

APOLOGETICS 32 – WHICH GOD? – PART 5

THE DUTY OF MAN – ISLAM, JUDAISM, CHRISTENDOM

INTRODUCTION

Apologetics - ἀπολογία apologia

The definition of Christian Apologetics is “the information that enables a believer to provide a defense for why a doctrine is believed.”

1 Peter 3:15 – But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

In previous topics, we determined that there is a supernatural, unseen creator. But which god is God? We have evaluated the major religions and have found that only Biblical Christianity provides a coherent, verifiable approach to creation.

Acts 17:26-31– According to this text, we see that the duty of man was to seek God, though He is not far from anyone. Furthermore, God is not a figment of our imagination and is not found or represented in images made by man. Now, the responsibility of man is to reconsider what they think about God and especially of Jesus Christ, who will be the judge of us all. If one is not found to be in Him, having His righteousness, which is by grace, then that one is condemned. If one believes in Jesus, that one will not be judged but has eternal life.

The question of the purpose of life, the duty of man, is addressed by every religion; that is the purpose of religion. How do different religions answer questions about the purpose of man? What is humanity's present condition? Have we fallen from the created status as a result of sin? Is there a barrier against our creator(s)? If so, how is this remedied?

ACCORDING TO ISLAM

The Quran presents the creation and fall in a way similar to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Humans and angels were created to worship Allah. However, there is a major difference from the Bible. Allah created Adam and commanded that he be worshiped by all angels. Satan opposed this command and only then was he banished from heaven:

And surely, We created you (your father Adam) and then gave you shape (the noble shape of a human being), then We told the angels, "Prostrate to Adam"; and they prostrated, except Iblis (Satan), he refused to be of those who prostrate. Allah said: "What prevented you Iblis, that you did not prostrate, when I commanded you?" Iblis said: "I am better than him (Adam), You created me from fire, and him You created from clay. Allah said: "O, Iblis, get down from this (Paradise), it is not for you to be arrogant here. Get out, for you are of those humiliated and disgraced." (Quran 7,11-13)

After this, Satan planned to deceive humans and make them disobedient to God, which he accomplished in a similar way to the biblical account (see Quran 7,20-21).

O Adam! Live you and your spouse in the Garden and both of you eat from it wherever you will, but never approach the tree or you shall become wrongdoers.' But Satan made an evil suggestion to both of them that he might reveal to them their shame that had

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remained hidden from them. He said: 'Your Lord has forbidden you to approach this tree only to prevent you from becoming angels or immortals. 'And he swore to them both: 'Surely I am your sincere adviser.' Thus Satan brought about their fall by deceit. And when they tasted of the tree, their shame became visible to them, and both began to cover themselves with leaves from the Garden. Then their Lord called out to them: 'Did I not forbid you from that tree, and did I not warn you that Satan 'is your declared enemy?' Both cried out: 'Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and do not have mercy on us, we shall surely be among the losers.' (Quran 7,19-23)

However, in Islam, there is no such thing as original sin. Although Adam and Eve sinned, they repented and were forgiven, so their sin had no repercussions for the rest of the human race. In their present condition, humans are exhorted not to repeat Adam's mistake and also warned that the devil attempts to cause all humans to rebel against Allah.

All people sin because of the passion to which they are subjected by Satan and because they are careless about the demands of the Quran. Each individual is appointed two angels who record all sins and good deeds that are performed during his or her life, and these records will be revealed at the final judgment.

Behold, two guardian angels appointed to learn [man's doings] and note them, one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him, ready to note it. (Quran 50,17-19)

In Islam, there is sin and accountability. The duty of man is to pursue God, but the god of Islam has very different demands.

Salvation From Sin Is Not Necessary In Islam

Islam does not believe a person must be saved from their sins. There is forgiveness for particular sins and the immediate repercussions of those sins, but there is no need for atonement in the case of eternity because man is not under a curse.

Jesus' Death on the Cross Was Not Necessary for Salvation

Because humanity is not under a curse, there is no need for a Savior. Therefore, Jesus Christ didn't need to die for the sins of the world. Islam rejects the idea that Jesus' death had any significance whatsoever.

Side point: Islam teaches that Jesus did not die but swooned.

Once again, Islam does not recognize original sin. Therefore, there is no need for salvation. There is nothing to be saved from. Going to heaven or hell is based on a person's deeds.

They whose balances shall be heavy shall be blest. But they whose balances shall be light, they shall lose their soul, abiding in hell forever (Surah 23:102-104).

In Islam, to go to heaven (Paradise) is through obedience to the law of Allah, the Shari'ah. The duty of man is to live a good life, pleasing Allah in all that they do. They are to submit

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and follow his commandments. Religion in Islam does not mean salvation from sin. Instead, it means following the right path.

There is one damnable deed in Islam. It is called shirk. This is a denial of the unity of Allah; specifically, this is the claim that God has a son. Therefore, anyone who holds to the doctrine of the Tri-unity or that Jesus is the Son of God commits the unpardonable sin.

Islam does not offer anyone assurance of salvation in this life. It is only at Judgment Day that people will discover whether they have been accepted by Allah, the exception being if one dies in service to Allah, that is they give up their life for his cause, then there is automatic acceptance.

ACCORDING TO MODERN JUDAISM

Although the content of Genesis is the same in Judaism, the doctrines therein are much different. For the most part, the account in Genesis 1-11 is not history according to most in modern Judaism, even in the most orthodox sects.

The account of Adam and Eve falling from an innocent state is the story of all of us. It is typically taught that mankind is not fallen and in need of salvation, rather every man sins and needs to make some kind of atonement.

Orthodox and modern Judaism agree that the sacrificial system in the Torah was a representation, but not of the Christ who would be the final sacrifice. They think it's a representation of a full and contrite heart to God.

To be perpetually right before God, one studies the Torah and follows the Law (moral, dietary, observes the holy days, and charitable acts). If one does this, then sin is not really an issue. Morality is not always a problem. Immoral behavior is not a sin unless one does harm to another (infidelity, stealing, violence).

Like Islam, it is a great offense to state or believe that God has a son. They would emphasize that God is one and there is no other god. To state that God has a son is akin to stating that there is another god other than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, unlike Islam, this is simply a theological error and not damnable according to most.

ACCORDING TO CHRISTENDOM

Christendom is defined as the religions that claim Jesus Christ as the leader or example to follow in religious thoughts or activity. Of those who self-identify as Christians in America, only 76% state that it is an absolute certainty that God exists. 43% state that they use the Bible to determine right and wrong. 38% state that standards are absolute. 39% believe that the Bible is the Word of God and should be read literally (18% state that the Bible is not the Word of God). 54% believe in Darwinian Evolution. In addition:

- 72% argue that people are basically good.

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- 71% consider feelings, experience, or the input of friends and family as their most trusted sources of moral guidance.
- 66% say that having faith matters more than which faith you pursue.
- 64% say that all religious faiths are of equal value.
- 58% believe that if a person is good enough or does enough good things, they can earn their way into heaven.
- 58% contend that the Holy Spirit is not a real, living being but merely a symbol of God's power, presence, or purity.
- 57% believe in karma.
- 52% claim that determining moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time.
- 34% believe that you cannot save yourself and only through Jesus Christ can one be saved.
- Of self-identified “Evangelical Christians,” about 71 million (statistically) American adults, only 41% state that when they die, they believe they will go to heaven.

Very few in Christendom will state that salvation is a free gift by grace through faith. Most in Christendom believe that it is a combination of believing in Jesus and doing good while avoiding evil that will ultimately result in going to heaven. 48% of “Christians” believe that if a person is generally good, they will earn a place in heaven regardless of beliefs.

According to Christendom the duty of man is to live like Jesus. This is found in the Gospels and is primarily the content of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. *Believe* has become synonymous with following Jesus; dedication to Jesus (moral and religious practice) is the path to salvation.

The difference is that, according to the Bible, the duty of man is to believe in Jesus as the One who died for sins and will save the believer from damnation to life eternal as a free gift based upon His sacrifice on the cross, resurrection, and coming again.

The duty of the believer is to live like Christ (being careful not to try to live like Jews) because of the grace God has given, not to earn favor or blessings in this life.

CONCLUSION

In our evaluation of “Which God?”, it is a sad statement to make that most in Christendom do not believe in the God of the Bible. They have a god of their own design.

This means that even though they are closer, most of those who claim Christianity are not any closer to the God of creation than an Islamist or Judaist.

In the next lesson, we will conclude our lessons on which God and state clearly that only a literal, harmonious view of the God of the Bible is the true One God.