

Gospels that Damn: Islam

by

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1. Introduction

a. How Islam Came to Be

i. While the historical record isn't always in agreement, the consensus is that right around

570 A.D., Muhammad was born in Mecca.

1. By eight years old, both his father and mother had died, leaving him in the care of his uncle.

2. During his teen years, Muhammad traveled with caravans to the region of Syria, where he had exposure to several polytheistic religions, as well as Judaism and Christianity.

ii. Up until about the age of forty, he lived a relatively normal life—but it was at this point that Islam teaches he had his first prophetic vision from the angel Gabriel, who called on him to be the messenger of Allah.

1. Over the course of the next 22 years, Muhammad would receive his revelation through direct dictation.

2. Every word recorded in the Quran today is said to be the exact words of Allah, and not Muhammad.

b. What Muhammed taught is born out of conditions in which he claimed that this was not a new religion at all—but an old religion that had been corrupted.

i. His message was one of pure monotheism, what is called Tawhid, where Allah's oneness and unity is the primary doctrine that needed to be reclaimed.

- ii. His argument was that the polytheistic religions of his day were impure—but what’s more than this, the monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity had also been corrupted.
 - 1. However, in spite of all this, Muhammad still affirmed that the Torah, the Psalms, and the gospel, come from Allah.
 - 2. In a nutshell, he argued that anything found within the Scriptures that contradict the Quran, are abrogated, or abolished, by the Quran’s teachings.

2. Islam’s Understanding of Allah

- a. The most important doctrine in Islam is the Tawhid, which is that there is no other god than Allah.
 - i. Yet this statement has more in mind to it than the fact that there is One True God.
 - 1. In reality, what Tawhid emphasizes is the oneness and uniqueness of Allah.
 - 2. It is a monotheistic religion, meaning they worship one god—but it is important to understand that it is a unitarian monotheistic religion.
 - a. He is one god, and only one god—no persons—no Trinity.
 - b. According to Surah 4:171, it is blasphemy to describe God in three persons, for there is only one god, named Allah, and he is far above having a son.
 - 3. The Quran claims that even though Christ was born of a virgin (Surah 3:47), He was still created in the likeness of Adam (Surah 3:59).
 - a. Jesus ate like regular human beings, and therefore, Islam argues that Christ could not be God (Surah 5:75).
 - b. Instead, the Quran claims He was merely one of the many prophets (Surah 2:136), and his gospel was the Tawhid: there is no god but Allah.

4. They likewise deny that Jesus was ever crucified.
 - a. Instead, the Quran teaches that it only appeared as if Jesus died on the cross (Surah 4:157).
 - b. Instead, it was either Judas or Simon of Cyrene who were crucified in His place.
 5. The Holy Spirit is likewise not seen as God, but the archangel Gabriel, who delivered the Quran to Muhammad.
- ii. That is all part and parcel to this fundamental doctrine of Islam known as Tawhid. It immediately rejects the Christian claim that Jesus is truly God, and that the Holy Spirit is truly God.
1. All of this is born out of the idea of Allah's transcendence. To relate Allah to anything or anyone, it is blasphemy.
 2. This is all radically important because this doctrine of Allah's transcendence means that in every single way, it starts with a denial of the only solution God has provided for us in the gospel.
 - a. But this doctrine of Tawhid encompasses much more than a rejection of the Trinity.
 - b. Remember: it stresses the oneness and uniqueness of Allah. The one characteristic of Allah that reigns supreme above them all is the idea that he is transcendent.
- b. Thus, we must answer the question: what does Islam mean when it says that Allah is transcendent?
- i. In much the same way that the Christian would describe God as sovereign and in control of everything, so too does Islam.

1. The major difference between the two though comes down to an understanding of who God is.
 2. For the Christian, God is not just sovereign, loving, merciful, etc., but He is the complete perfection of all of these attributes at once, and He is a personal God.
- ii. For Islam, this is not the case. Allah is purely above creation, and there is an infinite gulf between humanity and Allah.
1. While Allah has made his will known to man, and partially revealed himself, the best that you can hope to achieve is to know some things about Allah, rather than knowing him personally.
 - a. The Quran speaks regularly about Allah’s attributes, or his character—but every last one of them is seen through the lens of his transcendence.
 - b. Islam is more concerned about the fact that you affirm Allah as the supreme one, who is beyond all possible experience and knowledge, than any concept that you can have a relationship with this god.
 - c. The Quran does speak of the fact that Allah is closer than one’s jugular vein—but this nearness is only seen through the fact that he sees all, knows all, and has all power.
 2. This becomes incredibly important when we consider Islam’s teachings because everything is filtered through the lens of his transcendence.
 - a. To put it clearly: to affirm “there is no god but Allah,” is to affirm that the God of the Bible and the god of Islam are not the same.
 - b. This is the fundamental doctrine you must hold to if you are to be a Muslim.

3. Islam’s Understanding of the Problem

- a. Islam does teach that sin is an issue that all mankind faces, but it is ultimately not the thing that separates us from Allah.
 - i. What separates one from Allah in Islam is a failure to recognize him for who he is, and submit to him.
 - ii. Before I can even get into their doctrine of sin, it is helpful to start by defining what it isn't because you're automatically going to think of it within the Christian framework.
 - 1. There is no concept of original sin, in fact they reject it. Islam teaches that when Adam and Eve sinned, it did not bring man into sin.
 - 2. "And every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another" (Surah 6:164).
 - a. In other words: there is no inherited guilt because of Adam. As a result, they teach that mankind is born in a purely neutral state.
 - b. From here, man has the ability to submit to the guidance of Allah, or not—and that is fundamentally how they define sin.
- b. They define their understanding of sin in two different categories: minor sins and major sins.
 - i. Minor sins are commonly defined as sins found in the Quran that fall into two other categories.
 - 1. If the Quran doesn't attach a warning of Hell to the sin, it is viewed as a minor sin.
 - 2. If the Quran doesn't attach a warning of a curse upon the sin, it is also viewed as a minor sin.
 - a. Examples of minor sins would be breaking a promise, being immodest, being suspicious or spying on others, name-calling or bullying, gossip, swearing, and so on.

- b. All of these can be forgiven easily by Allah simply by stopping the sin and not returning to it.
- 3. However, this really doesn't give the Muslim any real sense of peace, because minor sins can become major sins.
- ii. Major Sins are defined as sins in the Quran that have a curse attached to them, or promise that Hell awaits those who commit them.
 - 1. All of these sins can be forgiven if you repent—but the ultimate hope is that you tip the scales in your favor by doing enough good to outweigh these major sins.
 - 2. There is, however, one sin that is considered an unforgivable sin: Shirk
 - a. Shirk is the worst possible negation of the Tawhid, in associating anyone or anything with Allah.
 - b. This has in mind not merely polytheism, but Christianity as well because it denies the Trinity.
 - c. “Indeed, those who disbelieve and avert [people] from the way of Allah have certainly gone far astray. Indeed, those who disbelieve and commit wrong [or injustice] - never will Allah forgive them, nor will He guide them to a path. Except the path of Hell; they will abide therein forever. And that, for Allah, is [always] easy. (Surah 4:167-169).

4. Islam's Understanding of the Solution/Commands

- a. The affirmation of the Shahada is essential to convert to being a Muslim. Without it, you have no hope Allah will forgive you.
 - i. The Tawhid: “There is no god but Allah.”
 - 1. This goes back into the concept of transcendence that we discussed in the beginning.

2. The emphasis is on the oneness of Allah, and his uniqueness from everything and everyone else. To embrace this is to reject Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
 - a. The most important doctrine in Islam—the starting point to their solution—is that you must deny the Bible’s solution to sin.
 - b. You do not have Islam without this. It is integral to the Muslim faith, but it is not the only thing you must affirm to be a Muslim.
- ii. The second affirmation of the Shahada is that Muhammad is Allah’s messenger (or prophet).
 1. What this means in Islam is very clear: Muhammad is the greatest and the last prophet.
 2. To reject any teaching from Muhammad is to reject Islam. To reject him as a prophet is to reject Allah.
- iii. The confession of the Shahada must be made in Arabic, in the presence of others—and it must be done with “true intent” and faith.
 1. This is all it takes to become a Muslim. There is no concept of grace, or redemption, or salvation—at least how the Christian would define it.
 2. It is pure obedience and submission to Allah, from beginning to end, and affirming Muhammad as the supreme prophet.
- b. The Five Pillars of Islam
 - i. The first of the Five Pillars of Islam, as we’ve already seen, is the Shahada.
 - ii. The second Pillar of Islam is prayer, which you must do five times daily.
 1. You must prayer in a certain way at certain times, wearing certain clothing, and only after you’ve undergone ritual purification.

2. The content of the prayers involves the Shahada, that is, “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger,” and other verses of the Quran.
- iii. The third pillar of Islam is almsgiving, or charity.
 1. Roughly 2.5% of your wealth is to be given back to the Islamic community.
 2. When you do this, you purify yourself and your possessions, but some sins can also be atoned for.
 - iv. The fourth pillar of Islam is fasting during the month of Ramadan.
 1. In this, the Muslim is expected to forego food, drink, intercourse, and even smoking, from sun-up until sun-down.
 2. The practice itself, however, can be invalidated in a number of ways.
 - v. The fifth and final pillar of Islam then is Hajj, which is the pilgrimage every Muslim is to make to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.
 - vi. These Five Pillars of Islam are *the base requirements* of being a Muslim.
 1. There are many other practices that are not mandatory—but all of these *must* be done if one is a Muslim, otherwise, they will not enter paradise.
 2. It must be made clear: the extra practices of Islam are all bound up in submission to Allah.
 - a. If you submit yourself to more good works, you have a better chance at entering paradise. If you do not, you have a better chance of winding up in hell.
 - b. Yet even with this, there is no real assurance that you will make it to paradise because Allah is transcendent.

c. The Scales

i. For Islam, the closest you have to the concept of salvation can be summed up in Surah 21:47 and Surah 99:6-8.

1. The context of these passages has in mind final judgment; every man will stand before Allah and their deeds will be placed on the scales.

a. “And we set up a just balance [scales] for the Day of Resurrection. Thus, no soul will be treated unjustly. Even though it be the weight of the mustard seed, we shall bring it forth to be weighed; and our reckoning will suffice” (Surah 21:47).

b. “That day mankind will come forth in scattered groups to be shown their deeds. And he who has done at atom’s weight of good will see it, and he who has done an atom’s weight of evil will see it” (Surah 99:6-8).

2. The basic gist of these scales is that once every deed is weighed, if your scales are tipped in favor of good, you may enter paradise; if your scales are tipped in favor of bad, you plunge into hell. Yet again, Allah’s transcendence can overrule.

d. The Transcendence of Allah

i. There is a teaching from one of the Hadith (Sahih Al-Bukhari 4:676) that illustrates this concept incredibly clearly.

1. The Hadith tells us that in the womb, Allah sends his angels to have him write four things: his provision, his age, and whether or not he will be of the wretched or the blessed.

2. Another Hadith (Sahih Al-Bukhari 8:593) tells us of Allah’s arbitrary sense of justice, where this divine decree sets in once again regardless of the person’s works.

3. What then do these two Ahadith show us?

- a. Forgiveness and mercy do not flow from Allah's character to provide a basis for salvation.
- b. Salvation is purely and arbitrarily shown by his supreme power to do what he wants.

5. Islam's Understanding of the Blessings

- a. There is no teaching on the blessings of Allah concerning one's life now beyond a sense of peace, prosperity, and a good reputation.
 - i. In general, Allah is simply seen as merciful and forgiving, but again, these do not flow from his character, but rather his power.
 - 1. There is no helper in the Spirit. There is no concept of justification. There is no sense of peace with Allah. There is no adoption.
 - 2. There is no sense that Allah will guarantee you are saved.
 - ii. Everything is based on Allah's sovereign choice. He will either bring you into paradise or not.
 - 1. Yet the ultimate goal of paradise is not that you would have any sense of a personal relationship with your God.
 - 2. Remember: to associate anyone or anything with Allah is shirk, the unforgivable sin. Allah cannot be a relatable, personal god.
- b. If you somehow make it to paradise, there are general terms the Quran speaks of what that will look like.
 - i. There is a bountiful garden with flowing rivers where you can eat and drink your fill.
 - 1. You will be decked out with the finest clothing and bracelets, you will enjoy eternal youth, and more.

2. Allah will grant you things beyond your wildest imaginations. And all of that sounds pretty good in one sense, doesn't it?
- ii. Yet the "best" part, Islam teaches, is that you will encounter Allah.
 1. Notice that word. You will *encounter* Allah. According to the tradition, the people of paradise will gather with him every Friday and they will have the blessing of gazing upon his noble countenance.
 2. In other words: you will not enjoy eternal fellowship with Allah because the point of paradise is not a perfect, eternal relationship with Allah.

6. Conclusion