

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ISLAM

Part Two

The first part of this Bible study considered the name and identity of God in the Bible and Islam. This Bible study will concern itself with the topic of salvation in the Bible and Islam. What does it mean to be saved from a religious perspective? Both Christians and Muslims will agree that we are saved from something, and that something is sin, death and hell. Furthermore, this salvation also implies, on the most rudimentary level, that we will live in heaven with God Almighty forever. This is where the similarity between the two religions ends. From time immemorial, humans have realized the wretched condition of this world and looked to the throne of God in heaven for deliverance and salvation.

Act 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

What shall we do indeed is the question! Let us begin with salvation in the Quran. “Then those whose balance of good deeds is heavy they will attain salvation” (Sura 23:102). Several verses in the Quran emphasize the importance of good deeds for salvation. In fact, the good deeds are often summarized as the Five Pillars of Islam in the Sunni tradition found in the Hadith of Gabriel. The first pillar is called the ***Shahada*** or the proclamation of faith. There are two *shahadas*: “There is no god but God” and “Muhammad is the messenger of God”. The Second Pillar of Sunni Islam is ***Salah***, or prayer. Muslims perform ablutions before the prayer; face, hands and feet are washed. The Third Pillar of Islam is called ***Zakāt***. Islam mandates the payment of 2.5% one’s income as alms or charity, which is supposed to sanctify and bless the remaining wealth. The Fourth Pillar of Islam is ***Sawm***, or fasting. Fasting takes place during Ramadan, which is the holy month in the Islamic calendar. Using a lunar calendar means the month of Ramadan shifts 11 days earlier each year. The fifth and final Pillar of Islam is the ***Hajj***, or pilgrimage. A Muslim is expected to travel to Mecca in Saudi Arabia in the 12th month of the lunar calendar.

Clearly, Islam prescribes several demanding tasks for one to attain salvation. Obviously, no Muslim would undertake any of these difficult tasks unless they genuinely fear and seek God. How many Christians pray five times a day? In addition, as Christians, we understand how difficult fasting is, and Muslims are expected to fast for an entire month (2 April to 2 May this year of 2022). However, the Bible maintains that salvation can never be

attained through our own works. “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6). Notice the plural “righteousnesses”! It is as if God was speaking specifically to the Muslim, “Your Five Pillars of deeds cannot save you. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” In Islam, Allah does not do anything at all – he only gives the commandments. Everything is left to the Muslim.

I have not met one Muslim who fulfilled the Five Pillars and could say with confidence that he or she was saved. I once asked an Imam whose forehead featured a large darkened, almost black patch, whether he was saved. The black patch was a sign that he had prayed for many years touching his forehead to the ground. He replied with a sad face, “Some individuals enter heaven like lightning while others crawl.” “So which one are you”, I asked him. “Only Allah knows”, he replied. It must be very depressing to work day and night to please someone who never gives the assurance of salvation. Note the stark difference to the Bible. These were individuals who knew they were saved by the Lord Jesus Christ and not their works, and, more importantly, were fully assured of their salvation.

***Titus 3:5** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

***2Timothy 1:12** For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

***2Timothy 4:8** Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

***1Peter 1:8** Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

In the Bible, salvation is a two-fold process. God gives salvation while we accept and live out his salvation in our lives. Let us begin with the first and most important part. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes” (Hosea 13:14). Notice the first person singular pronoun “I”. Salvation is the property and prerogative of God alone – no human actions can add or deduct from God’s salvation, as Islam teaches. Next, this one God, whose name is Jehovah, was manifested in flesh to give salvation. To the thousands assembled in Jerusalem who feared God and looked for his salvation, the Apostle Peter said, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The first pillar of Islam, the *Shahada* or the proclamation of faith, does not contain the name of

Jesus, but Allah and Muhammad. These names do not have salvation in them. The prophet Zechariah, whom even Muslims honor, prophesied 500 years before the Lord Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem,

Zechariah 9:9 *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

Only God has salvation, and Jesus is God. The Apostle Thomas who experienced a crisis of faith, declared when he saw the risen Christ, “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Salvation is the gift of God; it is a futile and painful endeavor to try to secure salvation by one’s own efforts. I have just returned from visiting the home and church (All Saints) of Martin Luther in Lutherstadt, Wittenberg, Germany. Martin experienced a thunderstorm and a lightning strike so fearful in 1507 that he made a vow to become a monk. He entered the cloister of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine in Erfurt in Germany as a 22-year-old. The monks prayed and fasted until 2 a.m. There were prescribed prayers at 3 a.m., 6 a.m., 9 a.m., 12 noon and 3 p.m. They ate only two meals a day, the first at noon. Martin went to confession more than any other monk did – once for 6 hours a day confessing his sins to another monk. For example, it was considered a sin just to laugh or cause others to laugh. Speaking to a woman was considered a mortal sin for which the punishment or penance was a three-day fast and a psalm of prayer. Despite all these works, Martin sank into deeper depression. He said:

It is true, I was a devout monk and observed the Order’s rules so strictly that I may say: if ever a monk got to heaven through monkery, then I wanted to get there too. All of my cloister companions, who knew me, will testify to that for me. For I would have – if it had lasted longer – martyred myself with keeping vigils, praying, reading, and other tasks ... In the end, where is the poor monk with his holiness and purity? He dangles and twists there between heaven and earth, lets himself be praised that he is pure and holy because of his consecration as a monk, and yet his heart and conscience can never experience it (Joestel, 2017, p. 12).¹

It was such desperation to know the true God and his salvation that led Martin Luther to rebel against a version of Christianity that did not focus on the finished work of Christ on Calvary, but constructed a religion of works. In the spirit of Luther, we invite our Muslim friends, who hunger for the true God and his salvation, to rebel against a religion that can only

¹ Joestel, V. (2017). *Martin Luther: Rebel and Reformer*. Reformation Biographies (English Edition). Lutherstadt: Drei Kastanien Verlag.

bind the soul through human efforts separated from the work of Christ. Paul warned the Galatians:

Gal 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Gal 4:10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Gal 4:11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

So how did the Lord Jesus Christ save us? The Bible teaches the following about salvation. Firstly, God had to come in flesh to save us because no one else had salvation. “And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him” (Isaiah 59:16). Salvation is in the blood because life is in the blood, according to the Bible, and without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins. Why did God have to come in a body and sacrifice himself (his Son), Muslims often wonder. The scriptures below give the answer.

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Heb 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Islam is a dry religion – by that I mean there is no blood involved for the remission of sins. Hence, there can be no salvation in Islam. To be saved, one must believe that God nailed our sins to the Cross of Calvary. Furthermore, we must repent of our sins, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit, who is none other than Jesus himself with tongues following. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). This is the second part of salvation – our response by faith to God’s salvation. Jesus did everything, he accomplished salvation for us in his name. For instance, when we are baptized in Jesus name, we are acknowledging and confessing that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins and rose up again the third day. Therefore, baptism in Jesus name is the Christian’s way of saying “Amen!” to Jesus’ finished work on the Cross. God does not want us to just affirm and consent in our hearts, but prove it by our actions – join Jesus in honoring the Gospel by reenacting his death, burial and resurrection through Acts 2:38. Finally, as Jesus rose up through the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer will rise above the temptations and sins of this world by the same Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Be saved in Jesus name today!