

# THE ISLAMIC VIEW OF SALVATION

**What Islam asserts to be the inspired word of God outlines a drastically different version of the way in which humankind can face the future.**

**T**he Koran claims that Islam is the same religion given to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. It alleges that God reveals truth in stages, so it claims to be a “fuller explanation” of Scripture. As such it is “scripture,” a message for all the world.

The fuller explanation is about God. Inspired angels declared that God is one God. So the Koran proclaims the one God called Allah. Jesus’ ministry on earth, His death for all humanity, and His post-ascension intercessory ministry are replaced by presenting Him as only a human prophet. By contrast, Muhammad is said to be the final prophet who came to give this fuller revelation of God, allegedly fuller

than Christ’s revelation. The Koran claims that Jesus predicted that Muhammad would come after Him. It says Muhammad is a “beautiful pattern [of conduct] for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day.”<sup>1</sup> His life is claimed to be a model for those desirous of obtaining the good goal of eternity—a reward rather than a redemption.

*Christ is not God.* The Koran says God is “too high” for any partners (like Christ and the Holy Spirit). In fact, God curses those who think Christ is the Son of God—there is

*\*Norman R. Gulley, Ph.D., is a Research Professor in Systematic Theology at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee.*





only one God. It is blasphemy to say God had a son, and those saying it will receive “the severest penalty.”<sup>2</sup> They will go to hell. In the meantime, Satan’s authority is over them.

The Koran demotes Jesus to one of the prophets. It claims He did not die on the cross; it only looked as if He did. Islam claims that Jesus was taken to God and is silent about Christ’s post-ascension intercession in heaven. Islam claims Jesus will return to Earth in the end-time to complete His prophetic ministry and fight the anti-Christ.

Yahiya Emerick, author and practicing Islamic believer, claims that “according to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, Jesus will speak to the Christians and Jews of the world and convert them to Islam. He will succeed in breaking the worship of the cross and stop the eating of pork. . . . Jesus will be the spiritual head of a transnational government of peace.”<sup>3</sup> This will last for 40 years, during which time Jesus will marry, have children, die, and be buried in Medina next to the grave of the prophet Muhammad.

*God and Muhammad.* According to the Koran, judgment is a summons to God and His apostle Muhammad. “It is such as obey God and His Apostle, and fear God and do right, that will win [in the end].”<sup>4</sup> The exhortation is, “establish regular prayer and give regular charity; and obey the Apostle; that ye may receive

mercy.”<sup>5</sup> In that Day of Judgment, God “will call to them, and say: ‘Where are My ‘partners’? Whom you imagined [to be such]?’”<sup>6</sup> Yet “We shall reward them.”<sup>7</sup> Note the plural “we,” which appears often. This seems to be God and Muhammad, for often God and His apostle are mentioned together, but at other times it may be a plural used of the one God, for it is used even for Old Testament times.

*Salvation by works.* Salvation in Islam is not a gift. It has to be earned through vigorous works. The Koran says, “Do good; for God loveth those who do good.”<sup>8</sup> Charity “will remove from you some of your [stains of] evil.”<sup>9</sup> “Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord.”<sup>10</sup> “He will be their Friend, because they practised [righteousness].”<sup>11</sup> A person can “abound in merit.”<sup>12</sup> Every person “gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns.”<sup>13</sup> “Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in God’s cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of God: they are the people who will achieve [salvation].”<sup>14</sup>

Either the Garden or hell will reward each person. One has to merit entrance into either. “One Day every soul will come up struggling for itself, and every soul will be rec-

ompensed [fully] for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.”<sup>15</sup> “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 God].”<sup>16</sup> Reward is in direct relation to endeavor. “Then those whose balance [of good deeds] is heavy, they will attain salvation: but those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell will they abide.”<sup>17</sup>

The Koran says, “Enter ye the Garden, because of [the good] which ye did [in the world].”<sup>18</sup> The focus is on reward, not redemption. Hell is mentioned repeatedly throughout the Koran and often with the most lurid details. Although the reward is a Garden with streams running beneath it, and that is often mentioned, too, the fear of an eternal hell would be stimulus enough to cause devotees to try to save themselves. The Koran says, “Save yourselves and your families from a Fire.”<sup>19</sup>

*Hell.* The Day of Judgment is often referred to throughout the Koran. God is “strict in punishment,”<sup>20</sup> for “severe is His chastisement.”<sup>21</sup> God says, “I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the hereafter, nor will they have anyone to help.”<sup>22</sup> In hell, “as often as their skins are roasted through, we shall change them for

fresh skins, that they may taste the Penalty.”<sup>23</sup> In the flames there will be nothing but “the heaving of sighs and sobs.”<sup>24</sup> There will be great thirst in hell. But all they have is “boiling fetid water.” “Indeed ye shall drink like diseased camels raging with thirst!”<sup>25</sup> Focusing on one sufferer, the Koran says, “In gulps will he sip it, but never will he be near swallowing it down his throat: death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die: and in front of him will be a chastisement unrelenting.”<sup>26</sup> That unrelenting punishment for all in hell is described as follows. “In the midst of boiling hot water will they wander round!”<sup>27</sup>

The inhabitants of hell are engulfed in flames. God says, “Every time it shows abatement, we shall increase for them the fierceness of the Fire.”<sup>28</sup> (Note the plural *we* again.) “For them will be cut out a garment of Fire: over their heads will be poured out boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as [their] skins. In addition there will be maces of iron [to punish] them. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and [it will be said], ‘Taste ye the penalty of burning!’”<sup>29</sup> Those in hell will cry to God to get out to work deeds of righteousness. But He tells them they must suffer for their past deeds, for there is no helper for wrongdoers.

The so-called fuller understanding of Scripture in the Koran does not live up to its claim. When Christ came to reveal the Father, He said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9, NIV). He did so as the God-man among humans. His ministry was an outpouring of God’s love to humans, and His death was the only way they could be saved. Christ taught that God so loved the world that He sent Him to be the Savior (John 3:16). To reject this revelation of God is not a fuller revelation of God, but an attempt to hide the truth about God.

The gift of salvation is denied, for according to Islam, Christ did not die, and salvation can be gained only through a rigorous system of works. All the time devotees are focused on what they have to do for God rather than on what God has done for them. Rather than a fuller revelation of God, there is a revelation of one who is unlike God. His demands are heavy, with five times of prayer each day and other works to earn, or merit, heaven. Believers are constantly reminded of hell in the Koran. The horrors of that place and the unfairness of an eternal punishment for not doing enough good works reveal God as a tyrant.

The fact that some in hell want to come out to do good deeds may suggest that they are not merely rebels, for such would curse God. To them, God shows no compassion, only a

seeming delight in increasing and prolonging the torture. The Moslem view of hell without Calvary gives such a distorted picture of God that the resulting system of human works for salvation is a counterfeit replacement for God’s gift of salvation. The Koran never says Allah is love. □

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> *The Qur’an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Elmhurst: Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, 2001), 33.21, hereafter abbreviated as *Qur’an*.

<sup>2</sup> *Qur’an* 10.68–70.

<sup>3</sup> Yahiya J. A. Emerick, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Understanding Islam* (Indianapolis: Pearson, 2002), pp. 106–108, 206, 207.

<sup>4</sup> *Qur’an* 24.51–52, cf. 47.33.

<sup>5</sup> *Qur’an* 24.56.

<sup>6</sup> *Qur’an* 28.62.

<sup>7</sup> *Qur’an* 39.7.

<sup>8</sup> *Qur’an*, 2.195.

<sup>9</sup> *Qur’an* 2.271.

<sup>10</sup> *Qur’an* 2.277.

<sup>11</sup> *Qur’an* 6.127.

<sup>12</sup> *Qur’an* 11.3.

<sup>13</sup> *Qur’an* 2.286.

<sup>14</sup> *Qur’an* 9.20.

<sup>15</sup> *Qur’an* 16.111.

<sup>16</sup> *Qur’an* 17.19.

<sup>17</sup> *Qur’an* 20.15.

<sup>18</sup> *Qur’an* 23.102.

<sup>19</sup> *Qur’an* 16.32.

<sup>20</sup> *Qur’an* 66:6.

<sup>21</sup> *Qur’an* 2.196; 2.211; 3.11; 4.2; 5.98.

<sup>22</sup> *Qur’an* 11.102.

<sup>23</sup> *Qur’an* 3.56.

<sup>24</sup> *Qur’an* 4.56.

<sup>25</sup> *Qur’an* 11.106. 21.100.

<sup>26</sup> *Qur’an* 56.55.

<sup>27</sup> *Qur’an* 14.16, 17.

<sup>28</sup> *Qur’an* 17.97.

<sup>29</sup> *Qur’an* 22.19–22.