

Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System

Abstract. A purely peer-to-peer version of electronic cash would allow instant, near-free, payments to be sent directly from one user to another without going through a trusted third party or financial institution. Digital signatures provide sender nonrepudiation and recipient authentication, timestamping provides ordering and prevents double-spending. We propose a solution to these needs by implementing a distributed timestamp server to prevent double-spending. The network timestamps events by hashing them into a chain. It's a hash-based proof-of-work mechanism that requires significant computational effort to be changed without redoing the proof-of-work. The longest chain of timestamped events is proof of the sequence of events witnessed, but production of new blocks is limited by the largest pool of CPU power. As long as a majority of CPU power is controlled by honest nodes, the network can withstand attacks. The network itself requires minimal structure since nodes broadcast on a best effort basis, and nodes can leave or join the network at will, accepting the longest proof-of-work chain as proof of what happened before they were gone.

1. Introduction

Commerce on the Internet has come to rely almost exclusively on financial institutions serving as trusted third parties to process electronic payments. While the system works well enough for most transactions, it still suffers from the weaknesses of the trust based model. Completely non-reversible transactions are not possible, and no mechanism is available to avoid mediating disputes. There is no way for two parties to transact directly without the intervention of a bank or other trusted third party to administer the transaction. This limits the number of possible transactions because the cost of each transaction is proportional to the number of intermediaries involved. These transaction costs, limiting the minimum practical transaction size, make it difficult and unprofitable for small casual transactions, and there is a broader cost in the form of non-reversible payments for non-reversible services. With the possible exception of bank fees, there is little motivation for trust spreads. Merchants must be wary of their customers, hassling them for payment more often than they would otherwise need. A certain percentage of fraud is accepted as a cost of doing business; these costs and payment uncertainties can be avoided in person by using checks and money orders, but this mechanism exists to make payments over a communications channel which is often unreliable.

What is needed is an electronic payment system based on cryptographic proof instead of trust, allowing any two willing parties to transact directly with each other without the need for a trusted third party. Transactions that are once recorded cannot be reversed or counterfeited so easily, and routine escrow mechanisms could easily be implemented to protect buyers. In this paper, we propose a solution to this problem by implementing a peer-to-peer distributed timestamp server to generate chronological order of transactions. The system is secure as long as honest nodes control more CPU power than any cooperating group of attacker nodes.

2. Transactions

We define an **electronic coin** as a chain of digital signatures. A payee transfers the coin to the next by digitally signing a hash of the previous transaction with their public key of the next owner and adding these to the end of the coin. A payee can verify these signatures to verify the chain of ownership.

The problem with this system is that it is not clear that the coin owners did not double-spend the coin. A common approach is to have a central authority or mint, that checks every transaction for double-spending. If a transaction is found to be double-spent, the coin must be returned to the mint to issue a new coin, which is coin is issued with a timestamp of the current time. This system depends on the company running the mint to be honest, just like a bank.

We need a way to make payees sure that the coin they received did not sign any earlier transactions. For our purposes, we can assume that all accounts, so we don't care about later attempts to spend the same coin again. The solution is to be aware of all transactions and decided which arrived first. To accomplish this, every party, transactions must be publicly announced. So, first we need to agree on a single history of the order in which they were received. This was the idea behind the timestamp server, just like a bank.

3. Timestamp Server

The solution we propose begins with a timestamp server works by taking a hash of a block of memory to be timestamped, the hash, such as in a newspaper or Usenode [2-5]. It takes the timestamp must have existed at the time, obviously, in order to get into the block. A timestamp is the previous timestamp in its hash, forming a chain. With each timestamp stamp reinserted in the ones before it.



4. Proof-of-Work

To implement a distributed timestamp network on a peer-to-peer basis, we will need to use a proof-of-work system similar to Adam背靠背 than newspaper or Usenet posts. The proof-of-work involves scanning for a value that, when hashed, such as with SHA-256, the hash begins with a number of zero bits. The amount of work required is exponential in the number of zero bits required and can be verified by executing a single hash.

For our timestamp network, we implement proof-of-work by incrementing a nonce in the block until a value is found that starts with the number of required zero bits. Once the CPU effort has been expended to make a timestamp, the block cannot be changed without redoing the work. As later blocks are added after it, the work to change the block would include redoing all the blocks after it.



The proof-of-work also solves the problem of determining representation in majority decision making. If the majority were based on one IP address one vote, it could be subverted by anyone able to allocate many IPs. Proof-of-work is essentially one-CPU-one-vote. The majority decision is represented by the longest chain, which is the greatest proof-of-work effort invested in it. If a majority of CPU power is controlled by honest nodes, the honest chain will grow the fastest and outpace any competing chains. To catch up with a past block, an attacker would have to redo the proof-of-work of the block and all blocks after it, and then catch up with and surpass the work of the honest nodes. We will see later that the probability of a slower attacker catching up diminishes exponentially as subsequent blocks are generated.

To compensate for increasing hardware costs and interest in running nodes over time, the proof-of-work difficulty is determined by the average targeting an average number of blocks per hour. If they're generated too fast, the difficulty increases.

5. Network

The steps to run the network are as follows:

- 1) New transactions are broadcast to all nodes.
- 2) Each node collects new transactions into a block.
- 3) Each node works on finding a difficult proof-of-work for its block.
- 4) When a node finds a proof-of-work it broadcasts the block to all nodes.
- 5) Nodes accept the block only if all transactions are valid and not already spent.
- 6) Nodes express their acceptance of the block by working on creating the next block in the chain, using the hash of the accepted block as previous hash.

Nodes always consider the longest chain to be the correct one and will keep working on extending it. If two nodes broadcast different versions of the next block simultaneously, some nodes may receive one or the other first. In that case, they work on the first one they received, but save the other branch in case it becomes longer. The tie will be broken when the next proof-of-work is found and one branch becomes longer. The nodes that were working on the other branch will then switch to the longer one.

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New transaction broadcasts do not necessarily need to reach all nodes. As long as they reach many nodes, they will get into a block before long. Block broadcasts are also tolerant of dropped messages. If a node does not receive a block, it will request it when it receives the next block and realizes it missed one.

6. Incentive

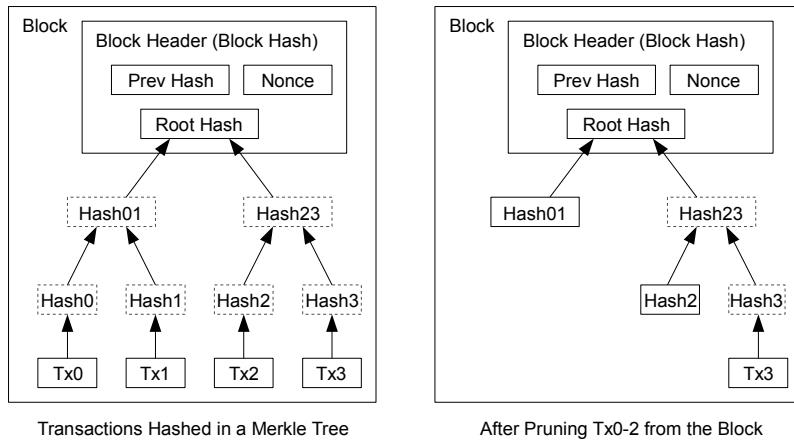
By convention, the first transaction in a block is a special transaction that starts a new coin owned by the creator of the block. This adds an incentive for nodes to support the network, and provides a way to initially distribute coins into circulation, since there is no central authority to issue them. The steady addition of a constant of amount of new coins is analogous to gold miners expending resources to add gold to circulation. In our case, it is CPU time and electricity that is expended.

The incentive can also be funded with transaction fees. If the output value of a transaction is less than its input value, the difference is a transaction fee that is added to the incentive value of the block containing the transaction. Once a predetermined number of coins have entered circulation, the incentive can transition entirely to transaction fees and be completely inflation free.

The incentive may help encourage nodes to stay honest. If a greedy attacker is able to assemble more CPU power than all the honest nodes, he would have to choose between using it to defraud people by stealing back his payments, or using it to generate new coins. He ought to find it more profitable to play by the rules, such rules that favour him with more new coins than everyone else combined, than to undermine the system and the validity of his own wealth.

7. Reclaiming Disk Space

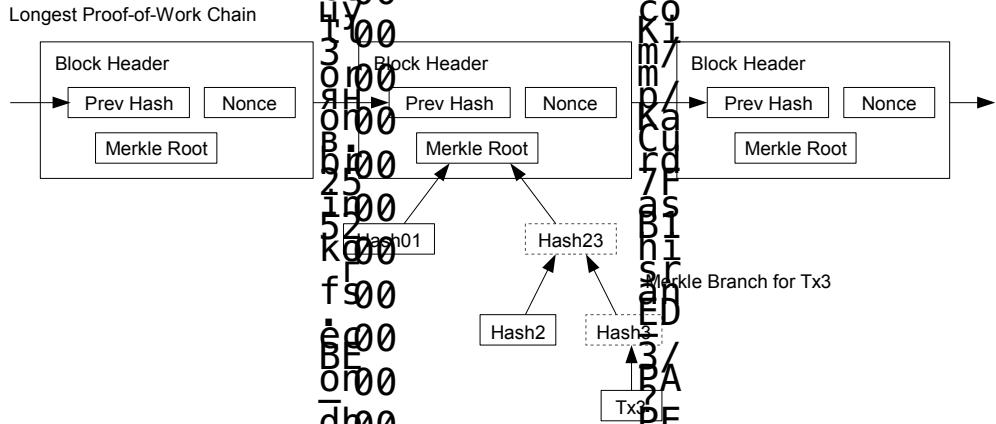
Once the latest transaction in a coin is buried under enough blocks, the spent transactions before it can be discarded to save disk space. To facilitate this without breaking the block's hash, transactions are hashed in a Merkle Tree [7][2][5], with only the root included in the block's hash. Old blocks can then be compacted by stubbing off branches of the tree. The interior hashes do not need to be stored.



A block header with no transactions would be about 80 bytes. If we suppose blocks are generated every 10 minutes, $80 \text{ bytes} * 6 * 24 * 365 = 4.2\text{MB}$ per year. With computer systems typically selling with 2GB of RAM as of 2008, and Moore's Law predicting current growth of 1.2GB per year, storage should not be a problem even if the block headers must be kept in memory.

8. Simplified Payment Verification

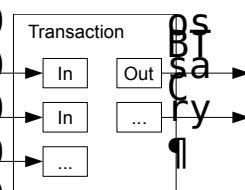
It is possible to verify payments without running a full network node. A user only needs to keep a copy of the block headers of the longest proof-of-work chain, which he can get by querying network nodes until he's convinced he has the longest chain and obtain the Merkle branch linking the transaction to the block it's timestamped in. He can't check the transaction for himself, but by linking it to a place in the chain, he can see that a network node has accepted it, and blocks added after it further confirm the network has accepted it.



As such, the verification is rapid as long as honest nodes control the network, but is more vulnerable if the network is overpowered by an attacker. While network nodes can verify transactions for themselves, the simplified method can be fooled by an attacker's fabricated transactions for as long as the attacker can continue to overpower the network. One strategy to protect against this would be to accept alerts from network nodes when they detect an invalid block, prompting the user's software to download the full block and alerted transactions to confirm the inconsistency. Businesses that receive frequent payments will probably still want to run their own nodes for more independent security and quicker verification.

9. Combining and Splitting Value

Although it would be possible to handle coins individually, it would be unwieldy to make a separate transaction for every cent in a transfer. To allow value to be split and combined, transactions contain multiple inputs and outputs. Normally there will be either a single input from a larger previous transaction or multiple inputs combining smaller amounts, and at most two outputs: one for the payment, and one returning the change, if any, back to the sender.



It should be noted that fan-out, where a transaction depends on several transactions, and those transactions depend on many more, is not a problem here. There is never the need to extract a complete standalone copy of a transaction's history.

10. Privacy

The traditional banking model achieves a level of privacy by limiting access to information to the parties involved and the trusted third party. The necessity to announce all transactions publicly precludes this method, but privacy can still be maintained by breaking the flow of information in another place: by keeping public key anonymous. The public can see that someone is sending an amount to someone else, but without information linking the transaction to anyone. This is similar to the level of information released by stock exchanges, where the time and size of individual trades, the "tape", is made public, but without telling who the parties were.



As an additional firewall, a new key pair should be used for each transaction to keep them from being linked to a common owner. Some linking is still unavoidable with multi-input transactions, which necessarily reveal that their inputs were owned by the same owner. The risk is that if the owner of a key is revealed, linking could reveal other transactions that belonged to the same owner.

11. Calculations

We consider the scenario of an attacker trying to generate an alternate chain faster than the honest chain. Even if this is accomplished, it does not throw the system open to arbitrary changes, such as creating value out of thin air or taking money that never belonged to the attacker. Nodes are not going to accept an invalid transaction as payment, and honest nodes will never accept a block containing them. An attacker can only try to change one of his own transactions to take back money he recently spent.

The race between the honest chain and an attacker's chain can be characterized as a Binomial Random Walk. The success event is the honest chain being extended by one block, increasing its lead by +1, and the failure event is the attacker's chain being extended by one block, reducing the gap by -1.

The probability of an attacker catching up with a given deficit is analogous to a Gambler's Ruin problem. Suppose a gambler with unlimited credit starts at a deficit and plays potentially an infinite number of trials to try to reach breakeven. We can calculate the probability he ever reaches breakeven, or that an attacker ever catches up with the honest chain, as follows [8]:

$q_z = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } p \leq q \\ (q/p)^z & \text{if } p > q \end{cases}$	وَالَّذِينَ يُمْسِكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقْبَلُوا عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ (8:3:3) l-ṣalata the الذِّينَ يُقْبِلُونَ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَمَمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ (8:35:3) ṣalātuhum their وَمَا كَانَ مِلَائِهِمْ عِنْدَ الصَّلَاةِ إِلَّا مُكَافَأَةٌ (9:5:18) l-ṣalata the الصَّلَاةِ قَلَّ تَأْبِي وَأَقْبَلُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُوَ سَبِيلُهُ (9:11:4) l-ṣalata the فَلَمْ تَأْبِي وَأَقْبَلُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَبَخْرُ أَنْكُمْ فِي الَّذِينَ (9:18:11) l-ṣalata the نَّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَإِلَيْهِ الْأَمْرُ وَأَقْبَلُوا عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَآتَيُوا الزَّكَاةَ (9:54:14) l-ṣalata (to) the وَلَا يَأْثُرُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَنُمَّ كَشَانٌ (9:73:12) l-ṣalata the	الصَّلَاةِ
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Given our assumption that $p > q$, the probability drops exponentially as the number of blocks the attacker has to catch up with increases. With the odds against him, if he doesn't make a lucky lunge forward early on, his chances become vanishingly small as he falls further behind.

We now consider how long the recipient of a new transaction needs to wait before being sufficiently certain the sender can't change the transaction. We assume the sender is an attacker who wants to make the recipient believe he paid him for a while, then switch it to pay back to himself after some time has passed. The receiver will be alerted when that happens, but the sender hopes it will be too late.

The receiver generates a new key pair and gives the public key to the sender shortly before signing. This prevents the sender from preparing a chain of blocks ahead of time by working on it continuously until he is lucky enough to get far enough ahead, then executing the transaction at that moment. Once the transaction is sent, the dishonest sender starts working in secret on a parallel chain containing an alternate version of his transaction.

The recipient waits until the transaction has been added to a block and z blocks have been linked after it. He doesn't know the exact amount of progress the attacker has made, but assuming the honest blocks took the average expected time per block, the attacker's potential progress will be a Poisson distribution with expected value:

$$\lambda = z \frac{q}{p}$$

To get the probability the attacker could still catch up now, we multiply the Poisson density for each amount of progress he could have made by the probability he could catch up from that point:

$$\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda^k e^{-\lambda}}{k!} \begin{cases} (q/p)^{(z-k)} & \text{if } k \leq z \\ 1 & \text{if } k > z \end{cases}$$

Rearranging to avoid summing the infinite tail of the distribution...

$$1 - \sum_{k=0}^z \frac{\lambda^k e^{-\lambda}}{k!} (1 - (q/p)^{(z-k)})$$

Converting to C code...

```
#include <math.h>
double AttackerSuccessProbability(double q, int z)
{
    double p = 1.0 - q;
    double lambda = z * (q / p);
    double sum = 1.0;
    int i, k;
    for (k = 0; k <= z; k++)
    {
        double poisson = exp(-lambda);
        for (i = 1; i <= k; i++)
            poisson *= lambda / i;
        sum -= poisson * (1 - pow(q / p, z - k));
    }
    return sum;
}
```

الْأَخْدُوهَا مُهْرُواً وَلَعِنًا
 (5:91:17) l-salati the prayer
 وَيُضْكِنُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِ وَعَنِ
 الصَّلَاةِ فَهُلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ
 (5:106:31) l-salati the prayer
 تُخْسِنُوهُمَا مِنْ بَعْدِ الصَّلَاةِ
 فَقُسْطَانٌ بِاللهِ
 لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ

Running some results, we can see the probability drop off exponentially with z .

```

q=0.1
z=0 P=1.0000000
z=1 P=0.2045873
z=2 P=0.0509779
z=3 P=0.0131722
z=4 P=0.0034552
z=5 P=0.0009137
z=6 P=0.0002428
z=7 P=0.0000647
z=8 P=0.0000173
z=9 P=0.0000046
z=10 P=0.0000012

q=0.3
z=0 P=1.0000000
z=5 P=0.1773523
z=10 P=0.0416605
z=15 P=0.0101008
z=20 P=0.0024804
z=25 P=0.0006132
z=30 P=0.0001522
z=35 P=0.0000379
z=40 P=0.0000095
z=45 P=0.0000024
z=50 P=0.0000006

```

Solving for P less than 0.1%...

P < 0.001	وصل علیهم بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ مَكَانَتْ لَهُمْ
q=0.10 z=5	(10:87:14) l-ṣalata the prayer اَعْلَمُو بِنِيَّتِكُمْ قِبْلَةُ
q=0.15 z=8	وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَتَشْرِيفُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
q=0.20 z=11	(11:87:3) aṣalaṭuka Does
q=0.25 z=15	قَالُوا يَا شَعِيرَتِي
q=0.30 z=24	أَمْلَأْتَكَ ثَمَرْنَ أَنْ تَثْرُكَ مَا يَعْنِي
q=0.35 z=41	أَبِي أَنْ
q=0.40 z=89	(11:114:2) l-ṣalata the prayer وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرْفِيَ الْمَهَارِ
q=0.45 z=340	

12. Conclusion

We have proposed a system for electronic transactions without relying on trust. We started with the usual framework of coins made from digital signatures, which provides strong control of ownership, but is incomplete without a way to prevent double-spending. To solve this, we proposed a peer-to-peer network using proof-of-work to record a public history of transactions that quickly becomes computationally impractical for an attacker to change if honest nodes control a majority of CPU power. The network is robust in its unstructured simplicity. Nodes work all at once with little coordination.² They do not need to be identified, since messages are not routed to any particular place and only need to be delivered on a best effort basis. Nodes can leave and rejoin the network at will, accepting the proof-of-work chain as proof of what happened while they were gone. They vote with their CPU power, expressing their acceptance of valid blocks by working on extending them and rejecting invalid blocks by refusing to work on them. Any needed rules and incentives can be enforced with this consensus mechanism.

وَوَسْطِي بِسَلَدَةٍ وَسَرَّابِيْمَ
 فَإِذَا دَعَتْ خَنَّا
 (19:55:4) **bil-salati** the
 وَكَانَ يَأْثِرُ أَفْلَانَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ
 وَالرُّكْعَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضَانًا
 (19:59:6) **al-salata** the
 فَخَلَقَ مِنْ تَغْدِيمٍ خَلَقَ
 أَشْفَاقًا لِلصَّلَاةِ وَأَشْفَاقًا لِلشَّهْوَاتِ
 (20:14:10) **l-salata** the
 إِنَّمَا قَاتَلَنِي وَأَقْمَمَ الصَّلَاةَ لِذَكْرِي
 أَنَّا قَاتَلْنَاكِي وَأَقْمَمْنَا الصَّلَاةَ لِذَكْرِي
 (20:132:3) **bil-salati**
 وَأَمْرَزَ أَكْلَكَ
 the prayer
 بالصَّلَاةِ وَاضْطَرَبَ مَلَئِنَاهَا
 (21:73:10) **l-ṣalati** (of) the
 وَأَوْخَيْنَا إِنْبَهِمَ الصَّلَاةَ
 الْجَزَّارَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ
 (22:35:12) **l-salati** the
 الْمَاضِيَرِينَ عَلَى هَا
 أَمَابِعِمَ وَالْمَقْبِعِيَ الصَّلَاةِ
 (22:40:21) **waṣalawatūn**
 and synagogues

(4:77:10) لـ-salata the
أَنْ تَرُ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قَبْلَ
نَاهِمْ كَفَرُوا أَنْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيفُوا الْمَلَةُ
(4:101:11) لـ-salati the
prayer فَإِذَا هَزَنْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
فَلَنِسْ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْفَرُوا مِنْ
الصَّلَاةِ إِنْ خَفِثْتُمْ أَنْ يَعْتَنِمُ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا

(4:102:6) لـ-salata the
وَإِذَا كَنَثْتُمْ فِيهِمْ فَاقْتَلُ
نَاهِمْ الْمَلَةُ فَلَنِسْ طَائِفَةً مِنْهُمْ
مَعْدَ

(4:103:3) لـ-salata the
فَلَذَا قَهْنَثَ الْمَلَةِ

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وَيُؤْكُونُ الْزَكَاةُ وَمُمْ زَانِغُونَ

(5:58:4) لـ-salati the
prayer وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الْمَلَةِ
أَخْلَوْهَا مَزْءُوا وَلَعِنَا

(5:91:17) لـ-salati the
prayer وَيَمْنَكُمْ عَنْ ذَكْرِ اللَّهِ وَنَنْ
الصَّلَاةَ فَهُنْ أَشَمُ مُنْتَهُونَ

(5:106:31) لـ-salati the
prayer تَخِسُونَهُمَا مِنْ بَعْدِ الْمَلَةِ
فِي قِسْمَانِ يَهُ

(6:72:3) لـ-salata the
prayer وَأَنْ أَقِيفُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَأَئُّهُوَ وَخُوَّهُ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُخْشَرُ

(6:92:21) salātihim their
prayers وَمُمْ غَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ
يُحَاطِفُونَ

(6:162:3) salāti my
prayer قُلْ إِنْ صَلَاتِي وَنَسْكِي
وَمُخْتَارِي وَمُفَاتِي لِهِ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

(7:170:5) لـ-salata the
prayer وَالَّذِينَ يُمْسِكُونَ بِأَيْكَابِي
وَأَقْامُوا الصَّلَاةَ

(8:3:3) لـ-salata the
prayer الَّذِينَ يُعَيِّنُونَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

(8:35:3) salātuhum their
prayer وَفَمَا كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يَنْهَى
الْبَيْتَ إِلَّا شَكَاءً وَتَضَدِّيَةً

(9:5:18) لـ-salata the
prayer فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِنَّهُمْ

سَيِّلُونَ

(9:11:14) لـ-salata the
prayer فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِنَّهُمْ

فِي الدَّيْنِ

(9:18:11) لـ-salata the
prayer فَنَّ آفَنْ بِاللَّهِ وَآنِيَمُ الْأَخْرَى
وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ

(9:54:14) لـ-salata (to) the
prayer وَلَا يَأْثُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَمُمْ
كُسَالِّ

(9:71:12) لـ-salata the
prayer وَيُعَيِّنُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْكُونُ
الْزَكَاةَ وَتَطْبِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ

(9:99:14) waṣalawāti and
blessings وَيَتَّبَعُونَ مَا يُنْتَقِي
فَرِيَادَ عَنْهُ اللَّهُ وَمَنْلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ

(9:103:11) لـ-salataka your
blessings وَمَهْلَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنْ
مَلَكَ سَكَنَ لَهُمْ

(10:87:14) لـ-salata the
prayer وَاجْتَلُوا بَلَوْتَمْ بِيَنَةَ

وَأَقِيفُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَبَشَرَ الْخُوَمِينَ

(11:87:3) aṣalatuka Does
your prayer قَاتُوا بِأَشْعِنَّ
أَصْلَاكَ تَأْمِرُكَ أَنْ نَثْرَكَ مَا يَغْنِي
آتَى فَنَّ

(11:114:2) لـ-salata the
prayer وَأَقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ طَرْفِي الْهَارِ
وَرَلَفَا مِنَ الْتَّلِّ

(13:22:7) لـ-salata the
prayer وَالَّذِينَ ضَيْرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ