I give the land of Canaan to your descendants through Isaac forever; they will return here from slavery in Egypt in fourth generation 5. Sarah will be the mother of nations and kings 6. you'll be blessed, famous, rewarded and a blessing 7. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you 8. God will be a shield to you and be your God 9. God will keep His covenant with those who love Him	Believe = leave home and family and follow where God leads	circumcision	YES, God says it is "an everlasting covenant," which He keeps with those who love and obey Him.	NO, only for Abraham and Israel
6.	<u>ABRAHAM B:</u> 1. Abraham 2. spiritual descendants	- Genesis 12:3; 15:1-6; 17:4-7,19; 22:1-18 - Acts 3:25-26 - Rom. 4:9-24; 9:6-8 - Galatians 3:6-9,14-16; 5:6 - Colossians 2:11	PROMISES: 1. all families/nations will be blessed in your seed 2. I am your shield and very great reward 3. your descendants shall be as the stars 4. everlasting covenant with your seed 5. God himself will provide the sacrifice	"believed God that: - descendants would be as the stars; - bear a son by Sarah - God would raise Isaac from the dead	circumcision of the heart	YES	YES, by faith
7.	<u>JACOB</u> 1. Jacob/Israel 2. physical descendants through 12 sons	- Genesis 28:10-21 - Genesis 35:9-12 - Deut. 1:10; 10:22 - Psalm 105:8-11	PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. I will give this land to you and your descendants 2. I will multiply your descendants like the dust. 3. Nations and kings shall come from you 4. in you and in your descendants all nations will be blessed 5. I will be with you and keep you wherever you go 6. I will bring you back to this land 7. Your name will be Israel COMMANDS: 1. Be fruitful and multiply	he made YHWH his God	circumcision	YES	NO, only for Jacob and descendants

	With Whom?	References	Commands, Ordinances, Promises, Judgments	Condition	Sign	Valid Today?	For Us?
8.	HAGAR & ISHMAEL: 1. Hagar 2. Ishmael 3. physical descendants	- Genesis 16:1-14 - Genesis 17:17-21 - Genesis 21:9-21	PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. God sees and hears her and will look after her 2. her son will become a great nation and her seed will be greatly multiplied 3. her son, Ishmael will be strongly independent and hostile against everyone	return to serve Sarah	none	YES	NO,
9.	INITIAL LAW AT SINAI/HOREB: 1. First Generation of Israelites over the age of 20 when they left Egypt	- Exodus 19:4-8; 20:1-21; 23:20-33; 31:12-18; 32:1-20; 33:1-17; 34:1-28 - Numbers 1:18; 13:1-33; 14:1-43 - Deuteronomy 2:14,15; 5:1-3 - Jeremiah 31:32	COMMANDS: 1. keep my ten commandments & all the law PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. shall be God's possession out of all nations, a kingdom of priest and a holy nation 2. God will send an angel to guard and lead 3. God will destroy enemies JUDGMENT: 6. first generation will die in wilderness	total trust and obedience	sabbath	NO, they broke it & died in wilderness. It is suspended until Messiah returns (Deut.4:3)	NO
10.	REPEATED LAW AT MOAB: "THE LAW" "OLD COVENANT": 1. Second Generation of Israelites (physical descendants of Jacob)	- Exodus 19:4-8; 20:1-21; 23:20-33; 31:12-18; 32:1-20; 33:1-17; 34:1-28 - Deuteronomy chapters 1-34 (curse of the law: Deut. 1:5,19; 2:14-16; 5:1,2; 11:1,13,22,26-28; 28:1-68; 29:1; 30:1-19; Joshua 8:34; Neh. 10:29; Daniel 9:11; Galatians 3:10-13)	COMMANDS: 1. keep all the law all the time 2. make no covenant with Canaanites 3. love the Lord with all heart, soul and strength PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. shall be God's possession out of all nations, a kingdom of priest and a holy nation 2. God will send an angel to guard and lead 3. God will destroy enemies 4. God's presence will go with them 5. will give you land of Canaan forever – Deut. 4:40 4. complete blessing on all physical life (food, health, crops, animals, money, enemies & long life) JUDGMENTS: 1. spend 40 yrs in wilderness until 1 st generation dies 2. curse of the law by not obeying all laws all the time	total trust and obedience	sabbath	NO (Hebrews 8:7-13)	NO,
11.	PHINEHAS: 1. Phinehas 2. physical descendants	- Num. 25:10-13 - Psalm 106:30,31; - Nehemiah 13:28,29; - Ezekiel 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; - Malachi 2:4-9; ? Hebrews 7:11-18	PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. a covenant of peace 2. his jealousy for God reckoned as righteousness 3. perpetual priesthood for his descendants forever	His jealousy for God's glory	none	YES, suspended till Israel's revival & return	NO, only for his seed
12.	DAVID: 1. David 2. David's reigning sons (Kings)	- 2 Samuel 7:5-17 - Psalm 89:19-37; 132:10-12 - Acts 7:46; 13:22,35,36	PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. make your (David's) name great 2. give rest from all your enemies 3. establish your house (dynasty) after you 4. your son to build my (God's) house 5. sins of sons to be punished by men, 6. your house (line) & throne to last forever "before me" 7. my faithfulness and love will be with you 8. anoint you with holy oil and strengthened with my arm 9. "horn" of David will be exalted	was a man after God's own heart, who did all of God's will	none	NO	NO, only for David

	With Whom?	References	Commands, Ordinances, Promises, Judgments	Condition	Sign	Valid Today?	For Us?
13.	DAVID'S SON (MESSIAH): 1. David 2. David's descendant, Messiah	- 2 Sam 7:11b-17 - Psalm 89:19-37; 132:10-18 - Isaiah 9:6,7 - Jer. 30:8-11 - Ezek. 34:23,24; 37:21-28 - Matthew 1:1; 15:22; 21:9,15 - Luke 1:32,33 - Acts 2:24-31; 13:23,32-37 - Romans 1:1-4	PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. David's son to build God's house 2. establish son's kingdom forever 3. I will be His Father and he will be my Son 4. my love will not depart from him like from Saul 5. will be my firstborn and highest of kings of the earth 6. "horn" of David will be exalted 7. will rule over restored and reunited Israel forever 8. my everlasting covenant, my faithfulness and my love will be with you 9. "horn" of David will be exalted	God's beloved Son	virgin birth Matt.1: 22,23 Isaiah 7:14	YES	YES
14.	SOLOMAN: 1. Solomon 2. Reigning Sons	- 1 Kings 3:4-14; 6:11-13; 8:15-21; 9:2-9; 11:1-13 - 2 Kings 23:25-27	PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. will give him wisdom above all others 2. will give riches and honor above all kings 3. will carry out covenant He gave to his father, David 4. will live among His people of Israel 5. will put you on the throne of David 6. will put your sons on your throne forever 6. will allow you to build my house (Temple), where I will put my name, heart and eyes forever JUDGMENTS: 7. If you turn away, I will turn away from all my promises and take away the kingdom from your son	total obedience		NO, he turned away in his later years	NO
15.	NEW COVENANT A: 1. Israel & Judah	- Jeremiah 31:31-40; 32:37-40 - Ezek. 34:11-31; 37:21-28 - Rom. 11:11,25-28 - Hebrews 8:6-9:10	PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. will re-gather Israel from all nations to Jerusalem 2. will re-unite Israel as one nation 3. will remove all idols from Israel and will put my law in their hearts 4. David's son (Messiah) will rule over them forever 5. will be their God & they my people forever 6. they shall all know me 7. will forgive their sin and never remember it 8. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and never again destroyed 9. Temple will be rebuilt and remain forever	none	They shall all know the Lord	YES, but not yet fulfilled	NO, only for Israel
16.	NEW COVENANT B: 1. Believers from all nations	- Hebrews 9:11-28 - Hebrews 10:4-22 - Hebrews 11:6,7 - Luke 22:20 - John 1:11-13 - Acts 2:38,39 - Rom. 3:1-31; 6:3-11; 10:8-13; 11:11-32 - 1 Cor. 11:25 - 2 Corinthians 3:3,6-18; 5:17 - Eph. 2:1-13 - 1 Peter 2:9,10 - Revelation 22:1-5	PROMISES, PROVISIONS: 1. Christ came into the world in a human body so He could die in our stead. 2. Christ entered the heavenly tabernacle with his own blood and obtained eternal redemption from all our sins. 3. Christ cleansed us from dead works so we could serve God. 4. God will never remember our sins 5. Christ obtained new and eternal life for us. 6. Christ has perfected and sanctified us for all time 7. God has put His laws in our hearts and minds 8. God has given us boldness to enter into His presence so we can draw near in fellowship with Him 9. God has justified us and made us heirs of His righteousness. 10. God gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit to live in us.	faith in Jesus	Baptism Col.2: 11-13	YES	YES

CHAPTER FIVE

THE INSCRUTABILITY (INCOMPREHENSIBLENESS) OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Inscrutability:

A. Can We Know God?

B. Is God Spirit?

C. God's Further Direct Relationship With Mankind

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. CAN WE KNOW GOD?

ISLAM:

1. NAMES OF GOD RELATED TO HIS INSCRUTABILITY: Three of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God seem to relate to this subject:

Az-Zahir (Zaahir) = The Manifest One, Apparent

Al-Batin (Baatin) = The Hidden One, Latent, Unobvious

Al-Latif (Lateef) = The Subtle, Mysterious

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

I find it interesting that the only one of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" that in any way indicates God's revealing of Himself is ***Az-Zahir (Zaahir)*** (The Manifest One, Apparent), which is listed right next to (in contrast to) ***Al-Batin (Baatin)*** ("The Hidden One, Latent, Unobvious"). This contrast seems to give a sense of mystique saying that although He is (somewhat) manifested, He is still hidden; although He is (somewhat) knowable He is still unknowable. A glimpse of this idea is found in the following quote from a Muslim Sufi internet site called sherifbaba.com:

"Now let's think of a painting. You look at this painting; it's quite beautiful. There is a beauty in its Zahir, its outer side. But this doesn't happen by itself. When you look, you think, 'There is someone who created this.' The person who painted it is not visible, but he has hidden himself inside of the art that he has created. That is the Batin." (from <http://www.sherifbaba.com/batin.htm>)

2. GOD KNOWS ALL. Clearly the Qur'an is not a revelation of the character of God. **The major emphasis of the Qur'an is on God's Greatness, not His Being or Character. Part of that greatness is His omniscience. He is so great that He knows everything and has all**

wisdom. So while we know very little about Him, He knows everything about us and about everything else. He is so great He understands all mysteries, even though we cannot:

“... **Allah is He Who understands the finest mysteries, and is well-acquainted (with them).**” (Sura 22:63; also 31:16 and 67:14)

“*And recite what is rehearsed to you in your homes, of the Signs of Allah and His Wisdom: for **Allah understands the finest mysteries and is well-acquainted (with them).***” (Sura 33:34)

In speaking of God, the Qur’an uses the terms “*all-knowing,*” “*knows what you know not,*” “*knows best,*” etc. over 100 times. **He is so great and His transcendence is so complete that it is not possible for mankind to know Him intimately!**

The Qur’an tells us much more about God’s power and His will for mankind than about God Himself. It also says a lot about Who God is not; essentially that He is not like any created being – not like anything we can know and understand.

3. GOD IS UNKNOWABLE. The Qur’an tells us that God is incomprehensible:

“**No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision; He is above all comprehension [Latif], yet is acquainted with all things.**” – Sura 6:103)

“**Invent not similitudes for Allah: for Allah knoweth, and ye know not.**” (Sura 16:74)

Al-Ghazali, one of the most respected theologians in the history of Islam, reasoned that we understand things by comparing them with things they are like, and since God is completely unlike anything known to mankind, He is **utterly unknowable!** Fadlou Shehadi, a contemporary scholar of Al-Ghazali, wrote about this:

“**If God is a unique kind of being unlike any other being in any respect, more specifically, unlike anything known to man, it would have to follow by Ghazali’s own principles that God is utterly unknowable.** For, according to Ghazali, things are known by their likenesses, and what is utterly unlike what is known to man cannot be known. Furthermore, **God would have to be unknowable, completely unknowable, not only to ‘the man in the street’, but to prophets and mystics as well.** This is a conclusion that Ghazali states very explicitly and not infrequently.” (Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazali’s Unique Unknowable God*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1964, p. 21-22)

A Shi’ite theologian has a different idea. He says, “*the Divine Attributes and Names*” of God, which “*are the very Essence of Allah, cannot be known by means of **concepts**” of the mind. But he adds that “*if it is possible to **visionally** know Allah-which is actually possible-it will be in the heart ... that is, by way of intuitive and visionary knowledge*” (<https://hawzah.net/en/Article/View/78778/To-What-Extent-Can-Allah-Be-Known>)*

4. GOD IS INFINITE AND UNMEASURABLE. God is not only beyond our understanding, He is also beyond all measure and all boundaries:

“**Limitless is He in His glory, and sublimely, immeasurably exalted above anything that men may say (about Him).**” (Sura 17:43 – M. Asad)

THE BIBLE:

1. THE ETERNAL GOD IS INVISIBLE: God (Who is Spirit) has no physical form and therefore is invisible:

*“He [Jesus] is the image of **the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation.” (Colossians 1:15)*

*“By faith he [Moses] left Egypt ... endured as seeing **him who is invisible**.” (Hebrews 11:27)*

*“To the King of the ages, immortal, **invisible**, the only God, be honor and glory ...” (1 Timothy 1:17)*

*“he said [to Moses], ‘you cannot see my face, for **man shall not see me and live**.’” (Exodus 33:20)*

*“**No one has ever seen God ...**” (1 John 4:12)*

*“he ... **who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see ...**” (1 Timothy 6:15,16)*

2. GOD IS OBSCURED IN “THICK DARKNESS.” The Bible says that God lives in and speaks out of “thick darkness.” In other words, **intense total darkness**:

*“... Moses drew near to the **thick darkness where God was**.” (Exodus 20:21)*

[the ten commandments] *“These words **the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness ...**” (Deuteronomy 5:22)*

*“He bowed the heavens and came down; **thick darkness was under his feet**.” (2 Samuel 22:10)*

*“Then Solomon said, ‘**The Lord has said that he would dwell in thick darkness**.’” (2 Chron. 6:1)*

*“Clouds and **thick darkness are all around him ...**” (Psalm 97:2)*

3. WE OURSELVES CANNOT KNOW GOD. Islam says the omnipotent, sovereign God is unknowable by us created human beings. **The Bible agrees that to our natural minds God is unknowable.** In our own human resources and abilities, we cannot begin to fathom the depths of God’s being. God expresses this fact through the words of Zophar, one of the three friends of the prophet Job:

*“Can you find out the deep things of God? **Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.**” (Job 11:7-9)*

And the prophets David and Isaiah echoed the same truth:

*“**Why, O Lord, do you ... hide yourself** in times of trouble?” (Psalm 10:1)*

*“**Truly, you are a God who hides himself...**” (Isaiah 45:15)*

*“**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**” (Isaiah 55:8,9)*

And the Apostle Paul likewise says God is both unsearchable and un-understandable:

*“**Oh, the depth of the ... knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord ...?**” (Romans 11:33,34)*

Paul K. Moser raises the question of God’s hiddenness in his booklet, Why Isn’t God More Obvious? Finding the God Who Hides and Seeks. Some of his conclusions are:

*“... God’s ... hiding thus does not entail that God is resistant ... or deceptive toward humans (cf. Luke 12:32; Isaiah 65:1-2). **It aims for our valuing, our treasuring, God above all else ...**” – page 13*

*“... **We come to know God only as God becomes our God, the Lord of our lives.** God will then differ from a mere object of our ... speculation, amusement or self-indulgence, ...” – page 18*

“... filial knowledge of God ... includes our being reconciled to God ... entrusting ourselves as children to God in grateful love ...” – page 27

4. BUT GOD HAS CHOSEN TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO US. This is where the Bible’s teaching differs dramatically! Yes, we cannot know God ourselves, but God can and does reveal Himself to us, and what He has revealed is beyond amazing!:

a. A Very Basic Revelation Of God In Nature: Initially, God chose to reveal two very basic things about Himself in His creation:

*“For what can be known about God is plain to them ... For **his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made ...”** (Romans 1:19,20)*

I believe those two things which all mankind can know just by looking at nature are:

i) *“His eternal power,”* which means **He is all-powerful** (omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and eternal).

ii) His *“divine nature,”* which means that **there is a God (a being; not just a force) Who created everything, Who is distinct from His creation** (transcendent).

This basic knowledge about God seen in nature, however, is not the same as a personal knowledge of God. **Knowing about God is not the same as knowing God!** As I thought about this truth, I found it very significant that essentially **the Qur’an’s teaching about God** (i.e., His awesome power and absolute transcendence) **is almost synonymous with what God has already revealed about Himself in nature!** That means that the Qur’an reveals only a *basic, limited, foundational level* of knowledge about God! **Only the Bible truly reveals God’s character and nature in a way that enables us to know Him personally!**

b. Sinful Mankind Does Not Want To Know God. The Bible tells us that **God’s eternal purpose for us is** not simply for us to *know facts about Him*, but also to **know Him personally**. Therefore **He has chosen to reveal Himself to us** in spite of the fact that **we are unable** in our own fallen, sinful nature **to know or have fellowship with Him and we do not naturally even desire to know Him:**

“I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that was not called by my name.” (Isaiah 65:1)

However, **God’s purpose in revealing mysteries to us is not simply that we might intellectually know what His attributes are, but that we may know Him personally by enabling us to enter into an intimate relationship with Himself:**

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom ... but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me ...’” (Jeremiah 9:23,24)

“The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him ...” (Psalm 25:14)

5. HOWEVER, OUR SINS HAVE MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD, “THE RIGHTEOUS ONE.” Not only are we naturally unable to know God, but our sins are an even greater hindrance to our knowing Him:

“but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

6. SO GOD HAS CHOSEN TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO US IN JESUS THE MESSIAH. Amazingly God has chosen to reveal Himself to us is by causing His eternal Word to become a human being – one of us – and live among us. **He is the incarnation and revelation of God and His love to us:**

“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” (John 1:18 – NIV)

“... no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matthew 11:27)

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you ... may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge ...” (Ephesians 3:17-19)

7. KNOWING GOD IN JESUS IS ETERNAL LIFE. The Bible plainly says knowing God and having eternal fellowship with Him is what salvation and eternal life is all about, and this is only possible through trusting in Jesus the Messiah:

“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

“Jesus said ... ‘I am the way ... No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6)

[The various stages and ways in which God has revealed Himself to us are found in Chapter 9. They include: God’s communication through nature, in an audible voice, in special appearances, in the written word, in human flesh, by His Holy Spirit, in eternity, and in the “face” of God.]

8. GOD THE REVEALER OF MYSTERIES: God not only reveals Himself to His people, but He also reveals unknowable truth to us. In the Bible “mysteries” are we spiritual truths we cannot know by ourselves but God has revealed them to us. Daniel the prophet understood that God is the “**revealer of mysteries**” and was able to demonstrate it to the great King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon:

*“Daniel answered the king and said ... ‘there is a **God in heaven who reveals mysteries**’ ... The king answered ... ‘Truly, your God is ... **a revealer of mysteries** ...’”* (Daniel 2:27,28,47)

The words “mystery” and “mysteries” are used 33 times in the New Testament. Knowing all the mysteries God has revealed to His people is not important for this study, but they include:

- The Mystery Of God’s Dealing With Israel (Romans 11:25)
- The Mystery Of God’s Plan To Unite All Things In Himself (Ephesians 1:9,10)
- The Mystery Of Christ’s Deity (1 Timothy 3:16)
- The Mystery Of The Gospel (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 6:19)
- The Mystery Of Gentiles Included In God’s Covenant People (Eph. 3:3-9)
- The Mystery Of Christ And His Church (Ephesians 5:32)
- The Mystery of Christ (Colossians 1:26,27; 2:2,3; 4:3)
- The Mystery Of Lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:7)
- The Mystery Of Jesus’ Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:51)

In Yusuf Ali’s translation of the Qur’an the words “mystery” and “mysteries” are used 8 times of physical things we cannot understand because only Almighty God does. We just have to believe what He says about them because He is not going to reveal them to us:

*"The (Qur'an) was sent down by **Him who knows the mystery (that is) in the heavens and the earth: verily He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.**" (Sura 25:6)*

B. IS GOD SPIRIT?

ISLAM:

When I mentioned to a Muslim friend that the Bible says "*God is Spirit*" (John 4:24) he told me God could not be a spirit because spirits are created beings. He further stated, "*God is not a spirit and He is not a man; He is God!*" In other words He is so totally unique that there is only one way to describe Him – "God"!

So how does Islam interpret the 18 times The Qur'an mentions God's Spirit in phrases like, "*The holy spirit*," "*His Spirit*" and "*the spirit*"?:

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT: The Qur'an speaks of the "***holy spirit***" 4 times:

*"... to **Jesus the son of Mary** We ... **strengthened him with the holy spirit** ..."* (Sura 2:87)

2. GOD BREATHED OF HIS SPIRIT. 6 times the Qur'an says God "*breathed ... of His spirit*" into Adam and into Mary:

*"He fashioned him [Adam] ... and **breathed into him something of His spirit** ..."* (Sura 32:9)

*"And (remember) her [Mary] who guarded her chastity: **We breathed into her of Our spirit**, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples."* (Sura 21:91)

3. A SPIRIT FROM GOD: 5 times it mentions a "spirit" sent by God:

*"With it came down **the spirit of Faith and Truth**"* (Sura 26:192)

*"They ask thee concerning **the spirit (of inspiration)**. Say: "**The spirit** (cometh) by command of my Lord ..."* (Sura 17:85)

4. THE ANGELS AND THE SPIRIT: 4 times it says, "the angels and the spirit":

*"Therein come down **the angels and the spirit** by Allah's permission ..."* (Sura 97:4)

Notice that "spirit" is not capitalized in any of these verses. All Muslims believe that these verses are talking about the angel Gabriel. I have checked several Islamic websites and all agree that the Angel Gabriel is God's messenger referred to as the "holy spirit" and the "spirit" sent from God. This idea is based on Sura 2:97,98:

*"... **Gabriel-for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe, -Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and messengers, to Gabriel and Michael, - Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject Faith.**"* (Sura 2:97,98)

[for more about "spirit" see chapter 13 – "The Life And Image Of God"]

THE BIBLE:

1. GOD IS SPIRIT. We believe this because it is plainly written:

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” (2 Corinthians 3:17)

One significance of the Scripture saying, **“God is spirit”** (John 4:24) is that spirit, like water, wind, oil and fire (comparisons used in Scripture for God), is unbounded and unlimited. **God is totally beyond our control, measurement and the limitations of human understanding.**

2. GOD CREATED US WITH SPIRITS. Yes, as the Qur’an says, all spirits (except God Himself) are created beings, but the reason He created our spirits is because He is Spirit and He wants us to know Him and be able to communicate with Him in our spirits:

*“In that day this song [of worship] will be sung in the land of Judah ... ‘My soul yearns for you in the night; **my spirit within me earnestly seeks you ...**’”* (Isaiah 26:1,9)

*“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when **the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**”* (John 4:23,24)

When a person does not know God, but worships something or someone else it makes God jealous. He created us for Himself and longs for us to intimately know and commune with Him in our spirit, which He formed to be able to know and worship Him:

*“... he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” But **he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.**”* (1 Corinthians 6:17)

*“Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘**He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?**’”* (James 4:5)

That is the same reason angels were created as spirits – so they can know and worship Him. God is constantly in communication with them as His servants sent to minister to believers among mankind:

*“And to which of **the angels** has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’? **Are they not all ministering spirits** sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”* (Hebrews 1:13,14)

C. GOD’S FURTHER DIRECT RELATIONSHIP WITH MANKIND:

ISLAM:

1. GOD’S “PRESENCE:” The Qur’an mentions God’s “*presence*” 36 times. 23 of them speak of His presence in this life and 13 of His Presence in Paradise. However, His “presence” seems to mean only that He sees and knows all that we do. It doesn’t seem to involve a personal, direct fellowship or communication with believers. At best it involves His being “a protecting friend” to those who practice righteousness:

*“To Allah belong the East and the West: Whithersoever ye turn, there is **the presence of Allah.** For Allah is all-Pervading, all-Knowing.”* (Sura 2:115)

*“Think not of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Nay, they live, **finding their sustenance in the***

presence of their Lord." (Sura 3:169)

"For them will be a home of peace **in the presence of their Lord: He will be their friend**, because they practised (righteousness)." (Sura 6:127 – Pickthal translates it "a protecting friend")

"... We have sent thee a Message **from Our own presence.**" (Sura 20:99)

"In an Assembly of Truth, **in the presence of a Sovereign Omnipotent.**" (Sura 54:55)

[See chapter four – God's Immanence - for a fuller description of God's presence in Paradise]

2. "REMEMBRANCE" OF GOD: A phrase used 22 times in the Qur'an is "*remembrance of Allah*," which is interpreted by *Sufi* Muslims to mean meditating on God, which they do as they chant God's name (or phrases including God's name) hundreds of times. They do this in a special remembrance (*dhikr*) worship service sitting, standing or whirling in a circle. They sometimes also do this individually. They believe this will enable them to draw near to God. Here are a few of those verses:

"And do thou (O reader!) **Bring thy Lord to remembrance in thy (very) soul, with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings; and be not thou of those who are unheedful.**" (Sura 7:205)

"Those who believe, and **whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.**" (Sura 13:28)

"... and **remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt.** And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do." (Sura 29:45)

"But **keep in remembrance the name of thy Lord** and devote thyself to Him whole-heartedly." (Sura 73:8)

3. "SEEKING GOD'S FACE:" God's "face" is mentioned 5 times in the Qur'an. Two of them (Sura 28:88 & 55:27) mention God's face being eternal (In Arabic "face" is *wajh*, meaning "self."). The other three are about Muslims' desire for a more direct communication with God by "**seeking God's face.**" These verses (below) describe God's instruction to Muhammad regarding those who seek God's face in prayer morning and evening, but it is important to note that **there is no mention of God granting them intimate fellowship with Himself as a result.** There is only the promise that God will deal with them justly by setting them "*on the right path*" and by benefiting their souls in reward for their good deeds:

"... **Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the "face" of Allah. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you ...**" (Sura 2:272)

"... **those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His face ...**" (Sura 6:52; 18:28)

Also there are four verses that mention believers "seeking" God's "**countenance**," with the meaning that they are seeking God's material blessings as a reward for their righteous deeds:

"So **give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer.** That is best for **those who seek the Countenance, of Allah**, and it is they who will prosper. That which ye lay out for increase through the property of (other) people, will have no increase with Allah: but **that which ye lay out for charity, seeking the Countenance of Allah, (will increase): it is these who will get a recompense multiplied.**" (Sura 30:38,39 - See also 13:22 & 92:20)

4. BRING YOURSELF CLOSER TO GOD: One verse says this. Notice that it says "bring yourself" closer to God, not God will come closer to you or draw you closer to himself:
 "... **bow down in adoration, and bring thyself the closer (to Allah)!**" (Sura 96:19)

There does not seem to be any clear indication of believers having an intimate, personal relationship with God in His “presence,” in His “remembrance” or by seeking God’s “face” or “countenance.” Nor do Muslims (other than Sufi Muslims) talk about having such a relationship with God. This is in contrast to what the Bible says (see below) about God being found by and having fellowship with true seekers.

THE BIBLE:

God’s communication of Himself to us is not limited to objective, external knowledge. He wants us to know more than facts about Who He is – **He want us to have an intimate “knowledge” (relationship) with Himself:**

1. GOD’S PROMISES TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO THOSE WHO TRULY SEEK TO KNOW HIM:

“But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 4:29)

“... the LORD ... If you seek him, he will be found by you” (1 Chronicles 28:9)

“I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.” (Proverbs 8:17)

“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you ...” (James 4:8)

“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

These promises are for those seekers who are seeking God Himself rather than God’s blessings or rewards for righteous deeds:

“... whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

And God uses His Son Jesus and His written Word to reveal Himself to us:

“... no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” (Matthew 11:27)

[Jesus said] *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”* (John 5:39,40)

Although we ought to seek Him, God will be found even by those who do not seek Him because **He is drawing us to Christ** (enabling us to seek Him) **more than we could ever seek Him.** We can never really reach up to God, so He reaches down to us!

“I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” (Romans 10:20)

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him ... It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God ...’”(John 6:44,45)

2. THE “FACE” OF GOD: A person’s face is that part of the human anatomy which most reveals the thoughts and intents of the inner being/person. Since we were created in the Image of God, we know God’s “face” is the original and our faces are only a reflection of His.

However, our human faces are flesh and God is Spirit, not flesh. Therefore God's face is not a physical face but is the most intimate spiritual communication of God's being/person that is possible. So "seeing" God's "face" means a greater glimpse of His awesome person and glory.

God's "face" is mentioned 83 times in the Bible (6 in N.T.):

a. God hiding or turning away His "FACE" from someone: This is found **31 times** in the Bible and means that God is refusing or cutting off any intimate relationship with those people:

"Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured ..." (Deuteronomy 31:17)

"... For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him." (2 Chronicles 30:9)

[Job said to God] *"Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?"* (Job 13:24)

b. God Setting His "FACE" against someone: This occurs **12 times** and is God opposing someone; a step more severe than turning away His face:

"If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people." (Leviticus 20:6)

"The face of the Lord is against those who do evil ..." (Psalm 34:16)

c. God making His "FACE" to shine on people: This is found **11 times** and shows God's delight, favor and blessing:

"the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you" (Numbers 6:25)

"not by their own sword did they win the land ... but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them." (Psalm 44:3)

"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us" (Psalm 67:1)

d. God being seen "FACE to FACE" by someone: This is found **8 times** and is a very rare, most intimate relationship with God, revealing His glory to a degree beyond normal capacity:

"the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend ..." (Exodus 33:11)

"The Lord spoke with you [nation of Israel] face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire," (Deuteronomy 5:4)

e. God's "FACE" Being Seen In Eternity: This is found **7 times** and seems to say we cannot see God's full glory in this life, but will in the next:

"... you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (Exodus 33:20)

"As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness." (Psalm 17:15)

"They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads." (Revelation 22:4)

f. Seeking the "FACE" of God: Found **6 times**, this indicates a serious desire to obtain an intimate meeting and fellowship with God:

"Now there was a famine ... And David sought the face of the Lord ..." (1 Samuel 21:1)

*“if my people ... humble themselves, and pray and **seek my face** and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin ...”* (2 Chronicles 7:14)

g. God showing His back to someone, but not His “FACE:” This is found **3 times** and means revealing only as much of God’s glory as a person can endure:

[God said to Moses] *“Then I will take away my hand, and **you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.**”* (Exodus 33:23)

h. Various other references to God’s “FACE:” 5 other verses speak of God’s face in various ways:

*“... may they perish **at the rebuke of your face!**”* (Psalm 80:16)

*“**a people who provoke me to my face** continually, sacrificing in gardens ...”* (Isaiah 65:3)

*“they do not consider that I remember all their evil ... **they are before my face.**”* (Hosea 7:2)

CHAPTER SIX

THE NAME & GLORY OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to this subject:

- A. God's Name**
- B. God's Glory**
- C. Conclusions**

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S NAME: Obviously the purpose of a name is to identify a particular being or object. It is a symbol used to represent that being's unique character and work/function. The name serves to identify and set apart that one from all others. A person's name becomes a representation of that person's reputation, of his/her actions and character – of who he/she is.

In some cultures a name identified the occupation of the family, such as *Cooper* (barrel maker) or *Smith* (blacksmith). In other cultures it shows the clan or nationality, such as *Qurashi* (of the Arabic Qurash tribe) or *Levi* (of the Jewish tribe of Levi). Some parents name their child after its father or some other beloved family member, hoping the child will become like that person. Others name their child after a famous person they admire, such as *Cambyses*, an ancient Persian King. Still others choose a name for their child because their aspirations for that child are expressed in the meaning of that word, such as *Bahadur* which means brave in Hindustani. And others choose a name simply because they like its sound.

Regardless of how a name is chosen, that name eventually becomes synonymous with that person, with his life, his work and actions and his character. We say, "He made a name for himself." Names such as Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Joseph the son of Jacob or Genghis Khan immediately bring to our mind the way those people treated others, the kind of character they had and the good or bad things they did.

With regard to God's names, they all have meaning and are intended to describe Who He is. They involve both His works (His awesome abilities) and His ways (His amazing character or being) and they help us glorify Him. God's names essentially mean His reputation or fame:

ISLAM:

1. ARABIC NAMES FOR GOD IN THE QUR'AN: There are four words in the Qur'an that are specified as names for God. Two are very prominent, and the other two are each mentioned only once:

a. ALLAH (The God): The Arabic word, “*Allah*” is found **about 3000 times** in the Qur’an, and is considered to be **God’s personal name, describing His essence**. Most other “names” seem to be his attributes. Many scholars believe *Allah* is derived from the combining of the words “*a*” (the) and “*illah*” (deity, god), meaning, “The God” (Others say it is borrowed from the Aramaic word “*alah*”). This emphasizes that He is the one and only God, and is consistent with the creed of Islam, which says, “There is no *illah* except *Allah*” (“There is no god but *The God*”).

“... **no god is there but the one God, supreme and irresistible... a message supreme...**” (Sura 38:65,67)

[See chapter 1 for more details about the name Allah]

b. RABB (Lord): The Arabic word, “*Rabb*” (pronounced “*Rub*”) is used **981 times** in the Qur’an. It is **more of a title** than a personal name and is used only of God (not of men like the word “Lord” is used in English). In the Qur’an God is called the Lord of 21 specific things:

- “Lord of the worlds” 33 times
- “Lord of the heavens and earth” 11 times
- “Lord of the Throne” 10 times
- “Lord of Retribution” 4 times
- “Lord of grace abounding.” (graciousness, mercy) 4 times
- “Lord of Moses and Aaron” 4 times
- “Lord of the seven heavens” 4 times
- “Lord of Mankind” 4 times
- “Lord of the East and the West, and all between” 3 times
- “Lord of Power” 2 times
- “Lord of bounties unbounded” 2 times
- “Lord of the highest bounty”
- “Lord of the Ways of Ascent”
- “Lord of Honour and Power”
- “Lord of every point at the rising of the sun”
- “Lord of the Dawn”
- “Lord of Sirius” (the Mighty Star)
- “Lord of the two Easts and the two Wests”
- “Lord of your fathers of old”
- “Lord of Forgiveness”
- “Lord of Righteousness”

c. AI-A’LA (Most High): The Arabic word, *Al-Alaa* is used only once for God:

“*Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord **Most High***” (Sura 87:1)

d. RAHMAN (Merciful): Although this word is one of Islam’s 99 “most beautiful names” for God and is used many times as an adjective describing God’s attribute of being merciful, it is one time specifically referred to as a name for God:

“*Say: ‘Call upon Allah, or call upon **Rahman**: by whatever **name** ye call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names ...*” (Sura 17:110)

2. THE 99 “MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES” OF GOD: In addition to the names specified as names for God, there are many other so-called “names” in a traditional listing called, the 99 “most beautiful names” of God [See Appendix 1 for a complete list]. These “names” are recited in worship with the use of a set of beads like a rosary, a practice which is based on 4 verses in the Qur’an mentioning God’s “most beautiful names” and urging believers to call on Him using these names. Here is one of those verses:

“*The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on him by them ...*” (Sura 7:180)

The number 99 comes from a tradition (*Hadith*) stating that Muhammad said God has that number of names:

AbuHurayra reported that, "Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "To God belongs **99 names**, 100 minus 1, anyone who memorizes them will enter Paradise; He (God) is odd (odd number, he is the Only One), and He loves odd numbers."

The "names" included in the 99 were chosen from two sources by Islamic leaders:

a. Names Taken From The Qur'an: Many of the 99 "most beautiful names" of God have been formed from adjectives, verbs, and nouns used in reference to God in the Qur'an. For example:

*"Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;- Who knows (all things) both secret and open; He, **Most Gracious, Most Merciful.** Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;- **the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace** (and Perfection), **the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme:** Glory to Allah! (High is He) above the partners they attribute to Him. He is **Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms** (or Colours). To Him belong the **Most beautiful names:** Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare His Praises and Glory: and He is **the Exalted in Might, the Wise.**" (Sura 59:22-24)*

b. Names Taken From The Hadith: Some of the names in the 99 "most beautiful names" are not found in the Qur'an, but are taken from verbs or adjectives used by Muhammad in reference to God quoted in the *Hadith* (Traditions).

Some Islamic scholars have divided God's 99 "most beautiful names" into two categories; as either God's "**beautiful attributes**" (The Merciful, The Kind, etc.) or His "**glorious**" or "**terrible attributes**" (The Avenger, The Powerful, etc.).

3. THE WORD, "NAME" USED IN REFERENCE TO GOD IN THE QUR'AN:

"Name" (or "names") is used **41 times** in phrases or sentences about God in the Qur'an. This includes, "*in the name of God/Lord*" (8 times); pronouncing God's name when slaughtering animals (6 times); "*celebrate His name*" (6 times); "*glorify His name*" (4 times); "*His beautiful names*" (4 times); "*not invoke any other name*" (4 times); "*misuse God's name*" (4 times); and "*holy name*" (1 time).

4. THE COMMON, REPETITIVE USE OF GOD'S NAME: Muslims are encouraged to use memorized Arabic expressions containing God's name on everyday occasions. Many websites list these Islamic phrases. For example, the website, http://arabic.speak7.com/islamic_expressions.htm lists 29, of which 27 contain the name *Allah* and the other two contain the title, *Rabb*. Unfortunately, while the meanings of these expressions are good, for many people they have become "vain repetitions" used habitually with little thought. They are to be spoken in Arabic regardless of the individual's native language and whether or not the individual understands the meaning of the Arabic words, because the repetition of the name *Allah* itself is supposed to bring blessing. This is similar to many Christians singing or saying the Hebrew word, "hallelujah" without knowing that it is a Hebrew word, meaning "praise the Lord!" The above website explains:

"The following Islamic expressions are frequently used by Muslims all over the world. Muslims' daily expressions seem to be closely related to religion, from simple greetings to future planning ..."

Here are five (out of the 29) examples:

"Alhamdulillah" = Praise to Allah ("used usually to express satisfaction, or after having finished eating... or if someone asks you how you were and you want to express that you're satisfied").

“Subhanallah” = Glory to Allah (“can be used in many places, for example if you heard something amazing and you want to express your amazement”).

“Mashallah” = What Allah wishes (“used to express amazement almost like Subhanallah except that Mashallah is mainly for positive amazement, like if someone tells you ‘I have a daughter and she is 9’ you can simply reply ‘mashallah’ then add something if you want”). Actually, this is used to ward off the “evil eye” when a complementary statement is made.

“Allahu Akbar” = Allah is great (greater) (“also can be used in a wide variety of places, often to show excitement”). This is used as the war cry by Jihadists.

“Bismillah” = In the name of Allah (“Used to start something, whatever a Muslim wants to start (driving, eating, walking, reading ...)”).

In conclusion, Islam’s use of God’s names should be **to praise and glorify Him**, but often it is only **to express pleasure, amazement or excitement**.

THE BIBLE:

God’s “name” essentially means His reputation or fame. It is Who He is:

[Jesus said in prayer] **“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world ... Holy Father, keep them in your name [all that you are and do], which you have given me ... While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me ...”** (John 17:6,11,12)

“... you have exalted above all things your name and your word.” (Psalm 138:2)

God has many “names” which are both specific and deliberate. His names reveal certain aspects of God’s character and the things He does – especially for those who know him intimately. Some are used specifically as names and others as adjectives describing Him:

1. PRIMARY NAMES OF GOD: The primary names of God are formed from three Hebrew words (YHWH, Elohim and Adonai) in the Old Testament and two Greek words (Theos and Kurios) in the New Testament:

a. HEBREW NAMES:

1) YHWH – meaning “He Is” or “He (Who) Is,” but translated **“the LORD”** in most English translations (“**Jehovah**” in a few). Its correct pronunciation is unknown, but is thought to be **“Yahweh.”** This is **the most frequent name of God in the Old Testament and is found about 7,700 times!** In addition, **Yah** (a contraction of *Yahweh*) is found **43 times**, mostly in the Psalms.

Yahweh is technically not a name, but is a form of the Hebrew verb “to be.” When God used that name for Himself, speaking in the first person, He said (as it is properly translated in Exodus 3:14), **“I Am”** or **“I Am Who I Am,”** but when that name is spoken in the third person about God by people it should be translated, **“He Is”** or **“He (Who) Is.”** Therefore YHWH is **THE SELF-REVEALING ONE**. [See also Chapter 4 – God’s Immanence]

Unfortunately it is mistranslated instead as, **“the LORD”** in most English translations. This apparently was done to follow the Jewish practice of audibly speaking the word,

“Adonai” (“Lord”) whenever they saw the word “YHWH” (“He is”) in the text, because they feared they might use God’s name in vain.

a) God’s Initial Use of YHWH: God first used YHWH as a name for Himself in His commissioning of the prophet Moses:

“Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say ..., ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you. ... The LORD [YHWH = ‘He Is’], the God of your fathers ... has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever’ ...” (Exodus 3:13-15)

b) God Claimed YHWH As His Name: Although God also claimed other names for Himself (see below), He Himself clearly stipulated eight times that YHWH is His own name. Beside Exodus 3:15 just mentioned, here are the other seven claims:

*“I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but **by my name the LORD** [YHWH] I did not make myself known to them.”* (Exodus 6:3)

*“And he said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you and will **proclaim before you my name** ‘The LORD [YHWH] ...’”* (Exodus 33:19)

*“You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane **the name of your God: I am the LORD** [YHWH].”* (Leviticus 18:21; 19:12)

*“I am the LORD [YHWH]; **that is my name** ...”* (Isaiah 42:8)

*“... **to swear by my name, ‘As the LORD** [YHWH] **lives,**’ even as they taught my people to swear by Baal ...”* (Jeremiah 12:16)

*“... they shall know that **my name is the LORD** [YHWH].”* (Jeremiah 16:21)

*“... that **my name** shall no more be invoked by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, **saying, ‘As the LORD** [YHWH] **God lives.**”* (Jeremiah 44:26)

c) YHWH As A Compound Name: Nine different words are combined with YHWH to form compound names, further **revealing both God’s power and His character – His “Works” and His “Ways”:**

His Works (Power):

Yahweh-tsaba = He Who is (Lord) of Hosts/Multitudes (found 232 times; NLT translates it as “the Lord of Heaven’s Armies”):

*“Not like these is **he who is the portion of Jacob ... the LORD** [YHWH] **of hosts is his name.**”* (Jeremiah 10:16 – see also Isaiah 48:2 & 51:15)

Yahweh-jireh = He Who sees (beforehand) and provides:

*“Abraham called the name of that place, ‘**The LORD** [YHWH] **will provide**’; as it is said ... “On the mount of the LORD **it shall be provided.**”* (Gen. 22:14)

Yahweh-rophe = He Who heals:

*“... I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for **I am the LORD** [YHWH], **your healer.**”* (Exodus 15:26b)

Yahweh-nissi = He Who is our banner (of victory):

*“And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, **The LORD** [YHWH] **Is My Banner.**”* (Exodus 17:15)

Yahweh-m'kaddesh = He Who Sanctifies (makes holy):

"Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD [YHWH] your God ... I am the LORD who sanctifies you." (Leviticus 20:7,8)

His Ways (Character):**Yahweh-rohi = He Who is our Shepherd (guider, caregiver):**

"The LORD [YHWH] is my shepherd; I shall not want ..." (Psalm 23:1,2)

Yahweh-shalom = He Who is Peace:

*"Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD [YHWH] and called it, **The LORD Is Peace** ..."* (Judges 6:24)

Yahweh-tsidkenu = He Who Is Our Righteousness:

*"... And this is the name by which he will be called: '**The LORD [YHWH] is our righteousness.**'"* (Jeremiah 23:6)

Yahweh-shammah = He Who is Present (Imminent):

*"... And the name of the city from that time on shall be, **The LORD [YHWH] Is There.**"* (Ezekiel 48:35)

d) Yahweh As A Contracted Name (compressed together with another word).

There are many examples. Here are a few:

Jehozabad = Yahweh (Jehovah) endowed

Jehu = Yahweh (Jehovah) is He

Jehoshaphat = Yahweh (Jehovah) judged

Of course, the most important one is:

Jesus = Yahweh (Jehovah) is salvation

e) The Importance Of Yahweh: The most important thing to understand about the name *YHWH* is that it shows us God intends to display **more than simply His power or His will. He wants to ...**

i) ... to reveal Himself to us; to make Himself known to us. Calling Himself "*YHWH*" (He Who Is!) is like saying, "**Here I am!**" or "**Let me show you who I am so you can know me.**"

ii) ... to be presently active in our lives. *YHWH* does not mean "He Can" or "He Will" but "He Is." Watchman Nee, in the November 5th reading of his daily devotional book, "A Table In The Wilderness" writes,

*"Three facts about God underlie true faith: He is able (Matt.9:28), He is willing (Matt.8:2-3) and ... 'He is' (Heb.11:6) ... by this last article of faith, I do not mean some vague belief that there is a God. I mean the conviction that **God is: living, present, active.** Let us suppose you have pointed a sinner to Christ. When you have prayed with him and he has prayed, you ask him where he stands now. If he replies that God **can** save him, are you satisfied? Even if he goes further and affirms that God **will** save him, is that enough? No, you will not be content until he has expressed the conviction that God **has** saved him, that God **is** his Savior. **We shall get nowhere with 'God can' and 'God will' if we stop short of 'God is.'** ... **Do not claim to have faith until you can say, 'I am ... and I have ... because God is!'"***

2) ELOHIM (and EL) = "God," "Mighty (One)," "Supreme (One)" [See Chapter 2 (God's Power)]: The Hebrew word *Elohim* is the second most common word used as a name for God in the Bible. It is a generic name for "God" and is plural (the singular is *El*), so technically it should be translated "Gods" or "Mighty Ones," but even though it might be

an indication of the Trinity, it is used as an honorific plural for the one true God. It occurs a total of **2,174 times!**

“And the Lord appeared to him [Isaac] the same night and said, ‘I am the God [Elohim] of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you ...’ (Genesis 26:24)

The singular form is **EL**, which occurs **225 times**. It is sometimes combined with other words to form **compound names for God**:

EI-Elyon = “God Most High” – (*Elyon* = “most high”), used **31 times** of God:

“blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies ...!” (Genesis 14:20)

EI-Shaddai = “God Almighty” – (*Shaddai* = “mighty”), **48 times** of God:

“... I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [El-Shaddai] ...” (Exodus 6:2b-3a)

EI-Roi = “The God Who Sees” – This is the name given by Hagar:

“So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, ‘You are a God of seeing,’ for she said, ‘Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.’” (Genesis 16:13)

EI-Olam = “The Everlasting God.” – This is a name used by Abraham:

“Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.” (Genesis 21:33)

Some **other variants of this name** are:

Elah – (found **89 times** and used only in Ezra, Jeremiah and Daniel)

Eloah – (occurring **56 times**).

3) ADONAI (and ADON) = “Lord,” “Master” [see Chapter 3 - God’s Sovereignty]: – This is the third most common Hebrew name for God and is also in the honorific plural. It occurs 322 times while the singular **Adon** occurs 211 times, making a total of **533 times**. This Hebrew word for “Lord” is used only for God and never for a man:

“... my God and my Lord [Adonai]!” (Psalm 35:23)

4) Other Hebrew Names For God:

ILLAI – This word, meaning **“Most High”** is used **9 times** in the book of Daniel and is closely related to the Arabic *“Illah”* (god).

MELEK – This word, meaning **“King”** is used **38 times** of God.

b. GREEK NAMES:

1) THEOS = “God” – This Greek word occurs **1250 times** in the New Testament and almost always refers to God the Father, but does refer to Jesus a few times:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word [Jesus] was with God [Theos], and the Word [Jesus] was God [Theos]. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:1-3)

2) KURIOS = “Lord” – This word occurs **696 times** in the New Testament, sometimes referring to God the Father, but usually referring to Jesus the Messiah. In fact, the title, *“Lord (Kurios) Jesus Christ”* occurs 63 times and *“Lord Jesus”* 102 times:

*“Blessed be the **Lord** [Kurios] **God** of Israel, for he has ... redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68)*

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the **Lord** [Kurios] **God Almighty**, who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8)*

*“that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord** [Kurios], to the glory of God the Father.”
(Philippians 2:10,11)*

3) PATER = “Father” – This is used for God 260 times in the New Testament (It is not used even once in the Qur’an!), and is used primarily by Jesus, Who used it of God 172 times. Someone may point out that technically this word is not a name, but a title, but so are “God” and “Lord” and all the other “names” listed above.

Amazingly Jesus also taught his disciples to address God in prayer as “Father” rather than “God” or “Lord.”

*“... one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray ...’ And he said to them, ‘**When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name ...”**’” (Luke 11:1,2; also Matthew 6:9)*

[See chapter 12 for more about God as “Father”]

2. OTHER NAMES OF GOD: There are many adjectives and nouns used in the Bible as titles or names of God. One listing has over 150 of them. Here are just a few examples, including some of the names of Jesus:

a. Names God Gave Himself:

*“... Fear not, Abram, **I am your shield** ...” (Genesis 15:1)*

*“**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.**”
(Exodus 3:6 & Acts 7:32)*

*“... **I am the Lord** [He Who is], **your healer.**” (Exodus 15:26)*

*“... do not profane **my holy name: I am the Lord.**” (Leviticus 22:2 - “holy name” is found 26 times)*

*“... **I am your portion and your inheritance** ...” (Numbers 18:20)*

*“... **I am your salvation**” (Psalm 35:3)*

*“**I, the LORD, am its keeper** ...” (Isaiah 27:3)*

*“... they will sanctify my name; they ... will stand in awe of **the God of Israel.**” (Isaiah 29:23)*

*“**I am the LORD, your Holy One** ...” (Isaiah 43:15 – “the Holy One” is found 44 times!)*

*“**I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.**” (Isaiah 43:11)*

*“**I am the LORD ... the Creator of Israel** ...” (Isaiah 43:15)*

*“... **I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.**” (Isaiah 60:16)*

*“... **I am a father** to Israel ...” (Jeremiah 31:9)*

*“... **I am their inheritance:** and you shall give them no possession in Israel; **I am their possession.**”
(Ezekiel 44:28)*

*“... if **I am a master**, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts ...” (Malachi 1:6)*

*“... **I am a great King**, says the LORD of hosts ...” (Malachi 1:14)*

*“**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**” (Revelation 22:13 & Isaiah 48:12)*

b. Names Others Gave To God:

*“... You are **a God of seeing** ... Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.” (Gen. 16:13)*

*“Abraham ... called there on **the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.**” (Genesis 21:33)*

*“... the Lord, **whose name is Jealous,** is a jealous God.” (Exodus 34:14)*

*“**The Rock**, his work is perfect ... **A God of faithfulness** ...” (Deuteronomy 32:4)*

*“... **the God of glory** thunders ...” (Psalm 29:3)*

“... for **his name alone is exalted** ...” (Psalm 148:13 & Isaiah 12:4)
 “... and **the Holy God** shows himself holy in righteousness.” (Isaiah 5:16)
 “... From the ends of the earth we hear songs ... of glory to **the Righteous One**.” (Isaiah 24:16)
 “the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, **whose name is Holy** ...” (Isaiah 57:15)
 “Who would not fear you, O **King of the nations?** ...” (Jeremiah 10:7)
 “But the LORD is the true God; he is **the living God** and **the everlasting King** ...” (Jeremiah 10:10)
 “... **Their Redeemer** is strong; **the LORD of hosts is his name** ...” (Jeremiah 50:34)
 “As I looked, thrones were placed, and **the Ancient of Days** took his seat ...” (Daniel 7:9)
 “**Our Father** in heaven, hallowed be your name.” (Matthew 6:9)
 “that ... **the Father of glory**, may give you the Spirit of wisdom ...” (Ephesians 1:17)
 “... he who is **the ... only Sovereign, the King of kings** and **Lord of lords**.” (1 Timothy 6:15)
 “for our **God is a consuming fire**.” (Hebrews 12:29)
 “... the voice was borne to him by **the Majestic Glory** ...” (2 Peter 1:17)

c. Names of Jesus: There are books listing as many as 700 names:

1) “**Jesus**” – a contracted name meaning “**Yahweh (YHWH) is salvation**”

2) **Old Testament prophecies using the Hebrew word, “YHWH”** are fulfilled in Jesus according to the New Testament. [See Appendix 5, point 8 for more details]:

- **Prepare the way of YAHWEH** (Isaiah 40:3 fulfilled in Jesus according to Mark 1:1-9)
- **Calling on the name of YAHWEH** (Joel 2:30-32 fulfilled in Jesus according to Romans 10:9-13)
- **Bowing before YAHWEH** (Isaiah 45:21-23 fulfilled in Jesus according to Philippians 2:10,11)
- **The heavens are temporary but YAHWEH is eternal** (Psalm 102 fulfilled in Jesus according to Hebrews 1:7-12)

3) **Names Jesus Gave Himself (most of which reveal His deity):**

<i>The Son of Man</i> (Mark 14:62)	<i>The bread of life</i> (John 6:35)
<i>The living bread from heaven</i> (John 6:51)	<i>The light of the world</i> (John 8:12)
<i>I am</i> [meaning of YAHWEH] (John 8:58)	<i>The door</i> (John 10:9)
<i>The good shepherd</i> (John 10:11)	<i>The Son of God</i> (John 10:36)
<i>The resurrection and the life</i> (John 11:25)	<i>The way, the truth, the life</i> (John 14:6)
<i>The vine</i> (John 15:5)	<i>The living one</i> (Revelation 1:18)
<i>The Alpha and Omega, the first and last,</i>	<i>The beginning and the end</i> (Rev. 22:13)
<i>The root and offspring of David</i> (Rev. 22:16)	<i>The bright morning star</i> (Rev. 22:16)

4) **Names Others Gave To Jesus (most of which reveal His humanity):**

<i>Jesus</i> (Matthew 1:1,21; Luke 1:31)	<i>Messiah/Christ</i> (Matt 1:1; 16:16; Luke 2:11)
<i>The Son of David</i> (Matt. 1:1; Matt. 9:27)	<i>Emanuel</i> [God with us] (Matthew 1:23)
<i>God's Beloved</i> (Matthew 12:18)	<i>Servant</i> (Matthew 12:18; Philippians 2:7)
<i>Prophet</i> (Matthew 21:11)	<i>The Holy/Righteous One</i> (Mk 1:24; Acts 3:14)
<i>Son of God/of The Most High/of The Blessed/of The Highest</i> (Mark 1:1; 5:7; Luke 1:32)	
<i>Lord/Master/Teacher</i> (Mk 10:17; Lk 2:11; Jn 13:13)	<i>The Son of Mary</i> (Mark 6:3)
<i>The King of the Jews/Israel</i> (Mk 15:2)	<i>Horn of Salvation</i> (Luke 1:69)
<i>Savior</i> (Luke 2:11)	<i>Glory of Israel</i> (Luke 2:32)
<i>Light To the Nations</i> (Luke 2:32)	<i>The Word of God</i> (John 1:1)
<i>Lamb of God</i> (John 1:29)	<i>Offspring/Seed of Woman</i> (Gal. 4:4; Gen. 3:15)
<i>The Last/Second Adam</i> (1 Cor. 15:45,47)	<i>Our Brother</i> (Hebrews 2:11,12)
<i>Priest/High Priest</i> (Hebrews 4:14-5:10)	<i>King of Kings</i> (Revelation 17:14)

3. THE WAY GOD’S “NAME” IS USED IN THE BIBLE. In speaking of God, the word “name” is used more than 100 times:

a. “Name” Used To Mean God’s Reputation Or Fame:

“... *making for yourself a name for great and awesome things ...*” (1 Chronicles 17:21)

“... *so that they do not profane my holy name: I am the Lord.*” (Leviticus 22:2)

“Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us **exalt his name together!**” (Psalm 34:3)

“he saved them for **his name's sake ...**” (Psalm 106:8)

“**And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them ...**” (Ezekiel 36:23)

“... He stood **in awe of my name.**” (Malachi 2:5)

b. “Name” Used In Place Of Or Representing God. To say, “I said this in God’s name.” or “I called on God’s name.” means “God said it” or “I called God.”

“... *that by the name of Jesus Christ ... whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well ... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name ... by which we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:10-12)

“... *who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded ...*” (Deut. 18:20)

“**May the God who has caused his name to dwell there ... in Jerusalem.**” (Ezra 6:12)

“Oh give thanks to **the Lord; call upon his name ...**” (Psalm 105:1)

“... Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, **calling on his name.**” (Acts 22:16)

c. “Name” Used For God’s Praise And Honor:

“He [Solomon] shall build a house for my name ...” (2 Samuel 7:13)

“**As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth ...**” (Psalm 48:10)

“Sing to the Lord, **bless his name;** tell of his salvation from day to day.” (Psalm 96:2)

d. “Name” Used To Mean Belonging To Or United With Him:

“So shall they put **my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.**” (Numbers 6:27)

“**everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory ...**” (Isaiah 43:7)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them **in [into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**” (Matthew 28:19)

B. GOD’S GLORY: God is glorified because of the excellence of what He has done and created (His works) and also because of the excellence of His character (His ways). People and angels, experiencing these things, glorify Him through actions and words of praise and worship. All other created things glorify Him just by displaying His handiwork.

ISLAM:

1. ARABIC NAMES RELATED TO GOD’S GLORY: Because of its constant declaration of God’s greatness, the Qur’an greatly glorifies and exalts Him.

The following six “names” (of the 99 “most beautiful names”) seem to apply to the subject of God’s glory and fame: [See appendix 1 for a complete list]

Al-Majeed (Majid) = The Glorious One, Majestic (in power, compassion & kindness)

Al-Maajid (Majid) = The Glorified One, Illustrious, Magnificent

Al-Ali (Aly) = The Exalted, High

Al-Hameed = Praised, Praise Worthy, Laudable

Al-Jaleel = The Majestic, Exalted, Glorious

Dhu’l-Jalal-Wal-Ikram = Lord of Majesty & Generosity

2. ENGLISH WORDS USED FOR GOD’S GLORY: Yusuf Ali, in his English translation of the Qur’an, usually uses two words in reference to God’s glory. They are “**glory**” and “**exalted**.” A third word, “**honour**” is also used a few times.

a. “Glory:” The word “glory” is used 41 times, “glorified” 2 times and “glorify” 10 times in reference to God. That’s a total of **53 times** and they are used **to express praise for God’s greatness, power, lordship, omniscience, and superiority above all things.** In other words, **His greatness and His great works.**

Phrases expressing God’s “glory” are frequently used as “**praise**” and **worship**:

“... **Glory be to Him ... to Him belongs all ... everything renders worship to Him.**” (Sura 2:116)

“... **for He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!**” (Sura 11:73)

“... **Allah ... magnify Him for His greatness and glory!**” (Sura 17:111)

“**If any do seek for glory and power, - to Allah belong all glory and power ...**” (Sura 35:10)

“**Lord of the Throne of Glory**” (Sura 85:15)

b. “Exalted:” The word, “exalted” is used of God **87 times.** It is used **exclusively to describe His omnipotent power** as seen by the fact that 77 of the 87 times it is found in the phrases, “**exalted in power**” or “**exalted in might.**” In fact 42 times He is named, “**the exalted in power,**” “**the exalted in might**” or “**the exalted one**”:

“... **And Allah is exalted in Power, Wise.**” (Sura 2:228)

“... **but Allah is exalted high above the partners they ascribe to Him.**” (Sura 7:190)

“... **Allah is full of Strength, exalted in Might, (able to enforce His Will).**” (Sura 22:40)

c. “Honor:” The word “honour” (British spelling) is used 8 times in reference to God, usually **implying authority and power**:

“**Let not their speech grieve thee: for all power and honour belong to Allah ...**” (Sura 10:65)

“... **exalted be Allah, the King, the Reality ... the Lord of the Throne of honour!**” (Sura 23:116)

“**Therefore exalted be Allah, the King, the Reality: there is no god but He, the Lord of the Throne of honour!**” (Sura 23:116)

“**Glory to thy Lord, the Lord of Honour and Power! (He is free) from what they ascribe (to Him)!**” (Sura 37:180)

3. GOD’S GLORY IS HIS BEING. An article on the Al-Islam website sounds like a philosophical attempt to explain the unexplainable. This certainly sounds profound, but seems to me to be a reflection of Islam’s obvious perspective that God’s glory is due totally to His omnipotent greatness:

“... **His Being And His Glory Are the Real Truth ... As for the nature of His glory** at the various stages of His essence, His attributes and His actions, the verses we have quoted above indicate **only that ‘He is the First and the Last and He is the Explicit and the Implicit.’ The real truth is only that there is no existence besides Allah ... All existing things are the result of Divine Glory ...**” (<https://www.al-islam.org/light-within-me-mutahhari-tabatabai-khomeini/part-3-3-allah-and-his-glory>)

So, **in conclusion**, God is glorified in Islam because of His omnipotent power, His total sovereignty, His omniscient wisdom and His being “above” or “free from” being one of the “partners” (other gods) that people associate with Him, or from being like a human being (having a son, etc.). He is not usually glorified because of the awesome characteristics of His own person or being, which are almost never revealed.

THE BIBLE:

First of all, He is “**The God of glory**” (Psalm 29:3 & Acts 7:2) and it is hard for us, who are so limited by sin and the estrangement from Him it has caused, to really understand what His glory is all about. What should we understand about God’s “Glory”?

1. MEANING OF “GLORY:” In one sense, God’s glory is **the indescribable awe we feel as we catch a glimpse of Who He is:**

*“Let all the earth fear the Lord; **let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!**” (Ps. 33:8)*

Real worship of God is possible **only when we fully surrender to Him**, experiencing the joy of exalting and honoring Him in our lives. In speaking of Abraham glorifying God in worship by offering his son, Watchman Nee writes:

*“And true worship is ... to let go to God all His gifts to us, all our rich experiences and all our hopes in Him, and to find unqualified **joy in God Himself.**” (“A Table In The Wilderness” - April 9th reading)*

But in another sense, God is glorious whether or not we experience or believe it.

2. WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE GOD’S GLORY: The Bible’s continual emphasis on God’s glory is evident by the vast number of times it is mentioned. **God’s glory is stated using several different words a total of 367 times in the Bible** (“glory” 169, “glorified” 25, “glorify” 18, “glorious” 19, “honor” 25, “awesome,” 25, “majesty” 33, “splendor” 18, “exaltation” 24, “extoled” 8, and “fame” 4). For example:

*“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, **majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?**” (Exodus 15:11)*

*“**Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place.**” (1 Chronicles 16:27)*

*“**Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty ... Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.**” (1 Chronicles 29:11)*

*“**The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty ...**” (Psalm 93:1)*

*“**I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.**” (Psalm 145:1)*

*“They shall pour forth **the fame of your abundant goodness** ...” (Psalm 145:7)*

*“To ... the only God, **be honor and glory forever and ever.**” (1 Timothy 1:17)*

3. HE IS THE GOD OF GLORY:

a. God Himself Is Glorious. He is the real source of all glory. In fact, He is named, **“The God of Glory”** (Psalm 29:3 & Acts 7:2), **“the Majestic Glory”** (2 Peter 1:17), and the **“The Father of Glory”** (Ephesians 1:17). Whether or not we glorify Him, God is glorious in Himself:

*“**Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!**” “**Let your glory be over all the earth!**” (Ps. 57:5,11)*

b. All Glory Forever Belongs To God:

*“To the King of the ages, immortal ... **be honor and glory forever and ever.**” (1 Timothy 1:17)*

*“**to the only God, our Savior ... be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.**” (Jude 1:25)*

c. God Is Not Selfish In Expecting To Be Glorified. God is the creator and originator of everything that exists. His is the perfection of all attributes and He is the only Savior and justifier of believers. So, there should be no question that all glory ultimately belongs to Him. He alone is worthy of all praise and honor.

*“I am the Lord ... **my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.**” (Isaiah 42:8)*

*“Then all your people will be righteous; They will possess the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, **That I may be glorified.**” (Isaiah 60:21)*

*“... In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted **for his own glory.**” (Isaiah 61:3 – NLT)*

*“**Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor** ...” (Revelation 4:11)*

God says He is **jealous** when he does not receive worship and honor from His people. Here are two of **the 28 times God’s jealousy is mentioned** in the Bible:

*“... worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is **Jealous**, is a **jealous God**” (Ex. 34:14)*

*“They angered God by building shrines to other gods; they made him **jealous** with their idols.” (Psalm 78:58 - NLT)*

In 2 Corinthians 11:2 the Apostle Paul talks about having **“godly jealousy”** because **jealousy is one of the attributes of God. God’s jealousy is pure because it is in response to someone not giving Him what belongs to Him.** Jealousy is sinful only when it involves wanting something that belongs to someone else.

God told His people Israel they were “robbing” him of the tithes and offerings that belonged to Him as a part of their worship:

*“**Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me.** But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions.” (Malachi 3:8)*

Likewise, we are “robbing” God when we refuse to worship and glorify Him. All of us ultimately will bow before Him and give Him glory, whether we want to or not:

*“By myself I have sworn ... **‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’**” (Isaiah 45:23)*

4. HOW GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED: God *wants* us to know Him intimately. That's why He reveals to us a limited measure of His glory. He does it in five ways:

a. In His Creation:

1) All Inanimate Created Objects Bring Glory And Praise To Him. Even the person who has never heard of God can see in creation that there is an awesome and glorious Creator:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and ... his handiwork." (Psalm 19:1 - NLT)

"Sing, O heavens ... shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the Lord ... will be glorified ..." (Isaiah 44:23)

"For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever!" (Romans 11:36 – NLT)

2) All Created Living Beings Are To Bring Glory And Praise To Him:

"The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches ..." (Isaiah 43:20)

"Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ... Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds!" (Psalm 148:7-10)

b. In The Display Of The Attributes Of His Character:

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!" (Psalm 115:1)

"... we hear songs of praise, of glory to the Righteous One ..." (Isaiah 24:16)

"For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off ... For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another." (Isaiah 48:9-11)

"... I will manifest my glory in your midst. And they shall know that I am the Lord when I execute judgments in her and manifest my holiness in her;" (Ezekiel 28:22)

"... God's truth abounds to his glory ..." (Romans 3:7)

"and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy ..." (Romans 15:9)

"For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 4:15)

c. In His Dealing With The Nations And With Israel:

"And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen." (Exodus 14:18)

"So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name." (Isaiah 63:14)

"But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations ... in whose sight I made myself known ... in bringing them out of Egypt." (Ezekiel 20:9)

"And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see..." (Ezekiel 39:21)

"and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy ..." (Romans 15:9)

d. In His Work Of Salvation:

"call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." (Ps. 50:15)

*"I, I am he who blots out your transgressions **for my own sake** ..." (Isaiah 43:25)*

*"**in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory**" (Romans 9:23)*

*"he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ ... **to the praise of his glorious grace** ... In him we have **redemption through his blood** ... so that we ... might be **to the praise of his glory**. In him you also ... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit ... **to the praise of his glory.**" (Ephesians 1:5-7,12-14)*

e. In His People:

1) God Originally Created Us For His Glory:

*"everyone who is called by my name, **whom I created for my glory** ..." (Isaiah 43:7)*

2) God's Glory Is Revealed By Enabling Us To Be Like Him. Reflecting His character brings praise and honor to him in a way that verbal praise cannot. Reflecting the Father's character is a child's ultimate praise to his/her father.

*"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." (Matthew 5:44,45)*

*"you are ... **a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**" (1 Peter 2:9)*

*"when he comes on that day **to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed,** because our testimony to you was believed." (2 Thess. 1:10)*

3) God's Glory Is Revealed In Our Faithful Service To Him:

*"... let your light shine before others, so **that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**" (Matthew 5:16)*

*"for you were bought with a price. **So glorify God in your body.**" (1 Corinthians 6:20)*

*"**Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God** ..." (1 Peter 2:12)*

*"**By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit** ..." (John 15:8)*

4) God's Glory Is Revealed In Our Individual Worship Of Him. When we worship Him we express to Him our love, admiration, thanksgiving and praise:

*"I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and **I will glorify your name forever.**" (Psalm 86:12)*

*"You who fear the Lord, **praise him! ... glorify him, and stand in awe** ..." (Psalm 22:23)*

5) God's Glory Is Revealed In Our Praising Him To All Nations:

*"We will not hide them from their children, but **tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.**" (Psalm 78:4)*

*"to **make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.**" (Psalm 145:12)*

*"... to the coastlands far away, **that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.**" (Isaiah 66:19)*

5. AND (AMAZINGLY) GOD GLORIFIES US. We naturally think all glory belongs to God and we would be sinfully arrogant if we wanted our own glory. I was astonished to discover **at least 22 verses** saying that **God doesn't just save and reconcile us, He glorifies us!** Here are a few:

a. The Perfect Father Glorifies His Children. [see Chapter 12 – The Fatherhood of God]

*“... obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus **with eternal glory.**”* (2 Timothy 2:10)

*“they loved the glory that comes from man more than **the glory that comes from God**”* (John 12:43)

*“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with **the glory that is to be revealed to [in] us...**”* (Romans 8:18)

*“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and **those whom he justified he also glorified.**”* (Romans 8:30)

*“**And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another ...**”* (2 Corinthians 3:18)

*“For this light momentary affliction **is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.**”* (2 Corinthians 4:17)

b. In Fact, God Himself Is Our Glory (Our Boast, Our Fame):

*“But **you, O Lord, are** a shield about me, **my glory,** and the lifter of my head.”* (Psalm 3:3)

*“they exchanged **their glory** [their God] for the image of an ox that eats grass.”* (Psalm 106:20 - NASB)

6. JESUS AND GOD'S GLORY:

a. Jesus, From Eternity, Is One With The Father, Is The Exact Image Of The Father And Shares The Father's Glory:

*“And now, Father, **glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.**”* (John 17:5)

*“... **my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.**”*
(John 17:24)

*“... **the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**”* (2 Corinthians 4:4)

*“**He is the image of the invisible God ... He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell**”*
(Colossians 1:15,18,19)

b. But He Chose To Put Aside His Glory By Humbling Himself To Become A Man And Suffer A Cursed And Shameful Death For Us:

*“... **Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**”* (Philippians 2:5-8)

*“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law **by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”**”* (Galatians 3:13)

*“looking to **Jesus**, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”*
(Hebrews 12:2)

c. Therefore The Father Has Once Again Glorified Jesus Through His Resurrection, Ascension and Exaltation At His Right Hand:

[Jesus:] *“If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me ...”* (John 8:54)

“You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor.”
(Hebrews 2:7)

“... predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories ... God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory ...” (1 Peter 1:11,21)

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

d. That Is Because He Has Always Been “The Lord Of Glory:”

“None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1 Corinthians 2:8)

“He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power ...” (Hebrews 1:3)

“... faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.” (James 2:1)

e. And Now He Shares His Glory With Those Who Believe In Him:

“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.”
(John 17:22)

“and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8:17)

“... so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

f. We Also Bring Glory To Jesus:

[Jesus prayed] *“All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.”* (John 17:10)

“In him we have obtained an inheritance ... so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:11-12)

“when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed...so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him...” (2 Thessalonians 1:10,12)

C. CONCLUSIONS.

1. While God’s name In the Qur’an primarily reflects His singleness and mighty power, God’s name in the Bible reveals His character.

2. In Islam, all glory is reserved for God alone, but the Bible tells us that God delights in sharing His glory with His children.

3. In Islam, God's glory brings fear, but in the Bible it brings joyful awe:

*"Fire blazed forth from the LORD's presence and consumed the burnt offering ... **When the people saw this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground.**"* (Leviticus 9:24 - NLT)

*"**Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him ...; his name is the LORD** ["He Who Is"]; **exult before him!**"* (Psalm 68:4) ["exult" = "to leap for joy, to be extremely joyful" – dictionary]

Fear and awe are balanced by the overwhelming joyful singing and leaping because this awesome and majestic God is *our* God, who has taken away all our guilt, shame and fear and in their place has shared with us His own amazing honor and glory.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MERCY & GRACE

OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Mercy & Grace:

- A. Names And Words Relating To God's Mercy And Grace
- B. The Basic Meaning Of God's Mercy And Grace
- C. Jesus The Revelation Of God's Mercy And Grace
- D. Differences And My Reactions

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. NAMES AND WORDS RELATED TO GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE:

ISLAM:

Islam presents God as the giver of mercy and grace:

1. THREE OF ISLAM'S 99 "MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES" RELATED TO THIS SUBJECT:

Ar Rahman = The Most Merciful, Gracious, Beneficent

Ar Rahim = The Most Merciful, Mercy Giver

Ar-Ra'uf (Ra'oof, Ra'uuf) = The Kind, Indulgent, Compassionate

2. A COMMON PHRASE, "BIS-MILLAH-AR-RAHMAN-AR-RAHIM" (in the name of Allah, the merciful and the mercy giver): This very common phrase embodies one of Islam's most basic and important concepts about God. It is translated by Yusuf Ali as, "*In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful.*"

The importance of this phrase is seen in the fact that it is found as a dedication at the beginning of all of the 114 *Suras* of the Qur'an (except the 9th) and that the two words, *Rahman & Rahim* are listed 2nd and 3rd (after "*Allah*") in the list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" or attributes of God (*Ar-Ra'uf* is listed 83rd).

[See appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

This phrase is also spoken as a dedication by Muslims at the start of every important activity (eating, boarding a vehicle, starting a job, etc.). It is also written at the top of letters and

documents.

THE BIBLE:

In this study of mercy and grace, I have divided **the Old Testament** from **the New Testament** in order to show the distinction between them in this matter. For those who may not know, the Old Testament is the first and largest part of the Bible and contains the Pentateuch or *Torah* (“*Taurat*” in Arabic), the *Psalms* (“*Zabur*” in Arabic) and 33 other books of the prophets before the coming of Jesus the Messiah. The New Testament (“*Injil*” in Arabic) is the last part and contains the life and teaching of Jesus plus the teaching of His apostles. Both Testaments reveal God’s grace and mercy.

“... you are a ... **merciful God.**” (Nehemiah 9:31) “... **the God of all grace** ...” (1 Peter 5:10)

Now notice the differences between Mercy and Grace in the Old and New Testaments:

1. THE FREQUENCY OF THE WORD, “MERCY”:

a. God’s “Mercy” In The Old Testament – 230+ Times: The exact number of times the words “*mercy*” and “*merciful*” occur in reference to God is difficult to determine because at least 8 different Hebrew words are translated this way in various English translations, but some of these words are translated “*favor*,” “*kindness*,” “*tender mercies*,” “*grace*,” “*compassion*” or “*steadfast love*” in other translations. In the KJV the most common word translated, “*mercy*” is **chesed** (see “*steadfast love*” below). In Hebrew it appears 176 times in reference to God, and is translated as “*mercy*,” “*kindness*,” “*loving kindness*” or “*goodness*.” The second most common word is **rawkham** (“*compassion*,” “*tender love*,” “*pity*,” “*womb*”), which appears 35 times. The 3rd & 4th most common words translated “*merciful*” in the KJV are **khawnan** (bending in kindness toward an inferior, to favor, bestow), which appears 11 times, and **rakhoom** (compassionate), which appears 8 times. So the collective total number of times these four words appear is 230.

b. God’s “Mercy” In The New Testament – 61 times: The most common words for mercy, used in the original Greek, are **eleos** (“*compassion*” or “*pity*”), **eleheho**, (“*compassionate*”) and **eleemon** (“*merciful*”). These words occur a total of 61 times, which is less than half the times the word grace occurs (see below).

2. THE FREQUENCY OF THE WORD, “GRACE”:

a. God’s “Grace” In The Old Testament - 62 times: The Hebrew word for “*grace*” is **khane** (“*kindness*,” “*favor*”), which appears 37 times. The two words for “*gracious*” are **khawnan** (“*gracious*,” “*merciful*,” “*bending in kindness toward an inferior*”) and **Khannoon** (“*gracious*”), which together appear a total of 25 times. All three words appear a total of 62 times.

b. God’s “Grace” In The New Testament – 149 times: The original Greek word translated, “*grace*” is “**charis**” and the word translated “*gift*” is “**charisma**,” which is used for the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit gives to believers. “*Charis*” and “*charisma*” are used in the New Testament 149 times to describe God’s grace (gracious gifting or unmerited favor) for mankind.

B. THE BASIC MEANING OF GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE:

ISLAM:

We will be looking at the following:

1. The Meaning Of The Words, “*Rahman*” And “*Rahim*”
2. The Use Of The Word “*Grace*” In Reference To God In The Qur’an
3. The Use Of The Word “*Mercy*” In Reference To God In The Qur’an
4. The Frequency And Use Of The Related Word, “*Kindness*” (*Ra’uf*) In Reference To God In The Qur’an
5. The Qur’an’s Basic Meaning Of This “*Grace-Mercy-Kindness*” Attribute Of God

1. THE MEANING OF THE WORDS, “*RAHMAN*” AND “*RAHIM*:” Because these two words are translated by many as “*gracious*” and “*merciful*” and in English the words, “*grace*” and “*mercy*” represent two related, but distinct concepts, I set out to understand the meaning of “*Rahman*” and “*Rahim*” in Islam, assuming they were the words for grace and mercy in Arabic. I discovered that different translators have translated the phrase “*bis-millah-ar-rahman-ar-rahim*” as, “*in the name of Allah, the most gracious, most merciful,*” “*... the merciful and the compassionate*” or “*... the beneficent, the merciful,*” which confused me. Which one means “*merciful*” and which one means “*compassionate,*” “*beneficent*” or “*gracious*”? After consulting several Islamic dictionaries and web sites I began to understand that these two words have basically the same meaning. That is because they come from the same three letter Arabic root, ر ح م (RHM). In writing about “*Rahmat*” (mercy), another word from that same root, one Islamic website, (<http://www.quran-st.net/Dictionary.htm>) helped me to understand this:

“Rahmat being constructive, beneficial, full of mercy etc. is also supported by the fact that the Arabic word for ‘womb’ is Rahm (Sura 3:6) from the same root ... used for Rahman, Rahim and Rahmat. The child in the womb is provided with all that is necessary for its growth through the mother and is carefully protected from all harmful things. The feeling of the mother towards the child is that of compassion, beneficence, mercy, safety etc. and these feelings further explain the term Rahmat ... ”

However, I also found out that Islamic scholars have made certain creative distinctions in the use and meaning of these two adjectives. After reading a number of articles, I have found the following 5 opinions regarding the distinction between the two words:

- 1) “*Rahman*” means the **all merciful**; “*Rahim*” means the **ever merciful**,
- 2) “*Rahman*” means **the merciful to all mankind** (believers and unbelievers) while “*Rahim*” means **the merciful and compassionate to believers**,
- 3) “*Rahman*” means **the merciful in all the situations and needs in this life on earth**; “*Rahim*” means **the merciful and compassionate throughout eternity**,
- 4) “*Rahman*” means **the merciful for the needs of the body**, while “*Rahim*” means **the merciful for the heart** and
- 5) “*Rahman*” refers to **God’s broad, overflowing but temporary mercy**, while “*Rahim*” refers to **God’s permanent mercy**.

Therefore the best translation of this phrase may be “*in the name of Allah, the merciful, the mercy giver*” or “*... the entirely merciful, the especially merciful*” (Saheeh International translation).

The concept behind these two interlinked, almost identical attributes of God (“*rahman*” and “*rahim*”) seems to be one of the major underlying themes of the Qur’an. This is made clear by the fact that the words, “*grace*,” “*gracious*” or “*most gracious*” are found at least 237 times and the words, “*mercy*,” “*merciful*” or “*most merciful*” are found at least 375 times in Yusuf Ali’s English translation of the Qur’an.

2. THE USE OF THE WORD “MERCY” IN REFERENCE TO GOD IN THE

QUR’AN: The fact that “*mercy*” is one of the most frequently used words of the Qur’an, is evidenced by the fact that there is a total of 375 occurrences of “*mercy*” or “*most merciful*” in Yusuf Ali’s English Translation of the Qur’an! The phrase, “*most merciful*” occurs 216 times – 113 times in the dedicatory phrase before each of the Suras (except the ninth) and 103 times throughout the verses of the Qur’an. Plus the single words “*mercy*” or “*merciful*” occur another 159 times.

Allah’s power is thought to be eclipsed only by his mercy (His power to forgive), and “*mercy*” seems to mean kindness or benevolence. As mentioned above, the meaning of both words is largely “*mercy*.” In trying to further understand the various facets of Islam’s teaching about God’s mercy I have examined the use of these words in each verse.

The 375 uses of “*mercy*” “*merciful*” and “*most merciful*” can be divided into five broad areas of emphasis. I have included a few verses as examples of each:

a. A Title Or Attribute Of God – 227 times: This includes “*In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful*” 113 times before each of the Suras (except the ninth), “*most merciful*” by itself 103 additional times, and “*merciful*” or “*full of mercy*” 11 times:

“*And your God is One God: There is no god but He, most gracious, most merciful.*” (Sura 2:163)

“*If they accuse thee of falsehood, say: ‘Your Lord is full of mercy all-embracing; but from people in guilt never will His wrath be turned back.’*” (Sura 6:147)

“*And put thy trust on the Exalted in might, the Merciful.*” (Sura 26:217)

b. God’s Kind Mercy In Giving Worldly Benefits – 25 times:

“*For His mercy He specially chooseth whom He pleaseth; for God is the Lord of bounties unbounded.*” (Sura 3:74)

“*And He it is who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy, and We send down pure water from the sky.*” (Sura 25:48)

“*It is out of His mercy that He has made for you night and day, - that ye may rest therein, and that ye may seek of his grace; - and in order that ye may be grateful.*” (Sura 28:73)

c. God’s Benevolent Mercy In Giving Books, Messages And Messengers – 23 times:

“*... those who accept a clear (sign) from their Lord, and whom a witness from Himself doth teach, as did the book of Moses before it, - a guide and a mercy? ...*” (Sura 11:17)

“*We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur’an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe: to the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss.*” (Sura 17:82)

“*Nor wast thou at the side of (the mountain of) Tur when we called (to Moses). Yet (art thou sent) as mercy from thy Lord, to give warning to a people to whom no warner had come before thee: in order that they may receive admonition.*” (Sura 28:46)

"Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our apostles: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel" (Sura 57:27)

d. Other Spiritual Benefits Given in God's Mercy – 19 times:

"Then those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, - soon will He admit them to mercy and grace from Himself, and guide them to Himself by a straight way." (Sura 4:175)

"And We bestowed of Our mercy on them, and We granted them lofty honour on the tongue of truth." (Sura 19:50)

"He it is who sends blessings on you, as do His angels, that He may bring you out from the depths of darkness into light: and He is full of mercy to the believers." (Sura 33:43)

e. God's Benevolent Mercy In Forgiving Sins – 81 times:

"On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray:) 'Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us; Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our protector; Help us against those who stand against faith.'" (Sura 2:286)

"But if any have done wrong and have thereafter substituted good to take the place of evil, truly, I am oft-forgiving, most merciful." (Sura 27:11)

"... that He may admit to His mercy whom He will. If they had been apart, We should certainly have punished the unbelievers among them with a grievous punishment." (Sura 48:25)

[See also CHAPTER 8– GOD'S SALVATION]

3. THE USE OF THE WORD "GRACE" IN REFERENCE TO GOD IN THE

QUR'AN: Alright, if both "*rahman*" and "*rahim*" essentially mean merciful what about grace? Are there other words with this meaning? It seems clear that there are several other words translated "*grace*," "*favour*," "*bestowment*" etc. by Yusuf Ali in the Qur'an. Some of them are *niematin*, *fadal*, *minna*, *ni'ma* and *huzwa*. Not having sufficient knowledge of Arabic script and meaning, I am unable to locate and study them in detail, but in trying to further understand Islam's teaching about God's grace, I have examined Yusuf Ali's 237 uses of the English words "*grace*" and "*gracious*" and divided them into the following **four usages** with samples of each:

a. God's Title Of "Most Gracious" – 145 times: As seen above, the word *Rahim* is used as a part of a dedicatory phrase at the beginning of 113 suras (all except the 9th). It is also used 32 other times in the text of the Qur'an. Yusuf Ali has translated it "**most gracious**," even though it means merciful:

*"In the name of God, Most Merciful, **Most Gracious**" (before each Sura)*

*"(God) **most gracious** is firmly established on the throne (of authority)." (Sura 20:5)*

*"A revelation from (God), **most gracious**, most merciful." (Sura 41:2)*

b. God's Grace (Favor) In General – 17 times:

*"... **The grace of God** and His blessings on you, o ye people of the house!" (Sura 11:73)*

*"... That is the **grace of God**, which He will bestow on whom He pleaseth." (Sura 5:54)*

*"We bestowed **grace** aforetime on David from ourselves" (Sura 34:10)*

c. God's Grace (Favor) In Bestowing Material Blessings - 25 times:

[about Job] *"So We listened to him: We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his people to him, and doubled their number, - as a grace from Ourselves ..."* (Sura 21:84)

"... if they are in poverty, God will give them means out of His grace" (Sura 24:32)

"Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until God gives them means out of His grace...." (Sura 24:33a)

"Seest thou not that the ships sail through the ocean by the grace of God? ..." (Sura 31:31)

"It is God who has made the night for you, that ye may rest therein, and the days as that which helps (you) to see. Verily God is full of grace and bounty to men ..." (Sura 40:61)

d. God's Grace (Favor) In Bestowing Spiritual Blessings – 50 times: Here are a few examples:

"God by His grace guided the believers to the truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For God guided whom He will to a path that is straight. ..." (Sura 2:213)

"... But God beckons by His grace to the garden (of bliss) and forgiveness, and makes His signs clear to mankind: that they may celebrate His praise. (Sura 2:221)

"O ye who believe! if ye fear God, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong), remove from you (all) evil (that may afflict) you, and forgive you: for God is the Lord of grace unbounded." (Sura 8:29)

"... But God has endeared the faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you unbelief, wickedness, and rebellion. Such indeed are those who walk in righteousness. A grace and favour from God" (Sura 49:7,8)

4. THE FREQUENCY AND USE OF THE RELATED WORD, "KINDNESS"

(Ra'uf) IN REFERENCE TO GOD IN THE QUR'AN: There are 11 occurrences of the words "*kindness*" or "*kind*" used as attributes of God in Yusuf Ali's English Translation of the Qur'an. Here are five of those verses:

"... For Allah is to all people most surely full of kindness, most merciful." (Sura 2:43)

"... And Allah is full of kindness to those that serve Him." (Sura 3:30)

"... to the Believers is he most kind and merciful." (Sura 9:128)

"... for thy Lord is indeed full of kindness and mercy." (Sura 16:47)

"... for Allah is Most kind and Most Merciful to man." (Sura 22:65)

In 9 of those 11 references there is a link to God's mercy in the same way that His graciousness is linked to His mercy. Also several other occurrences are presented as a title for God ("*Most Kind, Most Merciful*") in the same way that "*Most Gracious, Most Merciful*" is used, which would seem to indicate an almost identical meaning.

5. THE QUR'AN'S BASIC MEANING OF THIS "MERCY-GRACE-KINDNESS" ATTRIBUTE OF GOD: There Are At Least Four Important Things I Have Understood About The Quranic Meaning Of This Attribute:

a. The Words "*Grace,*" "*Kindness*" and "*Forgiveness*" Seem To Be Used Almost Interchangeably with "*Mercy,*" Indicating that they all have the same

basic meaning. See how they are coupled together with Mercy:

1) Grace and Mercy:

“... **Were it not for the grace and mercy of God unto you, all but a few of you would have fallen into the clutches of Satan.**” (Sura 4:83)

2) Kindness and Mercy:

“... For Allah is to all people Most surely **full of kindness, Most Merciful.**” (Sura 243)

“... to the Believers is he **most kind and merciful.**” (Sura 9:128)

“... for thy Lord is indeed full of **kindness and mercy.**” (Sura 16:47)

3) Forgiveness and Mercy: The twin phrases, “**oft-forgiving, most merciful**” and, “**oft-returning, most merciful**” are used 89 times, and in addition the two words, “**forgiveness**” and “**mercy**” are used together many other times:

“But if the thief repents after his crime, and amends his conduct, **God turneth to him in forgiveness; for God is oft-forgiving, most merciful.**” (Sura 5:39)

“And if ye are slain, or die, in the way of God, **forgiveness and mercy from God** are far better than all they could amass.” (Sura 3:157)

“He said: “O my people! why ask ye to hasten on the evil in preference to the good? **If only ye ask God for forgiveness, ye may hope to receive mercy.**” (Sura 27:46)

“Say: ‘O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! **Despair not of the mercy of God: for God forgives all sins: for He is oft-forgiving, most merciful.**” (Sura 39:53)

4) Grace, Forgiveness and Mercy: Three of these words are used a few times all together in the same verse:

“... and seek ye **the grace of God: for God is oft-forgiving, most merciful.**” (Sura 73:20)

b. In The Qur’an The General Meaning Of These Three Words Seems To Be A Simple Kindness, Pity Or Benevolence. Here are a few verses linking God’s mercy and grace with kindness and benevolence:

“... For **God is to all people most surely full of kindness, most merciful.**” (Sura 2:143)

“Were it not for the **grace and mercy** of God on you, and that **God is full of kindness and mercy,** (ye would be ruined indeed). (Sura 24:20)

“But verily **thy Lord is full of grace to mankind:** Yet most of them are ungrateful.” (Sura 27:73)

c. In Islam God’s Mercy-Grace-Kindness Is Earned. God gives this blessing in response to, and as a reward for, certain acts of the sinner, which will be weighed on God’s scale. In other words, **they are earned benefits!** But “**mercy**” and “**grace**” are not words that normally fit with earned benefits!

According to the Qur’an, Mercy is given as a reward which is earned and therefore deserved by believers doing enough good deeds. Grace apparently is only for those who have stopped sinning by their own will power, not for those who need God’s power in their lives to overcome their sin.

God’s mercy, grace and kindness seem to be reserved, not for those who have committed sin and beg for mercy, but for those who:

- 1) who believe in one God, bow to His will and turn to Him in repentance

- 2) who “hold fast” to God (continue to believe and obey Him)
- 3) who go not astray but are on “the straight way”
- 4) who are devoted to Islam and follow Muhammad
- 5) who follow the Qur’an
- 6) who are sincere and righteous
- 7) who do good, practice regular charity, establish regular prayer, fight in the cause of God and believe in God’s signs
- 8) who repent and give restitution
- 9) who abound in merit, whose deeds justly earn them paradise on the scales of justice.

[For a fuller study of the Qur’an’s teaching about Paradise see Chapter 4]

Here are a few verses about the things to be done in order to earn God’s mercy:

*“On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear. **It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns ...**”* (Sura 2:286)

*“**All who obey God and the apostle are in the company of those on whom is the grace of God, - of the prophets (who teach), the sincere (lovers of Truth), the witnesses (who testify), and the righteous (who do good): Ah! what a beautiful fellowship!**”* (Sura 4:69)

*“**Then those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, - soon will He admit them to mercy and grace from Himself, and guide them to Himself by a straight way.**”* (Sura 4:175)

*“... He said: ‘With My punishment I visit whom I will; but **My mercy extendeth to all things. That (mercy) I shall ordain for those who do right, and practice regular charity, and those who believe in Our signs.**’”* (Sura 7:156)

*“... and **bestow His abounding grace on all who abound in merit!**”* (Sura 11:3)

*“We shall set up **scales of justice for the day of judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least, and if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it (to account): and enough are We to take account.**”* (Sura 21:47; see also 101:6-9)

*“**So establish regular prayer and give regular charity; and obey the Apostle; that ye may receive mercy.**”* (Sura 24:56)

d. God Gives Merciful Kindness Only Because He Chooses To!

(This Is In Apparent Contradiction To What We Have Just Seen.) According to the following verses, God in His omnipotence simply decrees His mercy and grace as a special concession to those He chooses to favor, which may or may not be those who earn His favor! Thus God alone initiates repentance and faith in the hearts of believers. The following verses indicate that His choice involves three things:

- 1) His sovereign **will** (whomever He chooses),
- 2) His omnipotent **power** (Lord of unbounded grace and bounties), and
- 3) His superior **knowledge** (He knows best).

*“...But **God will choose** for His special **mercy whom He will** - for God is **Lord of grace abounding.**”*
(Sura 2:105)

*“For His **mercy** He specially **chooseth whom He pleaseth**; for God is **the Lord of bounties unbounded.**”*
(Sura 3:74)

*“... That is the **grace** of God, which He will bestow **on whom He pleaseth.**”* (Sura 5:54)

*“It is your Lord that **knoweth you best: If He please, He granteth you mercy, or if He please,***

punishment: *We have not sent thee to be a disposer of their affairs for them.*” (Sura 17:54)
He punishes whom He pleases, and He grants mercy to whom He pleases ...” (Sura 29:21)
... He may admit to His mercy whom He will ...” (Sura 48:25)
... a garden (of bliss)... that is the grace of God, which He bestows on whom he pleases: and God is the Lord of grace abounding.” (Sura 57:21)
That the People of the Book may know that they have no power whatever over the grace of God, that (His) grace is (entirely) in His hand, to bestow it on whomsoever He wills. For God is the Lord of grace abounding.” (Sura 57:29)

So Which Is It? – God’s **Mercy** in payment for a person’s meritorious deeds, or God’s sovereign **Will**?

How Does God’s Justice Relate To His Mercy? Is justice even in the picture? The following statement of Muhammad about God’s mercy, found in the English translation of Sahih Bukhari’s collection of Hadith, illustrates the strange way Islam deals with the conflict between God’s arbitrary mercy and His righteous justice:

“Narrated Hazrat Abu Huraira radi Allahu anhu: ‘Allah’s Apostle sallallahu alaihi wasallam said, ‘When Allah completed the creation, He wrote in His book which is with Him on His throne, “My mercy overpowers My anger.”’”(Bukhari’s Hadith, Volume 4, Book 54, Number 416)

From this statement It would seem that one way God deals with this conflict is to silence His justice by simply crushing it! Also, the Qur’an indicates another intriguing way God uses to disregard His justice for the sake of His sovereign will to forgive. **He simply changes evil into good! Wow!:**

“... for God will change the evil of such persons into good, and God is off-forgiving, most merciful.”
 (Sura 25:70)

6. CONCLUSIONS:

a. No Grace: The meaning of, “*grace*” in the Qur’an basically seems to be benevolent mercy. **It would seem, therefore that Islam knows only God’s mercy and does not at all understand God’s grace (see below)!**

b. Mercy Overpowering Justice: The Qur’an says God’s **mercy overpowers His anger**. In contrast the Bible teaches that God’s justice cannot be overpowered but is fully satisfied by His redemption in Christ. [See Chapter 11 - Justice]

c. Ultimately God’s Will Determines All. No doubt the Qur’an puts a great deal of emphasis on God’s mercy, but in the end it seems that God’s sovereign will is all that matters. If He wills to forgive, He forgives; if He wills to punish He punishes. He is merciful to whomever He chooses. [See Chapter 8(a) – Forgiveness]

THE BIBLE:

We will be looking at the following:

1. The Meaning Of Mercy In The Old And New Testament
2. The Meaning Of Grace In The Old And New Testament
3. Different Emphases Of Mercy & Grace And Their Relationship To Each Other
4. A Possible Biblical Origin For Islam’s “*Bis-Millah-Al-Rahman-Al-Rahim*”

5. God's "Steadfast Love"

1. THE MEANING OF MERCY IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT:

a. God's Mercy In The Old Testament: The meaning seems to be undeserved forgiveness or salvation for sinners doomed to destruction; i.e., "*favor,*" "*kindness,*" "*tender mercies,*" "*grace,*" "*compassion*" or "*steadfast love*":

*"Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and **thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life ...**" (Genesis 19:19 - KJV)*

*"... to say, Praise the Lord; for **his mercy endureth for ever.**" (2 Chronicles 20:21 - KJV)*

*"For thou, Lord, art ... **ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy ...**" (Psalm 86:5 - KJV)*

*"For as the heaven is high above the earth, **so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.**" (Psalm 103:11 - KJV)*

Notice that God's **goodness and graciousness** are used synonymously with His mercy (pardon):

*"Therefore **the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.** For the Lord is a God of justice ..." (Isaiah 30:18)*

*"Surely **goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,** and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23:6)*

*"... And I will be **gracious** to whom I will be gracious, and **will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.**" (Exodus 33:19)*

b. God's Mercy In The New Testament: The words translated as "mercy" have the meaning of "*compassion*" or "*pity.*" God's mercy is given to undeserving sinners. I have divided verses containing the word mercy into several categories. Here are a few examples for each category:

1) Mercy received in salvation from eternal destruction – 26 times: This includes not only salvation *from* our sins and from God's judgment, but also salvation *into* the new birth and new life in Christ as the people of God:

*"... in the **forgiveness of their sins,** because of **the tender mercy of our God ...**" (Luke 1:77,78)*

*"But God, **being rich in mercy,** because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ ...**" (Eph. 2:4,5)*

*"**he saved us,** not because of works done by us in righteousness, but **according to his own mercy,** by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5)*

*"... **According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3)*

*"Once you were not a people, but **now you are God's people;** once you had not received mercy, but **now you have received mercy.**" (1 Peter 2:10)*

2) Mercy received in general blessing – 10 times:

*"And **his mercy is for those who fear him** from generation to generation." (Luke 1:50)*

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of mercies** and God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3)*

*"**May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.**" (Jude 1:2)*

3) Mercy in deliverance from disease and demonic possession – 9 times:

“And as Jesus passed on from there, **two blind men** followed him, crying aloud, “**Have mercy on us, Son of David.**” (Matthew 9:27)

[Jesus said to] “... **the man who had been possessed with demons** ... ‘Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how **he has had mercy on you.**’” (Mark 5:18-19)

“Now the time came **for Elizabeth** [who was barren] **to give birth**, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that **the Lord had shown great mercy to her** ...” (Luke 1:57-58)

“Indeed he was **ill, near to death**. But **God had mercy on him** ...” (Philippians 2:27)

4) Mercy in receiving good character and wisdom – 12 times:

“Blessed are **the merciful**, for **they shall receive mercy.**” (Matthew 5:7)

“... I give my **judgment** as **one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.**” (1 Corinthians 7:25)

“But the **wisdom from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, **full of mercy** and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” (James 3:17)

5) Mercy and Grace used together – 4 times:

“To Timothy, my true child in the faith: **Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.**” (1 Timothy 1:2 & 2 Timothy 1:2)

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, **that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**” (Hebrews 4:16)

“**Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us**, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.” (2 John 1:3)

c. God's Mercy Cannot Ignore And Must Satisfy His Justice. God is both merciful and just, but these two attributes seem to contradict each other. If, in His mercy, He forgives our sin without punishment, he is no longer just. And if, in His justice, He punishes repentant sinners for their sins, He is no longer merciful! But, as we will see more clearly in the New Testament, by means of His atoning sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah, Almighty God has reconciled and satisfied both of these equally important attributes. Although the Old Testament does not show this as clearly as the New Testament, it certainly indicates it in the following 5 verses:

“... **the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.**” (Isaiah 30:18)

This verse clearly tells us that the reason God shows us mercy is because He is a God of justice, and for that reason He is exalted and glorified! Our God has found a way to reconcile these two attributes.

“**Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.**” (Psalm 85:10)

Steadfast love and peace represent mercy. Faithfulness (to His law) and righteousness represent justice. These two have found a way to “kiss each other”!

“**Righteousness and justice** are the foundation of your throne; **steadfast love and faithfulness** [to your promises] go before you.” (Psalm 89:14)

“**a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness** [to His promises] ... **one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.**” (Isaiah 16:5)

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but **to do justly, and**

to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8 – KJV)

[For a fuller study of God’s Justice, see CHAPTER 11]

2. THE MEANING OF GRACE IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT:

a. God’s “Grace” In The Old Testament: The meaning of the Old Testament Hebrew words translated “grace,” “gracious,” “mercy” and “merciful” are very similar to the meaning of the Arabic words for grace and mercy in the Qur’an. They all seem to mean “mercy” (“benevolence,” “pity,” “compassion” or “kindness”) rather than the clearer meaning of “grace” as seen in the New Testament:

*“Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; **listen to my plea for grace**” (Psalm 86:6) .*

*“Turn to me and **be gracious to me**, for I am lonely and afflicted.” (Psalm 25:16)*

*“For a people shall dwell in Zion ... you shall weep no more. **He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry**. As soon as he hears it, he answers you.” (Isaiah 30:19)*

*“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem **a spirit of grace** and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child ...” (Zechariah 12:10)*

b. God’s “Grace” In The New Testament: The original Greek word used for “grace” is “**charis**” which, according to Strong’s Concordance means “*benefit, favor, graciousness ... gift ...*” In this definition we see that God’s grace is not only unmerited but is given to enable. The Greek word for “gift” or “gifts” is “**charisma**” which, according to Strong’s means “*a (divine) gratuity... (spiritual) endowment... (free) gift,*” and is used for the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit graciously gives to believers. **In English we fail to see this obvious relationship between “grace” and “gift,” but it is clear in the Greek.** Therefore, I would define grace as “**God’s unmerited gift of enabling power.**”

“*Charis*” and “*charisma*” are used in the New Testament to describe God’s grace for mankind. The Grace of God was fully revealed in Jesus the Messiah and now administered by God’s Holy Spirit in the lives of God’s people. It **enables sinners to trust** in Christ for salvation, it **empowers believers to live** godly lives, and it **gives believers the ability to serve** other believers through the exercise of their spiritual gifts. In these ways God’s grace results in both glory to God and spiritual fruit in the lives of believers:

1) Categories Of Grace: I have divided the New Testament verses into several categories of examples of God gifting believers with His free grace:

a) God’s Grace Revealed In And Through Jesus The Messiah (“Incarnate Grace”) – God revealed His righteousness through Moses and the law, but His enabling grace is revealed through Jesus – 5 Times:

*“who has saved us ... **according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,**” (2 Timothy 1:9 - NASB)*

*“For **from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace**. For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**” (John 1:16,17)*

*“For **the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people**” (Titus 2:11)*

b) God’s Grace For Eternal Life (“Saving Grace”) – Grace enabling us to believe, be redeemed and receive salvation – 45 Times:

*“... **he greatly helped those who through grace had believed.**” (Acts 18:27)*

*“and are **justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**”*
(Romans 3:24)

*“... we have **redemption ... according to the riches of his grace.**”* (Ephesians 1:7)

*“For **by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**”* (Ephesians 2:8,9)

*“For **the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.**”* (Titus 2:11)

Sadly, some refuse God’s saving grace given through God’s Spirit:

*“How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by **the one who** has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and **has outraged the Spirit of grace?**”* (Hebrews 10:29)

c) God’s Grace For This Life (“Enabling Grace”) – To Empower Believers To Live In Christ’s Likeness – 51 Times:

*“... the word of his **grace, which is able to build you up ...**”* (Acts 20:32)

*“But **by the grace of God** I am what I am, and **his grace toward me** was not in vain. On the contrary, **I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.**”* (1 Corinthians 15:10)

*“... see that you **excel in this act of grace** [giving] **also.**”* (2 Corinthians 8:7)

*“For **the grace of God has appeared ... training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age ...**”* (Titus 2:11-12)

*“But **he gives more grace ... ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’**”* (James 4:6)

d) Prayers For God’s Grace To Be Given To Others (“Blessing Grace”) (this too is grace for this life). – 32 times:

*“... **Grace to you ... from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**”* (Rom. 1:7)

*“**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**”* (Romans 16:20)

*“... **Grace be with you.**”* (Colossians 4:18)

e) Spiritual Gifts (“Serving Grace”) – To Empower For Ministry To Other Believers (this too is grace for this life) – 17 times:

*“For **the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.**”* (Romans 11:29)

*“Having **gifts that differ** according to the **grace** given to us ...”* (Romans 12:6)

*“As **each has received a gift**, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of **God’s varied grace.**”* (1 Peter 4:10)

It should be noted that the total of the verses speaking about God’s grace enabling us to live for Him in this life (in the last 3 categories) equals two thirds (100 out of 149) of all uses of the words, “*charis*” and “*charisma*.” Shouldn’t we therefore put more emphasis on this instead of emphasizing only God’s grace for salvation from death and hell in category b)?

2) Objective Of God’s Grace: There are two sides to this same coin – the twin purposes of God’s grace in the life of a believer:

a) Transforming Us To Be Like Him, Reflecting His Glory, As He Originally Intended: By redeeming us (removing our sin) and giving us His indwelling Spirit, God is in the process of **restoring us to His own image, to reflect His glory and to live in an intimate relationship with Himself.**

*“And we all, with unveiled face, **beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**” (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

*“**so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus..**” (Ephesians 2:7)*

*“**Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.**” (1 John 3:2)*

[Islam, in contrast, claims to provide a guide for believers to become more like Muhammad; but never like God – an impossible thought in Islam:

*“**The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves ...**” (Sura 33:6)*

*“**Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) ...**” (Sura 33:21)]*

b) Empowering Us To Live For Him: In this present life God is equipping us with His power through His Holy Spirit so we can overcome temptation, walk in obedience and fellowship with Him as He uses us to work in the lives of others. Although God does not exempt believers from sickness, losses, accidents, obstacles, evil temptations and death, He gives us grace enabling us to persevere with joy, thankfulness and trust, bearing witness to His glory rather than being bitter, frustrated, defeated or angry:

*“... **we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God ...**” (2 Corinthians 1:12)*

*“**And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.**” (2 Corinthians 9:8)*

*“**But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness ...**” (2 Corinthians 12:9)*

*“**It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.**” (Philippians 1:7)*

*“**Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**” (Hebrews 4:16)*

An excerpt from Transforming Grace in the daily devotional, “Holiness Day By Day” by Jerry Bridges of the Navigators, includes a good summary of grace in our lives:

“We’re brought into God’s kingdom by grace; we’re sanctified by grace; we receive both temporal and spiritual blessings by grace; we’re motivated to obedience by grace; we’re called to serve and enabled to serve by grace; we receive strength to endure trials by grace; and we’re glorified by grace. The entire Christian life is lived under the reign of God’s grace.”

3. THE DIFFERENT EMPHASES OF MERCY AND GRACE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER: God’s Mercy and Grace are interwoven with each other and represent a large part of God’s character. Here are two classic passages showing

the interlocking relationship of God's grace and mercy:

"The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty ...'" (Exodus 34:6,7)

*"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But **the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him**, and his righteousness to children's children" (Psalm 103:8-17)*

It is clear that there is a great deal of overlap between the meaning of God's mercy and His grace, but each of them has a distinct emphasis. Someone has tried to describe it like this:

Mercy is God not giving us the bad things we deserve (judgment, punishment, etc.);

Grace is God giving us the good things we do not deserve (forgiveness, eternal life, etc).

While this distinction is generally very helpful, it is not entirely accurate:

God's Mercy includes not only God not judging and punishing us as we **do** deserve, but it also includes the forgiveness and salvation we **do not** deserve:

*"... in the forgiveness of their sins, because of **the tender mercy of our God**" (Luke 1:77,78)*

*"**he saved us**, not because of works done by us ... but **according to his own mercy** ..." (Titus 3:5)*

And God's Grace not only includes God giving us the eternal life we **do not** deserve, but it also includes the salvation from the punishment of death we **do** deserve:

*"For **by grace you have been saved** through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the **gift of God**, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)*

*"... so **that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.**" (Hebrews 2:9)*

Perhaps other ways of looking at the unique emphases of mercy and grace are:

Mercy is primarily God doing for us what we are completely unable to do – like new born babies.

Grace is primarily God empowering us to do everything He created us to do – like full grown adults.

Mercy is what a powerful king chooses to give out of pity for his subjects.

Grace is the training and provision a loving father gives his children, enabling them to be more like himself.

The meaning of God's grace in our lives is illustrated by an old rhyme:

*"'Run, John, run,' the law commands, but gives neither feet nor hands.
Better news the gospel brings; it bids me fly and gives me wings."*

4. A POSSIBLE BIBLICAL ORIGIN FOR ISLAM'S "Bis-Millah-Al-Rahman-Al-Rahim": It is quite possible that the primary source for part of the dedicatory Qur'anic phrase, "In the name of God, most merciful, most gracious" is the oft-repeated Old Testament phrase "*gracious and merciful.*" This phrase is found at least 8 times in varying forms in the Old Testament:

- "The LORD passed before him [Moses] and proclaimed, **"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin ..."** (Exodus 34:6,7)*
- "... For **the Lord your God is gracious and merciful** and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him." (2 Chronicles 30:9)*
- "... But **you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and **abounding in steadfast love** [loving kindness], and did not forsake them."** (Nehemiah 9:17)*
- "... for **you are a gracious and merciful God."** (Nehemiah 9:31)*
- "But you, O Lord, are **a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and **abounding in steadfast love** [loving kindness] and faithfulness."** (Psalm 86:15)*
- "**The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and **abounding in steadfast love** [loving kindness]."** (Psalm 103:8)*
- "... Return to the Lord your **God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and **abounding in steadfast love** [loving kindness]; and he relents over disaster."** (Joel 2:13)*
- "... for I knew that you are **a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and **abounding in steadfast love** [loving kindness], and relenting from disaster."** (Jonah 4:2)*

It would appear from the above verses that not only the phrase, "*gracious and merciful*" (or "*merciful and gracious*") itself, but also the Old Testament meaning of these words (loving kindness, favor, pity) is quite similar to what we see in the Qur'an. To some extent the teaching about God in Islam may be a reflection of the preliminary but incomplete knowledge about God revealed in the Old Testament. In our study of the New Testament we see the fuller revelation of God's grace.

5. GOD'S "STEADFAST LOVE": In five of the eight verses listed above we find the phrase, "*merciful and gracious*" or "*gracious and merciful*" linked together with the phrase, "*abounding in steadfast love.*"

This Hebrew word, **chesed** (see "Mercy" above), translated "steadfast love" (also translated "loving kindness," "kindness," "goodness," or "mercy" in other Bible translations) is a noun used more than 150 times throughout the Old Testament. It seems to have a similar meaning as the Arabic words *rahman* and *rahim* (merciful) in the Qur'an. However (unlike the Qur'an), the context of the Bible verses usually show a linking of God's steadfast love together with His mercy (see the following verses). It gives a better understanding of the quality of relationship with Him we experience because of His love. His relationship with us is not simply one of God condescending to show mercy to His creatures, but of a merciful Father "abounding in steadfast love" toward His children. This is God's self-giving love generating His mercy and grace:

*"God, being **rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us** ... " (Ephesians 2:4); better translated as: "**God being rich in mercy springing from his super-abundant love for us** ... " (The Resurrection New Testament, recently published by Dr. C. Gordon Olson)*

This "steadfast love" is described, for example, by King David in Psalm 63:1-8:

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. **My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich**

food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.”

God’s steadfast love or loving kindness (*chesed*) in this Psalm clearly indicates a more grace-filled and loving *relationship* between God and David, His servant than appears in the Qur’an’s use of “*rahman*” and “*rahim*.”

[For a fuller study of God’s Love, see Chapter 14]

C. JESUS THE REVELATION OF GOD’S MERCY AND GRACE:

ISLAM: The Qur’an says that Jesus was no more than a prophet, a man created by God’s command, to whom He gave the book *Injil* (Gospel) and the power to do miracles. It says nothing about Him being the giver or means of God’s mercy and grace.

“O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion ... **Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word** [God’s command to be born], **which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him ...**” (Sura 4:171) [Y.A.’s note #676: “Christ’s attributes are mentioned: ... a word bestowed on Mary, for **he was created by God’s word ‘Be’** ...”]

“Then will Allah say: “O **jesus** the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, **by My leave**, and thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird **by My leave**, and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, **by My leave**. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead **by My leave** ...” (Sura 5:110)

BIBLE:

1. JESUS AND GOD’S MERCY: Jesus is God become man, so He, through His death and resurrection, is both the source and means of God’s mercy, which He gives to us together with the Father,

a. Jesus Himself Gives Mercy:

“keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for **the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ** that leads to eternal life.” (Jude 1:21)

b. Jesus, Together With The Father Is The Source Of Mercy:

“To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, **mercy**, and peace **from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.**” (2 Timothy 1:2)

“Grace, **mercy**, and peace will be with us, **from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son**, in truth and love.” (2 John 1:3)

c. Jesus’ Work (Death & Resurrection) Is God’s Means Of Mercy:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great **mercy**, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**,” (1 Peter 1:3)*

2. JESUS AND GOD’S GRACE:

a. Jesus Himself Gives Grace:

*“But we believe that we will be saved **through the grace of the Lord Jesus**, just as they will.” (Acts 15:11)*

*“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift **by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ** abounded for many.” (Romans 5:15)*

*“For you know **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)*

*“You then, my child, be strengthened by **the grace that is in Christ Jesus**,” (2 Timothy 2:1)*

b. Jesus, Together With The Father Is The Source Of Grace:

*“Now may our **Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace**,” (2 Thessalonians 2:16)*

*“To Timothy, my beloved child: **Grace**, mercy, and peace **from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord**.” (2 Timothy 1:2)*

*“**Grace**, mercy, and peace will be with us, **from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love**.” (2 John 1:3)*

c. Jesus Is God’s Means Of Grace:

*“the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ**.” (John 1:17)*

*“so that, as sin reigned in death, **grace** also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life **through Jesus Christ our Lord**.” (Romans 5:21)*

D. DIFFERENCES AND MY REACTIONS:

In my opinion, there is a lot of similarity in the teaching of the Qur’an and the Bible regarding God’s mercy, but **Islam has little understanding of the Biblical concept of God’s grace**. The word “grace” is used more with the meaning of mercy than of grace.

Islam’s basic underlying concept of God’s mercy-grace differs because:

1. it is based primarily on God’s omnipotent power rather than His self-sacrificing love,
2. it proclaims God’s Almighty sovereignty but does not proclaim His perfect justice,
3. it elevates God’s absolute will at the expense of a personal relationship with man,
4. it is based on mankind earning it by good works instead of being given it unconditionally,
5. it denies Jesus is the perfect revelation of God to mankind.

In conclusion, I would say that the nature of God’s mercy-grace, as seen in the Bible and

especially in the New Testament, embodies God's merciful kindness, self-sacrificing love and enabling grace, and it is given to us undeserving rebels, former enemies, and helpless slaves, in order to transform us into His image as dearly loved children, enabling us to work alongside our Heavenly Father in His work.

But the concept of God's mercy-grace in the Qur'an is pity or benevolence given to menials such as slaves, indigents or infants. To illustrate this, imagine God as an extremely wealthy king, sending his servants to his door to give food and clothing out of his vast wealth to needy people standing there requesting help. Out of kindness he is helping those whom he chooses to help. These people are his subjects, but he neither needs them nor shares any personal relationship or common activities with them. He is merciful to them and feeds them, but *his relationship with them is indirect and does not go beyond his door*. He would never go to their homes and does not speak directly to them or invite them into his home either as friends or adopted children. And he certainly does not provide them with training and tools that would enable them to assist him in his business affairs or to support themselves.

[for the closely related study of God's Forgiveness and Salvation see Chapter 8 in this study]

CHAPTER EIGHT (a)

THE FORGIVENESS (AND SALVATION) OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

What Is The Difference Between Forgiveness And Salvation?

One very brief way to describe the difference is:

- **Forgiveness is cancelling the punishment for my sin but leaving me still guilty.**
- **Salvation is taking away my sin (with its guilt and punishment) and giving me God's own righteousness, enabling me to have eternal fellowship with God the Holy One.**

First, in this Part (a) we will be looking at the following topics related to God's Forgiveness:

- A. God's Response To Man's Initial Sin
- B. God's Forgiveness Of Sins

Then in Part (b) we will be looking at the these topics related to God's Salvation:

- C. God's Way Of Salvation For Sinners
- D. Reactions & Questions

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S RESPONSE TO MAN'S INITIAL SIN:

ISLAM:

1. THE QUR'AN'S ACCOUNTS OF ADAM'S FALL FROM PARADISE: These six passages describe how God dealt with man's initial sin:

*"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: 'Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?- whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?' He said: 'I know what ye know not.' And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: 'Tell me the names of these if ye are right.' They said: 'Glory to Thee, of knowledge We have none, save what Thou Hast taught us: In truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom.' He said: 'O Adam! Tell them their names.' When he had told them, Allah said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?' And behold, *We said to the angels: 'Bow down to Adam' and they bowed down. Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: He was of those who reject Faith. *We said: 'O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.' Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. *We said: 'Get ye*

down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood - for a time.’ Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord Turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. *We said: ‘Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.’” (Sura 2:30-38)

”O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and enjoy (its good things) as ye wish: but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.’ **Then began Satan to whisper suggestions to them, bringing openly before their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before): he said: ‘Your Lord only forbade you this tree, lest ye should become angels or such beings as live for ever.’ And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere adviser. So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies.** And their Lord called unto them: ‘Did I not forbid you that tree, and tell you that Satan was an avowed enemy unto you?’ They said: ‘**Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: If thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost.**’ (Allah) said: ‘**Get ye down. With enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood,- for a time.**’ He said: ‘**Therein shall ye live, and therein shall ye die; but from it shall ye be taken out (at last). O ye Children of Adam! *We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness,- that is the best.**’ Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may receive admonition! **O ye Children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you, in the same manner as He got your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their raiment, to expose their shame: for he and his tribe watch you from a position where ye cannot see them ...”** (Sura 7:19-27)

“*We had already, beforehand, taken **the covenant of Adam, but he forgot:** and *We found on his part no firm resolve. **When *We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate yourselves to Adam’, they prostrated themselves, but not Iblis [Satan]: he refused.** Then **We said: ‘O Adam! verily, this is an enemy to thee and thy wife: so let him not get you both out of the Garden, so that thou art landed in misery. There is therein (enough provision) for thee not to go hungry nor to go naked, Nor to suffer from thirst, nor from the sun’s heat.’ But Satan whispered evil to him: he said, ‘O Adam! shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?’ In the result, they both ate of the tree, and so their nakedness appeared to them: they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the Garden: thus did Adam disobey his Lord, and allow himself to be seduced. But his Lord chose him (for His Grace): He turned to him, and gave him Guidance. He said: ‘Get ye down, both of you,- all together, from the Garden, with enmity one to another: but if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from Me, whosoever follows My Guidance, will not lose his way, nor fall into misery.’”** (Sura 20:115- 123)

“... **For man was created Weak (in flesh).**” (Sura 4:28)

”**When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.**” (Sura 15:29)

”**Truly man was created very impatient**” (Sura 70:19)

2. WHAT WE LEARN FROM THESE ACCOUNTS:

a. Adam, God’s Vicegerent: God created Adam to be His “vicegerent on earth.”

b. Mankind Weak & Impatient: Man was created both weak and impatient.

c. Adam Taught The Names Of All Things: After God had taught Adam the names of all things, He asked the angels to tell the names, but they couldn’t. When Adam was able to tell them, “Allah said: ‘Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know

what ye reveal and what ye conceal?" This emphasizes what Islam always emphasizes - God's power and omniscience in knowing all things.

d. Angels Commanded To Worship Adam: God commanded the angels to worship Adam, His first created man, which would seem to contradict God's command to worship no one else but Him. Iblis (Satan) refused. At first Satan looks like the only one doing right, but then we see his evil heart. God had taught Adam the names of all the animals, but not Iblis, who apparently became jealous of Adam. So God warned Adam and Eve that Satan was now an enemy, plotting to get them "out of the garden."

e. Adam Being Seduced By Satan: Adam "forgot" God's covenant with him and "allowed himself to be seduced" by Satan, who was able to "make them slip from" and "get them out" of the garden and thus Satan "brought about their fall," seemingly without Adam's realization and with little responsibility.

f. Adam & Eve's "Shame:" Adam & Eve's "shame" apparently was hidden from them when they were created. They seem to have been created clothed with "raiment." Satan not only succeeded in deceiving them, but also of "stripping them of their raiment, to expose their shame" by "bringing openly before their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before)."

g. Adam & Eve's Forgiveness: Adam & Eve asked God for forgiveness and mercy. However, God sent them out of the garden and down on to the earth. Muslims in general believe that God forgave them because it says, "... thus did Adam disobey his Lord, and allow himself to be seduced. **But his Lord chose him (for His Grace): He turned to him** [Mohsin Khan translates this, "and turned to him with forgiveness"], and gave him guidance". This fits in with the Islamic teaching that all prophets are sinless, including Adam, but they all made "mistakes" (all except Jesus!) before they were made prophets.

h. Adam & Eve's Nakedness: After Adam & Eve eat of the forbidden tree Satan "stripped them of their raiment, to expose their shame" and later God said He "bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame." Most significantly the Qur'an never mentions God clothing Adam & Eve with the skins of animals (foretelling the sacrifice God Himself would make to remove our sin and shame through Christ's redeeming death).

i. Mankind's Banishment From Paradise: God commanded Adam & Eve and their descendants, "Get ye down, all (ye people), With enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place ... Therein shall ye live, and therein shall ye die." Muslims interpret this to mean that Paradise was up in heaven and because Adam was put "down" on the earth we now live on the earth (instead of in the garden of Paradise). Muslims do not believe, however, that "with enmity among ourselves" means we have inherited a fallen, sinful nature from Adam (what Christians call, "original sin"). Instead, they believe it is simply our own choice to do evil things. They also believe Adam's death was not the result of his sin but was simply how he was originally created.

j. Man's Eventual Return To Paradise: God commanded them, "Get ye down" on the earth "for a time ... but from it shall ye be taken out (at last)." This is interpreted by Muslim scholars to mean that true believers who follow God's guidance will eventually be returned to Paradise after they die because they have earned it. So they don't need a savior to save them from eternal punishment for their sins.

THE BIBLE:

1. THE BIBLE'S ACCOUNT OF ADAM'S FALL AND "ORIGINAL SIN": Here are four passages of Scripture describing Adam's fall:

*"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. **And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.** And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." (Genesis 1:26-31)*

*"The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And **the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'** Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' **Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.** But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden"?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, **and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" So **when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.** Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" **The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.'** Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" **The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'** The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I*

commanded you, “You shall not eat of it,” **cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**’ The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And **the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.** Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—’ therefore **the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.**” (Genesis 2:15 - 3:24)

“Therefore, just as **sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned**” (Romans 5:12)

“For as **in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive**” (1 Corinthians 15:22)

2. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE QUR’AN’S & BIBLE’S ACCOUNTS:

a. Adam Created “Very Good:” The Qur’an says God created mankind weak and impatient, and that Satan told Adam and Eve, “*Your Lord only forbade you this tree, lest ye should become angels or such beings as live for ever,*” (Sura 7:20) and “*O Adam! shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?*” (Sura 20:120). This implies that God had originally created them to eventually die and not to live forever. The Bible, however, says God created mankind “very good” (Genesis 1:31) with access to the tree of life, which means they were intended to live forever.

b. Adam, God’s Viceroy: The Bible agrees with the Qur’an that God created Adam to be His viceroy on earth. But the Qur’an does not teach that this means mankind is intended to be God’s junior partner, created in God’s image, and that this was the beginning of God including mankind in His work.

c. Adam Asked To Name The Animals: The Qur’an says Adam was taught the names of all things by God, but the Bible says God asked Adam, as His junior partner to name the animals himself, showing that God had made man in His own image with the authority and initiative to make decisions and choices.

d. Angels To Worship Jesus, Not Adam: The Qur’an says God commanded the angels to worship Adam his first created man, which would be idolatry. Instead, the Bible says (Hebrews 1:6) God commanded the angels to bow down and worship Jesus, His “firstborn” son.

e. Adam’s Choice To Disobey God: The Qur’an seems to say Adam and Eve “forgot” and were “seduced” by Satan, who was able to “make them slip from” and “get out” of the garden, seemingly without their realization or responsibility – making it Adam’s “slip” rather than Adam’s “sin” (Romans 5:12)! The Bible says Adam and Eve themselves chose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit.

“Remember that, according to Christian teaching, **sin is not just doing something wrong. It is a rebellion against God, the Source of Life. Death is not a punishment for our actions as much as it is a consequence.** God does not execute us for jaywalking, we get run over by a truck while jaywalking.” (p. 40 in No God But One; Allah or Jesus? By Nabeel Qureshi)

f. Death, A Result Of Sin: There is no indication in the Qur'an's account that God warned them that their disobedience would result in death, but only "*harm and transgression*" (Sura 2:35). In fact the Qur'an says that God created death (Sura 67:2), meaning they were created to die. The Bible teaches that God created them to live forever, eating from the tree of life. God warned them they would die if they ate of the forbidden fruit, and when they did He put them out of the garden so they could not eat of the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24). Death was the result of sin.

g. Who Was Put Down On The Earth, Adam & Eve Or Satan? While the Bible says Adam & Eve were put out of the garden, which was on earth, the Qur'an says God said to them, "*Get ye down ... On earth will be your dwelling-place.*" According to the Bible, this is what God did to Satan, not to Adam & Eve. Ezekiel 28:11-19 tells of the King of Tyre (a type of Satan) "*an anointed guardian cherub,*" who was created in perfection and beauty and was in Eden the garden of God, but sinned against God, Who cast him "*to the ground ... on the earth.*" (see also Luke 10:18).

h. Adam's Descendants Born With His Sin Nature: Although the Qur'an says God banished Adam & Eve down on the earth "*with enmity between yourselves*" [see 2:36; 7:24; 20:123] Islam doesn't believe we are born with a sinful, fallen nature ("original sin"), but that we are born innocent and pure (although weak and impatient). **So, Muslims believe it would be unjust to hold us responsible for Adam's sin.** However, The Bible says **when Adam sinned, we were all "*in Adam*"** (1 Corinthians 15:22) just like Levi was "*in the loins*" of Abraham when he paid tithes to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:9,10). **Therefore, we all sinned with him and inherited his sinful nature and his death. Sin and death are in our genetic structure.** Thus, we are all born spiritually dead with a sinful nature:

*"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men [all human beings] **because all sinned**" (Romans 5:12)*

"I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5)

i. Adam's "Shame" A Result Of His Sin: The Qur'an says Adam & Eve's "*shame*" was originally hidden from them until Satan exposed it by "*stripping them of their raiment.*" So their shame was due to their physical nakedness. The Bible says they were ashamed before God because of their sin (spiritual nakedness).

j. Adam And Eve Clothed With The Skins Of Innocent Animals: The Qur'an makes no mention of God clothing Adam & Eve with animal skins; only of His provision of "*raiment*" for their descendants down on the earth. The Bible says God performed the first sacrifice for sin by sacrificing the lives of innocent animals and clothing Adam & Eve with their skins, thus pointing to Jesus the future true "Lamb of God" who would die in our place to take away the shame of our sin.

k. Adam's Sin And Need Of Salvation: The Qur'an teaches, "*Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord Turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful,*" meaning that Adam did not sin (none of the prophets sinned) but only made a mistake. Then God in His mercy taught him the right way and turned toward him again in forgiveness. The Bible, however, teaches that what Adam did was rebellion resulting in death and that he needed salvation through redemption:

*"But they, like Adam, have **transgressed the covenant**; There they have **dealt treacherously against Me.**" (Hosea 6:7 – AMP)*

B. GOD'S FORGIVENESS OF SINS:

ISLAM:

1. ARABIC NAMES FOR GOD RELATED TO FORGIVENESS: Six of Allah's 99 "most beautiful names" relate to this subject: [See Appendix 1 for a complete list]

***Al-Ghaffar (Al-Ghafir)* = The Oft-Forgiving.**

***Al-Ghafoor* = The Hider of Faults.** These first two titles, from the same Arabic root, occur the most in the Qur'an. **Each of them occurs over 70 times and they are the primary words used for Forgiveness in the Qur'an.** The verb form of this name is used in Sura 2:263 and translated as, "the covering of faults." The word "Atonement" (covering) in The Bible has a similar meaning.

***Al-'Afuw* = The Pardoner, Releaser, Eraser of sins.** This title occurs only 5 times in the Qur'an and has a similar meaning as "Redemption" in the Bible.

***Al-Tawwab* = The Acceptor of Repentance, Relenting. (11 times)** Usually translated "Oft Returning" (turning back to pardon those who repent).

***Al-Haleem* = The Forbearing, Indulgent, Clement (10 times).**

***As-Sabur (Saboor)* = The Most Patient, Enduring.** Not in the Qu'ran.

2. GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN THE QUR'AN: The concept of God's forgiveness is mentioned repeatedly in the Qur'an. This is what God does because He is omnipotent. **Forgiveness is not so much a part of His character, as it is a demonstration of His power to do whatever He chooses to do.**

3. HELPFUL ARTICLES ON FORGIVENESS IN ISLAM: I have mentioned material from these articles in my reactions at the end of both parts of this chapter.

[See appendix 9 for a copy of these articles]

- a. Forgiveness In Islam, Summary of a Friday Khutbah (sermon), 14th April 2000
<http://www.pakistanlink.com/religion/2000/04-14.html>
- b. Forgiveness In Islam – Shahid Arthar, M.D. <http://www.islamfortoday.com/athar12.htm>
- c. Forgiveness – Dr. M. Amir Ali, Ph.D. of THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION <http://www.hawaiiiforgivenessproject.org/library/Forgiveness-in-Islam.pdf>

4. FORGIVENESS AND MERCY: It is significant that 89 of the 97 verses containing words related to forgiveness also contain the word, "mercy." Obviously forgiveness and mercy are closely linked. The conjoined phrases, "***oft-forgiving, most merciful***" and, "***oft-returning, most merciful***" are used 82 times; and likewise the two words, "***forgiveness***" and "***mercy***" are used together many times:

"... and his Lord turned towards him; for He is ***oft-returning, most merciful.***" (Sura 2:37b)

*“But if the thief repents after his crime, and amends his conduct, **God turneth to him in forgiveness; for God is oft-forgiving, most merciful.**”* (Sura 5:39)

[see Chapter 7 – God’s Mercy & Grace]

5. TWO CATEGORIES OF SIN: Islam describes two kinds of sin:

The greater (*kabeerah*) sins are idolatry, witchcraft, murder, false accusation of adultery, wasting the substance of orphans or widows, usury (interest), and desertion in battle. However, in common understanding, eating pork, drinking alcohol, gambling and fornication are also considered great sins. The rest are **lesser (*sagheerah*) sins**. Muslims lives are filled with the words, “*haram*” (forbidden) and “*halal*” (permitted). Sin is essentially a matter of disobeying God’s laws, and righteousness is obeying them and doing other un-required good deeds. Sin relates only to one’s actions, not to one’s inner motivation which produces the outer actions. Furthermore God says,

“If you shun the Greater Sins which you are forbidden, We will do away with your smaller sins and cause you to enter an honourable place of entering.” (Sura 4: 31)

The result of this teaching is a less than serious view of sin.

6. THE ONLY UNFORGIVABLE SIN: Attributing partners to God (i.e., idolatry) is called “*shirk*” (partnership) and is unforgivable (Muslims think Christians believe in three gods):

“Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else ... to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin Most heinous indeed.” (Sura 4:48)

“God forgiveth not (The sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with God, Hath strayed far ...” (Sura 4:116)

7. ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR GOD’S FORGIVING: The **two essential factors** qualifying a person for forgiveness are **belief** and **good deeds**:

“For those who reject Allah, is a terrible Penalty: but for those who believe and work righteous deeds, is Forgiveness, and a magnificent Reward.” (Sura 35:7 – see also 5:9)

“On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness there is no blame for what they ate (in the past), when they guard themselves from evil, and believe, and do deeds of righteousness ... For Allah loveth those who do good.” (Sura 5:93)

There is no forgiveness for unbelievers (even with good deeds):

*“Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of **the unbelievers**, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority: **their abode will be the Fire** ...”* (Sura 3:151)

*“... **the unbelievers will be gathered together to Hell**”* (Sura 8:36)

“Say to the unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from Unbelief), their past would be forgiven them; but if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning for them).” (Sura 8:38)

8. OTHER FACTORS WHICH MAY QUALIFY FOR FORGIVENESS:

a. Forgiveness Because Of Submission To God’s Will In Islam:

“Our Lord! make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will) ... and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.” (Sura 2:128)

“... those who bow in Islam to Allah’s Will” (Sura 27:91)

b. Forgiveness Because Of Following Muhammad's Example:

"Say: 'If ye do love Allah, Follow me [Muhammad]: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.'" (Sura 3:31)

c. Forgiveness Because Of Sincere Repentance:

"If any one does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah's forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." (Sura 4:110)

"But if the thief repents after his crime, and amends his conduct, God turneth to him in forgiveness; for God is oft-forgiving, most merciful." (Sura 5:39)

[Moses' murder] *"He prayed: "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me!" So (Allah) forgave him: for He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Sura 28:16)*

d. Forgiveness For Those Who Fight In The Cause Of God (Jihad) [see 10.a. below for those who die in Jihad]:

"Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of God as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid, - these are (all) in very truth the Believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous." (Sura 8:74)

e. Forgiveness For Those Who Go On Pilgrimage To Mecca:

[going on pilgrimage to Mecca] *"Then pass on ... and ask for Allah's forgiveness. For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." (Sura 2:199)*

f. Forgiveness Because Of Ignorance Or Good Intentions:

"Allah will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts; and He is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing." (Sura 2:225)

"Allah accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards; to them will Allah turn in mercy ..." (Sura 4:17)

"But verily thy Lord, - to those who do wrong in ignorance, but who thereafter repent and make amends, - thy Lord, after all this, is oft-forgiving, most merciful." (Sura 16:119)

g. Forgiveness Because Of Being Forced To Do Evil:

"... But if one is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, - then is he guiltless. For Allah is Oft-forgiving Most Merciful." (Sura 2:173)

h. Forgiveness For Believers Who Flinch & Disobey In Battle:

"Allah did indeed fulfil His promise to you when ye with His permission were about to annihilate your enemy, - until ye flinched and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight (of the booty) which ye covet. Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter. Then did He divert you from your foes in order to test you but He forgave you: For Allah is full of grace to those who believe." (Sura 3:152)

i. Forgiveness For The "Lapses" Of God's Messengers:

"So We forgave him [David] this (lapse) ..." (Sura 38:25)

9. GOD'S BASIS FOR FORGIVENESS: This the real issue!

a. Forgiveness On The Basis Of God’s Sovereign Will: Islam teaches that God, Who can do anything He wills to do, forgives sinners as He chooses:

*“To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth ... **He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth, for Allah hath power over all things.**” (Sura 2:284)*

*“**Again will Allah, after this, turn (in mercy) to whom He will: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.**” (Sura 9:27)*

b. Forgiveness By God’s Omnipotent Power: Islam believes God forgives people by 1) simply blotting out bad deeds, 2) ignoring them or 3) replacing their bad deeds with good deeds without any regard to His justice:

1) *“For these, there is hope that **Allah will forgive: For Allah doth blot out (sins) and forgive again and again.**” (Sura 4:99)*

*“Whether ye publish a good deed or conceal it or **cover evil with pardon, verily Allah doth blot out (sins) and hath power (in the judgment of values).**” (Sura 4:149)*

*“... who believe and work righteous deeds,- **from them shall We blot out all evil (that may be) in them, and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds.**” (Sura 29:7)*

2) *“Such are they from whom **We shall accept the best of their deeds and pass by their ill deeds: (They shall be) among the Companions of the Garden ...**” (Sura 46:16)*

3) *“... for **Allah will change the evil of such persons into good ...**” (Sura 25:70)*

*“So that **Allah will turn off from them (even) the worst in their deeds and give them their reward according to the best of what they have done.**” (Sura 39:35)*

c. Forgiveness By God “Persuading” The Offended Person To Forgive: In fact God even bribes people on the Day of Judgment to encourage their forgiveness of one another. This is seen in the following quote from an Islamic website, showing they think God is satisfied with forgiveness alone, without justice:

*“This is the general rule. However, it may happen that a person who has done such wrongs cannot pay back the people he had wronged or give them satisfaction. This may be the case because he does not have the means to make amends, or he does not know for certain the person or persons he has wronged, or he cannot trace them or because he will inevitably expose himself to great trouble if he admits his guilt to them, or for any other reason. In such cases, **he should pray hard to God to grant him forgiveness. If God answers his prayers and wishes to forgive him, He will take it upon Himself to satisfy the wronged person. On the Day of Judgement, He will call the one who is wronged and ask him to forgive the offender. If he does, then God rewards him generously for forgoing his rights. If he says that he does not want to forgive him, then God will increase the reward He grants him for his good actions until he willingly forgives his offender. In this way, God takes it upon Himself to satisfy the offended party and ensure forgiveness for the offender as a result of his sincere repentance.**” – (from <http://islamicvoice.com/January2006/Hadith/>)*

d. Forgiveness Only By One’s Own Efforts: The Quran is quite insistent in saying (5 times) that no one can “*bear the burden of another*” (which denies Jesus bearing our sin on the cross). Everyone has to purify and save himself:

*“**Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another’s burdens if one heavily laden should call another to (bear) his load. Not the least portion of it can be carried (by the other). Even though he be nearly related. Thou canst but admonish such as fear their Lord unseen and establish regular Prayer. And***

whoever purifies himself does so for the benefit of his own soul; and the destination (of all) is to God.” (Sura 35:18)

“... **Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another ...**” (Sura 6:164 –See also 17:15; 39:7 & 53:38) [Yusuf Ali’s note 987: “We are fully responsible for our acts ourselves: we cannot transfer the consequences to someone else. Nor can anyone vicariously atone for our sins.” And his note 3429: “... the atonement or expiation is by God’s Mercy, **not by** our merits or **the merits or sacrifice of anyone else.**” (meaning Jesus)]

However, Islamic tradition as seen in the Hadith is inconsistent with this teaching. The following explanation of a believer being able to provide “a substitute pilgrimage” (to Mecca) for another believer who failed to pay that “debt owed to God” is found on an Islamic website:

“... **Another man asked him about his own father who died without doing the pilgrimage. The Prophet asked his questioner whether he would repay his father’s creditors if he had left some outstanding debts. When the man answered in the affirmative, the Prophet said to him: ‘A debt owed to God has an even stronger claim to be settled.’** On the basis of this **Hadith**, scholars agree that a woman may offer the pilgrimage on behalf of a man and vice versa. On the other hand, the person who is doing a **substitute pilgrimage** need not be a relative of the one on whose behalf he is doing it.” – from <http://islamicvoice.com/January2006/Hadith/>

e. Forgiveness By Doing Good Deeds To Erase Bad Deeds: Dr. Omotosho in his article, “Salvation In The Religious Doctrine Of Islam” writes,

“If a sin is committed, **to erase it**, requires a good service such as feeding of the poor, freeing of a slave and as the prophet puts it: ‘follow your wrong deed with good conduct, **it will erase it.**’ In another version: ‘so that it will erase it.’” (He backs this up with Suras 4:92; 5:89 & 58:4)

10. THE UNCERTAINTY OF FORGIVENESS: How can a Muslim know for sure that God will forgive all their sins and allow him/her to enter Paradise?

a. Assurance For Martyrs In Jihad: In only one case (those who die in Jihad) can a Muslim be certain of going to Paradise (for others there is only hope):

“... **But those who are slain in the way of Allah** [jihad], **He will never let their deeds be lost. Soon will He ... admit them to the Garden** [paradise] ... **announced for them.**” (Sura 47:4-6)

“**Think not of those who are slain in God’s way** [jihad] **as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord ... Those who have ... suffered harm in my cause** [jihad], **or fought or been slain, verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath - a reward from the presence of God, and from His presence is the best of rewards.**” (Sura 3:169,195)

b. “Assurance Of The Hereafter:” Four verses speak about faithful believers having an “**assurance of the hereafter,**” but on what basis?

“**Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them; And who believe in the Revelation** [the Qur’an] **sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter.**” (Sura 2:3,4)

“... **the believers,- Those who establish regular prayers and give in regular charity, and also have (full) assurance of the hereafter.**” (Sura 27:2,3 – Also see 7:46 and 31:3,4)

In his translation of the Qur’an, Yusuf Ali’s notes mention three stages of spiritual development of believers, the third of which includes assurance of paradise:

#5738 on Sura 72:14: "Any one who responds to true guidance, and submits his will to God, finds that he makes rapid progress in the path of right conduct and right life. **He gets more and more assurance that his destination is the garden of bliss.**"

#5810 on Sura 75:2: "Our doctors postulate **three states or stages of the development of the human soul**: (1) *Ammara* (in 12:53), which is prone to evil, and if not checked and controlled, will lead to perdition; (2) *Lawwama* (in 75:2), which feels conscious of evil, and resists it, asks for God's grace and pardon after repentance and tries to amend; **it hopes to reach salvation**; (3) *Mutianna* (in 89:27), the highest stage of all, when it **achieves full rest and satisfaction ...**"

c. Uncertain "Promises": God **promises** to reward "the righteous" in Paradise. But He doesn't say **exactly how righteous** believers need to be.

"The parable of **the Garden which the righteous are promised!** ..." (Sura 13:35 & 47:15)

"... **the eternal garden, promised to the righteous?** ..." (Sura 25:15)

"... our Lord! that they enter **the Gardens of Eternity, which Thou hast promised to them, and to the righteous among their fathers, their wives, and their posterity!** ..." (Sura 40:8)

d. God's Scales: Then there is the question of God weighing our deeds on His **scales**. He knows, but how do we know if our good deeds are heavy enough?

"Then **those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy,- they will attain salvation**: But those whose balance is light ... in Hell will they abide." (Sura 23:102,103; see also Sura 101:6-9)

e. God's Will: And also there is the question of **God's will** in choosing whether or not to forgive us:

"... **He forgiveth whom He pleaseth and punisheth whom He pleaseth** ..." (Sura 3:129) "

"Allah forgiveth not (The sin of) joining other gods with Him; but **He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this** ..." (Sura 4:116)

f. Only Hope: Because of all this uncertainty, Muslims cannot be sure their sins will be forgiven. **They can only hope**:

[Abraham said] "... **the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds**; Who created me ... And **who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the day of Judgment.**" (Sura 26:77-82)

"But any that (in this life) had repented, believed, and worked righteousness, will **have hopes to be among those who achieve salvation.**" (Sura 28:67)

f. Muhammad's Uncertainty: And finally according to the Qur'an and Hadith **even Muhammad did not know for sure that he was going to Paradise**:

"... **nor do I know what will be done with me or with you** ..." (Sura 46:9)

"I heard Allah's Apostle saying 'By Allah! **I ask for forgiveness from Allah and turn to Him in repentance more than seventy times a day.**'" (Book #75, Hadith #319 of Sahih Al-Bukhari)

11. MY REACTIONS AND QUESTIONS: It seems that Islamic forgiveness is not based on God's justice, but solely on God's sovereign will and omnipotent power. He forgives only because He is powerful enough to do whatever He wants. And, mercy without justice leaves the sinner unpunished but still guilty!

a. Is Sin Not Very Serious? Islam teaches that God created mankind weak and therefore liable to sin. This makes sin seem less serious and ourselves less responsible.

This teaching also demeans God's character by saying that God created us flawed and imperfect. How is it possible that Almighty God could create something imperfect? The Bible's account of creation contains the description,

*"And God saw **everything** that he had made, and behold, **it was very good.**"* (Genesis 1:31).

b. What Happens To The Sins God Forgives? Do they simply disappear or get blotted out without any punishment? According to Islam God's mercy turns evil deeds magically into righteous ones (25:70). And He says He will *"turn off ... the worst of their deeds"* and *"give them their reward according to the best of what they have done"* (39:35). So in other words, God justifies a person's stealing valuables from a rich man because he gives bread to a poor man. **How could *Al-Adil* (The Just One) be unjust? Doesn't every sin need to be paid for?**

c. Does My Sin Have No Effect On God? According to the following verses from the Qur'an, my sin causes no harm to God – only to myself:

*"We [God] ... saying: 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you:' (But they rebelled); **to us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.**"* (Sura 2:57)

*"... If any did turn back on his heels, **not the least harm will he do to Allah ...**"* (Sura 3:144)

*"Those who reject Allah ... **will not injure Allah in the least ...**"* (Sura 47:32)

Dr. Amir Ali (see above) says the requirement for receiving forgiveness for a sin committed against a fellow human being is making restitution. But this is not required for sins committed against God. It seems Muslims believe sins against God cannot cause Him any loss or harm and therefore there is nothing to restore.

However, that creates a problem. The only one who can forgive a sin is the one who has suffered the harm caused by that sin. How could a total bystander forgive the insult leveled against someone else? Only the person insulted could forgive, and in doing so, he/she chooses to accept all of the shame or disgrace involved without seeking restitution, revenge or justice. So how could God forgive us if He doesn't suffer any of the harm caused by our sins? But Dr. Ali also writes, *"Muslims understand that an offense against the creation of God is an **offense against God.**"* **How could our sins be offensive to God if He is not offended by them?**

Finally, since our sins against God cause Him no grief, sorrow or disappointment – and since forgiving us will bring Him no joy or satisfaction, **obviously such a God has no love or feelings toward us. That leaves us with the depressing and empty realization that we can never have any personal relationship with Him!**

d. Is God's Forgiveness Overpowered By His Threatened Judgement?

Anyone who reads through the Qur'an for the first time will be somewhat overwhelmed by the constant threatening by God to send people to hell. A careful count shows that the total number of verses in which each of the following words are used in reference to God's judgment in hell is –

- **"hell," "fire" or "hell fire"** 250 times
- **"punishment"** 92 times
- **"grievous"** 80 times
- **"wrath"** 42 times
- **"perdition" and "destruction"** 19 times

All together **God in the Qur'an threatens judgment 483 times compared to forgiveness only 276 times.** To be fair, however, I need to point out that the Old Testament books (especially the prophets) are also filled with God threatening the nation of Israel with judgment because of its repeated idolatry and rebellion against Him.

THE BIBLE:

1. WHAT IS SIN? God created us in His “image” (which means being like Him in character). Therefore **sin is violating God’s purpose for us by being anything other than what He created us to be, i.e., in His “own image” – holy, righteous, merciful, just and loving like Himself (in order to bring Him glory):**

“... be holy, for I am holy ... For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:44,45)

“but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15)

“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)

“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36)

“and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:24)

But when our forefather Adam rebelled against God, his nature (which we’ve inherited) was corrupted and now **that corrupt nature in us constantly desires/craves sin:**

“... the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath [i.e., under the impending wrath of God], like the rest of mankind.” (Ephesians 2:2,3)

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.” (1 John 2:16 - NASB)

Furthermore, **all sin is against God, because sin against any person is sin against the creator of that person:**

“Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.”
“Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker ...” (Proverbs 14:31 & 17:5)

[God told king Abimelech regarding Abraham’s wife Sara whom he had taken to be his wife, thinking she was Abraham’s sister]
“Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.” (Genesis 20:6)

[Joseph said to his temptress] *“... nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”* (Genesis 39:9)

And our sin brings loss to God, because it deprives Him of His glory, which He created us to reflect. **The greatest sin, because it is the basis of all sin, is worshipping (exclusively loving or living for) any person or thing other than God:**

“You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3)

“for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14)

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:5)

I believe sin also causes God a far greater measure of grief, sorrow, anger, jealousy and shame than we can imagine, because it blocks His ultimate purpose of having us in eternal fellowship and communion with Himself:

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed ...” (Ephesians 4:30)

“Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us’?” (James 4:5)

2. WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION? If a person is charged with a crime, tried in a court and found innocent, he/she is justified. In that case all accusations against him/her are dismissed. God justified us by exchanging our sin with the righteousness of Jesus, declaring us not guilty and condemning the sinless Jesus in our place!

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

3. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS? The word forgiveness has different usages:

a. Human Forgiveness – To Forgo Punishment: In our human society, when we fully forgive someone for acts or words that have harmed us, it means **we choose to willingly endure whatever loss, pain, shame, etc. that person has caused us without seeking any kind of punishment, restitution, revenge, or compensation.** Also we should never mention that sin again to anyone (because reminding the sinner of that sin or telling others about it is a form of revenge) but we should do our best to put that sin out of our mind and not mention it again.

Partial forgiveness is much more common in this world and usually involves requiring the offender to make restitution as much as possible or to pay some form of ransom to appease our anger. Also most people are too quick to remember and gossip about the sins of others instead of trying to forget them.

Government pardoning involves people being set free from the punishment prescribed by the law. President Nixon was pardoned and allowed to live out his life without going to prison or paying any fine.

In all these cases of forgiveness the crime or sin is not forgotten. In President Nixon’s case the shame of his crime remains in the memories of Americans (especially his descendants) and in the historical record until today. He was pardoned, but he remained a criminal because his crime could not be cancelled or “expunged” (erased) from history. So, in this world there is no way that a guilty person can justly be declared innocent even when forgiven and not punished.

On the other hand, if an innocent man is mistakenly convicted of a crime, and later exonerated by new evidence, **he is not forgiven; but instead is justified and declared “innocent” and therefore “not guilty.”**

b. Biblical Forgiveness In The Old Testament – To Forgo Punishment:

1) Original Hebrew Words: The following three Hebrew words are used in reference to God’s forgiveness:

salach (*calach* or *sawlakh*) = to send away, dismiss, let go – 36 times

nasa (*nawsaw*) = to lift up or away – 19 times

kaphar = to cover, atone for – 5 times

The **Hebrew words (*salach* & *nasa* – used 36 & 19 times)** have the meaning of **sending away or loosening the punishment of sin:**

“... I will **forgive** [*salach* = send away] **all the guilt of their sin...**” (Jeremiah 33:8)

“Who is a God like you, **pardoning** [*nasa* = lift away] **iniquity and passing over transgression ...**” (Micah 7:18)

Joseph forgave his brothers and didn't try to take any revenge on them:

[Jacob's words to Joseph] “... Please **forgive** [*nasa*] **the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you ...**” (Genesis 50:17)

And Solomon asked God to forgive Israel's sin by preventing further defeat by their enemies and banishment from the promised land:

“If your people Israel are **defeated before the enemy** because they have sinned against you, and they turn again and ... pray and plead with you in this house, then **hear from heaven and forgive** [*salach*] **the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to them and to their fathers.**” (2 Chronicles 6:24,25)

In the KJV translation the **Hebrew word *kaphar***, meaning “**to cover**” (the sin) is translated “forgiveness” 5 times, but it is more frequently (81 times) translated “**to atone for.**” Before Christ came forgiveness usually was received only through animal sacrifices. According to the Mosaic law sin was **covered** (atonement), but not taken away by the blood (life) of those sacrifices. Those sinners were protected from any punishment until later when they would be completely **set free from** (redemption) their sin (through the sacrifice of Jesus, the perfect, sinless “lamb of God” in their place). Here are 2 of those 81 uses:

“Yet he [God], being compassionate, **atoned for** [*kaphar* = covered] **their iniquity and did not destroy them ...**” (Psalm 78:38)

“... **your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for** [*kaphar* = covered].” (Isaiah 6:7)

2) More than half (31 of 51) the verses about God's forgiveness in the O.T. sound very much like the teaching of the Qur'an. Here are some examples:

i) God Is Merciful And Forgives Those Who Plead For It. – 15 times:

“Please **pardon the iniquity of this people ... just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.**” (Numbers 14:19)

ii) Forgiveness When God's People Repent And Pray Facing The Temple In Jerusalem. – 13 times:

“And **listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place ... and when you hear, forgive.**” (1 Kings 8:30)

iii) Forgiveness For Women Who Make A Vow But Their Father Or Husband Nullifies It. – 3 times:

“if her father opposes her ... **no vow of hers, no pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. And the Lord will forgive her ...**” (Numbers 30:5)

3) 13 Verses Describe Temporary Forgiveness Through Animal Sacrifices.

Forgiveness of both deliberate and unknowing sins is given by God on the basis of

innocent animal sacrifices, which are **prophetic pictures of the real atonement that will be presented later by Jesus, the “Lamb of God:”**

“... And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.” (Leviticus 4:35)

“the priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally ... and he shall be forgiven.” (Numbers 15:28)

4) The Other 7 Verses Speak Prophetically Of God’s Just Redemption Through The Death And Resurrection Of Christ: These are things hinted at in the Old Testament and fully presented in the New Testament (how God *removes*, instead of only covering our sin, and how He can forgive with justice):

“The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty” (Numbers 14:18)

Some of these verses speak prophetically of **redemption**, by which we sinners can be totally cleansed and freed from sin and its death-hold on us:

“I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.” (Jeremiah 33:8)

“... a God of salvation, and to GOD ... belong deliverances from death.” (Psalm 68:20)

5) In Addition Other Old Testament Verses Speak Prophetically Of God’s Complete Removal Of All Our Sin (through Jesus), including the complete eradication of all record and memory of them:

“as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12)

“He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:19)

“... in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.” (Isaiah 38:17)

“I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake” (Isaiah 43:25)

“... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jeremiah 31:34)

c. Biblical Forgiveness In The New Testament: God’s forgiveness is mentioned 43 times in the New Testament. The following are things about forgiveness seen in the New Testament:

1) Greek Words translated “forgive,” “forgiveness” or “pardon:”

Aphiemi = to send off or away; let off or away – 48 times

Charizomai = to be gracious to – 12 times

The Greek word ***Aphiemi***, translated “forgiveness” has the meaning, **to “send away or let off” sin**. This concept of forgiveness in Greek is essentially the same as it is in Hebrew. It is the **forgoing of all punishment** for sin:

2) Forgiveness Is Joined Together With Redemption (deliverance from sin) **In God’s Plan Of Salvation:**

“In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7)

[Redemption is explained more fully in the second part (b) of this chapter eight].

3) Forgiveness Is Obtained Only Through Repentance And Faith In Jesus, God's Way Of Salvation. This is mentioned 15 times. Here are 2

*"to open their eyes, so **that they may turn from darkness to light** and from the power of Satan to God, **that they may receive forgiveness of sins** and a place among those who are sanctified **by faith in me** [Jesus]." (Acts 26:18)*

*"**If we confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to **forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" (1 John 1:9)*

4) Jesus Has Authority To Forgive Sins And Did So:

*"And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And **when Jesus saw their faith**, he said to the paralytic, 'Take heart, my son; **your sins are forgiven.** ... But that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**'—he then said to the paralytic—'Rise, pick up your bed and go home.'" (Matthew 9:2,6)*

5) Forgiveness Is Not Available To Those Who Refuse To Forgive Others Just As God Has Forgiven Us In Jesus. This is because such refusal shows a lack of true repentance and faith. True forgiveness involves forgiving "others," "your brother," "one another" and "everyone" who sins against us and to do it "from our heart." This is mentioned 10 times. Here are four of them:

*"**For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**" (Matthew 6:14,15)*

*"**So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.**" (Matthew 18:35)*

*"**Be kind ... forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**" (Ephesians 4:32)*

*"**and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.**" (Luke 11:4)*

In fact, Jesus goes beyond just **forgiveness** and instructs us to **love and bless** even our "enemies," who have subjugated or persecuted us:

*"... **Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.**" (Luke 6:27,28)*

This contrasts with Islam's teaching. Muslim scholars teach that Muslims should follow the example of Muhammad and forgive their enemies:

*"... **forgiving transgressors is an integral concept in the Qur'an and believers are always urged to forgive.** This was confirmed by the daily practice of the Prophet (PBUH) any chance he had. **A prime example is when he entered Mecca, which rejected him and tortured him for eleven years with a large army. He forgave all of its population, including those sworn enemies who waged war against him and wanted to kill him.**" - Safi Kaskas at www.huffpost.com/entry/is-forgiving-my-enemy-a-muslim-tradition.*

It is important to notice that Muhammad gave "forgiveness" to his enemies **after they were conquered and were in subjection to him.**

Here are some Qur'an verses about forgiveness: 1) & 2) are instructions for Muslims to temporarily "forgive and overlook" the rejection of Islam and Muhammad by the Jews until God's "purpose" (expelling or killing them) would later be accomplished in Medina

by Muhammad. 3) is instruction to forgive fellow Muslims who were cowardly in the battle of Uhud, causing them to be defeated by the Meccan forces (The Muslims later conquered the Meccans). 4) is the only Qur'an verse I can find that seems to imply that forgiving others is a condition for obtaining God's forgiveness:

- 1) "Quite a number of the People of the Book [Jews] wish they could Turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed, from selfish envy, after the Truth hath become Manifest unto them: **But forgive and overlook, Till Allah accomplish His purpose**; for Allah Hath power over all things." (Sura 2:109)
- 2) "But because of their [Jews] breach of their covenant, We [God] cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard; they change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them, nor wilt thou cease to find them- barring a few - ever bent on (new) deceits: but **forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds)**: for Allah loveth those who are kind.." (Sura 5:13)
- 3) "It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them [fellow Muslims who were cowardly]. Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so **pass over (Their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them**; and consult them in affairs (of moment). **Then, when thou hast taken a decision put thy trust in Allah.** For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)." (Sura 3:159)
- 4) "O ye who believe! Truly, **among your wives and your children are** (some that are) **enemies to yourselves**: so beware of them! But **if ye forgive and overlook, and cover up (their faults), verily Allah is Off-Forgiving, Most Merciful.**" (Sura 64:14)

d. Other Biblical Principles Involved In God's Forgiveness:

1) Forgiveness Is Costly And Never Free: The cost of forgiving involves willingly accepting the harm, shame, hurt or loss caused by the offense.

2) No One Can Forgive Except The Person Who (Like God) Has Suffered The Loss Caused By The Offense: No one, including God, can forgive someone's sin against another person without willingly accepting and paying the price of that sin. Otherwise it would be either a bad joke or an outrageous injustice. The Bible claims that through the death of His Son Jesus, God took upon Himself all the cost – all the shame, guilt, loss & punishment – of all our sin, and is thus able to forgive us. **He did this by punishing His own Son for our sins:**

*"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that **he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation** [appeasement, satisfaction] **for our sins.**" (1 John 4:10)*

*"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and **the LORD has laid on him** [Jesus] **the iniquity of us all.**" (Isaiah 53:6)*

And Jesus Himself was willing to suffer for our sins in our place:

*"... **he** [Jesus] **has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ... he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.**" (Isaiah 53:4-5)*

*"**He himself** [Jesus volunteered] **bore our sins** in his body on the tree ... **By his wounds you have been healed.**" (1 Peter 2:24)*

Islam says nothing about God Himself bearing the cost of our sin. Instead it says God can forgive without suffering any of the loss our sin has caused because He is God and can do whatever He wants. That makes Him an unjust tyrant!

3) No One Can Forgive Except The Person (Like God) Who Prefers Forgiving Over Punishing: The Bible states 9 times that God is “*slow to anger*” [see chapter 11(b)] and frequently talks about His “patience:”

“... **The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness**” (Exodus 34:6)

“Or **do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?**” (Romans 2:4)

“**The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**” (2 Peter 3:9)

4) Forgiveness Cannot Be Forced: The one against whom the sin is committed can forgive only if he/she chooses to forgive. To force someone to forgive would not only be unjust but also be an additional offense. God wants us to willingly forgive one another **just like He willingly forgives us:**

5) The Only Thing That Can Cleanse Or Remove Sin From The Sinner Is Death: The law is satisfied by the death of the sinner.

“For **the wages of sin is death** ...” (Romans 6:23)

“Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.**” (Hebrews 9:22)

Jesus took all our sin on Himself, becoming sin for us in order to fully pay the full price (death) for all our sin:

“**For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

“... **Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.**” (Hebrews 2:9)

“... **Christ Jesus, who ... emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And ... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**” (Philippians 2:5-8)

[See part (b) of this Chapter Eight to continue this subject]

CHAPTER EIGHT (b)

THE (FORGIVENESS AND) SALVATION OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

(Again) What Is The Difference Between Forgiveness And Salvation?

Another very brief way to describe the difference is:

- **Forgiveness is cancelling the punishment for my sin but leaving me still guilty.**
- **Salvation is taking away my sin (with its guilt and punishment) and giving me God's own righteousness, enabling me to have eternal fellowship with God the Holy One.**

In Part (a) we looked at the following topics related to **God's Forgiveness**:

- A. God's Response to Man's Initial Sin
- B. God's Forgiveness Of Sins

Now in Part (b) we will look at the following topics related to **God's Salvation**:

- C. **God's Way Of Salvation For Sinners**
- D. **Reactions & Questions**

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

C. GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION FOR SINNERS:

ISLAM:

We will look at the following:

1. Words Related To Salvation
2. Helpful Articles About The Way Of Salvation In Islam
3. Nine Points In Islam's Way Of Salvation
4. No Assurance Of Salvation
5. The Qur'an's Denial Of The Crucifixion And Resurrection Of Jesus

1. WORDS RELATED TO SALVATION:

a. Frequency And Use Of Words In The Qur'an Related To God's

Salvation And Deliverance: Although "Savior" does not occur in Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an in reference to God, the concept of God saving people is clearly seen a total of 77 times in related words ("saved," "save," "rescued," "deliver," delivered," etc.). **73% of these occurrences refer to salvation from dangers of this life while 27%**

refer to deliverance from hell and God's eternal wrath. The underlying emphasis of these verses is **God's Power; that He can save because He is all powerful**. Here are a few examples of each:

1) Salvation From Dangers & Problems Of This Life - 56 times:

- Salvation in the past – 48 times:

*"Now such were their houses, - in utter ruin, - because they practiced wrong-doing. Verily in this is a Sign for people of knowledge. And **We saved those who believed and practiced righteousness.**" (Sura 27:52,53).*

*"But **We saved him** [Lot] **and his family, except his wife**; her We destined to be of those who lagged behind." (Sura 27:57)*

- Salvation in the present – 8 times:

*"Say: **Who is it that delivereth you from the dark recesses of land and sea**, when ye call upon Him in humility and silent terror." (Sura 6:63)*

*"And **deliver us by Thy Mercy from those who reject (Thee).**" (Sura 10:86)*

2) Salvation From Hell And Eternal Judgment - 21 times:

*"(Namely), those who say: "Our Lord! we have indeed believed: forgive us, then, our sins, and **save us from the agony of the Fire;**" (Sura 3:16)*

b. Frequency And Use Of Words In The Qur'an Related To God's

Purifying: The words "purify" and "purified" are used a total of **8 times** in the Qur'an speaking of God making people deserving of paradise, regardless of their sins – something He does because He is omnipotent and sovereign:

*"Behold! the angels said: 'O **Mary!** Allah hath chosen thee and **purified** thee ...'" (Sura 3:42)*

*"... for he [Joseph, son of Jacob] was one of Our servants, sincere and **purified.**" (Sura 12:24)*

*"... were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, not one of you would ever have been **pure:** but Allah doth **purify** whom He pleases ..." (Sura 24:21)*

It is significant that the Islamic scholars who put together the 99 "most beautiful names" of God did not include even one about God's work of *redeeming* or *delivering*. For example, they could have included names like *Al Munijyam* ("The Deliverer" - Sura 2:50), *Al Monqid* ("The Rescuer" - Sura 3:103) or *Al Fadi* ("The Ransomer" - Sura 37:107), but they did not. I personally think this oversight may be due to the fact that the concept of God's delivering, rescuing and ransoming in the Qur'an seems to be synonymous with His omnipotent power to be merciful to whomever, whenever He chooses; a fact evident also in the frequent occurrences of the words grace, mercy and salvation together. [see Chapter 7 – Mercy, Grace]

2. HELPFUL ARTICLES ABOUT THE WAY OF SALVATION IN ISLAM:

[See Appendix 9 for complete articles]

a. Salvation In The Religious Doctrine Of Islam By Dr A.O. Omotosho

(<http://unilorin.edu.ng/publications/omotoshoao/salvation%20in%20islam%5B1%5DB2.pdf>). One of the things Dr. Omotosho writes, is:

*"The word salvation doesn't seem to have formed any basic doctrine in Islam, nor is it often used in Muslim works of divinity. Nevertheless, the concept of it is equally important in Islam. **The religion of***

Islam and its prophet are jointly agents of the emancipation of man from the state of darkness to the state of awareness, which at the end of the day or life will bring him to prosperity.

- b. Is Eternal Suffering In Hell Just? By Abdullah Rahim (<http://www.understanding-islam.com/q-and-a/islamic-beliefs/is-eternal-suffering-in-hell-just-9352>)
- c. Will All Muslims Go To Paradise? By Burhan (<http://www.islamhelpline.com/node/8032>)
- d. Does The Torment Of The Grave Continue Until The Day Of Resurrection? By Shaykh Muhammads Al-Munajjid (<http://islamqa.info/en/ref/21212/grave>)

In addition to the above four articles, these three additional articles are referred to in part (a) of this chapter:

- e. Forgiveness In Islam, Summary of a Friday Khutbah, 14th April 2000 (<http://www.pakistanlink.com/religion/2000/04-14.html>)
- f. Forgiveness In Islam By Shahid Arthar, M.D. (<http://www.islamfortoday.com/athar12.htm>)
- g. Forgiveness By Dr. M. Amir Ali, Ph.D. of THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION (<http://www.hawaiiiforgivenessproject.org/library/Forgiveness-in-Islam.pdf>)

3. NINE POINTS IN ISLAM’S WAY OF SALVATION: God’s salvation is obtained as a reward for **believing** certain things and **doing** certain deeds:

“... it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing.” (Sura 2:177)

Below I have listed all nine points of things necessary for or contributing to salvation:

- the **first three** are considered **essential** to receiving salvation by all Muslims.
- The **fourth, fifth and sixth** are either **optional** or apply only to some believers.
- The **last four** are accepted by most, but not by all scholars as other **possible** ways of obtaining salvation.
- All except the first and last ones are **dependent on the efforts or good works of the believer**.

We will examine each one:

- Essential: a. Belief In One God
- Essential: b. Working Righteous Deeds
- Essential: c. Pursuing Forgiveness
- Optional: d. Achieving Position Of Sincere Servant Believers
- Optional: e. Forgiving Those Who Sin Against Us
- Optional: f. Martyrdom In The Cause Of Islam (Jihad)
- Possible: g. Forgiveness Of Sins By Repentance & Special Prayers
- Possible: h. Atoning For Sins By Torment In The Grave
- Possible: i. Temporary Atoning For Some Sins In Hell
- Possible: j. Intercession Before God By Muhammad

a. Belief In One God (Essential): Islam teaches that only genuine believers in one God will receive God's salvation, and **God alone knows whose belief is genuine**. Of course those who worship idols and those who believe in multiple gods will not be saved from hell fire:

"Forgiveness is not ... for those who die as disbelievers" (Sura 4:18 - Pickthall)

*"... the deities, other than God, whom they invoked, profited them no whit when there issued the decree of thy Lord: **Nor did they add aught (to their lot) but perdition!**"* (Sura 11:101)

Burhan in his article, Will All Muslims Go To Paradise? says, ***"It is the Lord ... alone, Who will Decide ... on the Day of Judgment who amongst those who called themselves 'Muslims' were indeed 'real Muslims' ... and it is only those fortunate believers who are declared as 'real' Muslims by the Lord Most Merciful who will find themselves in the Mercy of their Lord Most Gracious, Most Merciful ... rest assured that our Lord Allah Subhanah, The Most Merciful, Most Gracious will never condemn a true believer who died on faith to the Hell Fire! ..."***

b. Working Righteous Deeds (Essential): This is doing righteous deeds in an active submission to Islam. The amount and genuineness of such good deeds necessary for earning entrance to Paradise is known only to God. Certain good deeds, however, are expected of all true believers. In other words, they are duties or obligations. Other good deeds bring additional merit:

"... then shall every soul receive its due,- whatever it earned,- and none shall be dealt with unjustly."
(Sura 3:161)

1) "Five Pillars" (Duties): The "righteous" are described as those who perform certain duties for which God promises Paradise as a reward. Five of those duties are known as the **"five pillars."** They are:

i) Confession or Witness (*"I confess that there is no God but The God (Allah) and that Muhammad is His messenger"*):

*"There is no god but He: That is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice. **There is no god but He ...**"* (Sura 3:18)

"those who believe in Allah and His messengers- they are the Sincere (lovers of Truth), and the witnesses (who testify), in the eyes of their Lord ..." (Sura 57:19)

"Only those are believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted ..." (Sura 49:15)

ii) Regular Worship Prayers (5 daily prayers with prescribed postures, Arabic words, and times, following a specified ceremonial cleansing):

"... set up Regular Prayers: For such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times."
(Sura 4:103)

"Who establish regular prayers ... Such in truth are the believers ..." (Sura 8:3,4)

iii) Giving Alms To The Poor (2.5% of accumulated wealth annually):

*"... believers,- those who establish regular prayers and **regular charity ...**"* (Sura 5:55)

*"The believers, men and women ... they observe regular prayers, **practise regular charity ...** On them will Allah pour His mercy ..."* (Sura 9:71)

iv) Fasting (before dawn until sundown in the month of Ramadan):

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint” (Sura 2:183)

“Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an ... So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in Fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later ...” (Sura 2:185)

v) Pilgrimage to Mecca (once in a lifetime during the month of Dhu 'I-Hijja):

“... the Station of Abraham; whoever enters it attains security; Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah,- those who can afford the journey ...” (Sura 3:97)

“And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men ... That they may witness the benefits (provided) for them, and celebrate the name of Allah, through the Days appointed ... Then let them ... (again) circumambulate the Ancient House. Such (is the Pilgrimage): whoever honours the sacred rites of Allah, for him it is good in the Sight of his Lord ...” (Sura 22:27-30)

2) Three Other Required Duties Of True Believers: In addition to the famous “five pillars” the following also are obligations of all Muslims:

i) Jihad – Fighting In Allah’s Cause:

[See <http://www.answering-islam.org/Bailey/jihad.html> for fuller details of Jihad]

“O ye who believe! What is the matter with you, that when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of God, ye cling heavily to the earth? Do ye prefer the life of this world to the hereafter? ... Unless ye go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty ... Go ye forth ... and strive [jihad] and struggle with your goods and your persons, in the cause of God ...” (Sura 9:38-41)

“Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of Allah ... these are (all) in very truth the believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.” (Sura 8:74)

“Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise): they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain ... that is the achievement supreme.” (Sura 9:111)

“Only those are believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah: Such are the sincere ones.” (Sura 49:15)

ii) Enjoin What Is Good & Forbid What Is Evil: It is the duty of all good Muslims to ensure (by force if necessary) that their fellow Muslims do what Islam says is right, and to restrain them from what Islam says is wrong:

“Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in God.” (Sura 3:110; also 3:104; 9:112; 22:41; 31:17)

“... they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: They are in the ranks of the Righteous.” (Sura 3:114)

“The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil ... On them will Allah pour His mercy ...” (Sura 9:71)

These words sound good, but in practice Muslims tend to go beyond simply enjoining and forbidding with words. Following the example of Muhammad the community usually carries this out by force if necessary. Saudi Arabia has even

created special religious police called the “**Commission For The Promotion Of Virtue And The Prevention Of Vice**” in order to be sure.

Muslims almost never say, “Mind your own business!”, because most of them feel everything is every Muslim’s business. Islamic society is very similar to a “collective” social system such as communism where the government forces everyone to conform to their standards, except that in Islam it is the community that enforces more than the government. (Contrast this with the Biblical concept of each individual freely choosing or rejecting, believing or disbelieving, abhorring or holding fast):

“...when he knows enough to **reject the wrong and choose the right.**” (Isaiah 7:15)

“...**choose for yourselves** this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15)

“**Whoever believes** in the Son has eternal life, but **whoever rejects** the Son will not see life...” (John 3:36 - also vs.15 &16)

“... **Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.**” (Romans 12:9)

Yes, the Bible teaches we should exhort and rebuke one another, but not by force:

“**If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him**” (Luke 17:3)

“... **exhort one another** every day ...” (Hebrews 3:13)

“... **reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.**” (2 Tim. 4:2)

iii) Invitation (“Da’wah”) To Unbelievers To Submit To Allah And Islam: This is Islamic “evangelism,” and it is really the other side of the *Jihad* coin:

“Who is better in speech than **one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness, and says, ‘I am of those who bow in Islam?’**” (Sura 41:33)

“... a band of **people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity.**” (Sura 3:104)

“**Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious ...**” (Sura 16:125)

3) Optional Additional Righteous Deeds: In addition to the duties listed above, which are considered as “**compulsory**” in Islamic law (*Shariah*), there are other good deeds classified as “**recommended**” or “**permitted**”:

“... that He may give Glad Tidings to **the believers who work righteous deeds, that they shall have a goodly Reward**” (Sura 18:2)

“**If any do good, good will (accrue) to them therefrom ... Do ye receive a reward other than that which ye have earned by your deeds?**” (Sura 27:89,90)

“He that works evil will not be requited but by the like thereof: and **he that works a righteous deed ... and is a believer- such will enter the Garden (of Bliss) ...**” (Sura 40:40)

(In addition to actions classified as “**compulsory**,” “**recommended**” or “**permitted**,” all other actions are considered either “**disapproved**” or “**forbidden**.” These five categories cover all aspects of what are called civil law, religious law and common law. Altogether they amount to a huge burden requiring constant vigilance and obedience, and **once again, only God knows who has done enough good deeds to be saved from hell.**)

Dr. A.O. Omotosho, in his article, Salvation in The Religious Doctrine of Islam, combines these first two essentials (Faith and Righteous Deeds) into one, which he calls, “the pursuance of the cause of Allah.” For this he quotes several verses:

“... That ye believe in God and His Apostle, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the cause of God, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you ...” (Sura 61:10-11)

“Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of God as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid, - these are (all) in very truth the believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.” (Sura 8:74)

Burhan, in his article, Will All Muslims Go To Paradise? seems to limit the requirements for salvation to these first two essentials. He quotes ten verses which say that only believers who do the required good deeds will be admitted to Paradise. Actually phrases containing these two essentials (belief and works of righteousness) are found in the Qur’an at least 49 times. For example:

“As to those who believe and work righteous deeds they have for their entertainment the Gardens of Paradise.” (Sura 18:107)

c. Striving For And Pursuing Forgiveness (Essential): [Note that this involves some overlap and repetition of material on the subject of forgiveness in part a of this eighth chapter.] This is essential for Muslims who fail to do all the required righteous deeds (which probably includes everyone). We have the perspectives of three different Muslim authors on this subject:

1) Dr. Omotosho reasons that because God created us humans weak and unable to live without sinning, God has provided another means for us to obtain salvation. Having done our best to obey and serve God, we must now *struggle* to obtain His forgiveness for our failures, because without forgiveness no one can receive salvation:

“Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden ... prepared for the righteous.” (Sura 3:133)

Dr. Omotosho explains that this “race” for forgiveness means to **“strive for salvation” with all our might, which involves three things:**

(i) **“true repentance”:**

“Forgiveness is not for those who do ill until death faces one of them, who then says, ‘Lo! I repent now ... for such we have prepared a painful doom.’” (Sura 4:18 - Pickthall)

(ii) **doing more good deeds** including obligatory acts (some of which the person may have previously failed to do) as well as acts of charity. Regarding this point, Dr. Omotosho further explains,

“There is also the obligatory method, through which a faithful man be commanded to do something which eventually will earn him forgiveness of Allah. Thus Muslim observance of the five daily prayers, fasting of the month of Ramadan, performing hajj and indeed the payment of Zakat are all intended to make the faithful receive forgiveness of Allah and His salvation, even though he may be penalised for not doing them ... Observing these obligatory duties in the first place amounts to seeking forgiveness of Allah.”

Seemingly such righteous deeds can magically “expiate,” “remove,” “turn off” and “take the place of” evil deeds!

"God ... will call you to account for your deliberate oaths: **for expiation**, feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days. **That is the expiation for the oaths ye have sworn**. But keep to your oaths ..." (Sura 5:89)

"... **those things, that are good remove those that are evil** ..." (Sura 11:114 & 2:271)

"Those who patiently persevere ... **turn off Evil with good** ..." (Sura 13:22)

"But if any have done wrong and have thereafter **substituted good to take the place of evil**, truly, I am off-forgiving, most merciful." (Sura 27:11)

Presumably all this is to outweigh (on God's scales) our failures:

"Then **those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy, - they will attain salvation**: But those whose balance is light ... in Hell will they abide." (Sura 23:102,103 – see also 7:8,9; 21:47; 26:182; 101:6-9)

(iii) asking for forgiveness over and over:

"As to the Righteous ... They were in the habit of sleeping but little by night, And **in the hour of early dawn, they (were found) praying for forgiveness**." (Sura 51:15-18)

For this point, Dr. Omotosho quotes Muhammad (from the Hadith):

"**I seek forgiveness from Allah more than seventy times each day.**"

2) Dr. Amir Ali, who in his article, Forgiveness, tells us that this striving for forgiveness includes the following four requirements:

(i) recognizing and sincerely confessing the sin to God (and to the person if the sin is against a person).

(ii) sincerely promising to not repeat the sin:

"**O ye who believe! Turn to God with sincere repentance**: In the hope that your Lord will remove from you your ills and admit you to Gardens ..." (Sura 66:8)

(iii) rectifying and making restitution as much as possible (required only for sins against other people, since God can't be harmed by our sin).

(iv) sincerely asking for forgiveness from God (and from the person, if the sin is against another person).

3) Dr. Shahid Arthar in his article presents a more optimistic view, that even though committing sin is inevitable (God created man "with weakness"), forgiveness is available for all sins except *shirk* (believing in multiple gods). He says, "**Giving up hope of the mercy of Allah is a crime in itself**":

"... **Despair not of the mercy of God: for God forgives all sins (except shirk)**" (Sura 39:53)

Dr. Arthar gives three conditions for forgiveness:

(i) The crime is committed unintentionally or out of ignorance,

(ii) The guilty person repents quickly and is ashamed after realizing his crimes,

"... **if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented and amended (your conduct)**, lo! Allah is Off-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Sura 6:54)

(iii) Forgiveness is asked for, and a promise or pledge is made to "mend his ways" and to stick to his promise.

The question remains: If for some reason confession to, making restitution to, and/or asking forgiveness from the person is not possible, or if the person refuses to forgive, what are the consequences? **Once again, only God knows!**

d. Achieving The Position Of “Mohmen” On The “Straight Way” (A “Mohmen” is a true and sincere believer; a purified servant of God) **(Optional):**

*“(Iblis) said: ‘O my Lord! because Thou hast put me in the wrong, I will make (wrong) fair-seeming to them on the earth, and I will put them all in the wrong, - except **Thy servants** among them, **sincere and purified** (by Thy Grace).’ (Allah) said: ‘This (way of My sincere servants) is indeed **a way that leads straight to Me. For over My servants no authority shalt thou have, except such as put themselves in the wrong and follow thee.**” (Sura 15:39-42)*

*“Show us **the straight way**” (Sura 1:6)*

[Yusuf Ali’s note (#1976) on 15:41 says: “**To be sincere in the worship of God is to obtain purification from all stain of evil and exemption from all influence of evil. It changes the whole nature of man. After that, evil cannot touch him. Evil will acknowledge him to be beyond its power and will not even tempt him.** Apart from such purified souls, everyone who worships God invites God’s grace to protest him.”]

e. Voluntary forgiving those who sin against us (Optional): If believers fail to do enough good deeds to merit salvation, and if they also fail to obtain God’s forgiveness for their failures by pursuing it, **there is still hope of earning God’s forgiveness by forgiving those who sin against them (but it is only hope).**

Believers are not required to forgive those who sin against them since it is their right to get justice. But there are certain benefits for them in forgiving, including the reward of obtaining forgiveness for their own sins. Dr. Ali writes,

“An eye for an eye is our right, but forgiveness, while recommended, is optional and brings a reward from God. ...Islam taught a middle path between turning the other cheek and never ending blood feud ...”

The Qur’an affirms this idea:

*“The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): **but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah**” (Sura 42:40)*

f. Martyrdom In The Cause Of Islam/Jihad (Optional): Islam says someone killed while fighting in the cause of Islam (*Jihad*), will automatically go to Paradise regardless of his past sins. This is based on verses such as:

*“**Think not of those who are slain in God’s way [in jihad] as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord;**” (Sura 3:169 – see also verses 157,158)*

*“... **Those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My Cause, or fought or been slain,- verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath ...**” (Sura 3:195)*

*“... **those who are slain in the Way of Allah,- He will never let their deeds be lost. Soon will He ... admit them to the Garden which He has announced for them.**” (Sura 47:4-6)*

g. Forgiveness Of Sins By Repentance And Prayers On Special Occasions (Possible): In an article written on 11/15/2011 about forgiveness at the

Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) (<http://seekersguidance.org/ans-blog/2011/11/15/seeking-forgiveness-from-others-before-hajj/>), Shaykh Faraz A. Khan writes:

“The basic idea is that hajj is a journey of repentance and returning to Allah, and it is hoped that the hajj will be accepted and one returns afterwards with his or her sins forgiven by Allah.”

Popular belief is that the pilgrim must be sincere in repentance and also must make every effort to gain the forgiveness of others before going on the Pilgrimage in order to be sure of obtaining God’s forgiveness. Also it is believed that the pilgrim returns from the Pilgrimage completely cleansed of all sins and must subsequently keep himself from further sins. Because avoiding all sins after the Pilgrimage is very difficult, many Muslims postpone going on Hajj until they are old and less likely to sin again. It is also believed that if a pilgrim dies during the pilgrimage he/she will certainly go directly to Paradise.

Many Muslims believe there are special prayers by which Muslims may earn extra special “*sawab*” (merit) before God. For example, it is believed that **prayers during the month of Ramadan** are more meritorious than those at other times, especially by **praying all night on “the night of power”** (the night Muhammad received the first part of the Qur’an) the Muslim will earn more merit than in “a thousand months” of regular prayers (1000 months = 83.25 years, i.e. a lifetime) and all previous and future sins will be forgiven! This is based on the following verse:

*“We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power: **The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.** Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah’s permission, on every errand: Peace! ... This until the rise of morn!”* (Sura 97:1-5)

h. Payment For Sins By Torment In The Grave (Possible): Most Muslims believe the interval or “partition” (*al barzakh*) between death and judgment day mentioned in the following verse is a time in the grave of rest for believers or of torment for unbelievers:

*“... when death comes to one of them, he says: ‘O my Lord! send me back (to life), In order that I may work righteousness in the things I neglected.’ - By no means! It is but a word he says. - **Before them is a partition** [al-barzakh] **till the Day they are raised up.**”* (Sura 23:99,100)

Primarily, however, belief in the concept of torment in the grave before the day of judgment is based on various traditions (Hadith) about things Muhammad said.

Only some Muslim scholars believe this torment in the grave can be a time of atoning for any un-forgiven sins of believers so they won’t need to go to hell at all. For example, Shaykh Muhammad Al-Munajjid in his article, Does The Torment Of The Grave Continue Until The Day Of Resurrection? (on the website, “Islam QA),” says,

“If a person was a sinner but he was a believer, then his torment in the grave will be commensurate with his sin, and perhaps the punishment for his sin will take less time than the time in al-barzakh between his death and the onset of the Hour, in which case it will cease.”

Burhan, in his article, Will All Muslims Go To Paradise?, indicates the same belief:

*“If a believer has committed major sins ... and died in a state whereby he could not repent ... then his state is in the Sole Hands of Allah Subhanah Alone! **He may, if He wills ... punish him in the grave...**”*

i. Temporarily suffering In Hell To Aton For Sins (Possible): Most Muslims believe that unfaithful Muslims may have to spend some time in hell suffering to atone for those sins not yet forgiven, but they will eventually gain admission into Paradise. This idea

is primarily based on several traditions (Hadith) plus the majority interpretation of the following Qur'an verses:

*“So, by thy Lord, without doubt, **We shall gather them together, and (also) the evil ones (with them); then shall We bring them forth on their knees round about hell; Then shall We certainly drag out from every sect all those who were worst in obstinate rebellion against (God) Most Gracious. And certainly We know best those who are most worthy of being burned therein. Not one of you but will pass over it. This is, with thy Lord, a decree which must be accomplished. But We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrong-doers therein, (humbled) to their knees.**”* (Sura 19:68-72)

Most Muslims believe that these verses teach that:

- i) All will be *“gathered on their knees round about hell”*,
- ii) Every person will quickly *“pass over”* the fires of hell on a razor-edged bridge,
- iii) Only those *“wrong doers”* who are *“worst in rebellion”* and *“most worthy of being burned”* in hell will fall into it and be left there,
- iv) God will save *“those who guarded against evil”* from staying in hell.

Abdullah Rahim in his article, Is Eternal Suffering In Hell Just?, takes a middle position on this. First he says the Qur'an does not teach temporary suffering in hell:

“Those who do not deserve to stay in Hell permanently will be forgiven at their moment of judgment and will go directly to Heaven as a result, rather than going to Hell first ...”

But then he admits God could choose to send a true believer to hell:

“if He decides not to punish some of those who were supposed to be punished or if He decides not to punish them permanently then we cannot say that He did not follow His promise because his promises of permanent punishment were within the context of a warning.”

This exception is based on this verse:

*“... He will say: ‘**The Fire be your dwelling-place: you will dwell therein for ever, except as God willeth.**’ for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge.* (Sura 6:128)

Burhan, however, clearly rejects this. He insists the Qur'an never says anyone will enter hell and later leave it. Instead he suggests the punishment of believers “may” take place outside of hell:

“Allah ... may, if He wills, forgive him; or punish him in the grave, or punish him on the Day of Judgment itself; and then have Mercy on him ... and save him from the eternal Hell Fire.”

j. Intercession Before God By Muhammad (Possible): (Most, but not all Muslims agree with this.) If a person should fail to do enough to reach Paradise, or should die before he/she completed the above essentials, Dr. Omotosho says God in His mercy has provided *“an additional safety net”* by allowing Muhammad to intercede for his followers on judgment day. If the person is already in hell such intercession can transfer him/her to Paradise. Muhammad is reported to have said that with the intercession of God's prophet, nobody with an atom weight of faith in his heart will remain in hell-fire. Here are some verses from the Qur'an about this:

*“... **Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth?** ...”* (Sura 2:255)

*“Verily your Lord is God ... **No intercessor (can plead with Him) except after His leave (hath been obtained).** This is God your Lord; Him therefore serve ye ...”* (Sura 10:3)

4. NO ASSURANCE OF SALVATION: In the end **the only thing certain is that God is so great only He knows who will be in Paradise.** Because even Muhammad did not know for sure, the “*darood*” (a prayer for Muhammad to have peace) is included in each of the 17 daily, required cycles of prayer. Also, Muslims add “*May God’s peace be upon him*” whenever they mention his name.

However, the following verse might seem to say otherwise:

“*Nay, verily for thee [Muhammad] is a Reward unfailing:*” (Sura 68:3)

So while officially Muslims can’t know for sure, some are unofficially quite certain of Paradise because of their faithful dedication to their Islamic duties, their belief in one God, the “hereafter,” and in God’s great mercy to forgive all their mistakes:

“... ***Mercy to the Doers of Good,- Those who establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity, and have (in their hearts) the assurance of the Hereafter.***” [that there is a hereafter] (Sura 31:2-4)

“*Those who establish regular prayers and give in regular charity, and also have (full) assurance of the hereafter. As to those who believe not in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds pleasing in their eyes; and so they wander about in distraction.*” (Sura 27:3,4)

5. THE QUR’AN’S DENIAL OF JESUS’ CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION:

The Qur’an vehemently denies Jesus’ death on the cross in our place (and our need of a savior) due to its emphasis on God’s sovereignty (He can forgive whomever He chooses) and man’s responsibility to earn salvation,

a. Jesus Never Died On The Cross. Most Muslims believe the Qur’an clearly denies both the crucifixion and death of Jesus the Messiah. The Qur’an says God deceived Jesus’ enemies by making it look like they had crucified him when they had not. The leading theory involves God interchanging the appearance of Judas and Jesus, causing the Jews and Romans to crucify Judas instead of Jesus, while Jesus was taken to heaven alive:

“*That they [the Jews] said (in boast), ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God’; - but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them ... for of a surety they killed him not.*” (Sura 4:157)

b. Jesus Never Rose From The Dead. Obviously if Jesus never died on the cross, he did not rise from the dead on the third day. Instead, based on the following verses, Islam teaches that he was taken up to heaven alive without dying (A few Muslims believe that although Jesus was not crucified by his enemies the Jews, He later died of natural causes):

“... ***for of a surety they killed him not:- Nay, God raised him up unto Himself; and God is Exalted in Power, Wise.***” (Sura 4:157-158)

“*Behold! God said: ‘O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme ...’*” (Sura 3:55)

THE BIBLE:

First we need to understand what salvation is. Briefly salvation is to deliver, set free or save us from our sin and from the eternal death (separation from God’s loving presence) that is produced by our sin, restoring us to eternal life in everlasting fellowship with God our creator. In

saving us, God justly and fully annihilates all our sin, enabling us to know Him intimately and live eternally in the joy of fellowship with Him:

“this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ ...” (John 17:3)

We Will Be Looking At The Following:

1. The Preparation For God’s Salvation In The Old Testament
2. The Completion Of God’s Salvation In Jesus In The New Testament
3. Seven Ways Jesus Is Qualified To Be Our Redeemer
4. No One Else Qualified

1. THE PREPARATION FOR GOD’S SALVATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:

a. Hebrew Words Relating To This Subject: They are translated by the following English words:

“Forgiveness” in the Old Testament is translated mostly from two Hebrew words (*salach* or *sawlah* – to pardon, spare, forgive – and *nasa* or *nawsaw* – to bear, carry, forgive).

“Salvation” in the O.T. comes primarily from three Hebrew words (*yeshooaw* – salvation, deliverance -, *yehshah* – liberty, deliverance – and *teshooaw* – rescue, deliverance).

“Atonement” comes from two Hebrew words (*kaphar* or *kawfar* – to cover – and *kipoor* – extinguishing, cancellation).

“Redemption” comes mostly from three Hebrew words (*ga’al* – to free by avenging or repaying, to buy back, or to ransom–, *padah* – to sever, release or free -, and *gullah* – freedom, price of redemption).

b. God’s Perfect Creation: God created Adam and Eve innocent and “very good,” but with freewill. They were not created weak or sinful. God warned them not to eat the fruit of one particular tree:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them ... And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:27,28,31).

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” (Genesis 2:16,17)

c. Entry Of Death Into God’s Creation. As God had warned them, death entered and began working in mankind when they chose to sin by disobeying God:

“God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ... the woman ... took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And ... the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man ... And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’ He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’” (Genesis 3:3-11)

Sin brought both spiritual and physical death. Death is essentially separation:

1) **First, sin brought spiritual death.** Spiritual death is **separation from God**. Sin destroyed Adam's fellowship with God and we have all inherited that death:

"therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden ..." (Genesis 3:23)

"but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)

"... sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Romans 5:12)

We all were in Adam's body when he sinned, so, as the above verse says, we together with him "all sinned." Spiritual death also resulted in a corrupted human nature, which we have inherited from our forefather Adam. **We are sinners because we are born with a sinful and spiritually dead nature, so sinning is natural.** From that time until today every descendent of Adam and Eve has been born **spiritually dead – cut off from fellowship with God**. This is what theologians call "**Original Sin**":

[David wrote] *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."*
(Psalm 51:5)

"you were dead in the trespasses and sins... we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath [under God's wrath], like the rest of mankind." (Ephesians 2:1,3)

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22)

2) **Second, sin brought physical death.** Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul. Because of sin the whole creation was cursed with death. The day that Adam sinned physical death began its work in his body, and he eventually died. All of us have physically come out of his body, so we are born doomed to die physically:

"And to Adam he [God] said, 'Because you have ... eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you ... By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'" (Genesis 3:17-19)

Death is so powerful that no monetary ransom, no matter how large, could ever save a person from death. Even if a person's greatest friend or loved one (or any other sinful human being) paid the greatest possible price by giving his own life, he would not be able to save someone from physical death:

"those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the pit." (Psalm 49:6-9)

d. God's Purpose Still The Same. In spite of man's fall into sin, God has never changed his original purpose for mankind. He created us to be holy (pure) like He is so that we could have perfect fellowship with Him throughout eternity. Many years after Adam God said to the people of Israel through the prophet Moses,

"... be holy, for I am holy... You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy..." (Leviticus 11:44-45)

"You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy ... You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine." (Leviticus 19:2; 20:26)

e. The Curse Of The Law: Many generations after Adam God gave His law to the people of Israel so they could know how perfect they would have to be to earn the right to re-enter God's presence. The law promised both blessing and a curse. They could obtain God's blessing only if they obeyed ALL of God's laws (which no one born from Adam can). Otherwise they would remain under the curse of the law:

"... what does the LORD your God require of you ... to walk in all his ways ... to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and ..." (Deuteronomy 10:12,13)

"... to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul ... be careful to do all this commandment ... walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him ... See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God ... and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God ..." (Deuteronomy 11:13,22,26-28)

*"For all who rely on works of the law are **under a curse**; for it is written, '**Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law.**' ..."* (Galatians 3:10)

f. God Our Savior: God is Himself the only savior and the "Rock" (occurs 27 times in the Bible) of our salvation (who later came to earth as a man to save us):

*"... I, I am the LORD, and **besides me there is no savior.**"* (Isaiah 43:11)

*"... no other god besides me, ... **a Savior; there is none besides me.**"* (Isaiah 45:21)

*"**The LORD is ... my rock**, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the **horn of my salvation**, my stronghold and my refuge, **my savior** ..."* (2 Samuel 22:2,3 & Psalm 18:2)

*"... You are my Father, my God, and **the Rock of my salvation.**"* (Psalm 89:26)

g. God's First Covering For Man's Sin: God created Adam and Eve innocent and without shame. But when they ate the forbidden fruit they realized their shame and nakedness. They tried to **cover** it with leaves, but God provided a **better covering for their sin** by Himself sacrificing the lives of innocent animals:

*"... **God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.**"* (Genesis 3:21)

This was the first sacrifice for sins, but it was only a prototype of **the real sacrifice God would later provide**. Animal sacrifices could only **cover up** sin and shame, but God's future sacrifice of a sinless, human life would **completely remove** sin.

h. Atonement/Covering: God, in his mercy, made a provision in the law for mankind to **cover ("atone" for)** their sins through animal sacrifices (as God initially did for Adam & Eve) in order to **postpone judgment until those sins could be fully cleansed and removed**. Those temporary animal sacrifices had no power to remove sin, but were prophecies of God's future **removal** of sin through the perfect sacrifice (Jesus, "the Lamb of God") He Himself would offer at His chosen time:

*"... And the priest shall **make atonement** [covering] **for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven.**"* (Leviticus 5:16)

*"**You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.**"* (Psalm 85:2,3)

Atonement (covering sin) in the Old Testament prophetically speaks of God's full redemption (removing sin) through Jesus. We see this in how Psalm 32:1,2 is interpreted by the Holy Spirit speaking through the Apostle Paul in Romans 4:6-8:

*“Blessed is the one whose **transgression is forgiven**, whose **sin is covered**. Blessed is the man **against whom the LORD counts no iniquity** ...” (Psalm 32:1,2)*

*“... David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God **counts righteousness** apart from works: **‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered’**; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will **not count his sin**.” (Rom. 4:6-8)*

Paul says that having our sins covered (atonement) prophetically speaks of counting the sinner righteous (redemption) because that was in the mind of God from the beginning and was later accomplished in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

i. The Psalmists Longed For Redemption. They longed to be set free from sin; to have it removed, not just covered up; and to be delivered from death:

*“**Wash me thoroughly** from my iniquity, and **cleanse me** from my sin!” ... Hide your face from my sins, and **blot out** all my iniquities.” (Psalm 51:2,9)*

*“**the LORD will redeem** those who serve him. **No one who takes refuge in him will be condemned**.” (Psalm 34:22 – NLT)*

*“**But as for me, God will redeem my life. He will snatch me from the power of the grave**.” (Psalm 49:15 – NLT)*

j. Other Prophets Spoke Of Redemption Through The Messiah: 700 years before Jesus, God predicted the **complete removal** of **sin** and **death** plus the gift of **righteousness** and **holiness** through His own perfect “lamb:”

1) Removal of sin:

*“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: **though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow** ...” (Isaiah 1:18)*

*“Surely he [Messiah] ... **was crushed for our iniquities** ... **with his wounds we are healed** ... **the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all** ... **he was ... stricken for the transgression of my people?** ... **and he shall bear their iniquities** ...” (Isaiah 53:4-12)*

2) Removal of guilt:

*“**I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me**.” (Jeremiah 33:8)*

3) Removal of death:

*“**And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever**” (Isaiah 25:7,8)*

4) Gift of righteousness:

*“... **my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations** ... **And the ransomed of the LORD shall return ... with singing** ...” (Isaiah 51:8,11)*

*“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD ... **for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness** ...” (Isaiah 61:10)*

5) Gift of holiness:

*“A highway shall be there ... called **the Way of Holiness** ... **It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray**.” (Isaiah 35:8)*

k. Use Of The Word Redemption: The general meaning in Hebrew of the word translated “redemption” (“redeem,” “redeemed,” “redeeming,” etc.) is **to free, loose, deliver**

or separate from by means of avenging, or paying a ransom. It is used often in the Old Testament and **usually speaks of physical deliverance:**

- People freeing animals, people and property from being dedicated exclusively to God's service by substituting others in their place.
- People freeing inheritance land from being lost to others by paying off the debt.
- God delivering the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt, from the attacks of enemy nations, and from captivity in Babylon by His mighty avenging power.
- God setting free individual believers from oppression, adversity, vows, widowhood (Ruth), etc. through the payment of their debt by others.

But our purpose now is to see how the Old Testament speaks prophetically of spiritual "redemption" from sin and death through the coming Messiah, and how God's people Israel is waiting by faith for God's redemption:

"I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning ... O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD ... is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." (Psalm 130:5-8)

Atonement covers up or hides sin by the substitutionary sacrifice of an innocent animal's life, **but the future spiritual redemption will completely set free from sin and death** by the sacrifice of a sinless human substitute – Jesus our Savior:

"... You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol." (Psalm 86:13 – NASB)

"... The Lord sets the prisoners free." (Psalm 146:3)

"I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you [set you free]." (Isaiah 44:22)

"Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? ..." (Hosea 13:14)

I. Other Descriptions Of God's Promised Freeing From Sins: Many verbs are used describing the future **removal** (redemption) of our sins:

"Purge me ... and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Psalm 51:7)

"... You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol." (Psalm 86:13 – NASB)

"as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12)

"... you have cast all my sins behind your back." (Isaiah 38:17)

"I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake ..." (Isaiah 43:25)

"... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:34)

"... the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities ..." (Ezekiel 36:33)

"... You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19)

"... And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture." (Malachi 4:2 – NLT)

m. Old Testament Prophets "saw" Jesus The Promised Messiah. The prophets understood that God would provide complete salvation through the Messiah, but they didn't know who He was or when God would send Him:

[Jesus:] *"... Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."* (Jn. 8:56)

“Isaiah said these things because **he saw his** ^[Jesus’] **glory and spoke of him.**” (John 12:41)

“... the patriarch **David** ... Being therefore a prophet ... **foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ** ...” (Acts 2:29-31)

“... saying nothing but what **the prophets and Moses** said would come to pass: **that the Christ must suffer and ... rise from the dead** ...” (Acts 26:22-23)

“Concerning this salvation, **the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories** ... things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

2. THE COMPLETION OF GOD’S SALVATION IN JESUS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

a. Greek Words Used In The New Testament Relating To This Subject:

They are translated by the following English words:

“**Forgiveness**” – occurs many times, mostly from two Greek words (*afeeaymee* = send away, lay aside, let be; *charizomai* = to favor, be gracious, grant).

“**Propitiation**” – occurs only 3 times, from the Greek word, *hilasmos* = expiation or appeasement

“**Salvation**” also occurs many times and comes mostly from two Greek words (*Sozo* = to save, keep sound; and *soteria* = safety, soundness).

“**Deliverance**” is found a number of times in reference to God rescuing, and it comes mostly from the Greek word *rhuomai*. = to rescue.

“**Redemption**” is found many times and comes from 6 different Greek words (including *apolutrosis* and *lutroo* = loosing by price, separating, freeing).

“**Ransom**” comes from the Greek word *lutron* (meaning “a price”) and is a payment made to redeem (release) from bondage or obligation.

“**Reconciliation**” comes from the Greek word *katallage*, which means to change thoroughly or exchange.

b. Because: (The “Bad News” – Without bad news there’s no good news!):

1) Because in our natural condition, we human beings are ...

... Enemies of God (Romans 5:10; James 4:4)

... Alienated from God’s life (Ephesians 4:18)

... Already under the wrath of God (John 3:18; Ephesians 2:3)

... Slaves of sin and Captives of the devil (John 8:34; 2 Timothy 2:26)

... Lovers of darkness (John 3:19,20)

... Hostile to God in our minds (Colossians 1:21)

... Shameless in our emotions (Romans 1:26)

... Evil in our hearts (Genesis 8:21)

... Spiritually dead from birth (Ephesians 2:1)

2) Because God is holy, we are alienated from God’s presence:

“... **holiness without which no one will see the Lord.**” (Hebrews 12:14)

“For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; **evil may not dwell with you.**” (Ps. 5:4)

“but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

3) Because no one can wipe away evil deeds by doing good deeds:

“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight ...” (Romans 3:20)

“For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” (Galatians 3:10)

4) Because God is just and He cannot simply ignore or cancel our sin:

“... For the LORD is a God of justice ...” (Isaiah 30:18)

“... the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.” (Nahum 1:3)

5) Because God’s merciful atonement through the death of innocent animals only covered up sins but could never take them away:

“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins ... offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:4,11)

6) and Because there was no sinless, righteous human being (other than Jesus) who could pay for or take away the sins of others:

“... there is none who does good, not even one.” (Psalm 14:3)

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

c. God’s Justice In Action: For all of the reasons listed above, God is compelled by the *just* nature of His own character – by Who He is – to deal with our sins *justly*. He cannot simply ignore our sins or just make them vanish.

Temporarily, because of His mercy, God instructed mankind to offer the blood of innocent animals to atone for (cover) their sins. But animals cannot be substitutes for human beings so their blood could not cleanse the sins of humans. However, because those animal sacrifices were a prophetic picture of the real sacrifice God Himself would provide later, the faithful obedience of believers’ in offering them kept God from punishing them for their sins:

“... in his divine forbearance he had passed over [without punishment] former sins.” (Rom. 3:25)

“Therefore he [Jesus] is the mediator ... since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.” (Hebrews 9:15)

Even though early believers had their sins covered and not punished, they could not enter into God’s holy presence because they were still guilty. So, after death the spirits of those believers were not sent to “Hades” but to a temporary place of comfort (called “Abraham’s bosom”) with all other early believers. There they waited for God to **redeem** them (set them free) from their guilt by destroying both sin and death through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Only then would they be made righteous and *justly* able to enter God’s presence. This is according to Jesus’ teaching in a parable:

*“The poor man [Lazarus] died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, **he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.** And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and **Lazarus** in like manner bad things; but now he **is comforted here**, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and*

you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.” (Luke 16: 22-26 – see verses 19-31 for full story)

In His chosen time God sent Jesus to die in our place as His “Lamb.” **Being completely perfect and sinless, Jesus was able to *justly* take our place and die in our stead,** bearing God’s curse for all our sins on a “tree” (cross):

“... **Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:29)

“While we were still helpless [powerless to provide for our salvation], at the right time Christ died [as a substitute] for the ungodly.” (Romans 5:6 – AMP)

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13)

“and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross ...” (1 Peter 2:24 - NASB)

In His spirit Jesus then went down into “the lower parts of the earth” (“Sheol” which has two parts - “Abraham’s bosom” and “Hades”) to proclaim to the spirits of believers in Abraham’s bosom the good news that they had been redeemed, and to take them with Him into His Father’s holy presence:

*“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but **made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,**”* (1 Peter 3:18-19)

“... ‘When He ascended on high, **He led captive a host of captives ...**’ (Now this expression, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that **He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?** He who descended is Himself also He who **ascended far above all the heavens,** so that He might fill all things.)” (Ephesians 4:8-10 - NASB)

“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption” (Psalm 16:10)

The only way God could *justly* forgive our sins was to pay for them *Himself*. Because of His love He chose to bear the punishment for our sin through His only Son. Thus the sins of all people of all ages who believe have been washed away:

“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified [cleansed]. (Hebrews 10:14)

“and [believers] are *justified* by his grace as a gift, through the **redemption that is in Christ Jesus ... It was to show **his righteousness** at the present time, so that he might be **just** and the **justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus.”** (Romans 3:24-26)

d. God’s Power In Action: Our Lord Jesus not only took our place on the cross, taking the punishment for our sins upon Himself, but **he conquered death and destroyed Satan’s power in order to deliver us from eternal damnation.**

“... our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death ...” (2 Timothy 1:10)

“that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who ... were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Heb. 2:14,15)

“... The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)

Being the creator and author of life, **He could not be held in death.**

“you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.” (Acts 3:15)

“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”
(Acts 2:24)

That is why we believe the **greatest demonstration of God’s power is seen in Jesus resurrection from death:**

*“and was **declared to be the Son of God in power** according to the Spirit of holiness **by his resurrection from the dead**, Jesus Christ our Lord,”* (Romans 1:4)

*“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; **death no longer has dominion over him.**”* (Romans 6:9)

If He had not risen victorious over death, Jesus would still be dead and we all would be in hell with no fellowship with God! Thus His resurrection from the dead is even more vital to our salvation than His suffering and death. That is why the early Christians constantly emphasized the good news of Jesus’ resurrection by greeting each other with *“He lives!”* (rather than *“He died for us”*) and by meeting for worship on Sundays (the day He rose) instead of Friday (the day He died). We need to rejoice in God’s great power in **Jesus’ victorious resurrection:**

*“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the **death** of his Son, **much more**, now that we are reconciled, shall we be **saved by his life.**”* (Romans 5:10)

*“... **Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised ...**”* (Romans 8:34 – NASB)

*“And **with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**, and great grace was upon them all.”* (Acts 4:33)

e. God, Our Salvation:

1) God Himself is Our Savior:

*“This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of **God our Savior**”* (1 Timothy 2:3)

*“... the living **God, who is the Savior** of all people ...”* (1 Timothy 4:10)

2) And Jesus Is “Our Savior,” “God Is Salvation” And “God With Us”:

*“Grace and peace from God the Father and **Christ Jesus our Savior.**” “whom he poured out on us richly through **Jesus Christ our Savior**”* (Titus 1:4; 3:6)

*“... **you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.**” [The original Hebrew of the English name, “Jesus” is “Yeshua” which means, “**God is salvation**”] *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet [Isaiah]: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and **they shall call his name Immanuel**’ (which means, **God with us**).”* (Matthew 1:21-23 quoting from Isaiah 7:14)*

3) Jesus The Messiah Is Our Savior And God’s Only Means Of Salvation. He is the only perfect (sinless) substitute, able to take all our sin upon Himself and fully satisfy God’s wrath by dying for us:

*“This **Jesus ... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**”* (Acts 4:11,12)

*“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already ...**”* (John 3:17,18)

f. God’s Salvation From ... There are two sides to God’s salvation. First what God has saved us from, then what He has saved us to. Now we will look at:

- **redeemed** (set free) **from** the condemnation of our sins
- **ransomed from** bondage
- **justified from** guilt
- **delivered from** death through death

1) Redeemed (Set Free), From The Condemnation Of Our Sins: Through the sacrifice of Jesus our sins are not only **forgiven**, but we are also **set free** (redeemed) forever from all condemnation against us! **Jesus did not just take our punishment for us (forgiveness); he took our sins from us (redemption) and put them on Jesus:**

"In him [Jesus] we have redemption [release/deliverance] through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7)

"he entered once for all into the holy places ... by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption [release/deliverance]." (Hebrews 9:12)

"... by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by [keeping] the law of Moses." (Acts 13:39)

Actually Jesus accepted the sins of the whole world as His own so that He could set us free by bearing the full force of death in our place. In fact, **He became sin itself!** Thus He put Himself under God's curse instead of us!

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13)

By Jesus' work of redemption our sins were not just **covered**, they were **removed** from us and transferred to Jesus. God uses many verbs to describe the **complete removal** of all our sins from us:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

"Repent therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out., and that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ..." (Act 3:19,20)

"... having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness." (Romans 6:18)

"And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)

"he has appeared ... to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews (9:26)

"... By his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)

"... the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin... he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:7,9)

"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood." (Revelation 1:5)

God's redemption of us from our sins is so complete and final that He describes it in His Word with expressions like:

"as far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12),

*"you have cast all my sins **behind your back**." (Isaiah 38:17), and*

"... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:34).

2) Ransomed From Bondage. The ransom Jesus paid in order to **release** us **from** the bondage of sin and death was His own blood – His own life!:

“... you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, ... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

“even as the Son of Man came ... to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 28:20)

“... you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” (Revelation 5:9)

“... Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

3) Justified From Guilt. Because Jesus took upon himself all our sins, we were **set free** from all guilt. As a result we are **justified** and found **innocent (guiltless)** in God’s court of justice. How awesome is that?:

“... justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ... that He might be ... the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:24,26)

“... But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

“... guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:8)

“The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us ...” (Romans 8:3,4 - NLT)

4) Delivered From Death Through Death. Just like a person whose parents carry a genetic defect is born doomed to have that same defect, so when we are born we are born **already condemned and under God’s wrath**, a condition we inherited from our forefather Adam’s sin and death.

“Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already ... Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:18,36)

Death is so final and unalterable, that it leaves us with a feeling of complete hopelessness:

“As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol ... returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him anymore.” (Job 7:9,10)

“What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?” (Psalm 89:48)

Because death is the result of sin and because Satan holds the power of death, our Lord Jesus deliberately accepted our sin as His own in order to enter death in our place and destroy both death and Satan. Only then could He give us eternal life. **Death could only be destroyed by an indestructible life** – a life so powerful and so eternal it is able to enter death and destroy it from within:

“... another priest arises ... by the power of an indestructible life he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:15,16,24,25)

“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” (Acts 2:24)

*“... **Death is swallowed up in victory.**” (1 Corinthians 15:54)*

*“... **our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**” (2 Timothy 1:10)*

*“**He will swallow up death forever ...**” (Isaiah 25:8)*

*“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that **through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.**” (Hebrews 2:14)*

Messiah Jesus used the illustration of planting a seed to illustrate this principal:

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.**” (John 12:24)*

Imagine a man in the middle of a crowded arena holding a hand grenade without realizing what it was and then pulling the pin to see what would happen. Then imagine another man grabbing the live grenade from him and falling on it in order to save the lives of that man and others around him. Finally imagine the second man being blown up in the air without being mortally wounded because of a special jacket he was wearing, which absorbed the full force of the blast. We are all that first man, not realizing the deadly results of our sin against God. Jesus is that second man, who **REMOVED** all our sin from us, allowing it to vent its full deadly force on Himself instead. He physically died on the cross and went to hell in our place, but his “special jacket,” which Hebrews 7:16 calls his “**indestructible life**,” made it possible for Him to absorb and completely destroy sin and death, to come back to life on the third day and to remain alive forever!: After all, the Scriptures tell us who the Lord Jesus really is: He is “**the Author of life**” (Acts 3:15), He is “**the Living One**” (Revelation 1:18), He is the “**I Am**” (John 8:58) and He is “**the Resurrection and the Life**” (John 11:25). Only Jesus was able to face death squarely – face to face – and overcome it by His own power.

This salvation transaction is pictured in the ceremony of water baptism by which believers proclaim the death of their old life with Jesus on the cross and their new life with Jesus risen from the dead, victorious through faith in Christ, Who is “the Resurrection and the Life:”

*“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized [united or submerged] into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. **For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.**” (Romans 6:3-5)*

*“**If we have died with him, we will also live with him.**” (2 Timothy 2:11)*

g. God’s Salvation To ... If God saved us only **from** sin, bondage, guilt, and death we would have only a clean, but empty life. He saved us **to have His life**, not just to be cleansed from our old life. The positive side of God’s salvation is expressed in various ways. We are saved to ...

- to be **reconciled** with God
- to be **born again** with God’s life
- to be **consecrated** to God

- to be **made like Jesus** by God
- to be **made righteous** by God
- to be **empowered** to live for God
- to be **glorified** with Christ's glory
- to **live forever** with God

1) We Are Saved To Be Reconciled With God. Our sins separated us from intimate fellowship with God, so **His basic reason** for removing our sin and making us holy is **to reconcile us to Himself** to be His people for eternity:

“Christ also suffered once for sins ... that he might bring us to God ...” (1 Peter 3:18)

“in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself ...” (2 Corinthians 5:19)

“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.” (Colossians 1:21,22)

“...Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem [loose] us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own...” (Titus 2:13,14)

2) We Are Saved To Be Born Again With A New Life –God’s Eternal Life. Because Christ died on the cross for our sins, He died our death. But the good news is that **when He rose victorious over death all believers were in Him and thus were made alive with Him.** This new life is spiritual life and it is God’s life, meaning we were made alive to God and in fellowship with God. Because we are united with Christ – **“in Christ”** – we are able to live and act in accordance with God’s will.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ ...” (Ephesians 2:4,5)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing ...” (Ephesians 1:3)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)

“... that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19)

The Lord Jesus called this being “born again” or “born of God”:

“Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... You must be born again.’” (John 3:3,7)

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born... of God.” (John 1:12,13)

Our salvation results in an eternal relationship with God – a relationship so deep that He calls us His “children” and instructs us to call Him “Father.” **Jesus the Messiah became a “son of man” in order to make us “sons of God”!**

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are...” (1 John 3:1)

“And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’” (Romans 9:26)

“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.” (Galatians 3:26)

“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven ...’” (Matthew 6:9)

3) We Are Saved To Be Forever Cleansed And Consecrated to God. The Greek word *hagiazō*, translated “sanctified” or “holy,” means to purify and **set apart for one exclusive purpose**. Through Jesus’s shed blood we are forever cleansed, made innocent and dedicated wholly to God! So **we are once for all forgiven (not punished) and declared innocent of all sin by God:**

“For God’s will was **for us to be made holy** by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all time** ...” (Hebrews 10:10 - NLT)

“... you were washed, you were **sanctified**, you were justified” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

“... to present you **holy and blameless** and above reproach before him.” (Colossians 1:22)

“that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation ...” (Philippians 2:15)

4) We Are Saved And Being Cleansed To Be Made More Like Jesus, the perfect image of God. **God’s work of sanctification (cleansing) in us believers is both once for all time** (see Hebrews 10:10 above) **but also an ongoing process in this life:**

“those whom he [God] foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son** ...” (Romans 8:29)

“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust [Adam], **we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven** [Jesus].” (1 Corinthians 15:49)

“... but we know that when he [Jesus] appears **we shall be like him** ...” (1 John 3:2)

“For by that one offering **he forever made perfect** [once for all] those **who are being made holy** [ongoing process].” (Hebrews 10:14 – NLT)

5) We Are Saved To Be Made Righteous by God. When we receive Jesus as our Savior, our sin is transferred to Him and His righteousness to us. This “great exchange” is possible because our position before God is **in** Jesus. **His righteousness has become our righteousness!** So **we are not just innocent** (emptied of all our sin) **but we are righteous** (filled with His righteousness):

“But now **the righteousness of God** has been manifested apart from the law ... **through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.**” (Romans 3:21,22)

“... **you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.**” (1 Corinthians 1:30)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, **so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

6) We Are Saved To Be Empowered To Live For God. When we receive Christ as our Savior, we receive God’s Holy Spirit, Who enables and empowers us to know, obey and love God:

“**And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes** and be careful to obey my rules.” (Ezekiel 36:27)

“**By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him ... to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.**” (2 Peter 1:3,4 - NLT)

7) We Are Saved To Share In Christ’s Glory. I have always felt it was my duty and joy to glorify (exalt and praise) God with my life and words, but I am astonished to discover

that God intends to share His glory with us as His dear children because He has united us with Christ our Savior:

He begins by adorning us with the beautiful garments of salvation and praise:

*“the LORD takes pleasure in his people; **he adorns the humble with salvation.**”* (Ps. 149:4)

*“... to give them **a beautiful headdress** instead of ashes, **the oil of gladness** instead of mourning, **the garment of praise** instead of a faint spirit;”* (Isaiah 61:3)

Then He gives us His own glory:

*“and if children, then heirs—**heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ**, provided we suffer with him in order **that we may also be glorified with him.**”* (Romans 8:17)

*“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and **those whom he justified he also glorified.**”* (Romans 8:30)

*“For this light momentary affliction is **preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.**”* (2 Corinthians 4:17)

8) We Are Saved To Live Forever with God. God originally created mankind to live forever with Him, but sin brought death. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection we are restored to the eternal life He created us to have:

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**”* (John 3:16)

*“**Christ died for us so that**, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, **we can live with him forever.**”* (1 Thessalonians 5:10 - NLT)

h. Three Dimensions Of Salvation: Many Bible teachers have pointed out that God has provided complete salvation for us – past, present and future (even though from God’s timeless perspective His work of salvation is all at once):

1) **Salvation In The Past:** We have been **saved from the penalty of our sin:**

*“For by grace **you have been saved** through faith ...”* (Ephesians 2:8)

*“**There is therefore now no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* (Rom. 8:1)

2) **Salvation In The Present:** We are **being saved from the power of sin:**

*“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**”* (Ephesians 2:10)

*“that according to the riches of his glory **he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,**”* (Ephesians 3:16)

*“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**”* (Philippians 2:12,13)

*“**God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.**”* (2 Timothy 1:7)

3) **Salvation In The Future:** We will be saved from the **presence of sin:**

*“... and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and **death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away ... But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.**”* (Revelation 21:3,4,27)

In summary, if God were only to forgive us sinners, without removing our sins from us, we would never be able to enter the glorious presence of God's absolute holiness. Or if God were only to take away our sins, without reconciling us and making us His children, we would be separated from His love for eternity! However, anyone, who through faith has received Jesus as his/her Savior, has had all his sins removed (washed away), has been given the pure righteousness of Christ and is indwelt by God's Holy Spirit. That person has been made holy just like God is holy and therefore is brought into a relationship with God so special that He calls us His children and enables us to spend all of eternity praising Him and rejoicing in His love. **This is real life!**

[See Appendix 10 for Man's Part In Obtaining Salvation; including:
What kind of faith is essential for salvation? and Is striving to obtain salvation essential?]

3. SEVEN WAYS JESUS IS QUALIFIED TO BE OUR REDEEMER:

a. Jesus Is Fully God. There is no other savior than God, and as we have already seen, in order for God to forgive our sins He Himself must absorb the full punishment of our sins. God's Word is God Himself, and Jesus is God's Word (also called the "Son of God"), who became a human being. Thus God was in His Son, Jesus the Messiah paying for our sins: [See Appendices 5 and 11 for a fuller explanation]

"For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior ... I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. (Isaiah 43:3,11)

"... Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:10)

"In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1:1-3,14)

"Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." (Colossians 2:8,9)

b. Jesus Is Fully Man. The only qualified substitute for human beings is a human being – one of us. An animal cannot be a substitute for a human being. Jesus, God's eternal Word, "became flesh" – He became fully human:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law." (Galatians 4:4)

"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14)

"Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me.' (Hebrews 10:5)

c. Jesus Is A Sinless Man. In order for Jesus to take the punishment of sinners, he had to be Himself innocent of all sin as God's sacrificial lamb (Otherwise He would need to pay for His own sins and could not pay for ours):

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

*“The next day he saw **Jesus** coming toward him, and said, **“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** (John 1:29)*

*“knowing that **you were ransomed** from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but **with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.**” (1 Peter 1:18,19)*

d. Jesus Is A Proven Man. In order for Jesus to be the Savior of sinful human beings he had to be not only a man and a sinless man, but He also had to be tested and proven to be perfectly righteous by overcoming all of the temptations we face. He was made “perfect” (mature, complete) through persevering and being victorious in the face of all the temptations and opposition He suffered:

*“Then **Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil ... the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.**” (Matthew 4:1,11)*

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one **who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**” (Hebrews 4:15)*

*“Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.**” (Hebrews 5:8,9)*

*“For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints **a Son who has been made perfect forever.**” (Hebrews 7:28)*

e. Jesus Is A Willing Substitute. In order for Jesus to die in our place, he had to be willing to do so, without being forced:

*“Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but **a body have you prepared for me**; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, **I have come to do your will.**’” (Hebrews 10:5-7)*

*“And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, **“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”** (Matthew 26:39)*

*“And being found in human form, **he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**” (Philippians 2:8)*

f. Jesus Is God’s Only Means Of Reconciliation. God’s whole work of salvation is for the purpose of reconciling fallen, sinful man to Himself so that we can live in perfect fellowship with Him for eternity, being His loved children. He did this by removing our sin and making us holy through Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf:

*“... while we were enemies **we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.**” (Romans 5:10)*

*“All this is from **God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; **that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them**” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)*

*“and through him [Jesus] **to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.**” (Colossians 1:20-22)*

g. Jesus’ Sacrifice Is More Than Adequate. The single sacrifice of Jesus, God’s Lamb, was enough to completely cleanse us from all our sins and give us eternal salvation. Nothing else needs to be added. Furthermore, His life was the only indestructible life strong enough to destroy death and Satan and all our sin:

1) Fully Sufficient For All Time. His one sacrificial death was enough to remove all our sin for all time (both past and future sins):

*“The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but **he** [Jesus] **holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.** Consequently, **he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives** to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:23-25)*

*“... **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But **when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins,** he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. **For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**” (Hebrews 10:10-14)*

*“**he has appeared once for all** at the end of the ages **to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.**” (Hebrews 9:26)*

2) Fully Sufficient For All People. His offering of Himself one time was more than powerful enough to take away the sin of all people who have ever lived or ever will live:

*“**He is the propitiation** [satisfaction] **for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**” (1 John 2:2)*

*“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:29)*

*“... and **he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.**” (2 Corinthians 5:14,15)*

*“**who gave himself as a ransom for all ...**” (1 Timothy 2:6)*

*“For the grace of God has appeared, **bringing salvation for all people,**” (Titus 2:11)*

However, His redemptive sacrifice **benefits only those who accept it** – those who believe and receive life through Him:

*“... we have our hope set on the living God, who is **the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.** (1 Timothy 4:10)*

3) Fully Sufficient To Destroy All Enemies. His life is **so indestructible and so powerful** that He is able to destroy **death, Satan and sin.** He entered death in order to abolish and swallow it up, to destroy Satan and to totally remove all our sin):

*“**He will swallow up death forever ...**” (Isaiah 25:8)*

*“ that **through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Hebrews 2:14,15)*

*“God raised him up, **loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.**” (Acts 2:24)*

*“... because of his own purpose and grace ... which now has been manifested through the appearing of **our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death ... through the gospel.**” (2 Timothy 1:10)*

*“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that **through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.**” (Hebrews 2:14)*

*“... Behold, **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:29)*

4. NO ONE ELSE QUALIFIED: No, there is no one else who has the qualifications to be our savior:

*“This **Jesus** is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And **there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**” (Acts 4:12)*

*“For, **There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus.**” (1 Timothy 2:5 – NLT)*

5. MY TOTAL AMAZEMENT: My reaction to the intricate, profound and complete salvation my God has prepared for me is summed up in this verse:

*“**Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!**” (Romans 11:33)*

D. REACTIONS & QUESTIONS:

1. IS GOD UNJUST? One of Islam’s 99 “most beautiful names” of God is “*Al Adl*” (The Just One), but various statements in the articles above seem to imply that God violates His own justice in forgiving our sins by simply “zapping” them away without exacting any punishment. It’s as if He is an unjust judge who turns a blind eye to the criminal acts of those he likes and declares he has authority to forgive them if he wants. For example, Dr. Omotosho, in his article, says,

*“an erring believer can still attain salvation through divine forgiveness, when **Allah overlooks his misdeeds...**”*

What happens in this life if a building engineer simply overlooks mistakes made in constructing a suspension bridge?

In, Forgiveness in Islam, (Summary of a Friday Khutbah, 14th April 2000), we read,

*“... **Allah is not bound to punish... But if He wishes to forgive any sinner, He has full freedom to do that. His mercy is unlimited and His love is infinite.**”*

Can **Al-Adil** (“The Just One”) simply “overlook” our sins? Can God forgive sins simply because He “wishes” to do so? Although that certainly is merciful, it cannot be just! I believe God is “bound to punish” sins because **His mercy is limited by His own just character – by Who He is! He must deal with our sins with justice or He would violate His own integrity.** His justice is far purer than that.

Dr. Shahid Athar, in his article presents a strange idea. First he points out that the Quran says there are several witnesses to our sins. Namely, the place on the earth where the sin was committed (Sura 99:4), the body part we used to commit the sin (Sura 41:21 & 36:65) and the angels who recorded it (Sura 82:11). Then he writes,

*“**God (the Al-Wakeel--the Defender), like a smart lawyer, removes all the witnesses against those whose repentance has been accepted, so that we present ourselves with a clean record. Case dissolved due to lack of witnesses!**”*

Sounds like rank injustice to me! Like a mob boss, God simply “eliminates” all the witnesses so He can declare us not guilty! And Dr. Athar supports this by quoting from the Hadith (traditions):

*“When Allah accepts repentance and forgives His servant, then **recording angels erase their records, organs** [of the body] **lose their memories**, and **earth removes its stains of evidence** so that when that person appears before Allah, there is no one to be a witness against him. (Hadith)*

If tampering with the evidence and getting rid of witnesses is a crime in this world, how could He who is “*Al-Haqq*” (The Truth - another of the 99 “names) stoop to being a “smart lawyer?” The Qur’an itself says God will treat everyone with justice:

*“And **the Book (of Deeds)** will be placed (before you); and thou wilt see the sinful in great terror because of what is (recorded) therein; they will say, ‘**Ah! woe to us! what a Book is this! It leaves out nothing small or great, but takes account thereof!**’ They will find all that they did, placed before them: **And not one will thy Lord treat with injustice.**” (Sura 18:49)*

And yet the Qur’an repeatedly says God will erase our sins without dealing with them:

*“...**will remove from you some of your (stains of) evil ...**” (Sura 2:271)*

*“... Our Lord! **Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness ...**” (Sura 2:286)*

*“... **behold, God is indeed an absolver of sins**, infinite in His power.” (Sura 4:149)*

*“... but **God doth purify whom He pleases ...**” (Sura 24:21)*

And it also says God will alter the official record by disregarding many of their bad deeds and rewarding them only “according to the *best* of their deeds.”

*“Those who believe and work righteous deeds, - from them **shall We blot out all evil (that may be) in them, and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds.**” (Sura 29:7)*

True, the Bible also teaches that God can remove, blot out, absolve and cleanse all our sins, but not without Himself first fully paying for them through His Son Jesus dying in our place. Islam’s perspective seems to be that almighty God can forgive and wipe away our sin without personally suffering any loss or being emotionally involved. It would be unthinkable for Him to have to sacrifice anything to do so.

2. CAN DOING GOOD DEEDS PAY FOR OUR SINS? Dr. Omotosho tells us in his article that our “race” for forgiveness means to “strive for salvation day and night,” involving both true repentance and also doing things already required of us:

*“There is also the obligatory method, through which **a faithful man be commanded to do something which eventually will earn him forgiveness of Allah. Thus Muslim observance of the five daily prayers, fasting of the month of Ramadan, performing hajj and indeed the payment of Zakat are all intended to make the faithful receive forgiveness of Allah and His salvation, even though he may be penalized for not doing them ... Observing these obligatory duties in the first place amounts to seeking forgiveness of Allah.**”*

Hold on! If I miss two of the five daily prayers I am required to do as a Muslim and then I do the other three, can two of those three make up for the two I missed? Suppose a man, working an eight hour a day job, is two hours late and tells his boss he will work for the next two hours (of his remaining 6 required hours) to repay him for the two he missed. I’m sure the boss will have difficulty understanding this kind of repayment!

In addition the Qur’an tells us we sinners can purify ourselves by atoning for our own sins through other good deeds (such as feeding the poor or forgiving others’ sins):

*“... and **whoever purifies himself does so for the benefit of his own soul ...**” (Sura 35:18)*

“... **by way of atonement, the feeding of the indigent**” (Sura 5:95)

“We ordained therein for them: ‘Life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal.’ **But if any one remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself....**” (Sura 5:45)

No matter how hard he tries a liar cannot take back or erase his lies by trying to purify himself through many prayers. No matter how many times a murderer is kind to other people his kindnesses can never bring back the life he took. **Forgiving others, instead of being a selfless act of love, seems to have become a selfish effort to gain merit for forgiveness,** which can never eradicate our own sins.

3. WHY CAN'T MUSLIMS BE SURE OF GETTING TO PARADISE?

Essentially a Muslim hopes to arrive in Paradise by his own efforts, which include believing in one God and doing enough good deeds. But no one seems to know just how many good deeds will be enough. Burhan, in his article, Will All Muslims Go To Paradise? explains:

*“It is the Lord Most Majestic Most Supreme alone, Who will Decide and Determine on the Day of Judgment who amongst those who called themselves 'Muslims' were indeed 'real Muslims'....and **it is only those fortunate believers who are declared as 'real' Muslims by the Lord Most Merciful who will find themselves in the Mercy of their Lord Most Gracious, Most Merciful.**”*

Obviously the intent of this uncertainty is to further exalt God's greatness – that He alone knows who will be admitted to Paradise. Uncertainty might also be an incentive for sinners to work harder at obtaining God's favor. But it seems to me that this uncertainty leaves the believer open to the possible horror and shock of discovering too late that he/she did not do enough deeds acceptable to God and has ended up in hell fire! Again, Islam is all about sinners earning Paradise by their own pitiful and hopeless efforts, which is a total insult to the holiness of Almighty God.

4. NO ALTAR AND NO CROSS: Islam has no altar and no cross because the idea of a substitute paying for the sins of another is absent from Islam. All believers must do their best to atone for their own sins by believing in one God and by doing enough good deeds to balance their bad deeds, and they can never be sure they have done enough for that. In other words, They have no good news or certainty of eternal salvation. This also means **they have no bad news either** because when they think they can somehow pay for my own sins by my own good deeds, they are deceived and do not understand the bad news of their own total sinfulness and absolute hopelessness to justify themselves before the holy God. Only when they fully realize the bad news of their lost-ness can they understand the good news (Gospel) of God's complete salvation for us. As someone has said, **“No Cross; No Gospel!”**

5. NO JOY OR SINGING IN WORSHIP: If you have ever attended a congregational worship service (Friday noon) in a mosque you probably were struck by the absence of any singing or joy. Everything is very serious and somber. The imam would never intentionally say anything funny and you won't see anyone crying tears of joy as they bow down facing Mecca. Some will say that is impressive and glorifies God, but I believe it shows Muslims have no assurance of salvation and no joy in fellowship with God. Compare that with God's Word:

*“I will give thanks to the LORD **with my whole heart**; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. **I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.**” (Psalm 9:1,2 – also 13:5)*

*“**Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!**” (Psalm 47:1)*

APPENDIX 9

ISLAMIC ARTICLES ABOUT SALVATION & FORGIVENESS:

CONTENTS:

1. page 1 - Forgiveness in Islam – Summary of a Friday Khutbah, 14th April 2000
2. page 4 - Forgiveness In Islam – Shahid Arthar, M.D.
3. page 7 - Forgiveness – Dr. M. Amir Ali, Ph.D.
4. page 15 - Salvation In The Religious Doctrine Of Islam – Dr. A.O. Omotosho
5. page 26 - Is Eternal Suffering In Hell Just? By Abdullah Rahim
6. page 27 - Will All Muslims Go To Paradise? By Burhan
7. page 33 - Does the torment of the grave continue until the Day of Resurrection? On Islam QA; By Shaykh Muhammads Al-Munajjid

1. Forgiveness in Islam

Summary of a Friday Khutbah, 14th April 2000

<http://www.pakistanlink.com/religion/2000/04-14.html>

Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala has granted intellect to human beings. The intellect entails responsibility. The more intellect a person has the more he/she is responsible. When the intellect is missing, the responsibility is also not there. Little children are not held responsible, because their intellect has not yet developed. The insane are not responsible, because they have lost the intellectual capacity. However, part of our being human is also that we make mistakes. Sometimes we make mistakes without deliberation and intention. But sometimes we knowingly and deliberately sin and do wrong to others. It is said, "to err is human and to forgive is divine." Both parts of this statement are very true. As human beings we are responsible, but we do also make mistakes and we are constantly in need of forgiveness. Islam speaks about two aspects of forgiveness: a) Allah's forgiveness; b) Human forgiveness. We need both, because we do wrong in our relations to Allah as well as in our relations to each other.

A. ALLAH'S FORGIVENESS:

Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala is the most Forgiving. There are many names of Allah given in the Qur'an. Some of these names are related to His mercy and forgiveness. Let me mention some of these names:

Al-Ghafoor: The most Forgiving. This name occurs in the Qur'an more than seventy times. There are other names from the same root, such as Ghafir and Ghaffar. The meaning of the "ghafara" is to cover, to hide and from it comes the meaning "to excuse", "to pardon", "to remit" and "to forgive". Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala does all these things. In the Qur'an, it is mentioned that Allah does not forgive the Shirk (without repentance) but He may forgive every other sin for whomsoever He wills. (al-Nisa' 4:116) We must turn to Allah to seek His forgiveness.

Al-'Afuw: This has another aspect of forgiveness. This name occurs in the Qur'an five times. Literally the word 'Afuw means "to release" "to heal", "to restore", "to remit". Thus in relation to Allah it means "to release us from the burden of punishment due to our sins and mistakes", "to restore our honor after we have dishonored ourselves by committing sins and making mistakes." Sometimes in the Qur'an both names: 'Afuw and Ghafoor come together.

Al-Tawwab: The Acceptor of repentance. This name of Allah is mentioned in the Qur'an about 11 times. Allah accepts the repentance of those who sincerely repent and turn to him. The word "tawwab" gives the sense of "oft-returning" which means that Allah again and again accepts the repentance. We make sins and mistakes then we repent, He accepts our repentance. Then again we commit sins and make mistakes and when we repent, He again very kindly accept us and gives us another chance.

Al-Haleem: The Clement. This name is mentioned fifteen times in the Qur'an. This means that Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala is not quick to judge. He gives time. He forebears and is patient to see His servant return to Him.

Al-Rahman and al-Rahim: The most Merciful and Compassionate. These names are the most frequent in the Qur'an. Al-Rahman is mentioned 57 times and al-Raheem is mentioned 115 times. Al-Rahman indicates that Allah's mercy is abundant and plentiful and al-Raheem indicates that this is always the case with Allah. He is full of love and mercy and He is ever Merciful.

The Qur'an teaches that Allah is a Judge and He also punishes, but Allah is not bound to punish. The justice of Allah, according to Qur'an is that Allah does not and will not inflict undue punishment on any person. He will not ignore the good of any person. But if He wishes to forgive any sinner, He has full freedom to do that. His mercy is unlimited and His love is infinite.

There are many verses in the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet -peace be upon him- on the love, mercy and forgiveness of Allah. In one of the prayers that the Prophet taught, he said, "O Allah, You are most Forgiving One, You love to forgive, so forgive me." (reported by al-Trimidhi and Ibn Majah). We need Allah's mercy and forgiveness all the time. It is wrong to assume at any time that one will find eternal salvation without the forgiveness of Allah.

B. HUMAN FORGIVENESS IN ISLAM:

Just as it is important to believe in the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, it is also necessary to base human relations on forgiveness. We cannot expect Allah's forgiveness unless we also forgive those who do wrong to us. Forgiving each other, even forgiving one's enemies is one of the most important Islamic teachings. In the Qur'an Allah has described the Believers as "those who avoid major sins and acts of indecencies and when they are angry they forgive." (al-Shura 42:37) Later in the same Surah Allah says, "The reward of the evil is the evil thereof, but whosoever forgives and makes amends, his reward is upon Allah." (al-Shura 42:40) In another place the Qur'an says, "If you punish, then punish with the like of that wherewith you were afflicted. But if you endure patiently, indeed it is better for the patient. Endure you patiently. Your patience is not except through the help of Allah (al-Nahl 16:126-127)

In one Hadith the Prophet -peace be upon him- said that Allah has commanded him about nine things. One of them he mentioned was "that I forgive those who do wrong to me."

The Prophet -peace be upon him- was the most forgiving person. He was ever ready to forgive his enemies. When he went to Ta'if to preach the message of Allah, its people mistreated him. They abused him and hit him with stones.

He left the city humiliated and wounded. When he took shelter under a tree, the angel of Allah visited him and told him that Allah sent him to destroy the people of Ta'if because of their sin of mistreating their Prophet. The Prophet -peace be upon him- prayed to Allah to save the people of Taif, because what they did was out of their ignorance. He said, "O Allah, guide these people, because they did not know what they were doing." When he entered the city of Makkah after the victory, the Prophet -peace be upon him- had in front of him some of his staunchest enemies. Those who fought him for many years, persecuted his followers and killed many of them. Now he had full power to do whatever he wanted to punish them for their crimes. It is reported that the Prophet -peace be upon him- asked them, "What do you think I shall do to you now?" They pleaded for mercy. The Prophet -peace be upon him- said, "Today I shall say to you what Joseph (referring to Prophet Yusuf -peace be upon him- as mentioned in the Qur'an, Yusuf 12:92) said to his brothers, 'No blame on you today. Go, you are all free.'" Soon they all came and accepted Islam at his hands. He forgave even Hind who had caused the murder of his uncle Hamza -may Allah be pleased with him. After killing him she had his body mutilated and chewed his liver. When she accepted Islam, the Prophet even forgave her.

A very striking example of forgiveness we find in the Qur'an in reference to the most unfortunate event of "Slander of Sayyidah A'isha". Some hypocrites of Madinah accused her. They tried to put dirt on her noble character. One of the slanderers turned out to be Mistah, the cousin of 'Aisha's father Abu Bakr's. Abu Bakr -may Allah be pleased with him- used to give financial help to this young man. After he slandered his daughter, Abu Bakr vowed not to help him any more. But Allah reminded Abu Bakr and through him all the Believers, "Let not those among you who are endued with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want and those who migrated in the path of Allah. Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? Indeed Allah is oft-Forgiving, most Merciful." (Al-Nur 24:22) Abu Bakr -may Allah be pleased with him- came out of his home and said, "Yes, indeed, I want Allah's forgiveness. He not only continued to help him but he gave him more. Islam emphasizes justice and punishment of the wrong doers, but it equally strongly emphasizes mercy, kindness and love. Justice, law and order are necessary for the maintenance of a social order, but there is also a need for forgiveness to heal the wounds and to restore good relations between the people. We must keep in mind that as much as we need Allah's forgiveness for our own sins and mistakes, we must also practice forgiveness towards those who do wrong to us.

2. Forgiveness in Islam

By Shahid Athar, M.D.

<http://www.islamfortoday.com/athar12.htm>

What I have learned from this article – Rev. R. Bailey

I have found four main points:

(1) Committing sin is inevitable. Since God created "man with weakness"; God knows and we should know that "to err is human," and "no one is perfect."

(2) But forgiveness is available for all sins except *shirk*. "Giving up Hope of the Mercy of Allah is a crime in itself."

"Say: 'O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins (except shirk): for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'" (Sura 39:53)

"And it is He who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons the evil deed and knows what you do." (Sura 42:25)

(3) There are three conditions for forgiveness:

(a) The crime is committed out of ignorance, not with the intention that, "Let us go ahead and commit this crime as Allah is forgiving, so He will forgive us.";

(b) The guilty person repents quickly and is ashamed after realizing his crimes committed out of ignorance.

(c) Forgiveness is asked for, and a promise or pledge is made to "mend his ways" and to stick to his promise.

"...if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented and amended (your conduct), lo! Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Sura 6:54)

"Forgiveness is only incumbent on Allah towards those who do evil out of ignorance and then turn quickly (in repentance) to Allah. Toward them will Allah turn in mercy; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom." (Sura 4:17)

"Forgiveness is not for those who do ill until death faces one of them, who then says, 'Lo! I repent now, nor for those who die as disbelievers, for such we have prepared a painful doom.'" (Sura 4:18)

(4) How Does God Justly Forgive Our Sins In Islam?

(a) He removes all witnesses against us!

(i) When we commit a sin, there are several witnesses:

- The place where we did the crime (i.e., scene of the murder).

"On that day, the earth will reveal all its secrets." (Sura 99:4)

- The body parts we used to commit the crime.

"When their ears, their eyes, their skin will testify against them." (Sura 41:21)

"That day we seal up mouths, and hands speak out and feet bear witness to all that they did." (Sura 36:65)

- The Angels who record the deeds (Kiraman Katebeen).

"The honored writers know what you do." (Sura 82:11)

"We record that which they send before them, and their footprints, and all things we have kept in a clear register." (Sura 36:12)

(ii) God destroys all evidence against us:

He writes, "God (the *Al-Wakeel--the Defender*), like a smart lawyer, removes all the witnesses against those whose repentance has been accepted, so that we present ourselves with a clean record. Case dissolved due to lack of witnesses."

"When Allah accepts repentance and forgives His servant, then recording angels erase their records, organs lose their memories, and earth removes its stains of evidence so that when that person appears before Allah, there is no one to be a witness against him. (Hadith)

(b) God teaches us the words of forgiveness.

Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of forgiveness, and his Lord turned toward him, for He is Off-Forgiving and Most Merciful. (Sura 2:37)

Allah (SWT), who named Himself Ar-Rahman (The Beneficent) and Ar-Rahim (The Merciful) is also Al-Ghafoor (The Forgiving). His Mercy overtakes His punishment and anger. He is more merciful to His creations than a mother can be to her infants. He created "man with weakness"; thus He knows and we should know that "to err is human," and "no one is perfect."

Iblis (Satan), the cursed one, out of envy to Adam, has promised to himself "to attack children of Adam on their way to their journey toward God, so that those who fall prey to his attack will also have the same fate as himself (I'll take you down with me!). So he says, "I'll attack men from the front, behind and sides." (7:17) This means he will disguise himself as our friend, as our opponent, and side distractions of the world. He will then make us do wrong by presenting evil as good (poison candy in a nice wrapper), making us angry, jealous, envious, just "follow-the-leader" type, and we wrong ourselves and fall prey to his temptation. Iblis and his followers have a feast of joy and laugh at man's foolishness, until the man realizes his mistakes, repents and asks for forgiveness and he is forgiven, and then Iblis cries again.

Giving up Hope of the Mercy of Allah is a crime in itself:

"Say: 'O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins (except shirk): for He is Off-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'" (39:53)

"And it is He who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons the evil deed and knows what you do." (42:25)

In order for forgiveness to be accepted, these conditions should be met:

- (1) The crime is committed out of ignorance, not with the intention that, "Let us go ahead and commit this crime as Allah is forgiving, so He will forgive us.";
- (2) Quickly turn into shame and repentance after committing a crime out of ignorance;
- (3) After asking for forgiveness, make a promise or pledge to "mend his ways", and to stick to his promise. Let us examine verses of Quran.

"...if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented and amended (your conduct), lo! Allah is Off-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (6:54)

"Forgiveness is only incumbent on Allah towards those who do evil out of ignorance and then turn quickly (in repentance) to Allah. Toward them will Allah turn in mercy; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom." (4:17)

"Forgiveness is not for those who do ill until death faces one of them, who then says, 'Lo! I repent now, nor for those who die as disbelievers, for such we have prepared a painful doom.'" (4:18)

IS ANY CRIME OR TOO MANY CRIMES TOO BIG TO BE FORGIVEN?

Let us examine two Hadith.

1) Hadith Qudsi: Allah, the Almighty, has said:

O Son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O Son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O Son of Adam, were you to come to Me with

sins as great as the earth, and were you then to face Me ascribing no partners to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.

2) Prophet (SW) has said:

A certain person had committed 99 murders. He went to a scholar and asked, is there any chance of my being forgiven? The scholar said no, you have committed too many crimes. The man killed the scholar too, but his heart was restless, so he went to another scholar and asked the same question. He was told yes, but you must leave this town of bad people and go live in the next town in the company of good people.

So the man set out to the town he was told to go to. On the way he died. A man passing by saw two angels arguing over his dead body. The Angel from Hell said, 'His body belongs to me as he had not done any good in his life.' The Angel from Heaven said, 'His body belongs to me as he had repented and was set out to be with good people.' The man who was the passer-by said, 'Let us measure the distance of his body from the town he left and the town he was going to.'

This was done. He was found to be nearer to the town he was going to. In another version, the earth was ordered by Allah to shrink and make the distance smaller, so that he was admitted to Heaven.

How does Allah forgive us?

When we commit a sin, four witnesses are established against us.

a) The place we did the crime (i.e., scene of the murder).

"On that day, the earth will reveal all its secrets." (99:4)

b) The organ we used to commit the crime. "When their ears, their eyes, their skin will testify against them." (41:21)

"That day we seal up mouths, and hands speak out and feet bear witness to all that they did." (36:65)

c) The Angels who record the deeds (Kiraman Katebeen).

"The honored writers know what you do." (82:11)

d) "We record that which they send before them, and their footprints, and all things we have kept in a clear register." (36:12)

Now, with four such strong witnesses, how can we present ourselves to Allah? So He (the Al-Wakeel -the Defender), like a smart lawyer, removes all the witnesses against those whose repentance has been accepted, so that we present ourselves with a clean record. Case dissolved due to lack of witnesses. Hadith is like this. "When Allah accepts repentance and forgives His servant, then recording angels erase their records, organs lose their memories, and earth removes its stains of evidence so that when that person appears before Allah, there is no one to be a witness against him. Subhan Allah.

How to ask for forgiveness when Adam and Eve realized they had done wrong but did not know how to ask for forgiveness:

Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of forgiveness, and his Lord turned toward him, for He is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful. (2:37)

What were those words taught to Adam?

They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged our souls and if you forgive us not, and bestow not upon us your mercy, we shall be losers. (7:23)

How did the Prophet Muhammad (AS) teach Aisha (RA) to ask for forgiveness in Ramadan?

O my Lord, forgive me, because you love to forgive, thus forgive me, O you Merciful!

Remember, asking for forgiveness is not just for our sins, but also for our needs as well.

And I have said! Seek forgiveness from your Lord. Lo! He is oft-forgiving (if you ask for forgiveness). He will give you plenty of rain, He will give you wealth and sons, and assign you Heaven and Rivers in the Heaven. (Surah Nuh:10-12)

Thus after repenting and asking for forgiveness, we must mend our ways and not go back to Kufr and fall prey to the tactics of Satan (Iblis) again. While we expect Allah to be kind and merciful and forgive our major and minor sins, we are unforgiving towards our fellow human beings!

Shahid Athar M.D. is Clinical Associate Professor of Internal Medicine and Endocrinology, Indiana University School of Medicine Indianapolis, Indiana, and a writer on Islam.

3. Forgiveness

By Dr. M. Amir Ali, Ph.D.1

<http://www.hawaiiforgivenessproject.org/library/Forgiveness-in-Islam.pdf>

THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Question #1: How is forgiveness defined according to the Islamic tradition? (e.g. which words for forgiveness are used In sacred texts, what does the act of forgiveness entail?)

The Concept of Forgiveness in Islam

The concept of forgiveness in the Qur'an is expressed in three terms, [1] *'afw*, (2) *safhu*, and (3) *ghafara*

'Afw means to pardon, to excuse for a fault or an offense or a discourtesy, waiver of punishment and amnesty. Examples of usage In the Qur'an are verses 42:40, 2:187 and 5:95.

Safhu means to turn away from a sin or a misdeed, ignore, etc. Examples of usage in the Qur'an are verses 2:109, 15:85 and 43:89.

Ghafara or *maghfira* means to cover, to forgive and to remit. Examples of usage in the Qur'an are verses 2:263, 42:37 and 42:43.

For more details see Lane's Lexicon [2] and Hans Wehr's dictionary [3], among others.

The God, Allah [4] Is the ultimate power Who can forgive.

Forgiveness means closing an account of offense against God or any of His creation. However, forgiveness must meet the criteria of sincerity. God, the All-Knowing, has the knowledge of everything including whatever a person thinks but does not express in words or deeds. An offense may be against (a) a person, (b) a group of persons or society, (c) other creation of God such as animals, plants, land, atmosphere, bodies of water and the life therein, and (d) God, Allah. Muslims understand that an offense against the creation of God is an offense against God.

To receive forgiveness from God there are three requirements:

- (1) Recognizing the offense itself and its admission before God.
- (2) Making a commitment not to repeat the offense.
- (3) Asking for forgiveness from God.

If the above three conditions are met in sincerity, forgiveness from God is assured. Sincerity protects a person from repeating the same offense. If a person is sincere he will be helped by God not to repeat; in addition, God will change his punishment for the offense into a reward.

If the offense was committed against another human being or society, a fourth condition is added and the order is changed.

- (1) Recognizing the offense before those against whom the offense was committed and before God.
- (2) Committing oneself not to repeat the offense.
- (3) Doing whatever needs to be done to rectify the offense (within reason) and asking pardon of the offended party.
- (4) Asking God for forgiveness.

Sometimes there is a party against whom wrong was done but this party cannot forgive, that is the creation of God other than human beings. Examples of offenses against God's creation are torturing animals, killing them without justification (food is a justification), defoliation and burning of trees, poisoning bodies of water thus killing life therein, polluting air, destroying land without justification and so on. Some of these activities may be justified, for example, hunting for food is justifiable but hunting for fun is not.

There are no particular words to say for asking forgiveness. However, Muslims are taught many phrases and words to keep repeating daily asking God's forgiveness. For example:

- (1) *Astaghfiru-Allah* [5] meaning, "I ask forgiveness from Allah."
- (2) *Subhanaka-Allah humma wa bi hamdika wa ash-hadu al la Ilaha illa Anta astaghfiruka wa atubu ilayk* meaning "Glory be to You, Allah, and with You praise (thanks) and I bear witness that there is no deity but You, I ask Your forgiveness and I return to You (In obedience).

There are many other similar phrases.

Question #2: What is the theological basis for forgiveness according to the Islamic tradition?

Question #3: What are the major references pertaining to forgiveness in Islamic sacred texts? Please include both the location and quotes from the text.

Questions 2 and 3 are essentially the same. I would like to deal with the terminology used in the questions.

"Islamic tradition" - This term, "tradition", perhaps, applies best to those religions that do not have God-revealed books in their original languages and the religion is the outgrowth of teachings and writings of religious leaders who have come and gone over the centuries and new traditions developed. In case of Islam, the original revelation, the Qur'an, exists in its original language and the second source, Hadith (defined elsewhere in this article), remains intact. Islamic teachings, methods of ritual worship and elements of legal system remain the same as given by Allah through His Messenger, Muhammad (peace and salutations of Allah be upon him, henceforth denoted by superscript (S)). However, some of the applications of Islamic systems may change with the change of technology or environment. Islam is a system of whole life, that is, there are guidelines for individuals, families, social life, economic system and political life of the people. In isolation, Islam as

a system does not work too well. For example, the Islamic legal system does not work very well if its welfare system is not in place. The Islamic family and social system does not work very well if its moral system is not in place. Similarly, the Islamic economic system does not work very well if its political and legal systems are not in operation. Hence, you see the Muslim countries in a mess; they are following neither the western system nor Islamic. You cannot have the legs of a deer, the body of a lion and the head of giraffe and expect such an animal to behave like all three or anyone of the three. We cannot call such an animal a lion nor a deer nor a giraffe.

The theological basis of forgiveness

It is in the Qur'an and Hadith. Qur'an is the word of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad(S) and is in Arabic language. Translation of the Qur'an is not Qur'an because God did not reveal it in any other language but Arabic. A translation may contain the message of the Qur'an but it is the word of the translator not the word of God. Qur'an, in many places, needs explanation which is done by the Prophet Muhammad(S) and recorded in Hadith collections. Hadith contains reports of Prophet Muhammad's sayings, deeds and approvals and is the second source of Islamic knowledge and legal system.

The Qur'an is divided into Suras and Ayas, loosely translated as chapters and verses, respectively. There are 114 chapters of varying length and each is assigned a name and a number in consecutive order. Translators use either Roman or Arabic numerals for numbering Suras. Verse numbers are given in Arabic numerals and numbered within the chapter in consecutive order.

There are many Hadith collections and each primary collection goes by the collector's name. Within each collection Hadith are numbered consecutively. There are secondary collections of Hadith, meaning they are culled from primary collections and arranged according the topic; such collections go by the name given by the collector. It is much easier for untrained people to use secondary Hadith collections than the primary collections. A selection of teachings about forgiveness from the Qur'an and Hadith are given below.

Allah forgives:

"And vie with one another to attain to your Sustainer's forgiveness and to a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, which has been readied for the God-conscious who spend [in His way] in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow men because God loves the doers of good; and who, when they have committed a shameful deed or have [otherwise] sinned against themselves, remember God and pray that their sins be forgiven - for who but God could forgive sins? And do not knowingly persist in doing whatever [wrong] they may have done. These it is who shall have as their reward forgiveness from their Sustainer, and gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide: and how excellent a reward for those who labor!" (The Qur'an [6] 3:133-136)

"Say: [Thus speak God] 'O you servants of Mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God's mercy: behold, God forgives all sins - for, verily, He Alone is Much-Forgiving, a dispenser of grace!" (The Qur'an 39:53)

"God does not like any evil to be mentioned openly, unless it be by him who has been wronged [thereby]. And God is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing, whether you do good openly or in secret, or pardon others for evil [done unto you]: for, behold, God is indeed an absolver of sins, infinite in His power." (The Qur'an 4:148-149)

Explanation: Above verses are self-explanatory and need no explanation.

Leadership must be forgiving:

"And it was by God's grace that thou [O Muhammad] didst deal gently with thy followers: for if thou hadst been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away from thee. Pardon them, then, and pray that they be forgiven. And take counsel with them in all matters of public concern; then, when thou hadst decided upon a course of action, place thy trust in God: for, verily God loves those who place their trust in Him." (The Qur'an 3:159)

Explanation: Allah approved Prophet Muhammad(S) for his leniency with his followers and taught him to pardon. In addition, Allah instructed the Prophet to counsel with the followers and once a decision in a given matter was taken, follow through with it and trust Allah for results. Following the example of Prophet Muhammad(S), Muslim leadership is required to adopt a similar course.

General teachings of forgiveness:

"If ye do good openly or keep it secret, or forgive evil, lo! Allah is forgiving, Powerful." (Quran 4:149)

"Keep to forgiveness, and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant. And if it should happen that a prompting from Satan stirs thee up [to anger], seek refuge with Allah: behold, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (The Qur'an7:199-200)

"And let not those who possess dignity and ease among you swear not to give to the near of kin and to the needy, and to refugees for the cause of Allah. Let them forgive and show indulgence. Yearn ye not that Allah may forgive you? Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (The Qur'an24:22)

"And who shun the more heinous sins and abominations; and who, whenever they are moved to anger, readily forgive." (The Qur'an 42:37)

"But withal, if one is patient in adversity and forgives - this, behold, is indeed something to set one's heart upon." (The Qur'an 42:43)

Explanation: These teachings are about doing good to others openly or secretly and forgiveness to those who may have done wrong. Sometimes a wrong may arouse the worst impulses of anger but it is from Satan; seek refuge with Allah from Satan. There may be a case where the one doing wrong is someone you have been helping but his wrong may arouse your anger to stop helping him; in such a case, Allah is exhorting to continue to help and forgive his transgression.

Family situations:

"O You who believe! Behold, among your spouses and your children are enemies unto you: so beware of them! But if you pardon [their faults], and forbear, and forgive- then, behold, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (The Qur'an 64:14)

Explanation: In a family, some members may cause a lot of pain by their wrongdoing. Sometimes, a family member may cause others to do wrong and transgress which may cause one to commit a crime but it was not intentional. Allah is exhorting to adopt a forgiving attitude within the family.

Murder:

"And slay not the life which Allah has forbidden except in [the pursuit of] justice. Whoso is slain wrongfully, We [7] have given power unto his heir, but let him not commit excess in slaying. Lo! He will be helped." (The Qur'an 17:33)

Explanation: In case of wrongful murder the court will prosecute the accused but in case of a guilty verdict, heirs of the victim(s) have the authority to decide the fate which includes pardoning and freeing him. However, they are not allowed to torture the convicted murderer. It is the duty of the state to carry out the wishes of heirs of the victim.

Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad(S) and his precedence:

Abu Kabsha 'Ameri reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "... and no man pardons an oppression seeking thereby the pleasure of Allah but Allah will increase his honor therewith on the Day of Resurrection." [8]

'Oqbah Ibn 'Amer reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "you shall keep relationship with one who cut it off from you, you shall give one who disappointed you, and you shall pardon on who oppressed you" [9]

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "Moses son of 'Imran had asked: 'O my Lord! Who is the best honorable of Thy servants to Thee?' He [the God] said: 'He who pardons when he is in a position of power.'" [10]

Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "The strong one is not he who knocks out his adversary; the strong one is he who keeps control over his temper." [11]

Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud reported that the Messenger of Allah taught his followers: "Narrating the account of one of the prophets [of Allah] who was assaulted and wounded by his people; while wiping the blood from the face he prayed: 'O Allah! Forgive my people because they do not know.'" [12]

Prophet Muhammad set an excellent example of a very forgiving person in his personal matters. He lived in his hometown, Makkah (erroneously spelled as Mecca) for thirteen years after his appointment as the Messenger and Prophet of Allah for mankind. During this period he was persecuted. His followers were persecuted and some were killed, and, finally, his enemies wanted to kill him. During the first 8 years in his adopted town, Madinah (misspelled as Medina), his enemies chased him, brought armies against him and he narrowly escaped. During twenty-some battles during eight years he lost many of his close associates and relatives by the hands of makkans and their allies. After the conquest of Makkah he declared general amnesty for those who did not take up arms against him during his entry in Makkah. Haykal wrote about a situation in which Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, head of the Makkan tribes and an archenemy of the Prophet Muhammad, finally gave in when he found no other alternative.

"Faced with the treat, Abu Sufyan converted and recited the confession of faith. Al 'Abbas then turned to the Prophet – God's peace be upon him – and said, 'O Prophet of God. Abu Sufyan is a proud man. Would you not grant him some privilege?' The Prophet answered: 'Yes, indeed! Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan shall be secure, whoever remains in his house shall be secure; and whoever enters the Mosque shall be secure.'" [13]

Haykal adds:

"All these thousands of men, of Muslims in battle array, stood on the ready waiting for that one word to wipe out the whole Makkah and its people within minutes. Muhammad, however, was no less than Muhammad! He was no less than the Prophet of God! No alienation, antagonism or hostility could find permanent abode in his heart. His heart was absolutely free of injustice, of malice, of tyranny or false pride. In the most decisive moment, God gave him power over his enemy. But Muhammad chose to forgive, thereby giving to all mankind and all the generations the most perfect example of goodness, of truthfulness, of nobility and magnanimity." {14}

After the conquest of Makkah, the tribes of Taif [15] and its surrounding area, called Hawazen attacked the Muslim armies in dark of the early morning while they were sleeping in their tents. Muslim armies lost a large number of their comrades and they were almost routed by the enemy. However, God helped the Muslim army under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad(S) and the enemy was defeated. This battle is known as the Battle of Hunayn. The Muslim armies got a large

quantity of war booty, however, the Prophet delayed its distribution hoping that the leadership Hawazen would come to him to make peace. He waited for ten days then distributed the booty. He gave the largest amount of booty to the leaders of defeated Makkans who had joined him in the war against Hawazen. Each one of the Makkan was responsible for causing serious troubles for Muhammad(S) and his followers for almost twenty years. The news of his magnanimity and generosity spread, and finally, leaders of enemy tribes showed up in submission. Prophet Muhammad(S) took back the booty he had given to his old faithful followers and gave it to the leaders of defeated tribes of Taif and Hawazen [16].

Question #4: How important or central is forgiveness to the Islamic tradition?

Forgiveness is selfishness. If one desires to be forgiven for his offenses he must learn to forgive others. Especially, if one seeks forgiveness from God, he should learn to forgive others for their offenses. If one desires that God overlook his weaknesses, he should learn to overlook weaknesses of others.

Forgiveness is important for two reasons:

1. Very importantly, for the after-life or the life hereafter. One forgives to seek forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness is a sign of humility and forgiving others is a sign of magnanimity.
2. Seeking forgiveness and forgiving others brings happiness in the worldly life - it's a psychological thing. In addition, forgiving improves relations with people by bringing a good reputation and respect.

In the ancient world tribes and families carried on blood feuds for generations because they could not forgive. Islam taught a middle path between turning the other cheek and never ending blood feud, that is, revenge to the extent of harm done is allowed but forgiveness is preferred. Allah said in the Qur'an:

"The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loves not those who do wrong."
(The Qur'an 42:40) (A. Yusuf Ali)

"But [remember that an attempt at] requiting evil may, too, become an evil: hence whoever pardons [his foe] and makes peace, his reward rests with God - for, verily, He does not love evil doers." (The Qur'an 42:40) (Muhammad Asad)

Both translations of the same verse are correct. One gives more literal meaning (Yusuf Ali) and the other gives more interpretive meaning (Muhammad Asad). It is allowed to take revenge of an offense only to the extent of damage done but not to be exceeded. However, there is a great probability of exceeding the damage, thereby, the victim becomes an offender. Forgiveness is a protection and brings great reward from Allah.

Question #5: According to the Islamic tradition, should forgiveness be contingent upon repentance by the offender? If so, why? If not why? Are there other conditions placed on forgiveness? (e.g., frequency and severity of offenses)

This question addresses the definition and understanding of the concept of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not taking revenge nor desiring any harm to the offender for a particular offense. Forgiveness includes not asking God's punishment to the offender in this life or in the life hereafter. There could be a partial forgiveness, that is, one would not take any revenge in this life but reserves his rights to address to the God in the life hereafter; this is called patience. In case of repentance by the offender, it may bring complete forgiveness for him.

The question #5 implies cases of clear-cut offense by one side against the other but real life situations are not always as clear. Two parties may disagree sincerely, about the offended and the offender. In such cases arbitration and conflict resolution may be required. Allah teaches Muslims in the Qur'an:

"Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them; but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to God's command; and if they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably [with them]: for verily, God loves those who act equitably!" (The Qur'an 49:9)

If there is repentance, it will bring a better bond between the two parties. However, forgiveness does not require repentance by the offender.

Question #6: Does forgiveness necessitate reconciliation? In other words, is it possible to forgive while deciding not to reconcile with the offender?

Reconciliation is desirable but not essential to forgiveness. If the victim feels that the offender has serious character flaws and it is not in his best interest to reconcile he doesn't have to. Reconciliation is used in the sense that the offense is forgiven and forgotten as if it never happened, which could be in theory, but not a practical concept. We all learn from our experiences and frequently we modify. Sometimes it is best for one's own sanity not to carry on normal relationship with certain kinds of characters but one should not totally dissociate from Muslim brethren.

1. Dr. M. Amir Ali is the Managing Director of the Institute of Islamic Information & Education, P.O. Box 410129, Chicago, Illinois 60641-0129, U.S.A. Email: light@iie.net Webpage: www.iie.net The Institute of Islamic Information & Education is dedicated to educating American people about Islam and Muslims thereby trying to removing ignorance and prejudices. Tel. (773) 777-7443, Fax. (773) 777-7199

2. Arabic-English Lexicon by Edward William Lane in 8 volumes, reprinted by Islamic Book Center, Lahore, Pakistan., 1982. Originally published by William and Norgate, London, England, 1863.

3. The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic edited by J.M. Cowan, Spoken Language Services, Inc., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850, Third Edition, 1976.

4. Allah, al-lah, is the name of Supreme Being in Arabic language; in English, the God or in Hebrew, Eloh or Elohim. Allah is the Creator, the Evolver, the Shaper of everything in the universe. Muslims have been taught that Allah has ninety-nine Beautiful Names or Attributes. In this article the names Allah and God have been used as synonyms

5. In this article all Arabic words which are not used commonly in English have been italicized. Also, quotes from the Qur'an, Hadith and other Islamic books have been italicized.

6. In this article the Qur'an translation by Muhammad Asad, titled, The Message of the Qur'an, Dar Al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980. Other Qur'an translations consulted were by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, titled, The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary, Amanat Corporation, Brentwood, MD 20722, 1989; and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthal, titled The Glorious Qur'an. Text and Explanatory Translation, various publishers.

7. This is the plural of authority; sometimes called royal or imperial. This is not plural of number.

8. Mishkat al-Masabih translated by Fazle Karim under the title, AL-HADIS, Vol.1, #339, P548, The Book House, Lahore, Pakistan.

9. AL-HADIS, op. cit. #192 w, p548
10. AL-HADIS, op. cit., #193 w, p.548.
11. RIYADH-US-SALEHEEN by Imam Al-Nawawi, translated by S.M. Madni-Abbasi, Vol. 1, #45, P. 43, International Islamic Publishers (Pvt.) Ltd., Karachi, Pakistan, 1990.
12. RIYADH-US-SALEHEEN, op. cit., #646, p. 359.
13. Muhammad Husayn Haykal in The Life of Muhammad, translated by Isma'il Ragi A. al-Faruqi, North American Trust Publications, 1976, p. 403. (Italics added)
14. Muhammad Husayn Haykal, op. cit., p. 408. (Italics added)
15. The town of Taif is on a plateau, some 3500 feet above sea level and is well known for its riches, beauty and moderate climate. Taif is located fifty-four miles east of Makkah.
16. Safi-ur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri in Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar), translated and published by Dar-us-Salam Publications, Houston, TX 77043, 1996, pp. 411-416

4. Salvation In The Religious Doctrine Of Islam

Dr A.O. Omotosho

<http://unilorin.edu.ng/publications/omotoshoao/salvation%20in%20islam%5B1%5DB2.pdf>

What I Have understood From This Article: - R. Bailey

He believes There Are Two Essentials Plus One Additional Resource For Receiving Salvation In Islam:

(1) Believing And Doing Good: This is what he calls, “the pursuance of the cause of Allah”, which he says includes both the need for believing and striving to serve God with all that we have:

*“O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty? **That ye believe in God and His Apostle, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the cause of God, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if ye but knew!**” (Sura 61:10-11)*

*“**For those who believe and do righteous deeds** are Gardens as hospitable homes for their (good) deeds. (Surah 32:9)*

*“... **Those who spend (freely) whether in prosperity or in adversity who restrain anger and pardon (all) men, for God loves those who do good.**” (Sura 3:133b)*

(2) “Struggling For” Forgiveness: But because human beings are created weak and are unable to live without sinning, God has provided a second essential part of the way to obtain salvation. We must also *strive* for forgiveness for our sins and failures. Without forgiveness no one can receive salvation:

*“**Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous.** (Sura 3:133a)*

*“**And O my people! ... it is for me to call you to Salvation [an-najat] ... I call you to the Exalted in Power, Who forgives again and again!**” (Sura 40:41,42)*

This “race” for forgiveness means to “strive for salvation” with all our might, which involves pleasing God through,

- (a) “true repentance,”
- (b) doing more good deeds

(c) asking for forgiveness over and over:

(a) “true repentance” for our sins and failures:

“(And to preach thus), ‘Seek ye the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance; that He may grant you enjoyment, good (and true), for a term appointed, and bestow His abounding grace on all who abound in merit! But if ye turn away, then I fear for you the penalty of a great day.’” (Sura 11:3)

“O ye who believe! Turn to God with sincere repentance: In the hope that your Lord will remove from you your ills and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow ... Their Light will run forward before them and by their right hands, while they say, ‘Our Lord! Perfect our Light for us, and grant us Forgiveness: for Thou hast power over all things.’” (Sura 66:8)

(b) doing more good deeds to please God: This includes first of all, performing the original duties of Muslims (confession, prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, alms) we have failed to do (Dr. Omotosho says, “Observing these obligatory duties in the first place amounts to seeking forgiveness of Allah.”) plus treating all people with respect and doing other good deeds such as voluntary acts of helping the poor. : So we see that struggling to obtain forgiveness for our failure to do all the good deeds God wanted us to do involves doing even more good deeds:

“To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath God promised forgiveness and a great reward. Those who reject faith and deny our signs will be companions of Hell-fire.” (Sura 5:9,10)

“... but for those who believe and work righteous deeds, is Forgiveness, and a magnificent Reward.’ (Sura 35:7)

(c) asking for forgiveness over and over: According to the Hadith, Muhammad said, “I seek forgiveness from Allah more than seventy times each day.”

*“And what is there to keep back men from believing, now that Guidance has come to them, nor from **praying for forgiveness from their Lord** ...?” (Sura 18:55)*

*“As to the Righteous, ... they lived a good life. They were in the habit of sleeping but little by night, And in the hour of early dawn, they (were found) **praying for forgiveness.**” (Sura 51:15-18)*

(3) Obtaining The Benefit Of The Intercession Of The Prophet: If a person should fail to do enough to please God and receive salvation, or if a person should die before he/she completed the above two essentials, Islam teaches that God in His mercy has provided an additional safety net. He will allow Muhammad the privilege of interceding for his followers on judgment day. Even if the person is already in hell such intercession can remove him/her from there into Paradise. Muhammad is reported to have said that after the intercession of God’s prophet, nobody with an atom weight of faith in his heart will remain in hell-fire.

*“... **Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth?** ...” (Sura 2:255a)*

*“Verily your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly established on the throne (of authority), regulating and governing all things. **No intercessor (can plead with Him) except after His leave (hath been obtained).** This is God your Lord; Him therefore serve ye: will ye not receive admonition?” (Sura 10:3)*

INTRODUCTION

As the topic of this paper indicates, it is not the intention of the writer to make a comparative study of the concept of salvation. Rather, the objective is to write about the position of salvation in Islam, the purpose, the kinds and the method adopted by Islam in inculcating the need to strive for salvation in the minds of its adherents.

Even though the paper is not intended to compare Islamic view of salvation with other religious, it is almost impossible to discuss the concept or definition of salvation without any reference to Christianity and Judaism. In the two religions, the term is more pronounced and serves as a cardinal doctrine. That is why the early part of the paper has to refer to the two faiths.

WHAT IS SALVATION

According to the New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary [1], "Salvation is the act of saving from destruction or catastrophe especially the saving of soul from sin or its consequence". This definition is supposed to be a literal definition but the term seems to have acquired so much religious significance that there is hardly any where it will be mentioned without religious undertone. For examples, the New Oxford Dictionary gives almost the same definition as above. It also refers specially to sin and its consequences [2]. This suggests that the word "salvation" all along has been a religious term and that there is not much difference between its literal and the technical meanings. Hence the special reference being made to sin in its literal definition.

The word "Salvation" As a technical term is more frequently used in both Christianity and Judaism where it has form an important doctrine. For example, the word "salvation" refers to the liberation of man from an un-religious situation to religious one. In other words, the coming of Jesus Christ in Christianity is regarded as salvation for man. The death of Jesus Christ also means salvation for man. [3] Also, when somebody who is a nominal Christian decides to become a practicing Christian, he is referred to as having been salvaged. Conversion of one into Christianity means that he has received salvation. As it is the situation in other religions, when one Christian sect converts somebody (of different Christian sect) into their particular church, they referred to him as having received salvation. [4]

Also, in Christianity, the word "Salvation" and redemption are often used interchangeably though the later was originally a commercial word before it became a religious code. [5]

As it is the case in Christianity, "Salvation" is an important word and issue in judaism. For example, the escape of the Israelites from the persecution of pharaoh is regarded as salvation and the exiles from their Babylonia captivity is also salvation. Even the victory of the Israelites over the Palestinians and the Arabs in 1948 war which eventually led to the creation of the state of Israel is considered as salvation, because it has brought them to the promised land. [6]

SALVATION IN ISLAM

The Qur'anic expression closest to the concept of salvation described above is *an-Najat*, especially as used in the Qur'an, Surah Ghafir, 40:41. It is in connection with the argument of a believing person among other things:

O my people! How (strange) it is for me to call you to salvation while ye call me to the fire.

The above verse clearly indicates that punishment in hellfire is the direct opposite of the attainment of salvation. But the subsequent verse gives an even clearer guidance as to what precisely leads to salvation and what leads to punishment in hell.

You call upon me to blaspheme against God, and join with Him partners of whom I have no knowledge, and I call you to the Exalted in power, who forgive again and again :(Ghafir 40:42).

In other words, blaspheming against God and joining partners with Him lead to hell, while the pursuance of the cause of Allah, the Exalted in power, and the seeking of forgiveness from Him lead to salvation.

The word salvation doesn't seem to have formed any basic doctrine in Islam, nor is it often used in Muslim works of divinity [7]. Nevertheless, the concept of it is equally important in Islam. The religion of Islam and its prophet are jointly agents of the emancipation of man from the state of darkness to

the state of awareness, which at the end of the day or life will bring him to prosperity. Muslims like Christians and Jews have consistently maintained that the mission of their prophet is purely “Salvation”. In the cause of Islam various Qur’anic verses emphasize this point. Some of them are as follows:

“It is He who hath sent His Apostle with guidance and the religion of truth to proclaim it over all religions even though the pagans may detest (it).” (Q.9:23.)

“We have sent down to thee the book explaining all things, a guidance, mercy and glad tidings to Muslims.” (Q.16:89).

Those who follow the apostle, the unlettered prophet who they find mentioned in their (scripture) in the law and Gospel, for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (impure); he releases them from their heavy burden and from the yokes that are upon them, so it is those who believe in him and follow the right which is sent down with him, it is they who will prosper. (Q.7)

According to Muslims, Islam is a religion of purpose and it teaches that there is nothing without reason. It also teaches that one should not do anything without an objective. Allah stated that He did not create man in vain:

“Did you think that we had created you in jest” (Q.23:115).

In another verse He stated that the reason is to worship Him:

“I have only created Jinns (Ghosts) and men that they may serve me.” (Q.51:56).

In order to fulfil that objective, He provided man with all necessary means and made His service a cornerstone of his life. Besides, He provided avenues for His service in every detail of his life. One even serves Him through one’s food, drink and even in ordinary discussion with another fellow human being:

“Kind word and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury.” (Q.2:263)

To ensure that the servant is motivated, He attached rewards to everything that he (servant) does as service to Him. These rewards are many but the quantity obtainable depends on individual records of service. Beside rewards, He also threatens whoever refuses to serve Him and deviates from His commandments with punishment. In the end, each servant is in either one or the other of the only two camps: the camp of those who obey God (or the good doers) and the camp of those who disobey God (the wrong doers). While the good doers are promised with reward – paradise, the evil doers are also threatened with punishment – hell-fire. Therefore, paradise is the hope and dream of good doers. He enjoins them to strive for it but due to the weak nature of man which made it impossible for him to concentrate only on gaining reward without committing any sin that is likely to affect his record, the attainment of this objective or dream remains difficult. The prophet seems to have confirmed this when he says: “None of you will enter paradise through his service unless Allah forgives him. [8]

FORGIVENESS (MAGHFIRAH) AND SALVATION

Since God knew that it is not possible for man to realise his original objective through individual efforts alone, He mercifully set another objective which is easier to attain and by attaining it, one is sure of getting the original one which is paradise. That is where *maghfirah* or forgiveness comes in as the first objective of a Muslim.

In many of the Qur’anic verses where Allah has offered various rewards, He seems to have accorded forgiveness the priority and made it number one objective. Other promises come after forgiveness:

“Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord and for a Garden....” (Q. 3:133).

For those who believe and work righteous deeds, is forgiveness and magnificent reward....” (Q.35:7).

Thus forgiveness or maghfirah is an abstract thing which has neither location nor perception but is much easier to obtain than the other promises of Allah. Allah has already described Himself as professional forgiver (al-Ghaffar):

“But without doubt, I am He that forgives again and again to those who repent, believe and do right.” (Q.20:82).

Al-Tahawi’s definition of Maghfirah (divine forgiveness) shows that both najat (Salvation) and maghfirah (divine forgiveness) are technically the same. He defined istighfar as follows: “Seeking protection against evil of what has happened. [9] While Salvation seeks to save soul from destruction, Maghfirah if obtained is intended to serve as a protection against hell-fire. Salvation is the ultimate objective of Christianity and the Muslim but to the Muslims, salvation is obtainable only through Maghfirah:

“God beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of bliss) and forgiveness.” (Q2.221).

“Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens.” (Q.3:133).

“For those who believe and do deeds or righteous hath God promised forgiveness and great reward.” (Q.5:10).

“For those who believe and work righteous deeds is forgiveness and magnificent reward.” (Q.35:7).

As the verses have shown, forgiveness is the key by which one can enter paradise or benefit from all rewards promised by Allah to the good doers. One cannot enter paradise; he cannot be prevented from getting into hell-fire unless he has received the forgiveness of Allah. The forgiveness of Allah is so important that the prophet himself says:

“I swear in the name of Allah, I seek forgiveness of Allah more than seventy times every day.” [10]

In another version, he said

“hundred times in a day.” [11]

Besides, he encouraged Muslims to seek forgiveness of Allah at the end of every prayer, especially the obligatory ones.

From the Islamic point of view Allah has not created a sinless man. In fact, neither Islam nor other divine religions before it have talked about such a man. They all talk only about how to avoid it (sin) and how to seek forgiveness for any unavoidable sin. In addition to the belief that there is no sinless man, Islam also believes that man is given the ability to avoid many sins especially the great ones, if he so wishes and he is determined. It is on this ability to do or not that Islam capitalized its encouragement of Muslims to avoid sin. The prophet seems to have acknowledged this fact when he said:

“all of you are sinners” but he quickly followed that up by saying “but the best sinner is he who repents”.[12]

In another hadith, he seems to have emphasized both sides i.e. that man is created a sinner and that his duty is to seek forgiveness

“I swear by Him in whose hands my soul lies, if you did not sin, Allah would have removed you and replaced you with other people who will be sinning and then seek His forgiveness, so that He can forgive them.” [13]

It must be pointed out here that the position of Islam is not that of encouragement of sin, rather the acknowledgement of the fact that man is naturally weak and incapable of avoiding sin in its totality, but since he is given the ability to avoid many, he should strive to avoid what is avoidable and be full of seeking forgiveness over those that are not avoidable, to ensure that those committed ones did not constitute obstacles to his way to paradise or salvation. This must have informed the prophetic saying mentioned above:

“None of you can enter paradise through his own work (achievement) but through the mercy of Allah.” [14] (Meaning forgiveness of Allah or His salvation).

In summary, the purpose of seeking forgiveness (maghfirah) lies in its importance and the possibility of its attainment or lack of its capability determining one’s fate. As already pointed out earlier, without forgiveness (maghfirah), one cannot enter paradise and he who is granted forgiveness (maghfirah) is granted everything behind it. In other words, **maghfirah is so important that the prophet himself seeks it about a hundred times in a day.** [15]

From the aforementioned, it becomes apparent that seeking forgiveness of Allah means *Rida Allah* (pleasure of Allah) which cannot be obtained without forgiveness (maghfirah) is also in the fact that seeking of maghfirah itself is an act of worship of God. This is evident in the prophet Tradition mentioned above.

“If you did not sin Allah would have removed you (from the earth) and replaced you with other people who would be sinning and seeking His forgiveness, so that He can forgive them.” [16]

THE STRUGGLE FOR FORGIVENESS AND SALVATION

Islam has adopted various methods in emphasizing the need to struggle for forgiveness in the mind of its adherents. These methods include among other things: education, motivation and advice. The methods often take the form of voluntary encouragement. Perhaps this is informed by the Islamic principle of no compulsion in religion. However, it has also taken the form of limited obligation.

To start with the educational approach, Allah made it clear to man that He created him to live on this earth and that his staying there is temporary. He is going back to another world where he will remain forever. He also made it clear to him that his performance in this present life will determine his fate in the hereafter which is made up of only two houses: the house of reward and the house of punishment. So, at the end this education, Allah enjoins men to seek the house of reward through good conduct and obedience to His commandments. This is a direct approach.

The second approach is that of motivation. This may take a direct or an indirect form. The direct form includes encouragement, i.e. seeking forgiveness is placed on top of everything. A Muslim is always under encouragement to try and strive for forgiveness day and night through any means at his disposal. The following verses provide good examples:

Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth prepared for the righteous. Those who spend (freely) whether in prosperity or in adversity who restrain anger and pardon (all) men for God loves those who do good. (Q.3:133).

Besides, the Muslim is being motivated by the fact that many humanitarian and voluntary services such as the offering of helping hands, giving to the needy, kindness to fellow human beings as well as animals, voluntary religious services like fasting and so on, all attracts forgiveness of Allah. For example, the prophet was reported to have said that a man has been assured of paradise for his good treatment of a dog. [17] This means that he has received forgiveness of Allah. Also, there is this hadith:

“No servant will fast a day in the cause of Allah unless Allah keeps his face away from hell-fire a distance of seventy miles..” [18]

There is also the obligatory method, through which a faithful man be commanded to do something which eventually will earn him forgiveness of Allah. Thus Muslim observance of the five daily prayers, fasting of the month of Ramadan, performing hajj and indeed the payment of Zakat are all intended to make the faithful receive forgiveness of Allah and His salvation, even though he may be penalised for not doing them. Apart from the fact that various aspects of these services provide avenues where the faithful is made to seek forgiveness of Allah such as recitation of istighfar during prostration, at the

time of breaking fast and so on. Observing these obligatory duties in the first place amounts to seeking forgiveness of Allah. The following Tradition of the prophet explains this better:

“On the authority of Jabir b. Abdullahi, the prophet said: the example of the five daily prayers is that of a river passing through the door-step of one of you and he bathes in it five times every day.”

“On the authority of Uthman b. Affan, I heard the prophet saying: there is no Muslim when it is time for (an obligatory) prayer, he perfects his ablution and says the prayer with full concentration unless it (the prayer) wipes out all sins committed between that prayer and the one before it, for as long as he did not commit a grievous sin.” [19]

“On the authority of Abu Hurayrah, the prophet said: He who observes the month of Ramadan as a result of his faith (in Allah and Islam) and with the intention of getting reward, Allah will forgive his sin.” [20]

Another Tradition:

“He who performs hajj to this house (the Ka’abah) and does not fight or violate any injunction of hajj comes out as sinless as a day old baby.” [21]

In another version he says:

“there is no other reward for a perfect hajj other than al-Janna” [22] (paradise).

The above traditions touch on three obligations, namely prayer, fasting and hajj. In all of them, the faithful is being motivated with the fact that the more he does them and perfects them the better are his chances of being granted forgiveness and salvation which are his ultimate dream. Islam also adopts the method of encouraging voluntary effort by the adherent, in order to get forgiveness of Allah. This soft approach is comprehensively stated in Q.61:10-12:

“O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous penalty? That you believe in Allah and His apostle and that you strive (your utmost) in the cause of Allah with your property and your persons. That will be best for you if you but knew. He will forgive you your sins and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in gardens of eternity that is indeed the supreme achievements.”

Beside these verses there are overwhelming encouragements of this nature both in the Qur’an and the hadith. In fact, forgiveness seems to be the most prominent reward promised for many services. If a sin is committed, to erase it requires a good service such as feeding of the poor, freeing of a slave and as the prophet puts it: “follow your wrong deed with good conduct, it will erase it.” In another version: “so that it will erase it.” [23] All these are parts of Islamic efforts to encourage Muslims to strive for forgiveness and eventually attain salvation.

SALVATION BY INTERCESSION

The hope of a Muslim to secure salvation doesn’t seem to have ended with his death, even though he may personally not be in the position to make further efforts towards that after death. Both Qur’an and hadith speak of al-shafa’ah (intercession) in the Day of judgement. This is a special kind of privilege that Allah has promised to grant Prophet Muhammad and other prophets to intercede in the day of judgement between their followers and Allah. On various categories of issues ranging from preventing some people from entering hell-fire in the first place to getting those who are already there out on an amnesty sort of situation.

While the Qur’an refers to this in principle, hadith of the prophet give detail explanations of the various kinds of intercessions that are involved. First, intercession has to be with the permission of Allah.

“Who is there that can intercede in His presence except as He permitted.” (Q2:255). “They offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable (to Him.)”

These two verses are just a few of many examples of Muslim reference to the existence of intercession in the Day of Judgement. Although the outward meaning of the verses doesn’t seem to

have completely given positive impression about the issue in the sense that it talked about it as if it may not happen, the hadith of the prophet as well as Muslim scholars are not only positive about it, but have also provided detailed explanation of intercession in the Day of Judgement. In fact, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, the available reports from the prophet show that at the end of the exercise nobody with an atom weight of faith in his heart will remain in the hell-fire.[24] This seems to be the opinion of the majority of Muslim scholars especially the orthodox [25] or ahl al-Sunnah wa al Jama'ah [26], while the Mutakallimun [27] hold the view that the question of intercession after death does not arise at all. Since in their view, that will contradict the principle of promise and threat which provides that he who dies on good conduct will be rewarded and he who dies on wrong doing (especially the grievous sin) without repentance will enter hell-fire and he will not come out of it. [28]

The majority of Muslim scholars believe that prophets will be given honorary privilege in the Day of Judgement to intercede or plead on behalf of their followers. [29]

Abu Ja'afar Ahmad ibn Muhammad better known as Imam al Tahawi (d. 321 A.H.) highlights seven different kinds of intercession (al-shafa'ah) which he says will be carried out on the Day of Judgement. All but one will be exclusively reserved for Prophet Muhammad. The first one is described as great intercession (al-Shafa'ah al-'uzmah) and it is one of many exclusively reserved for Prophet Muhammad. In support of this, he narrates a long hadith the summary of which is as follows:

- a) The prophet told his companions that he will be the master of mankind in the Day of Judgement. When he was asked why, he explained that when people are gathered to account for their deeds in the present life they will be desperate and anxious to know their fate as a result of the suffering of the day. Then they will be looking for anybody who can intercede on their behalf. In the process, Adam, Nuhu, Ibrahim, 'Isa, Musa, all will be approached to come forward and intercede but they will refuse for one reason or the other. Finally, Muhammad will be called upon and he will approach his God with certain glorification and praises that will be taught him then. God will permit him to intercede on behalf of those who need not account for their deeds among his community. This is the first intercession. [30] The other groups who will benefit from intercession include:
 - b) Those whose good and bad deeds do not outweigh each other and he (the prophet) will intercede on their behalf to enter paradise.
 - c) Some people who had entered paradise but on behalf of whom he will intercede so that they are given better position than their deeds would have earned them.
 - d) He will also intercede on behalf of some people to enable them to enter paradise without having to account for their deeds.
 - e) He will intercede on behalf of some people who are certainly going to hell-fire to have their punishment reduced. A specific reference is made to Prophet Muhammad's uncle Abu Talib who died as in unbeliever but defended the course of Islam and protected his nephew Muhammad against various attempts by the Quraysh to assault him.
 - f) He will be granted privilege to give permission to those whose works have already qualified them for paradise to enter it. This seems to be mere formality as various hadith have suggested.
 - g) He will be allowed to intercede on behalf of those who had committed grievous sin (and did not repent) among his community and are already in hell fire to come out of it. [31]

This is a graphic account of intercession as explained by al-Tahawi and other Muslim scholars. As far as Muslims are concerned, it is nothing but another means of attaining salvation designed by Allah to fulfil His promise to forgive and also to demonstrate His ability to forgive at any time. Above all, to show that whatever He may have commanded man to do or not to do is simply for his own good.

He is above his help and He cannot be affected in any way by his action whether good or bad. Moreover, in their view, the issue of intercession, like the earlier discussion of salvation and forgiveness, seem to be pointing to one fact that Islam has repeatedly emphasised i.e. that the present life is intended to serve as a work-field where everyone after being properly advised is left to show his best, while the Hereafter is intended to serve as a place of rest and reward. He who wants to rest must work hard and he who wants reward must also prepare for that right from here. Even though the available evidences show that for as long one believes in the existence of Allah, he may not necessarily remain eternally in hell-fire, the same evidence also show that Allah is a just creator and He will not award the same reward for those who have spent all their life making sacrifice by obeying His commandment and avoiding His prohibitions and those who have spent their life doing contrary to His orders.

Perhaps those who believe that present life has some reflection of the Hereafter may not be completely wrong, in the sense that if one lives in normal place where law and order reign, the standard of living of the individual will be measured only by his ability and the quality of work he does.

CONCLUSION

The first message one gets from this modest attempt on the doctrine of Salvation, is that it is a concept central to most, if not all, scripture religions. Any religion which does not promise its adherents salvation in return for loyalty to its principles, can hardly be regarded as a religion with spiritual message. This perhaps, is why it is not difficult to understand why Islam shares with Judaism and Christianity the concept of salvation even though they view the way to it in different perspectives.

Salvation, as conceived in Islam, is attainable in three inter-related and, indeed, complementary ways. Islam teaches its adherents to make admission into paradise and safety from hell-fire their goal and strive towards it. Thus is salvation in the eternal sense, and it is attainable through strict adherence to the rules and regulations laid down by Allah. These injunctions of Allah were the message brought and emphasized by His Apostles whom the Almighty had sent to mankind from the creation of Adam to the commencement of the prophet hood of Muhammad (S.A.W). With the prophet hood of Muhammad and the completion of the revelation of the Qur'an to him, the description of the way to salvation was completed and the message of it was perfected (Q.5:4) "This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favours upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion". On the basis of this Muslims see Islam as a way of life, and the perfected way to salvation (Q3:19 "The religion before God is Islam" (Submission to His will): Q3:85 "if anyone desires a religion other than Islam (Submission to God) never will it be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good).

Never-the-less, the attainment of salvation through this "direct" means i.e. strict adherence to the injunctions of Allah is rather difficult for man, because of the natural weakness inherent in him. To err, they say, is human. Therefore, an erring believer can still attain salvation through divine forgiveness, when Allah overlooks his misdeeds. To qualify for this, the believer has to observe more than the strictly obligatory duties. He should be well informed about the "dos and don'ts" of Allah and impart the same knowledge to other people. He should be of good conduct in relationship with others and should be involved in several voluntary deeds in the service of Allah and humanity.

Various verses of the Qur'an and Hadith which complement of former as the primary sources of guidance in Islam focus on convincing man that the objective of God in setting obligations and prohibitions for him is not to exploit him or make him face impossible situation but to encourage him to achieve the badly needed forgiveness that will make him receive salvation and eternal bliss in the day of resurrection (Yawm al-Qiyamah).

The Qur'an hints that on the day of judgement, people "will find all that they did placed before them and not one person will thy Lord treat with injustice" (Q18:49). Allah's promise to reward good deeds

with paradise and bad deeds with hell-fire is, however, still subjective to divine mercy. Therefore, forgiveness, which leads to eternal salvation is also attainable through intercession. There is sufficient scriptural evidence that Allah would on the day of resurrection allow His prophets to intercede on behalf of the faithful and that nobody with faith in his heart may live fore-ever in the hell-fire. Normally, the Day of Judgement is a day when there will be no power or means for anybody to do anything having all done their best on earth.

The following Qur'anic verses in which Allah reiterated His objectives and made it clear to man that He only wants to help him, should be enough for him (man) to think or decide whether or not he is prepared to receive divine salvation:

"If anyone does evil or cheats his own soul but afterwards seeks forgiveness, he will find God oft-forgiving, most merciful." (Q.4:10)

"What can God gain by your punishment if you are grateful and ye believe? Nay, it is God that recogniseth (all good) and knoweth all things." (Q.4:147).

1 The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary (Deluxe Encyclopaedia Edition) New York, 1991, p. 882.

2 The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (Ed. J. B. Sykes) Oxford 1978, p. 450.

3 John Scott *Understanding the Bible*, (Scripture Union) London, 1988, p. 128 – 9.

4 This is based on personal interview with some Christian intellectuals in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos. Among whom is Mr. J. D. Gwamna, a lecturer in Christian Religious Studies.

5 John Scott, op. Cit. P. 128.

6 Ibid. P. 129.

7 Thomas Patrick Huges, *Dictionary of Islam* (place of publication?. N.D. p. 564.

8 Muslim b. Muslim b. Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* (Translated by AbdulHamid Siddiqi) Dar al Arabian, Beirut, Vol. 4. P. 1472-3.

9 Al-Tahawi, Abu Ja'afar Ahmad b. Muhammad al Azdi, *Sharh al 'Aqidah al-Tahawi* (Maktabah al-Islami) Damascus, 1391 A.H. p. 368.

10 Al-Nawawi, Abu Zakariyya Yahya b. Sharaf *Riyad al-Salihin* – Damascus, Dar al Ma'mun) N.D. p. 174.

11 Al Nawawi op. Cit. P. 11-12.

12 Muslim, op. cit. P. 1473.

13 Al Nawawi, op.cit.

14 Muslim, op.cit., p. 1472-1473.

15 Al-Nawawi op.cit.

16 Ibid.

17 Muslim op.cit., p. 1215-6.

18 Al-Sana'ani, Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Kahalani, *Subul al-Salam* (Dar Ihya' al-Turath al Arabi) Beirut, 1960, Vol. 2, p. 167.

19 Al-Nawawi, op.cit.,

20 Abubakar Jabir al-Jazairi, *Minhaj al-Muslim* (Dar al-Taba'ah al-Hadithah) Maghrib, N.D. p. 307.

21 Ibid, p. 320.

22 Ibid, p. 20.

23 See Qur'an 4:92, Qur'an 5:89, and Qur'an 58:4.

24 Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqiyyu al-Din Ahmad, *Majmu'al-Fatawa*, Riyad, 1404 A.H. Vol. 1, p. 318.

25 Ibn Hazm, Abu Muhammad al'iyyu Ahmad, *Al-Milal wa al-Hawa wa al-Nahal*, Jiddah, 1982, vol. 4, p. 111- 113.

26 The term *ahl al Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* is a divinity term and it is used to describe those scholars who accept the Qur'an and Hadith as the main authorities of Islamic teachings and attach less emphasis on reason.

27 The word *al-Mutakallimun* is also a divinity term though it is used both in divinity and the law. When it is used in the divinity it is used to describe the Theologians and most especially those who accept systematic reasoning and philosophy as alternative to hadith and in the law they used it for those who believe that law can be interpreted from the rational point of view.

28 Zuhadi Jaru Allah, *al-mu'tazilah*, Beirut, (Ahaliyyah), 1974, pp. 51-52.

29 Ibn Taymiyyah, op.cit., p. 318.

30 Al-Tahawi, op.cit., 260.

31 Ibid., p. 257-8.

5. Is Eternal Suffering in Hell Just?

Answer by Abdullah Rahim

<http://www.understanding-islam.com/q-and-a/islamic-beliefs/is-eternal-suffering-in-hell-just-9352>

Question

“Asslamoalikum, I am very confused about the concept of eternal Hell. Suffering in an eternal Hell creates a confusion about divine justice, since eternity does not seem to be equal to evil committed during a limited life span of a human (lets say an average of 60-70 years). While reading the Quran I came across two verses which seem to go in favor of those who think God’s mercy would eventually prevail and Hell would cease to exist after its inhabitants have been given the punishment they deserve. The specific verses are Surah Hud 107 and 108. Firstly it does have the words illa Mash'aa rabbuk which leaves it up to Allah to decide. But more importantly, in verse 108 it has added the words ataa'an ghaira majzooz (a gift never ending). In 107 we don't have these additional words. Can you please shed some light on this?” - Question from **United Arab Emirates**

Answer

There are three angles in your question that need to be addressed:

1. Whether eternal punishment is unjust
2. Whether the Qur'an informs us of a temporary punishment in the hereafter
3. Whether it is possible that the punishment of Hell will be temporary for some

I will briefly discuss these in turn:

Whether eternal punishment is unjust

A student sits in an exam for two hours and fails it. As a result, he is not allowed to get the degree for the rest of his life if he is judged based on those two hours. One may ask, he only sat the exam for two hours, why then is he punished by not being allowed to get the degree for more than two hours?

A logical answer to the above is that the two hour exam is aimed to assess whether or not the student deserved to get the degree. The same answer applies to your question on permanent punishment and the fact that human life is about 70 years. As the Qur'an says, we are living in this world only to be challenged and tested so that it becomes evident who does better (67:2). Another point to keep in mind, is that we are given the opportunity to repent, which is similar to giving the individual the chance to repeat the exam a number of times.

People are punished not only for what they have done but also because of what they have become. The Qur'an relates the punishment to "what they have earned" with the word "Kasabu", e.g. (9:95, 10:8, 41:17, 45:14). It is because of "what they have earned" that as the Qur'an says, if they are returned to the world they will keep doing the same evil things that they used to do. Thus, they not only acquire sin but the sin itself becomes them and they are defined by it. It becomes an integral part of their character (2:81) and that trait begins to drive them.

Another point is that if we believe and appreciate that the punishment of hell is permanent this does not necessarily mean that we are providing a less merciful picture of the hereafter. What this really means is that those who do not deserve to stay in Hell permanently will be insha'Allah forgiven at their moment of judgment and will go directly to Heaven as a result, rather than going to Hell first and then going to Heaven.

Please also note a technical point, that is, we are not sure exactly what "eternal punishment" means in the hereafter as we are not sure what exactly the dimension of 'time' means in the hereafter. Therefore comparing times in this world and the hereafter is not really possible.

Whether the Qur'an informs us of temporary punishment in the hereafter

We do not have any verses in the Qur'an that inform us of a temporary punishment explicitly. In fact, the verses of the Qur'an make it very clear that the punishment is permanent. On the other hand,

the events of the hereafter are among the main subjects of the Qur'an. If there are people who are going to transfer to Heaven from Hell then the question is why the Qur'an is silent about this important event. There might be an explanation for this, which I will refer to in addressing the third point.

According to my understanding, the expression *Illā Masha'Allah* (except those who God wills) in verses 11:107, 108 does not tell us that the punishment is not permanent for some people. In my understanding, the expression simply denotes the concept that God, the Almighty, is above everything and decides everything. The same expression is given for staying in Heaven and we know for sure that no one is taken out from Heaven to go to Hell. As you correctly pointed out, the verse 11:108 says "*Ata'an Ghayra Majzooz*" (a gift that shall never be cut off) which makes the point clear that *Illā Masha'Allah* (except those who God wills) does not have a literal meaning here but simply refers to a concept about the Almighty and His ultimate power and dominance.

Whether it is possible that punishment of Hell be temporary for some

Regardless of whether the Qur'an refers to the possibility of ending the punishment for those who go to Hell, we know that the Almighty is the most merciful and we also know that the theme of the Qur'an is warning (Inzaar). When it comes to warning, the promises of punishment for those who do not heed the warning do not necessarily need to be met. If the Almighty does not put good people in heaven then we may say He did not follow His promise, however if He decides not to punish some of those who were supposed to be punished, or if He decides not to punish them permanently, then we cannot say that He did not follow His promise because his promises of permanent punishment were within the context of a warning.

Accordingly, my conclusion of the above three points is as follows:

Conclusion

The Qur'an only informs us of a permanent punishment and does not give us any news about people transferring to Heaven from Hell. We, therefore, cannot consider this (being transferred to Heaven from Hell) to be a belief based on the Qur'an. This however does not rule out the fact that the Almighty may forgive some people after being punished for a while. In any case, the concept of eternal punishment is not against the justice of the Almighty. The punishment is primarily for what the criminals who will be punished have earned, and thereby become, regardless of how long they managed to carry out the evil acts, based on their evil personality.

Answer published by **Abdullah Rahim**

6. Will All Muslims Go To Paradise?

<http://www.islamhelpline.com/node/8032>

One of our brothers/sisters has asked this question:

“assalamualikum. I would like to knw if all muslims will go to paradise?If a muslim he believes in Allah but he haas done somany bad things will he go to paradise?people like osma bin laden saddam hussien they hve killed so many people will they go to paradise?

I have read a hadiths actually i donno hw it is but i think it is like this a muslim will get punished for all his sins but in the end he will go to paradise and he will get tentimes reward of this world is it true ?this is applicple for all muslims good and bad?and i hve heard that only some few lakhs people will enter paradise is that true??

(There may be some grammatical and spelling errors in the above statement. The forum does not change anything from questions, comments and statements received from our readers for circulation in confidentiality.)

Answer:

Will all muslims go to paradise

In the name of Allah, We praise Him, seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. Whoever Allah guides none can misguide, and whoever He allows to fall astray, none can guide them aright. We bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but Allah Alone, and we bear witness that Muhammad (saws) is His slave-servant and the seal of His Messengers.

Your Question:I would like to know if all muslims will go to paradise? If a muslim he believes in Allah but he has done so many bad things will he go to paradise? People like Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussien, they have killed so many people will they go to paradise?

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 32 Surah Sajdah verse 19:

19 For those who **believe and do righteous deeds** are Gardens as hospitable homes for their (good) deeds.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 42 Surah Shura verse 22:

22 Thou wilt see the wrongdoers in fear on account of what they have earned and (the burden of) that must (necessarily) fall on them. But those who **believe and work righteous deeds** will be in the luxuriant meads of the Gardens: they shall have before their Lord all that they wish for: that will indeed be the magnificent Bounty (of Allah).

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 30 Surah Rome verse 45:

45 That He may reward those who **believe and work righteous deeds** out of His Bounty: for He loves not those who reject Faith.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 31 Surah Luqmaan verses 8-9:

8 For those who **believe and work righteous deeds** there will be Gardens of Bliss.

9 To dwell therein. The promise of Allah is true: and He is Exalted in Power, Wise.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 47 Surah Muhammad verse 12:

12 Verily Allah will admit those who **believe and do righteous deeds** to Gardens beneath which rivers flow; while those who reject Allah will enjoy (this world) and eat as cattle eat; and the Fire will be their abode.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 18 Surah Kahf verse 107:

107 As to those who **believe and work righteous deeds** they have for their entertainment the Gardens of Paradise

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 85 Surah Buruj verse 11:

11 For those who **believe and do righteous deeds** will be Gardens Beneath which rivers flow: that is the Great Salvation

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 22 Surah Hajj verse 23:

23 Allah will admit those who **believe and work righteous deeds** to Gardens beneath which rivers flow: they shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls; and their garments there will be of silk.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 22 Surah Hajj verse 56:

56 On that Day the Dominion will be that of Allah: He will judge between them: so those who **believe and work righteous deeds** will be in Gardens of Delight.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 22 Surah Mumin verse 40:

40 He that works evil will not be requited but by the like thereof: and he that **works a righteous deed whether man or woman and is a believer** such will enter the Garden (of Bliss): therein will they have abundance without measure.

Respected brother in Islam, the Realms of Paradise is the prerogative of Allah Subhanah Alone; and the two absolutely inseparable pre-conditions the Lord Most High Most Wise has conveyed in His Message for one's entry into the Eternal Gardens of Paradise are:

1. Belief, and
2. Righteous good deeds in accordance with the Guidance of the Lord.

A 'muslim' can be divided into two categories:

1. A 'legal' muslim: ie. one who is born to believing parents, or one who declares the 'Shahaadah', etc.

2. A 'Haqiqi' or 'real' muslim: ie. one who is declared to be a true believer in the Presence of the All-Knowing, All-Wise Lord on the Day of Judgment.

Thus brother it is not as if every person who declares himself to be a 'muslim' in the life of this world, or names himself an Abdullah, or Mohamed, or Ayyub, or Jaafar, etc. has an unconditional guarantee to enter Paradise!

It is the Lord Most Majestic Most Supreme Alone, Who will Decide and Determine on the Day of Judgment who amongst those who called themselves 'muslims' were indeed 'real muslims'.....and it is only those fortunate believers who are declared as 'real' muslims by the Lord Most Merciful who will find themselves in the Mercy of their Lord Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 29 Surah Ankabut verses 10-11:

10 *Then there are among men such as say "We believe in Allah"; but when they suffer affliction in (the Cause of) Allah they treat men's oppression as if it were the Wrath of Allah! And if help comes (to thee) from thy Lord they are sure to say "We have (always) been with you!" Does not Allah know best all that is in the hearts of all creation?*

11 *And Allah most certainly knows those who believe, and as certainly those who are hypocrites!*

Hadith Qudsi 6

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said: 'The first of people against whom judgment will be pronounced on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who died a martyr (in the Cause of Allah). He will be brought and Allah will make known to him His favors and he will recognize them. Allah, The Exalted, will say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I fought for You until I died a martyr (in Your Cause). Allah Subhanah will Say: 'You have lied - you did but fight that it might be said [of you]: He is courageous. And so it was said.' Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire. [Another] will be a man who has studied [religious] knowledge and has taught it and who used to recite the Quran. He will be brought and Allah will make known to him His favors and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will Say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I studied [religious] knowledge and I taught it and I recited the Quran for Your sake.' Allah Subhanah will Say: 'You have lied - you did but study [religious] knowledge that it might be said [of you]: He is learned. And you recited the Quran that it might be said [of you]: He is a recitor. And so it was said.' Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire. [Another] will be a man whom Allah had made rich and to whom He had given all kinds of wealth. He will be brought and Allah will make known to him His favors and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will Say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I left no path [untrodden] in which You like money to be spent without spending in it for Your sake.' Allah Subhanah will say: 'You have lied - you did but do so that it might be said [of you]: He is open-handed. And so it was said.' Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire.'

Sahih Muslim Hadith 6251 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

Allah's Messenger (saws) said: 'Do you know who is a 'mufлис' (abjectly poor or one who is totally bankrupt)?' They (the Companions (r.a.) of the Prophet (saws)) said: 'A 'mufليس' amongst us is one who has neither dirham with him nor wealth.' He (the Prophet (saws)) said: 'The 'mufليس' of my Ummah would be he who would come on the Day of Resurrection with prayers and fasts and Zakah but (he would find himself bankrupt on that day as he would have exhausted his funds of virtues) since he hurled abuses upon others, brought calumny against others, unlawfully consumed the wealth of others, shed the blood of others, and beat others. His virtues would be credited to the account of one (who suffered at his hand). And if his good deeds fall short to clear the account (of his mis-deeds), then their sins would be entered in (his account) and he would be thrown in the Hell-Fire!'

Respected brother, in light of the above absolutely clear guidance of Allah and His Messenger (saws) it is evident that not every one who considered himself to be a 'muslim' in the life of this world will enter Paradise.....but rather only those whom The Lord Most Gracious Determines to be true 'muslims' on that Inevitable and Tumultuous Day of Judgment will be shown the Mercy of their Lord Most Merciful.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 21 Surah Anbiyaa verse 47:

47 *We shall set up Scales of Justice for the Day of Judgment so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed (good or evil), We will bring it (to account): and enough are We to take account.*

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 6 Surah Anaam verse 160:

160 *He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit: he that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil. No wrong shall be done unto (any of) them.*

Your Question:"I have read a hadiths actually i donno hw it is but i think it is like this a muslim will get punished for all his sins but in the end he will go to paradise and he will get tentimes reward of this world is it true ?this is applicale for all muslims good and bad?"

As far as the state of the hypocrites, the disbelievers, and the polytheists (mushriks) goes, Allah Subhanah has made it abundantly clear that these people will never ever get out of the Hell Fire.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 5 Surah Maidah verses 36-37:

- 36** *As to those who reject faith, if they had everything on earth and twice repeated to give as ransom for the penalty of the Day of Judgment, it would never be accepted of them. Theirs would be a grievous penalty.*
- 37** *Their wish will be to get out of the fire, **but never will they get out therefrom:** their penalty will be one that endures.*

Nowhere in the Quran is it mentioned that one who is condemned to Hell Fire, will be taken out after some time! Beloved brother in Islam, the truth is there are indeed a few hadiths recorded which state that some believers who had faith, but because of their evil deeds were condemned to the Hell Fire and after serving their time in Hell Fire they will be taken out by Allah Subhanah! Although these narrations are recorded in the 'sahih' category of hadiths, almost all of such hadiths are related by one narrator and most of the good scholars and jurists are of the opinion that regardless of the source of the hadith, if any hadith goes against the clear guidance of the Holy Quran, that hadith cannot be accepted as 'sahih'.

The Glorious Quran has severely condemned this exact belief of the People of the Book, who believed that even if they did go to Hell for some of their mis-deeds, Allah would take them out of Hell!

Allah says in the Holy Quran Chapter 3 Surah Ale Imraan verses 23-25:

- 23** *Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who have been given a portion of the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah to settle their dispute, but a party of them turn back and decline (the arbitration).*
- 24** *This because they say: "**The fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days**"; for their forgeries deceive them as to their own religion.*
- 25** *But how (will they fare), when We gather them together against a Day about which there is no doubt, and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned without (favor or injustice)?*

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 2 Surah Baqarah verses 78-82:

- 78** *And there are among them illiterates who know not the Book but (see therein their own) desires and they do nothing but conjecture.*
- 79** *Then woe to those who write the book with their own hands and then say: "This is from Allah" to traffic with it for a miserable price! Woe to them for what their hands do write and for the gain they make thereby.*
- 80** *And they say: "**The fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days**"; Say: "**Have ye taken a promise from Allah for He never breaks His promise? Or is it that ye say of Allah what ye do not know?**"*
- 81** *Nay those who seek gain in evil and are girt round by their sins they are Companions of the Fire therein shall they abide (for ever).*
- 82** *But those who have faith and work righteousness they are Companions of the Garden therein shall they abide (for ever).*

Unfortunately, this belief, that a believer will spend some time in Hell and will then be released has also crept into the muslim Ummah! The Quran is extremely clear in its verdict that one who goes to Hell will stay in it forever; and the one who goes to Paradise will stay therein for ever!

Allah says in the Holy Quran Chapter 101 Surah Al-Qaaria verses 6-11:

- 6** *Then he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) heavy*
- 7** *Will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction.*
- 8** *But he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light*
- 9** *Will have his home in a (bottomless) pit.*
- 10** *And what will explain to thee what this is?*
- 11** *(It is) a Fire Blazing fiercely!*

The Holy Quran is extremely clear in its context that one who is condemned to the Hell Fire, will not be allowed to come out of it!

Allah says in the Holy Quran Chapter 32 Surah As-Sajdah verse 20:

20 **As to those who are rebellious and wicked, their abode will be the Fire: every time they wish to get away therefrom, they will be forced thereinto,** and it will be said to them: "taste ye the Penalty of the Fire, which ye were wont to reject as false.

Beloved brother, rest assured that our Lord Allah Subhanah, The Most Merciful, Most Gracious will never condemn a true believer who died on faith to the Hell Fire! If some believer has committed major sins like zina, murder, eating riba, transgression of Allah's Laws, etc. , and died in a state whereby he could not repent and seek Taubah; then his state is in the Sole Hands of Allah Subhanah Alone! He may, if He wills, forgive him; or punish him in the grave, or punish him on the Day of Judgment itself; and then have Mercy on him and forgive him and save him from the eternal Hell Fire.

Allah says in the Quran: Chapter 4 Surah An-Nisa Verse 48

48 *Shirk (associating other deities with Allah) is the only sin that Allah does not forgive, and He forgives, whomsoever He pleases, sins other than this. For whosoever associates any other partner with Allah, does indeed forge a big lie and commits the most heinous sin*

Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 4.445 Narrated by Abu Dhar

The Prophet (saws) said, "Jibrael said to me, "Whoever amongst your followers die without having worshipped others besides Allah, will enter Paradise (or will not enter the (Hell) Fire)." The Prophet (saws) asked. "Even if he has committed illegal sexual intercourse or theft?" Jibrael (a.s.) replied, "Even then!"

Hadith Qudsi 34

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said that Allah Subhanah, Glorified and Exalted is He, says: "O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it!"

But to believe that one who is so wretched that he has been condemned by the Lord to the Hell Fire will somehow come out of Hell Fire after serving their sentence is a belief of the People of Book and the pagans, and Allah Subhanah has Himself condemned this very belief in His Glorious Quran! It does not behove a believer, who sincerely believes in Allah and the Last Day, to hold a belief which the Merciful has Himself condemned in the Glorious Quran.

Dear and beloved brother in Islam, if there is one thing which has beguiled some believers to openly disobey the Commands and Dictates of Islam and transgress the clear boundaries of Allah and His Messenger (saws)....it is this concept that somehow or the other, simply because they claimed to be followers of Prophet Mohamed (saws), they will come out of Hell Fire and enter Paradise....even if it means that they will go to Hell Fire only for a number of years to pay for their sins!....but ultimately they will enter Paradise!!!

This is the exact same concept which was held by the People of the Book, and Allah Subhanah Himself has time and again strongly condemned this very concept and belief of theirs in His Glorious Quran; and it just does not behove and befit a believer who sincerely believes in Allah and the Last Day to hold a belief which has been condemned by their Lord Most High!

Your Question:"and i hve heard that only some few lakhs people will enter paradise is that true??"

Respected brother in Islam, it is not as if there are only a few limited places in Paradise, which if filled will not accept any more inhabitants.....nor are there limited places in Hell Fire, which if filled will refuse to accept any more inhabitants!!!!

To the best of our knowledge there is absolutely no number ascertained in the Quran or the Sunnah which declares how many will be Paradise or Hell Fire....that number is known to and determined by none save Allah Subhanah Alone. Whosoever's belief and deeds are unacceptable to the Lord Most Majestic will deserve their station in Hell Fire; and whosoever's belief and deeds are acceptable to the Lord Most Gracious will be shown His Mercy, His Forgiveness, and His Unending Grace.

Having said that there is no particular number declared in the Quran and the Sunnah, from the general guidance of the Glorious Quran it is safe to assume that the inhabitants of Hell Fire will far far exceed the numbers of the fortunate dwellers of Paradise.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran Chapter 50 Surah Qaf verses 30-35:

30 *One Day We will ask Hell "art thou filled to the full?" It (Hell) will reply "are there any more (to come)?" (ie. there is more than sufficient place for the evildoers!)*

31 *And the Garden will be brought nigh to the righteous; no more a thing distant.*

- 32 *(A voice will declare:) "This is what was promised for you for everyone who turned (to Allah) in sincere repentance who kept (His Law).*
- 33 *Who feared (Allah) Most Gracious unseen and brought a heart turned in devotion (to Him):*
- 34 *Enter ye therein in Peace and Security; this is a Day of Eternal Life!"*
- 35 *There will be for them therein all that they wish and more besides in Our Presence.*

Whatever written of Truth and benefit is only due to Allah's Assistance and Guidance, and whatever of error is of me alone. Allah Alone Knows Best and He is the Only Source of Strength.

Your brother and well wisher in Islam,

Burhan

7. Does the torment of the grave continue until the Day of Resurrection?

Islam QA Shaykh Muhammads Al-Munajjid
<http://islamqa.info/en/ref/21212/grave>

I would like to ask about the grave: after the two angels have finished questioning the person in his grave, will the evildoer continue to be tormented in his grave until the Hour begins? Also, will the believer continue to enjoy delight until the Hour begins? Or does that simply last for one day which comes to an end, after which the person becomes just a dead body? Is there any evidence to indicate that the person in his grave moves into a new life which will last until the Hour begins? Please answer me, may Allaah bless you.

Praise be to Allaah.

Man's life is divided into three sections:

- 1 – The life of this world, which ends with death.
- 2 – The life in al-barzakh, which starts after death and ends when the Hour begins.
- 3 – The life of the Hereafter, which begins after the people are raised from their graves, and is spent either in Paradise (we ask Allaah of His Bounty) or in Hell (we seek refuge with Allaah).

So the life of al-barzakh lasts from after a person dies until he is resurrected, whether he is buried in a grave or not, whether he is burned or eaten by wild animals. The evidence that points to this life is the hadeeth narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), who said that after the deceased is placed in his grave, he can hear the footsteps of his family (as they walk away from the grave).

This life (in al-barzakh) will either be filled with delight, or it will be hellish, and the grave will either be one of the gardens of Paradise or one of the ditches of Hell.

What indicates that there will be either delight or torment (in al-barzakh) is the aayah in which Allaah says concerning the people of Pharaoh:

“The Fire, they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon. And on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): ‘Cause Fir‘awn’s (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!’”

[Ghaafir 40:46 – interpretation of the meaning]

Ibn Mas'ood said: The souls of the people of Pharaoh and those of their ilk among the kaafirs are shown the Fire morning and evening, and they are told, this is your abode.

Ibn Katheer said: this aayah is the main basis of the Sunni's belief in the torment of al-barzakh in the grave.

(Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/82)

Al-Qurtubi said: Some of the scholars quoted as evidence to prove the torment of the grave the phrase "The Fire, they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon" [Ghaafir 40:46]. A similar view was expressed by Mujaahid, 'Ikrimah, Muqaatil and Muhammad ibn Ka'b, all of whom said that this aayah is proof of the torment of the grave. Do you not see that it says concerning the torment of the Hereafter: "And on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): 'Cause Fir'awn's (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!'"? (Tafseer al-Qurtubi, 15/319)

It was narrated that 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'When any one of you dies, he is shown his place morning and evening. If he is one of the people of Paradise then he is one of the people of Paradise, and if he is one of the people of Hell, then he is one of the people of Hell.'" (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, Bid' al-Khalq, 3001; Muslim, al-Jannah wa sifat na'eemihaa, 2866).

It was narrated from 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that a Jewish woman entered upon her and mentioned the torment of the grave, and said to her, "May Allaah protect you from the torment of the grave!" 'Aa'ishah asked the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about the torment of the grave, and he said, "Yes, the torment of the grave." 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: "I never saw the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) pray any prayer after that but he sought refuge with Allaah from the torment of the grave." (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, al-Janaa'iz, 1283; Muslim, al-Kusoof, 903).

These aayahs and ahaadeeth indicate that the torment of the grave is real and that it is ongoing in the case of some people.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him and save him from the torment of the grave) said:

If a person is a kaafir (we seek refuge with Allaah), then there is no way that the delight will ever reach him, and his torment will be continuous. If a person was a sinner but he was a believer, then his torment in the grave will be commensurate with his sin, and perhaps the punishment for his sin will take less time than the time in al-barzakh between his death and the onset of the Hour, in which case it will cease.

(al-Sharh al-Mumti', vol. 3, p. 253)

APPENDIX 10

THE BIBLE'S TEACHING ABOUT MAN'S PART IN SALVATION

This Appendix Includes Two Parts:
Facets Of The Faith Necessary For Salvation
Is It Essential That We Strive To Obtain Salvation?

1. FACETS OF THE FAITH NECESSARY FOR SALVATION: The faith necessary for receiving salvation is not just believing the facts that there is a God and that Jesus died on the cross, but specifically it is faith *in* God (trusting Him) to keep His promise to save us through the death and resurrection of His Son, our Lord Jesus. It is faith (trust) in a person (God), not in a concept or in a fact of history. This **faith means personally receiving Jesus as our Savior from sin. It means fully putting our life in the hands of Him Who rose victorious over death:**

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)

"To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (Acts 10:43)

"Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39)

"... since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

The Lord Jesus not only died in our place to provide our salvation, but **He also enables us to believe in Him by giving us the power to truly trust in Him** (If we really want with all our heart to believe and trust God):

"looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith ..." (Hebrews 12:2)

This faith is also the result of God drawing and enabling us to believe and trust in Him (although our own will is certainly involved because we must choose to respond):

(Jesus said) *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him ... This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."* (John 6:44,65)

Salvation is not earned by our own good deeds, but **is a free gift from God received through faith alone:**

"For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." (Romans 3:28)

"Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" (Galatians 3:11)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)

"and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." (Philippians 3:9)

"he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit ... through Jesus Christ our Savior." (Titus 3:5,6)

“For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” (Romans 3:28)

FAITH IN JESUS IS ACTUALLY THE ONLY THING NECESSARY FOR OBTAINING SALVATION, but there are things which are inseparably linked to faith, which also verify that the faith is genuine. We could call them FACETS OR BY-PRODUCTS OF FAITH. Some people count these as separate steps or actions other than faith, but **they really are all tied together with faith in Jesus.** These things may not always be clearly evident, but **they are essential. If they are not present, that so called “faith” is not genuine.** I believe the following four things are included:

a. Godly Grief: Until a person realizes he is sick and unable to cure himself he will not go to a doctor or take the medicine prescribed. Most of us stubbornly think we are able to save ourselves from hell by doing good deeds. **The life changing grief, resulting from the horrible realization that we are spiritually lost in sin, is a gift given to us by God,** and leads to true repentance:

“... because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” (2 Corinthians 7:9,10)

b. Repentance: True repentance certainly involves our will, but it is God at work in us that both creates godly sorrow over our sins and gives us the power to truly repent and turn away from our sins. **Repentance always accompanies real faith:**

*“When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also **God has granted repentance that leads to life.**’” (Acts 11:18)*

“for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13)

c. Open Confession Of Faith In Jesus: If there is genuine faith, it will reveal itself in several ways. One is open confession of that faith to others. **If that confession is not present, there is reason to doubt whether that “faith” is genuine.** Baptism in water should be one of the first ways in which this confession is made. Sadly sometimes because of ignorance or wrong teaching, a person may delay baptism or never be baptized, but **when genuine faith is present some form of open confession is inevitable:**

*“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and **with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**” (Romans 10:9,10)*

d. Good Works And Holy Living: Another proof of genuine faith in Jesus is its effect on the everyday actions of the believer. Doing good deeds does not bring salvation, but receiving salvation will most definitely cause the believer to do good deeds, even though they may be few at first. **If growth in godly living is not present, genuine faith is not present:**

*“For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**” (Ephesians 2:10)*

[See Chapter 10 – THE WORK OF GOD for a fuller discussion of this]:

2. IS IT ESSENTIAL THAT WE STRIVE TO OBTAIN SALVATION? (Because of Islam’s emphasis on striving to obtain God’s forgiveness, this is an important question.)

Yes and No! We must seek God and strive to receive His free gift of salvation (see below), but we can’t earn it through our seeking and striving and certainly not by doing good deeds. **We can find God and receive His salvation only by faith:**

As William Macdonald has written,

“The true Christian faith is unique in that it calls on men to receive eternal life as a gift by faith. All other religions tell men that they must earn their salvation by works or by character. The gospel tells how Christ finished the work necessary for our redemption. All other systems tell men what they must do to redeem themselves. It is the difference between DOING and DONE ... The Christian gospel eliminates boasting; it tells man that there are no meritorious deeds he can do to win God’s favor because he is dead in trespasses and sins ...” (from the October 21st reading of One Day At A Time)

a. There Are Four Things We Need To Understand About The Apparent Contradiction Between The “Rest” of Faith And “Striving” For Salvation:

“... there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest ...” (Hebrew 4:9-11)

1) We Must Seek God. The Bible 39 times says to seek the Lord (and seeking is striving). In fact, we were created to seek Him. The “wicked” don’t think there is a God so they don’t seek Him:

“he made from one man every nation of mankind ... that they should seek the Lord ...” (Acts 17:26,27)

“But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 4:29)

“Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God ...” (1 Chronicles 22:19)

“The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 10:4 – NASB)

“O God ... earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you ...” (Psalm 63:1)

“Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!” (Psalm 105:4)

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6)

2) But He Is The One Seeking Us. God is seeking us even before we seek Him! Jesus illustrated this in His parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep and the lost son. And He said,

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)

3) We Must Strive To “Take Hold” Of God’s Gift Of Salvation. Even though salvation is a free gift from God, He will not force us to receive it. **Our own will to receive it is essential.** Yes, God’s Spirit in us will *enable* us to receive salvation by believing in Jesus, but **we must want to trust God’s promise of salvation through Christ and we must want to overcome our unbelief.** This is what the Scripture means by **striving to enter into God’s Sabbath “rest” of faith in Jesus.** No, it is not striving to *rest*, which would be a contradiction of terms, but striving to *enter* that rest – **wanting or desiring with all our hearts** to let God enable us to fully trust and rest in Him:

“Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11)

“Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.” (Hebrews 4:1,2)

This is a matter of life or death. If we reject Jesus as our Savior, if we reject His blood shed for us, *i. e.*, if we reject God’s grace, there is no other way for us to be saved from judgment and death:

“how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? ...” (Hebrews 2:3)

4) But Our Striving Is Enabled By God As We Strive Together With Jesus. It is important to realize that it is **God who is working in us and Jesus who is working with us, enabling us to strive** to obtain rest in His salvation:

[Jesus said] *“Come to me, **all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me ... and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**”* (Matthew 11:29,30) [a “yoke” connects two animals together for work, so Jesus is saying He will work with us]

3. HAVING RECEIVED GOD’S GIFT OF SALVATION, IS IT ESSENTIAL THAT WE STRIVE TO LIVE GODLY LIVES?

a. Yes, We Should Also Strive To Please God In Our daily Living. As with obtaining salvation, **both our own will (personal choice) and God’s enabling grace are involved in our striving to live for His glory. We work/toil in serving Him, but it is God’s power in us that enables us to do so:**

As children of God by faith in Jesus, we must also *strive* to live Godly lives, not out of a sense of duty or fear that we might lose our salvation, but **because we love Him and want to exalt, honor and please Him.** Too many Christian believers are content to just get by with little effort to grow in the Lord. Others presume upon the Lord’s grace by sitting back and expecting God to grow them without any effort or striving on their part. Actually, if the desire to struggle to please our Heavenly Father is not present in our lives, we need to re-exam ourselves to see if we are truly saved. I see five ways in which we should struggle to live for our Lord:

1) In Serving Him:

[The Apostle Paul says] *“**For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.**”* (Colossians 1:29)

*“Do not be slothful in zeal, **be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.**”* (Romans 12:11)

*“... **we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,** which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10)

*“for it is **God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**”* (Philippians 2:13)

2) In Living Holy Lives:

*“If **by the Spirit you put to death** the deeds of the body, you will live.”* (Romans 8:13)

*“... **make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ... Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election ...**”* (2 Peter 1:5-8,10)

3) In Relations With Others:

*“**Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.**”* (Heb. 12:14)

4) In Faithfulness To Our Lord:

[The Apostle Paul wrote] *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”* (2 Timothy 4:7)

5) In Our Worship And Prayers:

*“Let **all that I am** praise the Lord.” (Psalm 104:1 - NLT)*

*“Speak out to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, offering praise with voices [and instruments] and making melody **with all your heart** to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19 – AMP)*

*“**praying at all times** in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert **with all perseverance**, making supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18)*

b. How Does This Work? In his comments about Romans 12:2 (“*Be transformed by the renewal of your mind.*”) in the July 4, 2016 Navigators devotional, “Holiness Day By Day,” Jerry Bridges shared this powerful explanation of this subject:

“The verb be transformed in Romans 12:2 is a command to do something. This indicates that we as believers are not passive in this transforming process. We’re not like blocks of marble being transformed into a beautiful sculpture by a master sculptor. God has given us a mind and heart with which to respond to and cooperate with the Spirit as he does his work in us.

“That thought leads naturally to a classic statement in Scripture of the working together of the believer and the Holy Spirit within: ‘Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure’ (Philippians 2:12-13).

“Paul urged the Philippian believers to apply themselves diligently to working out their salvation. He urged them to display the evidences of salvation in their daily lives through their obedience to God’s commands and through putting on the godly character traits that Paul elsewhere called the fruit of the Spirit. And, according to William Hendriksen, the tense of the verb work out indicates ‘continuous, sustained, strenuous effort.’ Here again we see that sanctification is a process, and a process in which we, as believers, are very actively involved.

“But Paul’s strong exhortation to the Philippians is based on the confidence that God’s Spirit is working in them, working to enlighten their understanding of his will, to stimulate in their emotions a desire to do his will, and to turn their wills so they actually obey. He gives them the enabling power so that they’re able to do his will.” (Excerpt taken from Transforming Grace)

CHAPTER NINE

THE COMMUNICATION (WORD) OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Communication:

- A. God's Communication With Man
- B. God's Vehicles Of Communication
- C. God's Revelation/Inspiration
- D. Content Of God's Communication
- E. God's Purposes In Communicating With Mankind
- F. God's Primary Messenger
- G. God The Holy Spirit Communicates With Our Spirit
- H. My Conclusions & Reactions

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S COMMUNICATION WITH MAN:

ISLAM:

1. ONE OF GOD'S "MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES" RELATED TO THIS:

Al-Fattah = "The Opener," "Revealer"

[See appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

2. "MOTHER OF THE BOOK": According to the Qur'an, the entirety of God's communication is contained in "the Mother of The Book" (*Umm-al-kitab*), also called "a Tablet Preserved" (*Luh-e-Mahfuz*), which is in God's presence. Each revelation (book, booklet, part of a book or verbal message) is taken out from that tablet and sent down to mankind for "each period" of history:

"We have made it a Qur'an in Arabic ... And verily, it is in the Mother of the Book, in Our Presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom." (Sura 43:3,4)

"... For each period is a Book (revealed). Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth: with Him is the Mother of the Book." (Sura 13:38,39)

"Nay, this is a Glorious Qur'an, (Inscribed) in a Tablet Preserved!" (Sura 85:21,22)

Another writer, (<http://www.harunyahya.com/en/Daily-Comments/12874/the-mother-of-the-book>), references the following two verses to further claim "the Mother of the Book", holds every bit of information about everything":

“Nor is there aught of the unseen, in heaven or earth, but is (recorded) in a clear record.” (Sura 93:75)
[Mohsin Khan translated it **“in a clear book.”**]

“And the Book (of Deeds) will be placed (before you); and thou wilt see the sinful in great terror because of what is (recorded) therein; they will say, “Ah! woe to us! what a Book is this! It leaves out nothing small or great, but takes account thereof!” They will find all that they did, placed before them: And not one will thy Lord treat with injustice.” (Sura 110:49)

In (<http://quransmessage.com/articles/mother%20of%20book%20FM3.htm>) Joseph Islam writes:

“The Mother of the 'book' (Umm-ul-Kitab) is the master source which is within God's presence. It is the original source and foundation from which all scriptures and revelations from God emanate including the Quran.”

Muslim theologians believe this “Mother of the Book” or “Guarded Tablet” is eternal and incorruptible and the master source of all of God’s messages and scriptures. Most Muslims also say God’s Word is the **“eternal, uncreated speech of God”**. A serious debate arose in the early Muslim community. Some said if God’s Word is eternal and uncreated it must be God, but others said that would mean there are two Gods, which is blasphemy. A comment from http://www.sunnah.org/aqida/uncreatedness_quran.htm has the following explanation:

“Ahl al-Sunna [Sunni Muslims] agree one and all that the Qur'an is the pre-existent, pre-eternal, uncreated Speech of Allah Most High on the evidence of the Qur'an, the Sunna, and faith-guided reason. In a rare instance of classic kalâm reasoning, Imam Malik gave the most succinct statement of this doctrine: ‘The Qur'an is the Speech of Allah, the Speech of Allah comes from Him, and nothing created comes from Allah Most High.’”

But don’t all created things come from God? While most Muslims now believe the Qur’an is eternal and uncreated but not God, they are not able to fully explain how.

THE BIBLE:

1. ONE OF GOD’S NAMES: God exists in community and so communication is a vital part of Who He is. That’s why one of His names is **“The Word:”**

“In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God ...” (John 1:1)

God is eternal and uncreated and He created all things simply by speaking them into existence. He has always existed as “The Word” (the 2nd person of the Trinity). In addition, His communication has always been very personal with believing people, as is seen by the fact that **the phrase “the word of the LORD came to ...” occurs 101 times in the Bible!** This is not simply a message sent from God by an angel, **it is God Himself coming to communicate verbally with someone:**

“And behold, the word of the LORD came to him [Abraham] ...” (Genesis 15:4)

2. JESUS, GOD’S WORD: In God’s own time, He (“The Word”) came into the world in the form of a man (Jesus the Messiah) to communicate more directly with us and to redeem us from our sin:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...” (John 1:1-4,14)

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands ... the word of life” (1 John 1:1)

Finally He (“The Word”) will come back to rule the world in perfect righteousness:

*“... behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True ... and **the name by which he is called is The Word of God.**”* (Revelation 19:11-13)

(Interestingly God’s “**word**” or “**words**” occur 61 times in Yusuf Ali’s translation of the Qur’an, but only twice is it used as a title - **of Jesus, God’s Word in human flesh**):

*“... **Christ Jesus the son of Mary was** (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him”* (Sura 4:171)

*“Behold! the angels said: “O Mary! **Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah**”* (Sura 3:45)

B. GOD’S VEHICLES OF COMMUNICATION

ISLAM:

In Islam, God’s communication with mankind is *indirect* and does not involve the communication of God Himself (His essence), but only of His will. In fact, **His primary communication is through four veils or layers of mediation (between God and man):**

God took out of,

- i) “the Mother of the Book” (His total Communication) ...
- ii) a selected message or book (Qur’an, etc.) and dictated it to
- iii) an angel (especially Gabriel), who dictated it to ...
- iv) a prophet, who then dictated it to ...
mankind.

We will be looking at these factors involved in God’s communication:

- “The Mother Of The Book”
- Angels
- Books
- Prophets
- “Signs”
- Human Nature
- Muhammad’s Life

1. GOD’S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION FROM “THE MOTHER OF THE BOOK”: All of God’s books/scriptures, including the Qur’an, come from the master source, called “the Mother of the Book” in the presence of God (see A. above).

2. GOD’S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION THROUGH ANGELS: The Qur’an frequently speaks of God sending messages to people (John the Baptist, Mary, believers in Paradise, etc.) through angels. It also says God gave the Qur’an in portions to the **angel**

Gabriel who dictated them to Muhammad over a 23 year period:

“Allah chooses messengers from angels and from men ...” (Sura 22:75)

“... gabriel-for he brings down the (revelation) to thy [Muhammad] heart by Allah's will ...” (Sura 2:97)

3. GOD'S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION THROUGH BOOKS:

a. Books From God Before The Qur'an: Islam says that God sent several books or scrolls through the ages before His final revelation (the Qur'an). In fact it says He sent a revelation to every prophet and a book for each period of time:

“... Allah, and the revelation given ... to (all) prophets from their Lord ...” (Sura 2:136)

“We did send messengers before thee ... For each period is a Book (revealed).” (Sura 13:38)

1) The Revelation Given To Abraham: – mentioned 7 times:

“We believe in Allah, and in ... what was revealed to abraham ...” (Sura 3:84)

“... to Noah and ... we sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac ... and ...” (Sura 4:163)

“... the Books of the earliest (Revelation), - The Books of Abraham and Moses.” (Sura 87:18,19; see also 53:36,37)

2) The Law (Taurat) Given To Moses: Mentioned 23 times:

“... We gave Moses the Scripture and the Criterion ...” (Sura 2:53)

“... and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind ...” (Sura 3:3)

3) The Psalms (Zabur) Given To David: mentioned 3 times:

“... We gave to David (the gift of) the Psalms.” (Sura 17:55)

4) The “Gospel” (Injil) or New Testament: The *Injil* (Gospel) is mentioned 12 times in the Qur'an as the book God gave to the prophet Jesus:

“... and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind ...” (Sura 3:3)

“... We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition ...” (Sura 5:46)

b. Books Sent By God Before The Qur'an Were Lost Or Corrupted. Islam believes the revelation to Abraham (and to others) was lost long ago and the books of the Bible (*Taurat*, *Zabur* and *Injil*) have been corrupted by the Jews and Christians (called “People of the book”). They believe that although the current copies of the Bible contain some of its original message, it is largely corrupted and should not be read. The opinion of Muslim scholars is that God did not protect those earlier books, and so He later replaced them with the final revelation – the Qur'an – which He has protected against any change. The following are a few of the verses Muslims believe teach that the Jews and Christians changed the Bible:

[See Appendix 15 for a complete list of all the verses with my interpretation]

“the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them ...” (Sura 2:59)

*“Can ye entertain the hope that they will believe in you?- Seeing that **a party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.**” (Sura 2:75)*

*“Then woe to **those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: “This is from Allah,”** to traffic with it for miserable price!- Woe to them” (Sura 2:79)*

*“... the children of Israel... **They change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them ... the Jews – men who will listen to any lie ... They change the words from their (right) times and places ...**” (Sura 5:13,14)*

However, believing in all these revealed books is an article of faith in Islam:

***“O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him). Any who denieth ... His Books ... hath gone far, far astray.”** (Sura 4:136)*

This “belief” does not involve reading and obeying the contents of these books, since they believe they have been corrupted, but belief only that these books were sent by God and existed historically. In the minds of Muslims the *Injil* (New Testament) was the message God gave to Jesus to preach to the Jews of his day. They believe that it has been largely corrupted and lost and that the current New Testament is not the *Injil* sent by God, but was re-written by followers of Jesus’.

c. The Qur’an, God’s Final Book: Islam teaches that the Qur’an is God’s final and permanent revelation. One website puts it this way:

“The Qur’an is the last scripture revealed by Almighty Allah (God), confirming what little truth remains in parts of previous scriptures and refuting and correcting fabrications and additions which have crept into current day versions of such scriptures.” (http://islamicpamphlets.com/the-quran-the-final-revelation-to-mankind/)

The name, “*Qur’an*” is mentioned 82 times within its 114 Suras (chapters), and it is called “glorious” and “most honorable.” The Arabic word, *Qur’an* means “recitation,” because it claims to have been dictated by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad, who was instructed to recite it to his followers, who likewise were told to recite it.

Islam says God “sent down” the Qur’an one part or section at a time (sometimes a whole sura and sometimes just a few verses) through the angel Gabriel to Muhammad to recite to his people during the last 23 years of Muhammad’s life. .

***“It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it ...”** (Sura 3:3)*

***“(It is) a Qur’an which We [God] have divided (into parts from time to time), in order that thou [Muhammad] mightest recite it to men at intervals: We have revealed it by stages.”** (Sura 17:106)*

4. GOD’S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION THROUGH PROPHETS: Islam’s teaching on this is somewhat mixed. Generally the view is that God is so great and we are so weak that we cannot endure Him speaking to us directly, and so the revelation of His will has come to us indirectly through angels and prophets:

***“It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration [revelation], or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal ... And thus have We, by Our Command, sent inspiration to thee [Muhammad] ...”** (Sura 42:51,52) [This verse is more carefully unpacked under section C. (God’s Mode of Inspiration).]*

“... the revelation given to us [Muhammad], and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, and that

given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets ..." (Sura 2:136)

God has **"sent down"** (or "given") His word to His messengers (prophets). This expression is used 58 times by Yusuf Ali in his translation (other translators also).

*"Say: 'Shall I seek for judge other than Allah? - when **He it is Who hath sent unto you the Book, explained in detail.**' They know full well, to whom **We have given the Book, that it hath been sent down from thy Lord in truth. Never be then of those who doubt.**"* (Sura 6:114)

*"The Hypocrites are afraid lest **a Sura should be sent down** about them, showing them what is (really passing) in their hearts ..."* (Sura 9:64)

God sending down a revelation to a messenger in Islam is not the same as inspiring His prophet to speak or write a message from Him in the Bible. God's message being "sent down" is more like a town crier loudly reading a written public announcement from the king to those standing and listening. He did not write it nor does it represent in any way his own personality and choice of words. It was sent to him to be announced verbatim. The Biblical concept of inspiring a prophet to write a book from God is more like a king empowering and trusting an ambassador to use his own mind and choice of words to accurately convey a message from his king.

a. Number Of Prophets: An Islamic tradition (*Hadith*) says that God has sent **124,000 prophets from Adam to Muhammad**. According to Muslim scholars it is a questionable tradition, but almost all Muslims have accepted it anyway:

"This hadith where the number of 124,000 Prophets is specifically declared has found mention in the collections of Musnad Ahmad and Tabarani, but the majority of the good scholars in Islam have classified it as a 'weak' or 'daeef' narration." (from: <http://www.islamhelpline.net/node/2630>)

While the Qur'an itself does not mention any specific total number of prophets, it says there are many more than those named in the Qur'an:

*"We did aforetime send messengers before thee: of them there are some whose story We have related to thee, and **some whose story We have not related to thee ...**"* (Sura 40:78)

The Qur'an also says that **God has sent prophets to every people group** in the world to teach **in their own languages**. That means a lot of prophets:

*"For We assuredly **sent amongst every People a messenger ...**"* (Sura 16:36 – see also 10:47)

*"**there never was a people without a warner having lived among them.**"* (Sura 35:24)

*"**We sent not a messenger except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them ...**"* (Sura 14:4)

The Qur'an specifically names 26 prophets, including Muhammad. Most of these prophets are Biblical prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Zechariah, John the Baptist and Jesus. Three others, Idris, Uzair and dhu'l-kifl are believed to be Enoch, Ezra and Ezekiel respectively. Lot and Ishmael are also listed as prophets, although not recognized as such in the Bible. Three others are Hud, Luqman and Salih. Samuel is mentioned as a prophet but not by name. Mary the mother of Jesus, the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an, is highly revered as a holy person, but not considered a prophet by most Muslims.

(By comparison, the Bible mentions 134 individual named prophets. In addition it mentions over 600 other unnamed and unnumbered prophets!)

[See Appendix 11 for details about all the prophets in the Bible]

b. Apostles – Special Prophets: Among all the prophets five are considered to be special and are called **Apostles** (messengers). Through them God sent a book or did some other special work. Islam gives them the following special titles:

Nuh (Noah), “*Najiyullah*” (Confidant of God)
 Ibrahim (Abraham), “*Khalilullah*” (Friend Of God)
 Musa (Moses), “*Kalimullah*” (To Whom God Spoke)
 Isa (Jesus), “*Ruhullah*” (Spirit of God)
 Muhammad, “*Rasulullah*” (Apostle of God)

“... that which He enjoined on **Noah** - the which We have sent by inspiration to **thee** [Muhammed] - and that which We enjoined on **Abraham, Moses, and Jesus** ...” (Sura 42:13)

“And remember We took from the prophets their covenant: As (We did) from **thee** [Muhammed]: from **Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus** the son of Mary ...” (Sura 33:7)

“**We have made some of these apostles to excel the others** ... and **some of them He exalted** by ... rank ...” (Sura 2:253 - Shakir)

Of these five, Islam teaches that Muhammad is the final prophet, and therefore he is called “the seal of the prophets”:

“**Muhammad** is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) **the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets**: and Allah has full knowledge of all things.” (Sura 33:40)

(By comparison, the Bible calls the messengers of God, “prophets,” “seers” or “men of God” in the Old Testament and “apostles” or “prophets” in the New Testament.)

c. Sinless Nature Of Prophets: Islam teaches that prophets are sinless, although they made “mistakes,” and some scholars say they were sinless only after they were appointed prophets. Nevertheless, the Qur’an mentions the repentance and need for forgiveness of sins of some of the prophets (e.g., Moses’ in Sura 28:15,16; David in 38:24; and Muhammad in 47:19, 40:55, and 48:2):

[Allah says] “So know (O Muhammad) that there is no God save Allah, and **ask forgiveness for thy sin** ...” (Sura 47:19 – Pickthall)

d. Islam’s Teaching About The Prophet Jesus: Essentially the Qur’an presents Jesus the Messiah as only a prophet (perhaps the greatest prophet after Muhammad), who was born of the virgin Mary by the power of God, who did many miracles by the power of God, who did not die on the cross but was taken to heaven without dying by the power of God.

[See Appendix 13 for the details of the 18 things taught about Jesus in the Qur’an]

5. GOD’S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION THROUGH “SIGNS”: The Qur’an speaks of many “signs” (proofs) in the heavens and the earth of God’s domination over all of creation and history, proving He is the omnipotent God. Yusuf Ali’s note #5432 defines these as “*signs in creation and in ordering His world.*”

“... **in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day,- there are indeed signs for men of understanding, Men who celebrate the praises of Allah ... contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (With the thought): ‘Our Lord! not for naught Hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! ...’**” (Sura 3:190,191)

“He Who has sent ... **a messenger** from among themselves [Muhammad], **to rehearse to them His Signs**. to sanctify them, and instruct them in scripture and wisdom ...” (Sura 62:2)

Muslim authors explain that God has conveyed various meanings of His providence to mankind by way of his signs (“ayat”), which He has put into every aspect of creation:

*“The truth contained in revelation (wahy) is essentially the same truth as contained in the working of Allah's providence in human history and the history of individual souls, as well as in the physical and metaphysical signs scattered literally throughout creation ... **man can contemplate about Allah: His Holy Attributes and His creation, acknowledging the Master's infinite power, supremacy and greatness, as opposed to his own insignificance and smallness, prompting his restive soul to scream out**” [Spahic Omer; 4/12/2017; at <http://www.islamicity.org/11433/communicating-with-allah/>]*

6. GOD’S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION THROUGH HUMAN NATURE: Spahic Omer [from: <http://www.islamicity.org/11433/communicating-with-allah/> April 12, 2017] continues, saying that the Qur’an indicates man is born with a **God-given, natural understanding** that he is not God, and an inclination toward doing and being good:

“Lastly, Allah communicates, to some extent, with man through his fitrah as well. The fitrah is the natural disposition, inclination and sound human nature that Allah instilled in mankind. According to a verse from the Qur’an (below), Allah took from the loins of Adam his progeny like tiny particles, and made them testify concerning themselves that He was their Creator and Master. Every newborn in this world is born with this covenant and affirmation.”:

“When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): ‘Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?’- They said: ‘Yea! We do testify!’ (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: ‘Of this we were never mindful!’” (Sura 7:172)

“That means that everyone is born with the natural inclination towards Islam as the ultimate truth and so, the only religion with Allah; the natural inclination -- or pure human nature -- which Allah instilled in all people on the day of the covenant. In their capacity as the creation and mere servants, all humans are born with the inclination towards their Creator, Master and Sustainer. Everyone is initially free of any false beliefs, and will always enjoy a disposition towards goodness and sound beliefs -- regardless of his adopted behavioural patterns -- while at the same time innately disliking evil, deceit and falsehood.”

7. GOD’S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION THROUGH MUHAMMAD’S LIFE:

Muslims believe that **God also communicates through the pattern of conduct of Muhammad ‘s life, which is called the “Sunnah.”** This is based on both collected traditions (“Hadith”) of his teachings, deeds, permissions and disapprovals as well as on written histories of his life. There is a good deal of disagreement as to the authenticity of many of the traditions, but they are very important because **Muslims believe Muhammad’s life-pattern was given to them by divine inspiration. Following the example of Muhammad’s life and practices is therefore very important to Muslims.**

“Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah.” (Sura 33:21)

THE BIBLE:

The following are vehicles by which God has communicated to us:

Love – God’s Communication Within Himself Before Creation

Nature – God’s Indirect Communication In Creation

Voice & Appearances – God’s Direct Communication To Some People

Books – God’s Indirect Communication To Mankind Through Many Prophets
Jesus – God’s More Direct Communication; His Living Word in Human Flesh
The Holy Spirit – God’s Direct, Indwelling Communication In Believers

1. LOVE – GOD’S COMMUNICATION WITHIN HIMSELF BEFORE CREATION:

God exists in community (Tri-unity) within Himself from eternally. Before He created Adam He was always communicating love within Himself:

[Jesus prayed] *“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with **the glory that I had with you before the world existed ... you loved me before the foundation of the world.**”* (John 17:5,24)

Jesus is God’s eternal Word and as such He is eternally within that communication:

“Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.” (Psalm 119:89)

2. NATURE – GOD’S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION IN CREATION: All things were created by God speaking them into being, i.e., by His Word/Command, as is seen repeatedly in the first chapter of Genesis and also elsewhere in the Bible:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ... And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light... And God said, “Let there be ... And God said ...” (Genesis 1:1,3,6,9)

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made” (Psalm 33:6)

“... the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.” (2 Peter 3:5)

In His creation God revealed to us a glimpse of His glory, omnipotence, handiwork, righteousness and divine nature. This is only a glimpse and not enough to enable us to know Him intimately. It is what theologians call “General Revelation”:

*“For **what can be known about God** is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made ...**”* (Romans 1:19,20)

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1)

“The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.” (Psalm 97:6)

3. VOICE AND APPEARANCES – GOD’S DIRECT COMMUNICATION TO SOME PEOPLE:

a. An Audible Voice: Usually God spoke to His messengers in their spirits, but a few times He spoke directly in an audible voice:

1) Moses: *“And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and it spoke to him.”* (Numbers 7:89)

2) Nation Of Israel: *“Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because **the LORD had descended on it in fire ... and the whole mountain trembled greatly ... Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.**”* (Exodus 19:18,19) Later Moses reminded Israel: *“And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain ... Then **the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice ...**”* (Deuteronomy 4:11-13) *“a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them ... At that time **his voice shook the earth ...**”* (Hebrews 12:19,26)

- 3) **Elijah:** “And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire **the sound of a low whisper**. And when **Elijah heard it**, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, **there came a voice to him** and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:12,13)
- 4) **Samuel:** “Now **Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him ... And the Lord came and stood, calling ... “Samuel! Samuel!” ... the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.**” (1 Samuel 3:7-10,21)
- 5) **Jesus:** “And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” (Mark 1:11); “... and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son; listen to him.’” (Mark 9:7); [Jesus prayed:] “Father, glorify your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven: ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’” (John 12:28)

b. Visual Appearances: God revealed Himself to some of the prophets in some visible form such as a “man,” “the angel of the Lord,” a voice “standing,” a “flame of fire,” etc. or He “appeared to them” in some form in a vision or dream. Those prophets did not see the full revelation of God, which is beyond human endurance.

- 1) **Adam & Eve:** “And they **heard the sound of the LORD God walking** in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves ...” (Genesis 3:8)
- 2) **Abraham:** “And **the LORD appeared to him ... as he sat at the door of his tent ... He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him ... he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself ... So the [two] men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD [the 3rd “man”]...**” (Genesis 18:1,2,22)
- 3) **Jacob:** “**God appeared to Jacob again ... And God said to him, ‘...I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply ... The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.’ Then God went up from him ...**” (Genesis 35:9-13)
- 4) **Moses:** “Now **Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law ... And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush**. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed ... **God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then he said, ... ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’...**” (Exodus 3:1-6)
- 5) **Isaiah:** “... **I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up ... And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!’**” (Isaiah 6:1-5)

c. Face To Face: God spoke “face to face” with only two prophets - **Moses and Jesus (the “prophet like” Moses – See Deuteronomy 18:15):**

Moses: “... If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not ... my servant **Moses ... With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD ...**” (Numbers 12:6-8); “So Moses ... rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai ... **The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and ... The LORD passed before him ... And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.**” (Exodus 34:4,5,8); “there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like **Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face ...**” (Deuteronomy 34:10) [The book of Deuteronomy was written long before Jesus was born]; “... **that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus ... about which God spoke ... long ago. [See Deuteronomy 18:15] Moses said ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.’**” (Acts 3:20-22)

Jesus: “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and **no one knows the Son except the**

Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Mathew 11:27); “... *I am in the Father and the Father is in me ... The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.*” (John 14:10); “**Father, I desire that they ... may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.**” (John 17:24)

4. BOOKS – GOD’S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH MANKIND THROUGH MANY PROPHETS: God chose a number of people to serve Him as prophets and apostles. God chose to give mankind a greater revelation of Himself through the books He inspired these messengers to write; namely **the 66 “books” of the Old and New Testaments.**

[See section C. below regarding God’s inspiration of books & section D. regarding the content of books]

5. JESUS – GOD’S MORE DIRECT COMMUNICATION, HIS LIVING WORD IN HUMAN FLESH: In the further progressive development of His revelation to mankind God chose to speak to us in His “Son,” our Lord Jesus. He is God’s Eternal Word, Who came to live among us in order to communicate with us in a more direct and more understandable way:

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature ...” (Hebrews 1:1-3)

But how could God have a “Son”? And if He does have a son and sends him to live among us, how could God reveal Himself to us that way?

First of all, **because God’s Word is eternal ...**

“Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.” (Psalm 119:89)

... and only God is eternal, therefore God’s eternal Word and God Himself obviously are One.

Secondly, **because there is only one God and Jesus repeatedly said He came out from God, Whom He called His Father, ...**

“Jesus said to them, ‘... I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.’” (John 8:42 – NASB)

“For I have come down from heaven ...” (John 6:38)

“I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)

... therefore He is called God’s “only (one-of-a-kind) Son,” the Living Communication of Himself to live among us in human flesh.

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of **the only Son from the Father**, full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14)

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT – GOD’S MOST DIRECT COMMUNICATION, INDWELLING ALL BELIEVERS: There is only one way God could speak to us more directly than by becoming one of us and living among us, and that is by **living IN us**. God has chosen to give each person who receives Christ as Savior the gift of His Holy Spirit to live in us. “God is Spirit” (John 4:24), the Holy Spirit is “God’s Spirit” (Romans 8:15) and the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9 & Colossians 1:27), Who lives in us forever (John 14:16,17):

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

“So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, **you received God’s Spirit** when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Romans 8:15 - NLT)

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the **Spirit of God** dwells in you. Anyone who does not have **the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him.” (Romans 8:9)

“... the glory of **this mystery, which is Christ in you**, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27)

[Jesus said] “**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for **he dwells with you and will be in you** (John 14:16,17)

He **teaches** us and **reminds** us of all that Jesus said (John 14:26). He **empowers** us to live and witness for Christ (Acts 1:8), **guides** us (John 16:13) through all of God’s words in the Bible. He **assures** us that we have eternal life (Romans 8:16) by putting His seal of guarantee in our hearts (Ephesians 1:13,14). And He **produces His own fruit** in our lives (Galatians 5:22,23):

“**But the Helper, the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**” (John 14:26)

[Jesus said] “**you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**” (Acts 1:8)

“**When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth**” (John 16:13)

“**The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God**, and if children then heirs ...” (Romans 8:16)

“**In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee**[down payment] **of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.**” (Ephesians 1:13,14)

“**the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**” (Galatians 5:22,23)

C. GOD’S REVELATION/ INSPIRATION:

ISLAM:

1. WORDS USED IN ARABIC: The English word, “inspiration” literally means “to breathe into.” The Arabic words, “**wahih**” (or “wahyun”) and “**ilham**” which Yusuf Ali frequently translates as “inspiration” are, in most cases, **better translated “revelation,”** because they usually mean a message from God revealed by dictation through an angel to a prophet to be recited verbatim to the people, rather than a message breathed into his heart and mind for him to communicate to the people through his own words guided by God’s Spirit, as seen in the Bible. In Yusuf Ali’s translation we find the words “inspiration,” “inspire” or “inspired” a total of 41 times while 4 other Muslim translators use “inspiration,” “inspire” or “inspired” a total of only 1 to 5 times. Instead they use the words “revelation” or “revealed” as seen below.

2. DIFFERENT MODES OF REVELATION:

a. Three Different Modes? A pivotal verse in the Qur’an says:

“It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil,

or by the sending of a messenger [angel] to reveal ... And thus have We, by Our Command, sent inspiration to thee [Muhammad] ... (Sura 42:51,52 – Yusuf Ali)

Do these verses list three distinct modes of inspiration/revelation, or only one? At first glance they would seem to mean something like the following:

It is not possible that Allah should speak to any human being directly, but only by revelation from behind a veil through an angel (Gabriel).

But Yusuf Ali's notes on these two verses show three distinct modes:

#4598 = "... Three ways are mentioned: (1) *Wahyun* [Arabic], Inspiration; (2) from behind a veil; and (3) by the sending of a Messenger ... **Wahyun, inspiration, is interpreted to be of two kinds:** (a) a suggestion thrown by God into the heart or mind of man, by which man understands the substance [but not the exact words] of the Message ... and (b) **verbal or literal inspiration, by which the actual words of God are conveyed in human language ... the latter is held to be of superior degree, only vouchsafed to the greater Prophets**, while the former may be given ... to other men of spiritual insight, who have not attained the degree of prophethood ..."

#4599 = "*Behind a veil:* Not, of course a material veil ... but the mystic Veil of Light, or 70,000 Veils of Light ..." [see Sura 24:35]

#4600 = "*Messenger: Rasul:* **the angel Gabriel**, through whom the revelations were given to the holy Prophet ..."

Dr. Bilal Philips in <https://blog.islamiconlineuniversity.com/question/category-and-mode-of-revelation/> also says three modes or categories of God's revelation:

"1. *Inspirations from true dreams*"

"2. *Direct communication from Allah from behind the veil of light*"

"3. *By the agency of Messengers, the Angels that carry revelation, particularly the angel Gabriel*"

I understand #1. to be inspired guidance through "true" dreams, given to individuals for themselves as distinct from revelation to mankind.

I believe #2. seems to refer to words given in visions to some prophets without actually seeing God.

And I believe #3. is speaking of revelations through angels given to prophets to be given to all mankind.

b. Different Classes of Prophets? The quotes above speak of "**superior**" prophets, and we have already seen in part B. that **some prophets are called "Apostles" whereas most are called only "prophets."** This is also confusing since the Qur'an says "*We make no distinction between them.*"

"... ***We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers.***' ..." (Sura 2:285)

"*We believe in Allah ... and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: **We make no distinction between one and another among them ...***" (Sura 3:84)

c. Direct Communication By God Only To Moses: The following verses not only say God elevated some prophets above others but they also say Moses was the only prophet to whom God spoke directly (instead of through an angel).

"*Those **messengers** We endowed with gifts, **some above others: To one of them [Moses] Allah spoke; others He raised to degrees (of honour) ...***" (Sura 2:253) [Y.A.'s note #289 = "... To Moses God spoke in clouds of glory ..."]

"*Of some messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not;- and **to Moses Allah spoke direct***" (Sura 4:164)

d. Inspiration Of Lesser Prophets: The Qur'an speaks of God inspiring people with

revelation other than books sent for all mankind. These may be personal messages of guidance meant only for them or for their extended community. The names I have underlined in the following verses are people inspired by God, but about whom there is no mention of their receiving a book from God:

"We have sent thee [Muhammad] inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms." (Sura 4:163)

"Say: 'We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord ...'" (Sura 3:84)

3. QUR'AN TO BE RECITED VERBATIM: Islam teaches that the Qur'an was dictated to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel to be memorized and recited verbatim to his people and then likewise recited by them. The word "*Qur'an*" means **recitation**:

*"**Recite (O Muhammad) what has been revealed to you of the Book (the Qur'an), and perform As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat) ...**"* (Sura 29:45 – Mohsin Khan)

[God speaking to Muhammad] *"And **recite (and teach) what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord: none can change His Words ...**"* (Sura 18:27)

4. REVELATION SENT DOWN IN ARABIC: The only accommodation in God's communication to humanity is that He sent His messages in the native language of each prophet. In the case of the Qur'an it was sent in Arabic:

*"We have made it a **Qur'an in Arabic, that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom).**"* (Sura 43:3)

*"**Had We sent this as a Qur'an (in the language) other than Arabic, they would have said: "Why are not its verses explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a Messenger an Arab)? ..."*** (Sura 41:44)

From all this I have concluded two things:

First, that in Islam God's mode of revelation (what Yusuf Ali mistakenly calls, "inspiration") is better described as "dictation" According to Islam, God has not sent any message to humanity by putting it in the mind and heart of a prophet for him to pass on to his people using his own personality and words. No doubt this is meant to elevate God's power, but in fact it diminishes it, because it means He could not enable a human prophet to use the right words in spite of the limitations of his human understanding.

Second, that those men called "prophets" were simply messengers passing on dictated messages, and not really prophets whose minds and hearts were inspired by God to communicate messages using their own personalities and words.

THE BIBLE:

1. THE MEANING OF "INSPIRATION:" The word, "inspiration" literally means to "breathe into." **God's usual way of communicating with humanity** was to inspire the minds and hearts of His prophets with the messages He wanted spoken and/or written down. Each prophet was "*carried along*" (guided and enabled) by God's Holy Spirit so that each word was correct and given by God even though it came through the prophet's own personality, vocabulary and culture. God's method of inspiration was not to dictate words or to have angels

dictate words to His prophets. Instead He enabled and empowered them as they wrote using their own language, vocabulary and thoughts.

“... no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20,21)

“these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: ‘The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.’” (2 Samuel 23:1,2)

[God said to Isaiah] **“And I have put my words in your mouth ...”** (Isaiah 51:16)

“... the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit [Spirit of God; not angel] through the former prophets.” (Zechariah 7:12)

The prophets probably thought they were writing their own ideas, but in fact those words and thoughts were actually “breathed out” by God’s Holy Spirit, even though they came through the thinking and choice of words of each of His prophets in their own native language, using their own cultural expressions. The result was God’s unchangeable message to mankind according to His eternal will:

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16)

In some cases God inspired one of His prophets to write the words He had given to another prophet. For example, Moses was inspired to write down the words God had spoken many years earlier to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph and others.

Many times they themselves did not fully understand what they were writing:

“... the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.” (1 Peter 1:10,11)

Some devout believers were suddenly empowered by God’s Holy Spirit, Who enabled them to speak extemporaneously and prophetically:

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon ... and the Holy Spirit was upon him ... And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus ... he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said ... ‘my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.’” (Luke 2:25-32)

Others were empowered by God to speak prophetically without realizing it:

“... Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,” (John 11:49-51)

The fact that the Bible is the Word of God is seen by the phrases, “thus says the Lord” (415 times), “God said” (53 times) and “the word of the Lord” (256 times).

This is another example of God enabling people to partner with him in doing His work

2. NOT DICTATION: God does not treat His servants as robots, and His way of communicating with us is not emotionally sterile. He does not simply “send down” dictated

messages dispassionately and indirectly to humanity through several layers of intermediaries (Mother of the Book, Angel Gabriel, prophets, books), while He Himself sits on His throne. Instead God “comes down” in His Spirit to work for and to speak to mankind in more direct and personal ways:

*“Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in your presence! As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, **your coming** would make the nations tremble. Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame! **When you came down long ago**, you did awesome deeds ...”* (Isaiah 64:1-3 - NLT)

3. DIFFERENT MODES OF INSPIRATION: Although God’s usual way of communicating with mankind is to inspire His prophets to write books, **He has used a variety of different ways to communicate with mankind:**

*“Long ago, at many times and **in many ways**, **God spoke** to our fathers by the prophets,”* (Heb. 1:1)

a. God Has Communicated By Inspiring Prophets To Write Books

(Described Above). The main way God continues to communicate with mankind is through the books of the Bible (see section D. below for content).

b. God Has Communicated By Speaking Words Directly To Some

Prophets. Sometimes, however, instead of inspiring His prophets to write books, God chose to speak words directly and have the prophet record them verbatim. Sometimes these words were in an audible voice and sometimes in a vision or dream. Although this was not His usual way, there are many instances of this. Accounts of these events are contained in the books God inspired: For example:

*“And the Lord said to Moses, **‘Write these words ...’**”* (Exodus 34:27)

1) “The Word Of The Lord Came.” Over 100 times we read that **“the Word of the Lord came to” a prophet** (Abraham, Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Solomon, Jehu, Elijah, Isaiah, David, Shemiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jonah, and Zechariah are named). Here is one example:

*“After these things **the word of the LORD came to Abram** in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”* (Genesis 15:1)

2) The Lord Himself “Appeared.” Fourteen times we read that **the Lord Himself appeared to His servants** (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Solomon, and the people of Israel are mentioned) revealing Himself to them. For example:

*“Then the **Lord appeared to Abram and said**, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.”* (Genesis 12:7)

3) The Lord “Came Down.” We also read eleven times that **the Lord came down to speak to His people.** In the Qur’an He “sent down” but in the Bible He “came down!”

*“**The Lord came down on Mount Sinai**, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.”* (Exodus 19:20)

*“**You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven** and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments”* (Nehemiah 9:13)

(It is significant that Jesus several times said He “came down” from heaven!)

4) God Wrote With His Finger. When God gave the children of Israel the ten commandments He Himself wrote them with His finger on stone tablets, which Moses later put into the Ark of the Covenant:

*“And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two **tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.**”* (Exodus 31:18)

*“And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, **the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone.**”* (Deuteronomy 4:13)

c. God Also Has Communicated To His Prophets Through Angels And Visions:

1) God Also Spoke His Words Through Angels. Many times God spoke through angels to a prophet who recorded it in a book. God sent angels to speak to Abraham, Hagar, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, Mary and Joseph. Here is what God said to Zechariah the father of John the Baptist (*Yahyah* in Arabic):

*“But **the angel said to him, ‘... your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John ... for he will be great before the Lord ... And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah ... to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.’**”* (Luke 1:13-17)

2) God Spoke In Visions. Sometimes God communicated His words to the prophets through visions. God gave visions to many of his servants, such as Abraham, Samuel, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Nahum, Zechariah, Peter, James, John, Ananias, Paul and John:

*“I spoke to the prophets; **it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables.**”* (Hosea 12:10)

[The book of Revelation is a vision given to John] *“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna **write:** ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life ...’”* (Revelation 2:8)

In conclusion, **whether God spoke directly, through an angel or by inspiring a prophet, all the words of the Bible are really God’s Words.** God Himself is speaking to us conveying His love, desires and instructions for our benefit.

D. CONTENT OF GOD’S COMMUNICATION:

ISLAM: In Islam, God’s communication with mankind is indirect and does not involve the communication of God Himself, but only of His dictated will.

1. THE FORMAT OR STYLE OF THE QUR’AN: The Qur’an is in a lecture format, condemning, commending and recounting events of the past as examples.

a. God Speaking In First Person: Usually the Qur’an is written in the first person (“... *Call to mind the favour which I bestowed upon you ...*”) with God speaking. (The first Sura is an exception since it is written entirely in the third person about God, such as. *“Praise be to God ...*”). God frequently refers to Himself in the honorific plural as “We” (*“To thee have We granted ...”*) or “Our” (*“... who reject Our signs ...”*).

b. Addressed To Muhammad (Through Gabriel): Most of the words of the Qur’an are

God speaking to Muhammad, His messenger: (*"It is We Who have sent down the Qur'an to thee [Muhammad] ..."* – Sura 76:23).

c. Addressed Indirectly To People Through Muhammad: And most of the Qur'an is God telling His messenger what to say to his people: (*"Say [to the people]: 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our protector' ..."* – Sura 9:51).

d. Using The Lives Of Prophets As Examples: Many times incidents in the lives of prophets are used as examples of faith and good deeds, but no sin of any prophet is specifically mentioned (although sometimes hinted at) in the Qur'an.

e. Threatening Judgment And Promising Paradise: Hundreds of verses contain warnings of hell fire for unbelievers and hypocrites, as well as promises of rewards in Paradise for true believers who faithfully obey God.

2. WHAT THE QUR'AN SAYS ABOUT ITSELF: The Qur'an says a number of things about itself, including its origin (from God, out of the Mother of the book, through the angel Gabriel), its nature (incorruptible, true, un-duplicable, etc.), its purpose (to verify and repeat what God said through the previous books and messages, etc.).

[See Appendix 14 for a list of 40+ things the Qur'an says about itself.]

3. OTHER FACTS AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE QUR'AN:

a. The Meaning Of The Name: The word *Qur'an* means "recitation," and it claims to be God's Word, dictated by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad for him to memorize and recite to the people. I assume it was meant to be a recitation, not a book.

b. The Suras Of The Qur'an Are Not In Chronological Order. The Suras are generally in order of length, from the longest to the shortest, which is almost the opposite of the historical order in which they were presented (recited) by Muhammad. The early Suras when Muhammad was in Mecca were short and then later when he moved to Medina they became longer and longer.

c. The Qur'an Is A Little Larger Than The New Testament.

d. The Qur'an Was Received Over A Period Of 23 Years. The first portion of the Qur'an (Sura 96:1-5) was received in the year 610 and others followed for 23 years until Muhammad's death in 632. Muhammad recited each new portion to his followers, who memorized them, and some wrote them down.

e. Muslims Believe That The Qur'an Cannot Be Translated. There are a number of translations into English, but they are considered "explanations" or "commentaries" rather than translations. The authentic Qur'an is only in Arabic.

f. The Qur'an Cannot Be Changed. The Qur'an teaches that God's Word cannot be changed, but Muslims teach that God protects only the Qur'an from any change, not the previous books, i.e., Taurat, Zabur, Injil (books of the Bible).

g. The Style Of The Qur'an Is A Beautiful Prose, Which Is Chanted. It is often referred to as poetic, but without rhyme. The Arabic of the Qur'an has become the worldwide standard for classical Arabic.

h. The official Written Qur'an: At the command of Abu Bakr and Uthman (the 1st & 3rd Caliphs) Zayd-ibn-Thabit, one of Muhammad's secretaries, compiled the official written

Qur'an from the memories of Muhammad's companions and from some portions written down by some of His followers. This process was completed about 20 years after the death of Muhammad. Four official copies were made and all previously written portions were burned at the order of Uthman. Some *Hadith* (traditions) mention variant readings and parts of the oral Qur'an that were left out.

i. The “Law Of Abrogation:” According to Islam, as Muhammad received the portions of the Qur'an by revelation through the angel Gabriel, a new portion often contained a verse or passage which seemed to contradict, cancel or abrogate something previously received. This has created a problem for Muslims. Some scholars say **as many as 1000 verses are affected**. To explain these seeming contradictions the following verses were given **to show God's power over all** by superseding an earlier verse with a “better” one:

*"None of our revelations (verses) do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but **we substitute something better or similar ... God hath power over all things?**" (Sura 2:106)*

*"**God doth blot out or confirm what he pleaseth. With Him is the Mother of the Book.**" (Sura 13:39)*

*"... **we substitute one revelation for another, - and God knows best ...**" (Sura 16:101)*

[Although all Muslim scholars believe that God abrogated some earlier verses by substituting later verses with new teaching, there is a great difference of opinion among them as to which verses supersede which verses. However, most are agreed that (for example) Sura 9:5, (called "the verse of the sword") supersedes most of the previous teaching about jihad. Some believe it abrogates as many as 111 previous verses. Nevertheless, many today quote the previous abrogated verses for the purpose of validating their perception of Islam being a peaceful religion. Thus liberal Muslim leaders, especially here in the west, are teaching what could be called "the Islam of Mecca" (where Muhammad lived in his earlier days) with its emphasis on nonviolence and tolerance. At the same time, "the Islam of Medina" (where he lived later), with its more totalitarian, violent nature is what is being practiced and taught by more radical Muslims in much of the Muslim world.]

j. The Most Serious Conflicts With The Bible:

- i) denial of the death of Christ by crucifixion (and no mention of his resurrection)
- ii) denial of the deity of Christ
- iii) rejection of the trinity and distorting it to be God, Mary and Jesus their son
- iv) confusion regarding the Holy Spirit (most think he is the angel Gabriel)
- v) many differences in the story of creation and in many other events

k. Power In The Words Of The Qur'an: According to popular belief, putting a copy of the following “throne verse” (Sura 2:255) on the wall of a home protects it from all evil and harm:

*"Allah! There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. **No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).**" (Sura 2:255)*

Another popular belief (from the Hadith) is that just reciting the Qur'an in Arabic, with or without understanding, brings special blessing:

“Whoever reads a letter from the Book of Allah, he will have a reward. And that reward will be multiplied by ten ...” (from Hadith of At-Tirmitheh)

The word translated, “reads” in the above quotation (and in 16:98 below) has more the meaning of “recite” than to read with understanding. Also it is believed reciting the Qur’an can bring healing and protection to believers:

“We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur’an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe: to the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss.” (Sura 17:82)

“When thou dost read the Qur’an, seek Allah’s protection from Satan ...” (Sura 16:98)

I. Interpretation Is Left To Early Leaders & Scholars. Comparatively few Muslims today read the Qur’an to understand or interpret its meaning. Usually those who “read” the Qur’an are only reciting it from memory, having memorized it in Arabic (which for most Muslims is a foreign language). Muslim teachers and scholars seldom try to interpret the Qur’an themselves, but instead study and quote the interpretations of highly respected leaders of the early years of Islam. Any teacher or leader who tries to present a different interpretation other than that taught by the early leaders is risking being branded a heretic.

THE BIBLE: The content of the Bible is quite different from that of the Qur’an. The Qur’an was written mostly in the first person (God speaking to Muhammad), came through one person in one language and was completed in a period of only 23 years. The Bible, on the other hand, was written mostly in the third person (prophets speaking about God), came through many different prophets in three different languages and was completed over a period of almost two thousand years. For that and other reasons **Muslims feel that the Bible does not sound like the Word of God.**

Here Are Some Things About The Content Of The Bible:

1. VARIETY OF BOOKS IN THE BIBLE: The 66 books of the Bible are in a variety of styles and have a variety of content:

There are 39 books in the Old Testament including the 5 books of the Torah (“*Taurat*” in Arabic), the book of Psalms (“*Zaboor*” in Arabic) and 33 other books of the prophets. There are 27 “books” in the New Testament (“*Injil*” in Arabic), 5 of which are written as histories, 20 as letters, 1 a theological treatise (Hebrews) and 1 a vision (Revelation).

Those 66 “books” are of **varying length** – from very long books like Isaiah and the Gospel of Matthew to shorter letters written to individuals like Titus or to churches like Philippians. Some of them are **records of history** like Genesis and Joshua, **collections of laws** like Leviticus and Deuteronomy, **books of poetry** like Psalms and Song of Solomon, **records of wise sayings** like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, **quotations of prophecies** like Jeremiah and Malachi, **letters of teaching** like Ephesians and Romans, **laments** like Lamentations, **studies of philosophy** like Job, **descriptions of visions** like Revelation, and **listings of songs of worship** like Psalms:

2. WRITERS, TIME PERIOD AND LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE: The 66 books of the Bible were written over a period of some 1560 years in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic & Greek), which were the native languages of more than 40 different prophets from a wide variety of backgrounds and professions (shepherds, fishermen, clerks, priests, teachers, doctors, kings, tax collectors, farmers, magistrates, etc.). Only some of those books contain

information as to the identity of the prophet God used to write that book. The human instrument is not important; only God's Word is important. All of the prophets (except Jesus) committed some sins, and many of them are described in all honesty, showing that God can and does use sinful, weak human beings who are committed to serving Him.

3. MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE: The Communication Of:

- **Who God Is**, including His **Works** (His Power), His **Words** (His Will) and His **Ways** (His Character)
- **What The Condition Of Mankind is** - The Fallen Nature Of Mankind
- **How We Can Be Saved From God's Just Judgment On Our Sin.**

a. Who God Is:

1) Describing God's Works: The Bible tells us of the many aspects of God's omnipotent creation & re-creation. [See Chapters 2 & 10 – Power of God & Work of God]

2) Communicating God's Words: The Bible reveals to us God's love and will for us. He does that through the examples of His dealing with people throughout history, His laws, the many covenants He has made with people, and most importantly, through His plan of salvation for all mankind.

God created us in His own image in order that we might have an eternal relationship with Him, and so He has revealed His thoughts and plans to us:

"How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:17)

"... he who forms the mountains ... declares to man what is his thought ..." (Amos 4:13)

"the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7)

3) Revealing God's Ways: While the Qur'an emphasizes God's power and the greatness of God's works, the Bible emphasizes His "ways."

Included in God's ways are His Attributes, Motivations, Judgments, Emotions, Thoughts And Purposes. His behavior and being reveal Who He is. Our desire should be to follow His ways and be like Him:

"who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" (Psalm 119:3)

"I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways." (Psalm 119:15)

"... give me life in your ways." (Psalm 119:37)

"Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths." (Psalm 25:4)

"Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways ... they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God." (Isaiah 58:2)

b. What The Condition Of Mankind Is: Throughout the Bible there is a constant narrative of the sinfulness of mankind – of us, the descendants of Adam:

After Adam & Eve's rebellion against God:

"And to Adam he said ... 'cursed is the ground because of you ... till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'" (Genesis 3:17,19)

In the days of Noah:

"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the

thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5)

In the days of King David:

*"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; **there is none who does good.** The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. **They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.**"* (Psalm 14:1-3)

In the days of Jesus' apostles:

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)

C. How We Can Be Saved From God's Just Judgment On Our Sin.

[See Chapters 8a & 8b – God's Forgiveness & Salvation]

4. ALL THAT WE NEED: The content of the Bible includes all that we need to understand God and ourselves as well as to empower us to live godly lives:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16,17 - NLT)

E. GOD'S PURPOSES IN COMMUNICATING WITH MANKIND:

ISLAM: We have already seen that God communicates with us through many vehicles, but what is His purpose in that communication, according to Islam?

1. TO GIVE GUIDANCE: One of God's primary purposes in communicating with mankind is to give guidance:

"Show us the straight way, The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray." (Sura 1:6,7)

*"O people of the Book! **There hath come to you our Messenger,** revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Book, and passing over much (that is now unnecessary): **There hath come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book,** - **Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light,- guideth them to a path that is straight.**"* (Sura 5:15-16)

The following is from <http://talkislam.com.au/the-purpose-of-life/>:

*"As Muslims we believe in the one and only Creator Allah ... **He has sent many Messengers and Prophets to guide humanity to the straight path ...**"*:

2. TO PROVIDE PEOPLE TO WORSHIP AND PRAISE HIM: Another one of God's primary purposes is **so He might receive worship and service:**

“God has guided people to the purpose of life—worshipping Him and seeking His pleasure—by sending His messengers, books and other means. But we have to want to please God to receive this guidance.”
(from: Sheima (author) at <http://howtobeahappymuslim.com/?p=446>)

“I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me.” (Sura 51:56)
[Some translations say “worship” instead of “serve.”]

3. TO TEST MANKIND: God created mankind in order to test and see which of us will choose to obey and live lives of faith and good deeds

“He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed ...” (Sura 67:2)

BIBLE: Below are some aspects of God’s broad purpose in sending His Word to us, and we know God’s purpose will be accomplished:

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10,11)

1. TO REVEAL HIMSELF (HIS LIFE) TO US: Best of all, through His Word, **God is communicating Himself** – His attributes and emotions – not just His power and will. Amazingly that means He chose to **stoop down to speak to us and to be with us** so we might know Him, being restored to His eternal fellowship [See chapter four]:

“I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love ... and I bent down to them and fed them ... for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst,” (Hosea 11:4,9)

[Jesus said] **“For I have come down from heaven ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.”** (John 6:38,51)

“... the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true ... He is the true God and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)

2. TO REVEAL AND CONDEMN OUR SIN:

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.” (Romans 8:3)

3. TO REVEAL HIS LOVE AND SALVATION FOR US [See chapter eight]:

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins ... And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.” (1 John 4:9,10,14)

4. TO SEND US HIS MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION: His ultimate goal is that all His people should **be reconciled to Him and know Him personally**:

“... God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18,19)

From all these purposes we see that God's Word is a **living scalpel** which He uses to produce His life in us. His basic purpose in sending His Word (both His written Word and Jesus) is to operate on us, removing malignancy and bringing new life. His Word discerns the motives of our hearts and produces His eternal life in us:

*"For the word of God is **living** and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."*

(Hebrews 4:12)

"... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," (Ephesians 6:17)

*"... when you received the **word of God** ... you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers."* (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

*"since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the **living** and abiding word of God;"* (1 Peter 1:23)

F. GOD'S PRIMARY MESSENGER (MUHAMMAD OR JESUS):

ISLAM:

Muslims believe God's present guidance in Islam is based on three sources:

- 1) The ***Qur'an***, considered the Word of God, conveyed through Muhammad,
- 2) The ***Hadith*** the word of the prophet (collections of reported teachings and practices of Muhammad),
- 3) The ***Sunnah*** the example of the prophet. Muslims believe **without the Hadith and Sunnah, the Qur'an is insufficient for believers to practice Islam**. (There are a few "Qur'an Only" Muslims but others consider them heretics).

We have already looked at the Qur'an, so **in this section we will look primarily at Muhammad's words and example in the Hadith and the Sunnah:**

1. MUHAMMAD, GOD'S GREATEST MESSENGER: The Qur'an declares Muhammad to be uniquely the "*seal of the prophets*," "*a universal messenger*" (all others are local, for one people) and one who has "*an exalted standard of character*."

"Muhammad is ... the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets ..." (Sura 33:40)

*"We have not sent thee but as a **universal (Messenger) to men**, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin) ..."* (Sura 34:28)

*"And thou (standest) on **an exalted standard of character**."* (Sura 68:4)

The Qur'an offers only one proof that Muhammad is God's prophet and final messenger – the Qur'an itself:

"And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto ..." (Sura 2:23 – also 10:37,38 and 17:88)

2. THE “HADITH” – COLLECTIONS OF TRADITIONS ABOUT THE WORDS AND ACTIONS OF MUHAMMAD: Here are some facts about the Hadith, which is supposed to be God’s guidance through His prophet:

a. Collectors Of The Hadith: The most reliable collections of thousands of traditions about things Muhammad said, did, instructed or forbade were published about two hundred years after Muhammad’s death. The most respected collections were made by scholars named Bukhari and Muslim, in that order. Other collections (by Abu Dawud, al-Nasai, al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Naja) published during the same time are also highly respected, making up the “six books” of hadith. These collections contain thousands of traditions in multiple volumes (e.g., 7275 traditions in Bukhari’s nine volumes). There are other less respected collections as well.

b. Value Of The Hadith: Muslim scholars reason that Muhammad, the prophet of God, is the best interpreter of God’s Word (the Qur’an). So the best way to understand the Qur’an is to study the Hadith. Also they teach that the prophet is the best example of how a Muslim should live and we need to follow his example (Sunnah) as described in the Hadith and in written histories of Muhammad’s life. Plus the Hadith contains many details of practices in Islam, which amplify the more general instructions found in the Qur’an. Muslims believe these traditions (Hadith) are inspired of God in a lesser sense than the Qur’an, and are very basic to Islam. In a practical sense the Hadith has more effect on Muslims than the Qur’an.

c. Reliability Of The Hadith: In an attempt to verify the accuracy (“*sahih*”) of a tradition a chain (“*asnad*”) of reliable witnesses from Muhammad to the time of their writing was sought by the collector. If anyone in that chain was not considered most reliable, the tradition was rejected. However, there is wide disagreement among the collectors of Hadith as to which traditions are most reliable and accurate. Bukhari collected and studied over 300,000 traditions being circulated in his day and rejected all but 7275 of them! All six of the most respected collectors included traditions the others rejected and rejected some the others accepted.

d. “Sacred Hadith”: There are a number (some say as many as 40) of traditions which are considered sacred (“*qudsi*”) because they are contain **the actual words of God spoken to Muhammad by Gabriel**. Curiously, why are they not included in the Qur’an? Here is an example:

“Ibn Abbas reported: ‘The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:’ **“Allah the Exalted said:** ‘The son of Adam has lied against me but he has no right to do so, and he has abused me but he has no right to do so. As for his lie, it is his saying that I cannot recreate him as I did before ...’”” (Sahih Bukhari 4212) [from <http://www.faithinallah.org/forty-sacred-hadith-qudsi-english-arabic/#sthash.NPnn5yrr.dpuf>]

3. THE SUNNAH: The Sunnah is the example of Muhammad, which we are to follow. It includes how he lived his daily life – how he washed himself, how he fasted and how he broke the fast during the month of Ramadan, how he treated people, how he performed the daily prayers and many other details. These facts are found in many of the recorded traditions of the Hadith and also in the historical accounts of his life.

THE BIBLE: Jesus is God’s primary messenger to us:

*“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”* (Hebrews 1:1-3)

God’s purpose is more than revealing His invisible attributes in nature and sending His written Word through His prophets. He wants to reveal **Himself** to mankind. So He came down to live among us as a human being called Jesus the Messiah. **Jesus is both God’s messenger and God’s message to us.** He is God’s eternal, living Word and therefore the only way we can know God. He is the revelation of God to us and therefore He displays all of God’s attributes:

1. JESUS IS GOD’S ETERNAL, LIVING WORD (Communication), who was eternally with God the Father and through whom the Father created everything:

*“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ... And God **said**, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light ... And God **said** ... And God **said** ...”* (Genesis chapter 1)

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God** ... All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made ... And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us** ...”* (John 1:1-3,14)

That Word of God, Who was in the beginning with God, is called God’s “Son” because He *came out* from the Father. He became a human descendant of Adam just like us; bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; in order to reveal Himself to us:

*“Therefore he had to be made **like his brothers in every respect** ...”* “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said ... ‘**a body have you prepared for me**’” (Hebrews 2:17;10:5)

2. JESUS IS THE ONLY “WAY” WE CAN KNOW THE FATHER. Jesus, God’s Son is the only one who can reveal the Father to us:

*“Jesus said ... ‘**I am the way** ... No one comes to the Father except through me.’”* (John 14:6)

“No one has ever seen God; the only Son ... he has made him known.” (John 1:18 – RSV)

3. JESUS IS “GOD WITH US” AND THEREFORE THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD ARE FOUND IN HIM. [See Appendix 5 for details of God’s attributes found in Jesus]:

*“... **they shall call his name Immanuel**” (which means, **God with us**).”* (Matthew 1:23)

Philip, one of Jesus’ disciples said to him, “Lord, **show us the Father** [God], and we shall be satisfied.” (John 14:8 – RSV). Our Lord Jesus’ answer to Philip is significant:

*“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ...”* (John 14:9)

Because Muslims do not believe that Jesus is God, but know that Christians do, they often ask whether He ever said “I am God. Worship me”.

[See appendix 12 for an explanation of whether Jesus ever claimed to be God, and also an explanation of why He seemed to hide His identity]

G. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT COMMUNICATES WITH OUR SPIRITS:

ISLAM:

According to Islam, the Holy Spirit is the angel Gabriel through whom He sends His messages to mankind. [see chapter 5, part B. & Chapter 17 Part A.]

THE BIBLE: God doesn't just communicate *through* a spirit or angel, but **He Himself is Spirit** and communicates as "the Spirit of God," also called "The Holy Spirit."

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

1. GOD'S COMMUNICATION IN ALL BELIEVERS: Even though God has communicated with us through nature, through His written Word in the books of the Bible and through Jesus the Living Word of Life, our capacity to truly understand Who He is has largely been hindered by our corrupted mind, spirit and will. Therefore before He ascended into heaven **Jesus promised that God would send us His Holy Spirit not just to live with us but to live *in and communicate with* all believers:**

"... the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you ... the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:17,25,26)

Jesus is one with the Father and with His Spirit, and so He Who is usually called "The Holy Spirit" is also called both "The Spirit of God" and "The Spirit of Christ:"

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." (Romans 8:9)

Notice the progression of God's communicating with mankind by His Spirit:

a. God's Holy Spirit First Came On Old Testament Prophets To Empower Them Temporarily For Certain Tasks:

[Moses] *"But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? **Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!**"* (Numbers 11:29)

[Samson] *"... the **Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him**, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands."* (Judges 15:14)

[David] *"Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And **the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward ...**"* (1 Samuel 16:13)

b. God's Holy Spirit Spoke Through Prophets Inspiring Them:

"Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas ..." (Acts 1:16)

*"... they departed after Paul had made one statement: **"The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:"*** (Acts 28:25)

*“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**” (2 Peter 1:21)*

c. Now God’s Holy Spirit Lives In And Communicates With All Believers To Enable Them To Live For And Serve Him:

1) Convicts And Brings To Repentance And Salvation:

*“Now **when they heard this they were cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, **“Brothers, what shall we do?”** And Peter said to them, **‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’**” (Acts 2:37,38)*

*“**he saved us**, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit**” (Titus 3:5)*

2) Assures Believers:

*“**The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit** that we are children of God,” (Rom. 8:16)*

*“**Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony** [witness] **in himself ...** And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **Whoever has the Son has life ...** I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, **that you may know that you have eternal life.**” (1 John 5:10,12-13)*

3) Empowers Believers (for witness, endurance, love, self-control, worship):

*“**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**, and you will be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth.”(Acts 1:8)*

*“... **all filled with the Holy Spirit ... to speak the word of God with boldness.**” (Acts 4:31)*

*[Stephen] “**But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.**” (Acts 7:55)*

*“... **share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,**” (2 Timothy 1:8)*

*“... **who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus ...**” (Philippians 3:3)*

*“**for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.**” (2 Timothy 1:7)*

*“**God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**” (John 4:24)*

*“**When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus ... with the power of our Lord Jesus**” (1 Corinthians 5:4)*

*“**that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,**” (Ephesians 3:16)*

4) Bears Spiritual Fruit In The Life Of Believers:

*“**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ...**” (Galatians 5:22,23)*

5) Fellowships With Believers:

*“**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion** [fellowship] **of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.**” (2 Corinthians 13:14 – KJV)*

6) Gives Spiritual Gifts To Believers For Ministry To Others:

“Now concerning spiritual gifts ... Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” (1 Corinthians 12:1,4-11)

7) Teaches Believers:

*“He who has an ear, let him hear **what the Spirit says** to the churches.”* (Revelation 2:29)

*“**these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.** For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also **no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.**”* (1 Corinthians 2:10,11)

8) Guides Believers:

*“And the **Spirit said** to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.”* (Acts 8:29)

*“When **the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth,** for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak”* (John 16:13)

9) Comforts Believers:

*“But **the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,** whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* (John 14:26 – KJV)

*“May the God of hope **fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**”* (Romans 15:13)

10) Intercedes/Prays For Believers:

*“Likewise **the Spirit helps us in our weakness.** For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but **the Spirit himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because **the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.**”* (Romans 8:26,27)

2. GOD’S COMMUNICATION WITH US THROUGHOUT ETERNITY: Even with the special enlightenment of God’s Spirit living in us (believers), we can know and understand God only to a certain level in this mortal, earthly existence. There are “secret things” about God and our fellowship with Him which we cannot even imagine in this life. Now we know only what God has chosen to reveal to us:

*“**The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.**”* (Deuteronomy 29:29)

*“**What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him**”* (1 Corinthians 2:9)

When we are transformed and brought into the very presence of God for all eternity, **only then we will fully understand and know our God:**

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12)

“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

H. MY CONCLUSIONS & REACTIONS:

1. I CONCLUDE THAT ISLAM HAS SIX CATEGORIES OF REVELATION:

a. Books or Pamphlets Given to Many Of The Early Prophets Are Completely Lost. The writings of Abraham and other prophets no longer exist.

b. The Taurat (“the Law”), Zabur (Psalms) & Injil (“the Gospel”): Muslims believe the Bible has been corrupted by the Jews and Christians. Some even say the Bible is not at all the same thing, but has been completely created by Jews and Christians.

c. The Qur’an: Muslims believe it is the complete, reinstated Word of God (with the message the Bible originally had); codified and protected by God against corruption.

d. Sacred Hadith (“*Hadith ul Qudsi*”): Muhammad is quoted repeating some statements and commands from Allah not found in the Qur’an.

e. Hadith: traditions of what the prophet Muhammad said, did, forbade and allowed; given through the memories of his early companions and preserved in collections. Islamic law (*Sharia* or *Fiqh*) is formed from this combined with the teachings of the Qur’an. There are two distinct elements of the Hadith:

- **“the word of the prophet:”** Muhammad’s teachings inspired to amplify and correctly interpret “the Word of God” in the Qur’an.
- **“the example of the prophet:”** (see f.)

f. Sunnah: The example of the prophet, which is found in the accounts of Muhammad’s life and actions in the Hadith plus historical records – the only inspired model for meritorious living.

2. THE QUR’AN NEVER CLEARLY SAYS THE BIBLE HAS BEEN CHANGED. I

do **not** believe that Islam’s own primary source (the Qur’an) substantiates the teaching of Islamic scholars that the Bible has been changed. The following is a list of the Qur’an verses Muslims use to support their claim that the Jews and Christians have changed the written words of the Bible:

[See Appendix 15 for my detailed analysis of the meaning of each of these verses]:

1. - **“But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them; so We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed (Our command) repeatedly.”** (Sura 2:59 – repeated in 7:161,162)
2. - **“Can ye (o ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you?- Seeing that a party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.”** (Sura 2:75)
3. - **“Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: “This is from Allah,” to traffic with it for miserable price!- Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby.”** (Sura 2:79)

4. - "There is among them a section **who distort the Book with their tongues** (as they read). You would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, 'That is from God,' but it is not from God. It is they who tell a lie against God, and (well) they know it!" (Sura 3:78)
5. - "And when there came to them an apostle from God, **confirming** what was with them, a part of the people of the Book **threw away the Book of God behind their backs**, as if (it had been something) they did not know." (Sura 2:101)
 - "And remember God took a covenant from the People of the Book, to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it. **But they threw it away behind their backs**, and purchased with it some miserable gain! And vile was the bargain they made!" (Sura 3:187)
6. - "**Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their (right) places, and say: "We hear and we disobey"; and "Hear what is not Heard"; and "Ra'ina"; with a twist of their tongues and a slander to Faith ... but Allah hath cursed them for their Unbelief; and but few of them will believe."** (Sura 4:46)
7. - "God did aforetime take a covenant from the children of Israel ... But because of their breach of their covenant, we cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard. **They change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them** ... the Jews – men who will listen to any lie, - will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee. **They change the words from their (right) times and places ...**" (Sura 5:13,14,44 – also 41)
8. - "... Say: "Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought?- a light and guidance to man: **But ye make it into (separate) sheets for show, while ye conceal much (of its contents)** ..." (Sura 6:91)

In fact, the Qur'an seems to teach just the opposite! Here are verses in the Qur'an which clearly teach that **God's Words cannot be changed** and will not dissolve or deteriorate by themselves! There is no exception made in these statements and they are not speaking only of the Qur'an, but of all of God's Words:

"None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?" (Sura 2:106)

"Rejected were the messengers before thee: with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs, until Our aid did reach them: there is none that can alter the words (and decrees) of Allah. Already hast thou received some account of those messengers." (Sura 6:34)

"For them are glad tidings, in the life of the present and in the Hereafter; no change can there be in the words of Allah. This is indeed the supreme felicity." (Sura 10:64)

"And recite (and teach) what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord: none can change His Words, and none wilt thou find as a refuge other than Him." (Sura 18:27)

And here are four other verses which show that the Word of God, including "the Law" and "the Gospel," is given for all mankind and has not been replaced or cancelled:

1. - **"It is He Who sent down to thee ... in truth, the Book [Qur'an], confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong)."**(Sura 3:3)

This says that the Qur'an was sent to "confirm" (not to abrogate or cancel) the Torah and the Gospel, which were given by God as "a guide for (all) mankind"?

2. - **"All food was lawful to ... Israel, except what Israel made unlawful for itself, before the Law (of Moses) was revealed. Say: 'Bring ye the Law and study it, if ye be men of truth.'"** (Sura 3:93)

Why would God tell Muhammad to instruct the people of Israel to study the Torah if it had already been corrupted and was being replaced by the Qur'an?

3. - [addressed to Muhammad]: “Say: ‘**O People of the Book!** [Jews & Christians] **ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law** [Taurat], **the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord.**’...” (Sura 5:68)

It seems that God is telling Jews and Christians that they should “stand fast” by the Law and the Gospel as well as the Qur’an. It is not saying they should quit reading the Law and the Gospel and replace them with the Qur’an.

4. - “... **We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law** [Taurat] **that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel** [Injil]: **therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.**” (Sura 5:46)

Why is the statement, “a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah” in the present tense? If the Gospel had already been corrupted before Muhammad, shouldn’t God have said, “... to those who feared Allah in the days of Jesus”?

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE QUR’AN IS TO REVEAL GOD’S POWER AND HIS WILL; NOT HIS CHARACTER. The Qur’an extensively reveals God’s great powers but explains comparatively little about God’s character. It contains God’s warnings and instruction, but does not encourage us to seek a personal relationship with Him. Even to the prophets He spoke only indirectly through the angel Gabriel.

In his introduction to Sura 13, Yusuf Ali writes,

“... *The special argument of this Sura deals with that aspect of **God’s revelation of Himself to man** and His dealings with him ...*”

But then he follows that by mentioning only things like,

“the revelation to the prophets which comes in ... the parallel revelation of **signs in the constant laws of external nature** on this earth ... in **the visible heavens ... recurring life and death** already in the external world ... **God’s power and glory in thunder and the forces of nature ... punishment in this world** compared to that in the life to come ... **signs of the working of His law ... God’s will** that must prevail ...”

He says nothing about God’s faithfulness, righteousness, love, holiness, etc. What he calls “*God’s revelation of Himself to man*” is no more than God’s “*eternal power and divine nature*” which are revealed in nature according to Romans 1:20. In other words, **the Qur’an does not add anything about God’s being and nature to what is already revealed to us in the physical creation of the heavens and earth!**

4. PROPHETS SPEAKING ONLY BY DICTATION: While prophets mentioned in the Qur’an were simply given God’s words with instructions to recite or repeat them, Biblical prophets were inspired by God to speak from their hearts about their *personal experience* with God rather than simply repeating words dictated to them by an angel.

5. EXCESSIVE VENERATION OF MUHAMMAD: Muslims vehemently insist that they do not worship Muhammad because he is only a man, and not God, and the Qur’an says Islam gives equal honor and respect to all the prophets:

“*We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to ... (all) prophets from their Lord: **We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to Allah (in Islam).***” (Sura 2:136)

“Say [O, Muhammad]: ***I am but a man like yourselves, (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your Allah is one Allah ...***” (Sura 18:110)

“**Muhammad is no more than a messenger ...**” (Sura 3:144)

However, their **veneration of Muhammad** as the final Messenger of God is so extreme that I believe it **is to the point of worshipping him**. There are **several facets of this**:

a. “Allah and His Messenger”: The phrase “**Allah and His Messenger**” (Muhammad) is found a total of **69 times** in the Qur’an, in which **Muhammad is linked together with God seemingly on an equal basis. Wow!**

1) Muslims Must Obey Both Muhammad And God Equally. 16 times it is stated that obeying Muhammad (not just God’s message through Muhammad) is tied together with obeying Allah. Obeying Muhammad is equal to obeying God:

“...those who **obey Allah and His Messenger** will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein (for ever) ... But those who **disobey Allah and His Messenger** and transgress **His** limits will be admitted to a Fire ...” (Sura 4:13,14)

“The Believers ... *enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practise regular charity, and **obey Allah and His Messenger ...***” (Sura 9:71)

[Other verses are: 3:32; 8:1,20,46; 24:52; 33:33,36,71; 48:17; 49:14; 64:12; 58:13; 72:23]

2) Muslims Must Believe In Both Muhammad And God. 12 times it is stated that believing in Muhammad (as well as in God’s message through him) is just as necessary as believing in God, and believers should believe in Muhammad so “*that ye may be guided*” by his life and teachings, not just by God’s message through him. (Thus the *Hadith* is believed to be almost as inspired of God as the Qur’an):

“O ye who believe! **Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture** which He hath sent ...” (Sura 4:136)

“... So **believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet, who believeth in Allah and His words: follow him** [Muhammad] **that (so) ye may be guided.**” (Sura 7:158)

“Only those are believers, who **believe in Allah and His Messenger: they ... are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger ...**” (Sura 24:62)

“... that ye (O men) may **believe in Allah and His Messenger, that ye may assist and honour Him, and celebrate His praise morning and evening.**” (Sura 48:8,9)

“... I inspired the disciples to **have faith in Me and Mine Messenger ...**” (Sura 5:111 –

[Other verses are 8:24; 48:13; 49:15; 57:7; 58:4; 61:11; 64:8]

3) Believers Must Serve Both Muhammad And God. 5 times:

“... Should he **die** as a refugee from home **for Allah and His Messenger, His reward becomes due and sure with Allah ...**” (Sura 4:100)

“But any of you that is **devout in the service of Allah and His Messenger, and works righteousness ...**” (Sura 33:31)

[Other verses are 9:91; 49:1; 59:8]

4) Believers Must Love And Seek Both Muhammad And God. 2 times:

*"Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, ... the wealth that ye have gained ... ;or the dwellings in which ye delight - are **dearer to you than Allah, or His Messenger, or the striving in His cause ...**" (Sura 9:24)*

*"But if ye **seek Allah and His Messenger, and the Home of the Hereafter ...**" (Sura 33:29)*

5) Unbelievers Mock, Reject Or Resist Muhammad And God Jointly. 9 times it is stated that rejecting (resisting or mocking) Muhammad (not just rejecting God's message through him) is the same as rejecting God:

*"**Was it at Allah, and His Signs, and His Messenger, that ye were mocking?**" (Sura 9:65)*

*"... if thou ask seventy times for their forgiveness, Allah will not forgive them: because they have **rejected Allah and His Messenger ...**" (Sura 9:80)*

*"Thou wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, loving those who **resist Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or sons ...**" (Sura 58:22)*

[Other verses are 9:54,84,90; 58:4,5,20]

6) Unbelievers Fight Against Both God And Muhammad. 6 times it is stated that fighting against, contending with, opposing or annoying Muhammad is the same as opposing God:

*"punishment of those who **wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is ...**" (Sura 5:33)*

*"This because they **contended against Allah and His Messenger: If any contend against Allah and His Messenger, Allah is strict in punishment.**" (Sura 8:13)*

*"Those who **annoy Allah and His Messenger - Allah has cursed them in this World and in the Hereafter ...**" (Sura 33:57)*

[Other verses are 9:63,107]

7) God And Muhammad Are Jointly The Law Giver And Judge. 8 times it is stated that Muhammad and God together give laws and judge:

*"... that ... **which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger ...**" (Sura 9:29)*

*"... It is **your actions that Allah and His Messenger will observe ... will ye be brought back to Him Who knoweth what is hidden and what is open ...**" (Sura 9:94)*

*"It is not fitting for a Believer ... when **a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision ...**" (Sura 33:36)*

[Other verses are 4:59; 8:1; 24:48,50,51]

8) God And Muhammad Jointly Make And Dissolve Treaty Alliances. 4 times:

*"an **announcement from Allah and His Messenger, to the people ... that Allah and His Messenger dissolve (treaty) obligations with the pagans ...**" (Sura 9:3 – See also vs.1,7)*

9) God And Muhammad Jointly Give Bounty. 2 times:

*"if only they had been content with **what Allah and His Messenger gave them and had said '... Allah and His Messenger will soon give us of His bounty ...**" (Sura 9:9)*

*"... the **bounty with which Allah and His Messenger had enriched them ...**" (Sura 9:74)*

10) Believers Are Obligated To Please Both God And Muhammad Equally. 1 time it is stated that when believers please Muhammad they please God:

*"... they should **please Allah and His Messenger if they are believers...**" (Sura 9:62)*

11) God And Muhammad Jointly Fight Against Those Who Disobey. 1 time:

*"If ye do it not, **Take notice of war from Allah and His Messenger**: But if ye turn back, ye shall have your capital sums"* (Sura 2:279)

12) God And Muhammad Jointly Foretell The Future for Believers. 1 time:

*"When the Believers saw the Confederate forces, they said: 'This is **what Allah and his Messenger had promised us**, and **Allah and His Messenger told us what was true**.' And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience. (Sura 33:22)*

Scholars have listed the suras (chapters) of the Qur'an in four time periods (see Nöldeke-Schwally's listing at: <https://understandingislam.today/>) according to the chronological order in which they were received by Muhammad during the years he lived in Mecca and later in Madina. Those periods are called "Early Meccan," "Middle Meccan," "Late Meccan" and "Medinan." It is very significant that the declaration that Muhammad is only a man (see above) came earlier in the *Middle Meccan* period while 67 of the 69 occurrences of the phrase, "*Allah and His Messenger*" are found later in the *Medinan* Suras! This **shows the later and progressive development of this veneration of Muhammad**.

This excessive veneration of Muhammad is the honor and worship that the Bible claims belongs only to Jesus, because it says He is God, one with the Father:

"that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." (John 5:23)

*"Let not your heart be troubled: **ye believe in God, believe also in me**."* (John 14:1 - KJV)

b. "Seal of the Prophets": The second reason I see for this veneration of Muhammad is that Islam teaches that prophets were sent to specific people groups with a corruptible message for a limited period of time, but Muhammad is called "the seal of the prophets" and is superior to all other prophets because:

- he is the final prophet,
- the revelation (Qur'an) through him is for all nations and peoples, and
- his revelation will never be corrupted (as all previous revelations were).

This teaching is found in the Qur'an and in popular opinion:

*"**Muhammad** is ... the Messenger of Allah, and **the seal of the Prophets** ..."* (Sura 33:40)

[Allah said to Muhammad] *"**This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you, and have chosen for you Islam as a religion**"* (Sura 5:3 – Sura 5 is believed to be the last Sura received before Muhammad's death)

One website (<http://www.lastprophet.info/-seal-of-prophethood-in-islamic-intellectual-history>) says,

"... the Quran with the verse: ... (Qur'an 5:3) indicates that society in relation to religion reached the zenith of improvement during Muhammad's time as prophet, that no other prophet is expected to arrive after him ... Moreover, the prophethood of Muhammad was universal and the revelations he received were never corrupted, thus there was no need for a new prophet."

Another webstie (http://www.answering-christianity.com/last_prophet.htm) says,

*"Prophet Jesus came before Prophet Muhammad and will come after him (peace be upon both of them). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) made it clear that **no new Prophet or Messenger will come after him**. Only Jesus (peace be upon him) will ..."*

c. The Sunnah: Thirdly, Muslims are taught that Muhammad is the perfect example for them to follow both in practices and in sayings and that they gain merit with God by doing so. This is called *Sunnah*. **The Bible teaches we should be like God, but Islam teaches we should be like Muhammad.**

d. Signs In The Mosque: The fourth reason I see is that Muhammad is elevated to a position equal to God in signs in the mosque. In Islamic culture respect and honor is shown by height, size and position. To show respect to the Qur'an, for example, Muslims will put it on the highest shelf or over the doorway above all other books or objects. Likewise, things that are bigger tend to be more important than those that are smaller and things on the right more honorable than things on the left.

To my knowledge, **every mosque in the world has at least two large signs high on the wall at the front (facing Mecca) of the worship area. One has the name "Allah" and the other "Muhammad."** They are equal in size and height and equally spaced on both sides of the center. **One is not larger or higher or more central than the other.** The only way that Allah is given more honor is that His name is on the right while Muhammad's is on the left. A stranger coming into a mosque who knows nothing about the teaching of Islam, probably would conclude that Muslims worship two gods! Is there some legitimate reason why all mosques venerate Muhammad in this way? Shouldn't Muhammad's name be much smaller and be placed much lower with God's name higher, bigger and alone in the center?

e. "Allah's Beloved": The fifth reason is the title given to Muhammad in Islamic tradition. Some of the greatest prophets have been given special titles and according to one tradition (Hadith), Muhammad overheard some men discussing these titles (Noah "*Allah's Preacher*," Abraham "*Allah's Friend*," Moses "*Speaker with God (face to face)*," etc.). Muhammad agreed they were worthy of these titles, but then he added:

"Listen carefully! I am 'Habeebullah' (Allah's beloved) but I do not say this to boast. On the Day of Judgment, 'Liva-ul-Hamd' (Holy Prophet's special flag) will be in my hand alone. Adam and entire human race will be beneath it. I do not boast about this. I will be the first one to intercede with Allah on behalf of sinners on the Day of Judgment and I will be the first one whose intercession will be accepted. I do not boast about this. I will be the first one to turn the key of Paradise. The poor amongst the Muslims will be with me at that time. Allah will open the door of paradise for my sake and will allow me to enter it. I do not boast about this. In Allah's view, I am the most honorable amongst all those who have passed and all those who are to come. I do not boast about this." (Sunan Tirmidhi, Book on Merits) [five times he says he is not boasting!]

Again I must emphasize that Muslims insist they worship Allah, not Muhammad, and in modern times they reject being called "Muhammadans" even though in earlier days they were proud to be known as "*al-umma al-Muhammadiya*" (the community of Muhammad). Nevertheless, as a friend commented, we Christians can criticize *Allah* and get away with it but if we criticize *Muhammad* we will be attacked for it! Why?

APPENDIX 11

PROPHETS IN THE BIBLE, VEHICLES OF GOD’S MESSAGE TO MANKIND

(Also on the internet at http://answering-islam.org/authors/bailey/bible_prophets.html)

Rev. Richard P. Bailey – 2011

Introduction:

As I began this research, I discovered that there are many different names and categories of “prophets.” Usually they are called “prophet,” “seer,” “man of God” or “apostle.” Some are not given any title, but have clearly acted in the role of a prophet. In some cases we read that “the Word of God came to ...” or that “God’s Spirit came upon ...” The message from God sometimes came through angels, dreams, visions, or in an audible voice. At other times God came and spoke to the prophet in some physical form. But in most cases they simply spoke what God put in their hearts as they were inspired and *“carried along by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:21).

Most of the prophets I have listed and numbered are named, but there are others in the list whose names are not given, such as “a Man of God from Judah.” There are also several groups of unnamed “prophets,” which I have listed but not numbered.

I also began to realize that prophets seem to have a variety of roles. Often the prophets verbally proclaimed a message from God, some were inspired by God to write a book or books, while others simply were called “prophet,” “seer,” or “apostle” with nothing recorded about their message. The content of the messages God caused His prophets to proclaim or write included calls to repentance, warnings of judgment, and/or foretelling future events. Many of the prophets in Old Testament times gave detailed predictions of the birth, life, crucifixion and resurrection of God’s Messiah. God did many miracles through just a few of the prophets; one or two miracles through several others but no recorded miracles through most of them.

In the chart I have created below I have included unbelievers and even Balaam’s donkey among those through whom God chose to speak. For example, even though Judas was an unbeliever whom the Lord Jesus called “a devil.” (John 6:70,71), I have included him because he is named an “apostle” - one of the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus - sent out by Jesus along with his other eleven “apostles” (Mark 3:13-19, 6:7-13) to proclaim his message and perform miracles. However, I have not included those who claimed to be prophets but are called false prophets by God. With the exception of Jesus the Messiah, all of them were subject to failures and sins – some more than others.

General Conclusions Drawn From the Chart Below:

Basic, Common Function of Prophets, Seers, Men of God, and Apostles: -

These chosen people seem to be those to whom God spoke a message, which was for the benefit of others or for their own personal guidance, and in most cases has been passed on to us in Scripture.

Total Number of Prophets: –

According to my count, there are **134 prophets named and numbered** in the list below. In addition, the Bible mentions several groups of unnamed prophets (70 elders of Israel, 100+ prophets saved from slaughter by Obediah, 50+ sons of the prophets at Jericho, 100 sons of the prophets at Gilgal, 288 “sons” of Aseph, Heman & Jeduthun) as well as 9 other groups of unnamed and unnumbered “prophets” (“A group of prophets,” etc.).

Counting only 2 each for those 9 unnumbered groups, I count a total of **at least 626 additional unnamed “prophets,”** which I have included in the list below without numbering them.

[133 named prophets plus 626 unnamed prophets equals **a total of at least 759 prophets in the Bible**]

Women Prophetesses: –

The following 16 women are included in the list: Eve, Hagar, Rebekah, Miriam, Deborah, Manoah’s wife, Hannah, Isaiah’s wife, Huldah, Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, and the four daughters of Philip.

Writing Prophets: –

About 32 of the human authors of the books of the Bible are fairly certain. The human authors of several of the Old Testament books as well as the author of Hebrews in the New Testament are unknown, so there could be at least 9 others. So there are between 32 and 41+ prophets through whom God caused the Bible to be written.

Prophets Through Whom God did Miracles: –

My definition of a miracle is something which is impossible according to the physical laws of nature (That is why it is called, “supernatural”). Of the 25 prophets through whom God performed recorded miracles, 16 of them performed only 1-3 miracles. The following nine are those through whom God performed more than three miracles (In some cases multiple unnumbered miracles are mentioned, which I counted as 2+) :

The two witnesses in 11th chapter of Revelation =	5+
Philip =	7+
Elijah =	10
Peter =	12+
Elisha =	15
Paul =	15+
Moses =	27
Jesus = (I counted only 2 for each mention of “He healed them all”)	106+.

Conclusions Drawn From This Study Relating to Islamic Teaching:

The Qur’an says, “*We sent a long line of prophets for your instruction.*” (Sura 23:23), and according to a Muslim tradition (“*Hadith*”) God sent 124,000 prophets (“*nabi*”) beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad. One tradition also says that 313 of those prophets were also apostles (“*rasool*”). As I thought about this, a lot of questions developed in my mind. For example, how many of those 124,000 are actually mentioned in the Qur’an or Hadith? How many prophets are mentioned in the Bible? Are there different definitions of a prophet in Islam and in the Bible? What is the difference between a prophet (“*nabi*”) and an apostle (“*rasool*”) in Islam? Is there a similar difference in the Bible?

The Number and Amount of Information About Prophets Mentioned in the Qur’an: -

A quick search through the Qur’an revealed that the Qur’an mentions only about 28 prophets by name. Furthermore, what is written about most of these prophets is limited to one or two basic facts. In comparison, the amount of information in the Bible about most of these prophets is two to ten times as much. Most Muslims deny that God sent any female prophets, but some hold that there were three - Abraham’s wife (Sura 11:71-73), the mother of Moses (20:38,39; 28:7) and *Miriam*, the mother of Jesus (28:7). Also the Qur’an mentions God inspiring or revealing things to the heaven, the earth, and the bee.

The Difference Between a *Nabi* and a *Rasool* in Islam: -

I have asked several Muslims what the difference is between a prophet (“*nabi*”) and an apostle (“*rasool*”) in Islam, and have received several answers, of which the following three seemed most common.

Perhaps the most frequent answer was that a *rasool* (apostle) is a special *nabi* (prophet) through whom God gave a book or portions of scripture to mankind. They believe God has given a total of 100 booklets

or portions of scripture plus four books. They were given through the following **8 rasools** (Note that this is different from the 313 *rasools* mentioned above):

- 1) Adam, to whom ten booklets of scripture were given,
- 2) Seth, to whom fifty booklets were given,
- 3) Idris (Enoch), to whom thirty booklets were given,
- 4) Abraham, to whom ten booklets of scripture were revealed,
- 5) Moses, to whom the *Taurat* was given,
- 6) David, to whom the *Zabur* was given,
- 7) Jesus, to whom God gave the *Injil*,
- 8) Muhammad, to whom God gave the *Qur'an*.

The second most frequent answer was that a *rasool* is a special *nabi* to whom God gave a set of laws ushering in a new age or dispensation, which abrogated the laws previously given. A third answer was that *rasools* (apostles) were commissioned to take the message to more than their own people, while *nabis* (prophets) were sent only to their own nation. [An interesting article on this subject is found at www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Incoherence/last_messenger.html]

The following **6 rasools** were also given special titles:

- 1) Adam – “*Safiyu 'Illah*” (chosen of God),
- 2) Noah – “*Nabiyu Illah*” (prophet of God),
- 3) Abraham – “*Khalilu Illah*” (friend of God),
- 4) Moses – “*Kalimu Illah*” (one who conversed with God),
- 5) Jesus – “*Ruhu 'Illah*” and “*Kalimat Ullah*” (spirit of God, word of God),
- 6) Muhammad – “*Rasulu 'Illah*” (apostle of God)

The Difference Between a Prophet (Seer - note Isaiah 29:10) and an Apostle in the Bible:

In the Bible these two titles speak of two different but closely related ministries. The prophet is a *spokesman* for God, given a message to pass on to others. An apostle is God’s *ambassador* who is appointed, called or commissioned to the authoritative and special ministry of initially presenting the gospel to an ethnic people group who have not heard it (Galatians 2:8). The title of prophet is used in both the Old and New Testaments, while the title of apostle is used only in the New Testament. According to Hebrews 3:1,2 our Lord Jesus the Messiah is “the Apostle” commissioned by God the Father. There were 12 “Apostles” commissioned by Jesus the Messiah to represent him, and there were numerous other apostles (Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Luke, Mark, etc.) later commissioned by God’s Holy Spirit.

Veneration of Prophets in Islam: -

Islam elevates prophets (especially Muhammad) to a position of such high veneration that they are believed to be sinless (at least after their call to prophet-hood) and different from other human beings – a kind of supermen. In contrast, the Bible mentions the sins of most of the prophets, while also giving great respect to them. It portrays them as ordinary people submitted to God and willing to be vehicles for God’s voice to mankind. Their ordinary stature is seen in the fact that many of them, through whom even some parts of the Bible were given, are completely unnamed.

The Islamic Belief That Muhammad is Mentioned in the Bible: -

The Qur’an says that the coming of Muhammad was predicted both in the “Law” (the “*Taurat*” given to the Prophet Moses) and in the “Gospel” (the “*Injil*” given to the Prophet Jesus):

(Sura 7:157) “*Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own Scriptures), - in the Law and the Gospel... ”*

(Sura 61:6) “*And remember Jesus, the son of Mary, said, ‘O children of Israel! I am the apostle of God (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of an Apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.’ ”*

[Note 416 from Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an: "... In the Old Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in Deut. 18:18... In the New Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in the Gospel of St. John 14:16, 15:26 and 16:7... The Greek word translated 'Comforter' is 'Paracletos,' which is an easy corruption from 'Periclytos,' which is almost a literal translation of 'Muhammad' or 'Ahmad' ... Further, there were other Gospels that have perished, but of which traces still remain, which were even more specific in their reference to Muhammad..."]

See a fuller discussion of this question in my article, "Answers to Questions Muslims Ask," Part Three, Question #2. at <http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/bailey.html>

Key to Symbols in the Chart:

There are many factor and variables related to prophets mentioned in the Bible, and I have done my best to sort them out. I have attempted to indicate those variables in chart form by using the following symbols:

TYPES OF PROPHETS:

A = The living, eternal Word of God Himself, who became a man and lived among us. (only example: Jesus the Messiah)

B = A chosen one, whose life was used by God, to whom God spoke, and whom God inspired to write a message for others in the form of a book or part of a book of the Bible. (example: Moses)

C = A chosen one, whose life was used by God, to whom God spoke, and through whom God gave a message for others, which is recorded in one of the books of the Bible. (example: Noah)

D = One inspired by God to record the events and messages given to others as a part of the Bible. (example: Luke)

E = One to whom or through whom God spoke a message directly, which is recorded in the Bible as a book or part of a book; in some cases called a "prophet." (example: Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah)

F = A chosen one, whose life was used by God, and who is called a "prophet", "seer" or "apostle," although no message from God is recorded. (example: James, son of Zebedee)

G = One who is simply called a "prophet," "seer," or an "apostle" or who is said only to have "prophesied" without any mention of what he prophesied. (example: Iddo)

H = One to whom or through whom God spoke a message by an angel. (example: Lot, Abraham's nephew)

I = A priest through whom God revealed his will to Israel, or a leader through the use of an "ephod." (example: Ahimelech the priest, son of Ahitub)

J = An unbeliever through whom God chose to speak. (example: Pharaoh Neco)

K = An animal through whose mouth God spoke. (example: Balaam's donkey)

OTHER VARYING FACTORS:

* = Mentioned in the Qur'an or Hadith by an Arabic name the same or almost the same as this English name (example: Adam)

(*) = Mentioned in the Qur'an but not by name (example: Elizabeth, wife of Zechariah the priest)

(**Musa*) = Mentioned in the Qur'an or Hadith by this Arabic name

+ = unnumbered, multiple prophets or miracles are counted as "2+" each, but probably are more than 2

ABRAHAM = One of the most important prophets (in my opinion)

Exodus = human author of this book (example: Exodus by Moses)

(1 & 2 Samuel ?) = Possibly the human author of part or all of this book (Example: 1 & 2 Samuel possibly written by Gad, David's seer)

Book 11:2-5 = Bible references in which it is seen that this person is a prophet

(Book 10:1-12:15) = Bible references in which the fuller account of this prophet is contained.

Chart of Prophets in the Bible:

Richard P. Bailey – October 2011

(as far as possible I have listed them in chronological order)

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEARANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRACLES
1, 2	Adam* & Eve	E	-	31 & 5	<u>Gen.1:28-30; 2:16,17; 3:9-20</u> (Gen.1:26 to 5:5)	Many	3	0
3	Abel (*), son of Adam	F	-	10	<u>Matt.23:35; Luke 11:50,51; Heb.11:4</u> (Gen.4:2-10; Heb.12:24)	0	1	0
4	Cain (*), son of Adam	E	-	20	<u>Gen 4:1-15</u> (Gen.4:1-25; Hebrews 11:4)	1	1	0
5	Enoch (* <i>Idris</i> ?)	C	-	12	<u>Jude 14,15</u> (Gen 5:18-24; Heb 11:4,5)	Many	1	1
6	NOAH (* <i>Nuh</i>)	C	-	53	<u>Gen.6:8,9,13-21; 7:1-4; 8:15-17; 9:1-17; Ezek.14:14,20; Heb.11:7</u> (Gen.5:29 to10:1)	Many	3	2
7	Job (* <i>Ayub</i>)	B	-	56	<u>Job 1:8; 2:3; 38:1 to 42:6; Ezek.14:14,20; Ezek 14:14,20; James 5:11</u> (Job 1:1 to 42:17)	0	1	0
8	ABRAHAM (* <i>Ibrahim</i>)	C	-	308	<u>Gen.12:1-7; 13:14-17; 14:18-20; 15:1-21; 17:1-22; 18:1-33; 20:7; 21:12-13; 22:1,2,15-18; Acts 7:2-3</u> (Gen.11:26 to 25:10)	4	8	0
9	Melchizedek (pre-incarnate Christ ?)	A (or C)	-	11	<u>Gen.14:18-20; Heb.7:1-17</u> (Genesis 14:13-24; Heb.7:1-17)	0	1	0
10	Hagar (*), Ishmael's mother	H	-	12	<u>Gen.16:7-14; 21:17-18</u> (16:1-16; 21:8-21; 25:12)	1	2	0
11	Lot (* <i>Lut</i>), nephew of Abraham	H	-	37	<u>Gen.19:12-22</u> (Gen.11:27,31; 12:4,5; 13:1-13; 14:1-16; 18:17-19:38; Luke 17:28; 2 nd Peter 2:7)	1	1	1
12	Abimelech	E	-	17	<u>Gen.20:3-7</u> (Gen.20:1-18)	0	1	0
13	Rebekah	E	-	31	<u>Gen.25:21-23</u> (Gen. 24:1 to 27:46)	0	1	0
14	Isaac (* <i>Ishaq</i>)	C	-	131	<u>Gen.26:2-5,24; 27:27-29,39,40</u> (Gen.17:15 to 28:8; 35:27,28)	2	2	0
15	JACOB / ISRAEL (* <i>Yaqub</i>)	C	-	372	<u>Gen.28:12-15; 31:3,11-13; 32:1,24-30; 35:9-13; 48:15,16,20,21; 49:2-27</u> (Gen.25:21 to 50:18)	3	6	0
16	Laban	E	-	54	<u>Gen.31:24,29,42</u> (24:29 to 32:4)	0	1	0

17	JOSEPH (* <i>Yusif</i>)	C	-	217	<u>Gen.37:5-11; 40:8-19; 41:15-39; 50:24,25</u> (Gen.30:22-24; 37:2 to 50:26; Ex.13:19; Josh.24:32)	0	3	0
18	MOSES, “The Man of God” (* <i>Musa</i>)	B	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy Psalm 90	935	<u>multiple references from Ex.3:2-4:17 to Deut.34:1-4; note especially Num.12:6-8</u> (Ex.2:1 to Deut.34:12)	5	100 +	27

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEARANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRACLES
--------	------	------	---------------	---------------------------	------------	------------------------	---------------------	---------------

19	Aaron (* <i>Haroon, Harun</i>)	E	-	334	<u>Ex.4:27; 6:13,26; 7:1,8,9; 12:1-20,43-50;.24:9-11; Lev.10:8-11; Num.12:4-8; 18:1-24</u> (Ex.4:14 to Num.20:29)	0	4+4	0
20	Miriam (*), sister of Moses	E	-	15	<u>Ex.15:20,21; Num.12:4-15</u> (Ex.2:4 to Num.20:1)	0	2	0
--	70 Elders	G	-	5	<u>Num.11:24-29; Ex.24:9-11</u>	0	1	0
21	Balaam, son of Beor	J	-	63	<u>Num.22:9-12,20,32-35; 23:4-10,16-24; 24:1-9,15-24</u> (Num.22:1 to 25:18; 31:16; Josh.13:22)	0	4	0
22	Balaam's donkey	K	-	15	<u>Num.22:22-30</u> (Num.22:22-33; 2 Peter 2:16)	1	1	1
23	JOSHUA, son of Nun	C or B	(Joshua ?)	200	<u>seventeen references in the book of Joshua from 1:1-9 to 24:2-13,26</u> (Ex.24:13,14; 32:15-17; 33:11; Num.13:1-14:10; Deut.3:28; 31:7,8; Josh.1:1 to 24:30; Judges 2:6-10)	2	17	2
24	Deborah, prophetess	C	-	9	<u>Judges 4:4,6,7,9,14; 5:2-31</u> (Judges 4:1-5:31)	0	3	0
25	Barak, son of Abinoam	E	-	14	<u>Judges 4:6-9; 5:2-31</u> (Judges 4:1 to 5:31)	0	3	0
26	“A Prophet”	E	-	1	<u>Judges 6:8-10</u> (Judges 6:7-10)	0	1	0
27	Gideon(*), Jerub-Baal, son of Joash	C	-	46	<u>Judges 6:11-26,34-40; 7:2-11,15</u> (Judges 6:1 to 8:32; Heb.11:32)	1	4	2
28	Jotham, Gideon's son	E	-	4	<u>Judges 9:7-21,56,57</u> (Judges 9:1-57)	0	1	0
29	Manoah & wife, parents of Samson	H	-	18	<u>Judges 13:3-5,11,13,14,16,18</u> (Judges 13:2-16:31)	1	1	0
30	Samson, son of Manoah	C	-	38	<u>Judges 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14-19; 16:19,28-30</u> (Judges 13:24 to 16:31; Heb.11:32)	0	1	2
31	Phinehas, son of Eleazar	I	-	16	<u>Judges 20:18,23,27,28</u> (Ex. 6:25; Num.25:7-13; Josh. 22:30-34; Jud.20:28; 1 Chr.6:1-4)	0	3	0
32	Hannah, Samuel's mother	C	-	13	<u>I Samuel 2:1-10</u> (I Samuel 1:1 to 2:21)	0	1	0

33	“A Man of God”	E	-	1	(I Samuel 2:27-36)	0	1	0
34	SAMUEL (* <i>Shameel</i>)	C or B	(1 & 2 Samuel ?)	140	<u>1 Sam.3:4-21; 7:3 to 8:22; 9:6 to 10:8; 10:17-25; 12:1-25; 13:13,14; 15:1-35; 16:1-13; 28:15-19; I Chron.29:29,30</u> (I Sam.1:1 to 16:13; 25:1; 28:3-20)	3+	11	2

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEARANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRACLES
--	“A Procession of Prophets”	G	-	3	(I Samuel 10:5,6,9-11)	0	1	0
35	King Saul	F	-	395	<u>1 Samuel 10:6-12; 11:6-7; 16:14; 19:23-24</u> (1 Sam.9:1 - 2 Sam.1:27; 1 chron.8:33; 9:39; 10:1-14)	0	4	0
36	King DAVID (* <i>Daud, Dawud</i>)	B	More than half of the Psalms (84 out of 150)	113 5	<u>1 Sam.16:13; 23:2-12; 30:7-8; 2 Sam.2:1; 5:19-24; 7:4-17; 12:7-14; 21:1; 23:1-7; 1 Chron.21:26-28; 28:11-19; 2 Chron.8:14; 29:25; Ps.141,51-71,86,96,101,103,105-110,122,124,131,133,138-145</u> (I Sam.16-2 Sam.24; 1 Chron. chapters 2-3,11-29)	0	97	0
--	“A Group of Prophets”	G	-	1	(I Samuel 19:20)	0	1	0
--	“Saul’s Men”	G	-	3	(1 Samuel 19:20,21)	0	1	0
37	Gad, David’s seer	C	(1 Samuel ?) (2 Samuel ?)	13	<u>1 Sam.22:5; 2 Sam.24:11-14; 1 Chron.21:9-12,18; 29:29; 2 Chron.29:25</u>	0	4	0
38	Ahimelich, priest & son of Ahitub	I	-	10	<u>1 Samuel 22:10</u> (1 Sam.21:1 to 22:22)	0	1	0
39	Abiathar, priest, son of Ahimelech	I	-	15	<u>1 Sam.23:2,4,6,9-12; 30:7,8</u> (1 Sam.22:20 to 23:12; 30:7,8; 2 Sam,15:24 to 20:25; 1 Kings 1:5 to 2:35)	0	7	0
40	Amasai	E	-	8	<u>1 Chron.12:18</u> (1 Chron.12:16-18)	0	1	0
41	Nathan, the prophet	C or D	(1 & 2 Samuel ?) (1 & 2 Kings ?)	29	<u>2 Sam.7:2-17; (1 Chron.17:1-15); 12:1-14,25; 1 Chron.29:29, 30; 2 Chron.9:29; 29:2</u> (2 Sam.7:2-29; 12:1-25)	0	5	0
42	Zadok, son of Ahitub, high priest, seer,	F	-	35	<u>2 Samuel 15:27</u> (1 Chron. 24:1-3; 12:26-28; 2 Sam.15:1 to 19:43; 1 Kings chapter 1)	0	0	0
?	Jehoshaphat, s of Ahilud	? D	(1, 2 Kings) ?	1	<u>2 Samuel 8:16</u> (“recorder”)	0	0	0

43	Asaph, the seer, son of Berechiah	C	12 of the Psalms	42	<u>1 Chron. 25:1-8; 2 Chron.29:30; Psalms 50,73-83 (1 Chron.6:31, 39; 15:16-19; 2 Chron.5:12; 35:15)</u>	0	12	0
44	Heman the singer, the King's seer, grandson of Samuel	C	11 of the Psalms	14	<u>1 Chron. 25:1-8; Psalm 42-49,84,85,87,88</u> (1 Chron.6:31,33; 15:16-19; 2 Chron.5:12; 35:15)	0	12	0

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEARANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRACLES
45	Jeduthun, the King's seer	C	Psalms 89	12	<u>2 Chron.35:15; Psalm 89 (2 Chron.5:12)</u>	0	1	0
--	288 "sons" of Asaph, Heman and Juduthun	G	(some of the Psalms ?)	6	<u>1 Chron. 25:1-8 (2 Chron. 5:12,13; 35:15; Ezra 2:41; 3:10; Nehemiah 7:44)</u>	0	0	0
46	SOLOMON (Jedidiah), son of David (* <i>Suliman</i> or <i>Sulayman</i>)	B	Psalms 72 ,&120, Proverbs 1-29, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon	307	<u>1 Kings 3:5-14; 4:29-33; 6:11-13; 8:14-61; 9:2-9; 11:9-13; Ps.72,120 (1 Kings chapters 1 to 11; 1 Chron. chapter 28 to 2 Chron. chapter 9)</u>	2	51	1
47	Agur, son of Jakeh	E	Proverbs 30	1	<u>(Proverbs 30:1-33)</u>	0	1	0
48	King Lemuel	E	Proverbs 31	1	<u>(Proverbs 31:1-9)</u>	0	1	0
49	Ahijah, of Shiloh	E or D	(1 & 2 Kings ?)	11	<u>(1 Kings 11:29-39; 12:15; 14:2-18; 2 Chron.9:29; 10:15)</u>	0	3	0
50	Shemaiah, the prophet	E or D	(1 & 2 Kings ?)	5	<u>(1 Kings 12:22-24; 2 Chron.11:2-4; 12:5-8,15)</u>	0	3	0
51	"A Man of God from Judah"	E	-	18	<u>(1 Kings 13:1-32; 2 Kings 23:15-18)</u>	0	3	3
52	"Old Prophet Of Bethel"	E	-	7	<u>(1 Kings 13:11-32; 2 Kings 23:18)</u>	0	1	0
53	Iddo, the seer	G	(Chronicles ?)	3	<u>(2 Chron.9:29; 12:15; 13:22)</u>	0	0	0
54	Azariah, son of Oded	E	-	2	<u>(2 Chron.15:1-8)</u>	0	1	0
55	Hanani, the seer	E	-	5	<u>(2 Chron.16:7-10)</u>	0	1	0
56	Jehu, son of Hanani	E or D	(1 & 2 Kings ?)	5	<u>(1 Kings 16:1-4,7,12; 2 Chron. 19:2,3; 20:34)</u>	0	2	0
57	ELIJAH (* <i>Ilyas</i>), of Tishbe in Gilead	C	-	98	<u>1 Kings 17:1-24; 18:1,15-46; 19:5-18; 21:17-24.29; 22:38; 2 Kings 1:3-4,10,12,15; 2:2,4,6,10; 2</u>	1	22	10

					<u>Chron.21:12-15</u> (1 Kings 17:1 to 2 Kings 2:10; 2 Chron.21:12-15)			
--	"100+ Prophets"	G	-	4	<u>1 Kings 18:4,13</u> (1 Kings 18:3-16)	0	0	0
58	ELISHA (* <i>El-yes'</i> / <i>El-yesha</i>), son of Shaphat	C	-	59	<u>1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 2:1-6, 9-12,14,16-18,20-22,24; 3:11-19; 44; 4:1-7,12-17,32-36,40-41,42-5:8-14,25-27; 20,32; 7:1-20; 6:6,7,9-12,16,17,18-8:1, 10,11-13; 13:15-19</u> (Luke 4:27)	0	25	15

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEARANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRACLES
59	"A Prophet"	E	-	3	<u>1 Kings 20:13-14,22,28</u> (1 Kings 20:1-30)	0	3	0
60	"One of the Sons of the Prophets"	E	-	3	<u>1 Kings 20:35-42</u> (1 Kings 20:29-43)	0	2	0
61	Micaiah, son of Imlah	E	-	18	<u>1 Kings 22:7-9,13-28; 2 Chron. 18:6-27</u> (1 Kings 22:1-28)	0	2	0
62	Jahaziel, son of Zechariah	E	-	1	<u>2 Chron. 20:14-17</u> (2 Chron. 20:1-19)	0	1	0
63	Eliezer, son of Dodavahu	E	-	1	<u>2 Chron. 20:37</u> (2 Chron.20:35-37)	0	1	0
--	"The Sons/ Company of the Prophets at Bethel"	E	-	1	<u>2 Kings 2:3</u> (2 Kings 2:1-3)	0	1	0
--	"The Sons/ Company (50+) of the Prophets at Jericho"	E	-	5	<u>2 Kings 2:5</u> (2 Kings 2:4-8,15-18)	0	1	0
--	"The Sons/ Company (100+) of the Prophets at Gilgal"	E	-	6	<u>2 Kings 4:38</u> (2 Kings 4:38-44)	0	1	0
64	Young Man of Company of Prophets	E	-	5	<u>2 Kings 9:1,6-10</u> (2 Kings 9:1-13)	0	1	0
65	Obadiah	E	Obadiah	1	<u>Obediah 1:1</u> (Obediah 1:1-21)	0	1	0
66	Joel, son of Pethuel	E	Joel	1	<u>Joel 1:1; Acts 2:16</u> (Joel 1:1-3:21; Acts 2:16-21)	0	3	0
--	"Prophets"	G	-	1	<u>(2 Chron.24:19)</u>	0	?	0
67	Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest	C	-	2	<u>2 Chron.24:20-22</u> (2 Chron.24:2,17-22; Matt.23:35 ?)	0	2	0

68	Jonah (*Yunus), s/o Amittai	C	(Jonah ?)	22	<u>(Jonah 1:1,2; 2:2-9; 3:1-4; 4:4,9-11; 2 Kings 14:25)</u> (Jonah 1:1-4:11; 2 Kings 14:25)	0	4	0
69	Hosea, son of Beerī	B	Hosea	3	<u>Hosea 1:1-2:23; 3:1-14:9</u> (Hosea 1:1 -14:9)	0	6	0
70	Amos, seer	E	Amos	7	<u>Amos 1:1-7:11,12-16; 7:16-9:15</u> (Amos 1:1-9:15)	0	20	0

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEAR- ANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRA- CLES
71	“A Man of God” “A Prophet”	E	-		<u>2 Chron.25:7-9,15,16</u> (2 Chron.25:5-24)	0	2	0
72	ISAIAH (*Shia), the prophet, son of Amoz	B	Isaiah (1 & 2 Kings ?)	53	<u>Isaiah 1:1; 2:1; 7:3; 13:1; 20:2,3; 37:2,5,6,21; 38:1.4.21; 39:3,5,8; 2 Kings 19:2,6-7,20-34; 20:1-11,14- 19</u> <u>2 Chron.26:22; 32:20,32</u> (2 Kings 19:1 to 20:19; 2 Chron.26:22; 32:20,32; Isaiah 1:1 to 66:24)	1	56	2
73	“Prophetess” wife of Isaiah	G	-	1	<u>(Isaiah 8:3)</u>	0	6	0
74	Micah, of Moresheth	E	Micah	2	<u>Micah 1:1; Jeremiah 26:18</u> (Micah 1:1 to 7:20; Jer. 26:18)	0	8	0
75	Oded	E	-	1	<u>2 Chron.28:9-11</u> (2 Chron.28:8-15)	0	1	0
76	King Hezekiah	E	-	126	<u>Isaiah 38:9-20</u> (2 Kings 18:1-20:21; 2 Chron. 29:1-33:33; Isaiah 38:1-22)	0	1	0
--	“prophets,”	E	-	1	<u>2 Kings 21:10</u> (2 Kings 21:10-15; 2 Chron.33:10,18,19)	0	1	0
77	Nahum, the Elkoshite	E	Nahum	1	<u>Nahum 1:1</u> (Nahum 1:1 to 3:19)	0	1	0
78	Zephaniah, son of Cush	E	Zephaniah	1	<u>Zephaniah 1:1</u> (Zephaniah 1:1 – 3:20)	0	1	0
79	JEREMIAH (*Aramayah) s/o Hilkiyah, priest of Anathoth	B	Jeremiah (Lamenta- tions ?)	138	<u>Jeremiah 1:1; 2 Chron.35:25; 36:12,21,22;</u> <u>Ezra 1:1; Matt.2:17; 16:14; 27:9</u> (Jeremiah 1:1 to 51:64; 2 Chron.35:25)	0	62	0
80	Huldah, wife of Shallum	E	-	2	<u>(2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chron.34:22- 28)</u>	0	1	0
81	Pharaoh Neco	J	-	2	<u>2 Chron.35:20-22</u> (2 Chron.35:20-24)	0	1	0
82	Habakkuk	E	Habakkuk	2	<u>Habakkuk 1:1; 3:1</u> (Habakkuk 1:1 to 3:19)	0	3	0

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEARANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRACLES
83	Uriah (Urijah), son of Shemaiah	C	-	3	<u>Jeremiah 26:20</u> (Jeremiah 26:20-23)	0	7	0
84	DANIEL * or Belteshazzar	B	Daniel	77	<u>Daniel 2:19-23,27-47; 4:19-27; 5:17-28; 6:28; 7:1-12:13; Ezek.14:14,20; 28:3; Matt.24:15; Mark 13:14</u> (Daniel 1:1 to 12:13)	0	8	2
85	Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon	J	-	109	<u>Daniel 2:28; 4:1-37</u> (Daniel 1:1-4:37)	0	2	0
86	EZEKIEL (* <i>Hizqeel</i>), the Priest, son of Buzi	B	Ezekiel	2	<u>Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2:1; 3:1; etc.</u> (Ezekiel 1:1 to 48:35)	4	54	0
87	Cyrus, King of Persia	J	-	22	<u>Isaiah 45:1-7; 2 Chron.36:23; Ezra 1:2</u> (Isaiah 44:28 to 45:7; 2 Chron.36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-11)	0	1	0
88	EZRA (* <i>Uzair</i>), son of Seraiah, priest & scribe	B	(Ezra, Nehemiah ?, Esther ?, Chronicles ?)	20	<u>Ezra 7:1 to 10:17</u> (Ezra 7:1 to 10:17; Nehemiah 8:1-18; 12:1-47)	0	2	0
89	Haggai	E	Haggai	10	<u>Haggai 1:1; 2:20; Ezra 5:1; 6:14</u> (Haggai 1:1 to 2:23)	0	5	0
90	Zechariah, son of Berechiah, son of Iddo	E	Zechariah	6	<u>Zechariah 1:1,7; 2:1; 4:1,2,8; 5:1,5,9; 6:1,9; 7:1,4; 8:1,9,18; 11:4,15; 12:1; Ezra 5:1; 6:14;</u> (Zech.1:1 to 13:21)	0	8	0
91	Malachi	E	Malachi	1	<u>Malachi 1:1</u> (Malachi 1:1 to 4:6)	0	1	0
92	Nehemiah, son of Hacaliah	E	part or all of Nehemiah	8	<u>Nehemiah 1:1-7:73; 12:31-13:31</u> (Nehemiah 1:1 to 13:31)	0	1	0
93	Zechariah, (* <i>Zakariyya</i>) the priest	C	-	9	<u>Luke 1:13-20,67-79</u> (Luke 1:5-25,57-79; 3:2)	0	2	1
94	Mary, mother of Jesus (* <i>Miriam</i>)	C	-	19	<u>Luke 1:28-38,46-55;</u> (Matt.1:16; Luke 1:26-56; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-40; Matt.2:1-23; Luke 2:41-51; John 2:1-12; Luke 8:19-21; Matt.13:55; John 19:25-27; Acts 1:14)	0	1	1
95	Elizabeth (*), wife of Zechariah	C	-	8	<u>Luke 1:41-45</u> (Luke 1:5-25,39-45,57-66)	0	1	0

96	Joseph, husband of Mary	C	-	17	<u>Matt.1:20-21; 2:12,13,19-20</u> (<u>Matt.1:1-25; Luke 2:1-40;</u> <u>Matt.2:1-23; Luke 2:41-51;</u> <u>Matt.13:55</u>)	0	3	0
--	Shepherds	H	-	3	<u>Luke 2:8-14</u> (<u>Luke 2:8-20</u>)	0	1	0
--	Magi, Wise men	J	-	2	<u>Matt.2:2,12</u> (<u>Matt.2:1-12</u>)	0	?	0

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEAR- ANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	#OF MIRA- CLES
97	JOHN , the Baptist (* <i>Yahyah</i>), son of Zechariah	C	-	90	<u>John 1:6-8; Luke 1:13-17,41,76;</u> <u>Mark 1:2-8; Matt.3:1-3; Luke 3:2-</u> <u>17; Matt.11:9-15; Luke 7:24-28</u> (<u>John 1:6-8; Luke 1:5-80; Mark</u> <u>1:2-8; Matt.3:1-17; Luke 3:2-20;</u> <u>Matt.11:7-15; 21:32; Luke 7:24-</u> <u>30; John 1:15-40; 5:22-36; 10:41</u>)	0	5	0
98	Simeon	E	-	2	<u>(Luke 2:25-35)</u>	0	2	0
99	Anna, daughter of Phenuel	F	-	1	<u>Luke 2:36</u> (<u>Luke 2:36-38</u>)	0	1	0
100	JESUS (* <i>Isa</i>) the Messiah/ Christ, Lord, Word o God, Son of Mary, Son of Man, Son of God, Son of David	A	-	About 1500 in NT alone	<u>Deut.18:15-19; Matthew 1:1;</u> <u>13:56-58; Mark 1:1; John 1:1-</u> <u>3,14; Acts 9:3-5; Rev. 22:7-16</u> (The Old Testament is filled with symbols and prophecies about Him, and the New Testament is, directly or indirectly, almost all about Him)	2	153	106+
101	SIMON PETER	B	1 & 2 Peter	175	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Matt.16:17-</u> <u>19; 17:1-9; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 3:1-</u> <u>10; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (<u>John 1:35-42;</u> <u>Luke 5:1-11; Matt.4:18-20; Mark</u> <u>1:29-31; 3:13-18; Matt.14:28-32;</u> <u>John 6:67-69; Matt.16:16-19;</u> <u>Mark 9:2-10; Matt.17:24-27;</u> <u>19:27-30; Mark 11:20-25; 13:3-13;</u> <u>Luke 22:7-13; John 13:4-9,33-38;</u> <u>Matt.26:31-33; Luke 22:31-34;</u> <u>Matt.26:36-46; John 18:10-11, 15-</u> <u>18; Matt.26:69-75; John 20: 3-10;</u> <u>21:1-22; Luke chs 6 to 24; Acts</u> <u>chapters 1-5,8-12,15</u>)	0	19	12+
102	Andrew, brother of Peter	F	-	13	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Acts</u> <u>1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (<u>John</u> <u>1:35-41; Matt.4:18-20; Mark 1:29-</u>	0	0	?

					31; 3:13-18; 13:3-13; John 6:8,9; 12:20-22; Luke chapters 5 to 24)			
103	James, son of Zebedee	F	-	20	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Matt.17:1-9; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (Matt.4:21,22; Mark 1:29-31; 3:13-18; 9:2-10; Luke 9:52-55; Matt.20:20-28; Mark 13:3-13; Matt.26:36-46; John 21:1-14; Luke ch 6 to 24)	0	0	?

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEARANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRACLES
--------	------	------	---------------	---------------------------	------------	------------------------	---------------------	---------------

104	JOHN , son of Zebedee	B	John, 1 st John, 2 nd John, 3 rd John, Revelation	36	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Matt.17:1-9; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 3:1-12; 4:33; 5:12,40; Revelation 1:1,4</u> (Matt.4:21,22; Mark 1:29-31; 3:13-18; 9:2-10,37-41; Luke 9:52-55; Matt.20:20-28; Mark 13:3-13; Luke 22:7-13; Matt.26:36-46; John 18:15; 19:25-27; 20:3-10; 21:1-24; Luke chapters 6 to 24)	1	9	1
105	Philip, the Apostle	F	-	16	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (John 1:43-46; Mark 3:13-18; John 6:5-7; 12:20-22; Luke chapters 6 to 24)	0	0	?
106	Bartholomew, (Nathaniel)	F	-	10	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (John 1:45-51; Mark 3:13-18; John 21:1-14; Luke chapters 6 to 24)	0	0	?
107	Thomas, (Didymus)	F	-	12	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (Mark 3:13-18; John 20:24-29; John 21:1-14; Luke chap 6 to 24)	0	0	?
108	Matthew/Levi	B	Matthew	7	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (Luke 5:27-32; Mark 3:13-18; Luke chapters 6 to 24)	0	2	?
109	James, son of Alphaeus	F	-	6	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (Mark 3:13-18; Luke ch 6 to 24)	0	0	?
110	Thaddaeus (Judas, son of James)	F	-	3	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (Mark 3:13-18; Luke ch 6 to 24)	0	0	?
111	Simon, the zealot, (the Cananaean)	F	-	3	<u>Mark 3:13-18; 6:7,13; Acts 1:2,13; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12,40</u> (Mark 3:13-18; Luke chapters 6 to 24)	0	0	?
112	Judas Iscariot	J	-	21	<u>Mark 3:13-18</u> (Mark 3:13-18; John 6:70,71; Luke chapters 6 to 21;	0	0	0

					Luke 22:3-6; John 13:2,10-11,18; Mark 14:18-20; John 13: 27-31; Matt.26:47-50; 27:3-10)			
113	Matthias	G	-	2	<u>(Acts 1:23-26; 6:2)</u>	0	0	0
114	Caiaphas, High Priest	J	-	9	<u>John 11:49-52; (John 11:47-53; 18:13-14,24,28; Acts 4:5-6)</u>	0	1	0
115	Stephen	C	-	7	<u>Acts 6:8-7:60</u> (Acts 6:1 to 8:2; 11:19; 22:20)	1	1	2+

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEAR- ANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	#OF MIRA- CLES
--------	------	------	------------------	---------------------------------	------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------

116	Philip, the deacon	C	-	16	<u>Acts 8:5-13; 8:26,29,39-40</u> (Acts 6:5; 8:26-40; 21:8)	0	1	7+
117	John Mark	B	Mark	8	(Acts 12:12,25; 13:13; 15:36-39; 2 Tim.4:11)	0	1	0
118	Luke, the physician	B	Luke, Acts	2	<u>Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1; 16:10-17;</u> (Col.4:14; 2 Tim.4:11; Phile. 24)	0	2	0
119	PAUL (Saul) of Tarsus	B	Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalon- ians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, (Hebrews ?)	185	<u>Acts 9:1-19; 13:1-3,9-11; 14:3,8-10;</u> <u>16:16-18,25-34; 17: 22-31; 18:9-10;</u> <u>19:11; 23:11; 27:10-34; Rom.1:1; 1st</u> <u>Cor.1:1; 2nd Cor.1:1; Gal.1:1;</u> <u>Eph.1:1; Phil.1:1; Col.1:1; 1st</u> <u>Thess.1:1; 2nd Thess.1:1; 1st</u> <u>Tim.1:1; 2nd Tim.1:1; Titus 1:1;</u> <u>Phile.1; 2nd Peter 3:15,16</u> (Acts 7:58 to 28:31)	1	37	15+
120	Ananias	E	-	8	<u>Acts 9:10-18;</u> (Acts 9:10-19; 22:12-16)	0	1	1
--	"prophets"	G	-	1	<u>(Acts 11:27)</u>	0	0	0
121	Agabus	E	-	2	<u>Acts 11:27,28; 21:10,11</u> (Acts 11:27,28; 21:10-14)	0	2	0
122	Barnabas (Joseph), a Levite from Cyprus	F	(Hebrews ?)	29	<u>Acts 13:1,2; 14:3-4,14; 12:25; 13:3-</u> <u>15:39</u> (Acts 4:36,37; 9:26-27; 11:20-26; 13:1 to 15:39)	0	0	0
123	Judas, (Barsabbas)	G	-	3	<u>Acts 15:32</u> (Acts 1:23; 15:22-34)	0	0	0
124	Silas	F	-	13	<u>Acts 15:32</u> (Acts 15:22 to 17:15; 18:5-18)	0	0	0
125	Timothy	F	-	28	<u>Phil.1:1; 1 Thess.1:1; 2:6</u> (Acts 16:1 to 18:18; 19:22; 20:4; Rom.16:21; 1 st Cor.4:17;16:10; 16:10,11; 2 nd Cor.1:1,19; Phil.2:19- 23; Col.1:1; Phile.1:1; Heb.13:23; 1 st & 2 nd Timothy)	0	2	0

126	Apollos from Alexandria	F	(Hebrews ?)	10	<u>1 Cor.1:12; 3:4-6,22; 4:6,9; (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1; 1 Cor.16:12; Titus 3:13)</u>	0	0	0
127 to 130	four daughters of Philip	G	-	1	<u>Acts 21:9</u> (Acts 21:8,9)	0	0	0

NUMBER	NAME	TYPE	BOOKS WRITTEN	# OF TIMES NAME MENTIONED	REFERENCES	# OF GOD'S APPEARANCES	# OF GOD'S SPEAKING	# OF MIRACLES
--------	------	------	---------------	---------------------------	------------	------------------------	---------------------	---------------

131	James, half brother of Jesus	B	James	14	<u>James 1:1;</u> (Matt.12:46;13:55; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:2-5; Acts 1:14; 15:13-21; Gal.1:19; 2:9; Jude 1)	0	1	0
132	Jude (Judas), half brother of Jesus	E	Jude	7	<u>Jude 1</u> (Matt.12:46;13:55; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:2-5; Acts 1:14)	0	1	0
133, 134	two witnesses	F	-	2	<u>Revelation 11:3-12</u> (Revelation 11:2-13)	0	0	5+

APPENDIX 12

THE REVELATION OF JESUS' FULL IDENTITY AND WHY HE SEEMED TO HIDE IT

By Rev. Richard P. Bailey

(All references are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted)

Muslims often ask, “Did Jesus ever say, ‘I Am God; worship me!’? While Jesus never said those exact words, He did say and do many things that revealed His Full Identity.

We will look at the following:

- A. Jesus Chose Not To Promote His Full Identity
- B. Jesus Forbade Those Who Knew Who He Was To Tell Anyone
- C. Reasons Why Jesus Chose Not To Openly Reveal His Full Identity?
- D. Jesus Predicted His Own Death 24 Times

A. JESUS CHOSE NOT TO PROMOTE HIS FULL IDENTITY. The Bible clearly reveals Jesus to be a **Prophet, The Messiah, The Son Of God and God**, but Jesus very seldom used those titles for Himself. In fact, He seemed to make every effort to avoid them without actually denying Who He is:

1. **“A PROPHET:”** Only once did Jesus refer to Himself as a prophet, and that was indirect:

*“And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A **prophet** is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.’” (Matthew 13:57 – this event is also mentioned in Mark 6:4)*

2. **“THE MESSIAH” (OR “CHRIST”):** Very seldom (5 times) and only indirectly He mentioned that He was the Messiah:

- a. To those who did not believe in Him, He three times indirectly admitted He was **“The Messiah”** (**“Christ”** in Greek) when they asked Him:

*“Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, ‘I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the **Christ**, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘**You have said so.** But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” (Matthew 26:63,64)*

*“If you are **the Christ**, tell us.” But he said to them, **“If I tell you, you will not believe,** and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, **“You say that I am.”** (Luke 22:67-70)*

*“the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are **the Christ**, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, **“I told you, and you do not believe.** The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me ...” (John 10:24-26)*

- b. And even to those who believed in Him Jesus only two times privately and indirectly admitted He was the Messiah:

*“The woman said to him, “I know that **Messiah** is coming ... When he comes, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, **“I who speak to you am he.”** (John 4:25,26)*

*“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are **the Christ**, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, **“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”** (Matthew 16:15-17 – see also Mark 8:29 and Luke 9:20)*

3. **“THE SON OF GOD:”** Only three times did Jesus directly call Himself this:

*“do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘**I am the Son of God?**’” (John 10:36)*

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, **an hour** is coming, and **is now here**, when the dead will hear the voice of **the Son of God**, and those who hear will live.” (John 5:25)*

*“But when Jesus heard it he said, ‘This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that **the Son of God** may be glorified through it.’” (John 11:4)*

Two other times He reluctantly and indirectly accepted the Jews’ use of that title for himself (**“Son of God”** was a term used by the Jews synonymously for the Messiah/Christ). The Jews still demanded that He say so clearly:

*“... the high priest said to him, ‘I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are **the Christ, the Son of God.**’ Jesus said to him, **‘You have said so.’**” (Matthew 26:63,64)*

*“So they all said, ‘Are you **the Son of God**, then?’ And he said to them, **‘You say that I am.’**” (Luke 22:70).*

But the common people standing and watching him die on the cross understood that He claimed to be the Son of God:

*“He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, **‘I am the Son of God.’**” (Matthew 27:43).*

Although Jesus avoided calling Himself the Son of God, He constantly implied it by calling God His “Father” (it is recorded 172 times in the four “Gospels”!)

4. **“GOD:”** Jesus never directly called Himself **“God.”** However, **He made His deity clear in some indirect but very undeniable ways.** For example:

a. Jesus Called Himself “I Am,” Which Is God’s Personal Name. Only God alone can be **“I Am,”** the eternal, unchanging One:

God told Moses that His personal name is “I Am”:

*“Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say ..., “God ... has sent me to you,” and they ask me, “What is his name?” what shall I say ...?’ God said to Moses, ‘**I AM WHO I AM.**’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: **“I AM has sent me to you.”**’” (Exodus 3:13,14)*

Jesus had an intriguing series of exchanges with the Jewish religious leaders in John chapters 8, 9 and 10. They kept trying to get Him to say something they could use to convict Him, asking him who He claimed to be (where He was from and who His father was). They were frustrated because He wouldn’t clearly state He was the Messiah, the Son of God. But when He went even further and called Himself by God’s personal name, **“I Am,”** they were so furious they attempted to stone Him for blasphemy.

*“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, **‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life ... I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going ... the Father who sent me bears witness about me.’** They said to him therefore, **‘Where is your Father?’** Jesus answered, **‘You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’** ... he said to them again, **‘I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.’**... **‘You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world ... unless you believe that***

I am he [Deut. 32:39; Isaiah 48:12] **you will die in your sins.**’ So they said to him, **‘Who are you?’** Jesus said to them, **‘Just what I have been telling you from the beginning ...’** They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said to them, **‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he,’** ... (John 8:12-28)

‘I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.’ They answered him, **‘Abraham is our father.’** Jesus said to them, **‘If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me ... This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did.’** They said to him, **‘We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.’** Jesus said to them, **‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.** Why do you not understand what I say? ... **You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires ... Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.’** The Jews answered him, **‘Are we not right in saying that you ... have a demon?’** Jesus answered, **‘I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father ... Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.’** The Jews said to him, **‘Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, “If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.” Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?’** Jesus answered, **‘If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, “He is our God.”’** ... **‘Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.’** So the Jews said to him, **‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’** **Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’** So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” (John 8:38-59)

Later, after Jesus had healed the man born blind, the religious leaders again began saying **“We don’t know where he comes from”** (meaning they didn’t know who he was or who he claimed to be.) But the man born blind who was healed by Jesus had no trouble understanding that He was the Son of God, having come **“from God”**:

“... And they reviled him [who was born blind], saying, ‘You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from. The man answered, ‘Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ... Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’ (John 9:28-33)

Finally, when they kept insisting He say plainly whether or not He was the Messiah, He told them His works had proved Who He was and that He and the Father **“are one.”** Again, they picked up stones and tried to stone him to death for blasphemy because they understood that He was saying He was God:

“So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, **‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep ... I and the Father are one.’**” (John 10:24-29)

“The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, **‘I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?’** The Jews answered him, **‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.’**” (John 10:30-33)

Also, three other times in John 8:24,28 and 13:19 He said, **“I am he,”** clearly implying that He is God. This was especially significant to the Jews because of what God had previously said to Israel:

“See now that **I, even I, am he**, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.” (Deuteronomy 32:39)

“Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! **I am he**; I am the first, and I am the last. (Isaiah 48:12)

b. Jesus Said Things Only God (or an insane person) Would Say:

“Jesus said to him, **I am the way, and the truth, and the life ...**” (John 14:6)

“Jesus said to her, **‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’**” (John 11:25,26)

“... **I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.**” (Revelation 1:17,18)

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**” (John 10:27,28)

“Therefore **I send you prophets** and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town” (Matthew 23:34)

“And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, **‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’** Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, **‘Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’**” (Mark 2:5-7)

c. Jesus Accepted The Worship Of People. Three days after Jesus’ crucifixion and death and His coming back to life again Jesus came to His disciples. Thomas, one of His twelve disciples, was not with them. When the others told him about it he refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. Then Jesus appeared to his disciples again and that second time Thomas also was there:

“Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side [where the soldier has pierced him with a sword], I will never believe.’ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ **Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’**” (John 20:24-29)

When Thomas saw that Jesus really had risen from the dead he believed and **worshiped him**, calling Him, “My Lord and **my God!**” Jesus not only did not correct or rebuke him for calling him “God,” but He even commended Him for it! No human prophet would ever allow people to worship him or call him God, but Jesus did.

Many other times people worshiped Him and He accepted their worship:

[The “wise men” shortly after His birth]: “And going into the house, they saw the child [Jesus] with Mary his mother, and **they fell down and worshiped him.** Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)

[A blind man whom Jesus healed]: “He said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he **worshiped him.**” (John 9:36)

[His disciples when they saw his miracle] “And those in the boat **worshiped him**, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’” (Matthew 14:33 – also 28:17)

[Two women followers of Jesus after His resurrection from the dead]: *“And behold, Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came up and **took hold of his feet and worshiped him.**”* (Matthew 28:9)

d. Jesus Said He Came From Heaven; Out From God. Even though Jesus’ body was born of the virgin Mary, that was not really where He came from. He said many times that **He came from heaven, meaning out from God.** He is **God’s eternal Word/Communication** (No prophet could say that):

*“For **I have come down from heaven**, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me ... So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, ‘**I am the bread that came down from heaven.**’ They said, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, “**I have come down from heaven**?””* (John 6:38,41,42);

*“He said to them [Jewish religious leaders], ‘You are from below; **I am from above.** You are of this world; **I am not of this world.**”* (John 8:23);

*“**I came from God** and I am here ...”* (John 8:42 – also see John 16:27,28 and John 3:13,31)

e. Jesus Said He Is Eternal. Only God is eternal:

*“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I am.**”* (John 8:58)

Jesus said He existed before the prophet Abraham, who lived more than 2,000 years before Jesus was born! Notice that He did not say he was born then, but “I am.”

Two times Jesus said in this prayer to God the Father that He existed with Him before the creation of all things:

*“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with **the glory that I had with you before the world existed.**”* (John 17:5)

*“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because **you loved me before the foundation of the world.**”* (John 17:24)

5. “THE SON OF MAN:” Instead of calling Himself “Prophet,” “Messiah,” “Son of God” or “God,” Jesus almost always (87 times) called Himself “The Son Of Man,” which is a clear indication of His purpose in coming to earth to be a perfect man completely qualified to be our substitute in dying for sinful humanity.

B. JESUS FORBODE THOSE WHO KNEW WHO HE WAS TO TELL ANYONE. Not only did Jesus Himself avoid revealing His full identity, He also forbade those who knew who He was to tell anyone:

1. HIS DISCIPLES:

*“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven ...’ **Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.**”* (Matthew 16:15-17,20 – see also Mark 8:29,30)

2. THOSE HE HEALED:

*“Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all and **ordered them not to make him known.**”* (Matthew 12:15,16)

*“And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘I will; be clean.’ **And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.’**” (Matthew 8:3,4)*

*“**And immediately the girl got up and began walking** (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. **And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.**” (Mark 5:42,43)*

3. DEMONS HE CAST OUT:

*“**And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.**” (Mark 1:34)*

*“**And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, ‘You are the Son of God.’ And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.**” (Mark 3:11,12)*

*“**And demons also came out of many, crying, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.**” (Luke 4:41)*

It is interesting that He also avoided unbelieving peoples’ false adoration of Himself when he asked why they called Him “good,” an attribute of God:

*“**And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.’**” (Mark 10:18)*

C. REASONS WHY JESUS CHOSE NOT TO OPENLY REVEAL HIS FULL IDENTITY: Here are three reasons I can see: “

1. HE CAME TO EARTH TO BECOME A MAN. He did not come to earth to prove He was God or to be exalted as God. **If Jesus had wanted to prove or glorify His deity He certainly would not have become a man! But He came to earth in order to save us from eternal death by becoming both our perfect substitute and the only mediator between us and God – the sinless “Son of Man” who died in our place:**

*“**For there is one God, and there is **one mediator** between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**, who gave himself as a **ransom for all**, which is the testimony given at the proper time.**” (1 Timothy 2:5,6)*

That is why He predicted his own death on a cross 24 times (see below).

Instead Of Bringing Glory To Himself As God, He Chose To Accept The Humiliating (For God) Aspects Of Becoming The “Son Of Man:”

a. Becoming A Servant Of Mankind: Just imagine God, The Lord of Lords and King of Kings, becoming a servant of men! But that is what He did:

*[Jesus said] “... **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and ...**” (Matthew 20:28)*

*“... **Christ Jesus, who ... emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And...**” (Philippians 2:5-8)*

b. Giving His Life For Humanity: God, the Creator of life, entered into death by voluntarily laying down His life as a ransom for condemned mankind:

*[Jesus said] “**even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**” (Matthew 20:28)*

*“... **Christ Jesus ... being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**” (Philippians 2:5,8)*

“I am the bread of life ... the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever ...”
(John 6:48-51)

“...God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9)

c. Saving Sinners By Taking Their Sins Upon Himself: Jesus didn't come to condemn sinners, but to take away our sins and give us His righteousness:

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

“You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.” (1 John 3:5)

“... by the one man's [Jesus] obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

d. Destroying Death And Satan: He became a perfect man in flesh and blood not only to remove sins but also to conquer and destroy death and Satan:

“... The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)

“... Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ... Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Hebrews 29:9,10,14,15)

Jesus did not come to be exalted and worshipped as God. If He had it would have been impossible for Him to serve us by becoming a man and taking our place in death.

2. AS A SON HE WANTED TO GLORIFY HIS FATHER. Not only did Jesus come to earth to become a man, but also to model for us being an obedient son, whose desire was to glorify His father, not Himself:

“The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true” (John 7:18)

“I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.” (John 8:50)

“Jesus answered, ‘If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’” (John 8:54)

His brothers and his disciples did not understand this, so they urged him to become famous by more openly declaring Himself:

“So his brothers said to him, ‘Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.’ For not even his brothers believed in him. (John 7:3-5)

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ‘Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?’”
(John 14:22)

3. WE COULDN'T HAVE RECOGNIZED HIM. A third reason is that there is no way that we finite human beings could have understood Jesus was God, standing in front of us in a human body. Even now, almost all people who have not been raised in Christianity are totally incredulous when they first hear this teaching. Just imagine the ridicule He would have received if He stood in

the streets and shouted, "I am God; Worship Me!" There is no way human beings in their natural understanding could have recognized Him as God. After all, if he looks like a man, talks like a man and lives like a man, he must be a man! Isn't that exactly what people think today too?

"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own [the nation of Israel], and his own people did not receive him." (John 1:10,11)

Only God can give a person the spiritual discernment to understand the "mystery" of Who Jesus is:

"... the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages" (Romans 16:25)

"When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4)

"the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:26,27)

"... the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ" (Colossians 2:2 - see also 4:3)

D. JESUS PREDICTED HIS OWN DEATH 24 TIMES:

The Lord Jesus repeatedly predicted his own death before it actually happened. **Six** of the 24 times He also said He would be resurrected from the dead! He also specifically mentioned 6 times He would be killed by crucifixion. **I have listed the Bible references for all 24 predictions in the chronological order in which they occurred, and written out the 16 clearest ones:**

"Jesus answered, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?' But the temple he had spoken of was his body ..." (John 2:19-22, also recorded in Matthew 26:61)

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." (John 3:14) (see John 8:28 and 12:32,33, listed below, where he repeated this same thing)

"anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:38 - He later repeats the same teaching on two other occasions listed below. One in Matthew 16:24, also recorded in Mark 8:34 & Luke 9:23, and the other in Luke 14:27)

"Jesus answered, ... 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'" (John 6:43,51)

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Matthew 16:21, also recorded in Mark 8:31 and Luke 9:22)

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24, also recorded in Mark 8:34 & Luke 9:23)

"As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus instructed them, 'Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'... 'in the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.'" (Matthew 17:9,12, also recorded in Mark 9:9,10)

"... he said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.'" (Matthew 17:22,23, also in Mark 9:31 & Luke 9:44)

(John 8:28)

(John 10:11-15)

"... Jesus said, ... 'The reason my Father loves me is that **I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord I have authority to lay it down and authority...to take it up again.**'" (John 10:7,17,18)

(Luke 13:31-34)

(Luke 14:27)

(Luke 17:24,25)

"... Jesus ... said to them, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. **They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!**'" (Matthew 20: 18,19, also recorded in Mark 10:33,34 & Luke 18:31-33)

"Jesus...said ... 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give his life as a ransom for many.**'" (Matthew 20:25,28, also recorded in Mark 10:45)

(John 12:23,24)

"Jesus said, ... 'But I, **when I am lifted up from the earth**, will draw all men to myself.' He said this **to show the kind of death he was going to die.**" (John 12:30-33)

(Matthew 21:37-39, also recorded in Mark 12:6-8 & Luke 20:13-15)

"... he said to his disciples, 'As you know, the Passover is two days away - and the Son of Man will be handed over **to be crucified.**'" (Matthew 26:1,2)

"Jesus said to them ... 'When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me **for burial.**'" (Matthew 26:10,12, also recorded in Mark 14:8)

(Luke 22:19, also recorded in Matthew 26:26 & Mark 14:22)

"Then Jesus told them, 'This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "**1 will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered**" But **after I have risen** I will go ahead of you into Galilee.'" (Matthew 26:31,32, also recorded in Mark 14:27,28)

(John 16:19-22)]

APPENDIX 13

DETAILS OF ISLAM'S TEACHING ABOUT JESUS THE MESSIAH

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All references are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted]

Islam's Teaching About Jesus Includes The Following:

[Major Passages: Sura 3:45-59; 4:171,172; 5:110-115; 19:22-35; 43:57-65]

1) Jesus' was created like Adam, whom God created out of the dust by saying, "Be!:"

"She [Mary] said: 'O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?' He said: '... God createth what He willeth: ... He but saith to it, "Be!" and it is!" (Sura 3:47)

"The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be". And he was." (Sura 3:59)

2) Jesus was a prophet, an apostle (messenger) and a servant of God:

*"Say ye: 'We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to ... to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and **Jesus**, and that given to (all) **prophets** ...'"* (Sura 2:136)

*"... **Christ Jesus** the son of Mary was (no more than) **a messenger** [apostle] **of Allah** ..."* (Sura 4:171)

*"... He said: '**I am indeed a servant of Allah**: He hath given me revelation and made me **a prophet** ...'"* (Sura 19:30).

[Jesus said] *"I am **the apostle of God** ..."* (Sura 61:6)

3) Jesus was sent as an apostle to the children of Israel to attest and confirm the Law of Moses which had been sent to them before and to make lawful something that had been forbidden by the Law:

*"And (appoint him) **a messenger to the Children of Israel** ..."* (Sura 3:49)

*"(I have come to you), **to attest the Law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (Before) forbidden to you** ..."* (Sura 3:50)

*"... O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you, **confirming the Law (which came) before me** ..."* (Sura 61:6)

4) Jesus was one of the greatest prophets, and thus sinless:

*"Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be **Christ Jesus** ... **of (the company of) those nearest to Allah**. He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. **And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous**."* (Sura 3:45,46)

*"And Zakariya and John, and **Jesus** and Elias: all in the ranks of **the righteous**"* (Sura 6:85),

*"... a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of **a holy son**"* (Sura 19:19)

5) Jesus was born of the virgin Mary by God's power:

*"She [Mary] said: 'O my Lord! **How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?**' He said: '... God createth what He willeth: ... He but saith to it, "Be!" and it is!"* (Sura 3:47)

6) God strengthened Jesus with "the Holy Spirit" (thought to be the angel Gabriel):

“... to Jesus the son of Mary **We** gave clear (Signs), and **strengthened him with the holy spirit**” (Sura 2:253; also verse 87)

“Then will Allah say: ‘O Jesus ... **I strengthened thee with the holy spirit ...**’” (Sura 5:110)

7) Jesus is called God’s “Word” and “a Word” from God:

“... Christ Jesus the son of Mary was ... a messenger of Allah, and **His Word ...**” (Sura 4:171)

“... O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of **a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus ...**” (Sura 3:45)

8) Jesus is also called a spirit proceeding from God:

“... Christ Jesus the son of Mary was ... a messenger of Allah ... and **a spirit proceeding from Him ...**” (Sura 4:171)

9) Jesus is also called a (miraculous) “Sign for all people:”

“He said: “So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, ‘that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as **a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us: It is a matter (so) decreed.**” (Sura 19:21)

“And (remember) her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her son **a sign for all peoples.**” (Sura 21:91; also 23:50 & 43:61)

10) And He is called “a Mercy” from God:

“He said: “So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, ‘that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and **a Mercy from Us: It is a matter (so) decreed.**” (Sura 19:21)

11) Jesus is called, “Messiah” (“Al Masih” in Arabic) 12 times (the meaning of the word “Messiah” is not explained):

“... Allah giveth thee ... a word from him, **whose name is the Messiah ...**” (Sura 3:45 - Pickthal)

“They have taken as lords beside Allah ... and **the Messiah son of Mary ...**” (Sura 9:31 - Pickthal)

12) Jesus is also called, “the son of Mary” 23 times – more than any other name or title:

“... Christ Jesus **the son of Mary ...**” (Sura 4:171)

13) He was born of the virgin Mary under “a palm tree” in “a remote place” “in the East:”

“Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to **a place in the East**. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects. She said: ‘I seek refuge from thee to (Allah) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah.’ He said: ‘Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son.’ She said: ‘How shall I have a son, seeing that **no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?**’ He said: ‘So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, “that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us:” It is a matter (so) decreed.’ So she conceived him, and she retired with him to **a remote place**. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of **a palm-tree**: She cried (in her anguish) ‘Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!’ But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): ‘Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee; And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee. So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye ...’” (Sura 19:16-26)

14) When he was a newborn infant Jesus spoke to declare Himself a prophet and to declare his mother was innocent of any sin (3:46):

“At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: ‘O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought! ... Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!’ But **she pointed to the babe**. They said: ‘How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?’ **He said: ‘I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet ... So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life’**” (Sura 19:27-33).

15) Jesus performed other miracles by God's permission such as making a bird out of clay and breathing life into it, healing the sick and raising the dead:

*"And (appoint him) a messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message): "I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that **I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by Allah's leave;** and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe; (Sura 3:49; also 2:87,253)*

16) At His disciples' request Jesus prayed for God to send a table of food down from heaven to prove God's power and His own apostleship:

*"Behold! the disciples, said: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! can thy Lord send down to us a table set (with viands) from heaven? ... 'We only wish to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts, and to know that thou hast indeed told us the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle.' Said Jesus the son of Mary: '**O Allah our Lord! Send us from heaven a table set (with viands) ...'** Allah said: '**I will send it down unto you: But if any of you after that resisteth faith, I will punish him with a penalty such as I have not inflicted on any one among all the peoples.**'" (Sura 5:112-115)*

17) But the Jews rejected Jesus' miracles as "evident sorcery."

*"... But when he came to them with Clear Signs, **they said, "this is evident sorcery!"** (Sura 61:6)*

18) Jesus was no more than a servant, but God made Him an example to the Jews:

*"When (Jesus) the son of Mary is held up as an example, behold, thy people raise a clamour thereat (in ridicule)! ... **He was no more than a servant: We granted Our favour to him, and We made him an example to the Children of Israel ... And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment) ...**" (Sura 43:57,59,61)*

19) Jesus cursed the Jews who did not accept and obey God's word to them:

*"**Curses were pronounced on those among the Children of Israel who rejected Faith, by the tongue of David and of Jesus the son of Mary: because they disobeyed ...**" (Sura 5:78)*

20) God sent Jesus the book called the "Gospel" (New Testament) in which "was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law (Torah) that had come before Him:"

*"... **We sent him the Gospel:** therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law [Torah] that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah." (Sura 5:46; also 3:47,48)*

21) That book also contained a prediction of the coming of Muhammad after Jesus:

*"...O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you ... **giving Glad Tidings of an Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad**" [Muhammad] ... (Sura 61:6)*

22) Jesus wasn't God or the "Son of God," but only an apostle (messenger):

*"... **Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not 'Trinity': desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son ...**" (Sura 4:171)*

*"In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary ... **Christ the son of Mary was no more than a messenger**" (Sura 5:17,75)*

*"... (they take as their Lord) **Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One Allah: there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him ...**" (Sura 9:31)*

23) Jesus denied ever telling people to worship him and his mother as gods:

“They do blaspheme who say: ‘Allah is Christ the son of Mary.’ But said Christ: ‘O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.’ Whoever joins other gods with Allah,- Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode ...” (Sura 5:72)

“And behold! Allah will say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?’ He will say: ‘Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine...” (Sura 5:116)

24) The Jews boasted they had crucified Jesus but they didn’t. God made it look that way. (Most Muslims hold that God exchanged his appearance with someone else – perhaps Judas – causing the Jews to mistakenly crucify someone else in Jesus’ place.)

“That they said (in boast), ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah’;- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them ... for of a surety they killed him not” (Sura 4:157)

25) Instead Jesus was taken to heaven alive without dying.

“Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself ...” (Sura 4:158)

“Behold! Allah said: “O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself ...” (Sura 3:55)

Some Muslims and many Christians say that two verses in Sura 19 clearly say He died:

[Jesus said] ***“So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)”*** (Sura 19:33).

“So Peace on him the day he was born, the day that he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)!” (Sura 19:15)

But most Muslim scholars claim that these verses refer to his death and resurrection after His second coming. Islamic traditions (based mainly on the Hadith) say that Jesus will return at the end of the world to preach Islam for 40 years. He will convert the rest of the world to Islam, break all the crosses and kill all the pigs. He will get married, and later die before being raised in the resurrection along with everyone else.]

APPENDIX 14

DETAILS OF THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT ITSELF

Arranged by Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All references are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted]

The Qur'an's Teaching About Itself Includes The Following:

(number of times mentioned is in brackets, plus examples):

It was "**sent down.**" from God (8) and It "**descended in truth.**" (1): "*sent down the (Qur'an) in truth, and in truth has it descended*" (Sura 17:105)

It was "**bestowed**" on Muhammad from God's presence and by God's command. (2) (Sura 27:6)

It was **sent down to Muhammad in parts or stages** (over his last 23 years) (5):

"(It is) a Qur'an which We have divided (into parts from time to time), in order that thou mightest recite to men at intervals: We have revealed it by stages." (Sura 17:106)

It was "**revealed by inspiration.**" (5) "... *This Qur'an hath been revealed to me by inspiration ...*" (Sura 6:19)

It came **through the angel Gabriel.** (1) "... *Gabriel ... brings down the (revelation) to thy heart ...*" (Sura 2:97)

The first part was sent down **in the month of Ramadhan.** (1) (Sura 2:185)

It was **sent in various ways.** (3) "*We have explained (things) in various (ways) in this Qur'an ...*" (Sura 17:41)

It **cannot be produced except by God.** (2) (Sura 2:23; 10:37)

It **verifies/confirmes the books** (Taurat/Torah & Injil/Gospel) **sent before it** (3):

"... the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind ..." (Sura 3:3)

"... For each period is a Book (revealed). Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth: with Him is the Mother of the Book." (Sura 13:38,39)

It **claims that the Taurat and Injil both prophesied the coming of Muhammad** (2)

"Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures),- in the law and the Gospel ..." (Sura 7:157)

"And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: 'O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad ...'" (Sura 61:6)

(Muslims believe Deuteronomy 18:15,18 and John 14-16 contain these prophesies):

It gives a **fuller explanation of "the Book from the Lord of the worlds"** ("Mother of the Book"?)

(1) "*This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a fuller explanation of the Book - wherein there is no doubt - from the lord of the worlds.*" (Sura 10:37)

It is **explained in detail** (1) and "**makes things clear**" (3): "... *the Book, explained in detail ...*" (S. 6:114)

It was **sent in Arabic** (9) in order **to make it easy to understand** (3): *“By the Book that makes things clear - We have made it a Qur'an in Arabic, that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom).”* (Sura 43:2,3)

It is **divided into parts** for easy reciting (1); It is **to be recited** *“in slow, measured rhythmic tones* (1); The listener is to seek God's protection from Satan while listening (1), and to listen in silent respect in order to receive mercy. (1)

It contains **every kind of similitude**. (2) *“... in this Qur'an, every kind of similitude ...”* (Sura 17:89)

It **contains every kind of parable**. (2) *“... for men, in this Qur'an every kind of parable ...”* (Sura 30:58)

Reciting it brings rewards in Paradise to believers (1):

“... read [recite]ye, therefore, as much of the Qur'an as may be easy (for you); and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan. And whatever good ye send forth for your souls ye shall find it in Allah's Presence, - yea, better and greater, in Reward ...” (Sura 73:20)

It **cannot be corrupted** (like the books before it were) (2): *“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)”* (Sura 15:9 – see also 6:114,115)

It **has no discrepancies** (1); is **sent “in truth”** (3); and **has “no crookedness.”** (1)

It was **given as glad tidings of a reward** to the believers. (3)

It is **full of wisdom**. (2),

It **provides guidance** (10); **“light”** (2); **judgment between right and wrong** (2);

It **warns** (8); **admonishes** (7); **strengthens** (1); **enables people to believe and to be humble** (1); **guards against evil** (1)

A company of Jinns listened to it in silence (2) and said, *“We have really heard a wonderful Recital!”* (1)

It **answers the objections of the Jews** (1)

It **gives deafness and blindness to those who don't believe**. (1)

It **puts a veil on unbelievers to prevent them from understanding**. (1)

It **causes unbelievers to flee from the truth, refuse it, contend with it, call it foolishness, call it vanity and increase their sin**. (8).

It is **God's final revelation**: (no verses, but common belief of Muslims, reasoning that Muhammad was the seal of the prophets, so the Qur'an has to be the final revelation from God)

APPENDIX 15

QUR'AN VERSES USED IN ISLAM'S CLAIMS THAT THE BIBLE HAS BEEN CHANGED

Arranged by Rev Richard P Bailey

[All references are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted]

The Qur'an Never Clearly Says The Bible Has Been Changed:

I do not believe that Islam's own primary source (the Qur'an) substantiates the teaching of Islamic scholars that the Bible has been changed.

Here are all the verses I can find that Muslims say teach the corrupting and changing of the Bible by Jews and Christians. I have included my analysis of each one:

1. - *"But **the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them**; so We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed (Our command) repeatedly."* (Sura 2:59 – repeated in 7:161,162)
 This verse is speaking about the people of Israel (see verse 2:47), and is speaking of a single "word," not the collective "Word of God." The translator Yusuf Ali in his commentary (note 72) says it refers to the sexual immorality and idolatry with Moabite women mentioned in Numbers 25:1-9 and that the word they changed may have been a password (not the Torah given to Moses).
2. - *"Can ye (o ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you?- Seeing that **a party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.**"* (Sura 2:75)
 It is assumed that the "word of Allah" refers to verbally recited portions of the Qur'an (not the written Torah), and that they verbally changed it (not in writing).
3. - *"Then woe to **those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: 'This is from Allah,'** to traffic with it for miserable price!- Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby."* (Sura 2:79)
 Translator Yusuf Ali in his note on this verse says the Jews did not change or destroy the Torah but tried to deceive by writing some invented pages themselves and claim they were from God: "... **The Jews wanted to keep back knowledge**, but what knowledge had they? Many of them even if they could read, were no better than illiterates, for they knew not **their own true Scriptures**, but read into them what they wanted ... **They palmed off their own writings for the Message of God ... 'Writing with their own hands' means inventing books themselves which had no divine authority.**" (note 84)
4. - *"There is among them a section **who distort the Book with their tongues** (as they read). You would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, 'That is from God,' but it is not from God. It is they who tell a lie against God, and (well) they know it!"* (Sura 3:78)
 They "*distort the Book with their tongues*" clearly means they verbally changed the meaning of it by misquoting it, but they didn't change the written book itself.
5. - *"And when there came to them an apostle from God, **confirming** what was with them, a part of the people of the Book **threw away the Book of God behind their backs**, as if (it had been something) they did not know."* (Sura 2:101)
 - *"And remember God took a covenant from the People of the Book, to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it. **But they threw it away behind their backs**, and purchased with it some miserable gain! And vile was the bargain they made!"* (Sura 3:187)

In these two verses the phrase, “*threw it away behind their backs*” means they refused to read it or to ignore it. It doesn’t mean they changed the book.

6. - **“Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their (right) places, and say: ‘We hear and we disobey’; and ‘Hear what is not Heard’; and ‘Ra’ina’; with a twist of their tongues and a slander to Faith. If only they had said: ‘We hear and we obey’; and ‘Do hear’; and ‘Do look at us’; it would have been better for them, and more proper; but Allah hath cursed them for their Unbelief; and but few of them will believe.”** (Sura 4:46)

This refers to things the Jews verbally said to deceive; not to change written Scripture.

7. - **“God did aforetime take a covenant from the children of Israel ... But because of their breach of their covenant, we cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard. *They change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them ... the Jews – men who will listen to any lie, - will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee. They change the words from their (right) times and places ...*”** (Sura 5:13,14,44 – also 41)

Other translators seem to make the meaning of “*change the words from their right time and places*” clearer. For example, Muhammad Akbar translates this as, “*They twist the words of Allah’s book out of their context.*” and Arberry translates it as: “*They pervert words from their meanings*”. Clearly this is twisting and misinterpreting the meaning, not actually changing the words in the written Book.

8. - **“... Say: “Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought?- a light and guidance to man: *But ye make it into (separate) sheets for show, while ye conceal much (of its contents) ...*”** (Sura 6:91)

This says their intent was to “*make it into (separate) sheets for show*” and “*conceal much (of its contents).*” In other words the Jews wrote out only chosen portions of the Torah on sheets of paper in order to deceive the Muslims by concealing large parts of it. They did not change the book itself.

[According to my understanding of Islamic history, these verses are in response to what the Jews of Medina did in their relationship to Muhammed. At first they responded with interest to Muhammed’s claim to be a prophet. They listened to the things he claimed to be words given to him by God through the angel Gabriel. At the same time Mohammed was asking them about different things written in the Torah. Soon they noticed that some things they had read to him from the Torah began to appear as parts of his so called revelations from God. This created doubts in their minds and so they secretly devised a plan to find out whether or not his revelations were really from God or from himself. They began to verbally add or subtract certain things from the Torah in order to read wrong teachings. A short time later Mohammed had another so called revelation from God in which those twisted teachings were repeated. Then they told him they did not believe he was a prophet and why. He later drove out or killed all of the three Jewish tribes from Medina. This is verified by the fact that all of these verses except the last one are in the Medinan Suras, and the last one is in one of the very last of the Late Meccan Suras.]

CHAPTER TEN

THE WORK OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will look at the following:

- A. Does God Work?
- B. The Meaning Of God's Work
- C. God's Works And His Ways
- D. Jesus And God's Work

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

What Is Work? Perhaps the simplest definition of "work" is doing something. For us humans, work involves an expenditure of our physical and/or mental energy and of our time – usually in exchange for something else such as money, goods, services or some other personal benefit. Since we have a limited amount of both energy and time during our lifetime, **work is actually the investing, spending or giving away of a part of our lives.**

What about God? Does He "work"? He certainly does things. But because God is not physical, He could not expend any physical energy, and because He is eternal and the creator of time, He could never "spend" any of His time. So the question is, what is the nature of God's "work" – of His doing things? And secondly, is God personally detached from what He does or causes to happen, or is His person somehow involved?

A. DOES GOD WORK?

ISLAM:

1. THE USE OF THE WORD "WORK" FOR GOD: A survey of Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Qur'an reveals that the word "work" is basically not used of God in the Qur'an. **Only one verse mentions God's "work" or "handiwork":**

"... (establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah ..." (Sura 30:30)

Two other verses refer to it without using the word itself:

"When Jesus found Unbelief on their part He said: 'Who will be My helpers to (the work of) Allah?' Said the disciples: 'We are Allah's helpers ...'" (Sura 3:52; See also Sura 61:14)

2. NAMES FROM ISLAM'S 99 "MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES" OF GOD WHICH RELATE TO THIS: The following 34 of Islam's 99 "names" of God describe many of the things He does:

Al-Qahhar (or Qahaar) = "The Subduer," "Dominant,"

Al-Baith (Baaith) = "The Resurrector," "Awakener"

Al-Wahhab (Wahhaab) = "The Bestower," "Grantor"	Al-Wakil (Wakeel) = "The Defender," "Trustee"
Ar-Razzaq (Razzaaq) = "The Provider," "Sustainer"	Al-Mawla = "Guardian," "Protector"
Al-Fattah (Fattaah) = "The Opener" "Revealer"	Al-Waliy (Walee) = "Protector," "Defender"
Al-Qabidh (Qaabidh) = "The Constrictor," "Grasper"	Al-Muhsi (Muhsee) = "The Accountant," "Appraiser"
Al-Basit (Baasit) = "The Spreader," "Releaser," "Reliever"	Al-Mu'id (Mu'eed) = "The Restorer," "Resurrector"
Al-Khafid (Khaafidh) = "The Abaser," "Humbler"	Al-Wajid (Waajid) = "The Finder," "All-Perceiving"
Ar-Rafi (Raafee) = "The Exalter," "Ennobler"	* Al-Mugheeth = "The Refuge," "Helper"
Al-Mu'izz = "The Honorer," "Exalter," "Strengtheners"	Al-Muqaddim = "The Expeditor," "Advancer," "Forewarner"
Al-Mudhill (Muthill) = "Dishonorer," "Humiliator," "Leader Astray"	Al-Mu'akhir = "the Delayer," "Deferrer"
Al-Hakam = "The Wise," "Judge," "Arbitrator"	Al-Jami (Jaami) = "The Collector," "Gatherer"
Ash-Shakur = "The Appreciative," "Rewarder of Thankfulness"	Al-Muqsit = "The Just," "Equitable," "Requirer"
Al-Hafiz (Hafeedh) = "The Preserver," "Guardian"	Al-Mugni (Mughnee) = "The Sufficer," "Bestower," "Enricher"
Al-Muqit (Muqeet) = "The Sustainer," "Nourisher"	Al-Mani (Maani) = "The Prohibitor," "Defender," "Withholder"
Al-Hasib (Haseeb) = "The Reckoner," "Accounter"	Ad-Darr (Adh-Dhaarr) = "The Afflicter," "Creator of Harm"
Al-Raqib (Raqeeb) = "The Guardian," "Watchful"	Al-Nafi (Naafi) = "Benefactor," "Profliter," "Creator of Good"
Al-Mujib (Mujeeb) = "The Responder to Prayer," "Answerer"	Al-Mu'ti = "The Giver"

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's "99 most beautiful names of God"]

This certainly would seem to indicate that God works. But how does God work?

THE BIBLE:

1. THE USE OF THE WORD "WORK" FOR GOD: Unlike the Qur'an, the Bible frequently uses the word, "work" in reference to God. Here are two verses:

"For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. How great are your works, O LORD! ..." (Psalm 92:4,5)

*"One generation **shall commend your works** to another, and **shall declare your mighty acts**. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on **your wondrous works**, I will meditate. They **shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds** ..." (Psalm 145:4-6)*

2. GOD, THE ORIGINAL WORKER: We might think that the Bible uses the word, "work" for God in order to make it more understandable to us human beings who are very familiar with work. But actually **God is the original worker** and we were created in His "image." Therefore, **because God works, we were created to work and to share in His work.** In the beginning (in His creation) God created mankind to be His viceroy to share in His work of dominion over the earth:

*"And on the seventh day **God finished his work** that he had done ..." (Genesis 2:2)*

*"So **God created man in his own image** ... And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and **subdue it, and have dominion** ... over every living thing ..." (Genesis 1:27,28)*

*"The LORD God took the man and **put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.**" (Gen 2:15)*

Obviously God's work of creation was good and awesome, and the work he gave mankind to do also must have been good:

*"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. **Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.**" (Psalm 139:14)*

But God put a curse on our work in response to mankind's (our) sin. **What was intended to be restful, enjoyable and good became cursed. Our work became painful. In other words, it became what we now call, "toil" or "labor" – causing our bodies to wear out and our emotions and spirits to become stressed and fatigued:**

*“... cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. **By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread**” (Genesis 3:17-19)*

So the good work God intended for us became painful labor. (It is significant that we also refer to the curse of increased pain in childbearing that God gave to women as “labor.”)

However, God through Christ is restoring us to His original purpose of enjoying restful, easy and peaceful work:

[Jesus said] *“Come to me, all **who labor and are heavy laden**, and **I will give you rest**. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls**. **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**” (Matthew 11:28-30)*

And He intends us to be restored to being His fellow workers to work together with Him in His joyful and rest-filled work – rest for our souls, and even some for our bodies:

*“For **we are God's fellow workers**. You are God's field, God's building.” (1 Corinthians 3:9)*

*“**Working together with him**, then, we appeal to you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)*

B. THE MEANING OF GOD’S WORK:

ISLAM:

Here are some of the many verses describing things God does even though they are not called, “work”:

1. GOD CREATES BY A SIMPLE COMMAND. According to Islam God is the great creator who created all things by simply willing them into being by decreeing, “Be!” Even though words like “made,” “created,” etc. are used, it all was done without any direct or active exertion on His part, and He was certainly not “wearied” by it:

*“To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth. **When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it, ‘Be,’ and it is.**” (Sura 2:117)*

*“... **God, who created the heavens and the earth, and never wearied with their creation**, is able to give life to the dead ...” (Sura 46:33 – see also 50:38)*

Strangely, the Qur’an says God created some people and jinn (evil spirits) specifically to fill hell with them:

*“**Many are the jinns and men we have made for hell ...**” (Sura 7:179)*

*“... and **for this did He create them**: and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: **‘I will fill hell with jinns and men all together.’**” (Sura 11:119)*

The Qur’an indicates that even after His original creation God continues to create life and death and anything else He wills to be simply by commanding “Be!” without Himself exerting any labor or “work”:

*“For **to anything which we have willed, we but say the word, ‘Be’ and it is.**” (Sura 16:40)*

*“Verily, **when He intends a thing, His command is, ‘Be,’ and it is.**” (Sura 36:82)*

*“**It is He who gives life and death, and when He decides upon an affair, He says to it. ‘Be’ and it is.**” (Sura*

40:68)

2. GOD, HAS ESTABLISHED BALANCE IN THE UNIVERSE. Having created the universe, God does not need to be actively involved in maintaining order:

*“... and do no mischief on **the earth after it has been set in order**: that will be best ...” (Sura 7:85)*

*“And the earth We have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things **in due balance**.” (Sura 15:19)*

*“And **the firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the balance** (of justice). In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance.” (Sura 55:7-8)*

3. GOD LISTENS TO AND WATCHES EVERYTHING. Without any direct involvement or investing of Himself (“work”), God passively watches and listens to all that humans are doing. The net result of his watching and listening is that **He knows all that we do**:

*“... For **God is He that heareth and seeth (all things)**.” (Sura 4:134)*

*“... **He who standeth over every soul (and knoweth) all that it doth ...**” (Sura 13:33)*

*“... And **God (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you, for God hears and sees (all things)**.” (Sura 58:1)*

*“Seest thou not that **God doth know (all) that is in the heavens and on earth? There is not a secret consultation between three, but He makes the fourth among them, - nor between five but he makes the sixth – nor between fewer nor more, but He is in their midst, wheresoever they be. In the end will He tell them the truth of their conduct on the day of judgment. For God has full knowledge of all things.**” (Sura 58:7)*

4. GOD ALSO CAUSES VARIOUS BLESSINGS TO BE SENT DOWN AND BROUGHT FORTH TO PEOPLE. He Himself does not go down, take down or bring down, but indirectly causes various blessings to be sent down and given to believers. We can conclude that He does this by simply saying, “Be!” Notice that when people rebelled against God, they “did no harm” to Him, but only to themselves. In other words, **God is not affected negatively or positively by anything we do**:

*“And **We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna and quails, saying: ‘Eat of the good things We have provided for you:’** (But they rebelled); **to us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.**” (Sura 2:57)*

*“**Who has ... sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith Fruits for your sustenance ...**” (Sura 2:22)*

*“It is God who **causeth** the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout. He **causeth** the living to issue from the dead, and He is the one **to cause** the dead to issue from the living ...” (Sura 6:95)*

*“Say, **The (Qur’an) was sent down by Him ...**” (Sura 25:6)*

5. LIKEWISE GOD SENT PROPHETS, THROUGH WHOM HE CAUSED, REVEALED, GAVE OR GRANTED MESSAGES, BOOKS AND REVELATIONS. He did this with **no personal involvement**, through the angel Gabriel and the prophets:

*“who believe in **the revelation sent to thee** [Muhammad], **and sent before thy time ...**” (Sura 2:4)*

*“And verily **We gave unto Moses the Scripture and We caused a train of messengers to follow after him, and We gave unto Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty), and We supported him with the Holy spirit** [angel Garbiel] ...” (Sura 2:87)*

*“and **God sent Apostles with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed ...**” (Sura 2:213)*

*“We did aforetime **grant to the children of Israel the book, the power of command, and prophethood ...**” (Sura 45:16)*

6. GOD GUIDES OR CAUSES PEOPLE TO DO THINGS. Again God’s causing does not involve any direct action or “work” on His part. **His guidance is given purely by willing it, without being personal involved:**

*“... **God by His Grace Guided the believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For God guided whom He will to a path that is straight.**” (Sura 2:213)*

*“... **He causes many to stray, and many He leads into the right path; but He causes not to stray, except those who forsake (the path)**” (Sura 2:26)*

*“How can ye reject the faith in God? - seeing that ye were without life, and **He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return.**” (Sura 2:28)*

7. GOD PERMITS OR DENIES PERMISSION FOR THINGS TO BE DONE. He does this without any direct action or personal involvement:

*“They learned from them the means to sow discord between man and wife. But **they could not thus harm anyone except by God's permission...**” (Sura 2:102)*

“... and those whom God leaves to stray, no one can guide.” (Sura 13:33)

8. GOD WILL CONSIGN REWARDS OR PUNISHMENT TO ALL. On the judgment day God will be sure that the unbelievers are punished and the righteous are rewarded at no cost to Himself:

*“As to those who believe and work righteousness, verily **we shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a (single) righteous deed.** For them will be gardens of eternity ...” (Sura 18:30-31)*

*“... **on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned** [given over to another's care] **to the most grievous penalty.** For God is not unmindful of what ye do.” (Sura 2:85)*

So in conclusion, it seems that God (in Islam) does not act directly or actively, but only indirectly and passively. He passively causes things to be done through His word, His angels and His messengers without directly involving Himself. So all He does costs Him nothing. This probably reflects the Islamic emphasis on God’s omnipotence, which also means **He is so great that nothing He does could involve any kind of personal giving or sharing of Himself with us.**

The Qur’an stresses God’s great power and sovereignty – what He can do; not Who He is. Thus Muslims cannot know Him personally; only His power and will. We might say the Qur’an’s name for God is “I CAN DO WHAT I WILL TO DO” instead of “I AM WHO I AM.”

THE BIBLE:

What is the meaning of God's "work" in the Bible and how does it affect Him and us?

1. FIVE FACETS OF THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORK:

a. God's Work Is An Active, Direct Involvement. The word, "work" in reference to God in the Bible seems to be deliberately used to portray an active, direct involvement by God in contrast to the passive causing of things to be done simply by willing them, as seen in the Qur'an. They are "*the works of his hands*" and include His personal attributes such as His righteousness and mercy:

"Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations. The works of his hands are faithful and just ..." (Psalm 111: 2-7)

b. God's Work Is Not Self-Consuming. God is Spirit, eternal and omnipotent; meaning He is not physical, He never changes and He can do anything. Therefore His "work" cannot deplete, spend or consume His being or life in any way, and He has no need of rest to regain His strength.

So what does it mean when it says He "rested" after six days of creation? Why would he rest if He was not tired?

"And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done." (Genesis 2:2)

Islam misinterprets the use of the words, "work" and "rested" in this verse to mean that God was wearied by His work and needed rest. In reaction the Qur'an says,

"We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in six days, nor did any sense of weariness touch Us." (Sura 50:38)

But the Bible too rejects the idea that God gets tired from His working:

"... The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary ..." (Isaiah 40:28)

God is inexhaustible, and yet He chooses to share Himself with us in some way!

c. God's Work Involves A Two Way Beneficial Relationship. Although God needs nothing, His "work" in our lives (that sharing of Himself) involves a benefit not only to us but also to Him:

"who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." (Titus 2:14)

"... These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God ..." (Revelation 14:4)

We see a picture of these first three facets of God's work in the story of the burning bush, which God used to speak and relate to Moses the man of God:

"... in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And ... God called to him out of the bush ..." (Ex. 3:2)

Physical fire is actively involved in destroying things by consuming them. But this fire apparently had its own inexhaustible supply of energy, so it did not harm the bush in any

way. The fire, by being in the bush, caused it to be noticed among all the other bushes scattered across the desert in front of Moses. At the same time, the bush gave the fire a vehicle in which to reveal its power. Thus the fire and the bush were united together in a unique and mutually beneficial relationship.

Likewise, God's "work" in us is mutually beneficial. He is re-creating us by working through us, and we are allowing Him to reveal His glory in us:

*"... so **that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**" (Ephesians 2:7)*

*"... when he comes on that day **to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed ...**" (2 Thessalonians 1:10)*

d. God Involves Us In His Work. He is the original Delegator:

*"For we are **God's fellow workers ...**" (1 Corinthians 3:9)*

*"We then, as **workers together with Him** also plead with you ..." (2 Corinthians 6:1 - NKJV)*

One of the many amazing ways God has chosen to share His work with us is by promising to bind or release people and arrangements in heaven when we bind or release them on earth:

*"Truly, I say to you, **whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." (Matt. 18:18,19)*

As someone has said,

"Without God, we cannot; without us, God will not!"

e. God's Work Brings A Revelation Of His Character. Most important of all, in God's "work" we see a clear revelation of God's character – who He is. Here are a few examples of the things we see:

i) God Does Works Of Love. He shares Himself with us as He works on our behalf. God's "love" is a **self-giving love**; a love that gave His own Son – His very heart – for our benefit.

*"... **God is love ... In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation** [satisfaction] **for our sins.**" (1 John 4:8,10)*

ii) God Does Works Of Righteousness. Whatever God does He does in righteousness because that is Who He is – the one, true Righteous One:

*"My mouth will tell of **your righteous acts**, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for **their number is past my knowledge.** With **the mighty deeds of the Lord God** I will come; I will remind them of **your righteousness, yours alone.**" (Psalm 71:15,16)*

*"... we hear songs of praise, of glory to the **Righteous One.**" (Isaiah 24:16)*

iii) God Does Works Of Justice:

*"The Rock, **his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.** A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, **just and upright is he.**" (Deuteronomy 32:4)*

*"**The Lord is known by his acts of justice ...**" (Psalm 9:16 - NIV)*

iv) God Does Works Of Goodness. God is good and His works clearly show that:

“... **the LORD is good**, for his steadfast love endures forever!” (Jeremiah 33:11)

“**Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!** Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!” (Psalm 34:8)

“And we know that **God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.**” (Romans 8:28 - NLT)

v) God Does Fatherly Works. God is “working” for us His children. He is providing security and care, and He also is living with us, because He is the Original Father:
[see chapter 12 – God’s Fatherhood]

“See **what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.**” (1 John 3:1)

“And **my God will supply every need of yours** according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

“Behold, **the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people.**” (Revelation 21:3)

God is the self-sufficient Sovereign Lord, Who is fully able to do whatever He wants, but His works are governed by His character. He cannot act in a way that contradicts Who He is.

2. GOD’S TWO WORKS: I believe we can divide his work into two categories:

- God’s work of **creating** the physical universe, and
- God’s work of **re-creating** his people to again be like Himself, as originally created.

a. God’s Work Of Creation: The Bible’s account of creation is similar to that of the Qur’an in that God created almost everything by simply saying, “*Let there be ...*” and it was! (see Genesis 1:3-31). And yet **God seems to be more involved than simply speaking:**

“I have **spoken**, and I will **bring it to pass**; I have **purposed**, and I will **do it.**” (Isaiah 46:11)

One purpose of God’s “work” of creation is to give us a small glimpse of the omnipotent power and awesome glory of who He is:

“The heavens declare **the glory of God** and the sky above proclaims **his handiwork.**” (Ps. 19:1)

“... For **his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ... in the things that have been made.**” (Romans 1:19,20)

But then we read:

“And on the seventh day **God finished his work** that he had done, and **he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.**” (Genesis 2:2)

Did God get tired after creating the universe and humanity in six days? Did he need to “rest” on the seventh day because He was tired? No! The Bible (like the Qur’an) clearly teaches that God never gets tired or needs to rest:

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. **He will not grow tired or weary.**” (Isaiah 40:28 NIV)

“Behold, he who keeps Israel **will neither slumber nor sleep.**” (Psalm 121:4)

So what does it mean when it says that God “rested”? It says He “**finished his work,**” and then it says “**He rested ... from all His work that he had done.**” After six days he “*finished*” (completed) his work of creation so he “*rested ... from*” that work because He had

finished it, not because He was tired. In the same way, when a lawyer has finished his work of defending or prosecuting in court, he says, “I *rest* my case.” He does not mean he needs to stop and rest because he is tired, he means he has finished it!

Actually, in one sense God never stopped working. In fact, the Bible says He is still working today! On one occasion when Jesus the Messiah had healed someone on the Sabbath day and the Jewish leaders were criticizing him for “working” on the Sabbath, Jesus gave a response with very profound implications. He said,

“My father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” (John 5:17 –NIV)

The Jewish religious leaders must have been shocked by our Lord Jesus’ statement that **God works on the Sabbath** – the seventh day of the week, which he himself had instructed the people of Israel to set apart as a day of rest! How could that be? They were amazed by this, because they didn’t understand that God had established the Sabbath day of rest for us humans, who need rest. As Jesus said on another occasion,

“The Sabbath was made for man ...” (Mark 2:27)

b. God’s Work Of Re-Creation: No, God has not stopped working. Yes He finished his work of creation, but now he is doing a different work – his **work of re-creation** in the lives of people, whom He created pure and sinless, but who have been corrupted by sin and rebellion. He Who once commanded physical light to shine out of physical darkness, is now Himself shining into the spiritually darkened hearts of His created beings through Jesus His Messiah in order to enable us to know Him personally. **He is working in us to re-create us in His own image** so that He can enjoy an eternal relationship of love and rest with us:

“For God, who said [at creation], ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another ...” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

All of God’s work is done in His perfect rest! Mankind needs a physical Sabbath of rest from physical labor, but much more **we need the true spiritual rest, which is “God’s rest.” That is the true Sabbath for God’s people**, who enter it by faith in God, Who is doing His second work in us through Jesus the Messiah:

“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.” (Hebrews 4:9,10)

“And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,” (Romans 4:5)

Most of the Bible is about this second work of God, which is mentioned many times. For example we read:

“for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13)

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” (Ephesians 3:20 NIV)

“For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” (Col. 1:29)

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10 NIV)

“Now may the God of peace ... equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us

that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20,21)

c. God's "Rest" From All His Work: Because time is a part of God's creation, and because God Himself is outside of that creation and unaffected by time, He has no past or future but exists in the eternal present:

"... the Father ... with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17)

However, for our understanding God uses time terminology in the Bible, saying things like, *"I have purposed* [past tense], *and I will do it* [future tense]" (Isaiah 46:11). Both of God's works have already been accomplished by God's sovereign will in eternity and are mentioned on the 7th day of creation:

"... And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." (Hebrews 4:4)

3. COMPARING GOD'S TWO WORKS: In comparing these two works of Almighty God, I see **four ways in which his work of re-creating us is far greater than his work of creation:**

a. More Important: God's work of *re-creation* must be more important because He completed His work of creation in just six days, but He has been continuing in his work of re-creation for several thousand years! This is reflected in a song written by Tim Felton called, "He's Still Workin' On Me." The chorus is:

*He's still workin' on me, To make me what I ought to be.
It took him just a week to make the moon and the stars,
the sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars.
How loving and patient He must be. He's still workin' on me!*

b. More Difficult: The Almighty's work of re-creation must also be more difficult, because in His work of creation He simply said, "Let there be ..." and there was instant compliance by all the elements of the universe. There was no will or force to oppose him. But God created us human beings in his own image, and in doing that he gave us *free will* to choose to submit to or oppose Him.

How many times have the descendants of Adam stubbornly refused to obey God? How many times has he allowed *us* to resist and refuse to do his will? He even allows us to do whatever we choose when we know full well we're doing the wrong thing!

c. More Enduring: God's work of re-creation in us is also more enduring because His work of creation is temporary in contrast to His eternal work of re-creation:

*"The heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment ... but **my salvation will last forever**, my righteousness will never fail."* (Isaiah 51:6 NIV)

*"I perceived that **whatever God does endures forever** ..."* (Ecclesiastes 3:14)

d. More Valuable: Lastly and most importantly, God's work of re-creation in us is far more valuable than his original work of creation because it cost God nothing more than a few words to create the universe. He simply spoke and it was!

*"By faith we understand that **the universe was created by the word of God**, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."* (Hebrews 11:3)

In contrast, his work of re-creation in our lives has cost God very dearly. The Scriptures are full of statements of how almighty God loved us so much that **he paid the highest price** to

re-create us as children of God:

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:9,10 – NIV)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.” (1 Peter 1:18-20)

The physical universe is so amazing that science will never be able to fully explore or comprehend it, but still it can't compare with the work of love God is doing in our lives. Why else would God patiently continue to work in us in spite of our stubborn and selfish willfulness? Why else would he send his son to endure all the weakness and humiliation of becoming a human being as well as the shame and curse of dying for us?

God's is obviously more committed to developing an eternal love relationship with us his children than he was to creating this fabulous universe. As Victoria Brooks wrote,

“We are surrounded by relationships, but driven by accomplishment. God is the opposite. Though surrounded by His accomplishments, He has given Himself to relationship. Though not in need of interaction, He has chosen to pursue it. For God fellowship is the goal.”

We are only beginning to understand how much our God loves us and we can't even imagine what it will be like throughout eternity to be in perfect harmony and communion with Almighty God and to join him in celebrating the completion of his amazing work of re-creation in our lives. We read in God's Word that,

“He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing”! (Zephaniah 3:17 – NIV)

And our Lord Jesus the Messiah spoke often of **the urgency of God's work of re-creation:**

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” (John 4:34)

“We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.” (John 9:4)

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.” (John 14:10)

On the one hand, we should not despair over the disobedient and foolish things we have done because we know God is able to work for our good in spite of them. We know this is true because he says,

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28 NIV)

And on the other hand, we should not be deceived into thinking we can make up for our sins by doing our own **“good” works**. In fact, God wants us to rest in his work of re-creation through Jesus our Lord just as He rested from his work of creation:

“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.” (Hebrews 4:9,10)

“And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.” (Romans 4:5)

This truth was physically symbolized by our great Creator when he established the seventh day as the Sabbath – a day dedicated for our rest.

It is my prayer that each of us will wholeheartedly trust God to complete the work of re-creation he has begun in each of our lives – the work of making me like Jesus – a work he will proudly put on display and rejoice in for all eternity!

*“when he comes on that day **to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed**, because our testimony to you was believed.”* (2 Thessalonians 1:10 - Also Ephesians 2:7; Romans 8:18,19)

In our worship shouldn't we praise God more for His work of re-creation in the lives of His people than for His work of creation in the physical universe? In our work shouldn't we be more concerned about and involved in God's work of re-creation among the nations than in the physical needs of the people of earth?

4. GOD'S REST: God not only works, but He also rests! God's "rest" was first mentioned after He completed His work of creation:

*“And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and **he rested** on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.**”* (Genesis 2:2,3)

In His work of creating God certainly did not get tired or need to rest. He is inexhaustible! He never gets weary or faint, as we saw above in Isaiah 40:28. No, as mentioned above, He **“rested from”** His work of creation, which means **He had completed it**.

Another mention of God's rest is in reference to the land of Palestine that God promised to the nation of Israel. **He promised to give them “a place of rest,” not simply some land.** It is His rest and only He is **the One Who gives rest:**

*“Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, ‘**The Lord your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.**’”* (Joshua 1:13)

*“But when you go over the Jordan and live in **the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest** from all your enemies around ...”* (Deuteronomy 12:10)

But the adult generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt constantly rebelled and failed to trust their Lord, so He kept them wandering in the wilderness until they all died, leaving only their children and grandchildren:

*“For forty years I loathed that generation and said, ‘They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.’ Therefore I swore in my wrath, **They shall not enter my rest.**”* (Psalm 95:10,11)

Instead He led their children into His promised *“place of rest.”*

The Full Meaning Of “God's Rest” Has Unfolded In Four Phases:

a. Rest From His Work Of Creation: God, having completed his “work” of creation and seeing that it was “very good,” decided to celebrate by crowning all His work with the blessing of **a day of “rest”:**

*“**And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good ... Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested** on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it **God rested from all his work that he had**”*

done in creation.” (Genesis 1:31-2:3)

b. Physical Day Of Rest For His People Israel: He “rested” from His work of creation in order to set *a pattern* for the people of Israel to rest from their physical work every seventh day of each week:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” (Exodus 20:8-11)

c. Physical Rest From All Enemies For His People Israel: God was leading the people of Israel to a **promised place of rest from their enemies**, where He wanted to bless them with **peace** if they would fully obey Him:

“But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety,” (Deuteronomy 12:10)

“Therefore when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies around you, in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess ...” (Deut. 25:19)

d. Spiritual, Eternal Rest For Believers

1) “Rest” From Our Own “Works”: God’s “rest” is for His people today. His ultimate purpose from the beginning, which is foreshadowed in the first three phases, is to give His people of all ages an **eternal, spiritual rest**. This is a rest from our “working” to earn our own righteousness:

“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.” (Hebrews 4:9,10)

2) “Rest” From Our Enemies: And it is a rest from all our enemies (**our carnal nature, the world, Satan**). It is the rest of faith in God and a celebration of His victorious re-creation of our eternal lives. It is finding rest by trusting in God’s provision of salvation through Jesus’ redeeming death and resurrection from the dead on our behalf. The only work we can do to receive God’s promised rest is the “work” of believing (trusting) in Jesus:

[Jesus said] “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28,29)

“Then they said to him, ‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’” (John 6:28,29)

Notice that it is “**God’s rest**.” Rest is not just something God gives to us, but **it is a part of His being; of Who God is**.

C. GOD’S WORKS AND HIS WAYS:

ISLAM:

The Qur'an has a lot to say about God's capabilities and the things He does (His **works**), all of which magnify His almighty power. This includes His complete omnipresence and omniscience, His total sovereignty over all of creation, His irresistible will, His inscrutability (un-knowableness), His marvelous "signs," His great mercy upon whomever He chooses, etc. However, it says little about His **ways** – His character; Who He is; the integrity of His Being – including His holiness, faithfulness, fatherhood, unfailing love, righteousness, grace, etc.

As I have expressed before, this means Muslims cannot *know* Him, but can only know *about* Him. They do not know His person, only His power. They know His works, but not His ways. While they wonderfully admire and praise His mighty greatness, they are deprived of any personal relationship with Him.

THE BIBLE:

Moses, David and many others spoke of both God's works and ways:

"And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!'" (Revelation 15:3 – NASB)

It is easier to know about God's works than His ways because His works are clearly evident in His creation, revealing His almighty power, omnipresence, transcendence, wisdom, sovereignty, eternity, etc.:

"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature [deity], have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made ..." (Romans 1:19,20)

In other words, it is easier to know *about* God than to *know* God! That's because His ways (attributes of His character such as His justice, righteousness, grace, glory, peace, love, etc.) are revealed to us only as we have a personal relationship with Him:

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Romans 11:33)

God Himself put more emphasis on His ways than on His works when He told Moses His name. He didn't say it was, "I CAN DO WHATEVER I WILL TO DO" (which is also true). Instead, ...

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14)

"I AM" not "I CAN" because God wants us to know Him – Who He is, not just what He can do; to know not only His works, but most of all, His ways. (And for that reason He created us in His own image; making us enough like Himself that we would have the capacity to know Him personally.) For example, He wants us to know both His saving power (His works) and His love for us (His ways); the motivation behind His wanting to save us.

"that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations." (Psalm 67:2)

He wants us to know His character and to be like Him. Sadly, although the majority of the Children of Israel saw God's mighty works through the many miracles He did in delivering them from slavery in Egypt and carrying them through the wilderness for 40 years, they did not care to really know Him personally; to love and follow His ways:

*"your fathers put me to the test and **saw my works for forty years.**"* (Hebrews 3:9)

But God's servants through the ages have asked God to show them His ways so they could know Him, have prophesied about His ways and have praised Him for His wonderful works and ways:

[Moses asked God] *"**please show me now your ways, that I may know you ... show me your glory.**"* (Exodus 33:13,18 – ESV)

[David prayed] *"**Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**"* (Psalm 25:4)

*"**I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.**"* (Psalm 77:11,12)

*"**Teach me your ways, O LORD, that I may live according to your truth! ...**"* (Psalm 86:11 – NLT)

[David prophesied] *"**All the kings of the earth ... shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.**"* (Psalm 138:4,5)

D. JESUS AND GOD'S WORK:

ISLAM: The Qur'an tells us that Jesus was the "son of Mary" and no more than a messenger of God, who served God by giving his people God's message:

*We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of **messengers**; We gave **jesus the son of Mary** Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit ..."* (Sura 2:87)

*"We believe in Allah, and **the revelation given to us**, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and **jesus**, and that given to (all) **prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them** ..."* (Sura 2:136)

*"O People of the Book! [Jews & Christians] Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. **Christ jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah**, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His **messengers**. Say not 'Trinity' ..."* (Sura 4:171)

BIBLE: Jesus is the perfect revelation of God to humanity. Whatever He did or does it is in oneness with His Father, and therefore is God's work as seen in these verses:

1. GOD THE FATHER HAS GIVEN ALL THINGS (INCLUDING HIS WORK) INTO THE AUTHORITY AND CONTROL OF JESUS:

*"**All things** have been handed over to me by my Father ..."* (Luke 10:22)

*"**The Father** loves the Son and **has given all things** into his hand."* (John 3:35)

*"Jesus, knowing that **the Father had given all things** into his hands ..."* (John 13:3)

2. JESUS ALWAYS DID WHATEVER WORKS THE FATHER GAVE HIM TO DO:

[Jesus said] ***“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”*** (John 4:34)

“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’” (John 5:17)

“Jesus answered them, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?’” (John 10:32)

“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do ...” (John 17:4)

3. JESUS DID GOD’S WORKS, Including Giving Life, Judging, Speaking, Providing Salvation, Loving, Etc:

“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,” (John 5:19-22)

“as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” (Jn. 5:26)

“... I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.” (John 8:28)

“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.” (John 12:49) ***“And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”*** (John 12:50)

“... my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me.” (John 14:24)

“No one takes it [His life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:18)

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” (John 15:9)

4. JESUS WORKS TOGETHER WITH THE FATHER:

“... it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.” (John 8:16)

“If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” (John 10:37,38)

“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.” (John 14:11)

“... Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.” (John 14:10)

5. THOSE WORKS PROVE JESUS WAS SENT BY THE FATHER:

“... the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.” (John 5:36)

“We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day ...” (John 9:4)

“... The proof [that He Was Messiah] is the work I do in my Father’s name.” (John 10:25 – NLT)

6. JESUS’ REST: Therefore, when our Lord Jesus had completed all the Father’s work of re-creation and redemption He rested and celebrated by sitting down at His Father’s right hand. This is important in that it is mentioned three times:

*“So then **the Lord Jesus**, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and **sat down at the right hand of God.**”* (Mark 16:19)

*“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. **After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high**”* (Hebrews 1:3)

*“But **when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.**”* (Hebrews 10:12,13)

CHAPTER ELEVEN (a)

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE, WRATH & PATIENCE OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

In This Part (a) we will be looking at the following topics related to this subject:

- A. God's Righteousness
- B. God's Justice
- C. My Reactions

In Part (b) we will be looking at the following topics related to this subject:

- D. God's Wrath And Patience
- E. God's Wrath And Jihad (Holy War)
- F. My Reactions

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS:

ISLAM:

1. ISLAM'S 99 NAMES: Only one of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God seems to be related to His righteousness (***Ar-Rasheed*** = *Righteous Teacher, Guide, Infallible*), but this "name" for God never actually occurs in the Qur'an itself.

2. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE QUR'AN: Righteousness is not presented as an attribute of God in the Qur'an! In Yusuf Ali's English translation the adjective "righteous" is found 113 times, but none of them modify God. The noun "righteousness" is used 79 times in reference to mankind and 2 times in reference to God, but no other translator uses that English word in those two verses! The adverb "righteously" is not used at all. While the Qur'an is not saying that God is *unrighteous*, clearly it is not making any effort to talk about His righteousness. Why is this?

I would say **the Qur'an's purpose is not to describe God** but only to instruct and warn humanity. Also some Muslim scholars think that **attributes are comparative, and God cannot be compared with anyone**. That would also reflect the basic Islamic belief **that we humans can never be like God, but instead we should strive to follow the way of Muhammad ("Sunnah")**. Logically it would make sense, therefore, that the Qur'an's teaching about righteousness is limited to what God decrees for mankind.

However, this is especially peculiar since adjectival phrases containing other attributes of God,

such as “most merciful,” “most gracious,” “oft forgiving,” etc., are repeatedly used throughout the Qur’an emphasizing His superiority. **Why doesn’t the Qur’an say something like “God most righteous”?**

THE BIBLE:

1. GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE BIBLE: In contrast to the Qur’an, **the Bible speaks clearly of God’s righteousness 132 times** (“righteousness” 77, “uprightness” 4; “righteous” 46 and “upright” 5)! God’s righteousness is obviously a major teaching of the Bible. Perhaps one reason for this is that the Bible constantly teaches that we were created in the image of God and are intended to be righteous like He is. Here are some aspects of what the Bible says about God’s righteousness:

a. God Himself Is Righteous. Righteousness is not an objective standard outside of God to which He may choose to conform Himself. He Himself is the standard! He is eternally the Righteous One! In fact God is the personification and definition of righteousness since **He is the only being Who is truly righteous:**

*“... you who test the minds and hearts, **O righteous God!**” (Psalm 7:9)*

*“For **the LORD is righteous**; he loves righteous deeds ...” (Psalm 11:7)*

*“From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise, of glory to **the Righteous One.**” (Is. 24:16)*

b. God Acts And Judges Righteously. God always acts righteously. He can’t be unrighteous. Or else He would self-destruct and cease to be God!

*“But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and **he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.**” (Psalm 9:7-8)*

*“**The LORD is righteous in all his ways** and kind in all his works.” (Psalm 145:17)*

*“**By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness ...**” (Psalm 65:5)*

c. God Righteously Justifies Sinners. How can God be righteous when He declares sinners “justified” (innocent)? It is by **removing** all sin (“redemption”) from those who believe in Jesus and punishing Him for those sins in their place:

*“... **the righteousness of God** has been manifested apart from the law ... **the righteousness of God** through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe ... **for all ... are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ... This was to show God’s righteousness ... so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**” (Romans 3:21-26)*

2. JESUS IS THE REVELATION OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS:

a. Jesus, God’s Righteous Son: Because Jesus is God’s revelation of Himself to us, God’s righteousness is revealed in Him. Therefore He is called, “**the righteous,**” “**a righteous branch**” (descendent) of King David, “**The LORD is our righteousness,**” and “**The Holy and Righteous One**” (which is one of God’s titles – see 1.a. above) Who will rule with righteousness:

*“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, **Jesus Christ the righteous.**” (1 John 2:1)*

*“In those days and at that time **I will cause a righteous Branch** to spring up for David, and he shall*

execute justice and righteousness in the land ... And **this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'**" (Jeremiah 33:15,16 – also 23:5,6)

"Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied ... the Holy and Righteous One ... you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead." (Acts 3:13-15 - also Acts 7:52 & 22:14)

"But of the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom." (Hebrews 1:8)

b. Jesus, Our Righteousness: His righteousness is given to us when we put our faith in Him. When the Bible talks about **"the righteous"** it does not refer to people popularly considered very good and basically sinless. It refers to sinners who have no righteousness of their own in God's sight, but who have had Jesus' righteousness and eternal life imputing to them by faith in His death and resurrection on their behalf, in order that they may reflect His righteousness:

"the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe ..." (Rom. 3:22)

"... Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Romans 10:3,4)

"... you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30)

"and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:24)

"and be found in him [Jesus], not having a righteousness of my own ... but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil. 3:9)

B. GOD'S JUSTICE: [One difference between righteousness and justice is that righteousness is the moral "right-ness" of a person's character, while justice is the moral "right-ness" of the ways in which that person treats others.]

ISLAM:

1. NAMES OF GOD RELATED TO JUSTICE: The following are seven of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God, which seem to relate to His justice. It should be noted, however that *Al-Hakam*, *Al-Adil*, and *Al-Muqsit* are not found in the Qur'an as names *per se*, but they are names created from verbs used:

Al-Qahhar (or Qahir) = The Subduer, Dominant, Crusher

Al-Fattah (Fattaah) = The Opener, Revealer, Judge

Al-Hakam = The Wise, Perfect in Judgment, Arbitrator

Al-Adil (Adl) = The Just, Equitable

Al-Hasib (Haseeb) = The Reckoner, Accounter

Al-Hakim (Hakeem) = Exalted In Might, Most Wise, The Best To Decide

Al-Muqsit = The Just, Equitable, Requirer

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's "99 most beautiful names of God"]

2. USE AND MEANING OF RELATED WORDS: There are several words in the English translation of the Qur'an used in relation to God's Justice:

a. the word justice In Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Qur'an is used a total of **23 times in reference to God's actions. but it is never used to modify God Himself** ("God's justice," "the Justice of God," etc. are not found). Nine times it is used with regard to God's working in the lives of mankind with justice, twelve times it says God will give justice on the Day of Judgment and twice it is used to state that God commands justice and forbids injustice. Here are a few examples:

"... But never will they fail to receive justice in the least little thing." (Sura 4:49)

"Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion ..." (Sura 16:90)

"We shall set up scales of Justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least ..." (Sura 21:47; see also 101:6-9)

b. The word, just is used **16 times in reference to God's actions. Once it says God is never unjust** [See Sura 4:40 below], six times it says God created everything for just purposes, six times that we should be just, once that God provides our sustenance in a just way, once that God speaks what is just and two times that God will make just decisions on the Day of Judgment. **But it never positively modifies God** (such as "God is just," "just God," "God most just," etc):

"Allah is never unjust in the least degree ..." (Sura 4:40)

"Allah created the heavens and the earth for just ends, and in order that each soul may find the recompense of what it has earned, and none of them be wronged." (Sura 45:22)

"Give just measure, and cause no loss (to others by fraud)." (Sura 26:181)

"... enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong ..." (Sura 31:17)

"(Allah) said: "Then it is just and fitting- and I say what is just and fitting." (Sura 38:84)

"On that Day Allah will pay them back (all) their just dues ..." (Sura 24:25)

c. The word, justly is used **5 times in reference to God's actions.** Three of them are in regard to God's punishments being given justly and two have to do with God's commands to mankind to deal justly with one another:

"Not one (of them) but rejected the messengers, but My punishment came justly and inevitably (on them)." (Sura 38:14)

"Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just." (Sura 60:8)

d. the noun, judge and the adjective, justest are used **once of God:**

"... and Thou art the justest [most just] of Judges!" (Sura 11:45)

e. Finally the verb, judge is used **18 times in reference to God.** The Qur'an says God will judge with truth. 10 times we read that God will judge between conflicting parties on the Day of Judgment. 3 times we are told to call on God to judge our enemies. 2 times instructing us to deal justly. And 2 times that God has given us the Book (Qur'an) by which to judge:

"And Allah will judge with (justice and) Truth: but those whom (men) invoke besides Him, will not (be in a position) to judge at all ..." (Sura 40:20)

"We settled the Children of Israel ... they fell into schisms. Verily Allah will judge between them as to the schisms amongst them, on the Day of Judgment." (Sura 10:93)

"On that Day of Dominion will be that of Allah: He will judge between them ..." (Sura 22:56)

"Say: "Shall I seek for judge other than Allah? - when He it is Who hath sent unto you the Book, explained in detail ..." (Sura 6:114)

In summary, from the use and meaning of these words we learn that:

- i) God judges with justice especially on the Day of Judgment.
- ii) He created the Qur'an as a standard by which men are to judge.
- iii) He commands mankind to justly deal with one another accordingly.

3. JUSTICE AS AN ATTRIBUTE OF GOD: Strangely, **justice, like righteousness, is not described as an attribute of God in the Qur'an even though it clearly says that God's actions are just.** He commands justice and He treats people with justice, but phrases such as "the justice of God," "The Just One," "God is just," or "God's justice" are not found except for one statement that He is "*the justist of judges.*" **There is no doubt that Islam believes God is just, so why doesn't the Qur'an say so and stress it?** Muslim scholars suggest it's because that would seem to be comparing the incomparable God with other beings, and because attributes would seem to be things He has (God + attributes) as opposed to things He is (one God), which would violate His absolute oneness.

4. GOD'S STANDARDS OF JUSTICE FOR GOVERNMENT: God instructs human government to treat mankind with justice, and also to give opportunity for individuals **to atone for their own sins** (but not for other's sins) by forgiving others:

"We ordained therein for them: 'Life for life, eye for eye, nose or nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal.' But if any one remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself ..." (Sura 5:45)

5. GOD'S RETRIBUTION: At least a quarter of the Qur'an consists of God's warnings concerning punishment for sinners. He constantly threatens unbelievers with punishment in hell fire. Four times He is given the title, "**Lord of Retribution**" and three times it says He is "**swift in calling to account:**"

"... Allah is ... the Lord of Retribution ... (men) will be marshalled forth, before Allah, the One, the Irresistible; And thou wilt see the sinners that day bound together in fetters;- Their garments of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with Fire; That Allah may requite each soul according to its deserts; and verily Allah is swift in calling to account." (Sura 14:47-51)

One Muslim scholar states, "... we also know that **the theme of the Qur'an is warning (Inzaar).**" (<http://www.understanding-islam.com/q-and-a/islamic-beliefs/is-eternal-suffering-in-hell-just-9352>) Five times the Qur'an says He exacted retribution from those who rejected His truth, and six times that He will mete out retribution on unbelievers on the Day of Judgment:

*"So **We exacted retribution** from them ..."* (Sura 7:136)

*"... Verily from those who transgress **We shall exact (due) retribution.**"* (Sura 32:22)

6. WHAT KIND OF JUSTICE? God certainly punishes all the sins of *unbelievers* in hell, but He sees no benefit in punishing the sins of *believers* just to satisfy His justice:

"... those who repent, mend (their lives) hold fast to Allah, and purify their religion as in Allah's sight: if so they

will be (numbered) with the believers. And soon will Allah grant to the believers a reward of immense value. **What can Allah gain by your punishment, if ye are grateful and ye believe?** Nay, it is Allah that recogniseth (all good) ..." (Sura 4:146,147)

There is a strange kind of justice mentioned often in the Qur'an. God magically changes evil deeds into good deeds, multiplies good deeds, substitutes good deeds for evil ones and passes by ill deeds. Is that justice?

"He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit: He that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil: no wrong shall be done unto (any of) them." (Sura 6:160)

"... for Allah will change the evil of such persons into good ..." (Sura 25:70)

"But if any have done wrong and have thereafter substituted good to take the place of evil, truly, I am oft-forgiving, most merciful." (Sura 27:11)

"Those who believe and work righteous deeds, - from them shall We blot out all evil (that may be) in them, and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds." (Sura 29:7)

"So that Allah will turn off from them (even) the worst in their deeds and give them their reward according to the best of what they have done." (Sura 39:35)

"... We shall accept the best of their deeds and pass by their ill deeds ..." (Sura 46:16)

7. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUSTICE AND MERCY: In Islam, God's mercy seems to be arbitrary and is not limited by His justice. So God is free to forgive without punishment, as He pleases. His sovereign will is all that matters! "He will not ignore the good of any person" but He will ignore sin! Listen to a Muslim preacher:

*"The Qur'an teaches that **Allah is a judge and He also punishes, but Allah is not bound to punish**. The justice of Allah, according to Qur'an is that Allah does not and will not inflict undue punishment on any person. **He will not ignore the good of any person. But if He wishes to forgive any sinner, He has full freedom to do that. His mercy is unlimited and His love is infinite.**" (from "Forgiveness in Islam" a Summary of a Friday Khutbah, 14th April 2000 www.pakistanlink.com)*

THE BIBLE:

God's justice is emphasized in the Bible as seen by the fact that words describing God's attribute of justice are found 124 times (the words "just" or "justly" are used 40 times of God and the words "judge," "judges" or "judged" are used 84 times).

1. JUSTICE AND GOD:

a. God Himself Is Just. He is just because that is Who He is. He doesn't just tell us to be just; He Himself is the model of justice and all justice is His justice:

"... for all his ways are justice ... just and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4)

"God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day." (Psalm 7:11)

"... For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him." (Isaiah 30:18)

"The LORD ... does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail ..." (Zephaniah 3:5)

b. God's Judgment Is Without Bias:

“... **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?**” (Genesis 18:25 – see also Ps. 94:2)

“... **The LORD reigns! ... he will judge the peoples with equity.**” (Psalm 96:10)

“**For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.**” (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

“**For the LORD your God ... is not partial and takes no bribe.**” (Deuteronomy 10:17)

“**For God shows no partiality.**” (Romans 2:11)

“... **the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.**” (Nahum 1:3 – see also Exodus 34:6,7)

c. God Loves Justice.

“**He loves righteousness and justice ...**” (Psalm 33:5)

“**For I the LORD love justice ...**” (Isaiah 61:8)

“**The LORD is king! Let the nations tremble! ... Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established fairness. You have acted with justice ...**” (Psalm 99:1,4 – NLT)

d. God’s Justice Is Based On His Righteousness:

“... **you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.**” ... “**But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.**” (Psalm 9:4,7-8)

e. God’s Justice Involves Retribution/Vengeance: As the truly just judge, Who fully knows the inner motives of our hearts, God is the One to punish sin. God has told us not to seek revenge, because that is His job:

“... **For the LORD is a God of recompense, He will fully repay.**” (Jeremiah 51:6,56 - NASB)

“**O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth!**” (Psalm 94:1)

“... **does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?**” (Proverbs 24:12)

“**Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’**” (Romans 12:19; also Deuteronomy 32:35; 1 Thessalonians 4:6 & Hebrews 10:30)

f. But Many Of God’s Servants (e.g., Jeremiah, Job, Isaiah, Solomon) Have Struggled To Understand God’s Delayed Justice:

“**Righteous are You, O LORD, that I would plead my case with You; Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?**” (Jeremiah 12:1 - NASB)

“**Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? ... Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them ... They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol.**” (Job 21:7,9,13)

“**Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter.**” (Isaiah 59:14)

“**There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous ...**” (Ecclesiastes 8:14)

g. King Solomon's Prayer For God's Justice: He prayed and asked God to enable him to rule not simply with justice and righteousness, but specifically with **God's own justice** and righteousness:

"Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!" (Psalm 72:1)

2. RECONCILING GOD'S JUSTICE WITH HIS MERCY: How Can God's Justice And Wrath Be Reconciled With His Mercy And Forgiveness? How can God be merciful if He puts us to death because of our sin, and how can He be just if He forgives us sinners in His mercy without any punishment for our sins? Is it possible for His mercy to cancel His justice or vice versa? God says, no:

"... for I will not acquit the wicked." (Exodus 23:7 – See also Nahum 1:3)

"... The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious ... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:6,7)

a. The Principles Of Justice And Forgiveness: In order to understand the issues involved in this subject, I believe it is necessary to understand the following terms and concepts [See also Chapter 8 (b)]:

- 1) Sin or crime always causes some harmful affect (pain, loss, shame, damage, cost) for someone. That affect is never lost and is suffered by the victim(s).
- 2) Forgiving is the voluntary act by the victim(s) of willingly accepting and suffering the full affect of the sin or crime without demanding justice (punishment or retribution from the one who committed the sin).
- 3) The Forgiver: Only the person who willingly accepts (suffers) the full affect of a sin or crime against him/her is able to forgive the sinner. No one (not even God) can forgive that sin otherwise.
- 4) The Forgiven: A person who has been forgiven is not punished (caused to pay or caused to suffer) for his/her sin.
- 5) Atonement is a concept, which comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to cover." It means a temporary covering of sin or guilt by means of some offering in order to postpone the just punishment of the person who committed the sin.
- 6) Demand for Justice is an attempt by the person, against whom the sin or crime is committed, to avoid bearing the full affect or loss caused by that sin. This is done by obtaining some satisfaction from the sinner such as compensation, retribution and/or causing punishment.
- 7) Innocence is the condition of a person who did not commit a sin or crime.
- 8) Justification is the removal of all charges and accusations against a person because he/she has been proven innocent in court.
- 9) Redemption is a concept based on Hebrew and Greek words, meaning to "set free" or "deliver" a person from all guilt, shame and punishment by completely removing, cleansing or destroying all record of the sin or crime.

b. A Chronological Account Of How God Has Reconciled His Justice With His Mercy [See also Chapter 8 (b)]:

1) God Initially Provided “Atonement” Through Animal Sacrifices. God, in His mercy and patience, *covered* (the Hebrew word for atonement means “to cover”) and thus **postponed punishment** for the sins of all believers before Christ. In this way **He temporarily “passed over” their sins** until in His righteousness and justice He would carry out the just punishment for those sins:

*“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ... because **in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins**. It was **to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just ...**” (Romans 3:23,25,26)*

*“**The Lord is ...patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish ...**” (2 Peter 3:9)*

God then used **prophetic types** to reveal to all the prophets His future intention to punish the Messiah (Jesus) as full payment for the sins He had temporarily covered (atoned for) and not punished. In this way He showed He would justly set free (redeem) those sinners who trust in Jesus. Here are three examples:

a) Atonement For Adam: God first provided a covering (atonement) out of **the skins of innocent animals**, whose lives He sacrificed in order to make clothing to *cover* the nakedness of Adam and Eve. In this way God gave us a prophetic picture of the “Lamb of God” (Jesus) Whom He would later provide in order to take away our sin and shame by dying as our substitute:

*“**And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed [covered] them.**” (Genesis 3:21)*

b) Atonement For Abraham’s Son: Some twenty generations later we again see God Himself providing **an innocent animal** as a substitute to cover sin (atonement); this time in place of Abraham’s son:

*“... He said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Abraham said, ‘**God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.**’ ... And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And **Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The LORD will provide ...**” (Genesis 22:7,8,13,14)*

c) Atonement for the people of Israel: An additional 500 years later God instructed His people Israel through His prophet Moses, to continue to offer the **lives of innocent animals** as sacrifices for their own sins, symbolically transferring their sins to the animal by laying their hand on its head, in order to temporarily *cover* (atonement) their sins and postpone judgment:

*“The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘**If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby— if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt. And he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering. And the priest shall make atonement [covering] for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty.**” (Leviticus 6:1-7)*

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement [covering] for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.”
(Leviticus 17:11)

“When ... the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish, and shall lay his hand on the head of the goat and kill it ... it is a sin offering ... So the priest shall make atonement [covering] for him for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.” (Leviticus 4:22-26)

2) God Later Provided “Redemption” (“*setting free*” or “*loosing from*”). At His chosen time, Almighty God put all the sins of all humanity on His own Son Jesus, “the Lamb Of God,” making him guilty instead of us. In order to justly punish and take away all sin He put him to death. This included the previous sins temporarily “covered” by the death of animals. In this way He set free all believers from all guilt and punishment, making us holy (pure) and justified:

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’ (John 1:29)

“So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people ...” (Hebrews 9:28)

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree [the cross], that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

“... our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem [loose] us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own ...” (Titus 2:13,14)

3) God Gives Us The Gift Of Righteousness. Having transferred our sins to Jesus (who had no sins of His own), God was justly able to give Jesus’ righteousness (which is God’s righteousness) to all who believe in and receive Jesus as Savior. Thus we are made holy and righteous in God’s sight:

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction.” (Romans 3:21,22)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

“... because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”
(Hebrews 10:10,14)

4) God Also “Justifies” Us (“*declares us innocent*”). But how is that just? Isn’t that like declaring evil to be good? Not at all. Because God’s Son has taken our place, paid for and taken away our sins, given us the gift of His own righteousness and set us free from all guilt. He can now declare us not simply “not guilty” but completely “innocent.” What amazing grace! God’s justification of sinners is one of the most profound truths revealed in God’s Word:

“Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.” (Acts 13:38,39)

“And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works ... blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” (Romans 4:5-8)

“... a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ ... because by works of the law no one will be justified.” (Galatians 2:16)

5) However, if we refuse to repent and believe in the redemption God is providing for us in Jesus the Messiah, we have no other way to be saved from God’s just judgment. Before we rejected Jesus as our Savior we were already condemned by God’s law because of our sinfulness, and so, having rejected the only way of salvation, His wrath remains on us:

“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (John 3:18)

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36)

“How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:29-31)

6) God Is Both Just And Merciful. So we see that God’s redemption through Jesus became His means of bringing His justice and righteousness into harmony with His mercy. He is absolutely righteous and just in justifying sinners who repent and receive Jesus as their Savior:

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law ... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe ... This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:21,22,25,26)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ...” (1 John 1:9)

3. JESUS AND GOD’S JUSTICE: Jesus, Who is the revelation of God, is just and impartial and He will judge the world with justice:

“And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God.” (Mark 12:14)

“... he will judge the world in righteousness by a man [Jesus] whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31)

“... in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead ... the crown of righteousness, which the Lord [Jesus], the righteous judge, will award to me [Apostle Paul] ...also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:1,8)

In summary, if God were only to forgive us sinners without removing our sin, we would still be unholy and unable to ever enter into fellowship with the absolutely righteous and holy God. However, God has set us free from our sin and the eternal punishment we deserve and has given us the perfect righteousness of Jesus as a gift when we accept Him as our substitute and Savior. So Jesus is God’s mercy and justice personified, i.e the fullness of God’s mercy and justice is revealed in Jesus. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection from the dead God paid our debt in full, thus God has

reconciled both His mercy and His justice:

“My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.” (Psalm 71:15,16)

C. MY REACTIONS:

It seems that one of the major emphases of the Qur’an is **WHAT GOD DOES** rather than **WHO GOD IS**. He does righteous and just deeds, but the Qur’an is basically silent about God being righteous and just in character.

God’s mercy, as seen in the Qur’an, seems to be unrelated to His justice. The one does not bear on the other. God’s sovereign will is all that matters.

[See Part (b) for the rest of this subject]

CHAPTER ELEVEN (b)

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE, WRATH & PATIENCE OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

In Part (a) we looked at the following topics related to this subject:

- A. God's Righteousness
- B. God's Justice
- C. My Reactions

In This Part (b) we will be looking at the following topics related to this subject:

- D. God's Wrath And Patience**
- E. God's Wrath And Jihad (Holy War)**
- F. My Reactions**

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

D. GOD'S WRATH AND PATIENCE:

ISLAM:

1. NAMES OF GOD:

a. Names Related To His Wrath: The "wrath" of God is mentioned 53 times in Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an. (However the words, "anger," "angry" and "fury" are not used of God). Three of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" seem to be related to His wrath: [See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's "99 most beautiful names of God"]

Al-Mudhill (Muthill) = The Dishonorer, Humiliator, Abaser, Leader Astray

Al-Muntaqim = The Avenger, Vindictive

Ad-Darr (Adh-Dhaarr) = The Afflicter, Distresser, Creator of Harm

Yusuf Ali sometimes translates these words as "retribution," which occurs 15 times.

b. Names Related To His Patience:

As-Sabur (Saboor) = "The Most Patient," "Enduring"

2. GOD'S WRATH IN THE QUR'AN: Unlike "righteousness" and "justice," the word, "wrath" is used repeatedly (53 times) as an attribute of God ("wrath of God," "His wrath," etc.). It is usually found in association with God's condemning unbelievers to hell and is primarily

aimed at those who reject His revelation through His prophets, who refuse to believe in Him, and who do evil deeds. Here are a few examples:

“... *they deny (the revelation) which Allah has sent down ... Thus have they drawn on themselves wrath upon wrath ...*” (Sura 2:90)

“*If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (For ever): And the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him ...*” (Sura 4:93)

“... *turning in friendship to the Unbelievers ... Allah's wrath is on them ...*” (Sura 5:80)

a. God’s Wrath Expressed In Eternal Hell Fire: The word “fire” is used **138 times in reference to hell** in Yusuf Ali’s translation of the Qur’an. e.g.:

“... *if any of you Turn back from their faith and die in unbelief ... in the Hereafter; they will be companions of the fire and will abide therein.*” (Sura 2:217)

“*Those who reject Faith,- neither their possessions nor their (numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allah: They are themselves but fuel for the fire.*” (Sura 3:10)

“... **The Fire be your dwelling-place: you will dwell therein for ever**, except as Allah willeth.” *for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge.*” (Sura 6:128)

“*thou wilt see the sinners that day bound together in fetters;- their garments of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with Fire*” (Sura 14:49,50)

“**The fire will burn their faces**, and they will therein grin, with their lips displaced.” (Sura 23:104)

“... **Taste ye the Penalty of the Fire**, the which ye were wont to reject as false.” (Sura 32:20)

“**The Day they will be dragged through the fire on their faces ...**” (Sura 54:48)

“... **save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is Men and Stones ...**” (Sura 66:6)

“... **far will be (Forgiveness) from the Companions of the Blazing fire!**” (Sura 67:11)

“(It is) **the fire of (the Wrath of) Allah** kindled (to a blaze),” (Sura 104:6)

In contrast the Bible, which is 3 times bigger than the Qur’an, mentions the fire of hell only 29 times. However, it uses the word “fire” hundreds of times for God Himself (“*God is a consuming fire*” – Deut. 4:24) or for His holiness, wrath, presence, cleansing, and His acceptance of sacrifices.

b. Temporary Time In Hell For All? Some Muslim scholars believe hell is eternal and therefore only unbelievers will ever go to hell. However, most believe, that every person, including believers, will at least be touched by hell fire for a time to pay for any unforgiven sins. The following verses are used to prove this:

“*And certainly We know best those who are most worthy of being burned therein. Not one of you but will pass over it: this is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished. But We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrong-doers therein, (humbled) to their knees.*” (Sura 19:70-72) [see Yusuf Ali’s note #2518]

“*Ye shall certainly see Hell-Fire!*” (Sura 102:6)

c. God’s Wrath On Israel: God, in His wrath on Israel, turned them into apes for their disobedience and unbelief. (Some Muslims today despise the Jews, believing they are apes looking like men):

“*And well ye knew those amongst you [Israelites] who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath: We said to them: **Be ye apes, despised and rejected.***” (Sura 2:65)

"When in their insolence they transgressed (all) prohibitions, We said to them: 'Be ye apes, despised and rejected.'" (Sura 7:166)

3. THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT GOD'S PATIENCE: The words "patient," "patience" or "long suffering" are never used of God in the Qur'an. Two verses say that God gives us patience, but it never says He Himself is patient:

"... Our Lord! pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto thee as Muslims (who bow to thy will)!" (Sura 7:126)

"And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allah; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots." (Sura 16:127)

Instead, in contrast to the Bible's teaching that God is "slow to anger" (see below), the Qur'an emphasizes God's justice by repeatedly saying God is "**swift**" in calling to or taking account of those who disbelieve or disobey. I have found at least 6 such verses:

"that God may requite each soul according to it deserts; and verily Allah is swift in calling to account." (Sura 14:51; also 3:19 and 13:41)

"... and inflict no harm on her or a swift penalty will seize you!" (Sura 11:64)

"That Day will every soul be requited for what it earned; no injustice will there be that Day, for Allah is swift in taking account." (Sura 40:17; also 5:4)

The Qur'an does show many occasions of His patience with those who believe in Him and try to do good deeds. But as with righteousness and justice, patience is not described as an attribute of God's character. Again this shows us that the Qur'an is not intended to be a revelation of God Himself (which Islam believes would be beyond our ability to understand or appreciate), but is only a revelation of His will for us. We are His slaves and He is our Sovereign Master.

4. THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT SIN AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S LACK OF PATIENCE: What the Qur'an has to say about sin is significant and explains God's seeming lack of patience in dealing with mankind's sin:

a. Mankind Was Created Weak. First of all, according to the Qur'an, man was created weak; coming from lowly clay and a "despicable" liquid (sperm):

"Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): For man was created Weak (in flesh)." (Sura 4:28)

"Behold! thy Lord said to the angels: "I am about to create man, from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape" (Sura 15:28)

"Have We not created you from a fluid (held) despicable?" (Sura 77:20)

So it is no surprise that weak mankind is easily enticed by Satan to sin:

"Doth not man see that it is We Who created him from sperm? yet behold! he (stands forth) as an open adversary!" (Sura 36:77)

"Woe to man! What hath made him reject Allah; From what stuff hath He created him? From a sperm-drop He hath created him.." (Sura 80:17-19)

b. How Does Mankind Sin? According to Islam, God has given us the Qur'an to show us "the straight path" and when we fail to **remember** God's guidance we fall into

disobedience by default. Satan's goal is to make us **forget** God's guidance as he did with Adam:

*"We had already, beforehand, taken the **covenant of Adam, but he forgot ...**" (Sura 20:115)*

*"**The Evil One has got the better of them: so he has made them lose the remembrance of Allah. They are the Party of the Evil One ...**" (Sura 58:19)*

c. Sin's Effect On God: God is unaffected (unharm) by mankind's sin because He knows all about it in advance and is emotionally untouched by it. **So there is no need for God to restrain His anger in order to be patience:**

*"... (But they rebelled); **to us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.**" (Sura 2:57)*

*"If any one **does evil or wrongs his own soul... And if any one earns sin, He earns it against His own soul: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom**" (Sura 4:110-111).*

I need to digress here to explain more about Islam's view of sin:

1) Major And Minor Sins: There are varying lists of sins but most Muslim theologians would agree that the following 7 are major sins:

1. *Shirk* (adding partners to God), 2. Magic or Sorcery, 3. Murder, 4. Usury (Charging or Paying Interest), 5. Despoiling orphans, 6. Fleeing from a battle, 7. False charges of adultery

The Qur'an says God may choose to overlook or forgive our lesser sins if we avoid all the major sins. In fact the Qur'an goes so far as to say God will remove all evil out of a sinner who avoids the major sins and send him/her to Paradise! (It does not explain how God can justly do this):

*"If ye (but) **eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall expel out of you all the evil in you, and admit you to a gate of great honour.**" (Sura 4:31)*

2) Halal And Haram: Devout Muslims live carefully questioning every action or object to see whether it is *Halal* (permitted) or *Haram* (forbidden):

*"**Halāl**" ("permissible") ... refers to what is permissible or lawful in traditional Islamic law. It is frequently applied to permissible food and drinks. In the Quran, the word **halal** is contrasted with **haram** (forbidden). In Islamic jurisprudence this binary opposition was elaborated into a more complex classification known as "**the five decisions**": **mandatory, recommended, neutral, reprehensible, and forbidden** ... In recent times, Islamic movements seeking to mobilize the masses and authors writing for a popular audience have emphasized the simpler distinction of **halal and haram**" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halal> - 10/7/2017)*

The "five decisions" referred to in the Wikipedia quote above are degrees of approval of things or actions being considered permitted or forbidden. Smoking, for example, is in the 4th category – reprehensible, but not forbidden or sinful.

The word, "forbidden" appears 42 times in Yusuf Ali's translation. For example:

*"... but **Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury ...**" (Sura 2:275)*

*"**He has only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and any (food) over which the name of other than Allah has been invoked ...**" (Sura 16:115)*

*"**Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry any but a woman similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever ... to the Believers such a thing is forbidden.**" (Sura 24:3)*

3) Sins Of The Prophets: Muslims believe prophets are without sin, but they made

“mistakes,” which God forgave. They say that the Qur’an’s use of the word “forgiveness” does not mean that they sinned, but only that their mistakes need forgiveness because God holds them to a higher standard. For example:

David and the ewe lamb (There’s no mention of his sin with Bathsheba):

*“Has the Story of the Disputants reached thee? Behold, they climbed over the wall of the private chamber; When they entered the presence of David, and he was terrified of them, they said: ‘Fear not: we are two disputants, one of whom has wronged the other: Decide now between us ... This man ... has nine and ninety ewes, and I have (but) one: Yet he says, ‘commit her to my care ...’ (David) said: ‘He has undoubtedly wronged thee in demanding thy (single) ewe to be added to his (flock of) ewes ...’ and **David gathered that We had tried him: he asked forgiveness of his Lord, fell down, bowing (in prostration), and turned (to Allah in repentance).**” (Sura 38:22-24)*

Muhammad’s “faults” [Both of the following verses are spoken to Muhammad]:

“That Allah may forgive thee thy faults of the past and those to follow ...” (Sura 48:2)

“... and ask forgiveness for thy fault, and ...” (Sura 40:55)

THE BIBLE:

The “wrath” of God is mentioned 507 times in the English translation of the Bible (mentioned in the use of several words: “wrath” 171 times, “anger” & “angry” 348 times, “fury” 22 times, “jealous” & “jealousy” 24 times, and “vengeance” 42 times).

When I contrasted this with the Qur’an, where God’s “wrath” is mentioned only 53 times and the words “anger,” “angry,” “fury,” “jealous” and “jealousy” are never used of God, **I was truly amazed and began to realize this is clearly a major subject in the Bible and speaks powerfully of both God’s justice and emotions!**

As I was studying this subject I was brought face to face with the awful revulsion God must experience as He looks at my sin! I am appreciating more “*the fear of the Lord*” and “*the terror of the Lord*” mentioned repeatedly in the Bible.

Here are several aspects of God’s Wrath that I see:

1. WRATH IS A PART OF GOD’S JUST CHARACTER:

a. God’s Wrathful Anger:

*“Pour out thine indignation ... let thy **wrathful anger** take hold of them.” (Psalm 69:24 - KJV)*

*“... Who can stand before you when once your **anger** is roused?” (Psalm 76:1)*

*“... the Lord is avenging and **wrathful**; the Lord ... keeps **wrath** for his enemies.” (Nahum 1:2)*

b. God’s Vengeance:

*“The Lord is a ... **avenging God** ... and ... takes **vengeance** on his adversaries ...” (Nahum 1:2)*

*“O LORD, **God of vengeance**, O **God of vengeance**, shine forth! Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve! (Psalm 94:1,2)*

*“... I will take **vengeance**, and I will spare no one.” (Isaiah 47:3)*

*“... for the LORD is a **God of recompense**; he will surely repay.” (Jeremiah 51:56)*

c. God's Jealousy:

"The Lord is a jealous and avenging God" (Nahum 1:2)

"... for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me," (Exodus 20:5)

2. GOD'S WRATH IS NOT ONLY COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED, IT IS ABSOLUTELY INEVITABLE!

Because of the nature of God's Justice and Righteousness— because of Who He is – He must react in wrath to the wickedness of sin. Like oil and water, God cannot co-exist with sin!

"In our human experience a tension often exists between justice and mercy. Sometimes one prevails at the expense of the other. But with God, justice always prevails. His justice must be satisfied; otherwise his moral government would be undermined. God does not exalt his mercy at the expense of his justice. And in order to maintain his justice, all sin without exception must be punished." - (from Nav's daily devotional)

3. THE VERBAL IMAGERY USED COULDN'T BE MORE GRAPHIC!

God's deep personal emotion in response to our horrible and repulsive sinfulness is expressed by the following verbal descriptions:

Burning Hot Wrath: *"my wrath may burn hot"; "your burning anger"; "my hot jealousy";*

Furious Wrath: *"furious anger"; "he has poured out his fury like fire;"*

Fire of Wrath: *"a flame of devouring fire and furious anger"; "poured out his fury like fire"*

Consuming Wrath: *"I have consumed them in my anger"; "God is a consuming fire"*

Great Wrath: *"in anger and in fury and in great wrath"*

Cup of Wrath: *"this cup of the wine of wrath," "let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty"*

Winepress of Wrath: *"the great winepress of the wrath of God"*

Poured Out Wrath: *"I will soon pour out my wrath upon you, and spend my anger against you"*

Destroying Wrath: *"but all the wicked he will destroy."*

Terrorizing Wrath: *"terrify them in his fury"*

Fierce Wrath: *"his fierce wrath," "on the day of his fierce anger"*

Avenging Wrath: *"a jealous and avenging God" "avenging and wrathful"*

Striking Wrath: *"the dead bodies of men whom I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath"*

4. GOD'S PATIENCE IN HIS WRATH:

a. God Is "Slow To Anger." The phrase, the Lord is *"slow to anger"* is found 9 times in the Bible (in stark contrast to the Qur'an's *"swift"* judgment):

"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6 – also Numbers 14:18)

"... But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them." (Nehemiah 9:17)

"But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Psalm 86:15 – also 103:8 & 145:8)

"... Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster." (Joel 2:13 – also Jonah 4:2)

"The Lord is slow to anger and great in power ..." (Nahum 1:3)

b. God Waits Patiently. God's just wrath on sin must and will be satisfied, but He

never has wanted to pour out His wrath on His creation, so **He has always waited patiently** for mankind to repent:

“The Lord ... is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance ... And count the patience of our Lord as salvation ...” (2 Peter 3:9,15)

“Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for [covered] their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath.” (Psalm 78:38)

“For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off.” (Isaiah 48:9)

“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4)

“God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared ...” (1 Pet. 3:20)

c. When Sin Is Beyond Remedy Destruction Is Sudden. In fact even when people refuse to repent, **God patiently waits until sin is beyond His tolerance. Then destruction is sudden (like a roaring lion as He pounces) with no further opportunity to repent:**

“they kept mocking ... and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD against his people became so great that there was no remedy.” (2 Chronicles 36:16 - NRSV)

“He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” (Proverbs 29:1 – KJV)

“The LORD roars ... and utters his voice ... The lion has roared; who will not fear? ...” (Amos 1:2; 3:8)

d. Destruction Sometimes By Sin Itself: When God's patience is exhausted **He sometimes expresses His wrath by turning us over to the destruction that will be brought by our own sins:**

“... for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.” (Isaiah 64:7) [NASB translates it: “...delivered us into the power of our iniquities.”]

“Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves ... For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature ... And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.” (Romans 1:24,26,28)

5. THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S WRATH:

a. God's Wrath On All Sin: God loves us sinners, but it is our sin that He hates. Sadly, because of our sin His wrath is poured out on us:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” (Romans 1:18)

b. God's Wrath On People, Cities or Nations Whose Sin Became So all Pervasive Or “Complete” As To Be Intolerable:

1) The World In Noah's Day: God patiently waited 10 generations after Adam until mankind's sin was beyond His endurance in the days of Noah. Genesis 6:3 seems to indicate that God allowed Noah to preach and warn the people of his day an additional 120 years during the time it took him to build the ark. He told them that God's judgment

would destroy them in a flood because of their sin. They obviously ignored him and when Noah and his family and the animals had all entered the ark the rain began to fall. No doubt the people then began to knock and ask Noah to let them in, but it was too late because God Himself had shut them in the ark. **God's wrath was sudden and final after a long time of great patience and warning:**

"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually ... So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created ...'" (Genesis 6:5,7)

*"And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and the seven others in his family. **Noah warned the world of God's righteous judgment.** So God protected Noah when he destroyed the world of ungodly people with a vast flood."* (2 Peter 2:5 – NLT)

*"And those that entered, male and female of all flesh ... **And the LORD shut him in.**"* (Genesis 7:16)

2) Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah: Only when the sin of those two cities had become "very grave" did God send His angels to destroy them:

*"Because **the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave**' ... 'we are about to destroy this place, because **the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD.**"* (Genesis 18:20; 19:13)

3) The Peoples Of The Land Of Canaan: God promised Abraham He would give his descendants the land of Canaan, but not until the sin of the Canaanites became "complete." God would be patient with them allowing them to repent of their sin. **When their sin finally had filled the land "from end to end" and become intolerable to God only then would He allow Abraham's descendants to destroy them and occupy their land.** He told Abraham:

*"... I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess ... Know for certain that your offspring ... shall come back here in the fourth generation, **for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.**"* (Genesis 15:16)

When that time came, God told His people Israel:

*"The land that you are entering, to take possession of it, is a land impure with **the impurity of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness.**"* (Ezra 9:11)

After a **long list of sexual perversions** in Leviticus chapter 20, including homosexuality and bestiality, God told Israel the Canaanites were being driven out of the land because of their practice of all those sins:

*"And you shall not walk in the customs of **the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them.**"* (Leviticus 20:23)

4) The People Of Nineveh In The Days Of Jonah: God sent the prophet Jonah to preach against Nineveh because of their great sin:

*"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah ... saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, **for their evil has come up before me.**"* (Jonah 1:1,2)

Because the people of Nineveh repented, God did not destroy them.

c. God's Wrath On His People Israel: Here are a few of many instances:

1) Punishment Of Israelites By Immediate Death: God sometimes put individuals to death who chose to rebel, worship idols, be immoral or complain:

- God killed **3,000 Israelites** by the Levites' swords plus **many more** by a plague when they made a golden calf and worshipped it (Exodus 32).
- God caused **Nadab & Abihu, sons of Aaron** to be burned to death when they presented "unauthorized fire" before the Lord (Leviticus 10).
- God caused the earth to swallow **Korah, Dathan and Abiran and their families**. He caused fire to burn up **250 men who offered unauthorized incense**. And He killed **14,700 more** Israelites by a plague. They had rebelled against Moses and God's leadership (Numbers 16).
- God sent poisonous snakes to kill **many Israelites** because of their constant grumbling about the food and water and against Moses' leadership He had provided for them (Numbers 21).
- God sent a plague to kill **24,000 Israelite men** because of their sexual immorality with Moabite women who came to entice them (Numbers 25).

2) Punishment Of A Whole Generation Of Israelites By Allowing Them To Die In The Desert Without Entering Into The Promised Land:

- God caused **a whole generation** of Israelites to die during 40 years of wandering in the wilderness because of their unbelief and failure to occupy the land God promised them (Numbers 14 & Deuteronomy 1,2).

3) Later Punishment Of Israel By Banishment From The Promised Land: Israel's unbelief and idolatry over many generations caused God to reluctantly punish them by driving them out of the promised land:

*"and [Israel] went and **served other gods and worshiped them ... and the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as they are this day.**" (Deuteronomy 29:26,28)*

*"... for our iniquities we ... **have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame ...**" (Ezra 9:7)*

*"**The LORD could no longer bear your evil deeds and the abominations that you committed. Therefore your land has become a desolation ...**" (Jeremiah 44:22)*

4) Israel's Ultimate Restoration: But, because of His covenant with Abraham, God promised to never totally destroy Israel. Instead He will eventually restore them to the whole land of Israel (when they remember and turn to God).

*"... **if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen ...**" (Nehemiah 1:8,9)*

*"**Though I scattered them among the nations, yet in far countries they shall remember me, and with their children they shall live and return.**" (Zech. 10:9)*

*"**Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up ... he will raise us up, that we may live before him.**" (Hosea 6:1,2)*

God tells us that He will do this at the end of this age when He will bring many nations to fight against Israel, so that He will be exalted in destroying those nations and delivering His people Israel:

*"Therefore, son of man, prophesy, and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord GOD: 'On that day **when my people Israel are dwelling securely, will you not know it? You will come from your place out***

of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army. You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land ... In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes ... But on that day ... my wrath will be roused in my anger ... I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord God ... With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him ... torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur.” (Ezekiel 38:14-16,18,21,22)

d. At Last God’s Wrath On Nations That Gleefully Attack God’s Chosen People:

“Therefore all who devour you [Israel] shall be devoured, and all your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity; those who plunder you shall be plundered, and all who prey on you I will make a prey.” (Jeremiah 30:16)

[Mount Seir] “And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it ... While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate ...” (Ezekiel 35:13-15)

e. God’s Wrath On Jesus, Because Of Our Sin: God’s full wrath was justly poured out on Jesus (who Himself was without any sin) when He took all of our sin upon Himself in order to die in our place and save us from God’s wrath:

“... smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed ... Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt ...” (Isaiah 53:4,5,10)

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

The greatest agony of that crucifixion for Jesus was when the Father had to turn His back and forsake His Son, because He became guilty of all our sin:

“... Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matthew 27:46)

f. God’s Wrath On Sinners In Eternity; Those Who Reject Jesus – God’s Gift Of Salvation:

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36)

“in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (2 Thessalonians 1:8)

“They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,” (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

“Then the kings of the earth ... and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (Revelation 6:15-17)

E. GOD'S WRATH AND *JIHAD* (HOLY WAR): *(Jihad is the Arabic word for "striving" or "struggle" for God, commonly called "Holy War.")*

ISLAM:

1. THE "GREATER JIHAD": Some Muslims claim that "the greater jihad" is the spiritual struggle in our hearts against sin, and the "lesser jihad" is the outer, physical war against unbelievers with physical weapons of war. They base their idea of "the greater jihad" on the following two verses:

*"And **whosoever striveth** [jihad], **striveth only for himself** ..." (Surah 29:6)*

*"Therefore listen not to **the unbelievers, but strive** [jihad] **against them with the utmost strenuousness, with the (Quran).**" (Sura 25:52; see also 22:78)*

However, there are varying opinions about the meaning of these verses, while there are at least 168 verses in the Qur'an mentioning outer physical Jihad. **The Qur'an overwhelmingly speaks of jihad as physical war against unbelievers.** In fact, most Muslim scholars agree that a "greater jihad" is unorthodox:

"... all four schools of Sunni jurisprudence (Fiqh) as well as the Shi'ite tradition make no reference at all to the "greater" jihad, only the lesser. So even before examining the evidence against the validity of this hadith, it is known that the concept of the greater jihad is unorthodox and heretical to the majority of the world's Muslims." (from http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Lesser_vs_Greater_Jihad -10/2017)

2. NATURE OF JIHAD: In addition to being called "*jihad*" (struggle), it is also referred to as fighting "*in the cause of God*," so it is actually God's cause. It is God's war expressing God's wrath against unbelievers by the hands of believers:

a. The Qur'an's Teaching About *Jihad* (Struggling In The Cause Of God) Includes The Total Destruction Of All Non Islamic Religions, Governments, And Laws.

S. Abul A'La Maududi is one of the most read authors of Islamic literature today. He is also the founder of the *Jamaiyat Islami* ("Islamic Party"), one of the oldest Islamic revival movements. In one of his booklets entitled ***Jihad in Islam*** (5th edition published in February of 1991). He dogmatically states several things:

1) that Islam is not a conventional religion:

*"We are forced to admit the point that If you regard Islam as a religion in the conventional meaning of the term and **if, indeed, Islam be a conventional type of religion, the necessity of 'Jihad' cannot be justified.**" (page 4)*

2) that Islam is an international revolutionary party:

*"In reality **Islam is a revolutionary ideology and programme which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals ... And 'Jihad' refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic Party brings into play to achieve this 'objective.'**" (page 5)*

3) that the objective of Islam is to establish Islamic rule throughout the whole world for the benefit of all humanity:

*“Islam has its own particular ideological stand point and **practical programme to carry out reforms for the welfare of mankind. Islam wishes to destroy all States and Governments anywhere on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and programme of Islam** regardless of the country or the Nation which rules it. **The purpose of Islam is to set up ... an ideological Islamic State ... Islam requires the earth – not just a portion, but the whole planet ... because the entire mankind should benefit from the ideology and welfare programme ... All sacrifices and exertions should be directed to achieve the one and the only end i.e, the establishment of a just and equitable social order among human beings ...**” (pages 6,7,9)*

4) that Jihad is a “struggle in the cause of God”:

*“But the ‘Jihad’ of Islam is not merely a ‘struggle’; it is a ‘**struggle for the Cause of God**’. ‘For the Cause of God’ is an essential condition for ‘Jihad’ in Islam ... All such work is undertaken for the collective well-being of mankind and in which the functionar has no vested interest in the present world. **His sole interest being to win the favour of God ... the sole purpose of human life is to win the favour of the Creator of the universe ... But the most important, nay, the fundamental ideal among the revolutionary doctrines of that Revolutionary Party called ‘Muslims’ is to expend all the powers of body and soul, your life and goods in the fight against the evil forces of the world, not that having annihilated them you should step into their shoes, but in order that evil and contumacy should be wiped out and God’s Law should be enforced in the world.**” (pages 7,8,10)*

b. The Qur’an’s Teaching About Jihad Developed Chronologically In Four Stages. The first stage is to patiently endure persecution. The second stage is to permit defensive response, the third stage is to command defensive response, and **the fourth and final stage, which is in effect today, commands believers to conduct offensive unprovoked war on unbelievers until they submit to the will of God (Islam):**

*“... **fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war) ...**” (Sura 9:4)*

*“... **Fight them and Allah will punish them by your hands ...**” (Sura 9:14)*

*“**Fight those who believe not in Allah ... nor acknowledge the religion of Truth ...**” (Sura 9:29)*

*“O ye who believe! ... **ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, ye cling heavily to the earth? Unless ye go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty ...**” (Sura 9:38,39)*

*“**God hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods. For theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise). They fight in His cause, and slay and are slain.**” (Sura 9:111)*

It is not my purpose here to study *jihad* in detail showing the chronological development of its *four stages, but simply to show its relationship to God’s wrath.

*[For more details about Islam’s four stages of Jihad see: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Bailey/jihad.htm>]

[Also see Nabeel Qureshi’s book, [Answering Jihad](#)]

3. MUHAMMAD AND JIHAD: According to Islam, each believer is expected to follow the example of Muhammad in all areas of life, and *Shariah* Law is largely based on this prescription. Nabeel Qureshi in his best-selling book, *No God But One, Allah Or Jesus* says that Muhammad “*commissioned or participated in eighty-six battles over the course of nine years.*” and he concludes from this fact, “*one would consider such activity among his followers to be inevitable.*” (page 148)

THE BIBLE:

We will look at :

1. The Bible's Teaching About God's Use Of War
2. Comparing Old Testament Israel To The Individual New Testament Believer
3. Comparison Of Islamic Jihad With Old Testament Wars
4. Death And God's Wrath

Christians often criticize Islamic jihad as inhumane and against the nature of God. Muslims respond that the Bible too tells of God giving instruction to His people Israel to annihilate whole nations including women, children and the elderly (it is probable, in my opinion, that Muhammad obtained his ideas about jihad from a distorted understanding of parts of the Old Testament which he had heard). What is our answer to this? **What is the difference between Islamic jihad and the Old Testament's teaching about God's use of war?** We will look at what the Bible says, and try to see its distinction from jihad.

1. THE BIBLE'S TEACHING ABOUT GOD'S USE OF WAR:

a. God Is Not The Creator Of Wars: In the beginning God did not create mankind to fight and hate. He created everything good, including mankind:

*"And God saw **everything that he had made**, and behold, **it was very good.**" (Genesis 1:31)*

Mankind is the creator of wars. Wars are the product of our hatred and selfish ambition, which flow out of the spiritual death we inherited from Adam:

*"**What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.**" (James 4:1,2)*

However, God in His sovereignty gives mankind freedom to choose. Even though we usually choose to do evil and kill, He sovereignly uses even our evil wrath and hatred to fulfill all His good purposes and to bring praise to Himself:

*"Surely **the wrath of man shall praise you**" (Psalm 76:10)*

b. God's Destruction Of Nations In The Past (Old Testament times): The principles God used in dealing with people in the days before the coming of Jesus the Messiah are different from the way He deals with people now. **Then God dealt with physical nations** (especially with His chosen people Israel) **but now He mostly deals directly with the spiritual lives of individuals.**

1) Sometimes God Himself Directly Destroyed Peoples Or Nations. In His wrath God sent the great flood in the days of Noah (Genesis 6-9) and He poured fire and brimstone on Sodom & Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19). He did this **because, in spite of repeated warnings, their sin had grown beyond His tolerance.** But **He never destroyed any righteous people among them** (God rescued Noah and Lot from the destruction He sent on their peoples).

*"... when once the longsuffering of God waited **in the days of Noah**, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, **eight souls were saved by water.**" (1 Peter 3:20)*

[angels said] *"we are about to destroy this place, because ... the LORD has sent us to destroy it.' ... As morning dawned, **the angels urged Lot, saying, 'Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.**" (Genesis 19:13,15)*

2) Sometimes He Used Their Own Sin to Destroy Nations. For example in the days of Moses He destroyed Egypt by sending ten plagues (Exodus chapters 4-12) because Pharaoh worshipped idols and refused to acknowledge the true God by letting the Israelites go to worship Him. (It's interesting that 4 times God's Word says Pharaoh "*hardened his heart,*" and 8 times it says "*God hardened Pharaoh's heart.*" God knew from before creation that Pharaoh would resist obeying His messages through Moses and refuse to turn from his idols, so He used Pharaoh's hard heart to bring Egypt's destruction.)

3) Sometimes He Let Other Nations Destroy them. He often destroyed nations indirectly by allowing other nations to fight and destroy them. He used their evil desire to destroy, which was their own, not something God gave them:

a) Using Evil Unbelieving Nations To Destroy Other Nations: God did this in His wrath against the sin of His people, Israel:

"The LORD says, "O Israel, ever since Gibeah, there has been only sin and more sin! ... Now whenever it fits my plan, I will attack you, too. I will call out the armies of the nations to punish you for your multiplied sins." (Hosea 10:9,10 – NLT)

God even used cruel nations like the Assyrians and Babylonians to partially destroy His chosen people Israel because of their disobedience and idolatry:

"Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!" (Isaiah 10:5)

"... 'Because you have not obeyed my words, behold, I will send ... Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land [Israel] and its inhabitants ...'" (Jeremiah 25:8,9)

"... thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city [Jerusalem] into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall capture it ... For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth." (Jeremiah 32:28-30)

But then later He punished the Babylonians also for their sins of idolatry and their cruelty against other nations, including the people of Israel:

"Then after 70 years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity ..." (Jeremiah 25:12-14)

"Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him, and now at last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has gnawed his bones. Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing punishment on the king of Babylon and his land, as I punished the king of Assyria." (Jeremiah 50:17,18)

b) Using His Own People Israel To Fight Wars Against Evil Nations:

Sometimes God allowed or even commanded His chosen people Israel to attack and/or totally destroy other nations. **(The following Bible passages in which God commanded Israel to destroy other nations are the Bible's closest equivalent to Islam's "Jihad" and may well be the original inspiration for that teaching).** These wars were both defensive and offensive:

Defensive Wars – Against Nations Attacking Israel:

- **Amorites & Bashan:** *"Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, 'Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into field or vineyard. We will not drink the water of a well ...' But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. He ...*

went out ... and fought against Israel. And Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword and took possession of his land ... Then they turned and went up by the way to Bashan. And Og the king of Bashan came out against them ... But the LORD said to Moses, 'Do not fear him, for I have given him into your hand, and all his people, and his land ...' So they defeated him and his sons and all his people, until he had no survivor left. And they possessed his land." (Numbers 21:21-24,33-35)

- **Arabs, Ammonites & Ashdodites:** "... the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites ... **all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it ... 'Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight ... Our God will fight for us.'**" (Nehemiah 4:7-8,14,20)

Offensive Wars – Against Nations Whose Sins Were Intolerable to God: After looking at the following examples, we will see God's purposes:

- **Midianites:** When the Israelites were traveling to Canaan, the Midianites sent their women to seduce the Israelite men into sexual immorality and idolatry. God punished Israel by sending a plague that killed 24,000 of the Israelites who indulged in immorality, and then in His wrath He told Moses to annihilate the whole Midianite nation:

"The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Avenge the people of Israel on the Midianites ...' So Moses spoke to the people, saying, 'Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the LORD's vengeance on Midian ... They warred against Midian ... and killed every male. They killed the ... five kings of Midian ... All their cities ... they burned with fire, and took all the spoil and all the plunder ... Moses said to them, '... kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. But all the young girls who have not known man ... keep alive for yourselves.'" (Numbers 31:1-3,7-8,11,15,9,17,18)

- **Amorites/Canaanites:** God commanded Moses and Joshua to lead the people of Israel in taking possession of Canaan (Palestine today) by "possessing" their land, forcing the Amorites/Canaanites to leave or be totally destroyed. But first He also gave separate instruction about other nations Israel might choose to fight against:

"When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. And if it responds to you peaceably and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword, but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves. And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you. Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God." (Deuteronomy 20:10-18)

*"Now therefore **arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them** ... From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river ... Euphrates ... to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun ... **No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life ... Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous ... you are to ... go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess ...**" (Joshua 1:2-7,11)*

- **Amalakites:** Later God commanded King Saul to completely destroy the nation of Amalek (a grandson of Esau, Jacob's brother). Amalek had previously attacked Israel, and apparently they were so evil that God told Moses He would eventually wipe out even the memory of that nation:

*"Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek.' ... And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write this as a memorial in a book ... that **I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.**' ... The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exodus 17:8-16)*

Later God fulfilled that through Samuel and King Saul:

*"And Samuel said to Saul, '... **Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."**'" (1 Samuel 15:1-3)*

c. God's Destruction Of Nations In The Present (New Testament Times):

Ever since the coming of Jesus the Messiah God has been dealing with mankind in a different way – **spiritual life rather than physical life, and individuals rather than nations.** Therefore God is working with wars in a different way with different principles today:

1) God Tolerates Evil Nations Fighting Wars. Of course God is sovereign, and for reasons we don't fully understand He allows evil nations to fight against and even conquer other nations – both evil and not so evil. Because He is primarily dealing with individual spiritual souls instead of physical nations, He normally allows natural human factors to determine the outcome of wars and tolerates the evil of both nations until the Day of Judgment:

*"And **when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet.**" (Mark 13:7)*

*"**Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.**" (Luke 21:10)*

2) God Teaches Believers Not to Take Revenge. In this New Testament age God never instructs individual believers to themselves physically attack or kill evil individuals. He tells us not to take revenge for evil actions committed against us, but to overcome evil with love:

*"But I say to you, **Do not resist the one who is evil.** But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also ... You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.**" (Matthew 5:39,43,44)*

“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’ ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:19,21)

God says all such hatred is evil and comes from an evil heart:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that **everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.**” (Matthew 5:21,22)

“And he [Jesus] said, ‘What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For **from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.**” (Mark 7:20-23)

3) Instead, God Instructs Believers To Leave To Their Government Authorities The Task Of Punishing Criminals And Fighting Against Enemy Nations. God tells us to allow government authorities (police, courts, army) to do this because they are His instruments in carrying out His wrath on mankind’s evil and injustice. He allows us to punish criminals and to attack and destroy evil nations only as members of our government’s police, court system or armed forces, which are created to defend its people and nation:

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God ... Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For **he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.**” (Romans 13:1-4)

4) God Teaches Us Believers To Fight Spiritual Enemies While Loving Human Enemies. Our real enemies are not people, but spiritual forces – Satan, unseen evil forces behind the world’s rulers, and our own evil nature:

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

“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.” (Matthew 5:44,45)

2. COMPARING OLD TESTAMENT ISRAEL TO THE INDIVIDUAL NEW

TESTAMENT BELIEVER: It is helpful to compare God’s working in the physical nation of Israel before the coming of Christ with His working in the spiritual lives of individual believers today. The former gives us a prophetic picture of the latter. By this comparison we can understand why God uses wars today in a different way:

a. Israel, A Physical Nation Called God’s “Son:” In the Old Testament era sometime after the great flood, God chose Abraham to be the father of His own chosen physical nation of people. The people of Israel did not themselves choose to be a part of that nation, but were born *physically* from Abraham through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob (whom God renamed “Israel”). Jacob’s twelve sons became the twelve tribes of

Israel. When that family grew to become a *physical* nation in Egypt God chose them to be His own people and **He called His chosen nation His own “son”**:

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” (Hosea 11:1)

He delivered them from the *physical* slavery of Pharaoh, provided all of their *physical* needs through 40 years in the wilderness, and gave them the *physical* land of Canaan (Palestine). In that land He promised to bless them with *physical* children, crops and herds, to make them *physically* healthy and prosperous, and to enable them to defeat their *physical* enemies with *physical* weapons of war. This promise was part of His covenant with them on the condition that they obey all of the Law He gave to Moses for them. That law was a complete legal system for a *physical* nation including family, societal, financial, political and religious law.

b. A New Testament Believer, A Spiritual Child Of God: In this New Testament age, God gives each believer a *spiritual* birth as His own *spiritual* child:

*“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become **children of God**, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but **of God**.”* (John 1:12,13)

*“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been **born of God**, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever **has been born of him**. By this we know that we love **the children of God**, when we love God and obey his commandments.”* (1 John 5:1,2)

God also baptizes (immerses) His **spiritual children** into His **spiritual body** (the church) by His own Holy *Spirit*, who comes to live in them (Water baptism, which is commanded by Jesus, physically symbolizes this spiritual immersion). Each person chooses individually to receive Christ regardless of whatever nation or people they were physically born in. Thus He makes each believer a part of **a spiritual nation**, a member of **the spiritual body of Christ**, and a stone in **the spiritual temple of God**. He blesses and prospers each believer with *spiritual* blessings such as peace and joy, and enables him/her to **defeat spiritual enemies** (the world system, our carnal nature and the devil) **in spiritual warfare with spiritual weapons**:

*“For though we walk in the flesh, **we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh** [not physical] **but have divine power to destroy** [spiritual] **strongholds**.”* (2 Corinthians 10:3,4)

*“... **take up the whole armor of God** ... having fastened on the **belt of truth**, and having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, and, as **shoes** for your feet, having put on the **readiness given by the gospel of peace**. In all circumstances take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**, praying at all times in the Spirit, with **all prayer and supplication**.”* (Ephesians 6:13-18)

Here is a chart to help us see the contrast between the two:

<u>Israel, Physical Children of Abraham</u>	<u>Believer, A Spiritual Child of God</u>
<u>Birth</u> : physical birth from Abraham	spiritual “new birth” by Holy Spirit
<u>Salvation</u> : from Pharaoh’s slavery	from sin’s slavery
<u>Baptism</u> : physical baptism in the Red Sea	spiritual baptism into body of Christ
<u>Sanctuary</u> : God’s presence in physical Temple	God’s presence in our inner being
<u>Offerings</u> : animals, grain, fruits, etc.	self, praise, thanksgiving, service
<u>Law</u> : laws & punishments for a nation	instruction for believers & church

<u>Reward</u> : land of Canaan (Palestine)	God's eternal fellowship & kingdom
<u>Prosperity</u> : crops, wealth, health, children	spiritual fruit, gifts & children
<u>Life</u> : 70+ years (physical)	eternal life with God (spiritual)
<u>Food</u> : physical manna, fruit of the land	Word of God (spiritual bread)
<u>Enemies</u> : physical nations	world, flesh, devil
<u>Weapons</u> : physical (sword, shield, etc.)	spiritual (faith, salvation, etc.)

Therefore, we need to understand that individual believers do not have any guarantees from God that He will defeat their *physical* enemies, prevent *physical* accidents or diseases, or provide *physical* prosperity (even though He often does).

3. COMPARISON OF ISLAMIC JIHAD WITH OLD TESTAMENT WARS: Some people say that Christians have no reason to criticize Islamic jihad since the Old Testament of the Bible contains clear instructions from God to His people Israel to annihilate entire nations – men, women and children. It is true that God gave those instructions, but I believe there are clear differences between that teaching and the teaching of the Qur'an about jihad:

a. Differences:

1) Different People To Be Destroyed: Islamic jihad is aimed at the **unbelievers (non-Muslims)** of the world (Most Muslim scholars include Jews and Christians as well as pagans, and some fanatics even include Muslims of other sects and Muslims who hold non Islamic political and social beliefs).

God's wrath in the Old Testament was poured out upon some very specific **excessively sinful people; not just Gentiles (non-Jews)**.

2) Different Reason To Destroy People: The Qur'an's reason for annihilating people is their **unbelief in Allah and their refusal to submit to Islam**:

"... fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war) ..." (Sura 9:5)

"... when ye meet the unbelievers (in fight), smite them at their necks ..." (Sura 47:4)

But the Old Testament's reason for God annihilating peoples was **their refusal to repent of their excessively evil practices after many warnings**:

[in Noah's day] *"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* (Genesis 6:5)

"... Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave ..." (Genesis 18:20)

[God told Israel]: *"... it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you ..."* (Deuteronomy 9:4,5)

3) Different Opportunity For Repenting Or Being Destroyed: The Qur'an allows Muslims to kill unbelievers and idolaters if they refuse to declare **belief in Allah and submission to Islam** after only one warning, that is **in the face of death, when the knife is at their throats**:

"... fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them ... But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them; for God is oft-forgiving, most merciful." (Sura 9:5)

"Therefore, when ye meet the unbelievers (in fight), smite them at their necks. At length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them) ..." (Sura 47:4)

In contrast, God in Old Testament times, because of His great love for all people, sent messengers with the message of repentance and **patiently waited, giving them repeated opportunities to repent of their sins and be forgiven until their sin had become beyond God's tolerance and His patience was exhausted:**

"For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off." (Isaiah 48:9)

"they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared ..." (1 Peter 3:20)

God had long before promised Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to His descendants, allowing them to annihilate the Canaanites, but **because of His patient long suffering** He told him He would not let them enter it **until the Canaanites' sin was "complete."** In other words, God continued to give the Canaanites the opportunity to repent and did not destroy them until their sin was so "complete" that it was intolerable and irreversible:

"And he [God] said to him, 'I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess' ... Then the LORD said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your offspring ... shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.' ..." (Genesis 15:7-8,16)

It is important to notice that when God's patience finally ran out, destruction was sudden with no opportunity to repent:

"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Proverbs 29:1 – KJV)

"... as it was in the days of Noah ... They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise ... in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26-29)

I'm sure there were many people who ran and knocked on the door of the ark after the flooding began, but God had shut the door and did not allow Noah to open it for those "repentant" sinners. Likewise when the fire and brimstone began to fall on Sodom and Gomorra there was no longer any opportunity for those people to repent and be saved. And when God told the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites He did not tell them to spare them if they repented. **God does not invite insincere, "foxhole repentance" because He knows the human heart.**

4) Different Application For Today: The teaching of the Qur'an regarding outward, physical Jihad is accepted by most Muslims as **valid today**, although liberal Muslims claim that it is not. The teaching of the Bible regarding **fighting and destroying wicked nations**, however, **was only for the nation of Israel in the time of the Old Testament.**

b. Effects From These Differences: Naturally the differences in these two teachings produce different results. Here are some:

1) Effect On Genuineness Of Conversions: Islamic jihad uses war by Muslims to terrorize “pagans” and “unbelievers” with the threat of death in order to “persuade” them to become Muslims. If they verbally confess the Islamic creed and submit to the duties of Islam they are released from the threat of death. Thus many confessions are not from the heart.

In The Old Testament God was looking for sinners to **freely repent and trust Him for forgiveness of sins**, which would enabled them to enter into a loving relationship with Him. **He did not terrorize them with an army holding swords to their throats in order to get them to “repent” and “believe.” God patiently tried to persuade them with verbal warnings from those who trusted in Him.** Noah, “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), warned people for 120 years before the flood (Genesis chapters 6-8). “Righteous Lot” warned the people of Sodom and his future sons-in-law (2 Peter 2:7,8). **Because they ignored these warnings from God’s messengers, He suddenly destroyed the world with the flood (Genesis 6-8) and Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven (Genesis 18-19).** The prophet Jonah stood among the people of Nineveh and warned them of imminent destruction (Jonah chapter 3), leading to their repentance. In this way, without terrorizing them with an army, **God saved those who freely chose to repent and destroyed those who did not.** Thus the repentance of those who repented (even that of the people of Nineveh in the days of the prophet Jonah) was genuine.

2) Effect On Life After Conversion: Islam has to be sure those who convert to Islam under the threat of imminent death continue to submit, which necessitates **continual threatening. According to Islamic Law (Shariah) any Muslim who leaves Islam is worthy of being physically assaulted and/or killed by the hands of devout Muslims:**

“But if they repent, establish regular prayer, and practice regular charity, they are your brethren in faith ... But if they violate their oaths after their covenant ... Fight them and God will punish them by your hands ...” (Sura 9:11,12)

The Bible shows that God’s purpose in our repentance is for us to freely choose to love and fellowship with Him both in this life and throughout eternity:

“And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served ... or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15)

3) Effect On God’s Justice And Mercy: The way in which God destroyed peoples and nations reveals the quality of His justice and mercy. Whenever the evil of a nation or city had become so bad that God could no longer tolerate it **He always made a way to save alive any who were “righteous” believers in those evil nations. God did not destroy the righteous along with the majority of unrighteous people.**

God **gave Noah time to prepare an ark** in order to save him and his family in the flood. God **sent angels to remove Lot** and his family from Sodom before He destroyed it. God **protected the first born of Israel by the blood of innocent lambs** while He destroyed Egypt’s first born. God **strengthened the walls around the house of Rahab** so she and her family would be saved when He destroyed Jericho. God **spared a “remnant” from Israel** when He allowed Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and take most of the Israelites as captives:

“And the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness,’ declares the Lord GOD.” (Ezekiel 14:12-14)

4. GOD’S WRATH AND DEATH: [for a fuller study of death see chapter 13 – God’s Life]

a. God Did Not Create Death. God never said, *“Let there be death.”* Death is simply the cessation of life. He created life and has the authority to take it away:

“For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts him off, when God takes away his life?” (Job 27:8)

b. Sin Is The Cause Of Death; Of The Cessation Of Life:

“But each person is ... enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” (James 1:14,15)

c. But God Is Patient Because He Does Not Want People To Die:

“As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live ...” (Ezekiel 33:11)

d. God In His Mercy Takes Away Death By Taking Away Our Sin Through Jesus’ Death And Resurrection:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

5. CONCLUSIONS:

a. Any Attempt To Escape Death By Doing Good Deeds To Earn Righteousness Is In Vain.

The more we try to attain paradise by keeping all of God’s Law and avoiding every sin the more we find ourselves unable to do so perfectly, and instead we are under the curse of God’s law given to Moses:

“But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.” (Deuteronomy 28:15)

“For all who rely on works of the law [of Moses] are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’” (Galatians 3:10)

b. God Has Already Provided Life For Us By Destroying Death Through Death. He provides the gift of perfect righteousness to those of us who believe in Jesus the Messiah and accept His death in our place. Through Jesus’ resurrection from the grave God has swallowed up death and provided eternal life for us:

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself [Jesus] likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Hebrews 2:14,15)

“... ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” (1 Corinthians 15:54)

F. MY REACTIONS:

I wonder why the Qur'an frequently mentions wrath as an attribute of God but not righteousness or justice. The Qur'an certainly does not deny God's righteousness or justice, and it often mentions Him doing righteous and just things, but righteousness and justice are not specifically mentioned as attributes of His being. Could it be that God's wrath would seem to highlight His omnipotent greatness (which Islam emphasizes) more than His righteousness or justice would?

Curiously, according to Islam, God's wrath seems to be detached from any emotion on His part. This may account for the fact that words, like "anger" and "fury" are never used of God in the Qur'an. Therefore His wrath affects only the sinner, and has no emotional affect on God Himself! He seems to be like a professional judge who daily listens objectively and pronounces judgment on the crimes of evil people while hardening himself against any personal emotional feelings of compassion or grief.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Fatherhood:

A. Is God Our Father?

(The following six sections are **The Six Aspects Of God's Fatherhood**)

B. **God's Life & Creation Of Life (Children)** (Life & Image Of God - Chapter 13)

C. **God's Presence In His Children's Lives** (Immanence Of God – Chapter 4)

D. **God's Care For His Children**

E. **God's Love For His Children** (Love Of God – Chapter 14)

F. **God's Mentoring Of His Children**

G. **God's Honoring Of His Children**

H. Jesus, The Revelation Of God's Fatherhood

I. My Reactions

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. IS GOD OUR FATHER?

ISLAM:

1. ISLAM REJECTS THE USE OF THE WORD, "FATHER" FOR GOD:

a. **God Not A "Father:"** The Qur'an never calls God "Father."

b. **God Has No "Son" And Does Not "beget" Children:** The Qur'an categorically rejects the Bible's teaching that Jesus is the Son of God. In fact the Qur'an pronounces a curse on those who believe Jesus is the Son of God:

"The Jews call 'Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!" (Sura 9:30)

The Qur'an rejects the idea that God "begets" children like a human father with a wife, which is what the Qur'an says is the meaning of calling Jesus God's "Son:"

"He begetteth not, nor is he begotten." (Sura 112:3)

"They say, 'God hath begotten a son.' Glory be to Him – Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth. Everything renders worship to Him." (Sura 2:116; also 10:68; 23:91)

"(Both) the Jews and the Christians say: 'We are sons of Allah, and his beloved.' ... Nay, ye are but men,- of the men he hath created ..." (Sura 5:18)

“... How can He have a son when He hath no consort? He created all things ...” (Sura 6:101)

“It is not befitting to (the majesty of) God that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, ‘Be’ and it is.” (Sura 19:35)

c. Not Just A Misunderstanding: Islam’s rejection of the word “Father” for God is not because Muslims are incapable of understanding the use of the term “father” in a spiritual (non-physical) sense. It is because Muslims feel they must reject whatever the Qur’an rejects (see verses above). For this reason, **no amount of explanation will persuade devout Muslims to “understand” otherwise.** They believe calling God “Father” is an insult to God’s glory and demeans Him to the level of being equal to mortal human beings. Bilquis Sheikh, a Pakistani Muslim woman seeking God was encouraged by a Christian friend to address God in prayer as “Father,” which repulsed her at first. Later she did, which led to her receiving Christ. Her book is called, “I Dared To Call Him Father.”

No doubt this reaction was also partly due to the teaching about Mary being “the Mother of God” that had begun to surface in Christianity by the time of Muhammad, and perhaps also to the earlier pagan beliefs of the Greeks and Romans, who believed in many gods with consorts and offspring by them.

Sadly some well-meaning Christians have attempted to avoid offending Muslims by substituting terms like “God’s Beloved” for “Son of God” and “Allah” instead of “Father” in Bible translation efforts.

2. BUT ISLAM DOES DESCRIBE SOME OF GOD’S FATHERLY

ATTRIBUTES. Even though Islam does not call God “Father,” it describes some of His fatherly attributes; e. g., He gives life to (creates) human beings and He is kind and caring toward some people. We will be looking at these aspects in the following sections.

THE BIBLE:

1. THE FREQUENCY AND USE OF “FATHER” FOR GOD: It is significant that **the word, “Father” is used in reference to God 277 times in the Bible** (but never in the Qur’an)! Obviously this is a major emphasis in the Bible’s teaching and represents a clear contrast between the theology of the Qur’an and the Bible.

The word “Father” is used of God **17 times in the Old Testament**, but **260 times in the New Testament.** The Bible’s teaching about God’s fatherhood develops from a bud in the Old Testament to a beautiful flower in full bloom in the New Testament.

Most of the use of the title, “Father” for God in the New Testament is by Jesus, who used it 172 times. 120 of them are in John’s Gospel, where the major emphasis is on Jesus the “Son of God” and on God’s love for us. **It is significant that He taught his disciples to address God in prayer as “Father” and not only “God” or “Lord”** (Luke 11:2; Matt.6:9). Here are a few of the New Testament occurrences of God being our “Father” and we being His sons (children):

*“Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:3)*

*“**one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**” (Ephesians 4:6)*

*“**To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.**” (Philippians 4:20)*

*“And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there **they will be called ‘sons of***

the living God.” (Romans 9:26)

2. GOD, THE ORIGINAL FATHER: I used to think that the Bible used the word, “Father” for God in order to help us understand a part of God’s character by comparing Him to human fatherhood; something we understand and experience. In other words, I thought the word, “Father” was being used for God metaphorically, saying He is *like* a human father. However, I have discovered that **God is the ORIGINAL FATHER! We were created in the image of God, so human fatherhood is a reflection** (although, a very poor one) **of God’s fatherhood, not the reverse:**

*“For this reason I bow my knees before **the Father, from whom every family^a in heaven and on earth is named**” (Ephesians 3:14.15) [text note in the ESV: “^a or **fatherhood**; the Greek word is *patria*, which is closely related to the word for *Father*”]*

As human fathers we experience all the aspects of God’s fatherhood, in whose image we were created. God’s fatherhood is perfect and pure, but ours is badly distorted.

3. OTHER FACTS ABOUT GOD’S FATHERHOOD:

a. God Himself Initiated This Relationship With Us:

“I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me ...” (2 Corinthians 6:18)

b. Intimacy Of Fatherhood Seen In Personal Pronouns: Our Heavenly Father’s intimate relationship with us is seen 80 times in possessive pronouns (“**my** Father” 47 times, “**your** Father” 24 times and “**our** Father” 9 times). For this reason, while unbelievers call god “Lord” or “the Almighty,” only believers call Him “Father.”

c. The Father Or Origin Of All Things. Modern science may not agree, but God is the origin of all things, including time (In Isaiah 9:6 He’s called the “Everlasting Father”) and our spirits (“Father of spirits” in Hebrews 12:9):

*“For **from him and through him and to him are all things ...**” (Romans 11:36)*

*“for us **there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things ...**” (1 Corinthians 8:6)*

d. God’s Fatherhood Is Parenthood (Not Just Male). God is not a gender specific “father.” God also compares Himself to a mother.

“As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you ...” (Isaiah 66:13)

In the January 19th reading of Oswald Chambers’ My Utmost For His Highest, he refers to God as “*the Father-Mother God.*”

4. THE SIX ASPECTS OF GOD’S FATHERHOOD: The next six sections of this study are the six aspects of God’s fatherhood revealed in Scripture:

- B. God’s Life & Creation of Life (Children)
- C. God’s Presence In His Children’s Lives
- D. God’s Care For His Children
- E. God’s Love For His Children
- F. God’s Mentoring Of His Children
- G. God’s Honoring Of His Children

B. GOD'S LIFE & CREATION OF LIFE

(CHILDREN): Our Heavenly Father makes us His children by giving us His own life – life out of Himself. Because this is an extensive subject I have made it a separate study (See Chapter 13 – The Life & Image Of God).

C. GOD'S PRESENCE IN HIS CHILDREN'S

LIVES: God lives with His children. He is not an absentee father either ignoring us or living far away, and He will never leave us. This subject is covered in detail in part B of chapter 4 (The Immanence Of God).

D. GOD'S CARE FOR HIS CHILDREN (Kindness, Provision, Protection):

ISLAM:

Although the Qur'an does not call God "Father" or believers God's "children," it does teach that God is kind and good to us, and that He is our provider and protector. The following five of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God relate to this: [See appendix 1 for the full list]

Al-Karim (Kareem) = The Most Generous, Bountiful

Al-Barr = The Source of Kindness, Doer of Good

Al-Ghani (Ghune) = The Wealthy, All-Sufficient, Generous

Al-Khair = The Good

Al-Hafiz (Haafiz) = The Preserver, Guardian, Caretaker

1. GOD IS KIND AND GENEROUS. As we have already seen, God's mercy (Chapter 7) in the Qur'an is basically the same as God's kindness. The same is true of God's love (Chapter 14) in the Qur'an. The kindness and generosity of God is a strong theme in the Qur'an, amplifying God's omnipotent power and sovereignty.

Apart from the words translated "mercy" and "love," His "kindness" to believers in this life is spoken of 13 times, and His "generous provision" or "generous reward" to believers in Paradise is mentioned 7 times. Most of these verses refer to God's bountiful goodness to those who are already believers, but a few of them speak of His kindness available to all people. Here are a few examples:

"... And never would Allah Make your faith of no effect. For Allah is to all people Most surely full of kindness, Most Merciful." (Sura 2:143)

“... *to the Believers is he most kind and merciful.*” (Sura 9:128)

2. GOD IS OUR PROVIDER. The Qur’an calls God our “**provider**” at least 42 times. Here are three of them:

“*They rejoice in the bounty **provided** by Allah ...*” (Sura 3:170)

“... *and **provide** for our sustenance, for thou art the best **Sustainer** (of our needs).*” (Sura 5:114)

“... *these are (all) in very truth **the Believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.***” (Sura 8:74)

“*O ye that believe! Fear Allah ... He will **provide** for you a Light by which ye shall walk (straight in your path), and He will forgive you (your past) ...*” (Sura 57:28)

3. GOD IS OUR GUARDIAN PROTECTOR. At least 50 times the Qur’an calls God “**protector**” and 11 times “**guardian,**” usually emphasizing His great power:

“*Allah is the **protector** of those who have faith ...*” (Sura 2:257)

“... *be sure that Allah is your **protector** - the **best to protect** and the best to help.* (Sura 8:40)

“... ***Except for Him ye have no protector nor helper.***” (Sura 9:116)

“***Your Guardian-Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days ...***” (Sura 7:54)

4. GOD IS OUR CHERISHER. God is called “**cherisher**” 36 times, most of which say He is the “**Lord and cherisher,**” but a few simply say “cherisher:”

“*Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and **I am your Lord and cherisher:** therefore serve Me (and no other).*” (Sura 21:92)

THE BIBLE:

1. OUR CARING HEAVENLY FATHER IS HIMSELF THE SOURCE OF ALL COMFORT:

“... *the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction ...*” (2 Corinthians 1:3,4)

2. GOD OUR FATHER GENEROUSLY CARES AND PROVIDES FOR HIS CHILDREN.

“... *your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*” (Matthew 6:8 – See also Luke 12:30)

“*Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*” (Matthew 6:26)

“*For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace ...*” (John 1:16)

“*casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*” (1 Peter 5:7)

3. OUR CARING HEAVENLY FATHER IS BOTH GOOD AND KIND:

a. God’s Goodness: In the ESV English translation of the Bible the word, “**goodness**” is used in reference to God 19 times and “**good**” 6 times.

No one else but God is truly good; whatever God has created and all God's gifts are good; and God is good to His people Israel:

*"... **No one is good except God alone.**" (Luke 18:19)*

*"For **everything created by God is good ...**" (1 Timothy 4:4)*

*"**Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down from God our Father ...**" (James 1:17 - NLT)*

*"They shall pour forth the fame of **your abundant goodness ...**" (Psalm 145:7; also 25:8; 100:5 and Exodus 33:19)*

*"... I will be their God ... **for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them ... I will rejoice in doing them good ...**" (Jeremiah 32:38-41)*

b. God's Kindness: The word, "**kindness**" is used of God 10 times:

*"Or do you presume on the riches of his **kindness** and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's **kindness** is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4)*

4. IN HIS CARE FOR US OUR HEAVENLY FATHER PROTECTS US:

*"**Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.**" (Psalm 68:5)*

*"**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me ... You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies ...**" (Ps. 23:4,5)*

His Protection Is Expressed In At Least Two Titles:

a. The Shepherd Of Our Souls: Our Heavenly Father's careful guidance and provision for His children is perhaps best expressed in His name, "**Shepherd**," used 11 times for God in the Bible:

*"**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.**" (Psalm 23:1)*

*"**He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.**" (Isaiah 40:11)*

*"... **the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**" (1 Peter 2:25)*

b. Our Rock Of Refuge And Deliverance: Our Father's protection and salvation are seen in the word, "rock" used 27 times in reference to God (including "*my rock*" 11 times, "*rock of my salvation*" 7 times and "*the rock*" 3 times). Words most closely associated with it are: "*refuge*" (8), "*salvation*" (7), "*fortress*" (4), "*deliverer*" (3) and "*redeemer*" (1), which reveal the fuller meaning of this metaphor. Here are a few examples (See also Deut.32:18; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 18:2,31,26; 28:1; 31:1-3; 42:9; 62:5-8; 71:3):

*"You were unmindful of **the Rock** that bore you ..." (Deuteronomy 32:18)*

*"**The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence.**" (2 Samuel 22:2,3)*

*"... You are **my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.**" (Psalm 89:26)*

Psalm 71:1-6 especially expresses the many aspects of God's being a Rock for us. He is our salvation, our habitation, our security and our sustenance:

*"In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed. In Your righteousness **deliver me and rescue me**; Incline Your ear to me and **save me**. Be to me a **rock of habitation** to which I may continually come; You have given commandment to **save me**, For You are **my rock and my fortress**. **Rescue me**, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, Out of the grasp of the wrongdoer and ruthless man, For You are my hope; O Lord GOD, You are **my confidence** from my youth. By You I have been **sustained** from my birth; You are He who took me from my mother's womb; My praise is continually of You." (Psalm 71:1-6 – NASB)*

God is much more than just a care giver, He's our loving Father. He cares for and protects us out of His love for us. He is truly the perfect Father. Guardians, government social workers or foster parents provide for and protect the children in their care, but they usually don't do so for the same reason that a father does.

E. GOD'S LOVE FOR HIS CHILDREN: God's Love is the very foundation of all the aspects of true fatherhood. But it is also by itself one of the six aspects of fatherhood because it is possible to create children and even care for them without loving them. And because love is such a big subject in itself, I have made it a separate study (See Chapter 14 – The Love Of God).

F. GOD'S MENTORING OF HIS CHILDREN:

ISLAM:

1. GOD DOES NOT MENTOR (teach by example): In Islam God is our Sovereign and we are His *slaves, submitted to Him to obey His commands. The Arabic word "**Islam**" means "submission" and the Arabic word "**Muslim**" means "submitted (one)." Even Muhammad is God's **slave**, submitted to His will:

*"So if they dispute with thee [Muhammad], say: **"I have submitted My whole self to Allah** and so have those who follow me." ... **in Allah's sight are (all) His servants** [slaves]." (Sura 3:20)*

*"And if you (Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians) are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to **Our slave (Muhammad)**, then ..." (Sura 2:23 – Mohsin Khan)*

*[Note: The Arabic word "**Abd**," meaning slave or bond servant, is found over 100 times in the Qur'an referring to devout believers in God, including Muhammad and other prophets. Yusuf Ali translates this word as, "servant" but Pickthal and Mohsin Khan translate it as "slave."]

The omnipotent God is dictating His commands to His slaves; certainly not mentoring sons to be His partners in His work:

*"He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: **no son has He begotten, nor has He a partner in His dominion**: it is He who created all things ..." (Sura 25:2)*

In fact, **the idea of anyone being a "partner" with God is so repulsive to Islam that it is condemned 65 times in the Qur'an! To attribute to God a "partner" is the unforgivable sin:**

“Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin Most heinous.” (Sura 4:48)

The Biblical idea of God training His children to work together with Him for His glory by including us as junior partners in His own work is not only unthinkable in Islam; it is the unpardonable sin!

Likewise trying to be like God in any way is an impossible thought to Islam. How could we possibly be like the Almighty, Sovereign God? **The Qur’an presents Muhammad, instead of God, as the model and pattern of conduct for all believers:**

“Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah.” (Sura 33:21)

[speaking to Muhammad] **“And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character.”** (Sura 68:4)

2. TEACHING FROM A DISTANCE: However, the Qur’an does say that God **teaches** and **instructs** people. But what is meant by that is that He sends prophets to tell us **His commands and His will** for us – what He **permits** and what He **forbids**. And the Qur’an says He **guides** whom He will to the straight path and **causes** people to stray or not stray. [See Chapter 10 – The Work Of God].

This is all done from a distance through prophets, books and experiences He ordains, but not by God Himself coming along side us and mentoring us as a human father mentors his sons, allowing them to join Him and learn from Him while He works:

a. God’s Revelation: God taught the prophets by **sending** revelation to them (Notice the wording that God “sent” and the angel Gabriel “brings” in order that He might “teach” His slaves indirectly from a distance His will for them):

*“beware of them lest they beguile thee from any of that (**teaching**) which Allah hath **sent down** to thee [Muhammad].”* (Sura 5:49)

*“... **Gabriel ... he brings down the** (revelation) [teaching] **to thy heart by Allah's will ...**”* (Sura 2:97)

*“And Allah will **teach** him [Jesus] the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel.”* (Sura 3:48)

*“Thus did We establish Joseph in the land, that We might **teach** him the interpretation of stories (and events).”* (Sura 12:21)

b. God’s Books: God instructed and taught the people through the Qur’an and other books which He **sent down** to them:

*“... He **sent down** to you **the Book** and Wisdom, for your **instruction** ...”* (Sura 2:231)

*“... He **sent** among them [Arabs] a messenger from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and **instructing them in Scripture** ...”* (Sura 3:164)

*“... a witness from Himself [the Qur’an] doth **teach**, as did the Book of Moses ...”* (Sura 11:17)

c. God’s Prophets: God instructs the people through the prophets He **sent** to them:

*“... We have **sent** among you **a Messenger** of your own, rehearsing to you Our Signs, and sanctifying you, and **instructing** you in Scripture and Wisdom ...”* (Sura 2:151)

*“... Nor would **he** [a prophet] **instruct** you to take angels and prophets for Lords ...”* (Sura 3:80)

*“... We have **sent thee as a messenger to (instruct)** mankind ...”* (Sura 4:79)

d. Experiences: God teaches the people through experiences He **sends**:

*“There **did Allah give you one distress after another** by way of requital, **to teach you not to grieve for (the booty)**” (Sura 3:153)*

The Qur’an does not contain the concept of God **mentoring** (coaching or instructing by example). Nor are the words “**discipline**” or “**train**” used in reference to God’s teaching.

THE BIBLE:

God doesn’t just give us life and meet our needs. He mentors us so that we become spiritually mature sons and daughters, able to share with Him in His work:

1. OUR HEAVENLY FATHER MENTORS/TEACHES US AS SONS:

a. His Mentoring Includes Discipline Done In Love: In contrast to government officials who enforce laws out of their sense of duty, God, our loving heavenly Father, disciplines us because He loves us as His sons:

*“Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but **he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.**” (Proverbs 13:24)*

*“... ‘My son, do not regard lightly **the discipline of the Lord**, nor be weary when reproved by him. For **the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.**’ It is for discipline that you have to endure. **God is treating you as sons ...**” (Hebrews 12:5-7)*

*“**Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.**” (Revelation 3:19)*

b. His Mentoring Is Done With Great Patience: Only a father who loves His children can be this patient in disciplining and training them:

*“The Lord is **longsuffering**, and of great mercy ...” (Numbers 14:18 - KJV)*

*“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and **patience** ...” (Rom. 2:4)*

*“**The Lord ... is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance ... And count the patience of our Lord as salvation ...**” (2 Peter 3:9,15)*

2. GOD’S PURPOSE IN MENTORING US:

a. So We, As His Children, Might Be Like Him: I find it amazing and encouraging that the Lord mentors us by deliberately including us in what He is doing. He treats us like sons, not like slaves or robots and not like students in a classroom and He does this by **being a model for us to follow**. Jesus mentioned this dynamic – that discipline is specifically so that we might become more like God our Father in holiness and righteousness. God wants us to grow into **mature and respectful sons and daughters, mirroring His character and work:**

*“... **the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.**” (John 5:19,20)*

*“Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children.**” (Ephesians 5:1)*

*“... we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we **respected** them. **Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?** For they disciplined us ... as it seemed best to them, but*

he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness ... discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness ... (Hebrews 12:9-11)

b. So We, As Junior Partners, Might Share With Him In His Work: He makes us His junior partners by **explaining His plan to us** and by **giving us a part in it**. God does this with us His children so we will mature in **our work together “with” Him – work that includes sharing His authority, giving us responsibility and empowering us to work “along side” of Him**. Here are a few examples:

1) Adam: Starting with Adam, God has given mankind responsibility to share in His work. He shared His sovereignty with Adam making him His viceroy on earth:

*“So God created man in his own image ... God said to them, ‘... and fill the earth and **subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**”* (Genesis 1:27,28)

*“For it was **not to angels that God subjected the world** to come ... ‘What is **man**, that you are mindful of him ... **you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.**”* (Hebrews 2:5-8 quoting from Psalm 8:4-6)

*“The heavens are the **LORD's** ... but **the earth he has given to the children of man.**”* (Psalm 115:16)

2) Noah: Later God shared with Noah His decision to destroy the people of the earth, who had now become totally corrupt. Then He gave Noah the responsibility of building the ark for the preservation of both humans and animals. He also gave him the authority to govern the ark during the flood:

*“And **God said to Noah, ‘I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch ... I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life ... But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark ... with you ...’**”* (Genesis 6:13,14,17-19)

3) God’s People Today: Today God gives us a vital part in His work of redeeming mankind. **Here are three ways He does that:**

i) Preaching The Gospel: It is our job to proclaim the Gospel of salvation:

[Jesus said] *“... everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled ... that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”* (Luke 24:44,46-48)

Jesus Himself has fulfilled the first two parts of these Old Testament prophecies – that He would suffer and rise from the dead – and we are given the responsibility of fulfilling the third **in His name - to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations**. God could have written the message in the sky for all to see, but instead He gave us this part of His work – **as God’s coworkers** – just like Timothy was:

*“we sent **Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith**”* (1 Thessalonians 3:2)

ii) Praying for Workers: It is our job to advise God to send workers:

*“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. **Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.**”* (Luke 10:2)

Since He is the “Lord of the Harvest” and knows all about the needs of the harvest, why would He want us to ask Him to send workers? The implication is that He will not send workers until we ask Him to do so! Wow! Clearly He has given to us, weak and erring human beings, the task of directing His hands. In other words, **He has made us His junior partners and He will not send laborers until we ask him to do so!**

iii) Sharing In God’s Thoughts And Advising Him Regarding His Purposes:

Even more amazingly, He shares with us what He is thinking so we can join with Him in His purposes:

*“For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind and **declares to man what are His thoughts**”* (Amos 4:13 - NASB)

*“**The secret** [or counsel] **of the LORD is for those who fear Him, And He will make them know His covenant.**”* (Psalm 25:14 - NASB)

3. AND IT IS OUR JOY AND HONOR TO LOVINGLY REVERE (“FEAR”) AND BE DEPENDENT ON GOD OUR FATHER:

a. Revering Our Father Is The Secret To Becoming Mature Sons. To “fear” God means to delight in Him by loving to obey and honor Him, even though He has given us authority and sovereignty to act like He does:

*“**Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!**”* (Psalm 112:1)

*“**The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge** [intimate relationship] **of the Holy One is insight.**”* (Proverbs 9:10)

b. Mature Sons Still Depend On Their Father. How amazing to experience our own mature and independent authority, taught to us by our Father, and at the same time realize the blessing and need to continue to be dependent on Him, as we seek to do His will instead of our own. Our Lord Jesus modeled this:

*“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. **And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man ... ‘I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.’**”* (John 5:26,27,30)

G. GOD’S HONORING OF HIS CHILDREN:

ISLAM:

In Islam because **God is not our father and we are not His children**, and because He is absolutely One (single) God, He doesn’t share His own glory with anyone. He gives some **lesser honor** to **His servants**, i.e., to His prophets and to **His submitted believers** who earn it. So, His honor is **a reward** given to those who believe and do righteous deeds:

In the Qur'an the words, "honor," "exalt" and "glory" are used of these believers as follows:

1. HONOR: The word "honor" occurs 23 times in reference to God's prophets and devout believers. God rewards **his faithful and obedient servants** with honor both in this life and in paradise (but **not as sons**). Here are a few of those 23 verses:

*"Those **messengers** We endowed with gifts, some above others: To one of them Allah spoke; others He **raised to degrees (of honour)** ..." (Sura 2:253)*

*"... Glory to Him! **they are (but) servants raised to honour.**" (Sura 21:26)*

*"If ye (but) eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall expel out of you all the evil in you, and **admit you to a gate of great honour.**" (Sura 4:31)*

*"Such will be the **honoured ones in the Gardens** (of Bliss)." (Sura 70:35)*

*"O mankind! ... Verily the most **honoured** of you in the sight of Allah is **(he who is) the most righteous** of you. And Allah has full knowledge ... (with all things)." (Sura 49:13)*

2. EXALT: The words "exalt" or "exalted" are used only a few times of believers (90 times of God), those who do "righteous deeds":

*"But such as come to Him as **Believers who have worked righteous deeds,- for them are ranks exalted**" (Sura 20:75)*

*"If any do seek for glory and power, - to Allah belong all glory and power. To Him mount up (all) Words of Purity: **It is He Who exalts each Deed of Righteousness** ..." (Sura 35:10)*

3. GLORY: The words "glory," "glorious," or "glorify" are used of human beings in the Qur'an only two times. One in which Muhammad is told he will be given a position of "praise and glory" and the other in which believers can expect to receive one of two "glorious things" (Martyrdom or victory in Jihad):

*"And pray in the small watches of the morning: (it would be) an additional prayer (or spiritual profit) for thee: **soon will thy Lord raise thee to a Station of Praise and Glory!**" (Sura 17:79)*

*"Say: 'Can you expect for us (any fate) other than **one of two glorious things- (Martyrdom or victory)**? ...'" (Sura 9:52)*

4. GOD'S HONORING SEEN IN 3 OF ISLAM'S 99 NAMES OF GOD:

Ar-Rafi (Raafee) = "The Exalter," "Ennobler"

Al-Mu'izz = "The Honorer," "Exalter," "Strengthener"

Ash-Shakur (Shakoor) = "The Appreciative," "Acknowledger and Rewarder of Thankfulness"

THE BIBLE:

A true father chooses to share his own honor and glory with his son mostly because he is his son, even if that son doesn't always do a very good job of earning that honor. The father honors him because he wants to encourage his son and to motivate him with his love for him. God's honoring of his children involves His sharing His own glory with us not as a reward for any deeds, but out of His love for us.

1. GOD ORIGINALLY HONORED MANKIND BY SHARING WITH US HIS DOMINION OVER THE EARTH. He did that with Adam when He gave him dominion over the earth (Gen.1:26,28), and later with King David, who in speaking of it gave us a prophecy of Messiah Jesus, the One who will ultimately reign over the earth:

*“what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? **Yet you have ... crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet**” (Psalm 8:4-6)*

2. GOD HONORS HIS CHILDREN BY EXALTING US. When we put God first in our lives, He exalts us here on earth:

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that **at the proper time he may exalt you**” (1 Peter 5:6)*

[Jesus said] *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and **whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**” (Matthew 23:12; see also Luke 14:11 & Luke 18:14)*

*“**Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation**” (James 1:9)*

3. GOD HONORS HIS CHILDREN BY CLOTHING US WITH BEAUTY. In his parable Jesus taught about a father honoring his undeserving, prodigal son when he came back home in contrition:

*“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly **the best robe** [for the guest of honor], and put it on him, and put **a ring** [symbol of authority] on his hand, and **shoes** [symbol of privilege] on his feet. And bring the **fattened calf** [reserved for honoring celebrations] and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’” (Luke 15:22-24)*

Just as the father in the parable of the prodigal son clothed his son with the best robe, ring and shoes, so our Heavenly Father clothes us with the most beautiful and glorious clothes of salvation, in spite of all our sin (which He has transferred to Christ):

*“For the **LORD** takes pleasure in His people; **He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.**” (Psalm 149:4)*

*“Her priests **I will clothe with salvation**, and her saints will shout for joy.” (Psalm 132:16)*

*“... to give them **a beautiful headdress** instead of ashes, **the oil of gladness** instead of mourning, **the garment of praise** instead of a faint spirit ...” (Isaiah 61:3)*

4. ABOVE ALL GOD HONORS HIS CHILDREN BY GIVING US HIS OWN GLORY. God Himself is our glory! How amazing. Almost beyond belief!

*“But **you, O Lord, are** a shield about me, **my glory**, and the lifter of my head.” (Psalm 3:3)*

*“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding **the glory of the Lord**, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

*“... walk in a manner worthy of **God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.**” (1 Thessalonians 2:12)*

In the New Testament I have found 19 verses in which it is stated that God shares with us His glory in and through His Son Jesus the Messiah. [See also Chapter 6 – The Name And Glory Of God] Here are a couple of them:

“if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to [for] us...” (Rom. 8:17,18)

“... is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison..” (2 Corinthians 4:17)

H. JESUS THE REVELATION OF GOD’S FATHERHOOD:

1. “LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON:” Often in human life the best demonstration of a father’s character is his son. The qualities of the son should reveal those of his father. So it is with Jesus, God’s Son. He himself said this often:

[Jesus said] *“... For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”* (John 5:19)

“... Jesus answered, ‘... If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’” (John 8:19)

“... whoever sees me sees him who sent me.” (John 12:44,45)

“Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?’” (John 14:8,9)

We find in Jesus, God’s Son, the same six aspects of fatherhood as in God the Father:

- Jesus **gives life to us,**
- Jesus **is always with us**
- Jesus **loves us,**
- Jesus **cares for us,**
- Jesus **trains/mentors us,**
- Jesus **honors and encourages us:**

a. Jesus Gives Life To Us: [see also Chapter 13 – THE LIFE AND IMAGE OF GOD]

1) Jesus, Like The Father, Is The Creator Of All Things:

“by him [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16-17)

“But of the Son [Jesus] he [God the Father] says ... ‘You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands.’” (Hebrews 1:8,10, quoted from Psalm 102:25-27)

“and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead ...” (Acts 3:15)

2) Jesus Is Himself God’s “Word Of Life” Revealed To Us: In the beginning when God created all things He did it by commanding *“Let there Be!”* Jesus Himself is that “Word” (command) of God by whom God gave life to us, and that “Word of Life” came to live among us:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the

Father and was made manifest to us” (1 John 1:1,2)

*“In the beginning was **the Word ... All things were made through him**, and without him was not anything made that was made. **In him was life, and the life was the light of men ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”** (John 1:1,3,4,14)*

3) Jesus, Like His Father, Is The Source Of Life And Gives Us Eternal Life:

“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish ... I and the Father are one.” (John 10:28,30)

*“Jesus said to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,”** (John 11:25)*

[Jesus said about Himself] *“For the bread of God is **he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world ... I am the bread that came down from heaven ... so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh ... As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.”** (John 6:33,41,50,51,57)*

“God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life.” (1 John 5:11,12)

b. Jesus Is Always With Us: The Lord Jesus, like the Father, said:

“... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

[Jesus said before His crucifixion] *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”* (John 14:18)

c. Jesus, God’s Son, Loves Us Like His Father Loves Him: [see also Chapter 14 – GOD’S LOVE]

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” (John 15:9)

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

d. Jesus, Like His Father, Is Our Shepherd, Who Cares For And Provides For Us:

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep ... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:11,14,15)

*“even as **the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** (Matthew 20:28)*

e. Jesus Teaches And Mentors Us Like The Father:

*“Take my yoke upon you [join me in my work], and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For **my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** (Matthew 11:29,30)*

“You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit ...” (John 15:14-16)

*“All this is from God, who through **Christ** reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation ... entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us ...”* (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

f. Jesus, Like His Father, Honors And Encourages Us:

“These things I have spoken to you ... that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11)

[Jesus prayed to the Father] ***“... The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one ... that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”*** (John 17:21-23)

2. THE FATHER IN THE SON: What Jesus said and did was the Father in Him speaking and acting – God in human flesh – the perfect image and revelation of His Father:

“... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself ...” (2 Corinthians 5:19 - NASB)

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature ...” (Hebrews 1:1-3)

“He is the image of the invisible God ...” (Colossians 1:15)

Amazingly, in Isaiah’s prophecy of the Messiah He is even called the “Everlasting Father:”

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)

3. SO NO ONE CAN KNOW THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH KNOWING JESUS:

“... no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matthew 11:27)

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6)

a. When We By Faith Receive Jesus As Savior, God The Father Unites Us With Jesus, And In Jesus We Become Sons Of God:

“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.” (Galatians 3:26)

b. In Jesus We Receive All The Father’s Blessings Given To His Son:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:3-14)

“This life is in the Son. He that hath the Son hath the life.” (1 John 5:11-12 - KJV) *It is a blessed thing to discover the difference between Christian graces and Christ: to know the difference between meekness and Christ, between patience and Christ, between love and Christ. God will not give me humility, patience, holiness or love as separate gifts of His grace. He is not a retailer dispensing grace to us in packets, measuring out*

some patience to the impatient, some love to the unloving, some meekness to the proud, in quantities that we can take and work on as a kind of capital. **He has only one gift to meet all our need: His Son Jesus Christ ...**” (Watchman Nee, April 22nd reading from, A Table in the Wilderness)

c. As Sons (Children) Of God, We Should Follow (Imitate) Jesus, Who Is The Father’s Image:

“And he said to them, ‘**Follow me**, and I will make you fishers of men.’” (Matthew 4:19)

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and **follow me**.’” (Matthew 16:24)

[Jesus said] “If anyone serves me, he must **follow me**; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.” (John 12:26)

I. MY REACTIONS:

Islam’s belief that God is not a “father” and we are only His slaves is consistent with the deficient teaching of Islam about five of the six aspects of God’s fatherhood. **Islam says:**

- **God didn’t give us His own life;** He didn’t breathe into us the breath of His own life, but merely ordered mankind into existence by edict through His omnipotent power [see chapter 13]. Such fatherless children have little similarity to their creator’s character.
- **God does not live with us.** There is no mention of an intimate relationship with those He has created. A “father” who keeps his children at a distance is an absentee father.
- **God does not love us with a father’s unconditional, self-giving love,** willing to spend Himself to save us. Yes, Islam says God likes us if we obey and honor him, but He does not like us if we don’t – and that is not a father’s love.
- **God does not mentor us by coming along side and demonstrating or sharing His own work with us or including us in His work.** He only gives us orders to obey and gives us little explanation of His purposes and objectives. Islam also tells us there is no use trying to imitate or be like God because that is impossible.
- And **God doesn’t encourage us by honoring us or sharing His glory with us.** Instead we are treated merely as His “slaves”; corrected or punished when we fail to fully obey and rewarded in Paradise with worldly pleasures when we do obey; pleasures He Himself has no use for.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE LIFE & IMAGE OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'anic quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

(This Is Section B. Of Chapter twelve, The Fatherhood Of God)

In Chapter Twelve, we looked at the six facets of fatherhood, the first being the Father giving life to His children. Here we will explore that more fully.

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Life & Image:

- A. God's Creation Of Life
- B. The Origin Of Death
- C. God's Image
- D. My Reactions

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S CREATION OF LIFE:

ISLAM:

Five of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God relate to this subject:

- Al-Khaliq (Khaalick)* = The Creator
- Al-Bari (Baaree)* = The Maker of Order, Curer
- Al-Mu'id (Mu'eed)* = The Restorer, Resurrector
- Al-Muhyi (Muhyee)* = The Giver of Life, Quickener
- Al-Hai (hai'yyu)* = The Ever Living, Living One
- An-Nafi (Naafi)* = The Benefactor, Profiter, Creator of Good
- Al-Badi (Badee)* = The Creative One, Originator

1. GOD'S OWN LIFE: Islam believes that, in contrast to lifeless idols, God Himself is a living being and is the Creator and source of all life:

- a. The Eternal, Living One:** Four times the Qur'an calls Him "*the living*" (one), four times the "*eternal*," three times "*the Self-subsisting*" and once He is referred to as He "*Who lives and dies not*." Essentially it is saying God has eternal life within Himself and is not some kind of force or an idol made of stone or wood:

"Allah! There is no god but He, -the living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal." (Sura 3:2)

*“And put thy trust in **Him Who lives and dies not ...**” (Sura 25:58)*

*“Allah, the **eternal, Absolute**” (Sura 112:2)*

b. The Source Of All Created Life: Although the Qur’an does not call God “Father” and people His “children,” it does emphasize that He is the Creator and giver of life. He is called “**The Creator Of All Things,**” “**The Creator Supreme,**” and “**The Best Of Creators:**”

*“Is not **He Who created the heavens and the earth** able to create the like thereof?” - Yea, indeed! for He is **the Creator Supreme, of skill and knowledge (infinite)**!” (Sura 36:81)*

*“Allah is **the Creator of all things, and ...**” (Sura 39:62)*

*“Will ye call upon Baal and forsake **the Best of Creators?**” (Sura 37:125)*

2. GOD’S CREATION OF LIFE: The Qur’an declares God to be the source of life at least 56 times and uses words like “*creator,*” “*creating,*” “*creation*” and “*made*” 226 times in reference to God. Below are a number of observations I have made, but first let’s look at what the Qur’an itself says about God’s creation. The most complete descriptions of this process of God’s “creation” are found in the following passages:

*“**To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: “Be,” and it is.**” (Sura 2:117)*

[Y.A.’s note #120: “... primeval matter ... owes its origin itself to God, Who is ... the Cause of all causes ... **the process of creation is [was] not then completed. All things in the heavens and on the earth are created by gradual processes.** In “things” we include abstract as well as material things ... the creating of a thing out of nothing and after no pre-existing similitude ... **the creation of primeval matter to which further processes have to be applied later,** as when one prepares dough but leaves the leavening to be done after ... **implies beginning the process of creation ... the beginning of the creation of pristine man from clay refers to his physical body, leaving the further processes of reproduction and the breathing in of the soul to be described in subsequent verses ...**”]

*“**And behold! ye come to us bare and alone as We created you for the first time: ye have left behind you all (the favours) which We bestowed on you ...**” (Sura 6:94)*

[Y.A.’s note #916: “... **In the creation of man there are various processes. If his body was created out of clay, i.e. earthly matter, there was an earlier process of the creation of such earthly matter.** Here the body is left behind, and the soul is being addressed. **The soul underwent various processes of fashioning and adapting to its various functions in its various surroundings. But each individual soul, after release from the body, comes back as it was created, with nothing more than its history, the deeds which it has earned, which are really a part of it ...**”]

*“**We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed**” (Sura 22:5)*

*“**Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); then we placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then we made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature.**” (Sura 23:12-14)*

*“**It is Allah Who begins (the process of) creation; then repeats it; then shall ye be brought back to Him [“recreated” or resurrected to appear for judgment].**” (Sura 30:11)*

[Y.A.’s note #3517: “... It is God Who originates all creation. **What appears to be death may be only transformation; for God can and does recreate. And His creative activity is continuous. Our death is but a phenomenal event. What we become after death is the result of a process of re-creation by God, Who is both**

the source and the goal of all things. **When we are brought back to Him, it will be as conscious and responsible beings, to receive the consequences of our brief life on this earth.**”]

*“He Who has made everything which He has created **most good: He began the creation of man with (nothing more than) clay, and made his progeny from a quintessence of the nature of a fluid despised: But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit ...**”* (Sura 32:7-9)

[Y.A.’s note #3637: “Man is asked to contemplate his own humble beginning. **His material body (apart from life) is a piece of earth or clay, which is another term for primeval matter. Matter is therefore the first stage ...**”]

*“That it is He Who granteth Death and Life; **That He did create in pairs,- male and female, From a seed when lodged (in its place); That He hath promised a Second Creation (Raising of the Dead)**”* (Sura 53:44-47)

Here Are A Few Things I Conclude From What The Qur’an Says About His Creation:

a. The Beginning Of God’s Creation: According to the Traditions (Hadith) Muhammad said this about the beginning of creation:

“... There was Allah and nothing else before Him and His throne was over the water, and He then created the heavens and the earth ...” (Sahih Al-Bukhari Vol.9, #514)

Does this mean that water existed with God before creation?

b. God Creates Man’s Life In Stages:

1) The Hadith Says Muhammad spoke of 4 “stages” of human birth:

“Allah’s apostle ... said, ‘(as regards your creation), every one of you is collected in the womb of his mother for the first forty days, and then he becomes a clot for another forty days, and then a piece of flesh for another forty days. Then Allah sends an angel to write four words: He writes his deeds, time of his death, means of his livelihood, and whether he will be wretched or blessed (in religion). Then the soul is breathed into his body ...” (Sahih Al-Bukhari Vol.4, #549)

2) The Qur’an speaks of 3 stages of life (childhood, adulthood and old age):

*“It is **Allah Who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness, then gave (you) strength after weakness, then, after strength, gave (you) weakness and a hoary head: He creates as He wills, and it is He Who has all knowledge and power.**”* (Sura 30:54)

3) And 3 stages of God’s creation of man’s life (life, death and resurrection):

*“It is **Allah Who has created you: further, He has provided for your sustenance; then He will cause you to die; and again He will give you life ...**”* (Sura 30:40)

*“Seeing that it is **He that has created you in diverse stages? ... Allah has produced you from the earth growing (gradually), And in the End He will return you into the (earth), and raise you forth (again at the Resurrection)?**”* (Sura 71:14,17,18)

4) Also called 2 deaths and 2 lives? (before birth, life, death, resurrection):

*“They will say: ‘Our Lord! **Twice hast Thou made us without life, and twice hast Thou given us life!** ...”* (Sura 40:11) [Yusuf Ali’s note #4371: “Non-existence, or existence as clay without life was equivalent to death. Then came true life on the earth; then came physical death ... and now at the resurrection, is the second life”]

*“... **ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return.**”* (Sura 2:28)

5) And Two Creations (this present life and the resurrection)

*"That He hath promised a **Second Creation** (Raising of the Dead)" (Sura 53:47)*

*"... When we are reduced to bones and broken dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a **new creation**?" (Sura 17:98) "*

c. God Is Also Able To Give Life To The Dead:

"... Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His Signs ..." (Sura 2:73)

"... Allah said to them: 'Die': Then He restored them to life ..." (Sura 2:243)

"... Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again) ... Look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh ..." (Sura 2:259)

d. In Fact, God Brings The Living Out Of The Dead And The Dead Out Of The Living:

1) Is the Qur'an talking about life, death and the resurrection?

"... Thou bringest the living out of the dead, and Thou bringest the dead out of the living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleases ..." (Sura 3:27)

"It is He Who brings out the living from the dead, and brings out the dead from the living ... and thus shall ye be brought out (from the dead)." (Sura 30:19)

2) or is it talking about sleep?

"It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed ..." (Sura 39:42)

"And He it is Who makes the Night as a Robe for you, and Sleep as Repose, and makes the Day (as it were) a Resurrection." (Sura 25:47)

e. Curious And Confusing Details About God's Creating: Some of the things in the Qur'an about God's creating and giving life are difficult to understand:

1) God's Method Of Creating Mankind: The Qur'an says mankind was created – :

- *"out of nothing,"* (19:67)
- by saying *"Be!"* (3:59; 6:73; 40:68)
- with His own *"hands"* (38:75; 36:71)
- *"from dust"* (30:20); or *"from clay,"* (6:2; 15:26; 32:7; 55:14); or *"from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape,"* (15:28)
- *"out of sperm"* (16:4; 18:37; 22:5; 23:14; 35:11; 36:77; 40:67; 76:2; 80:18,19) or *"from a quintessence of the nature of a fluid despised"* (32:8; 77:20) or *"from a drop emitted"* (86:6) or *"from a seed"* (53:46)
- *"out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood"* (96:2)
- *"from water,"* (21:30; 25:54)

So which is it? Did He create out of nothing by just saying "Be!"? Or from dust, sperm, a clot of blood or water? Did He create through a process, with His own hands or Did He create Adam & Eve and then out of them all humanity? Is He continuing to create each individual separately? Or is it all of the above?

2) Other Curious Facts About God's Initial Creation: The Qur'an also gives other "facts" about the "beginning" of God's creation, such as:

- Although God created man “*most good*” (32:7), “*beautiful*” (64:3) and “*in the best of molds*” (95:4), yet it also says He created man “*weak*” (4:28), “*prone to evil*” (12:53) and “*impatient*” (70:19). [see B.3. below]
- He created “*seven firmaments*” (2:29; 41:9-12) “*seven heavens one above another,*” (71:15) “*above you seven tracts*” (23:17) and “*of the earth a similar number*” (65:12)
- Eve was created of “*like nature*” as Adam, but not out of one of his ribs:

*“O mankind! Reverence your Guardian Lord, who created you from a single person, **created, of like nature, His mate,** and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women ...”* (Sura 4:1 also 7:189 & 39:6)

3) God’s Further Creating After His Initial Creation: The Qur’an says God “repeats” His creation and “adds” to it whatever He pleases:

“... It is He Who beginneth the process of creation, and repeateth it ... It is Allah Who originates creation and repeats it ...” (Sura 10:4,34)

[Y.A.’s note 1389: “**God’s creation is not a simple act, once done and finished with. It is continuous, and there are many stages, not the least important of which is the Hereafter ...**”]

“... He adds to Creation as He pleases: for Allah has power ...” (Sura 35:1)

a) This “repeating” of creation involves several things in this present life. For example, the Qur’an says God “created” the following:

God “created” each individual child in the womb:

*“...for them to hide **what Allah Hath created in their wombs ...**”* (Sura 2:228)

God “created” Jesus from dust by saying, “Be!” but also from Mary:

*“**The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: “Be”. And he was.**”* (Sura 3:59)

*“She [Mary] said: ‘How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste? He [angel] said: ‘So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, ‘that is easy for Me ...’ It is a matter (so) decreed. So **she conceived him ... And the pains of childbirth** drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree ...”* (Sura 19:20-23 – see 16-27)

God “created” mates for each of us:

*“... **He created for you mates from among yourselves ...**”* (Sura 30:21; & 26:166)

God “created” sea vessels like the ark for Noah:

*“... We bore their race (**through the flood**) in the loaded ark; And **We have created for them similar (vessels) on which they ride.**”* (Sura 36:41,42)

b) And it involves God’s creation of things after this life:

God’s future “creation” of the heavens:

*“The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll ... **even as We produced the first creation, so shall We produce a new one ...**”* (Sura 21:104)

God’s making us a “new creation” in the future resurrection:

*“... ‘**When we are reduced to bones and broken dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new Creation?**’”* (Sura 17:98)

God has “created” undefiled virgins in Paradise as a “special creation”:

“We have created (their Companions) of special creation. And made them virgin-pure (and undefiled)” (Sura 56:35,36)

4) God’s Sovereignty To Create What He Pleases:

“... Even so: **Allah createth what He willeth**: When He hath decreed a plan, **He but saith to it, 'Be,' and it is!**” (Sura 3:47)

“... **He createth what He pleaseth**. For Allah hath power over all things.” (Sura 5:17)

3. GOD’S PURPOSE IN CREATING MANKIND: The Qur’an seems to give five reasons for God’s creation of mankind:

1) To Show Mankind His Power: (The Qur’an’s major emphasis about God):

“O mankind ... (consider) that **We created you out of dust ... in order that We may manifest (our power) to you ...**” (Sura 22:5)

2) To Examine And Test Mankind: A total of 87 times the Qur’an mentions God’s trying/testing of mankind! Here are a few of them:

“He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed ...” (Sura 67:2)

“Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?” (Sura 23:115)

“He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days - and His Throne was over the waters - that He might try you, which of you is best in conduct ...” (Sura 11:7)

One Muslim website (<https://islamqa.info/en/45529>) interprets this last verse to mean:

“Allaah has told us that the creation of the heavens and the earth, and of life and death, is for the purpose of testing, so as to test man. Whoever obeys Him, He will reward him, and whoever disobeys Him, He will punish him.” ... “One of the greatest reasons for which Allaah has created mankind – which is one of the greatest tests – is the command to affirm His Oneness (Tawheed) and to worship Him alone with no partner or associate ...”

3) That Mankind Might Serve (or Worship) God: I believe from various other verses that the meaning is more “serve” than “worship.”

“I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me.” (Sura 51:56 – Pickthal - Yusuf Ali and Shakir translate it “that they might serve Me”)

Various respected Muslim scholars’ in interpreting this verse paraphrase it to say that God created mankind so that they might serve Him willingly or unwillingly (although He has no need of their service and worship).

4) To Learn Obedience And Righteousness:

“O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness” (Sura 2:21)

5) So Mankind Might Know More About God By Having Some Similar

Characteristics (?): This reason, which is presented by several Muslim scholars, is very similar to the Bible’s teaching, and because I couldn’t find any Qur’an verses that specifically state this idea, I question whether it really is the teaching of Islam. Here are a few quotes from these scholars:

In <http://www.islamicteaching.info> one author says:

“Muslims do not believe man is created in the image of God’s essence. God does not physically look like human beings or have the inherent limitations of humanity ... On the other hand, God has created human beings with attributes similar to those of His own, but in a very limited fashion. This is highlighted in the verse, ‘... I have made him (Adam) complete and breathed into him of My spirit ...’ [Sura 15:29]. Notwithstanding the fact that Islam clearly rules out any assertion that may suggest the divinity of any human being, it also allows that the human being possesses the perfect and infinite attributes of God in a limited and finite fashion, so we can get to know God.”

From <http://www.al-islam.org/articles/nature-of-allah-yasir-al-wakeel> we read:

“... Although we can understand some of His attributes, His essence cannot be comprehended by a human’s limited mental capacity. Allah has created mankind primarily so that they may know their creator through his creations.”

And again from (<https://islamqa.info/en/45529>):

“Allaah (may He be exalted) created mankind to worship Him and to know Him by His names and attributes, and to enjoy that upon them ...”

If this is not Quranic teaching, where did it come from? Could it be the result of Biblical teaching that Muslim leaders living in western countries have heard? Or could it be their effort to explain the meaning of the Qur’an’s phrase, “*something of His spirit*” (See the following point 4.)?

4. MANKIND’S LIFE NOT GOD’S OWN LIFE: The Qur’an shows that God is the source of all life and that He gives life to all living creatures, and although mankind is given much superior mental abilities, there is no indication that the life God created in man was any different than that of animals. It does not say (as the Bible does) that He “*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*” thus giving to mankind life out of Himself. However, the Qur’an twice says something very similar:

“... He began the creation of man with (nothing more than) clay ... But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit ...” (Sura 32:7-9)

“Behold thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I am about to create man ... When I have fashioned him ... and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.’” (Sura 15:28,29)

“*Something of His spirit*” seems very vague. Sadly, the Qur’an does not explain what the “*something*” is and **Islamic theologians struggle to explain it**. This is dealt with in much more detail below in section C. (God’s Image).

5. MANKIND NOT CREATED IN GOD’S OWN IMAGE: This is covered in detail in section C. below.

6. SUMMARY: The Qur’an seems to use the word, “create” to mean not only things God created out of nothing in the beginning, but also things subsequently built, born or developed through the God-given ability of men and animals. This may explain the meaning of “*every kind of creation*” in the following verse:

“He will give them life ... for He is Well-versed in every kind of creation!” (Sura 36:79)

Possibly it is used this way to mean these things were predestined by God and that God enabled people to produce them. To be fair we need to recognize that the Bible also speaks (a

comparatively few times) of God's creating in this way. For example:

*"Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that **a people yet to be created** may praise the Lord"* (Psalm 102:18)

*"When you hide your face, they [animals] are dismayed; **when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created**, and you renew the face of the ground."* (Psalm 104:29,30)

*"Then **the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night**; for over all the glory there will be a canopy."* (Isaiah 4:5)

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

THE BIBLE:

1. WHAT IS LIFE? Life is not simply existence. It is conscious, perceptive existence. Rocks and water have existence but not life because they're not conscious or perceptive. (They obey the will of their creator, but not consciously or perceptively). We see this when our Lord Jesus, the Creator, calmed the storm by commanding the wind and waves to "be still." His disciples were amazed and exclaimed:

*"... Who then is this, that **even the wind and the sea obey him?**" – Mark 4:41)*

a. Two Kinds of Life: There is **physical life** and there is **spiritual life**:

1) Physical life is a conscious and perceptive relationship to this present world. It has an awareness of the physical, mental and emotional reality of this present creation. God originally intended for mankind to have a physical body and mind that would never die, but Adam's disobedience brought sin and death. Because this creation has been corrupted by sin, physical life is both temporary and mortal and only exists until it ends in complete decay and corruption (death).

2) Spiritual life is a conscious and perceptive relationship with God, which He designed to be eternal. While plants, animals and birds have only physical life, Adam's body was created out of the dust of the ground and then God breathed into his nostrils "the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7), making his body physically alive toward the physical world around him and his soul spiritually alive toward God. Thus God gave him physical life as well as His own spiritual, eternal life.

b. Two Kinds Of Birth: There is **physical birth** and there is **spiritual birth**. Adam was created with both physical and spiritual life, but we are born with only physical life because of Adam's sin, which resulted in his being cut off from God's spiritual life. When a person believes in Jesus, he/she is born spiritually ("**born again**") and is restored to the intimate relationship with God that God originally created man to have:

*"Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, '... **That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit** ... The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its*

sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:3-8)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, **he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**” (1 Peter 1:3)

c. Two Kinds Of Death: The names of all who are born again are written by God in His “**book of life**” and they will live eternally in fellowship with God. But when those people die who have never been born spiritually, they will enter into what is called “**the second death**” (eternal separation from God):

“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. **This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**” (Revelation 20:14,15)

Therefore the person who is born again by faith in Jesus is born twice, but the person who is not born again dies twice.

2. GOD’S OWN ETERNAL LIFE: Not only is God eternal, but He is the giver of, and the only source of, eternal life. In fact, He Himself is eternal life:

a. God Is “The Living God”: The Qur’an one time says God is “the living” One and 5 times that He is “alive”, but the Bible (in the ESV) calls God, “**the living God**” 30 times and “the living Father” once. The intent of that statement is not merely to contrast Him with all other “gods” (wooden or stone idols) which have no life, but primarily to show that **He is the very fountain of life and pulses with life:**

“My soul thirsts for **God**, for **the living God** ...” (Psalm 42:2)

“... it shall be said to them, ‘Children of **the living God**.’” (Hosea 1:10)

“For we are the temple of **the living God** ...” (2 Corinthians 6:16 – also 1 Tim 4:10)

“As **the living Father** sent me, and I live because of the Father ...” (John 6:57)

b. The Lord God “Lives”! Whenever the people of Israel took an oath, they would say “**As the Lord lives,**” thus expressing their belief that **God is not only the single source of all life but also is eternal.** This expression is recorded in various forms 42 times in the Old Testament. Here are a couple of them:

“For **as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives** ...” (1 Samuel 25:34)

“... **“As the Lord of hosts lives** ...” (1 Kings 18:15 & Jeremiah 44:26)

c. God Alone Is Immortal (undying):

“... the King of kings and Lord of lords, **who alone has immortality** ...” (1 Timothy 6:15,16)

“To **the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God** ...” (1 Timothy 1:17)

“... the glory of **the immortal God** ...” (Romans 1:23)

d. God Lives In Eternity, i. e., He Lives Simultaneously In The Past, Present And Future:

“For thus says **the One** who is high and lifted up, **who inhabits eternity** ...” (Isaiah 57:15)

“... **him who is and who was and who is to come** ... ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord

God, ***‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’*** (Revelation 1:4,8)

*“... Lord God Almighty, **who is and who was ...**”* (Revelation 11:17)

e. God Is The Eternal God:

*“... The **eternal God** is your dwelling place, and underneath are the **everlasting arms.**”* (Deuteronomy 33:27)

That Is Why His Name Is **“I AM.”** In Exodus 3:14 God told Moses that His name is, *“I Am Who I Am”* or *“I Am.”* Throughout the Old Testament, this name is commonly found in the 3rd person as *“Yahwah”* In Hebrew, which means **“He Is”** or **“He (Who) Is.”** Unfortunately, translators have instead translated it as “Lord” in English.

3. THE FIVE PHASES OF GOD’S CREATION OF LIFE:

[See Appendix 16 for my understanding of God’s creation vs. “scientific proof”]

a. First Phase – God’s Beginning Of Creation: God began creating the heavens and the earth **out of nothing**, by His Word:

*“By faith we understand that **the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.**”* (Hebrews 11:3)

*“... **God ... who ... calls into existence the things that do not exist.**”* (Romans 4:17)

*“**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep ...**”* (Genesis 1:1,2)

The Hebrew word for *“without form”* is *“tohu,”* which can be translated “lying waste, vacancy, desolation or worthless.” The word for *“void”* is *“bohu,”* meaning “emptiness, void” and the word for *“darkness”* is *“choshek”* meaning “darkness, meaninglessness, obscurity.” It is clear that God created space (*“the heavens”*), water (*“the deep”*), and land (*“earth”*). We also know there were no stars (including no sun or moon), the continents and oceans had not yet been formed (*“without form”*) and there was no light (*“darkness”*). We know this because those things were all created in the second phase. So we could translate this **“The earth was empty of inhabitants, the heavens were empty of stars and the space above the waters was empty of light,”** meaning God did not complete His work of creation in this first phase, but simply set the stage for filling the earth and seas with life, light and formation in the second phase. The Bible says God created the heavens and earth *“to be inhabited”* so I assume this first phase was not a separate creation, but was simply the beginning of His creation which was completed in the second phase:

*“... the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; **he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited**) ...”* (Isaiah 45:18)

Time was a part of God’s creation, and it would seem logical that He created time when He began this first phase of His creation, as is indicated by the words *“in the beginning.”* However, no length of time is mentioned, so we may guess whether or not there was a time period between the first and second phases.

b. Second Phase – God’s Creation Of Light And Life: God completed this second phase of His creation of the heavens and the earth in six days. (The mention of “days” here seems to indicate that God had already created time.) **In this second phase God created** light as well as **two kinds of life:**

1) Physical Life: God formed plants, trees, birds, fish and animals (on the third and fifth days) out of the earth and water that He had already created in the first phase, **giving them physical life** by a command of His Word:

“... Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees ... Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens ... Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth ...’ And it was so.” (Genesis 1:11-13,20-25)

2) Spiritual Life: When God created mankind He did something different. He didn’t say, **“Let there be man”** or **“Let the earth bring forth man”** as He had in creating everything else, instead He said, **“Let us make man in our image.”** (Genesis 1:26). He did that by forming man’s physical body out of the dirt and then **breathing His own (spiritual) life into him:**

*“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**; and man became **a living soul.**”* (Genesis 2:7 - KJV)

*“The Spirit of God has made me, and **the breath of the Almighty gives me life.**”* (Job 33:4)

Thus our life (God’s life) is clearly different from all other created life forms. They were given physical life **by His Word** (*Let there be ...*); we were given His own life **by His own breath**. The animals were created **by His Will**; we were created **out of His Being**. The plants, fish, birds and animals received physical life created by God, but **man received both physical life and God’s own spiritual life!** That is because God wanted to create us **like Himself, in His own “image”** and call us **His children. Thus God enabled us to know Him intimately.** That’s why, Unlike the animals, Adam was called the “son” of God:

*“... the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of **Adam, the son of God.**”* (Luke 3:38)

God created one man, Adam, out of whom He created Eve and gave them the capacity to procreate physical children out of themselves. Therefore, because we, their physical descendants, have all come out of Adam, we too are called **the “offspring” or children of God** and God is called our “Father:”

*“... **Is not he your father, who created you, who made you ...?**”* (Deuteronomy 32:6)

*“**Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? ...**”* (Malachi 2:10)

*“for **‘In him we live and move and have our being’**; as even some of your own poets have said, **‘For we are indeed his offspring.’**”* (Acts 17:28)

(Sadly, however, when our first father, Adam, sinned we were in him and so we sinned with him, causing our spiritual life – our relationship with God – to be cut off.)

c. Third Phase – God’s Continuing “Creating” Today: The Scriptures say that God is still “creating” life at this present time **by causing offspring to be born out of already created lifeforms.** In that sense He continues to “create” (enable) all the days we are to live as well as the children we are to have (as He “forms,” “knits together” and “makes” them in the womb) through the abilities He gave to us when He originally created us:

*“Let this be recorded for **a generation to come**, so that **a people yet to be created** may praise the LORD”* (Psalm 102:18)

*“For you **formed** my inward parts; you **knitted** me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully **made** ... My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being **made in secret, intricately woven** in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my **unformed substance**; in your book were written ... **the days that were formed** for me, when as yet there was none of them.”* (Psalm 139:13-16)

*“Behold, I have **created** the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also **created** the ravager to destroy”* (Isaiah 54:16)

And He also commands (creates) the weather that happens each day:

“He sends out his command to the earth ... He gives snow ... he scatters frost ... He hurls down his crystals of ice ... He sends out his word and melts them ...” (Psalm 147:15-18)

These things are not created out of nothing as things in God's original creation, but they are created by God out of things already created. The Qur'an also refers to this as God's “creating” today.

d. Fourth Phase – Re-Creation Of Mankind's Spiritual Life: When our first parents, Adam and Eve, willfully sinned against God, their relationship with God (spiritual life) was cut off because evil cannot co-exist with God:

*“For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; **evil may not dwell with you.**”* (Psalm 5:4)

They died spiritually just as God had warned them would happen, and so they and all their descendants were cut off from God's eternal life, although the memory of it still lives in the hearts of all mankind:

“... he has put eternity into man's heart ...” (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Therefore, all we sons of Adam are born physically alive, but spiritually dead, i.e., we are born disconnected from God and are unable by ourselves to know God:

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world ... among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind ...” (Ephesians 2:1-3)

“... darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God ...” (Ephesians 4:18)

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

But now when we put our trust in Jesus and accept His death and resurrection on our behalf we are **spiritually reborn** (“born again”) and **re-created** as God's children. Then we begin to be restored to the relationship with God that He originally created mankind to have – to live eternally with Him:

*“Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again** [or “from above”] **he cannot see the kingdom of God ... That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again.**”* (John 3:3,6,7)

*“... [the Jews] did not receive him. But **to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man** [i.e., not physically], **but of God.**”* (John 1:11-13)

*“Jesus said to her, **“I am the resurrection and the** [eternal, spiritual] **life. Whoever believes in me, though he die** [physically], **yet shall he live** [spiritually], **and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.** Do you believe this?”* (John 11:25,26)

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation** ...” (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

*“we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus** for good works ...” (Ephesians 2:10)*

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be **born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3)*

So God is not only the Father (Creator) of our physical lives, but especially of the spiritual lives of all those who trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. He is our spiritual Father, who gives to His children His own eternal life:

*“... we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to **the Father of spirits** and live?” (Hebrews 12:9)*

*“Pray then like this: ‘**Our Father in heaven**, hallowed be your name.’” (Matthew 6:9)*

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” (1 John 3:1)

This relationship with God will be fully restored to a complete, perfect life when we go to live eternally with him and our dying bodies are changed to immortal bodies:

*“For while we are still in this tent [body], we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed [be without a body], but **that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.**” (2 Corinthians 5:4)*

e. Fifth Phase – Re-Creation Of A New Heaven And New Earth: In the end of this temporal creation **God will create all things new and they will last forever:**

*“... **I create new heavens and a new earth** ... be glad and rejoice forever in that which I **create**; ...**I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.**” (Isaiah 65:17,18)*

*“Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth** ... And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, **I am making all things new.**’” (Revelation 21:1,5)*

*“And night will be no more ... **they will reign forever and ever.**” (Revelation 22:5)*

*“... **whoever does the will of God abides forever.**” (1 John 2:17)*

4. JESUS AND GOD’S LIFE:

a. Jesus – One With The Father In Creating Life: That Is Why He is called “*the word of life*,” “*the Author of life*” & “*the beginning of God’s creation*:”

*“In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... **All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.**” (John 1:1-4)*

*“That [Jesus] **which was from the beginning**, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning **the word of life—the life was made manifest**, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you **the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us** ... and indeed **our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.** (1 John 1:1-3)*

*“and you killed [Jesus] **the Author of life**, whom God raised from the dead ...” (Acts 3:15)*

*“For **by him** [Jesus] **all things were created, in heaven and on earth ... all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**” (Colossians*

1:16,17)

*"The words of the Amen ... **the beginning** [origin] **of God's creation.**" (Revelation 3:14)*

So Jesus healed in the same way He created – by His word (commanding):

*"And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment ... And looking up to heaven, he sighed and **said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'**" And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly." (Mark 7:32,34,35)*

*"... a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, '**Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.**'" And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, '**I will; be clean.**'" And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." (Matthew 8:2,3)*

b. Jesus – One With The Father In Upholding Creation: He not only created simply by commanding ("*Let there be light*" etc) but "*by the word of His power*" He continues to uphold all creation:

*"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and **he upholds the universe by the word of his power** ..." (Hebrews 1:3)*

c. Jesus – One With The Father In Being Eternal: That's why He is called "*the living one*"

*"... **I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.**" (Revelation 1:17,18)*

d. Jesus Became A Man, Submitting Himself To Death So His Indestructible Life Could Abolish Death From The Inside. That's why He is called "*the resurrection,*" "*the firstborn from the dead*" & the One "*who abolished death:*"

*"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, **that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." (Heb.2:14,15),*

*"... **our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life** ..." (2 Timothy 1:10)*

*"Jesus said ... '**I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die** ...'" (John 11:25,26)*

[Jesus] "*who has become a priest ... **by the power of an indestructible life.**" (Hebrews 7:16)*

*"God raised him up, **loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.**" (Acts 2:24)*

*"We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again, **death no longer has dominion over him.**" (Rom.6:9)*

e. Jesus – One With the Father As The Giver Of Eternal Life:

[Jesus said]: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.**" (John 5:25,26)*

*"Jesus said to him, '**I am ... the life** ...'" (John 14:6)*

*"For **as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will** ... Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an***

hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." (John 5:21-25)

"... you refuse to **come to me that you may have life.**" (John 5:40)

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

"... the promise of the **life that is in Christ Jesus ...**" (2 Timothy 1:1)

f. God Restores Eternal Spiritual Life To All Who Trust In Jesus. When Jesus the Messiah entered death in our place (physical death on the cross and spiritual death, *i.e.*, separation from the Father both on the cross and in hell) God enabled us to be resurrected from death with Jesus and thereby restored to the spiritual life and loving relationship with God our Father He initially created us to have. Thus by faith in Jesus we are spiritually "born of God" or "born again" (also translated "born from above"). Only then can we be restored to having God's breath (life/Spirit) in us as **God's children**, able to call God our "Heavenly Father":

"But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he [God the Father] gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh ... but of God." (John 1:12,13)

"Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you ... That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind^[c] blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8) [^[c] The same Greek word can be translated *wind, breath or spirit*]

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are ..." (1 John 3:1)

B. THE ORIGIN OF DEATH

ISLAM:

1. ISLAMIC NAMES: Two of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God relate to this: [See appendix 1 for a full list]

Al-Mumit (Mumeet) = The Taker of Life; Slayer

Ad-Darr (Adh-Dhur, Adh-Dhaarr) = The Afflicter, Distresser, Creator of Harm

2. GOD CREATED DEATH. Death was created by God when He created the world. He gave life to mankind, but that **life was created to end in death**. According to Islam, God is the creator and giver of both life and death:

"... It is Allah that gives Life and Death ..." (Sura 3:156)

"He Who created Death and life ..." (Sura 67:2)

"It is Allah Who has created you: further, He has provided for your sustenance; then He will cause you to die; and again He will give you life [in Paradise] ..." (Sura 30:40 – also 22:66)

"Say: 'It is Allah Who gives you life, then gives you death ...'" (Sura 45:26)

In fact the exact time each person is to die is fixed by God and cannot be avoided:

“Nor can a soul die except by Allah's leave, the term being fixed as by writing ...” (Sura 3:145)

“... Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death ...” (Sura 3:154)

3. DEATH IS NOT A RESULT OF ADAM'S SIN. Islam rejects the Bible's teaching of **“Original Sin”** (that we were in Adam when he sinned and we thereby have inherited his corrupt nature and death). Instead Islam teaches that every child is born pure and innocent. At the same time it also teaches that mankind was created **“weak,” “impatient”** and **“prone to evil.”** Yusuf Ali's notes speak to this: 249 says:

“It was carnal-minded men who invented the doctrine of original sin: ‘... in sin did my mother conceive me’ (Psalm 51:5). This is entirely repudiated by Islam, in which the office of father and mother is held in the highest veneration. Every child of pure love is born pure ...” – (Y.A.'s note #249)

*“Our doctors postulate three states or stages of the development of the human soul: (1) Ammara (Sura 12:53), which is **prone to evil, and, if not checked and controlled, will lead to perdition**; (2) Lawwama, as here [Sura 75:2], which feels conscious of evil, and resists it, asks for God's grace and pardon after repentance and tries to amend; it hopes to reach salvation; (3) Mutmainna (Sura 89:27), the highest stage of all, when it achieves full rest and satisfaction.”* – (Y.A.'s note # 5810)

Therefore we sin by our own choice as we succumb to evil influences, and salvation depends on our efforts to seek forgiveness and purify our souls by doing good:

“By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;- Truly he succeeds that purifies it, And he fails that corrupts it!” (Sura 91:7-10)

*“God ... breathes into it [the soul] an understanding of what is sin, impiety, wrong-doing and what is piety and right conduct ... **This is the most precious gift of all to man, the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong ... By these ... man should learn that his success, his prosperity, his salvation depends on himself, - on his keeping his soul pure as God made it ... his perdition depends on his soiling his soul by choosing evil.**”* – (Y.A.'s note #6152)

One tradition (Hadith) exalts God's glory in forgiveness so much that it puts it this way:

“... if you did not sin, Allah would have removed you and replaced you with other people who will be sinning and then seek His forgiveness, so that He can forgive them.” [Al-Nawawi, Abu Zakariyya Yahya b. Sharaf Riyad al-Salihin – Damascus, Dar al Ma'mun; N.D. p.11-12]

4. BUT APPARENTLY GOD CREATED MANKIND SINFUL: Although Islam believes we all are born innocent, strangely **the Qur'an teaches that all mankind is evil, blasphemous, greedy, self-centered, ungrateful and violent:**

“... We created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him ...” (Sura 50:16)

“... the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil ...” (Sura 12:53)

“If Allah were to punish men for their wrong-doing, He would not leave, on the (earth), a single living creature ...” (Sura 16:61)

“... truly is man a blasphemous ingrate avowed!” (Sura 43:15)

“Woe to man! What hath made him reject Allah.” (Sura 80:17)

“Now, as for man, when his Lord trieth him, giving him honour and gifts, then saith he, (puffed up), ‘My Lord hath honoured me.’ But when He trieth him, restricting his subsistence for him, then saith he

(in despair), 'My Lord hath humiliated me!'" (Sura 89:15,16)

"... man doth transgress all bounds ... he looketh upon himself as self-sufficient." (Sura 96:6,7)

"Truly man is, to his Lord, ungrateful; And to that (fact) he bears witness (by his deeds); And violent is he in his love of wealth." (Sura 100:6-8)

5. PUNISHMENT FOR VARIOUS OFFENSES:

a. In Islamic Law Physical Death Is Permitted As A Penalty In At Least Eight Offenses. Although there is latitude for ransom or even forgiveness in some cases depending on the circumstances. These offenses are: Murder, Adultery, Homosexuality, Bestiality, Highway Robbery, Treason (against Islam), Apostasy (leaving Islam), and fleeing from the enemy during Jihad. Some Muslims add other offenses, such as blasphemy, false accusation of adultery, heresy, drug abuse, etc. [see <https://www.thoughtco.com/capital-punishment-in-islam-2003792>]

b. God Also Punishes Sin In This Life By Affliction And Distress:

"If Allah touch thee with affliction, none can remove it but He ..." (Sura 6:17)

"Before thee We sent (messengers) to many nations, and We afflicted the nations with suffering and adversity, that they might learn humility." (Sura 6:42)

[Abraham said to his father, who worshipped idols] *"O my father! I fear lest a Penalty afflict thee from (Allah) Most Gracious, so that thou become to Satan a friend." (Sura 19:45)*

"... There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve for (the booty) that had escaped you and for (the ill) that had befallen you. For Allah is well aware of all that ye do." (Sura 3:153)

"We only fear a Day of distressful Wrath from the side of our Lord." (Sura 76:10)

c. Eternal Death In Hell: "hell fire" is mentioned at least 138 times in Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an (See God's Wrath in chapter 11b) and destruction in hell 250 times (See God's chapter 8a B. ISLAM 11. d.), and it is described as a condition in which unbelievers will "neither die nor live," i.e., they will repeatedly die and be re-created to die again and again:

"...The Fire be your dwelling-place: you will dwell therein for ever, except as Allah willeth." for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge." (Sura 6:128)

"Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, will be in Hell-Fire, to dwell therein (for aye). They are the worst of creatures." (Sura 98:6)

"Who will enter the Great Fire, in which they will then neither die nor live." (Sura 87:12,13)

THE BIBLE:

1. DEATH AND GOD'S CREATION:

a. All Of God's Creation Is Good. God could not have created Death:

"God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good ..." (Genesis 1:31)

"For everything created by God is good ..." (1 Timothy 4:4)

b. But Some Verses Seem To Say God Created Death, Darkness And Evil. Is God actually the source and/or creator of death, darkness and evil?

*"In the beginning, **God created the heavens and the earth.** The earth was without form and void, and **darkness was over the face of the deep ...**" (Genesis 1:1,2)*

*"**The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.**" (1 Samuel 2:6)*

*"**I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity** [KJV translates this as "evil"], **I am the LORD, who does all these things.**" (Isaiah 45:7)*

*"Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. **I have also created the ravager to destroy**" (Isaiah 54:16,17)*

*"But he [Job] said ... '**Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil** [disaster]?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:10)*

*"... **If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?**" (Amos 3:6 – NASB)*

*"... **the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you.**" (1 Kings 22:23)*

How could these things come from Him when there is no darkness or evil in Him?

*"... **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.**" (1 John 1:5)*

First of all the Hebrew word for "create" is "bara," which can be translated "create," "choose" or "select" and in Isaiah 45:7 & 54:16,17 above it seems the meaning is the latter. The Hebrew word for "kills" in 2 Samuel 2:6 is "muwth," meaning to give or deliver to death; not to create death. Also remember that the Hebrew word translated "darkness" (in Genesis 1:2 and Isaiah 45:7) can be translated "meaninglessness" or "obscurity," which is more the absence of light. The Hebrew for "evil" in Job 2:10 and for "calamity" in Isaiah 45:7 and Amos 3:6 is "ra" which means "adversity," "affliction" or "calamity." So the meaning of these verses is that **God selects and uses negative things He did not create, but which He allows to come into existence (like darkness, death, calamity and evil people), to accomplish His good purposes.**

*"And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28 – NASB)*

*"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for **God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one** [with evil]." (James 1:13)*

While God uses darkness and evil as tools to accomplish His purposes, these things do not come out of His person. There is no death, darkness or evil in God Himself. A good example of God's working is Joseph, who was sold as a slave by his brothers into Egypt, but God used their sin for the benefit of those same brothers:

*"And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because **you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life ... So it was not you who sent me here, but God.** He has made me ... ruler over all the land of Egypt ... **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive ...**" (Genesis 45:5,8; 50:20)*

What God is doing is to bring light into the darkness through Jesus Christ:

[Jesus said] *"**I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.**" (John 12:46)*

“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)

We might say that God uses death, evil, darkness and calamity like props in a theater production. They are there only to “set the stage” for the drama itself.

2. WHAT IS DEATH? Death is not merely nonexistence or the absence of life; rather it is **separation from life**. There are **Two Kinds of Death – Physical And Spiritual**. We see both of them in this Scripture passage:

*“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the [physically] **dead, great and small, standing before the throne**, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is **the book of [eternal, spiritual] life**. And **the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done ...** Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. **This is the second death, the lake of fire**. And if **anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life**, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)*

a. Physical Death: When we die physically **our body is separated from our soul** as well as from loved ones and other things of this life.

b. Spiritual Death (“Second Death”): Spiritual death is much more serious because it is **separation from God** and from His fellowship.

3. DEATH IS THE RESULT OF SIN:

Throughout the ages God continually reminded mankind that sin always results in spiritual death, that is, separation from God:

*“but **your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.**” (Isaiah 59:2)*

a. Death In Adam: Both Adam’s body and his spirit were originally created to live forever in fellowship with God. But death entered because of Adam’s sin, just as God had warned him:

*“the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘... of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**’” (Genesis 2:16,17)*

Physically Adam’s body began to die and eventually after many years he breathed his last and his body was put in the grave. More importantly Adam also died spiritually as He was cut off from God’s presence. First he was put out of the garden where he had enjoyed daily fellowship with God, and then slowly he lost any contact with Him while watching his children descend into gross sin including murder and idolatry.

The problem for us is that **when Adam sinned we were all in his body, so it wasn’t just Adam who sinned; we were part of him so we all sinned with him!** (see Romans 5:12 below) When his sin brought death into his being, we might say it changed his DNA, making his nature sinful and corrupt. We were “in his loins” (as in Hebrews 7:10) at that time and **we all became sinful and corrupt as we inherited Adam’s corrupted DNA:**

*“... **sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.**” (Romans 5:12)*

*“For as **in Adam all die**, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)*

Thus we are born with a sinful nature and it is natural for us to sin. Like all of our ancestors we are born spiritually dead, without any relationship to God:

“And you were [spiritually] dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” (Ephesians 2:1-3)

b. Death After the flood: God gave Noah’s descendants the responsibility of punishing the sin of murder with the death of the murderer. Before this God had not allowed mankind to put anyone to death. So once again **sin resulted in death**:

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed ...” (Genesis 9:6)

c. Death In Israel: In contrast to Islamic law, with the death penalty for only 8 to 12 offenses, the Mosaic Law given to the people of Israel through Moses names the following **21 offenses for which the death penalty was prescribed**, to be carried out by the leaders of the nation of Israel:

Contempt for God:

1. Worshipping idols: - Exodus 22:20; Deuteronomy 17:2-7; 29:18-21
2. Teaching others to rebel against God and worship idols: - Deut. 13:1-15
3. Sacrificing your child to an idol: - Leviticus 20:2
4. Being a false prophet: - Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20
5. Witchcraft/Sorcery: - Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27
6. Blasphemy: - Leviticus 24:16
7. Sabbath breaking: - Exodus 31:14,15; 35:2 (Numbers 15:32-36)

Contempt for Judge or Priest:

8. Refusing to obey a Judge/Priest: - Deuteronomy 17:12-13

Contempt for parents:

9. Being a rebellious, disobedient son: - Deuteronomy 21:18-21
10. Cursing mother or father: - Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9
11. Attacking father or mother: - Exodus 21:15

Contempt for another’s life:

12. Murder: - Exodus 21:12,22,23; Lev. 24:17,21; Num. 35:30-34; Deut. 19:11-13
13. Kidnapping: - Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7
14. Allowing a goring bull to kill: - Exodus 21:28-31

Contempt for marriage and the family:

15. Adultery: - Leviticus 20:10-12; Deuteronomy 22:22
16. Pre-marital sex: - Deuteronomy 22:13-21,23,24
17. Prostitution by a priest’s daughter: - Leviticus 21:9
18. Raping an engaged or married woman: - Deuteronomy 22:25-27
19. Incest: - Leviticus 20:11,12,14
20. Homosexuality: - Leviticus 20:13
21. Bestiality: - Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15,16

Also, God instructed Moses to establish several different blood sacrifices of “clean” animals who were to be put to death to atone for unintentional sins and ceremonial defilement experienced by people (Leviticus chapters 4 & 5). One way or another **sin resulted in death** – either a person’s own death or an innocent animal’s death.

God later summed up His warning to His people Israel through the prophet Ezekiel:

*“Behold, all souls are mine ... **the soul who sins shall die.**”* (Ezekiel 18:4)

Obviously the Mosaic Law was a perfect law intended for a **perfect** geo-political nation and there was **no tolerance for sin**. Through that law God was showing His people Israel over many years what we all need to understand, that we sons of Adam are sinful and absolutely unable to live a righteous (perfect) life.

[It is noteworthy that all of the above sins, for which God prescribed the death penalty, are **outwardly evident sins**. Likewise, all of the Ten Commandments deal with outward, visible sins, except for the last (“thou shalt not covet”). The inward, invisible sins of hatred, selfishness, lust, envy, etc. are not prominent in the Mosaic Law, which clearly emphasizes the physical aspects of life rather than the spiritual. It makes sense then that it was **designed for a physical nation** rather than for the spiritual life of an individual believer.]

It also became obvious through the New Testament teaching that **God’s intention** in giving Israel the Mosaic Law was not to make them righteous by full obedience, but **to help them understand that they were sinners deserving death, who needed the salvation that God was providing** through Jesus their Messiah:

*“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so **that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.**”*
(Romans 3:19,20)

*“Therefore **the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ**, so that we may be justified by faith.”*
(Galatians 3:24 - NASB)

d. Death After The Coming Of Jesus The Messiah: God sent many apostles to proclaim the good news of the salvation He has provided for all peoples through our savior Jesus. One part of that message again is the sad fact that **sin results in death**:

*“For **the wages of sin is death ...**”* (Romans 6:23)

*“But each person is ... lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and **sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.**”* (James 1:14,15)

So **death is not a creation of God that He created to punish us**. Instead **death is the destruction of our life by our sin**. Just like darkness is the absence of light, so death is the absence of life. God created light and life, not darkness and death:

Nabeel Qureshi in his book, No God But One: Allah or Jesus? stated it well:

*“Remember that, according to Christian teaching, **sin is not just doing something wrong. It is a rebellion against God, the Source of Life. Death is not a punishment for our actions as much as it is a consequence ...**”* (page 40)

4. BLOOD, THE SYMBOL OF LIFE AND DEATH: Because blood carries life to every part of the body and the loss of it results in death, the Bible uses blood as the symbol of life and the shedding of it as the symbol of death:

*“If any one ... eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For **the life of the flesh is in the blood** and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, **for it is the** [the shedding of] **blood that makes atonement by the life.**”* (Leviticus 17:10,11)

*“... and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.**”* (Hebrews 9:22)

a. Spilling Of Blood Brings Death: Way back in the beginning **when Cain killed Abel, his brother**, God showed how the spilling of blood brings death:

*“And the Lord said [to Cain after he killed his brother], ‘What have you done? The voice of **your brother’s blood** is crying to me from the ground.’” (Genesis 4:10)*

God talked to **Noah after the flood** about the shedding of blood resulting in death, both to the one who’s blood is being poured out and the one doing it:

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed ...” (Genesis 9:6)

All throughout the Old Testament there are hundreds of references to the sacrifice of the blood (lives) of innocent animals to cover the sins of mankind:

b. Spilling Of Blood Brings Life: God’s Word tells us that by allowing His blood to be spilled on our behalf, Jesus takes away our sins and brings eternal life to those of us who believe in Him and accept His sacrifice on our behalf:

*“and through him [Jesus] **to reconcile to himself** [God the Father] **all things** ... making peace **by the blood of his cross.**” (Colossians 1:20)*

“he** [Jesus] **entered once for all** into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but **by means of his own blood**, thus **securing an eternal redemption** [setting free].” (Hebrews 9:12)*

*“knowing that **you were ransomed** ... **with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (1 Peter 1:18,19)*

*“... Worthy are you [Jesus] to take the scroll and to open its seals, for **you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God** from every tribe and ... nation,” (Revelation 5:9)*

*“... and **the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.**” (1 John 1:7)*

c. Islam Neglects To Mention The Blood: It is certainly significant that:

1) In the Qur’an’s account of Adam and Eve’s sin and fall from Paradise, which is quite extensive [See chapter 8a for the full account], there is no mention of God making clothing for them out of **animal skins** (which involved the shedding of blood of **innocent animals**) to cover their nakedness. It mentions God making “raiment” for them, but it makes **no mention of the shedding of blood to make that “raiment:”**

*(Allah) said: ‘Get ye down ... On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood,- for a time.’ He said: ‘Therein shall ye live, and therein shall ye die; but from it shall ye be taken out (at last). O ye Children of Adam! **We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness,- that is the best.’ Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may receive admonition! O ye Children of Adam! **Let not Satan seduce you, in the same manner as He got your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their raiment, to expose their shame:** for he and his tribe watch you from a position where ye cannot see them ...” (Sura 7:24-27)***

2) In the Qur’an’s account of Abraham offering his son as a sacrifice [See Sura 37:100-109] there is again significant detail given, but instead of mentioning God’s providing an innocent animal to be sacrificed in the place of Abraham’s son, it only says, *“We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice.” (37:104).* Although Islamic scholars seem to agree that it means God provided an animal to be sacrificed, **there is no specific mention of an animal or of the shedding of blood.**

3) In the Qur’an’s account of the plagues God brought on Egypt through the prophet Moses, it mentions only five of them: *“Wholesale death, Locusts, Lice, Frogs, And Blood” (Sura 7:133).* *“Blood”* is the first plague when water was turned to blood. *“Wholesale death”* probably refers to either or both the fifth (killed the livestock) and/or seventh

plague (hail that killed both men and animals in the fields). But if it refers to the tenth plague (the Passover), **there is no mention of the Israelites putting the blood of innocent lambs on the outside of the doors** so the death angel would pass over them as he killed the first born sons in all of Egypt.

4) In the Qur'an's account of God's dealings with the nation of Israel and His giving the law to them through the prophet Moses, there is no mention of the blood of the hundreds of thousands of innocent animals offered to God over a period of many years to cover their sins.

5) In the Qur'an's account of the life and ministry of Jesus, there is a clear denial of his being put to death on the cross in our place to pay for our sins with his innocent blood.

*"That they said (in boast) 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of God' but **they killed him not nor crucified him**, but so it was made to appear to them ... For **of a surety they killed him not.**" (Sura 4:157)*

THERE IS NO BLOOD ATONEMENT IN ISLAM!

5. BUT GOD DOES NOT WANT THE DEATH OF SINNERS:

"Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?" (Ezekiel 18:23)

*"The Lord ... is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**" (2 Peter 3:9)*

a. So God, In His Mercy Delayed Eternal Death For Believers. Although God could not justly revoke His law that sin results in death, in His compassion He chose to postpone the eternal death of believers until it would be swallowed up by a more powerful force:

1) God Delayed Adam's Eternal Death. Although physical death began to work in Adam's body at the time he ate the forbidden fruit, God postponed eternal spiritual death by providing an innocent animal to be a substitute so He could temporarily cover up (atone for) Adam's sin. God Himself sacrificed the lives of innocent animals in order to cover Adam's nakedness and guilt with their skins (Genesis 3:10,21). Those animals prophetically foretold the later coming of "the Lamb of God," God's Messiah, who would permanently set Adam free from eternal spiritual death by His own death in Adam's place.

2) And God Likewise Delayed The Eternal Death Of All Believers Before The Messiah. Believers like Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, etc. were all sinners like their forefather Adam. These early believers deserved to die because of their sins. But by prescribing the sacrifice of innocent animals to temporarily "cover" their sins, God postponed the eternal spiritual death they deserved **until they could later be permanently redeemed (set free) from those sins and from the death resulting from them, through the Messiah's death in their place**

*"... the redemption [setting free] that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation [appeasement] by his blood, to be received by faith. **This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over** [postponed the punishment of] **former sins.**" (Romans 3:24,25)*

b. And Then God Sent Us A Savior To Set Us Free By Destroying Death And Satan and Totally Removing All Our Sin. He did this through the **redeeming** (setting free) death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus:

“... **the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**” (Romans 3:24)

Therefore, for all who put their faith in Jesus, God has now:

1) put away (abolished) **sin** with its condemnation and bondage:

“**He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.**” (Psalm 103:12 – NLT)

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he [Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things, **that through death he might ... deliver all those who through fear of death [condemnation] were subject to lifelong slavery.**” (Hebrews 2:14,15)

“... he [the Lord Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages **to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.**” (Hebrews 9:26)

2) destroyed **Satan** and all his power:

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he [Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things, **that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.**” (Hebrews 2:14)

3) destroyed (swallowed up) **death**:

“**He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears ...**” (Isaiah 25:8)

“... **‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’**” (1 Corinthians 15:54)

“... **our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**” (2 Timothy 1:10 - NIV)

Our Lord Jesus destroyed death “through death,” meaning He conquered death by deliberately entering into it in order to conquer and destroy its power from within! The expression, “swallowed up” is very insightful because Jesus destroyed death by ingesting it – by taking it into Himself – and because He is the great eternal Word of Life, death was consumed by Him with no harm to Himself.

Yes, we can be released from eternal, spiritual death if we by faith receive Jesus as our mighty Savior:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life ... Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**” (John 3:16-18)

Notice That Jesus Himself Has Authority Over Death:

“... **I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.**” (John 10:17,18)

c. So Although We Still Die Physically, Our Spiritual Life Is Now Restored Eternally, and one day our physical bodies also will be resurrected from death and restored to His original design for them – without disease or death to live eternally with Him:

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [died]. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ ... Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23,51-53)

6. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

a. Don’t Abuse God’s Patience! God’s patience is not something to take for granted. His purpose in being patient is our repentance, not our punishment. Ignoring God’s purpose is an invitation for Him to send His wrath:

“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed ... for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth ... there will be wrath and fury.” (Romans 2:4-8)

b. We must be “born again.” How can we receive spiritual life and be restored to what God originally intended us to be – in perfect fellowship with Him? We must be spiritually born of God by receiving Jesus as our Savior through hearing and believing “the gospel” (God’s message of good news for us):

“But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12,13)

[Jesus said] ***“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit [of God] is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”*** (John 3:6,7)

“you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:24)

C. GOD’S IMAGE: [see also Chapter One, section B - God’s Uniqueness]

ISLAM:

Because the Bible says man was created in the image of God, it is important to see if the Qur’an says anything about this:

1. NO ONE LIKE GOD: In Yusuf Ali’s translation of the Qur’an the word “*image*” is used only three times and the word “*likeness*” only once, and all four are used in reference to idol worship. The word, “*similitude*” is found only three times in reference to God. One is used forbidding anyone to compare anything to God:

“Invent not similitudes for Allah: for Allah knoweth, and ye know not.” (Sura 16:74)

The other two have the meaning of “description” or “attribute” (which is the way others have

translated them):

“... to Allah applies the highest **similitude**: for He is the Exalted in Power ...” (Sura 16:60)

“... To Him belongs the loftiest **similitude** (we can think of) in the heavens and the earth: for He is Exalted in Might, full of wisdom.” (Sura 30:27)

The message of these two verses may be that God is far beyond any comparison we might think of with our feeble minds, so don't even try. Furthermore, there are two other verses which clearly say there is no one like God:

“(He is) the Creator ... **there is nothing whatever like unto Him** ...” (Sura 42:11)

“Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; **He begetteth not, nor is He begotten** [rejection of “Son of God”]; **And there is none like unto Him.**” (Sura 112:1-4)

One result of Islam's rejection of man being in the image of God is expressed by a former Muslim, who was educated in a “madrasa” (Islamic school), where he says,

“Reasoning is not valued. Creativity is suppressed. Questioning is not allowed.” – (anonymous)

2. GOD BREATHED SOMETHING OF HIS SPIRIT INTO MAN. Strangely, the **Qur'an** twice mentions that God “**breathed of His spirit**” into man when he created him. Does this imply man was created in the image of God?

“... He began **the creation of man** with (nothing more than) clay ... But He fashioned him in due proportion, and **breathed into him something of His spirit** ...” (Sura 32:7-9)

“thy Lord said ... ‘**I am about to create man** ... When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) **and breathed into him of My spirit**, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.’” (Sura 15:28,29)

The average Muslim is inclined to believe that God is incomparable and we are not like Him in any way. For example, here are the perspectives of two Muslim scholars:

“**The belief that God created man in His own image has distorted the concept of God for centuries. It would be completely illogical to believe that God possesses human physical features.** The expression “in the image of God” has been taken out of context and misunderstood ... **if God was in the shape of a human, then it would be logical to assume that He would also bear the same characteristics of a human and also be subject to the laws of human nature.**” [from <http://www.discoveringislam.org>]:

“... Allah is unique and superior to His creations. Thus **the biblical statement that was mentioned in Genesis Ch1 v27 that God has created man in his own image is a view that is not shared by Muslims** ...” [from <http://www.al-islam.org/articles/nature-of-allah-yasir-al-wakeel>]

Zuberi doesn't seem to understand that God's creation of man in His own image (or “likeness”) is not referring to man's physical body (which God does not have), but refers to our having many of God's spiritual and moral characteristics.

One of the most influential Islamic theologians, Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi In his commentary Tafhim al-Qur'an, presents a different perspective about this:

“... (when I have) **breathed of My spirit into him** ...’ = ‘... (when I have) **cast a reflection of My Divine characteristics on him** ...’ This shows that the soul of man implies life, knowledge, power, will, discretion and other human characteristics in the aggregate. **These are in reality a slight reflection of Divine characteristics that has been cast on the human body** ... And it is **this Divine reflection on the human body** which has raised him to the position of the Vicegerent of Allah and made him that worthy being before whom angels and every earthly thing should bow down.”

Another Muslim website interprets “*breathed into him something of His spirit*” to mean that we were created with characteristics similar to His but in a very limited way:

“Muslims do not believe man is created in the image of God’s essence. God ... does not have arms and legs as we do ... On the other hand, God has created human beings with attributes similar to those of His own, but in a very limited fashion. This is highlighted in the verse, “... I have made him (Adam) complete and breathed into him of My spirit ...” [QUR’AN, 15:29] ... Islam clearly rules out any assertion that may suggest the divinity of any human being, it also allows that the human being possesses the perfect and infinite attributes of God in a limited and finite fashion, so we can get to know God ... For us to comprehend God he has embedded in us attributes similar to His own. We use our attributes as a unit of measure to understand the absolute, eternal and perfect attributes of God ... Knowledge of God is essential as it leads to love of God. We cannot love someone we do not know ...” [from <http://www.islamicteaching.info/faq-items/do-muslims-believe-in-man-being-created-in-the-image-of-god/>]

Although I like this explanation, which is similar to Biblical teaching, it seems to conflict with the teaching of the Qur’an (see above) that nothing is “like” God.

A fourth site says it means only that we are encouraged to strive to acquire the characteristics implied by the attributes of God:

“Man is encouraged to strive to acquire the characteristics implied by some of the attributes and names of Allah (God). That means striving to acquire those attributes ... such as knowledge, strength, mercy, forbearance, generosity and forgiveness, etc. ... But when applied to Allah, these attributes are perfect and greater than when applied to any created being, because there is nothing like unto Allah in His attributes and actions, just as there is nothing like unto Allah in His Essence ... it is sufficient for a person to have a share in the sense of these attributes ...” [from: <http://www.iqrasense.com>]

So, it seems that Muslim scholars struggle to explain the meaning of “*breathed into him something of His spirit*.” They use phrases like, “A slight reflection” and “in a very limited fashion” but cannot agree that God created man in His “own image.”

Strangely, however, according to <https://islamqa.info/en/20652> the following quotes from the Hadith (traditions) show **Muhammad said God created Adam in his image:**

“... the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Allaah created Adam in His image, and he was sixty cubits tall ... Everyone who enters Paradise will be in the form of Adam, but mankind continued to grow shorter until now.” [Al-Bukhaari (6227) and Muslim (2841)]

“When any one of you fights his brother, let him avoid the face, for Allaah created Adam in His image.” [Muslim (2612)]

Muslim scholars engage in various explanations in an attempt to explain this. One (<http://www.iqrasense.com/allah/islamic-viewpoint-on-god-made-man-in-his-own-image.html>) says:

“As Muslims, we must believe in all the attributes that have been narrated from Allah or from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in a manner that befits Allah, whilst also believing that He does not resemble any of His creation in any of His attributes, just as He does not resemble them in His Essence ... [however] Man is encouraged to strive to acquire the characteristics implied by some of the attributes and names of Allah (God) ...”

THE BIBLE:

1. GOD, UNLIKE ANY PHYSICAL CREATED BEING: God is not physical and certainly does not resemble the appearance of any physical being:

“To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?” (Isaiah 40:17-19)

*“You shall not make for yourself a **carved image, or any likeness of anything** that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”* (Exodus 20:3-5)

2. MANKIND CREATED IN GOD’S SPIRITUAL/MORAL “LIKENESS” OR “IMAGE:” So, although God is not like us, we are like Him:

*“God said, **“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.** And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing ...”* So **God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**” (Genesis 1:26-27)

*“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, **for God made man in his own image.**”* (Genesis 9:6)

Since God is not physical, man being created in the "image of God" must involve characteristics that are non-physical. Also being created in God’s image clearly does not mean being equal to Him in His divine powers (His absolute sovereignty, His complete knowledge, His total power, etc.). Instead it means **we were created to be like Him in our character** (and to some degree in our personality).

Mankind was created with character traits coming from God and reflecting His character. For example, one of the aspects of God's character is that He is truthful, so Adam and Eve were created to be truthful like God is. Another aspect of God's character is His justice, and mankind was created to treat one another justly. Because mankind was originally created in God’s image, we were intended to also be patient, self-controlled, creative, free to decide, analytical, industrious, good, faithful, kind, etc. – because those things are a part of God’s character.

[See chapter one, B. Bible, 2. For a list of ways in which we were created to be like God]

Notice how clever Satan was in distorting this truth by deceiving Adam and Eve into believing they could become *“like God”* by eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and thus gain complete knowledge and be omniscient; an impossible objective never intended by God:

*“the serpent said to the woman, ‘... God knows that when you eat of it **your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that **the tree was to be desired to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”* (Genesis 3:4-6)

3. GOD’S IMAGE IN MANKIND CORRUPTED AND DISTORTED: Sadly, our forefather Adam’s rebellion against God brought “death” to him, and so we his descendants have also inherited both sin and death. His corrupted DNA has seriously distorted and corrupted the “image” of God in us. We are born with a sinful nature, and as a result only a faint shadow of God’s character and pure emotions remains. Now we find it natural to lie, hate, be greedy and even to murder:

*“Therefore, just as **sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ... by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners ...**”* (Romans 5:12,19)

[The Apostle Paul wrote] *“For **I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ... I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire***

to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” (Romans 7:15,18-19)

“For as **in Adam all die**, so also **in Christ shall all be made alive.**” (1 Corinthians 15:22)

4. GOD’S ORIGINAL PURPOSE IN CREATING MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE:

Okay, so nothing and no one is equal to God and yet He created us to reflect His image to some degree, but Why? Why didn’t He create only lifeless stars and planets that would always completely obey His every command, or like animals, birds and fish that simply follow instinct that God has built into them?

The Qur’an says (see A.3.) that man was created in order to see God’s power, to worship and serve God and be tested by God. In contrast the Bible says **God created us to be enough like Himself that we would have the capacity to glorify Him and enjoy an intimate relationship with Him:** (The Westminster Catechism says “The chief end of man” is “to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”)

a. “To Glorify God” (Make Him Famous) **Both Now And Eternally:** When we trust in Christ, He enables us to **glorify Him, by reflecting His character**, thus causing others to glorify Him. Obviously the more we know and love Him the more we will want to be like Him, and the more we are like Him the more **our lives will glorify Him:**

- In Creation:

“... everyone who is called by my name, **whom I created for my glory** ...” (Isaiah 43:7)

- In This Life:

“But thanks be to **God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.** (2 Corinthians 2:14)

“**And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another ...**” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

- In Eternity:

“**when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.**” (2 Thess. 1:10)

b. To Enjoy An Intimate Filial Relationship With God Eternally: If we were to be totally different from Him, we would be totally unable to know Him. So God made us enough like Himself to be able to know Him and to live in intimate fellowship with Him. God Himself exists in community, so He created us with the capacity to live in community with Him. As believers in Christ we enjoy **a growing knowledge and relationship with God**, and in the future **we will be with Him and like Him forever.** That is, because God not only originally created us to glorify Him by reflecting His image, but **now He is recreating us in Jesus to be His children – His own special pride and joy:**

- In Creation:

“**He made from one man every nation of mankind ... for in Him we live and move and exist ... Being then the children of God** [i.e., created by God], **we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is ... an image [idol] ...**” (Acts 17:26,28-29 – NASB)

- Now:

“**Thus says the LORD: “... let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me ...”** (Jeremiah 9:23,24)

“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God ...” (John 17:3)

“For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’” (2 Cor. 6:16)

“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18) [The NLT renders the last part of this verse as “... and we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.”]

(It is interesting that He compares us to “firstfruits of his creatures.” **First fruits** are special because they are the **beginning** of a harvest, but mankind was created **last** as the **climax** of all of God’s creative work. Those of us being redeemed by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus are so special to Him that He calls us His “first fruits!” – **first fruits of a new harvest; to be God’s prized possession!** Our joy is a result of His joy in us.)

- In The Future:

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11)

“... I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest ...” (Jeremiah 31:33-34)

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are ... Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:1,2)

“... Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” (Revelation 21:3)

5. JESUS, GOD’S PERFECT IMAGE: In order to save us and enable us to be restored to the image of God as originally intended, Jesus became for us the perfect man and perfect substitute – the exact image of God:

a. Jesus Changed His Form. Jesus became man by putting aside the “form of God” and choosing to live among us in the “form of a servant” by taking on the “likeness of men.” He didn’t put aside His deity, but He chose to put aside (stop using) His behavior and powers as God and take on the “form” of a perfect and complete man:

“... Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:5-8)

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.” (Romans 8:2-4)

b. So Jesus Became For Us The Perfect Human “Image Of God.” He looked just like us sinful human beings, but His behavior, words and thoughts were completely like God in character – righteous and without sin:

“... the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:4)

“He is the image of the invisible God ...” (Colossians 1:15)

“... He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature ...” (Hebrews 1:2,3)

[The NLT paraphrase: “*The Son ... expresses the very character of God*”]

“For we do not have a high priest [Jesus] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but **one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**” (Hebrews 4:15)

c. To Transform Us Into His Own Likeness By Enabling Us To Live Increasingly In God’s “Image” In This Life. This is frequently mentioned:

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” (Romans 8:29,30)

“**And we all ... are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another ...**” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

“**to put off your old self**, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires ... and **to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**” (Ephesians 4:22,24)

“... Christ ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, **becoming like him in his death ...**” (Philippians 3:8,10)

“Put on your new nature, and be renewed **as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.**” (Colossians 3:10 - NLT)

“**His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence**, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, **so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature ...**” (2 Peter 1:3,4)

d. And To Ultimately Restore Us Completely To God’s Image: Although we will not totally become like Christ in this life, we will be completely like Him when we are resurrected:

“As for me, **I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.**” (Psalm 17:14,15)

“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, **we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven [Jesus].**” (1 Corinthians 15:48-50)

“... we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears **we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.**” (1 John 3:2)

D. MY REACTIONS:

1. “Best Of Creators:” How can the Qur’an call God the “best” Creator and the “Creator Supreme”? The Qur’an repeatedly says there is only one God, so how can He be the “best” or the “supreme” creator if there are no other creators? Is He comparing Himself to human “creators”?

2. God’s Purpose In Creating Mankind: Since in Islam God is not our Father, He could not have created us for the purpose of having any kind of fellowship or loving relationship with us. It would seem He created us only to show He could (His power)!

3. God Creating Mankind Weak And Impatient, And God Creating Death: God is perfect and the Qur’an says He “*made everything most good*” (Sura 32:7-11). So how could He create

mankind “weak” and “impatient,” and how can He “*cause*” or “*create*” death? The Bible says Mankind’s death is caused by his sin, but the Qur’an says it is “caused” by God and is His “creation.” In a general sense, it is true that ultimately God is the origin of all things including death, but I believe the following verses show that God is the creator of life, and that death is what God has reluctantly allowed as the result of man’s sin:

*“Therefore, just as **sin came into the world through one man** [Adam], **and death through sin, and so death spread to all men ...**” (Romans 5:12)*

Death is the absence of life. More specifically it is the absence of any relationship with God, the source of life. The Qur’an’s emphasis on God creating death would seem to be either for the purpose of exalting the power of God or of frightening us into obeying Him.

4. Man’s Life Is Not God’s Life. Also with regard to Islam’s teaching about God creating life, it seems that **human life is something totally separate from God’s life**. Our life seems merely something He created out of nothing just by saying, “Be!” **rather than His own life** that He “*breathed into*” us from within Himself.

5. “Something Of His Spirit” in Man: It is significant that Islamic theologians seem to recognize that there is some sense in which God wants us to imitate His characteristics, and at least one of them quoted above (see C.2. under *Islam*) recognizes that God’s purpose in breathing “*something of His spirit*” into man must be “*so we can get to know God*”:

*“Muslims do not believe man is created in the image of God’s essence ... On the other hand, God has created human beings with attributes similar to those of His own, but in a very limited fashion ... Notwithstanding the fact that Islam clearly rules out any assertion that may suggest the divinity of any human being, it also allows that the human being possesses the perfect and infinite attributes of God in a limited and finite fashion, **so we can get to know God ...**” – [http://www.islamicteaching.info]*

6. Imitating Muhammad Instead Of God: However Islam basically teaches that believers cannot know God in any intimate way and that our objective is not to try to imitate God’s characteristics, which are far beyond us, but we should instead follow and be like Muhammad, God’s “messenger.”

*“... So believe in Allah and **His Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet**, who believeth in Allah and His words: **follow him** [i.e., Muhammad] **that (so) ye may be guided.**” (Sura 7:158)*

The Bible, however, teaches us to imitate God:

*“Therefore **be imitators of God**, as beloved children.” (Ephesians 5:1)*

APPENDIX 16

MY EXPLANATION OF GOD'S CREATION VS. SCIENTIFIC PROOF

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

Because God is God, when He created the cosmos He simply spoke everything into existence out of nothing. God's Word tells us that all those things He created were "very good" (Genesis 1:31). In other words, they were created complete and perfect in themselves.

One facet of God's complete and "very good" creation is His creation of time (see 1 Corinthians 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:9; Jude 1:25). With time everything is constantly changing. I believe that means that everything God created He created with time, or we might say "in motion." Therefore those things did not just begin from "a dead start," but they were created in the midst of existence. So when He created the earth, the stars, the trees, the animals and human beings He created them with a built-in history as well as a future. Let me try to explain what I think this means.

When He created the earth, He created it with a geological history (including fossils, strati, etc.) seemingly giving scientific evidence that it had been in existence and evolving for thousands of millennia, even though it had just come into existence. When He created trees they had rings in them appearing to prove scientifically they had been there already for many years and that they initially came from the seeds of full grown trees before them. When He created the stars they had a built in individual history of millions of years from the time of each one's initial formation out of some kind of "explosion." When He created Adam he was full grown and had a belly button and a full genetic structure, seeming to prove physiologically that he must have had a mother and father, an endless line of ancestors, been born a baby and had grown up.

God created all things with an apparent eternal history in them, even though they had just come into existence. At the time God created the earth (Gen. 1:1), if there had been a geologist present to examine it, he would have determined it to be many thousands if not millions of years old with the remains of countless sea creatures and dinosaurs in the rock formations and clear "evidence" of the continuing shifting of tectonic plates in the continents.

No wonder scientists have not ever been able to discover how old the universe is and how far out its outer edges are (if it has any edges), and they certainly will never be able to prove scientifically how it initially came into being.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE LOVE OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

As we saw in Chapter 12 (Fatherhood Of God), there are **six aspects of Fatherhood**. Namely, i) His giving life to children, ii) living with His children, iii) caring for His children, iv) **loving** His children, v) training/mentoring His children and vi) honoring His children. This chapter, which focuses on the fourth of those six aspects, is really **the heart of God's Fatherhood and therefore the foundation of all the other five aspects**.

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's love:

- A. Words Used For God's Love**
- B. God And Love**
- C. Nature Of God's Love**
- D. God's Humility In His Love**
- E. God's Goodness In His Love**
- F. Conclusions And Reactions**

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. WORDS USED FOR GOD'S LOVE:

ISLAM:

1. ISLAM'S 99 "MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES" OF GOD: Only one of these 99 "names" seems to relate to this attribute of God:

Al-Wadud (Wadood) = The Affectionate, Kind, Loving

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

The Arabic name, "***Al Wadud***" is used only twice of God in the Qur'an:

"And He is the Oft-Forgiving, Full of Loving-Kindness" (Sura 85:14)

"But ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn unto Him (in repentance): For my Lord is indeed full of mercy and loving-kindness." (Sura 11:90)

From the context in which it is used in these verses, this attribute of God seems to be more God's kindness and mercy than an unconditional, self-giving love.

2. MOST COMMON WORD: The Arabic word ***Hubb/Muhibba*** is the primary word used (42 times) of God's love for mankind in the Qur'an: Although this word is

etymologically related to the Hebrew word, *Ahabah* used of God's emotional or affectionate love for mankind (see below), its meaning as used in the Qur'an is somewhat different. This word is discussed under section C (Nature Of God's Love).

I believe that Islam's emphasis on God's greatness and His transcendence (being "above" and separate from all things) clearly negates any possibility of Him having the self-giving and self-involving love for mankind that is seen in the Bible.

3. COMMENTS ABOUT ARABIC WORDS FOR LOVE: Farid Mahally in his very helpful article, [A Study Of The Word "Love" In The Qur'an](#), comments on these words:

"... *Allahu Muhibba* or "God is love" is not found among the 99 names of God given in Islam. There is however, the name *Al-Wadud* or "the Loving One," which is found in Surah 11:90 as well as Surah 85:14. In each case the translator translates "full of loving kindness." This is interesting in itself since it indicates that this quality lies imbedded in the nature of God himself and of course would then be infinite. However, **Islam is careful in stating that we cannot in any way know the nature of God. We can only know His will. The Arabic word "wadud" is related more to the area of friendship and affection. It is applied to one devoted in a relationship and expresses fondness. The word "hubb" carries a much more intense meaning and is used in its other grammatical forms for "beloved," "sweetheart," "courtship," "lover," and "mutual affection."** It is also elastic, as our use of love in English, where one might express his love for sports, movies, food or other common day interests ..." (from: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Themes/love.htm>)

THE BIBLE:

1. HEBREW WORDS TRANSLATED "LOVE": There are four Hebrew words used in the Old Testament of the Bible for God's love:

a. *Chesed* (*Khesed*) – God's Loving Kindness: This Hebrew word (translated "loving kindness," "steadfast love," or "unfailing love" in different translations) is the primary word used for God's love in the Old Testament. It is **used more than 150 times of God's love.**

It is also the same Hebrew word most commonly translated as "mercy" [see Chapter 8 of this study] and seems to have a similar meaning as the Arabic words *Rahim* (merciful) and *Rahman* (compassionate) in the Qur'an. However, the meaning is not simply mercy or kindness, but seems to be more "**loving kindness**" with a meaning well beyond Islam's condescending mercy.

It seems apparent to me that the Hebrew word, *chesed* is so meaningful and complex that **there is simply no word in the English language that can embrace its full meaning!** We will try anyway:

1) The Fuller Meaning Of *Chesed* is brought out by the **eight different words combined with it** and used to amplify it:

i) God's *Chesed* Love Is Eternal. It is used **52 times** with modifying words or phrases:

- **God's love endures forever.** – found 47 times, most of which are combined with "endures" and/or "forever":

*“For the Lord is good; **his steadfast love endures forever**, and his faithfulness to all generations.” (Psalm 100:5)*

*“Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows **steadfast love** to his anointed, to David and his offspring **forever**.” (Psalm 18:50)*

- God’s love is everlasting. – found 3 times:

*“But the **steadfast love** of the Lord is from **everlasting to everlasting** ...” (Psalm 103:17)*

- God’s love never ceases. – found 1 time:

*“The **steadfast love** of the Lord **never ceases**; his mercies never come to an end” (Lamentations 3:22)*

*“... **love is strong as death** [never lets go or stops] ...” (Song of Solomon 8:6)*

- God’s love shall not depart. – found 1 time:

*“For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but **my steadfast love shall not depart from you**, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.” (Isaiah 54:10)*

ii) God’s *Chesed* Love Is Integrally connected with His Faithfulness. It is mentioned **36 times**:

*“As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your **steadfast love** and your **faithfulness** will ever preserve me!” (Psalm 40:11)*

*“I will sing of **the steadfast love of the LORD**, forever; with my mouth I will make known **your faithfulness** to all generations.” (Psalm 89:1)*

iii) God’s *Chesed* Love Is Abundant. It is found **25 times** as His “abundant,” “abounding” or “great” love:

*“But I, through **the abundance of your steadfast love**, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.” (Psalm 5:7)*

*“For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, **abounding in steadfast love** to all who call upon you.” (Psalm 86:5)*

*“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so **great** is his **steadfast love** toward those who fear him” (Psalm 103:11)*

iv) God’s *Chesed* Love Is Linked To His Goodness. This is mentioned **15 times**:

*“... they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, ‘For **he is good**, for his **steadfast love** endures forever.’” (2 Chronicles 7:3)*

*“Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your **steadfast love** remember me, **for the sake of your goodness**, O Lord!” (Psalm 25:7)*

v) God’s *Chesed* Love Is Synonymous With His Mercy And Graciousness. This is found **5 times**:

*“The Lord, the Lord, a God **merciful and gracious**, slow to anger, and **abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness**” (Exodus 34:6)*

*“The **steadfast love** of the Lord never ceases; **his mercies** never come to an end” (Lamentations 3:22)*

vi) **God's Chesed Love Is Limitless or immeasurable** It is used **4 times** together with "to the heavens" or "to the clouds":

"Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds." (Psalm 36:5)

vii) **God's Chesed Love Is Synonymous With His Compassion.** This is mentioned **3 times**:

"... he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love." (Isaiah 63:7)

viii) **God's Chesed Love Is Associated With His Justice And Righteousness.** This is found twice:

"... I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:24)

"And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy." (Hosea 2:19)

2) The Word chesed Is Commonly Used In Worshipping God. The phrase, "*His Steadfast Love (chesed) Endures Forever*" was used perhaps more than any other expression by God's people Israel in their congregational worship of God. It is repeated **42 times** throughout the Old Testament, including 26 times in Psalm 136, 5 times in Psalm 118, plus 11 other times. Here are examples:

"With them were Heman and Jeduthun and the rest of those chosen and expressly named to give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever." (1 Chronicles 16:41)

"And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever.'" (2 Chronicles 20:21)

"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" (Psalm 118:1)

The importance of this phrase is seen in its use on the occasion of King Solomon's dedication of the magnificent temple he had built in Jerusalem as "the house of God" for the worship of the one true God. Solomon called together all the people, with the heads of all the twelve tribes, the leaders of all the families of Israel and all the Levites (including the priests, singers and 120 trumpet players), for a solemn ceremony of dedication. We read ...

"... and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,' the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God." (2 Chronicles 5:13,14)

The "steadfast love" of the Lord is obviously a very important factor in God's relationship with His people. If nothing else is certain about the full meaning of that relationship, we know it "**endures forever.**" Therefore, **it depends primarily on God's unchangeableness** rather than mankind's "holding fast" to God in faithful obedience.

3) The Word chesed Is Used To Describe God's Intimate Relationship With Us: King David described it in his prayer to God:

“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.” (Psalm 63:1-8)

In the above verses God’s steadfast love and kindness clearly indicate a far more intimate and loving *relationship* between God and His servant than appears in the Qur’an’s use of either “loving kindness” or “mercy.”

b. Ahab, Ahabah – God’s Affection: This word is used of God’s **emotional or affectionate love** for mankind. This word is the primary Hebrew word used for **human love** (both human love of God and human love of each other), and only 25 out of 200+ times that this word occurs in the Old Testament is it used of God’s love for mankind. When it is used of God it expresses His emotional love for us:

“... **in his love** and in his pity **he redeemed them** ...” (Isaiah 63:9)

“... **I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore** ...” (Jeremiah 31:3)

“... **I will love them freely**, for my anger has turned from them.” (Hosea 14:4)

“The LORD your God ... will **rejoice** over you with gladness; he will quiet you by **his love**; he will **exult** [jump and shout with joy] **over you with loud singing.**” (Zephaniah 3:17)

c. Cheashaq – God’s Chosen “Delight”: This Hebrew word is used **only two times** of God’s love. It is clearly a pre-view of New Testament *agape* love by which God chooses to love us unconditionally and save us even when we are His enemies. He “sets His love on us” even though we deserve His condemnation and destruction in hell:

“It was not because you were more in number than any other people that **the LORD set his love on you** and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples.” (Deuteronomy 7:7)

“... **in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction**, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.” (Isaiah 38:17)

d. Rakhum – God’s “Compassion,” “mercy”: One of the dimensions of God’s love in the Old Testament is expressed in the Hebrew word, **rawkham**, which is translated, “compassionate” or “merciful” and used in reference to a father’s love:

“... you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and **merciful**, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love ... you are a gracious and **merciful** God.” (Nehemiah 9:17,31)

“**As a father shows compassion (rakhum) to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.** For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:13-14)

“... he is gracious and **merciful**, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love ...” (Joel 2:13)

2. THE GREEK WORD FOR “LOVE”: The primary Greek word used for God’s love in the New Testament is **Agape**.

Agape, Agapao – God’s Benevolent, Self-Giving Love: The word *agape* occurs in reference to God’s love 56 times in the New Testament. The nature of God’s love is slowly revealed from a bud in the Old Testament Hebrew words *Chesed* (“loving

kindness”) and *Cheashaq* (“delight”) to a beautiful flower in full bloom in the New Testament. The full nature of God’s unique love for us is seen in the New Testament. It is unconditional, self-giving, fatherly, indiscriminating, long suffering, eternal and for all mankind.

a. Unconditional Love: A father’s love for his children is not primarily based on the behavior of his children, but on his relationship with them. He loves them because they are his children, not because their behavior always pleases Him:

*“What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**”* (Luke 11:11-13)

The Lord Jesus, in His famous parable of the prodigal son, describes the unconditional love of a father for his son:

*“And the son said to him, ‘**Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.**’ But the father said to his servants, ‘**Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.**’ And they began to celebrate.”* (Luke 15:21-24)

In the Old Testament also God uses illustrations of His unconditional love for us, such as the love of a shepherd carrying his lamb in his arms (Isaiah 40:11) and a husband longing for his unfaithful wife to return to him (Jeremiah 3). In all these illustrations he describes His love being given to undeserving or helpless individuals.

In contrast, Islam teaches that believers are slaves of God, totally submitted to His will. Two common Arabic names are *Abid*, meaning “slave,” and *Abdullah*, meaning “slave of God.” Also, the word, *Islam* means “submission” and *Muslim* means a “submitted one”:

*“... say: ‘**I have submitted myself to Allah (in Islam), and (so have) those who follow me.**’... and Allah is All-Seer of (His) **slaves.**”* (Sura 3:20 - Mohsin Khan translation)

However, the Bible refers to us as “sons” or “children” of God as well as His “bride” because He has created us to relate to Him forever as our “Father” and “Husband”:

*“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right **to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**”* (John 1:12,13)

*“For **your Maker is your husband**, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is **your Redeemer**, the God of the whole earth he is called.”* (Isaiah 54:5)

b. Self-Giving Love: What greater love could there be than for a father to willingly give up his only son for the sake of others, and for the son to give up his own life?

*“For **God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son ...**”* (John 3:16)

*“**In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation [appeasement] for our sins.**”* (1 John 4:10)

*“Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as **Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**”* (Ephesians 5:1,2)

*“**By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us ...**”* (1 John 3:16)

d. God's Love For Sinners: God does not love us because we are good, but He loves us in order to enable us to become good. He loves us even though we have sinned and rebelled against Him and do not deserve His love. He loved us when we were completely "dead" in our sin and unable to respond to His love:

"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us ... while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ..." (Romans 5:8,10)

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ ..." (Ephesians 2:4,5)

e. God's Love For The Whole World: He sent His only Son to be a redeeming sacrifice for us all. Anyone who receives Him will be saved:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16,17)

"He is the propitiation [appeasement, satisfaction] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

f. God's Enduring And Eternal Love: As a friend recently described it, "A love that says, 'there is nothing you could ever do to make me not love you.'"

"I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38,39)

g. God's Love, Expressed In Jesus:

"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"For I am sure that neither death ... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38,39)

"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." (1 John 4:9)

h. God The Father's Love For His Children:

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God; and so we are ..." (1 John 3:1)

B. GOD AND LOVE:

ISLAM:

1. LOVE, A HUMAN EMOTION: Muslim theologians imply that love is a self-centered human emotion and that we love because we need love. God needs nothing and does not have human emotions. Any kind of direct, personal relationship with God is thought to be impossible, and it is unfitting for God even to speak to us directly!

"It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise." (Sura 42:51)

A few years ago, when Christians in America were displaying bumper stickers saying things like “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,*” the most popular one was “*God loves you.*” Some Muslims in New York countered with their own bumper stickers including, “*As for me and my house we will serve Allah.*” But because they believe God is far “above” having the human emotion of love, they produced one saying, “*I love Allah*” instead of “*Allah loves you.*”

2. THE AFFECT OF LOVE ON GOD: Although the Qur’an talks about God “loving” people, there is no indication that that “love” has any emotional effect on God Himself. He experiences no emotional feeling whatever in loving people, and whether people love Him or ignore Him He feels neither joy nor sorrow. Some Islamic preachers say things like, “***If the whole world worshiped God it wouldn’t add anything to Him and if no one worshiped Him He would not suffer any loss!***”

“... (but they rebelled); **to Us** [God] **they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.**” (Sura 2:57 & 7:160)

“**neither heaven nor earth shed a tear over them** [the people of Pharaoh] ...” (Sura 44:29)

Probably Muslim theologians would tell us that all such emotions are a part of our human weakness and God is far above any such weakness.

THE BIBLE:

This chapter’s study is the most vital of the six aspects of God’s Fatherhood, because **love is the interconnecting fabric of all that fatherhood is.** He created us out of His love by breathing into us His own life. He cares, provides for, mentors and honors us out of love. In fact **God’s love is the heart of His unique and unfathomable character:**

1. GOD IS LOVE. The heart of His greatness is His love! All of God’s amazing creation is beyond awesome, but all of it is temporary and will one day cease to exist except for us human beings, whom He created to live eternally with Him because of His love. His self-giving love is greater than all else. Nowhere is it written that “God is power” or “God is sovereignty,” etc. But it is written that “**God is Love**”:

“... *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love.***” (1 John 4:8)

A preacher, speaking about God’s will for a man and his wife to love each other, once said, “*God is the author of love; He invented it!*” While that sounds right, it isn’t. **God did not invent love. He is love! Love is Who He is, not something He created:**

Because God is love:

a. All Love Comes From God. God is the “*God of love*” meaning He is the source and origin of all true love:

“... **love is from God,** and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” (1 John 4:7)

“... and **the God of love and peace will be with you.**” (2 Corinthians 13:11)

b. God Is The Original Lover. He loved even before He created anything:

[Jesus prayed] “*Father ... **you loved me before the foundation of the world.***” (John 17:24)

“**Even before he made the world, God loved us ...**” (Ephesians 1:4 – NLT)

c. God Is The Initiator Of Love. His love always precedes our love for Him. He

pursues us whether we respond or not:

*“In this is love, **not that we have loved God but that he loved us** and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)*

*“We love because **he first loved us.**” (1 John 4:19)*

*“**I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me.** I said, “Here I am, here I am,” to a nation that was not called by my name.” (Isaiah 65:1)*

2. THE EFFECT OF GOD’S LOVE ON HIMSELF:

a. Suffering: Anyone who truly loves another with self-giving love, opens himself up to possible rejection and the suffering it causes. Unlike the Qur’an, the Bible shows us how **God’s love for us causes Him to suffer**, and He shows this by using human metaphors we understand. In each of the following God describes the suffering He feels by our rebellion against Him:

– A Grieving & Sorrowful Creator:

*“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth ... And **the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.** So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land ... for **I am sorry that I have made them.**” (Genesis 6:5-7)*

– A Betrayed Husband:

*“And I will punish her [Israel] for the feast days of the Baals [idols] when she burned offerings to them ... and forgot me’, declares the LORD. ‘Therefore, behold, **I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her** ... And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth ... And **in that day**’, declares the LORD, ‘**you will call me “My Husband,**” ...’” (Hosea 2:13-16)*

– A Forsaken and Despised Father:

*“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: ‘**Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know [Me, their God], my people do not understand ... They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged ...**’” (Isaiah 1:2-4)*

– A Rejected Lord:

*“... **let us return to the LORD ... he has struck us down ... After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.**” (Hosea 6:1,2)*

It is difficult for us to even imagine the depth of God’s suffering. How painful it is to see even one of our children reject our love and go off into destructive living, or to have my wife abandon me and choose a licentious life style in the world. How can God endure such gut-wrenching experiences on such a massive scale without being completely overcome with grief and sorrow! He certainly does not harden Himself or shut His eyes to the sin of so many of His loved ones.

(Note also **God’s great joy** when we repent and believe – See Zeph. 3:17; 2 Cor. 2:14 & Luke 15:10 – It is interesting that **God rejoices in front of His angels**)

b. Sacrifice: God’s love causes Him to **sacrifice what is dearest to Him – His only Son** – in order to save us from eternal death and separation from Himself:

*“For **God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish**”*

- but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*" (John 3:16,17)
- "... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us ... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."* (Romans 5:8,10)
- "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."* (1 John 4:9)

C. THE NATURE OF GOD'S LOVE:

ISLAM:

In order to better understand the nature of what the Qur'an describes as God's "love" (the Arabic word *hubb* in its different forms) we need to look at both the positive and negative aspects of it:

1. THOSE WHOM GOD LOVES: The Qur'an tells us 19 times that God loves only certain people – those who please Him by obeying and serving Him. **His love is conditional.** Here are 9 qualifications required to obtain God's love:

Faith In God: "On **those who believe** and work deeds of righteousness, **will (Allah) Most Gracious bestow love.**"; "... For Allah **loves those who put their trust (in Him).**" (Sura 19:96 & 3:159)

Doing Good Deeds: "On **those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, will (Allah) Most Gracious bestow love.**" (Sura 19:96); "... for Allah **loveth those who do good.**" (Sura 2:195; 3:134; 3:148 & 5:93); "... verily Allah **loves those who act aright**" (Sura 3:76); "... for Allah **loveth the righteous.**" (Sura 9:4); "... for Allah **doth love the righteous.**" (Sura 9:7)

Dependence On God: "... For Allah **loves those who turn to him constantly ...**" (Sura 2:222)

Keeping Pure: "... He **loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.**" (Sura 2:222); "... and Allah **loveth those who make themselves pure.**" (Sura 9:108)

Love For God: Allah tells Muhammad to ... "Say: **'If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you ...'**" (Sura 3:31); "... soon will Allah produce a people whom **He will love as they will love Him, ...**" (Sura 5:54)

Steadfastness: "... And Allah **Loves those who are firm and steadfast.**" (Sura 3:146)

Kindness: "... for Allah **loveth those who are kind.**" (Sura 5:13)

Being Just And Fair: "... For Allah **loveth those who judge in equity.**" (Sura 5:42); "... God **loves those who are fair (and just).**" (Sura 49:9); "... Allah **loveth those who are just.**" (Sura 60:8)

Strong In Fighting For God: "... soon will Allah produce a people whom He **will love ... lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters, fighting in the way of Allah, and never afraid of the reproaches of such as find fault ...**" (Sura 5:54); "Truly Allah **loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure.**" (Sura 61:4)

2. THOSE GOD DOES NOT "LOVE": God does not love sinners. God does not love people who reject faith, disobey Him, and engage in any of the following 10 actions. In Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an the phrase, "loveth not" is mentioned 21 times in reference to God not loving the following people:

Excessive Aggressors: "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah **loveth not transgressors.**" (Sura 2:190)

The Unthankful: "... For He **loveth not creatures ungrateful and wicked.**" (Sura 2:276); "... verily, Allah **loveth not any that ... shows ingratitude.**" (Sura 22:38)

Unbelievers: "Say, 'Obey Allah and His Apostle.' But if they turn back, **Allah loveth not those who reject faith.**" (Sura 3:32; 30:45)

Wrong Doers: "... And **Allah loveth not those that do wrong.**" (Sura 3:57; 3:140 & 42:40)

Rebels, blasphemers & Doers of Mischief: "... their **obstinate rebellion and blasphemy ... And Allah loveth not those who do mischief.**" (Sura 5:64 – see also 28:77)

Arrogant Boasters: "... For Allah **loveth not the arrogant the vainglorious.**" (Sura 4:36); "... verily He **loveth not the arrogant.**" (Sura 16:23); "... For **Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster.**" (Sura 31:18); "... For Allah **loveth not any vainglorious boaster.**" (Sura 57:23); "**Allah loveth not those who trespass beyond bounds.**" (Sura 7:55)

The Treacherous: "... for Allah **loveth not one given to perfidy [treachery] and crime.**" (Sura 4:107); "... for Allah **loveth not the treacherous.**" (Sura 8:58)

The Luxuriously Indulgent: "... for Allah **loveth not those given to excess.**" (Sura 5:87); "... for Allah **loveth not those who exult (in riches).**" (Sura 28:76)

Wasters: "... for Allah **loveth not the wasters.**" (Sura 6:141 & 7:31)

Turncoats: "... verily, Allah **loveth not any that is a traitor to faith ...**" (Sura 22:38)

When we look at the way in which the word *love* is used in these verses, we can conclude it would be better translated, God "likes," "approves of," "is merciful to" or "gives blessing to" rather than "loves." This is more obvious in verses like:

"Allah loveth not [i.e., dislikes] **that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done; for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth all things.**" (Sura 4:148)

Al-Ghazali and other Islamic theologians have indicated they believe God is loving, but because He is transcendent, He is above having any emotional feeling. The Qur'an does not speak of an unconditional, self-giving and passionate love of God, like the Bible does.

Recently, as I was reading through the Qur'an, I discovered the following verses:

"To Allah belong all things in heaven and earth: verily Allah is He (that is) free of all wants, worthy of all praise. And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply) yet would not the words of Allah be exhausted (in the writing): for Allah is Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom." (Sura 31:26,27)

I was astonished as I immediately recalled the third verse of the famous hymn, "The Love of God" by Frederick Lehman, which says,

*"Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade;
To write **the love of God** above Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Though stretched from sky to sky."*

And I began to think, "Maybe I am wrong; maybe the Qur'an does exalt the love of God, but then I reread those verses and realized it is not talking about God's love at all, but instead is talking only about God's words and His power! No surprise there!

3. WAYS TO OBTAIN GOD'S LOVE AND BLESSING: An article on the internet (<http://islamqa.info/en/10117>) answers the question, "What are the indications of Allah's love for his worshippers and how can we achieve it." Basically it is saying the way to obtain God's love is by doing the following four things (The author backs up these things mostly by the *Hadith* but sometimes by the Qur'an):

a. Following Muhammad's example and teaching:

“Say (O Muhammad to mankind): **‘If you (really) love Allah then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow the Qur’an and the Sunnah), Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’**” (Sura 3:31 – Mohsin Khan’s translation)

b. “Reading” (i.e., reciting) The Qur’an:

“Abu Umamah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that he heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying: **‘Read the Quran (regularly) for it will act as an intercessor for its readers on the Day of Resurrection.’**” [Hadith of Muslim].

c. “Remembering Allah” (repeatedly reciting His names and praises):

“Abu Musa (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: **‘The similitude of the one who remembers (glorifies the praises of his Lord) in comparison to the one who does not remember his Lord is like that of the living and the dead.’**” [Hadith of Al-Bukhari].

d. “Invoking Allah’s Blessings Upon the Prophet” (Muhammad) i.e., saying in Arabic, “peace and blessings of Allah be upon him,” which is called the “salah”:

“Almighty Allah said (what means): **“Allah and His Angels send blessing on the Prophet, O you who believe! send your (salah) and salute (greet) on him with a worthy salutation.”** (Sura 33:56 – Mohsin Khan’s translation)

“‘Abdullah bin ‘Amr bin Al-‘Aas (may Allah be pleased with him) said that he heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying : **‘A person who calls for blessings on me, (recites salah) once, Allah sends down mercies on him ten times.’**” [Hadith of Muslim].

THE BIBLE:

Although our human love has been corrupted by our forefather Adam’s sin and by our own sin, we love because God loves, and we were created in His image. Our love is a pitiful shadow of God’s perfect, pure love. Our love is selfish and distorted by our desire to receive benefit and be praised. God’s love, however, is totally self-giving! **God doesn’t just give us His love. He gives Himself to us!** His love is beyond description, but here are some things God does or has done because of His love for us:

1. GOD, IN HIS SELF-GIVING LOVE, LOWERS HIMSELF TO LIFT US UP: [See God’s Humility in section D]

[King David prayed to God] “... **your gentleness made me great.**” (2 Samuel 22:36 and Psalm 18:35 – the NIV 1984 translates it as: “... **you stoop down to make me great.**”)

“Because **he bends down to listen**, I will pray as long as I have breath!” (Psalm 116:2 – NLT – The ESV Has it, “Because **he inclined his ear to me**, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.)

2. GOD’S LOVE INVITES US TO SEEK TO KNOW HIM PERSONALLY:

“But from there you will **seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.**” (Deuteronomy 4:29)

“**Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!**” (1 Chronicles 16:11)

“**You have said, ‘Seek my face.’** My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’” (Psalm 27:8)

*“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but **let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me ...**’” (Jeremiah 9:23,24)*

3. GOD’S SELF-GIVING LOVE IS BY HIS OWN CHOICE; NOT BECAUSE OF OUR MERITS:

[God said to Israel] *“It was not because you were more in number than any other people that **the LORD set his love on you and chose you**, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but **it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers ...**” (Deut. 7:7,8)*

4. GOD’S LOVE IS FOR SINNERS (no matter who they are):

*“**God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**” (Rom 5:8)*

*“**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him ...**” (John 3:16)*

5. GOD’S SELF-GIVING LOVE GIVES WHAT IS BEST FOR US:

*“**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.**” (James 1:17)*

*“**What father among you, if his son ... asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ... how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**” (Luke 11:11-13)*

6. GOD’S SELF-GIVING LOVE IS LIMITLESS. In quality (“unfailing”), space (“as vast as the heavens”) and time (“everlasting”):

*“Your **unfailing** love, O LORD, is **as vast as the heavens ...**” (Psalm 36:5 - NLT)*

*“... I have loved you with an **everlasting** love ...” (Jeremiah 31:3)*

7. RELATIONSHIPS IN GOD’S SELF-GIVING LOVE. We humans were made in the image of God and even though that image has been badly marred, our human relationships still dimly reflect God’s perfect love:

a. God’s Love Is That Of The Original, Perfect Husband:

*“... **For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name ... ‘In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you [Israel], but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,’ says the LORD, your Redeemer.**” (Isaiah 54:5,8)*

b. God’s Love Is That Of The Original, self-Sacrificing Mother. A mother’s love is unique. She is willing to give her own life for her children:

*“**As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you ...**” (Isaiah 66:13)*

*“**Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.**” (Isaiah 49:15)*

*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... **How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!**” (Luke 13:34)*

c. God’s Love Is That Of The Original, Loving Father:

*“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!**” (Matthew 7:11)*

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are ...” (1 John 3:1)

[See chapter 12 – Fatherhood of God]

d. God’s Love Is That Of The Original, Loving Benefactor and His Heir. A person chooses someone very dear to be his heir:

God says to His people that we are His inheritance and treasured possession:

“But the LORD has taken you [Israel] and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.” (Deuteronomy 4:20)

“Now therefore, if you [Israel] will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine” (Exodus 19:5)

“But you [the church] are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

And He also says that He Himself is our inheritance and prized possession:

“And the LORD said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel.” (Numbers 18:20)

“This shall be their [the tribe of Levi who served in the temple] inheritance: I am their inheritance: and you shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession.” (Ezekiel 44:28)

8. GOD MADE COVENANTS OF LOVE WITH HIS PEOPLE: What are covenants? Covenants are not edicts issued by a king or law giver. They are agreements between two parties each agreeing to give or do something. The world’s covenants often are agreements between two warring parties, but **God’s covenants are loving agreements between a loving Father and His children:**

“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments ...” (Deut. 7:9)

“O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you ... keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart” (1 Kings 8:23)

God has made covenants with many people, but we will look at only **the two main covenants** mentioned in the Bible: [See Appendix 8 for a more complete list]

a. The “Old Covenant:” (from which the Old Testament is named): This was the covenant God made with the nation of Israel because of His love for Abraham. It was revealed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as to Moses, and it was sealed by the blood of flawless “clean” animals:

“the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country ... to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” (Genesis 12:1-3)

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you [Israel] shall be my treasured possession among all peoples ...” (Exodus 19:5)

“Moses took the blood [of oxen] and threw it on the people and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you ...’” (Exodus 24:8)

*"It was not because you were more in number than any other people that **the LORD set his love on you and chose you**, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but **it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers ...**" (Deut. 7:7,8)*

Israel was not faithful in keeping this covenant, but in spite of their rebellion God said He would not violate the covenant He had made to love them:

*"For **the Lord your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you [Israel] or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.**" (Deuteronomy 4:31)*

The Old Covenant was not perfect because it had no provision to enable the people of Israel to keep their part of it. But, the Old Covenant prepared God's people for a better covenant; one they would be empowered by God to keep:

*"... declares the LORD ... **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ... not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them ... out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ... declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD ...**" (Jeremiah 31:31-34)*

b. The "New Covenant:" (from which the New Testament is named): After Israel broke the Old Covenant, God replaced it with a new and better one. This is God's new covenant with His "Called Out Ones" (the meaning of the Greek word *ecklesia* translated "church"); *i.e.*, all believers in Jesus, not only from Israel but also from all other nations. This covenant was sealed by the blood of Jesus, God's "Lamb," sacrificed in love for all sinners:

*"... **Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant ... I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people ... In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete ..."**" (Hebrew 8:6-8,10,13)*

*"... he [Jesus] is the mediator of **a new covenant**, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, **since a death [of Jesus] has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.**" (Hebrews 9:15)*

[Jesus said] **"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."** (Mark 14:24)

9. BUT WHAT NEED OR REASON WOULD GOD HAVE FOR LOVING US?

The best answer I can find is that He, in His sovereignty, **chose us to be His Own; His special "heritage" and "possession":**

*"Blessed is ... the people **whom he has chosen as his heritage!**" (Psalm 33:12)*

*"But know that **the LORD has set apart the godly for himself ...**" (Psalm 4:3)*

*"But **you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him ... Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people ...**" (1 Peter 2:9,10)*

“In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.” or “He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.” (James 1:18 – NASB & NLT)

10. CLASSIC BIBLE PASSAGES ABOUT GOD’S LOVE: Psalm 136 contains the phrase, *“for his steadfast love endures forever”* 26 times (once in each of its 26 verses). In fact, the entire book of Psalms is essentially a song about the loving relationship between God and His people. Other classic love passages are Romans 8:35-39; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8,13 and 1 John 4:7-12,16-21.

D. GOD’S HUMILITY IN HIS LOVE: Yes, God is humble! His humility, however, is not the fearful, wimpy, weak kind. It is very resolute and powerful. Those of us who have children know how very humbling the process of loving and raising children can be, and how strong it makes us! Actually, the sacrificial love required to raise children is in itself humbling, and undoubtedly that is the reason so many selfish people choose not to get married or to not have children. Think about it; love without humility is not really God’s love because it is not focused on benefiting others.

ISLAM: Islam’s concept of God does not seem to have any room for Him to be humble. Even the thought of it would seem absurd!

THE BIBLE:

1. GOD’S CONTINUAL HUMILITY IN STOOPING DOWN TO MANKIND: From the very beginning of humanity, God humbled Himself in order to relate to mankind. At first, He lowered Himself by coming down from heaven to walk in the garden and talk with Adam and Eve in some physical form, which is evident from the fact that they heard the sound of His walking in the garden:

“the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature ... The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it ... And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’ ...”
(Genesis 2:8,15 & 3:8-10)

Many other times over the ages God has humbled Himself to “come down” (All human religions urge man to somehow try to climb up and reach God by making themselves worthy). Normally He spoke through angels or by the whisper of His Spirit in the hearts of his prophets, but a few times He “came down” from heaven to commune with mankind either in an audible voice or in some physical form. What amazing and loving humility! Almighty God sovereignly choosing to stoop down in order to commune with mortal man! Here are some examples:

[in the days of Abraham] *“And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.”* (Genesis 11:5)

[in the days of Jacob] **“God appeared to Jacob again ... Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him.”** (Genesis 35:9,13)

[in the days of Moses] **“and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.”** (Exodus 19:11)

[in the days of Moses] **“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders ...”** (Numbers 11:25)

[in the days of Moses] **“And the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent and called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forward.”** (Numbers 12:5)

2. JESUS, THE FULL EXPRESSION OF GOD’S LOVING HUMILITY: But the greatest expression of God’s humility and love came in Jesus, Who is God’s eternal Word humbling Himself to become a human being, restricted by the boundaries of time and space, in order to save us and restore us to eternal fellowship with Himself. Nothing could reveal God’s humility more than His coming down to become a man and live among us in order to serve us in providing salvation for us. **The Love of God is fully revealed and expressed in the love of Jesus:**

“the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” (John 6:33)

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

[Jesus said] *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* (Matthew 11:28,29)

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

a. Jesus’ Humility In Becoming A Man: We can never fully appreciate the humility involved in Jesus becoming a human being. First, He humbled Himself to become a man in a human body. Then as a common man He humbled Himself even further by stooping to serve and obey His earthly parents. Then finally He humbled Himself by bearing the shameful and cursed death of crucifixion as a criminal, willingly entering into death in our place.

Just imagine:

- The Creator of the universe humbling Himself to live in a created human body;
- the Lord of Lords humbling Himself to become a servant of all mankind;
- the Lord Of Life humbling Himself to obediently enter into death in our place;
- the King of Glory humbling Himself to embrace the shame of crucifixion:

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”
(Philippians 2:5-8)

In Fact, this is ...

- 1) ... **Deity Entering Humanity:** Jesus, Who is the Creator, became a man:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God ... All things were made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made.... And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...**” (John 1:1-3,14)*

*“**when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me.’ ... we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh”** (Hebrews 10:5,10,20)*

2) ... Royalty Entering Poverty: Jesus, Who is creator and owner of all, chose to become poor. He was born in a stable, grew up in a village carpenter’s home, had no home of His own, and was buried in a borrowed tomb:

*“you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that **though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor**, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)*

*“And Jesus said to him, ‘**Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.**’” (Matthew 8:20)*

3) ... Eternity Entering Time: Jesus, Who created time, chose to live in the constraints of time; to be born, grow up, live one day at a time and then to die:

*“**And he said to them ... ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.**” (Luke 13:32)*

b. Jesus’ Humility In His Self-Sacrificing Ultimate Love:

*“This is my commandment, that you love one another **as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.**” (John 15:12,13)*

c. Jesus’ Humility Is An Example For Us:

[Jesus said] *“Take my yoke upon you, and **learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:29)*

*“For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **But I am among you as the one who serves.**” (Luke 22:27_)*

*“When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, **‘Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.’**” (John 13:12-15)*

d. Knowing By Experience The Loving Humility Of Christ Is The Key To Being Filled With “The Fullness Of God”:

*“that you ... may have strength **to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**” (Ephesians 3:17-19)*

E. GOD’S GOODNESS IN HIS LOVE:

ISLAM: Islam’s concept of God’s goodness seems to be that **God is all powerful**

and able to give good things to anyone He chooses, because all good things are in His hand. The Qur'an also speaks of things that are according to His "good pleasure." And there are many verses which speak of men doing good things with God's approval. **None of these are quite the same as God Himself being good:**

*"Say: 'O Allah! Lord of Power (And Rule), Thou givest power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honour whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest: **In Thy hand is all good.** Verily, over all things Thou hast power.'" (Sura 3:26)*

*"Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;- for **Allah loves those who do good**" (Sura 3:134)*

*"And they returned with Grace and bounty from Allah: no harm ever touched them: For they followed **the good pleasure of Allah:** And Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded." (Sura 3:174)*

THE BIBLE:

How should we define "goodness?" Is it **good** vs bad, **righteous** vs evil, **upright** vs devious, **light** vs darkness, **love** vs hate, **kind** vs cruel, **merciful** vs unloving, **truth** vs deception or **care** vs neglect?

I believe all of these things are involved in God's goodness. God's goodness is directly related to His Mercy and Grace (chapter 7), His Forgiveness and Salvation (chapter 8), His Righteousness and Justice (chapter 11a), His Fatherhood (chapter 12), His Love (chapter 14) and His Truth (chapter 16), So since I have already included material about His goodness in these chapters, I am adding here only a few verses on this subject:

*"... according to your **steadfast love** remember me, for the sake of **your goodness, O LORD! Good and upright is the LORD;** therefore he instructs sinners in the way." (Psalm 25:7,8)*

*"**The LORD is good to all,** and his mercy is over all that he has made." (Psalm 145:9)*

*"For **everything created by God is good** ..." (1 Timothy 4:4)*

*"For **the Lord is good;** his steadfast **love** endures forever, and his **faithfulness** to all generations." (Psalm 100:5)*

*"... **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.**" (1 John 1:5)*

F. CONCLUSIONS AND REACTIONS:

1. MY CONCLUSIONS: As with **God's grace**, it seems that there is **no clear understanding of God's love** in Islam. It is reduced to being merely God's condescending **mercy** or **kindness** from a distance. It is like an air drop of food and supplies in a war zone. The recipients never personally meet the one who pays for it or drops it. Sadly, God's self-giving love is essentially unknown by Muslims. So perhaps "**God likes**" or "**God approves of**" certain people (rather than "God loves" the world) would be a more accurate description of what the Qur'an is saying.

I have concluded 7 things about the Qur'an's teaching about God's love:

- God's "love" is **not unconditional** but is conditional upon our good behavior. It is given only to

those who earn and deserve it,

- God's love is **not for all mankind**,
- **God is not the initiator of love**; it is **only for those who love Him first**.
- God's love is **not the motivating factor for a person turning to Him**, but it is **only the reward for turning to and obeying Him**.
- God's love **costs Him nothing** (is not self-giving) and it **has neither a positive nor negative effect on Him**,
- God's love is **not really for the benefit of mankind**, but it is only for the exaltation of His own greatness.
- God has **no intimate relationship or fellowship** with mankind.

2. A MUSLIM'S REACTION TO GOD'S LOVE: Christian friends of ours who are serving the Lord among Muslims recently described the following experience with a Muslim friend:

*"...He stayed for dinner and when it was time for our daughter to go to sleep we invited him to participate in our nightly routine with her of singing a hymn and praying. We sang blessed assurance by Fannie Crosby and after re-reading the last line, "filled with his goodness lost in his love." K asked my husband, "what does 'lost in his love' mean?" To which he replied, "His love is so great that we are swallowed up by it." K was amazed and said, "**This is not Islam!**"*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE FAITHFULNESS (ETERNALITY & IMMUTABILITY) OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

God's eternity and immutability are very much a part of His faithfulness, but in this study I will try to distinguish them from one another as much as possible.

We will be looking at the following topics:

- A. God's Faithfulness
- B. God's Eternality
- C. God's Immutability

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS:

ISLAM:

1. NAMES OF GOD RELATING TO HIS FAITHFULNESS: There are two of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God that seem to refer to God's faithfulness:

Al Mu'min = The Faithful, Trustworthy, Inspirer of Faith

Al-Haqq = The Truth, Reality, Faithfulness

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

In Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Qur'an, as far as I can determine, the Arabic word "*Al-Mu'min*" is used only of people except in Sura 59:23, where it is used of God and translated "*the Guardian of Faith*."

"Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;- the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme: Glory to Allah! (High is He) above the partners they attribute to Him." (Sura 59:23)

About that verse, Yusuf Ali writes in his note #5402,

"Mu'min, one who entertains Faith, who gives Faith to others, who is never false to the Faith that others place in him: hence our paraphrase 'Guardian of Faith'."

In this verse ***Al Mu'min*** seems to have more the meaning of giving and guarding the faith of believers than of God Himself being faithful. Thus, it seems that **basically the Qur'an doesn't use the word, "faithfulness" as an attribute of God.** However, it does describe certain

aspects of His faithfulness in His actions as seen in #3 below.

2. DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF “FAITHFUL”: One problem that arises when a Christian and a Muslim are talking about the “faithfulness” of God is that they have different concepts of the meaning of that word as it relates to God’s character.

Speaking in Urdu, I once asked a Pakistani Muslim friend of mine whether he would use the Urdu word *wafadar* for God. *Wafadar* is the word used for “faithful” in the Urdu translation of the Bible. He thought for a while and then said, “I don’t think you could use the word, *wafadar* for Allah. That word is used for servants, children, and other subservient beings, who are faithful to those in authority over them. How could Allah, who is the creator and Lord of all, be *wafadar* (faithful) to anyone?”

My first reaction was to wonder if the Bible translators had used the wrong Urdu word but the Urdu dictionary says the word *wafa*, means “fulfilling a promise,” “sincerity” or “fidelity” and *wafadar* is an adjective describing a person of that character. Another Pakistani friend, who has done a lot of Bible translation work, suggested using the Urdu phrase, *sadiq-ul-qaol* (true to his word) instead of *wafadar* for God’s faithfulness.

I also wondered why the translators had not used the Urdu word *imandar* (*iman* = faith; *imandar* = a possessor of faith, faithful). But the common usage of *imandar* is in reference to humans who are “honest,” “trustworthy” or “devout.” It is never used of God, Who is not to be compared with humans.

But the problem is not with any word we use, but with the theology of Islam, which cannot conceive of God being under any obligation to mankind by having to keep promises He has made to them. Saying God is faithful would mean God is obligated by some outside law or power to be faithful to His promises, but God is almighty and not obligated by anyone to do anything! In other words, God’s character does not govern or control His will, but His will alone governs whatever He does. The Bible says it is not possible for God to do anything that would violate his character, but Islam seems to teach that God’s will is supreme and cannot be dictated to by any objective principle (or anything else).

3. QURANIC VERSES ABOUT GOD’S FAITHFULNESS: Although the Qur’an generally does not use “faithful” as an attribute of God, nevertheless the Qur’an clearly does describe certain aspects of God’s faithfulness; namely His being unchangeable and truthful (as is indicated in the Arabic name *Al-Haqq* above):

a. God Never Breaks His Promises. Over 100 times in Yusuf Ali’s English translation of the Qur’an, the words “*promises*,” “*promised*” or “*promise*” are used of God. 10 of them state categorically that He will never break His promises and another 19 say that His promises are absolutely true. A few of them are used in reference to God’s blessings in this life, but the majority are about God’s promises concerning believers going to Paradise and unbelievers to Hell:

“... *Allah, for He never breaks His promise? ...*” (Sura 2:80)

“*Never think that God would fail His apostles in His promise ...*” (Sura 14:47)

“*Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power) ... that He will establish in authority their religion ... and that He will change (their state) ... to one of security and peace ...*” (Sura 24:55)

“The Companions of the Garden will call out to the Companions of the Fire: ‘We have indeed found the promises of our Lord to us true: Have you also found Your Lord’s promises true?’ They shall say, ‘Yes’ ... The curse of Allah is on the wrong doers” (Sura 7:44)

However, God’s promises are not specific enough. For example, His promise is to those “*who believe and work righteous deeds,*” and are not “*the wrong-doers.*” But how many “righteous deeds” are enough? How many wrong deeds make one a “wrong doer”?

b. A Covenant? Although the promises of God are mentioned over 100 times in the Qur’an, the word “**covenant**” is used only once:

“Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise): they fight in His cause, and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qur’an: and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.” (Sura 9:111)

In my opinion **this is a bargain, but not a covenant.** These believers give “*their persons and their goods*” to God to “*fight in His cause*” in order to “*slay*” and possibly be “*slain*” in exchange for Paradise, “*the achievement supreme.*” This is called a “**bargain**,” implying that the believers receive a greater value (eternal bliss in Paradise) than what they give (their temporal life here on earth). While that is a bargain for the believers, is it a “**covenant**”? The believers are giving themselves and everything they have but God is giving them only Paradise, which is not Himself nor any kind of relationship with Himself. I believe a covenant involves more than a bargain. It involves a **relationship** between two parties, which is not the case here. Rather this kind of transaction is like a poor peasant selling his life to serve as an indentured servant of an extremely wealthy landlord in order to receive shelter, clothing and food for the rest of his life. The Biblical picture is of God making us His children with all the privilege, wealth, authority, and honor of being the children of the king, able to live with Him and enter His presence at will.

c. God’s Commands Certainly Will Be Accomplished:

“(Inevitable) cometh (to pass) the command of God ...” (Sura 16:1)

d. God Speaks The Truth:

“... God’s promise is the truth, and whose word can be truer than God’s?” (Sura 4:122)

It is important to notice that **such statements certainly relate to God’s faithfulness, but they are primarily expressions of God’s sovereign greatness (His omnipotence – Islam’s major emphasis).** He is **so great** that no one can prevent Him from doing what He promises, and His word is truer than anyone else’s.

So once again we see that, as with God’s righteousness and holiness, God’s faithfulness seems to be under emphasized in favor of His sovereignty and omnipotent greatness.

THE BIBLE:

1. MEANING OF THE WORD, “FAITHFULNESS:” The Bible clearly teaches that Faithfulness in one of God’s attributes. Hebrew and Greek words, translated “faithful” or “faithfulness” in the English translation of the Bible, are found **at least 34 times** in the Bible in reference to God. What does God’s faithfulness involve?

First, we need to look at the words in the original languages for these 34 occurrences:

Hebrew words: *emunah* = secure, trustworthy, stable, firm – used 18 times
aman = supporting, up-building, steady, true – used 4 times
emeth = stability, certainty, trustworthiness – used 3 times
 Greek word: *pistos* = trustworthy, steady – used 9 times

The core meaning of these words seems to be **trustworthy, stable** and **true. God is worthy of our complete trust and faith because He is true to His Word!**

Second, we see that **God is the original model of faithfulness. All true faithfulness originates in Him and is measured by Him.** Only He is perfectly faithful:

“LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago.” (Isaiah 25:1 – NIV)

Third, faithfulness involves **voluntarily subjecting oneself to another** in order to carry out an obligation and to fulfill a promise made. For God this means stooping down to lift us up to a level where we can relate to Him – something Islam totally rejects as blasphemous and insulting to God’s sovereign majesty:

“... you stoop down to make me great.” (Psalm 18:35 - NIV 1984)

By way of example, a faithful husband and father is one who is steadfast and stable. He will always love and provide for his wife and children. As long as he lives he will never desire any woman other than his wife and will always be a good example for his children. As the head of his family, he has chosen to forever obligate himself to "faithfully" keep his covenant with them at any cost to himself even if they don’t fulfill their obligation to respect and obey him. When God created mankind in His own image (see Genesis 1:26,27) He created us to be faithful like He is, but sin has corrupted that image, making mankind’s faithfulness only a faint likeness of God’s faithfulness:

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” (Jeremiah 31:3)

“... his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” (Psalm 100:5)

“Your faithfulness endures to all generations” (Psalm 119:90)

2. FACETS OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS: There are a number of words that show facets of faithfulness, such as **endurance, integrity** and **patience**.

a. God’s Endurance: Endurance is a part of God’s character, and He is the source of endurance for all believers’ today:

“... the God of endurance and encouragement ...” (Romans 15:5)

“being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy” (Colossians 1:11)

b. God’s Integrity: The dictionary defines this as soundness, incorruptibility:

“To the faithful you show yourself faithful; to those with integrity you show integrity.” (2 Samuel 22:26 - NLT)

c. God’s Patience: Patience is a part of God’s character and He also is the source of patience for us:

*“Then he said, “Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try **the patience of my God** as well?” (Isaiah 7:13 - NASB)*

*“do you presume on **the riches of his** kindness and forbearance and **patience** ...” (Romans 2:4)*

3. GOD OUR “ROCK.” Another word used in the Bible for God’s faithfulness is “Rock.” It is found 38 times in the Bible in reference to God, and portrays the same meaning as “faithful,” namely that He is unmovable, dependable, reliable and unchanging in all His ways (justice, righteousness) and works (salvation, refuge):

*“**The Rock!** His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; **A God of faithfulness** and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.” (Deuteronomy 32:4 – NASB)*

*“He said, ‘**The Lord is my rock** and my fortress and my **deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,** my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence.’” (2 Samuel 22:2,3)*

*“**Be to me a rock of refuge,** to which I may continually come; you have given the command to save me, for you are **my rock and my fortress.**” (Psalm 71:3)*

*“He shall cry to me, ‘You are **my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.**’” (Psalm 89:26)*

*“Trust in the Lord forever, for **the Lord God is an everlasting rock.**” (Isaiah 26:4)*

4. FOUR DIMENSIONS OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS:

a. God Is Faithful To Himself – To His Own Character:

*“if we are faithless, **he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.**” (2 Timothy 2:13)*

*”but **I will not** remove from him my steadfast love or **be false to my faithfulness.**” (Psalm 89:33)*

b. God Is faithful To His Word – To Do What He Says. In fact, **God obligates Himself** to keep His Word every time He makes a promise or covenant:

*“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. **Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?**” (Num. 23:19)*

*“... **not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised ... All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed.**” (Joshua 23:14)*

*“**The LORD is faithful in all his words** and kind in all his works” (Psalm 145:13)*

c. God is Faithful To His People. He makes promises and covenants out of His great love. **We can be sure He will keep His promises:**

1) God Is Faithful To Keep The Covenants He Makes:

*“... God, **the faithful God who keeps covenant** and steadfast love **with those who love him** and keep his commandments, **to a thousand generations.**” (Deuteronomy 7:9)*

2) God Is Faithful To Cleanse Us From Our Sins And Make Us Righteous:

*“If we confess our sins, **he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**” (1 John 1:9)*

3) God Is Faithful To Give Us Eternal Salvation:

*“... I have spoken of **your faithfulness and your salvation;** I have not concealed **your steadfast love and your faithfulness** from the great congregation.” (Psalm 40:10)*

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."
(Hebrews 10:23)

4) God Faithfully Calls His People Into His Fellowship:

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

5) God Chooses To Faithfully Love His People with eternal love. These two attributes of God are linked together more than **30 times** in the Old Testament:

*"... the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and **abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness**, keeping **steadfast love** for thousands ..." (Exodus 34:6,7)*

*"For the Lord is good; his **steadfast love** endures forever, and his **faithfulness** to all generations."*
(Psalm 100:5)

*"The **steadfast love** of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; **great is your faithfulness**."* (Lamentations 3:22,23)

6) God Is Faithful To Always Enable Us To Endure And Overcome Affliction And Temptation, Which He Allows For Our Good:

*"I know, O LORD ... that in **faithfulness** you have afflicted me."* (Psalm 119:75)

"God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but ... will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one." (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

7) God Hears The Prayers Of His People Because Of His Faithfulness:

*"Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your **faithfulness** answer me, in your righteousness!"* (Psalm 143:1)

d. God Is Faithful To His Work: [see chapter 10 – The Work Of God]

*"For the word of the LORD is upright, and **all his work is done in faithfulness**."* (Psalm 33:4)

God created us in His own image, but after Adam's sin and falling away from God's purpose, that image was horribly corrupted. Now He is working to restore us to His image and to eternal fellowship with Him:

*"For we are **God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**"* (Ephesians 2:10 NIV)

"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)

"Now may the God of peace ... equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight ..." (Hebrews 13:20,21)

5. PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS: Not only does the Bible describe and define God's faithfulness, but it is full of praise to God because of it:

"I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 89:1)

*"For I said, 'Steadfast love will be built up forever; **in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.**'"*
(Psalm 89:2)

*"Let the heavens praise your wonders, **O LORD, your faithfulness** in the assembly of the holy ones! ... O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, **with your faithfulness all around you?**"* (Psalm 89:5,8)

*"It is good to give thanks to the LORD, **to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night.**"* (Psalm 92:2)

*"Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and **the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!**"* (Psalm 117:1,2)

6. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS FULLY REVEALED IN HIS MESSIAH:

[God spoke about His Messiah through Isaiah his prophet] *"Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and **faithfulness the belt of his loins.**"* (Isaiah 11:5)

*"... that in me ... **Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience** as an example to those who were to believe in him"* (1 Timothy 1:16)

*"... **Christ Jesus** ... The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him ... if we are faithless, **he remains faithful**—"* (2 Timothy 2:10-13)

*"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and **faithful high priest in the service of God,** to make propitiation for the sins of the people."* (Hebrews 2:17)

*"... consider **Jesus**, the apostle and high priest of our confession, **who was faithful to him who appointed him,** just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house."* (Hebrews 3:1,2)

*"and from **Jesus Christ the faithful witness** ..."* (Revelation 1:5)

*"... is **called Faithful and True,** and in righteousness he judges ..."* (Revelation 19:11)

God is faithful because that is Who He is. Muslims may reason that God tells us we should be faithful, but if we say God Himself is faithful it would amount to saying God is like us. No, we are like God, created in His image to be faithful because He is faithful.

B. GOD'S ETERNALITY:

ISLAM:

The Qur'an's teaching about this seems to be very similar to the Bible's teaching:

1. NAMES OF GOD RELATED TO HIS ETERNALITY: Nine of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God show His eternity:

Al-Hai (Hai'yyu) = The Ever Living One

Al-Qayum (Qayyoom) = The Sustainer, Eternal, Self-Existing

As-Samad = The Eternal, Ultimate

Al-Awwal = The First

Al-Aakhir = The Last

Al-Baqi (Baaqee) = The Everlasting, The Enduring, Immutable

Al-Azali = The Eternal in the Past

Al-Abadi = Eternal in the Future

Al-Abqa = The Everlasting

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

2. ABOUT GOD'S ETERNALITY: God is the Living One, the Eternal One, and He is the First and the Last:

"God is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward ..." (Sura 57:3)

"Allah! There is no god but He, -the Living, the Self-subsisting, eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep ..." (Sura 2:255 – also 3:2)

"faces shall be humbled before (Him) - the Living, the Self-Subsisting, eternal ..." (Sura 20:111)

"Allah, the eternal, Absolute" (Sura 112:2)

THE BIBLE: As we saw above in section A. under Bible 1. the root meaning for faithfulness in the Bible is "**trustworthy, stable and true.**" God's eternity is the "stable" part of it. Because He never changes, He brings stability to all of creation:

"And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:17)

1. THE ETERNAL GOD. God lives in the eternal present. He is everlasting:

"The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms ..." (Deuteronomy 33:27)

"... His ways are everlasting." (Habakkuk 3:6 – NASB)

"For as the Lord lives who saves Israel ..." (1 Samuel 14:39)

2. GOD'S CHARACTER OF FAITHFULNESS WILL NEVER CEASE:

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22,23)

"... the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever." (Psalm 117:2)

3. GOD IS THE CREATOR OF TIME AND IS NOT SUBJECT TO OR LIMITED

BY IT: Perhaps it will help to think of God's creation as a sphere or globe with God Himself outside of it. Time is part of that sphere and did not always exist.

*"... we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory **before time began.**"* (1 Corinthians 2:7 – NIV)

*"to the only God, our Savior ... be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, **before all time** and now and forever. Amen."* (Jude 1:25)

Since God is the creator of that sphere, He is separate from it and able to see all of it in one glance! We can never think outside of time like God does, because we are inside that sphere and bound by time. Because God exists outside of and independent from His creation, He is unaffected by time, but "sees" and knows all about history – every place, object, event, and person – all at once and constantly!

But **God speaks to us in our "time terminology" to enable us to understand what He is saying to us.** Please note that words like "foreknew," "predestined," "before," "first," "last," "after," and "everlasting" (as well as all use of past and future verb tenses) are time

terminology words, which God uses only for our benefit. For example:

a. God Lives In “Eternity” And In All Three Dimensions Of “Time”:

Although God in His transcendence is not subject to time (which He created), He has chosen, in His Immanence, to enter into creation in order to relate to and work in the lives of us humans, who are subject to time. Therefore, He has chosen to “inhabit” all three dimensions of time, and thus He “is” and “was” and “is to come” simultaneously:

*“... the One who is high and lifted up, **who inhabits eternity** ...” (Isaiah 57:15)*

*“... him **who is and who was and who is to come** ... ‘I am the **Alpha and the Omega**,’ says the Lord God, ‘**who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.**’” (Revelation 1:4,8)*

*“... holy, is **the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!**’ ...” (Revelation 4:8)*

b. God is “From Everlasting To Everlasting” - outside of history & time:

*“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, **from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**” (Psalm 90:2)*

*“Your throne is established from of old; **you are from everlasting.**” (Psalm 93:2)*

*“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The **LORD is the everlasting God**, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.” (Isaiah 40:28) [Notice the eternal present tense in the above three verses!]*

*“I have loved you with an **everlasting** love; therefore I have **continued my faithfulness** to you.” (Jeremiah 31:3)*

c. Because God Is Outside Of Time And “Inhabits Eternity,” He is both “The Beginning and The End” At The Same “Time”:

*“I am the **Alpha and the Omega** [the Greek A and Z] **says the Lord God** ...” (Revelation 1:8)*

*“I am the **Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**” (Revelation 22:13)*

d. To God “A Thousand Years” Is The Same As “A Day”:

*“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that **with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**” (2 Peter 3:8)*

Some people have said that this means every thousand years in our world is one day in God’s life, but that is not the meaning. This verse means that God is outside of time and time has no effect on Him. Therefore, a day and a thousand years are both the same to Him –no time at all!

e. God Knows Everything Even Before It Happens In Our Time:

*“Even **before a word is on my tongue** ... **O LORD, you know it altogether.**” (Psalm 139:4)*

*“**Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.**” (Isaiah 65:24)*

*“... I am God, and there is none like me, **declaring the end from the beginning** and from ancient times things not yet done ...” (Isaiah 46:9,10)*

4. JESUS IS THE ETERNAL GOD, ENTERING INTO TIME TO COMMUNICATE WITH AND SAVE MANKIND:

a. He Is God’s Word From Eternity Past: Jesus was “before” creation and by him everything was created:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made ... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” (John 1:1-3,14)

“He is the image of the invisible God ... For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”
(Colossians 1:15-17)

b. He Entered Into Death to Abolish It: As the eternal Lord and Author of Life, Jesus entered into our human life in order to be able to take our place as the “Son of Man” in paying the full cost of our sins. Then He entered into our death so He could destroy it and give us eternal life in fellowship with Him:

“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” (Acts 2:24)

“you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead ...” (Acts 3:15)

“... our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death ...” (2 Timothy 1:10)

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Hebrews 2:14,15)

“... ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’” (Rev 1:17,18)

c. He Is Lord Of Lords In Eternity Future: The Lord Jesus is God and will be forever and ever:

“until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ ... he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:14,15)

“... the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings ...” (Rev. 17:14)

“But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever ...’ And, ‘You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.’” (Hebrews 1:8-12)

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS ETERNAL: Obviously God’s Holy Spirit is also “eternal”:

“... Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God ...” (Hebrews 9:14)

“And as for me, this is my covenant with them [Israel],’ says the Lord: ‘My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth ...’ says the Lord, ‘from this time forth and forevermore.’” (Isaiah 59:21)

C. GOD’S IMMUTABILITY (Unchangeableness):

ISLAM:

1. GOD HIMSELF IS UNCHANGEABLE. God is the Living One, the Self-subsisting (remaining the same) One, Who is the First and the Last:

"Allah! There is no god but He, -the Living, the self-subsisting, Eternal." (Sura 3:2)

"God is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward" (Sura 57:3)

2. GOD'S WAYS ARE UNCHANGEABLE (immutable). There can be no change in God's Ways, His Work, His Dealings or in the Practices He Approves:

"(This was Our) way with the apostles We sent before thee: thou wilt find no change in Our ways." (Sura 17:77)

"... (establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah ..." (Sura 30:30)

"... But no change wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing): no turning off wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing)." (Sura 35:43)

3. GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR BELIEVERS ARE UNCHANGEABLE:

"... No change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of Allah." (Sura 33:62 & 48:23)

4. GOD'S WILL IS IRREVERSIBLE:

"... But when (once) Allah willeth a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect." (Sura 13:11)

5. GOD'S WORDS ARE UNALTERABLE. No one can change God's Word, nor can it change by itself (The Qur'an itself calls the Torah and the Gospel God's Word, so how can Muslims keep saying they have been changed?):

"... There is none that can alter the words (and decrees) of God ..." (Sura 6:34)

"The word of thy Lord doth find its fulfilment in truth and in justice: None can change His words: for He is the one who heareth and knoweth all." (Sura 6:115)

"... no change can there be in the words of Allah. This is indeed the supreme felicity." (Sura 10:64)

"And recite (and teach) what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord: none can change His Words, and none wilt thou find as a refuge other than Him." (Sura 18:27)

6. NEVERTHELESS GOD CAN AND DOES CHANGE THINGS. In light of the above, how could God change anything? Some Islamic scholars try to explain by saying that God Himself does not change, but what He says or reveals may change for different people and at different times. God does not change His mind. Instead an instruction or verse may be temporary and apply only to one generation. Later he may have a different thing to reveal, which He has always intended.

While this may explain Islam's "law of abrogation," the cancelation of some verses in the Qur'an by replacing them with new ones, but it does not explain God changing a person's destiny or changing his evil into good. This seems inconsistent with God's character:

"... They guard him by command of Allah. Allah does not change a people's lot unless they change what is in their hearts ..." (Sura 13:11)

"Unless he repents, believes, and works righteous deeds, for Allah will change the evil of such persons into

good, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Sura 25:70)

THE BIBLE:

When I was in college I was part of a team of students who ministered in a Sunday school program in the city of Chicago. Many years later, one of those team members began contacting the rest of us. She told me how disappointed she was to find that many of our group had stopped fully following Christ in order to be successful in the world. How sad! They had *changed!* They had not remained *faithful!* But God does not change!

1. GOD HIMSELF IS UNCHANGEABLE. Every molecule of every object in all of creation is constantly changing – **because of time**. But God, the creator of time itself, is outside of time and remains the same. That is why His name is “I AM” (Exodus 3:13,14). He is ever **being**; never **becoming**:

“... you whose years endure throughout all generations! Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment ... but you are the same, and your years have no end.” (Psalm 102:24-27)

“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6)

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father [creator] of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17)

We can trust our God to always be the same, to always keep His promises to us and to always keep on working in our lives no matter how unfaithful we may be. He will always fulfill His obligation to us at any cost to Himself – because that is Who He is:

2. GOD’S ATTRIBUTES ARE UNCHANGEABLE. His Love And Faithfulness Never Change Or Diminish:

“... his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” (Psalm 100:5)

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” (Jeremiah 31:3)

“Your faithfulness endures to all generations ...” (Psalm 119:90)

3. GOD’S WORD AND INTENTIONS ARE ALWAYS TRUE; NEVER VACILLATING OR DEVIUS:

“The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.” (Ps. 33:11)

“... all his precepts are trustworthy; they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.” (Psalm 111:7,8)

“... it is impossible for God to lie ...” (Hebrews 6:18)

4. BUT DOES GOD CHANGE HIS MIND OR “REPENT”?

*“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should *change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” (Numbers 23:19) [*KJV & NASB translate it, “that he should repent”]*

*“Also **the Glory of Israel** [God] **will not lie or *change His mind; for He is not a man that He should *change His mind.**” (1 Samuel 15:29 – NASB) [*KJV translates it as “repent”]*

Why then does the King James translation of the Bible say that God “**repented**” in the following four references?

[In the days of Noah] *“And it ***repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth**, and it grieved him at his heart.” (Genesis 6:6 – KJV)*

*“... and **the LORD *repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.**” (1 Samuel 15:35 - KJV)*

In these first two verses most other translations use “**regretted**” or “**was sorry**” instead of “**repented.**” These are simply examples of God grieving about the sin of mankind because they did not live up to His desire and purpose for them. This shows God’s deep emotional involvement in our lives.

The last two verses using the same word (and Amos 7:3,6), are more difficult because they seem to say that God changed his mind about things He had **said** He would do:

*“And the LORD said unto Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and, behold, **it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.**’ And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, ‘LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, “For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?” Turn from thy fierce wrath, and **repent of this evil** against thy people. **Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, “I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.”**” And the LORD ***repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.**” (Exodus 32:9-14 - KJV) [*most other translations use “relented” or “changed His mind”]*

*“And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, ‘**Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown**’ ... And **God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God *repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.**” (Jonah 3:4,10) [*most other translations use “relented” or “changed His mind” instead of “repented”]*

These passages are speaking of something God had not actually done but in His anger had desired to do. In the Exodus passage He did not say He would consume them, but, He said to Moses, “**Let me alone that my wrath may (not will) consume them**” and He spoke of “**the evil which he thought to do (not would do) unto them.**” God was so angry with His people Israel because of their continual turning away from Him that He threatened to destroy them (God is a very emotional being; but His emotions never control Him). Instead of destroying Israel He allowed Moses to intercede to persuade him not to. What an amazing reality that God not only allows us to “reason” with Him, but He even invites us to do so:

*“Come now, **let us reason** [dispute] **together, says the LORD ...**” (Isaiah 1:18).*

In the Jonah passage God in His anger felt like consuming the people of Nineveh. He said to Jonah “**Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me**” (Jonah 1:2). We don’t know exactly what God wanted him to say, but what Jonah did say was, “**Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.**” Because God has sent Jonah to warn them, we can assume His threat to overthrow Nineveh had to have contained the implied condition, “**unless you repent.**”

*The Hebrew word used in all of the above six passages in this section about God repenting is *nawkham*, which means “**to breathe strongly, to be sorry, to pity.**” This Hebrew word is

sometimes translated “repent,” “change his mind,” “relent” or to “regret.” It is different from “*shoob*,” another word meaning “*to turn back*.”

I believe even though God threatened punishment and later “repented” or “relented,” He certainly knew from before creation that mankind would become evil beyond measure in the days of Noah; that the people of Israel would repeatedly sin against Him; that King Saul would be totally self-centered; and that the people of Nineveh would repent at the preaching of Jonah. In none of these cases did He change to an action different from what He originally intended to do.

5. JESUS’ IMMUTABILITY: Jesus, God’s eternal Word, is unchangeable:

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

*“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I am.**’”* (John 8:58)

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE TRUTHFULNESS OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Truth:

- A. God's Truth
- B. God's Light
- C. My Reactions

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S TRUTH:

ISLAM:

1. FOUR OF ISLAM'S 99 "MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES" OF GOD relate to this subject:

Al-Haqq (Huk) = The Truth, Reality

Al-Mudhill (Muthill) = The Misleader, Leader Astray

An-Nur (Noor) = The Light

Al-Hadi (Haadee) = The Guide

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

2. VARIOUS ASPECTS OF GOD'S TRUTH: The Qur'an mentions several aspects of God's truth which are very similar to the teaching of the Bible:

a. God Is The Truth; The Reality (*Al Haqq*) (found 7 times). He Himself is the Truth and the only Reality:

"High above all is Allah, the King, the truth! ..." (Sura 20:114)

"... Allah - He is the Reality [Al-Haqq] ... verily Allah is He, Most High ..." (Sura 22:62)

"... Allah is the (very) Truth [Al-Haqq], that makes all things manifest." (Sura 24:25)

"That is because Allah is the (only) reality, and because whatever else [a false god] they invoke besides Him is Falsehood ..." (Sura 31:30)

b. Truth Comes From God Alone (found 3 times):

"The truth (comes) from Allah alone; so be not of those who doubt." (Sura 3:60)

"If ye invoke them [false gods], they will not listen to your call, and if they were to listen, they cannot answer your (prayer) ... and none, (O man!) can tell thee (the truth) like the One Who is acquainted with all things." (Sura 35:14)

c. God Created The Universe In Truth (found 2 times):

"Seest thou not that Allah created the heavens and the earth in truth? ..." (Sura 14:19)

d. God's Words Are The Truth (found 23 times):

"Say: 'Allah speaketh the truth: follow the religion of Abraham ...'" (Sura 3:95)

"... And whose word can be truer than Allah's?" (Sura 4:87)

"... that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord is the truth ..." (Sura 13:19)

"Mary the daughter of 'Imran ... and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations ..." (Sura 66:12)

e. God Causes Some To Stray From The Truth. Twice the Qur'an says God causes people to stray from His truth – those who forsake Him:

[Moses said to God] *"... this is no more than Thy trial: by it Thou causest whom Thou wilt to stray, and Thou leadest whom Thou wilt into the right path ..."* (Sura 7:155)

"Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things, lowest as well as highest. Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord ... By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads into the right path; but He causes not to stray, except those who forsake (the path)" (Sura 2:26)

f. God Decides And Judges In Truth (found 5 times):

"... In God is our trust. our Lord! decide Thou between us and our people in truth, for Thou art the best to decide." (Sura 7:89)

"Our Lord will gather us together and will in the end decide the matter between us (and you) in truth and justice: and He is the one to decide ..." (Sura 34:26)

g. God Sent Down His Truth Through Messengers:

1) Truth Sent Down In The Qur'an (found 17 times):

"It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) ..." (Sura 3:3)

"... We have given the Book, that it hath been sent down from thy Lord in truth ..." (Sura 6:114)

"They said, 'O our people! We have heard a Book revealed after Moses, confirming what came before it: it guides (men) to the truth and to a Straight Path.'" (Sura 46:30)

"But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and believe in the (Revelation) sent down to Muhammad - for it is the truth from their Lord ..." (Sura 47:2)

2) Truth Sent Through Gabriel, The Holy Spirit Of Truth (found 2 times):

"the Holy Spirit has brought the revelation from thy Lord in truth ..." Sura 16:102) [As mentioned in Chapter 9, Muslim scholars all believe the Holy Spirit is Gabriel]

"Verily this [Qur'an] is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds: With it came down the spirit [Gabriel] of Faith and truth to thy [Muhammad's] heart and mind ..." (Sura 26:192-194)

3) Truth Sent To His Messengers (Prophets) (found 3 times):

"We only send the messengers to give Glad Tidings and to give warnings: But the unbelievers dispute ... in order therewith to weaken *the truth* ..." (Sura 18:56)

4) Truth Sent To Muhammad (found 7 times):

"It is He Who hath sent His Messenger [Muhammad] with guidance and the Religion of truth, to proclaim it over all religion ..." (Sura 9:33)

"Nay! he has come with the (very) truth, and he confirms (the Message of) the messengers (before him)." (Sura 37:37)

h. Islam Is The Religion Of Truth:

"Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day ... nor acknowledge *the religion of Truth*, (even if they are) of the People of the Book ..." (Sura 9:29)

i. All God's Promises Are Truth And He Is Bound By Them (4 times):

"... Allah's promise is the truth, and whose word can be truer than Allah's?" (Sura 4:122)

"Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise): they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qur'an: and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? ..." (Sura 9:111)

j. God Blesses Believers With His Truth:

1) Truth Revealed To Them (found 4 times):

"So put thy trust in Allah: for thou art on (the path of) manifest truth." (Sura 27:79)

"Has not the Time arrived for the Believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the truth which has been revealed ..." (Sura 57:16)

2) Truth In God's Guidance (found 6 times):

"O ye who believe! ... If ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray ... it is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do." (Sura 5:105)

"... never could we have found guidance, had it not been for the guidance of Allah: indeed it was the truth, that the messengers of our Lord brought unto us ..." (Sura 7:43)

"... But Allah tells (you) the truth, and He shows the (right) Way." (Sura 33:4)

3) In An Assembly Of Truth In Paradise (found 1 time):

"As to the righteous, they will be in the midst of gardens and rivers. In an Assembly of truth, in the Presence of a Sovereign Omnipotent." (Sura 54:54,55)

k. God's Truth Destroys Falsehood (found 2 times):

"Nay, We hurl the truth against falsehood, and it knocks out its brain, and behold, falsehood doth perish! ..." (Sura 21:18)

l. God Keeps A Record Of All Actions And In The End Will Show The Truth Of What People Have Done In Life (found 17 times):

"It is He who ... hath knowledge of all that ye have done by day ... In the end unto Him will be your return; then will He show you the truth of all that ye did." (Sura 6:60)

- “... in the end will ye be brought back to Him Who knoweth what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did.”** (Sura 9:94)
- “... O mankind! your insolence is against your own souls, - an enjoyment of the life of the present: in the end, to Us is your return, and We shall show you the truth of all that ye did.”** (Sura 10:23)
- “But if any reject Faith, let not his rejection grieve thee: to Us is their return, and We shall tell them the truth of their deeds: for Allah knows well all that is in (men's) hearts.”** (Sura 31:23)
- “This Our Record speaks about you with truth: For We ... put on Record all that ye did.”** (Sura 45:29)
- “On the Day that Allah will raise them all up (again) and show them the truth (and meaning) of their conduct. Allah has reckoned its (value) ...”** (Sura 58:6)
- “Seest thou not that Allah doth know (all) that is in the heavens and on earth? There is not a secret consultation between three, but He makes the fourth among them ... but He is in their midst, wheresoever they be: In the end will He tell them the truth of their conduct, on the Day of Judgment. For Allah has full knowledge of all things.”** (Sura 58:7)

THE BIBLE:

Pilot asked Jesus, “What is truth?” (John 18:38), which is the question we too should ask. Truth is what is, not what appears to be or what someone thinks or says it is.

1. GOD IS TRUTH. Because God is the only reality from whom all things have come into being, all truth is in and from Him. **Truth is not only what God says it is, but it is what He Himself is.** God is the truth and the only source of truth. All truth is God’s truth. He is **the God of truth:**

*“So that he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by **the God of truth**, and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by **the God of truth** ...”* (Isaiah 65:16)

*“**The very essence of your words is truth** ...”* (Psalm 119:160 – NLT)

2. SEVERAL DIMENSIONS OF GOD’S TRUTH: The word, “truth” is used in reference to God 83 times in 77 verses of the Bible:

a. God Is The True God; There Is No Other:

*“But the LORD is the true God; he is **the living God** and **the everlasting King** ...”* (Jeremiah 10:10)

b. God’s Ways And Judgements Are True:

*“... O Lord God the Almighty! **Just and true are your ways** ... Yes, Lord God the Almighty, **true and just are your judgments!**”* (Revelation 15:3; 16:7)

*“But we are sure that **the judgment of God is according to truth** ...”* (Romans 2:2 – KJV)

c. All God’s Words Are Words Of Truth:

*“... **the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.**”* (Psalm 19:9)

*“But you are near, O Lord, and **all your commandments are true.**”* (Psalm 119:151)

*“**Every word of God proves true** ...”* (Proverbs 30:5)

*“... **I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.**”* (Isaiah 45:19)

d. All God's Promises Through The Prophets Are True:

"... **to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs**, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. **As it is written**, 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles ...' **And again it is said**, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.' **And again**, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles ...' **And again Isaiah says**, 'The root of Jesse will come ... in him will the Gentiles hope.'" (Romans 15:8-12)

e. God Cannot Lie:

"**God is not man, that he should lie**, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. **Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?** (Numbers 23:19)

"And also **the Glory of Israel will not lie** or have regret, for he is not a man ..." (1 Samuel 15:29)

"in hope of eternal life, which **God, who never lies**, promised before the ages began." (Titus 1:2)

"... **it is impossible for God to lie** ..." (Hebrews 6:18)

f. God Swears By Himself, because no one else is more truthful:

"For when **God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself**," (Hebrews 6:13)

"**By myself I have sworn ... a word that shall not return** ..." (Isaiah 45:23)

g. We Must Worship God In Truth, not with thoughtless repetition or ritual, but with honest intention and understanding from our hearts:

"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when **the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." (John 4:23)

3. THE TRIUNE GOD IS TRUTH. Not only is God the Father Himself truth, His Holy Spirit and His Word (Jesus) are also the Truth:

a. The Spirit Of God is Himself The Spirit Of Truth (not simply the messenger or conveyor of truth as Islam says):

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, **the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father**, he will bear witness about me." (John 15:26)

"**When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth** ..." (John 16:13)

b. Jesus (God's Word incarnate) Is The Perfect (Truthful) Revelation Of God, And Is Also Himself The Truth:

"For the Law was given through Moses; **grace and truth were realized** [came] **through Jesus Christ**. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has explained Him**." (John 1:17,18 - NASB)

"Jesus said, '**I am the way, the truth and the life** ...'" (John 14:6)

"Sanctify them in the truth; **your word is truth**." (John 17:17)

B. GOD'S LIGHT:

ISLAM:

1. GOD'S NAMES: Two of Islam's "99 most beautiful names" relate to this subject:

An-Nur (Noor) = The Light

Al-Hadi (Haadee) = The Guide

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

2. VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE QUR'AN'S TEACHING ABOUT LIGHT:

a. God Is Himself The Light (mentioned 1 time):

"Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth ... light upon light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His light ..." (Sura 24:35)

b. God Is The Only Source Of Light Or Enlightenment (2 times):

"... for any to whom Allah giveth not light, there is no light!" (Sura 24:40)

"... what god is there other than Allah, who can give you enlightenment? ..." (Sura 28:71)

c. God Sent His Light Through Books Sent To Prophets:

1) Light In Previous Books Before The Qur'an (mentioned 6 times):

"... We ... revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light ..." (Sura 5:44)

"... We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light ... and an admonition ..." (Sura 5:46)

2) Light In The Qur'an (mentioned 6 times):

"A Book which We have revealed unto thee [Muhammad], in order that thou mightest lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light ..." (Sura 14:1)

"... We have made the (Qur'an) a light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verily thou dost guide (men) to the Straight Way" (Sura 42:52)

3) Muhammad, A Light In The Darkness (mentioned 4 times):

"A Messenger ... that he may lead forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the depths of Darkness into light ..." (Sura 65:11)

"O Prophet! ... We have sent thee ... as a lamp spreading light." (Sura 33:45,46)

[It should be mentioned that some over enthusiastic Muslims have gone beyond the Qur'an by saying Muhammad is himself **The Light**, not simply a lamp of God's light]

d. God Gives Light For Guidance Now:

1) To Each Soul (mentioned 1 time):

"By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right" (Sura 91:8)

2) To Believers (mentioned 8 times):

"Allah is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light ..." (Sura 2:257)

“O ye that believe! Fear Allah, and believe in His Messenger ... He will provide for you a light by which ye shall walk (straight in your path) ...” (Sura 57:28)

“Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure ... and leadeth them out of darkness ... unto the light,- guideth them to a path that is straight.” (Sura 5:16)

3) But Not To Unbelievers (mentioned 3 times):

“... Yet there are among men those who dispute about Allah, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a Book to enlighten them!” (Sura 31:20)

“Verily, from (the light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled.” (Sura 83:15)

4) So Believe In The Light God Has Sent Down (mentioned 1 time):

“Believe, therefore, in Allah and His Messenger, and in the light which we have sent down. And Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.” (Sura 64:8)

5) God’s Light Will Be Completed In Spite Of Opposition (2 times):

“Their intention is to extinguish Allah's light ... But Allah will complete (the revelation of) His light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).” (Sura 61:8)

e. God Hopefully Will Perfect The Believers’ Light In Paradise (mentioned 2 times):

“O ye who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: In the hope that your Lord will remove from you your ills and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow,- the Day that Allah will not permit to be humiliated the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will run forward before them and by their right hands, while they say, ‘Our Lord! Perfect our light for us, and grant us Forgiveness ...’” (Sura 66:8)

f. God Will Bring To Light (Reveal) The Truth Of The Evil In Peoples’ Hearts (mentioned 3 times):

“... Allah, Who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows what ye hide and what ye reveal.” (Sura 27:25)

THE BIBLE:

God’s light is the revealing of His truth; the enlightenment we can receive only from Him.

Watchman Nee in his devotional book, A Table In The Wilderness writes the following in his April 7th and August 23rd readings:

*“We confuse truth and doctrine, but the two are not the same. Doctrine is what is said on earth about the eternal truth. The Jesus who said, ‘Ye shall know the truth’ Himself embodies all that is true ... All spiritual experience derives from **the shedding of divine light** upon eternal truth. **Preached without light from God, truth remains but doctrine. With that light it will transform you and me** so that **the reality, found till now in Christ alone, begins to be seen also in what God is making us to become in Him.**”*

The word, “light” is found in reference to God 96 times in 83 verses. Here are some of the dimensions of what God says about Light:

1. GOD AND LIGHT:

a. God Himself Is Light And Lives In Light:

"... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

"covering yourself with light as with a garment ..." (Psalm 104:2)

"He knows what lies in darkness ... light dwells with Him ..." (Daniel 2:22)

"who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light ..." (1 Timothy 6:16)

b. God Reveals The Light Of Our Salvation; The Light of Life:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? ..." (Psalm 27:1)

"For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." (Psalm 56:13)

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone." (Isaiah 9:2 – quoted in Matthew 6:8)

c. God Enlightens The Darkness Of Our Path; He Guides Us:

"when his lamp shone upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness," (Job 29:3)

"Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me ... to your dwelling!" (Psalm 43:3)

"... a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness." (Isaiah 42:6,7)

"And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light ..." (Isaiah 42:16)

d. God Guides Us By The Light Of His Word:

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105)

"The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119:130)

"For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life," (Proverbs 6:23)

2. JESUS AND LIGHT:

a. Jesus Is Himself The Light, The Revelation Of God's Truth:

"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him." (John 1:9,10)

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5)

"I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness." (John 12:46)

"... the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

b. God Through Jesus Is Making His People To Be Light Like He Himself Is:

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden ... In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

“For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” (Acts 13:47)

“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)

“for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (for the ***fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true***) (Ephesians 5:9)

“But you are ... a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

C. MY REACTIONS AND QUESTIONS:

1. IS GOD’S TRUTH OBJECTIVE OR SUBJECTIVE? I feel the teaching of the Qur’an about God’s truth and light is quite similar to that of the Bible. However, the major emphasis of the Qur’an’s teaching regarding this subject is, as expected, that God is omnipotent and knows everything. Therefore we are expected to understand that whatever He says is truth and light. In Islam truth is not seen to be an objective reality emanating from and reflecting the truthful character of God, but truth is whatever the omnipotent God subjectively declares it to be, even if it sometimes changes!

2. CAN I QUESTION GOD’S TRUTH? Many young, eager Muslims have gotten into trouble asking questions about things they don’t understand or find difficult to accept. This is especially true of questions that seem argumentative. They are told bluntly to repent of such disrespect and not to ask questions about what God has said. Here is an explanation of this teaching from <http://www.faithfreedom.org/?p=10907> :

“Twelve centuries ago there was a “Golden Age” in the Islamic world where people of different views could actually make their arguments about religion without fear of retribution, much less assassination. Sometimes these differing views were communicated to the Caliph al-Ma’mum, who considered them with rapt attention. He also set up the House of Wisdom in Baghdad which promoted free inquiry. Sadly, this moment of open inquiry lasted only 34 years, barely one generation, before the doors to Islamic inquiry (ijtihad) were forever closed.

One of the most compelling debates that emerged from this short breath of oxygen was a dialogue between the Arab Christian Abd al-Masih Al Kindi, a member of the Caliphate court, and the Muslim Abd-Allah al-Hashimy (both pseudonyms). This exchange was known as the Apology (risala) of Al Kindi. An abridged English translation was produced by the Scottish Orientalist Sir William Muir in 1887. (See: <http://www3.nd.edu/~reynolds/nehc20624/al-kindi.pdf>)

After the suppression of the rational Mu’tazilites, copies of this debate continued to circulate in the Middle East. The religious leaders were so alarmed by the devastating effect the arguments were having on Muslims, a law was promulgated in Egypt that anyone found with a copy of the document would have his house razed to the ground, and his neighbors in the nearest forty houses would also have their houses destroyed. That is the equivalent of having an entire city block leveled for possessing a single forbidden document!” (See: Robert R. Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, 2010, page 36.)

The Quran contains a strong warning to Muslims not to question their holy book:

“O ye who believe! Ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble. But if ye ask about things when the Qur’an is being revealed, they will be made plain to you, Allah will forgive those: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing. Some people before you did ask such questions and on that account lost their faith.” (Sura 5:101,102)

It is one thing for an antagonist to raise questions simply to provoke or criticize God’s truth, but to tell seekers of truth that God has forbidden them from asking questions regarding things that trouble them or that they don’t understand is not only very strange; it is a clear reflection of the nature of God that is presented in the Qur’an – a God Who forbids thought and reason. The Bible on the other hand presents God saying,

“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord ...” (Isaiah 1:18)

3. CAN GOD BE A “SCHEMER” AND DECEIVER?

Some sincere Christians have argued that the Qur’an presents God as the Deceiver, **but the Bible does a similar thing.** This is a very difficult subject to understand:

The Arabic word in the following Qur’an verses is *makr* or *makara*, which the dictionary says means, “*deceive, delude, dupe.*” Eight times in the Qur’an we read about God scheming and plotting to deceive the wicked. Isn’t Satan the great deceiver? How *can* God be a deceiver? Translators of the Qur’an into English try to soften this meaning. For example, Muhammad Pickthal (see below) translates this word as, “schemed” or “plotted,” while Yusuf Ali and other translators soften it even more by translating it as, “planned.” Here are 4 of those verses:

“And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and Allah too planned, and the best of planners is Allah.” (Sura 3:54 – Yusuf Ali)

“And when those who disbelieve plot against thee (O Muhammad) to wound thee fatally ... they plot, but Allah (also) plotteth; and Allah is the best of plotters.” (Sura 8:30 – Pickthal)

“Are they then secure from Allah’s scheme? None deemeth himself secure from Allah’s scheme save folk that perish.” (Sura 7:99 – Pickthal)

“Those who were before them plotted; but all plotting is Allah’s ...” (Sura 13:42 – Pickthal)

But the Bible also says similar things. For example:

“to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious [distorted] you show yourself shrewd [astute or twisted].” (Ps. 18:26 - NIV)

The prophet Jeremiah expresses his deep feelings by saying:

“Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord God, surely you have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, “It shall be well with you,” whereas the sword has reached their very life.” (Jeremiah 4:10)

“O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I” (Jeremiah 20:7)

We can explain the above two verses since it is clear they are what Jeremiah said (not God) and he was overstating things in his frustration. Job also had similar feelings, overstating things as He objected to what he mistakenly thought to be God’s cruelty to him (Satan’s cruelty by God’s permission):

“For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause” (Job 9:17) – [saying God is unjust and cruel]

“He has torn me in his wrath and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me; my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.” (Job 16:9) – [saying God hates him and is cruel]

“God has made my heart faint; **the Almighty has terrified me**” (Job 23:16) – [God, a terrorist?]

“*God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes. **I cry to you for help and you do not answer me; I stand, and you only look at me. You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me.***” (Job 30:19-21) – [God, a cruel persecutor?]

But, by allowing Satan to do these things to Israel and to Job, God Himself is ultimately responsible, which makes this question so difficult. We know God Himself is not cruel; nor does He terrify his people, hate sinners, refuse to hear the prayers of his people, or “persecute” His people. But does God lie or deceive? Is God shrewd or devious?

“*Then **a spirit** came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ And the Lord said to him, ‘By what means?’ And he said, ‘I will go out, and will be a **lying spirit** in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And **he** [God] **said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.’ Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the Lord has declared disaster for you.***” (1 Kings 22:22,23)

Even though that “*spirit*” appears to be an evil spirit rather than an angel, nevertheless it was the Lord who “*put a lying spirit in the mouth*” of the false prophets of evil King Ahab. **Clearly God allowed or used evil in order to accomplish His purposes.**

And what about what God Himself says through His prophets Ezekiel and Paul?

“*For any one ... who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart ... and yet comes to a prophet to consult me through him ... I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the LORD. **And if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him ...***” (Ezekiel 14:7-9)

“*The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore **God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,***” (2 Thess. 2:9-11)

It is the Lord who “*deceived*” and who sends “*a strong delusion.*” How can that be?

The teaching of both the Qur’an and the Bible in this matter seems to be about God punishing idolatrous unbelievers by allowing Satan to deceive them. This seems to be the same as God saying, “*Go ahead. Die in your sin since you want to!*” We read how God “*gave them over*” to complete submersion in the evil things they want to do because they have totally rejected God’s truth and want to believe a lie:

“*But **God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven**, as it is written in the book of the prophets: ‘Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.’” (Acts 7:42,43)*

“*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth ... Therefore **God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie** and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason **God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men** and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, **God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.***

They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”
(Romans 1:18,24-32)

So the ultimate question is: Why did God allow Adam in the beginning to be deceived by Satan, to sin and to become the recipient of death and a fallen nature? I struggle to answer that question satisfactorily, but I do understand four things:

- 1) **God Himself is not a deceiver.**
- 2) **God gives us free will either to believe Him or to be deceived by believing Satan, because God wants us to voluntarily choose to love and worship Him.**
- 3) **God allows Satan and his followers to try to deceive us.**
- 4) **God is fully accomplishing His perfect will in all things, even using Satan's deception and our rebellion to do so.**

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

What is the difference between holiness and righteousness? Someone has said that holiness is character while righteousness is behavior resulting from character. That may be too simplistic, but it is still helpful.

We will be looking at the following topics related to God's Holiness:

A. Names And Words Used

B. God's Holiness

C. Holy People And Things

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. NAMES AND WORDS USED:

ISLAM:

1. THE 99 NAMES: One of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God is ***Al-Quddus*** (The Holy One). It is from the Arabic root of ق د س (QDS)

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God]

Although the name, *Al Quddus* does not appear as such, one verse says:

*"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: '... we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify **Thy holy (name)?** ...'" (Sura 2:30 – Yusuf Ali)*

Another translator puts it, "extol **Thy holiness**" (Shakir), but most translate it, "**sanctify Thee.**"

2. WORDS USED FOR GOD'S HOLINESS: The English word "holy" appears only 14 times (plus 2 times implied) in Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Quran and **only three of them (2 of them are the name *Al-Quddus*) refer to God:**

*"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: '... we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify **Thy holy (name)?** ...'" (Sura 2:30)*

*"God is He ... the Sovereign, **the Holy One**, the Source of Peace ... the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme ..." (Sura 59:23)*

*"Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare the Praises and Glory of God, - the Sovereign, **the Holy One**, the Exalted in Might, the Wise." (Sura 62:1)*

The word, “**holiness**” does not appear in the Qur’an. The related words, “Pure” and “Sanctified” are found a total of 42 and 11 times respectively. However, **none of them modify God**; they all speak of the need for holiness in human lives.

3. CONCLUSION: It would seem we may conclude that God’s holiness must be of little important in Islam.

THE BIBLE:

HEBREW AND GREEK WORDS: In the Old Testament, the original Hebrew word, ***Qadesh*** (linguistically related to the Arabic *Quddus*) is translated “holy” or “holiness” and has the meaning of “**separation**” or “**setting apart**” or “**dedicated**” to only one purpose. It also has the meaning of **sanctified, pure, consecrated or cleansed**. In the King James Translation of the Old Testament this word is translated “holy” or “holiness” **105 times in reference to God**.

In the New Testament, the original Greek word, ***Hagios*** plus several other Greek words in their various forms are **translated “holy” or “holiness” 106 times In reference to God** in the King James translation

God is called the “**Holy One**” a total of **44 times** in the Bible and the “**Holy God**” **3 times**. Also His “**holy name**” is mentioned **26 times**. **Obviously holiness is a major emphasis in the Bible compared to the Qur’an, as seen by the fact that in the entire Bible the holiness of God is mentioned 211 times and the holiness of people and things 584 times, making a total of 795.**

In the Qur’an the holiness of God is mentioned only **4 times** and other things are called “**holy**” only **9 times**, making a total of only **13**. That’s **795 versus 13** – a rather stark contrast!

B. GOD’S HOLINESS:

ISLAM:

The average Muslim conceives of God’s purity (holiness) as a **negative attribute**. **He is separated from something rather than exclusively dedicated to something. Specifically, He is totally separate from any similarity to created beings. Essentially it is His transcendence.** His holiness is an absence of anything that might lessen His greatness by being in any way like a created being.

1. BEING “ABOVE” OR “PURE” FROM ALL WEAKNESS: Although the specific word “holy” is found only three times in the Qur’an in reference to God, statements about His being “above,” “pure” or “free from” all human weakness or imperfection, are found far more often. Here are a few examples:

a. He is free from and greater than death:

“And put thy trust in Him Who lives and dies not ...” (Sura 25:58)

b. He is free from and greater than getting sleepy like humans:

“Allah. There is no god but He, -the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. **No slumber can seize Him nor sleep.**” (Sura 2:255)

c. He is free from and above being unjust like humans:

“**God is never unjust in the least degree ...**” (Sura 4:40)

d. He is free from and greater than being a liar like humans:

“... **and whose word can be truer than Allah's?**” (Sura 4:87)

“... **We shall soon admit them to gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, - to dwell therein for ever. Allah's promise is the Truth, and whose word can be truer than Allah's?**” (Sura 4:122)

e. He is free from and above being forgetful like humans:

“... **my Lord never errs, nor forgets.**” (Sura 20:52)

f. He is free from and greater than being selfish like humans:

“The Jews say: “Allah's hand is tied up.” Nay, **both His hands are widely outstretched: He giveth and spendeth (of His bounty) as He pleaseth ...**” (Sura 5:64)

g. He is above having anyone similar to Him.

“... **knowest thou of any who is worthy of the same Name as He?**” (Sura 19:65)

“... **there is nothing whatever like unto Him ...**” (Sura 42:11 – See also 112:4)

h. He is above being born or having children like humans:

“**He begetteth not, nor is He begotten.**” (Sura 112:3)

“**It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son.** Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, “Be”, and it is.” (Sura 19:35)

“**Is it not that they say, from their own invention, ‘(Allah) has begotten children’? But they are liars! ... Glory to Allah. (He is free) from the things they ascribe (to Him)!**” (Sura 37:151,152,159)

2. MUSLIM SCHOLARS’ INTERPRETATIONS: The Qur’anic meaning of God’s “holiness” is explained by various scholars:

“**Al-Quddus means holy, transcendent above everything.** As such, Allah (Exalted be He) is transcendent. He is beyond our sight and our hearing, beyond space and time, and **beyond any imperfection whatsoever.**” (from <http://seekersguidance.org/blog/2009/11/al-quddus/>)

“The ancient roots of **the Arabic word Quddûs**, as well as the Hebrew word Kadosh, point toward that which is set apart, different, that which is ‘other’. Thus, **al-Quddûs is known as the One who is set apart, distinctly different and separate from all worldly imperfections, sins and faults, the One whose perfection and righteousness are so ‘other’ that they cannot be grasped by mankind ... The name al-Quddûs describes the unique, unimaginable purity and perfection that is Allâh ...**”

(http://wahiduddin.net/words/99_pages/quddus_4.htm)

(**Al-Quddoos:**) “He is ... devoid of all blemish, shortcoming, weakness, heedlessness and error ... **He bears no resemblance, in any of His attributes or actions, to even the most perfect of His creations.**” (from The Most Beautiful Names by Sheikh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti)

“**Al-Quddoos: The One who is Absolutely Pure. He is far from and above anything else that does not befit Him.**” (From Al Quddus – Absolutely Pure Yusra Owais (Amatullah) December 6, 2012 <http://www.suhaibwebb.com/personaldvlp/ purification-heart/al-quddus-absolutely-pure/>)

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT: There are four references to “the Holy Spirit” in the following verses, but Muslim scholars all seem to believe that title is referring to the angel Gabriel (as seen especially in 16:102), whom God has set apart to be His messenger to the prophets. So this is not God Himself:

“Say, **the holy spirit has brought the revelation from thy Lord in Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a Guide and Glad Tidings to Muslims.**” (Sura 16:102)

“We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Apostles; **We gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit ...**” (Sura 2:87)

“Those messengers We endowed with gifts, some above others: To one of them Allah spoke; others He raised to degrees (of honour); **to Jesus the son of Mary We gave clear (Signs), and strengthened him with the holy spirit ...**” (Sura 2:253)

“Then will Allah say: **‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity ...**” (Sura 5:110)

THE BIBLE:

1. ASPECTS OF GOD’S HOLINESS: The Bible’s teaching about God’s holiness includes both His separation from evil and His dedication to righteousness:

a. God Is Holy FROM: This has the sense of being **separated and pure from all evil and sin.** (This negative side is not emphasized as much as the positive side below):

“Once for all I **have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David.**” (Psalm 89:35)

“I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for **I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.**” (Hosea 11:9)

Because God is completely holy and separate from evil, He cannot co-exist with sin and He will not tolerate sin in His presence:

“Are you not from everlasting, **O LORD my God, my Holy One? ... You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong ...**” (Habakkuk. 1:12,13)

“the LORD said to Moses, **‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, “Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it.” Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death.**” (Exodus 19:10-12)

It would seem then, that it would be impossible for God, who is completely holy, to associate with, or have fellowship with, unholy (sinful; imperfect) people like us:

“**Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? ...**” (1 Samuel 6:20)

“... **holiness without which no one will see the Lord.**” (Hebrews 12:14)

And yet, amazingly, we read in God’s Word that He lives with repentant sinners!:

“For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, **whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit ...**” (Isaiah 57:15)

This is only possible by God completely removing our sin from us and giving us the

gift of His perfect holiness through Jesus Christ, Who Is God’s revelation of Himself, and Who is therefore called “the Holy One”:

“... you [Jesus] are the **Holy One** of God.” (John 6:69)

“... **Jesus of Nazareth** ... I know who you are—**the Holy One** of God.” (Luke 4:34)

“**Jesus ... the Holy and Righteous One** ... whom God raised from the dead.” (Acts 3:13-15)

[For a fuller explanation see Chapter 9 – GOD’S FORGIVENESS AND SALVATION.]

b. God Is Holy TO: For us to be holy means to be exclusively dedicated to the Lord, but to whom could God be exclusively dedicated other than to Himself? **God is completely dedicated to always and fully being Himself, because He alone is the origin of all holiness.** No one else is holy in that way:

“**There is none holy like the LORD.**” (1 Samuel 2:2)

“*Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For **you alone are holy** ...*” (Revelation 15:4)

In praising God, repeating “holy” three times is an ancient cultural way of emphasizing the completeness and perfection of His holiness:

“... **Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!**” (Isaiah 6:3)

“... **‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’**” (Rev. 4:8)

God is thrice holy. Meaning: 1) He is uniquely holy in Himself, 2) He is completely holy, and 3) He is always holy!

1) Raymond E. Brown in his book, “New Testament Essays,” (Doubleday, 1968) shows how **God is uniquely holy in Himself** (the origin of holiness) by writing concerning the “First Petition” of the Lord’s Prayer (“*Hallowed be thy name*”):

“*When we turn to sanctity, the other term in our petition, we find that **only God is holy in Himself.** For the Hebrew mind, **all other things are holy only because they have been set aside for worshiping God ...**” (page 290)*

“*Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? ... majestic in **holiness***” (Exodus 15:11)

2) Ivory Soap is advertised as being “99.44% pure.” Every aspect and characteristic of **God is completely holy.** He is 100% holy (pure)!

“*They cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, **holy and true** ...’*” (Revelation 6:10)

3) Maxwell House coffee advertises that it is “*good to the last drop.*” **God is always holy.** He never fails to be holy, even “to the last drop:”

“... *Your reign, O Lord, is **holy forever and ever.***” (Psalm 93:5 – NLT)

“*For **he remembered his holy promise** ...*” (Psalm 105:42)

c. Quality Of God’s Holiness: God’s holiness is majestic, glorious and awesome, which should cause all true believers to worship God in awe. After being disappointed by many fake “gods,” we are blown away by seeing the real thing:

“*Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? **Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?***” (Exodus 15:11)

“*Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! **Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.***” (1 Chronicles 16:29 & Psalm 29:2)

*“He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. **Holy and awesome is his name!**” (Psalm 111:9)*

2. GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT: The Holy Spirit is mentioned over 100 times in the New Testament alone. There are Biblical reasons why Christians believe the Holy Spirit is God Himself (Not the angel Gabriel as Muslims believe):

a. God is Spirit (not physical) and He is Holy, therefore He is the **Holy Spirit:**

*“**God is spirit**, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)*

b. “The Spirit Of God” Is Used Synonymously With “God.” The Holy Spirit of God was involved in creation, by the Holy Spirit’s power Jesus did miracles and the Holy Spirit lives in true believers today:

*“In the beginning, **God created** the heavens and the earth ... And **the Spirit of God was hovering** [brooding] **over** the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:1,2)*

[Jesus said] *“But if it is by **the Spirit of God** that I cast out demons, then **the kingdom of God** has come upon you.” (Matthew 12:28)*

*“Do you not know that you are **God’s temple** and that **God’s Spirit** dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16)*

c. The Holy Spirit In The Trinity: Notice that the one “*name*” (not “names”) in the first verse applies to all three, that all three are “*with*” all believers in the second verse and that “*the Spirit*” in the third verse is used synonymously with “*the Spirit of God*” and “*the Spirit of Christ*”

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in **the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**” (Matthew 28:19) - One Name!*

*“The grace **of the Lord Jesus Christ** and the love **of God** and the fellowship **of the Holy Spirit** be **with you** all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14) - One Communion!*

*“You, however, are not in the flesh but in **the Spirit**, if in fact **the Spirit of God** dwells in you. Anyone who does not have **the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him.” (Romans 8:9) – One Spirit!*

3. GOD’S HOLY SON: No one is truly holy except God, so obviously the reason **Jesus is called, “the Holy One”** is because He is “*God with us*,” the eternal Word of God in a human body:

[The angel Gabriel told Joseph] *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name **Immanuel**” (which means, **God with us**).” (Matthew 1:23)*

*“The angel answered [Mary], ‘The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So **the holy one** to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:35 – NIV)*

*“Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that **you are the Holy One of God**.’” (John 6:67-69)*

*“But you denied **the Holy and Righteous One** [Jesus] ...” (Acts 3:14)*

Also, **Jesus never changes**, which is one of the characteristics of total holiness:

*“**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**” (Hebrews 13:8)*

And another characteristic is that **Jesus is without sin (completely holy):**

*“You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and **in him there is no sin.**” (1 John 3:5)*

“... Jesus ... one **who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**” (Hebrews 4:14,15)

“... Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.**” (1 Peter 2: 21,22)

C. HOLY PEOPLE AND THINGS:

ISLAM:

1. HOLY PEOPLE: There are only two verses in which people are called “holy.” In one of them Jesus is called “holy” (19:19), and in the other believers in Paradise are called “pure and holy” (4:57). It is noteworthy that out of all people on the earth only Jesus is called “holy.” There are 3 other verses in which the word, “holy” is used in Yusuf Ali’s English translation of the Qur’an for other things. They include 2 verses in which God’s books are called “holy” (80:14; 98:2) and one verse in which wine in Paradise is called “pure and holy” (76:21).

2. “PURE” AND “SANCTIFY:” The related words, “Pure” and “Sanctify” are found a total of 42 and 11 times respectively (none in reference to God). These terms speak more of things that are *halal* (permitted), but in a few cases of prophets and believers who are set apart or purified by God for special purposes. “Pure” is used of people, food, animals, life, provisions and wine in Paradise, and “Sanctify” is used of Mecca, the House of God, believers, and items used in the worship of God.

THE BIBLE:

People and things that have been cleansed, set apart and dedicated for God’s own use are called “holy to the Lord.” **They have no intrinsic holiness of their own. They are made Holy by God.**

1. GOD’S HOLY PEOPLE: God’s Objective Is For Us To Be Holy To Him, Not Just To Be Holy From Sin. Just as a man being separated **from** all other women is not the same as, or nearly as meaningful as, being separated only **to** his wife. (A single man can be separated from all women but cannot be separated only to his wife.). In the same way being holy **from** all sin, does not automatically create holiness **to** God. If we are truly set apart and holy **unto** our Lord, we will automatically be holy **from** every other “god” and from all sin. God wants us to be His own possession, not simply cleansed from all sin:

*“But you are **a chosen race ... a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**”* (1 Peter 2:9)

There have been “holiness movements” emphasizing “sinless perfection” or “complete sanctification,” but sometimes they morph into attempts merely to stop all sin rather than to live fully and only for their Lord in every aspect of life.

a. The People Of Israel: God’s purpose for His people Israel was to be totally and always separated *from* evil, and especially to be “holy to the Lord.” – **separated to Him** as His treasured possession:

*“You shall **be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.**”* (Leviticus 20:26)

*“And the LORD has declared today that **you are a people for his treasured possession** ... and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be **a people holy to the LORD your God**, as he promised.” (Deuteronomy 26:18-19)*

1) Priests: Aaron and his sons were set apart as “holy to the Lord,” to serve Him in great purity and splendor as His priests:

*“They also made the coats ... for Aaron and his sons, and the turban ... They made the plate of **the holy crown** of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription, like the engraving of a signet, **“Holy to the LORD.”** (Exodus 39:27-30 – see also 28:36-38)*

But two of his sons sought to create their own holiness for themselves:

*“Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, **they disobeyed the LORD by burning before him the wrong kind of fire, different than he had commanded.** So fire blazed forth from the LORD’s presence and burned them up, and they died there before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the LORD meant when he said, **“I will display my holiness through those who come near me. I will display my glory before all the people.”**’” (Leviticus 10:1-3 - NLT)*

2) Nazirites: A man who took this special vow of separation from the good things of this life was also separating himself to the Lord:

*“All the days of his **vow of separation**, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which **he separates himself to the Lord, he shall be holy** ... All the days of his separation he is **holy to the Lord.**” (Numbers 6:5,8)*

3) Firstborn: The first born sons of all the families of Israel were purchased by the Lord through the blood of the Passover lambs to be the Lord’s holy firstborn:

*“**Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.**” (Luke 2:23 – see Exodus 13:12)*

b. Saints Today: The term, “saint” (found about 100 times in the Bible) simply means a believer, **sanctified** (made holy or cleansed) by Christ. Sadly, churches have exalted certain “saints,” calling attention to their holiness instead of the Lord’s.

*“To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be **saints**” (Romans 1:7)*

*“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to **those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints** together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (1 Corinthians 1:2)*

God wants His people (His church) today to be “holy” (purified). This especially means **being separated completely to Him for His glory**, because God has purchased us by the blood of **Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb. He has purified us by cleaning us from all sin** and reconciling us to Himself for all eternity as part of His **“assembly (church) of the firstborn:”**

*“... For **Christ, our Passover lamb**, has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)*

*“... to **the assembly of the firstborn** who are enrolled in heaven ...” (Hebrews 12:23)*

*“... Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us ... **to purify for himself a people for his own possession** who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:13,14)*

*“... the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... **chose us in him** before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and blameless before him.**” (Ephesians 1:3,4)*

c. It Is God's Purpose That His Holiness In Us (Not Our Own Self-Discipline) Should Be Seen By All The Nations Of The World:

*"Thus says the Lord God: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and **manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations ...**" (Ezekiel 28:25)*

*"So **I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations.** Then they will know that I am the Lord." (Ezekiel 38:23)*

*"since it is written, '**You shall be holy, for I am holy.**'" (1 Peter 1:16)*

He gives us Jesus' holiness and promises to enable us to live holy lives when we trust in Jesus, even though we are too weak in ourselves to be holy like He is:

*"**that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness** before our God ..." (1 Thess. 3:13)*

*"For **God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.**" (1 Thessalonians 4:7)*

*"... he disciplines us for our good, **that we may share his holiness.**" (Hebrews 12:10)*

*"you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, **to be a holy priesthood**, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5)*

*"... For **God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.**" (1 Corinthians 3:17)*

2. DEDICATING THINGS:

a. Things Set Apart For God: Hebrew words translated, "holy" or "holiness" are found 350 times and "sanctified" or "consecrated" 115 times in reference to things God has made holy (dedicated exclusively to Him) in the Old Testament. In addition, Greek words translated "holy" or "holiness" are found 88 times and "sanctified" 31 times in the New Testament. These are things mentioned in the Bible that have been, should be or could be dedicated to the Lord. As we have already seen, the holiness of these objects is only because they are dedicated to the Lord God:

*"... an **animal** that may be offered as **an offering to the Lord**, all of it ... is **holy.**" (Leviticus 27:9)*

*"... every devoted thing is most **holy to the Lord.**" (Leviticus 27:28)*

*"**Every tithe (tenth)** of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is **holy to the Lord.**" (Leviticus 27:30)*

*"Observe the **Sabbath day**, to **keep it holy**..." (Deuteronomy 5:12)*

*"But all silver and gold, and **every vessel** of bronze and iron, are **holy to the Lord**; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord." (Joshua 6:19)*

*"... the **holy bread** ... the bread of the Presence ..." (1 Samuel 21:6)*

*"... in **the Most Holy Place**, underneath the wings of the cherubim." (2 Chronicles 5:7)*

*"... the **holy race** has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands ..." (Ezra 9:2)*

*"... the **city** of God, the **holy habitation** of the Most High." (Psalm 46:4)*

*"Your people will offer themselves freely ... in **holy garments**" (Psalm 110:3)*

*"Her **merchandise** and her **wages** will be **holy to the Lord** ..." (Isaiah 23:18)*

*"Her priests ... have profaned **my holy things**. They have made no distinction between the **holy** and the common ... so that I am profaned among them." (Ezekiel 22:26)*

“... *this choice portion of the land, for it is holy to the Lord.*” (Ezekiel 48:14)

“... *there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, ‘Holy to the Lord.’ ...*” (Zechariah 14:20)

“... *the place where you are standing is holy ground.*” (Acts 7:33)

“... *present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God ...*” (Romans 12:1)

“... *men should pray, lifting holy hands (in prayer) without anger or quarreling.*” (1 Timothy 2:8)

“*for it [food] is made holy by the word of God and prayer.*” (1 Timothy 4:5)

b. What About “Holy” Relics? Sadly many professing “Christians” believe that certain “holy” places (historic religious sites and buildings) and “holy” objects (relics, “holy water,” crosses, anointing oil, communion bread and wine) contain a certain power to “bless” or “sanctify” those who revere them.

Such ideas easily lead to idolatry. For example, the people of Israel were instructed to look (in faith) at a brass serpent on a pole (which Moses was told to make) in order to be healed by the Lord of the poisonous snake bites they received because of their rebellion against Him (Numbers 21). Looking was an act of repentance and faith which the Lord honored by healing them. That brass snake on a pole had no power itself and was used by God only that one time, but years later (actually 19 generations after Moses) the Israelites were still carrying it with them and worshipping it. Such idolatry is condemned by God.

“He (King Hezekiah) removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).” (2 Kings 18:4)

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE PEACE & JOY OF GOD

A comparative study of the teaching about God in both the Qur'an and the Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey

[All Qur'an quotations are from A. Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (translation) unless otherwise noted]

We will be looking at the following topics related to this subject:

- A. God's Peace
- B. God's Joy
- C. The Relationship Of The Holy Spirit And Jesus To Peace & Joy
- D. Conclusion & Reaction

Under each topic we will look first at what Islam teaches and then what the Bible says.

A. GOD'S PEACE:

ISLAM:

The only name (of Islam's 99 "most beautiful names" of God) that applies to this subject is:

As-Salam (Salaam) = The Peaceful One, Source of Peace, Peace Maker

[See Appendix 1 for a complete list of the "99 "most beautiful names" of God]

Muslims often say that Islam is a religion of peace. The reason they say that is because the Arabic words "*Salaam*," "*Islam*" and "*Muslim*" all come from the same root, which is related to peace or safety. The greeting, "*Salaam*" means "peace" (peace to you from God), the word, "*Islam*" has more the meaning of submission (peace and safety through submission to God's will) and the word "Muslim" means a submitted or surrendered one (who has peace and safety through submission to God's will). Surrender brings a peace resulting from an end to resistance and conflict, but it can also be humiliating and bitter. It is not the same as the inner peace described in the Bible, when God lovingly wipes away all record of our rebellion and gives us His loving fellowship through Messiah Jesus.

Although the Qur'an says God gives peace and is the source of peace, **it doesn't seem that peace is an attribute or characteristic of God Himself – of His Being.** The Qur'an does not say things like, "God is peace," "God is peaceful," "My peace" or "the God of peace," and only once does it say "his peace." It seems that God in His omnipotence can give peace, but He Himself is far above ever needing to experience peace, which is considered a human emotion. Here are some of the things the Qur'an says about peace:

1. GOD IS THE GIVER OF PEACE. Peace is "sent down" "from" Him (but is not "of" or "out of" Him). Only in that sense is it "His peace":

“... and he said to his companion, ‘Have no fear, for Allah is with us’: then **Allah sent down His peace upon him** [Muhammad], and **strengthened him with forces which ye saw not ...**” (Sura 9:40)
 “... O Noah! Come down (from the Ark) with **peace from Us**, and blessing on thee ...” (Sura 11:48)
 “**Allah is ... the Source of peace (and Perfection) ... the Preserver of Safety ...**” (Sura 59:23)

2. THE PEACE GOD GIVES SEEMS TO BE LINKED TO SECURITY AND PROTECTION FROM OUTER HARM, RATHER THAN AN INNER TRANQUILITY:

“... Abraham said: “**O my Lord! make this city one of peace and security ...**” (Sura 14:35)
 “... and that **He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace ...**” (Sura 24:55)
 “Enter ye therein **in peace and Security**; this is a Day of Eternal Life!” (Sura 50:34)

3. GOD GIVES PEACE TO BELIEVERS IN THIS LIFE:

“... **peace to all who follow guidance!**” (Sura 20:47)
 “**‘peace!’ - a word (of salutation) from a Lord Most Merciful!**” (Sura 36:58)

Most Muslims believe God gives them peace because they believe in God and do righteous deeds, but Sufi Muslims, who practice a special “remembrance” (*dhikr*) ceremony by chanting God’s name hundreds of times, quote Sura 13:28 saying that it promises peace to any who join in the “remembrance” of God that way. They translate the last word of the verse as “peace” while Yusuf Ali and most other translators translate it “satisfaction” or “rest”:

“Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for **without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction** [or “peace”].” (Sura 13:28)

Many Muslims also believe that they receive special peace (plus forgiveness of all past sins) by being in a pure state, staying awake and worshipping during the “Night of Power” (the night in the month of Ramadan when Muhammad is believed to have received the first part of the Qur’an from the angel Gabriel) according to the 97th Sura:

“We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power: And what will explain to thee what the night of power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah’s permission, on every errand: **Peace!** ... This until the rise of morn!” (Sura 97:1-5) [“a thousand months” is 83.3 years, which is a lifetime!].

4. “HOUSE OF PEACE:” Muslims are told that they should try to live in a country where Islam is the ruling religion, which is referred to as “**dar-al-Islam**” (the house of peace). Other areas are “**dar-al-harb**” (the house of war) adjoining countries where governments are being called upon (*jihad*) to surrender to Islam, or **dar-al-sulh** (house of treaty), where governments have a treaty of nonaggression (temporary) with a Muslim government. These terms are not found either in the Qur’an or in the *Hadith* but are a part of classical *Shariah* (Islamic law).

5. GOD GIVES PEACE TO BELIEVERS IN PARADISE:

*“But Allah doth call to **the Home of peace**: He doth guide whom He pleaseth ...”* (Sura 10:25)

*“those whose lives the angels take in a state of purity, saying (to them), ‘**peace be on you; enter ye the Garden**, because of (the good) which ye did (in the world).”* (Sura 16:32)

*“... it is the Companions of the Garden, that will achieve **Felicity**.”* (Sura 59:20)

However, Muslims repeatedly pray for Muhammad to have that peace in Paradise. Every time they mention his name, they add the Arabic phrase meaning, “*may peace be upon him.*” Some try to say that it is not a prayer, but simply a phrase of respect:

*“The Arabic phrase ‘**alayhi as-salām**’ ... which translates as ‘**peace be upon him**’ is a conventionally complimentary phrase ... attached to the names of the prophets in Islam. The English phrase is also given the abbreviation pbuh in writing ...”* – Wikipedia

No doubt in popular usage it has become simply “*a complimentary phrase,*” but I believe it is more than that because of the two obligatory prayers for Muhammad to have peace and mercy which are to be repeated in each of the five times daily worship prayers [See Chapter 2 part A.3. for more details of Muslim prayer]. Those two prayers are:

*Tashah-hud: “O’ Allah! You alone deserve all Veneration, Worship and Glory. **O Prophet! Peace be on you and the Mercy of Allah** and His blessings.”*

*Durood-E-Ibrahimi or Durood Sharif: “O’ Allah, **let Your Peace come upon Muhammad** and the family of Muhammad, as you have brought peace to Ibrahim [Abraham] and his family. Truly, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious. O’ Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as you have blessed Ibrahim and his family. Truly, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.”*

6. “PEACE!” IS THE GREETING GOD GIVES TO BELIEVERS AND THEY GIVE TO EACH OTHER BOTH IN THIS LIFE AND IN PARADISE:

*“**peace!**” - a word (of salutation) from a Lord Most Merciful!”* (Sura 36:58)

*“When those come to thee who believe in Our signs, **Say: ‘peace be on you ...’**”* (Sura 6:54)

*“Glory to Thee, O Allah! And ‘**peace**’ will be their greeting therein [in Paradise]! ...”* (Sura 10:10)

*“**As-salāmu ‘alaykum** ... is a Muslim greeting in Arabic that means “Peace be upon you”. The greeting is a standard salutation among Muslims and is routinely used whenever and wherever Muslims gather and interact, whether socially or within worship and other contexts ...”* – Wikipedia 2019

THE BIBLE:

God Himself is peace, meaning peace is an attribute of His person, a characteristic of Who He is. Also God’s peace in an inner peace that He gives to believers. It doesn’t come from outward circumstances nor can circumstances affect it.

1. “GOD IS PEACE:” He is Himself peace, not just the giver of peace:

*“Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, **The LORD Is Peace** ...”* (Judges 6:24)

2. “GOD OF PEACE:” God is the source and Sovereign Master of peace:

*"May the **God of peace** be with you all. Amen."* (Romans 15:33)

*"For **God is not a God of confusion but of peace ...**"* (1 Corinthians 14:33)

*"... and the **God of peace** will be with you."* (Philippians 4:9)

3. PEACE OF GOD: Peace belongs to God and It is His alone to give:

*"And the **peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:7)

*"... **my covenant of peace** shall not be removed," says the LORD"* (Isaiah 54:10)

*"For thus says the Lord ... I have taken away **my peace** from this people ..."* (Jeremiah 16:5)

4. GOD, THE GIVER OF INNER PEACE:

*"... Grace to you and **peace from God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Romans 1:7 - NASB)

*"**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ...**"* (Romans 15:13)

*"Now may the **Lord of peace** himself give you peace at all times in every way ..."* (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

*"Grace, mercy and **peace will be with us, from God the Father ...**"* (2 John 1:3)

5. NO PEACE APART FROM GOD:

*"... '**Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,**' says the LORD, 'and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. **There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'**"* (Isaiah 57:19-21)

So God gives true, inner peace out of Himself; out of His being, because He Himself is our peace. It is His own eternal peace, which He shares with us when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord (See Ephesians 2:14).

B. GOD'S JOY (ENJOYMENT, REJOICING):

ISLAM:

It doesn't seem that joy is an attribute or characteristic of God Himself, although the Qur'an says **God gives many blessings to enjoy** and in that sense He is the source of joy. The Qur'an doesn't say, "God is joy," "the joy of the Lord," "God's joy," "God rejoices" or "God is joyful." So, while God gives things that bring joy, **He Himself is far above ever rejoicing, celebrating or experiencing joy**, which is considered a human emotion. Here is some of what the Qur'an says about **human beings receiving joy**:

1. FIVE DAILY WORSHIP PRAYERS BRING JOY:

*"... **celebrate (constantly) the praises of thy Lord**, before the rising of the sun, and before its setting; yea, celebrate them for part of the hours of the night, and at the sides of the day: **that thou mayest have (spiritual) joy.**"* (Sura 20:130)

2. GOD'S PROVISION IN THIS LIFE BRINGS ENJOYMENT:

"... enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes: but unto Him is the Resurrection." (Sura 67:15)

"O ye messengers! enjoy (all) things good and pure, and work righteousness ..." (Sura 23:51)

3. GOD PROVISION IN PARADISE BRINGS JOY:

"Verily the Companions of the Garden shall that Day have joy in all that they do" (Sura 36:55)

"Enjoying the (Bliss) which their Lord hath bestowed on them ..." (Sura 52:18)

4. GOD ALLOWS EVEN UNBELIEVERS TO HAVE WORLDLY ENJOYMENT FOR A TIME:

"(As if) to show their ingratitude for the favours we have bestowed on them! then enjoy (your brief day): but soon will ye know (your folly)!" (Sura 16:55 – also 20:131)

"Seest thou? If We do let them enjoy (this life) for a few years" (Sura 26:205)

THE BIBLE:

Joy is part of God's character. Therefore, joy is Who He is, and that's why He rejoices over us. He is the source of true joy, and there is no real joy except in knowing Him. **He Himself is our joy**, not just His blessings. **The Bible is a book filled with joy**. The words "joy," "bliss," "gladness," "delight," "happiness," etc. are found well over 900 times!

1. GOD'S OWN JOY: Joy is a part of God's being. It is His joy and it emanates from within Him:

"Honor and majesty surround him; strength and joy fill his dwelling." (1 Chronicles 16:27 – NLT)

"... for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you ..." (John 15:11)

2. GOD HIMSELF IS OUR JOY. We don't rejoice in His blessings, but in Him – especially in personal fellowship with Him:

"Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy ..." (Psalm 43:4)

"The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord ..." (Isaiah 29:19)

"yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk 3:18)

3. JUST BEING IN HIS JOYFUL PRESENCE GIVES US JOY:

"... in your presence there is fullness of joy ..." (Psalm 16:11)

"... you will fill me with the joy of your presence." (Acts 2:28 – NIV)

"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy" (Jude 1:24)

4. IN BLESSING US GOD HIMSELF REJOICES OVER US. How amazing that in blessing us God Himself receives great joy:

*“... as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, **so shall your God rejoice over you.**” (Isaiah 62:5)*

*“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, **he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.**” (Zephaniah 3:17 - KJV)*

5. SO WE SHOULD ALWAYS REJOICE “IN THE LORD.” That means united in an intimate fellowship with Him we participate in His joy – *“joy in the Lord!”*:

*“yet I will **rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.**” (Habakkuk 3:18)*

*“**Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!**” (Psalm 97:12)*

*“... **rejoice in the Lord ... Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.**” (Philippians 3:1; 4:4)*

6. HIS JOY SHOULD FILL OUR WHOLE BEING:

a. Our whole heart (emotions & resolve):

*“Let **all that I am** praise the LORD; **with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.**” (Psalm 103:1 - NLT)
[ESV has “**all that is within me**”]*

*“... Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with **joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,**” (1 Peter 1:8)*

b. Our voice (singing and shouting). That’s why our churches should be filled with loud singing, laughter and rejoicing:

*“**Shout to the Lord, all the earth; break out in praise and sing for joy!**” (Psalm 98:4 -NLT)*

*“**Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy ... The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad ...**” (Psalm 126:2,3)*

c. Our strength and body (exulting and dancing – The dictionary says “exult**” means “to leap for joy.”):**

*“Hannah prayed ... ‘**My heart exults in the LORD ... I rejoice in your salvation.**’” (1 Samuel 2:1)*

*“I will greatly **rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness ...**” (Isaiah 61:10)*

*“You have turned my mourning into **joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy**” (Psalm 30:11 - NLT)*

*“Let the righteous one **rejoice in the Lord ... Let all the upright in heart exult!**” (Psalm 64:10)*

C. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND JESUS TO PEACE AND JOY:

ISLAM: The Qur’an is silent regarding this subject because it believes that the Holy Spirit is the angel Gabriel and Jesus is no more than one of God’s messengers.

THE BIBLE:

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S RELATIONSHIP TO PEACE AND JOY: God is Spirit (John 4:24) and the Spirit of God, also called "the Spirit of Christ," indwells all true believers:

*"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.**"* (Romans 8:9)

Therefore, we should understand that what is called "*the fruit of the Spirit*" is a description of God's own character and ways which God Himself produces in a believer's life:

*"But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**"* (Galatians 5:22,23)

In that sense, all of the above-mentioned aspects of His "fruit" can be called attributes of God. Among them are "joy" and "peace." God's Holy Spirit – God Himself – gives us His own joy and peace. Thus, as He lives in us and we live in Him, He produces in us His own joy and peace by enabling us to reproduce His peace and joy in our own lives:

*"... you received the word in much affliction, with **the joy of the Holy Spirit,**"* (1 Thessalonians 1:6)

*"For **the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**"* (Romans 14:17)

2. JESUS' RELATIONSHIP TO PEACE AND JOY: Because Jesus is God's Word in human flesh (the revelation of God to us) He became God's means of giving us peace and joy and the salvation He has provided for us through His redeeming death and resurrection. So peace and joy are His to give:

a. Jesus Christ, the Prince Of Peace & Lord of Peace:

[prophecy of Messiah] *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace.**"* (Isaiah 9:6)

*"... **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**"* (Romans 5:1 - NASB)

*"Now may **the Lord of peace** himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all."* (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

b. God's Peace Through Jesus Our Savior And Lord:

*"... there is **peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.**"* (Acts 10:36 – NLT) "...

c. Jesus Gives Us His Own Peace (Which Is God's Peace):

[Jesus said] *"**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you ...**"* (John 14:27)

*"And let the **peace of Christ** rule in your hearts ..."* (Colossians 3:15)

*"... Grace to you and **peace from** God our Father and **the Lord Jesus Christ.**"* (Romans 1:7 - NASB)

*"For **he himself is our peace ...**"* (Ephesians 2:14)

*"Grace, mercy and **peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.**"* (2 John 1:3 – see also Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; and Philemon 1:3)

d. Jesus Gives Us His Own Joy (Which Is God's Joy):

*"These things I have spoken to you, **that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.**" (John 15:11)*

*"... these things I speak ... **that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.**" (John 17:13)*

*"looking to **Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**" (Hebrews 12:2)*

*"Until now you have asked nothing in my name. **Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.**" (John 16:24)*

D. CONCLUSION & REACTION: Again, we see that the Qur'an's teaching about God is not so much related to Who He Is, but only to what He does and can do. In other words, His greatness. So according to Islam, peace and Joy are not a part of His being, but only gifts He gives to those who believe in and obey Him. He is totally "other" and not in any way like us human beings. He needs nothing so He has no need of peace or joy. He is above all such human traits.

How tragic that Muslims are deprived of being able to know or have personal fellowship with their Maker Who wants to share Himself, including His joy and peace with his "children!"

CONCLUSIONS

To The 18 Part Comparative Study Of God According To The Qur'an And The Bible

Rev. Richard P. Bailey – 2012-2019

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED ABOUT MY LORD:

I have read from the Bible daily since 1949 and have earned both a B.A. and an M.A in Biblical studies. I have also spent countless hours discussing the Bible and Islam with both Christian and Muslim friends for over 55 years. This comparative study of God, however, has taught me more about biblical theology (who God is) than anything else has! And yet, I continually bang my head on the ceiling of my own limited human understanding and carnal self-centeredness. God is so much more than I understand because God is, after all, God!

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ... For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33,36)

Even though I marvel continually at the new heights to which His revelation of Himself enables me to reach in knowing Him, I long to move beyond the limits of this life to know Him more fully and intimately. Some day when I am with the Lord I will be able to fully understand and know Him “face to face.” That experience is truly unimaginable now:

*“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because **we shall see him as he is.**”* (1 John 3:2)

*“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but **then face to face.** Now I know in part; then **I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.**”* (1 Corinthians 13:12)

*“However, as it is written: **‘What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived’— the things God has prepared for those who love him**”* (1 Corinthians 2:9 - NIV)

All praise belongs to Him!

THE DEGREE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE QUR'AN'S AND THE BIBLE'S TEACHINGS ABOUT GOD:

Many people wishfully say the Qur'an and the Bible really teach the same thing. Do they? I am listing below my estimation of the degree of difference in each of the subjects studied in the previous 18 chapters, using a scale of:

Very Little Difference

Some Difference

Major Difference

TOTAL Difference

Chapter 1 – The Oneness/Unity of God = **Major** Difference

Chapter 2 – The Power of God = **Some** Difference

Chapter 3 – The Sovereignty of God = **Some** Difference

Chapter 4 – The Transcendence Of God = Very Little Difference

- “ 4 – The Immanence of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- Chapter 5 – The Inscrutability of God = **Major** Difference
- Chapter 6 – The Name of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- “ 6 – The Glory of God = **Some** Difference
- Chapter 7 – The Mercy of God = Very Little Difference
- “ 7 – The Grace of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- Chapter 8 – The Forgiveness of God = **Major** Difference
- “ 8 – The Salvation of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- Chapter 9 – The Communication of God = **Major** Difference
- Chapter 10 – The Work of God = **Major** Difference
- Chapter 11 – The Righteousness of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- “ 11 – The Justice of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- “ 11 – The Wrath of God = **Some** Difference
- “ 11 – The Patience of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- Chapter 12 – The Fatherhood of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- “ 12 – God’s Care For His Children = Very Little Difference
- ” 12 – God’s Mentoring of His Children = **TOTAL** Difference
- “ 12 – God’s Honoring of His Children = **TOTAL** Difference
- Chapter 13 – The Life of God = **Major** Difference
- “ 13 – The Image of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- Chapter 14 – The Love of God = **Major** Difference
- “ 14 – The Humility Of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- Chapter 15 – The Faithfulness of God = **TOTAL** Difference
- “ 15 – The Eternality/Immutability of God = Very Little Difference
- Chapter 16 – The Truthfulness of God = Very Little Difference
- “ 16 – The Light of God = **Some** Difference
- Chapter 17 – The Holiness of God = **Major** Difference
- Chapter 18 – The Peace of God = **Major** Difference
- “ 18 – The Joy of God = **TOTAL** Difference

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE BIBLE REGARDING GOD:

In my opinion the differences between the teaching of the Qur’an and the Bible about God that have the deepest effect on the hearts and beliefs of Muslims are found not so much in what the Qur’an says about God (much of which is biblical), but in **what it doesn’t say, as well as what it denies about Christ. Here are five I feel are most important:**

1. God’s Immanence: According to Islam, **God is so great and so completely transcendent, that it is not possible for us mere created human beings to know Him.** We can know only His will for us (His commands) revealed in the Qur’an, and even that was revealed indirectly through multiple veils (the Mother of the Book, the angel Gabriel and the “prophet” Muhammad). Islamic theologians explain that God’s “essence” is on the throne in heaven and only His will is sent down to mankind. **God can do anything and knows all things, but He Himself is far too great for us to know! Any personal relationship with mankind is unimaginable.**

God is so much greater than that! The Bible tells us that Almighty God is the self-revealing One, Who is more than able to reveal Himself to us mere mortals as our loving Heavenly Father, and

that in His sovereign love, He chose to “come down” and live among us (Jesus) and in us (Holy Spirit):

“... as God said, **‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’**” (2 Corinthians 6:16)

“*In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God ... **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father ...***” (John 1:1,14)

2. God’s Character: While the Qur’an greatly exalts God’s awesome **works** (His power, uniqueness, sovereignty, transcendence, inscrutability, etc.), it says very little about His **ways** (His love, immanence, faithfulness, holiness, joy, righteousness, redeeming grace, peace, etc.). In other words, **Islam greatly magnifies God’s omnipotent greatness but is mostly silent with regard to God’s character.** The Bible, on the other hand, emphasizes both:

“*And they sang **the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!’***” (Revelation 15:3 – NASB)

In Romans 1:20 we read that mankind is without excuse because we can all see in nature two basic things about God; “*his eternal power and divine nature*” – *i.e.*, that God is eternally all powerful and a divine Being (not just a force or principle). In thinking about this, I was amazed when I realized that these two things make up the majority of what the Qur’an teaches about God – His omnipotence and His eternal deity! **In other words, Islam adds very little to what we can know about God simply by observing nature (without any prophets or books)! So, essentially the Qur’an is not a revelation of the person and character of God, but only an exaltation of His power and eternity.**

The Bible not only reveals God’s omnipotent power and actions – **His works**, but also His character – **His ways**. Not only **what He can do**, but **who He is! We can know God only as we know Him by discovering His ways:**

[Moses prayed] “... please **show me now your ways, that I may know you ...**” (Exodus 33:13)

“*And **this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God ...***” (John 17:3)

And truly knowing God involves **also becoming like God in all our ways** as we walk with Him in an intimate personal relationship:

“... what does the LORD your God require of you ... to **walk in all his ways**... to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul ...” (Deuteronomy 10:12,13)

“***In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.***” (Proverbs 3:6)

3. God’s Emotions: Islam seems to believe that **emotions are human and carnal**, and therefore not a part of Who God Is. He needs nothing and that includes love, joy, peace, etc., which we human beings need because of our weakness. Yes, Islam tells us God is pleased with people who obey and serve Him, but He doesn’t rejoice or sing about it. He certainly does not love sinners or grieve over them. Instead His punishment in hell is dispassionately dispensed to unbelievers because they deserve it. In fact, He has calmly determined to fill hell with them. God grants Paradise to those who believe and do good works, but there is no rejoicing in heaven over a sinner who repents, because that is what they should do. **Nothing we do can affect God emotionally in any way!**

The Bible tells us God is very emotional and we have been created in His image. He is the origin of all our emotions. However, His emotions are pure and complete, while ours have been badly distorted by sin. In eternity we will live in complete fellowship with Him, experiencing the fullness of joy and pleasures forever more, just as He does now:

*“The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; **he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult** [dictionary = “to leap for joy”] **over you with loud singing.**” (Zephaniah 3:17)*

*“You make known to me the path of life; **in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**” (Psalm 16:11)*

4. God’s Fatherhood: God’s immanence, character and emotions all relate to God’s fatherhood. For that reason, it is not difficult to see why Islam denies God’s fatherhood. According to Islam God is totally alone and self-sufficient, and therefore needs no one. The Qur’an reasons that if God were a Father, He would be a human being who gets married and has children. Likewise, if Jesus is God’s “Son” He would be the child of that marriage. Such belief is an unforgivable sin in Islam:

*“**He begetteth not, nor is he begotten.**” (Sura 112:3)*

*“To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: **How can He have a son when He hath no consort? He created all things ...**” (Sura 6:101)*

*“**It is not befitting to (the majesty of) God that He should beget a son.** Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, ‘Be’ and it is.” (Sura 19:35)*

The Bible, on the other hand, puts great emphasis on God’s fatherhood. The six aspects of fatherhood all emanate from God, Who is the original father (Ephesians 3:14.15) and the perfect model of fatherhood for us. **The word, “Father” is used in reference to God 277 times in the Bible**, mostly by Jesus, who used it 172 times. It is significant that He taught his disciples to address God in prayer as “Father:”

*“... And he [Jesus] said to them, ‘**When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name ...”**’” (Luke 11:2)*

*“Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:3)*

*“**one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**” (Ephesians 4:6)*

5. God’s Salvation: In Islam God leaves our salvation in our own hands. We must earn it! There is no savior since “*no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.*” We must repent and turn to Him in obedience, working hard to obey His commands. On Judgment Day God will decide our fate, and no one can know before that. Then, if we have done enough good deeds to please Him (No one knows how much that is!), He will forgive us by magically transforming our bad actions into good actions and forgetting about our lesser sins. He will reward us for our good works by sending us to Paradise where we will live in undreamed-of physical luxury. We will enjoy the most luxurious foods without limit, be able to drink freely from a river of wine without being intoxicated, have all the sex we want with women who always remain virgins, and recline on our own thrones of honor, dressed in the most expensive robes and surrounded by beautiful mansions and fruit trees. We will have companionship with all other believers, but we will not have any personal fellowship with God (although His “presence” will be there, seeing and knowing all that we do).

The Bible’s teaching about salvation is that we can receive it only by accepting and trusting in Jesus’ redemptive work in dying and conquering death for us. It is not a reward for good works,

but completely a free gift from God to all those who believe in Christ. There is no other way that God can justly forgive and remove all our sin and give us the gift of His righteousness, enabling us to enjoy eternal fellowship with Him. The picture of the afterlife of believers in Jesus is focused mainly on a continual communion with and worship of God and His Son Jesus.

*“Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and **so we will always be with the Lord.**” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)*

*“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, **the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.**” (Revelation 21:3)*

THE TRAGIC RESULTS OF THE QUR’AN’S INCOMPLETE AND DISTORTED TEACHING:

Islam, which some believe to be the greatest cultic imitation of Christianity the world has ever seen, has robbed billions of people of the Good News of a personal relationship with God through salvation in Jesus Christ. It contains enough Biblical truth to impress and give the appearance of life, but the results are spiritual death and separation from God. While it proclaims Jesus as one of the greatest prophets it curses those who proclaim His redeeming death and resurrection for sinners or His deity. While extolling God’s omnipotent power it denies the resurrection power of Jesus over sin and death. While emphasizing God’s mercy for sinners it rejects Jesus’ loving provision of eternal salvation and intimate fellowship with God. While promising to provide the way to Paradise, it leaves sinners with no assurance of salvation.

In his bestselling book, No God But One; Allah Or Jesus, Nabeel Qureshi wrote:

“The central claims of Christianity are explicitly rejected by Islam. Islamic doctrine is antithetical to the core message of Christianity.” (page 154)

CONTRASTS:

GOD’S UNITY:

ISLAM: - “There is no God but **The** God. “ (creed)

BIBLE: - “The Lord **our** God, the Lord is One...” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

ISLAM: - God is single and **alone** without any “partners.”

BIBLE: - God is triune; and exists in **community** within Himself.

ISLAM: - God has **no emotions** (emotions are human) and is unaffected by anything we do.

BIBLE: - God is **very emotional** and is deeply affected by all that we do.

GOD’S POWER (OMNIPOTENCE):

ISLAM: - God’s **greatness** – “*Allah-o-Akbar*” (God is great!) – God’s **power** seen in His **works**.

BIBLE: - God’s **character** – “*I AM Who I AM*” – God’s **person** seen in His **ways**.

ISLAM: - God **can do absolutely anything** He wants to do.

BIBLE: - God **can do anything except** violate His own character.

ISLAM: - God’s **will is supreme** and He can do whatever He chooses to do.

BIBLE: - God’s **character is supreme** and He always does what is consistent with it.

ISLAM: - God, “**exalted in power.**” (Sura 6:96)

BIBLE: - God humbles Himself to **come down** to us. (John 6:33; Isaiah 64:3)

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY:

ISLAM: - **God’s will** is absolutely supreme and He allows us to will only what He wills us to will.

BIBLE: - God **gives us free will** while sovereignly using our decisions to accomplish His will.

GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE & IMMANENCE:

ISLAM: - God's **transcendence** is absolute, so He is too great to be immanent. Mankind cannot know Him.

BIBLE: - God is transcendent but, in His **immanence**, He has chosen to stoop down to live in believers.

GOD'S INSCRUTIBILITY:

ISLAM: - God is completely **unknowable** by humanity, so we, His slaves must simply obey His will.

BIBLE: - God is unknowable, but He has chosen to **reveal Himself** to us through Christ.

GOD'S NAME & GLORY:

ISLAM: - God's name is **ALLAH (The God)** and his glory is in His singleness and omnipotence.

BIBLE: - God's name is **YAHWEH (He is), the self-revealing One** and His glory is in His love.

GOD'S MERCY & GRACE:

ISLAM: - God **chooses to grant mercy** to whomever, whenever and for whatever reason He chooses.

BIBLE: - God **lovingly gives both mercy and grace** to believers, enabling us to live holy lives.

GOD'S FORGIVENESS:

ISLAM: - God **unjustly and arbitrarily cancels** whoever's sin He wills, because of His almighty power.

BIBLE: - God **justly forgives** our sins because of Jesus' redemptive death and resurrection.

GOD'S SALVATION:

ISLAM: - God grants **physical pleasures in Paradise** to believers who earn them by righteous deeds.

BIBLE: - God gives **eternal fellowship with Himself** to those who trust in Christ as their Savior.

GOD'S COMMUNICATION:

ISLAM: - God speaks **indirectly through many veils** to all peoples and nations.

BIBLE: - God speaks **directly in His creation, His eternal Word, His Son Jesus and His Holy Spirit**.

GOD'S WORK:

ISLAM: - God doesn't "work," but **simply commands things to be**.

BIBLE: - God's two works are **creation** and more importantly, His **re-creation/reconciling of believers**.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE & WRATH:

ISLAM: - God's **attributes are incomparable** and therefore unknowable.

BIBLE: - God's **attributes are our model** to follow as God's children.

ISLAM: - God's righteousness, justice, wrath and patience are **whatever He wills them to be**.

BIBLE: - God's righteousness, justice, wrath and patience are **perfectly pure and balanced**.

ISLAM: - God's wrath is governed by **His omnipotent will**.

BIBLE: - God's wrath is governed by **His loving justice**.

ISLAM: - God's patience is displayed, but not mentioned as an attribute.

BIBLE: - God's patience is repeatedly mentioned, showing God longs for man to repent.

GOD'S FATHERHOOD:

ISLAM: - God is **not a father because He is not in any way like a human being**.

BIBLE: - God, our Heavenly Father is **the original Father**, from whom all human fatherhood is named.

ISLAM: - God is the **Almighty Master** and we serve Him as His **submitted slaves**.

BIBLE: - God is our **Loving Father** and we love and serve Him as His **beloved children**.

GOD'S LIFE & IMAGE:

ISLAM: - God created mankind out of dirt simply **by saying, "Be!"**

BIBLE: - God created mankind out of dirt **by breathing into us His own life**.

ISLAM: - We were **not created in God's image**, because God is not in any way like us.

BIBLE: - We were **created in God's image** so we would be able to know Him intimately.

GOD'S LOVE:

ISLAM: - God's "love" is **conditional**. He likes us only if we are good.

BIBLE: - God's love is **unconditional**. He loves sinners and wants to redeem us.

ISLAM: - God's "love" is **given only as a reward for man's obedience**.

BIBLE: - God's love is **self-sacrificing love, freely given to those who receive it in Christ**.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS, ETERNALITY & IMMUTIBILITY:

ISLAM: - God is **too great to be faithful to anyone**.

BIBLE: - God is **too great to be unfaithful to anyone**.

ISLAM: - God is eternal and unchangeable, **but He changes** some things and abrogates His words.

BIBLE: - God is eternal and unchangeable, so **He has bound Himself by His word**.

GOD'S TRUTHFULNESS:

ISLAM: - **God's truthfulness is subjective** and whatever He declares it to be.

BIBLE: - **God's truthfulness is objective** and never changing.

GOD'S HOLINESS:

ISLAM: - **God's holiness is His separation** from all created things, especially mankind.

BIBLE: - **God is holy in Himself** and He cleanses all believers so they can be holy like He is.

GOD'S PEACE & JOY:

ISLAM: - **God grants peace and joy**, but not from out of Himself.

BIBLE: - **God Himself is our peace and joy**, not just the giver of peace and joy.

In my opinion, perhaps the most fundamental, basic difference between the teaching of the Qur'an and the Bible about God can be captured in this simple couplet:

Islam = "**Allah-u-Akbar!**" = "**God is Greater**" (God's Power – What God Does)

Bible = "**God Our Father**" (God's Love – Who God is)