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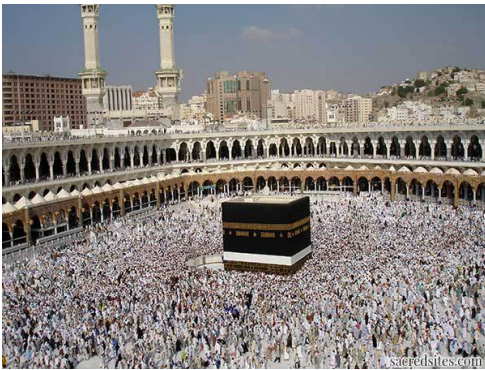


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JULY 11, 2018

Differences Between Salvation in the Qur'an & the Bible

by [Eric Davis](#)



Ultimately, it's the only question that matters. It's the question that everyone must ask. Failure to correctly ask and answer it results in eternal catastrophe. "What must I do to be saved?" ([Acts 16:30](#) [L](#)). Every system, philosophy, and religion proposes some form of salvation. They all articulate a problem which must be solved in order for a person to experience salvation. What matters most is what a system teaches about salvation. Whenever we seek to understand a

spiritual system, this is where we need to go. What must a person to do be saved?

Last month, the Cripplegate began a series looking at the differences between the Qur'an and the Bible. We looked at a brief [introduction to Islam and the textual origin and transmission of the Qur'an](#). In our second post we observed [two critical differences between the God of the Qur'an with that of the Bible](#). Then, we looked at [nine differences between the Jesus of the Qur'an and the Jesus of the Bible](#). In today's post, we will examine the differences between the salvation proposed by the Qur'an and that of the Bible.

Just as with teachings covered in previous posts, it will be clear that the differences between the Qur'anic and biblical doctrines of salvation differ radically. An understanding of salvation in the mind of a Qur'anic Muslim will clash at every point with that of a biblical Christian.

1. The Qur'an teaches that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross.

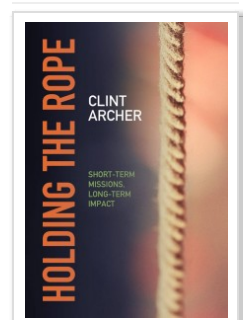
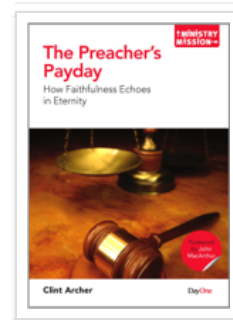
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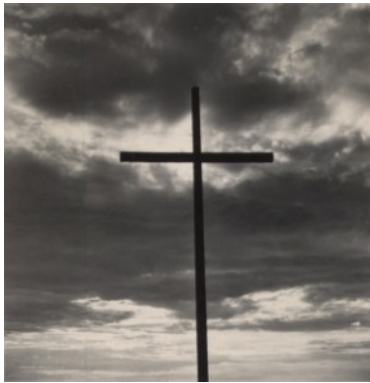
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The Qur'an teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross. Surah 4:157 reads as follows:

And [for] their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah ." And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain.

According to the Qur'an, the Jews did not crucify Jesus. To be sure, someone was crucified that day. However, it was not Jesus. It was someone who only appeared like Jesus. Allah, presumably, made it look like he did. Who died then? Some Muslim scholars say Judas, some, Simon of Cyrene.

In keeping with the Qur'an, many Muslims reject the idea that Allah would allow a great prophet like Jesus to die by crucifixion; a shameful criminal's execution. It could not happen, they propose. It's too offensive and base of a thing to befall a prophet.



This poses an unspeakable problem for Qur'anic Islam. The overwhelming biblical testimony is that Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, did die a literal death on a cross. We have four eyewitness testimonies to the event of Jesus' crucifixion ([Matt. 27:35](#), [Mark 15:24](#), [Luke 23:33](#), [John 19:18](#)).

Further, the early church testifies to the historical event of Jesus' crucifixion. Early church leaders such as Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 108) and Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) bear witness that Jesus died on the cross.

Even more, early non-Christian testimonies declare that the Jesus of the Bible died on the cross (e.g. Josephus, A.D. 85 and Tacitus, A.D. 115).

In the ancient world, one needed two or three witnesses of an event to confirm it as fact. We have four gospels written within a few decades of the event, several church leaders testifying to it, and secular sources within a few decades doing the same. The Qur'an was written ca. A.D. 630 (600 years after the crucifixion) and nearly 800 miles away from Jerusalem. And yet, it stands as a lone witness claiming that the crucifixion did not happen. Therefore, the integrity of the Qur'an as a whole comes into serious question. It will not do, as some propose, to reject the crucifixion on the grounds of corrupted New Testament manuscripts. As demonstrated in the first post of this series, such claims are unwarranted. The burden of responsibility is upon the skeptic to invalidate biblical and secular testimonies.

The cross is the center point of salvation for humanity. More than an incidental instrument for execution, the cross was the place where God solved the single greatest problem facing humanity. No cross, no salvation.

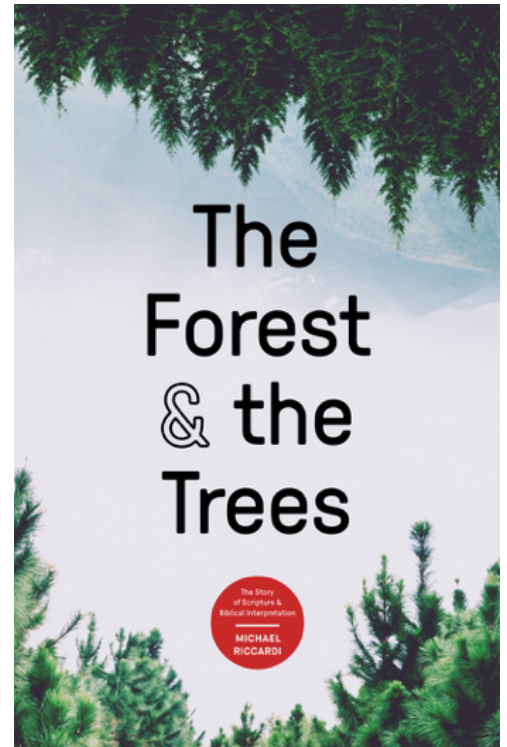
2. The Qur'an teaches a works-based righteousness for human salvation.

Qur'anic verses on salvation are rare and scattered. That is troubling when we understand that there is no more important subject than salvation. Where there is teaching on salvation, the Qur'an teaches the concept of scales. One's works must weigh heavily upon the scales of judgment in order to approach salvation. If one's works are not in large quantity, then salvation is unattainable in Qur'anic Islam.

We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt

& the Bible

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with unjustly in the least, and if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it (to account): and enough are We to take account. (Surah 21:47)

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. The Fire will burn their faces, and they will therein grin, with their lips displaced. (Surah 23:102-104)

Qur'anically, then, one must have a heavy amount of good deeds to attain salvation. But, if your works are light on the scale, your lot is eternity in hell with a burned face. Now, this demands a few questions: how many good works do you need to be saved? What constitutes a "heavy" balance when it comes to good works? How much does each good work weigh in comparison to a bad work? Can you check on your score at a given time in your life?

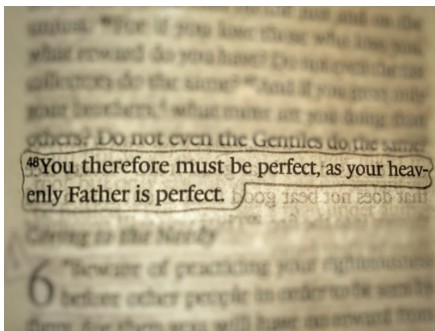


The Qur'an does not say. It is an utterly crushing uncertainty.

Allah is said to be merciful (Surah 24:21), but a concept of mercy and scales is not entirely coherent. One might say they contradict. Tragically, therefore, Islam is a system where there is no objective or subjective assurance of salvation. You might not have enough moral merit. You might not have enough good works.

This is consistent with Qur'anic Muslim testimony. Recently [one Sunni Muslim Scholar, Yasir Qadhi](#), said, "No Muslim can say, 'I'm going to heaven...' It is arrogance to say I am going to enter heaven and I am certain about it. Rather, I am hopeful, I am optimistic. I know God is loving. I know God will forgive me if I turn to him. But there is a small element of fear. What if I am not sincere enough? What if something I did was displeasing to God? So I am battling between fear and hope."

In contrast, the biblical teaching on salvation is clear and in abundance. We should expect this since there is no more important issue for a person than salvation.



Scripture teaches that salvation is impossible by works for two basic reasons ([Rom. 3:19-20](#) [☞](#), [Gal. 2:16](#) [☞](#)). God's standard is too high and man's sinfulness is too great. Every human being is sinful by nature. Thus, every work of man is tainted with sin. His best efforts fail to be good as God defines. God is not relatively good, but absolutely good. Thus, man's noblest efforts contain sin. And sin is not merely an act of external harm or hate. Rather, it is any motivation, thought, desire, word, or deed

which fails to give God the praise, love, glory, and honor which matches his worth. Therefore, man's apparent good deeds no more accumulate merit before God than counterfeit money pays down one's mortgage. Just as the counterfeit money, one's deeds are void because they lack perfection. Like a counterfeit bill which appears 98% similar, since it differs from the real thing by 2%, it is 100% unacceptable for making payment. So it is with our works before God. We cannot morally muscle our way into right standing with God.

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God and Evil

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Incredibly, God does not leave us in our helpless predicament (Rom. 5:6). He did the true work of salvation. And he eagerly and instantly gifts the benefits of salvation to individual sinners on the basis of faith in the biblical Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:28). Jesus died on a real cross in the first century. But, through this tragedy, God was accomplishing salvation. On the cross, God judicially punished Jesus in our place for all of the sin of whoever would put faith in him (Isa. 53:4-6, 10). Jesus then rose from the grave demonstrating the suitability of his death for our sin (Rom. 4:25). We access salvation from God, not by works, but faith (Phil. 3:9). The Bible teaches that salvation is granted to individuals not on the basis of one's works, but faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Therefore, true salvation comes with fixed assurance. We have assurance because salvation depends on the work of Christ, not the sinner (Rom. 8:1). We do not have assurance of salvation because of what we do. We have assurance of salvation because of what Jesus did. Salvation is not works-based, but faith-based righteousness (Phil. 3:9).

3. The Qur'an teaches forgiveness without atonement for sin.

To forgive someone means to release them from their sins in a manner that does not violate justice and righteousness. Forgiveness requires three parties; a judge, a forgiven offender, and a substitute to atone for the forgiven offender.

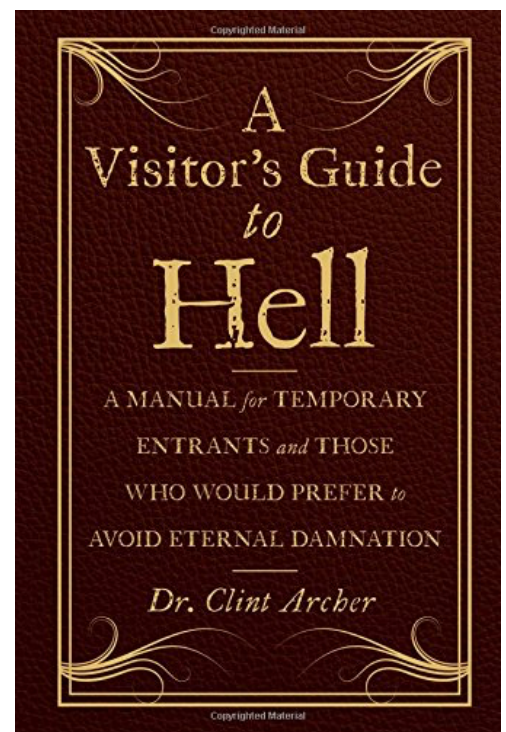
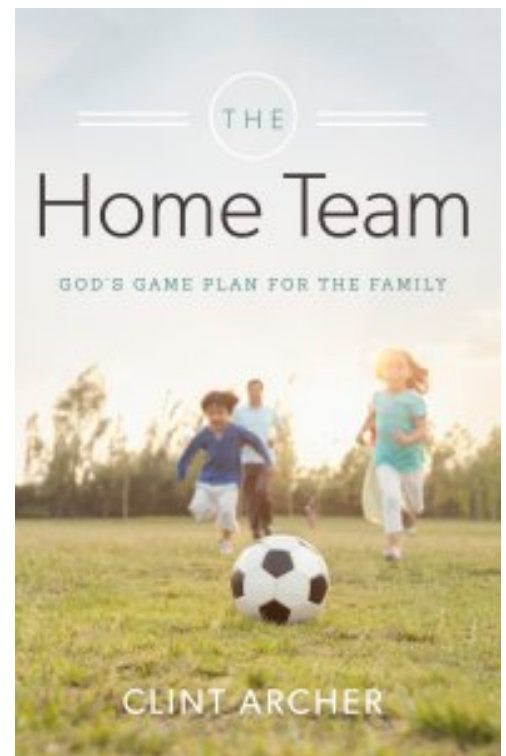
The Qur'an says that Allah is forgiving towards man (e.g. Surah 3:31, 61:12, 71:4). However, it is impossible for the God of the Qur'an to actually forgive one person. The Qur'an denies that Jesus Christ died on the cross. Doing so is infinitely consequential as Jesus is God's only righteous substitute by whom man's sin is atoned. The Qur'an fails to put forward an alternative God-man qualified to propitiate the wrath of God. Even so, the Qur'an suggests that Allah forgives man of his sin. Thus, Islam faces an insurmountable conundrum; salvation without propitiation and forgiveness without substitution. Allah forgives but in a way that violates justice. He lets sinners go but without punishing the sin. He releases transgressors without enacting justice on their transgressions. Qur'anic forgiveness violates justice and righteousness.

Imagine a judge who capriciously forgave extortioners, murderers, and terrorists. "What about their punishment, your honor?" "Don't worry about that. I'm just forgiving." To tamper with justice in such a way is the height of evil.




Islam is left with a few possibilities. First, man actually is not sinful and therefore does not need forgiveness. He is inherently righteous in all ways and never sins. But, that would violate the many verses in the Qur'an which teach man's need of forgiveness and good deeds for the scale. Another possibility is that Allah does forgive without a substitutionary atoning sacrifice. He releases sinful men from their sins without punishing their sins. In this case, Allah could not be considered good. He capriciously violates justice, which is evil. A third possibility is that Allah does not actually forgive anyone. Though he says that he is forgiving, he never actually forgives one person. Forgiveness remains hypothetical. He may desire to be forgiving, but, because he fails to supply a righteous substitutionary atoning sacrifice, forgiveness will never be effectual. Whatever the case, Qur'anic forgiveness faces an insurmountable problem.



From a God-centered perspective, forgiveness should trouble us. How can such a good, holy God release such offensive, repulsively sinful people from their sins instantly and on the basis of faith? It risks moral outrage (cf. Prov. 17:15, Jonah 4:2). Thus, a righteous forgiveness is the great, apparent moral dilemma of the universe. It's one thing to say, "I forgive you." It's



quite another, as the supreme Judge, to justly forgive an individual that has perpetually violated the law.

The way in which forgiveness happens without violating justice is through propitiation. Propitiation means to extinguish the righteous wrath of an offended God due a violator in a just manner. The Bible teaches that God the Father effectually forgives on the basis of the propitiatory sacrifice of the righteous Jesus Christ ([Rom. 3:24-26](#) , [1 John 4:10](#) ). Christ lived a life in nature and deed perfectly conforming to the righteousness of God the Father. Therefore, his life offered is sufficient to pay the penalty for forgiven sinners. Christ, the righteous substitute, bore the wrath of the forgiven on the cross ([1 Pet. 2:24](#) ). That which the forgiven are forgiven is punished in the Person of Jesus Christ. The most rigorous sinner can be justly and instantly released from the condemnation of his sins because God held Jesus accountable for those sins in his substitutionary death on the cross. So, God's gavel justly slams in the courtroom of heaven, pronouncing the sinner "righteous" on the basis of Christ's just substitutionary work. This is, indeed, unspeakably good news for the human race.



Forgiveness without righteous propitiation is a great evil. Without a righteous substitutionary sacrifice, forgiveness is fictitious. Forgiveness without propitiation is fictional. It cannot happen. The God of the Bible alone offers a just and factual forgiveness.

The Bible and the Qur'an differ significantly when it comes to its most essential teachings. The Qur'an proposes works-based salvation. Yet, it also teaches man's need of forgiveness. However, due to man's sinful nature and the absent of a righteous propitiatory sacrifice, Qur'anic salvation is impossible. The Qur'an offers a system which cannot save. The God of the Bible offers a righteousness that is acceptable to him on the basis of faith alone in the Person and substitutionary work of Jesus Christ alone. Therefore, true salvation is only found through the Jesus of the Bible.

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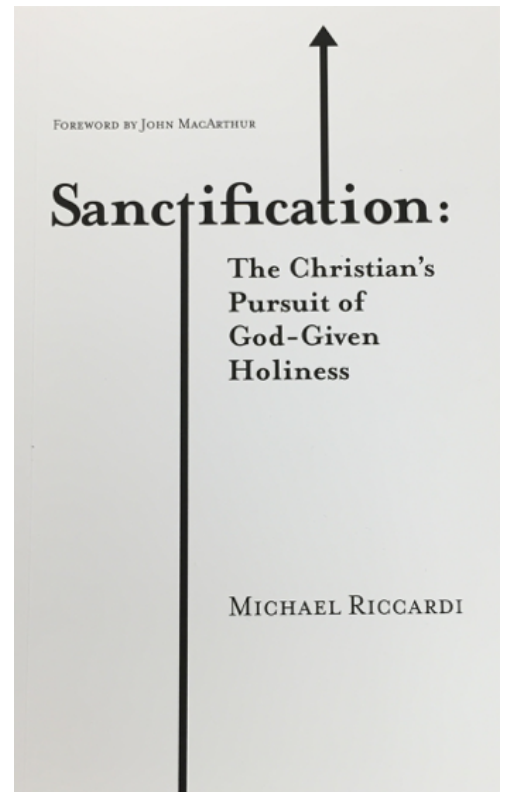
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Eric Davis

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Eric is the pastor of Cornerstone Church in Jackson Hole, WY. He and his team planted the church in 2008. He has been married for 16 years and has 3 children.



7 Comments **The Cripplegate**[Login](#) 1 ▼[Recommend](#) 1[Share](#)Sort by Oldest ▼**Michael** • 9 days ago

Yep, you asked the simple right question: "What must a person to do be saved?"

That cuts to the chase for comparisons with all religions, in particular, Islam, since it truly opposes the death of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This is the "spirit of antichrist".

While some other false religions do not directly oppose the doctrine of the death of Christ on behalf of sinners (although it seems they imply it), Islam opposes the death of Christ on behalf of sinners directly.

2 ^ | ▼ • [Share](#)**tovlogos** • 9 days ago

Perfect, Eric -- it's so obvious especially in the Hadith the ideology consists of the rumblings of a single finite mind. God says so many things that a human would not think of in a lifetime. God's action are often unpredictable, in contrast to man's. Muhammad, as you have shown, is drawing conclusions from the many lessons he learned from the Israelites, and subsequently the Christians; but with a human twist.

"In keeping with the Qur'an, many Muslims reject the idea that Allah would allow a great prophet like Jesus to die by crucifixion; a shameful criminal's execution. It could not happen, they propose. It's too offensive and base of a thing to befall a prophet."

Why? because the reality didn't rest well with Muhammad? It would leave no room for him, as the case with the religious leaders in John 12:19. But that's terrible exegesis. So when some Muslims realize the differences, some are uncomfortable with Islam. Although Islam is still thriving -- equal to Catholicism at 1 1/2 billion each -- we know it's never about the numbers, it's about whom God chooses. I don't believe this conflict is only about Ideologies, it has to also include the personal hate that arises out of Islam due to Muhammad's hate for the Jews.

1 ^ | ▼ • [Share](#)**4Commencefiring4** • 7 days ago

If the Q'ran gives a different account of just who was crucified, I would be curious to know if it says, like the Gospels, that He had first predicted His own death.

It's a contradiction for Muslims to believe both that Jesus was a prophet, yet didn't die on the cross. For they believe that prophets, by definition, do not lie. And IF the Jesus of the Q'ran predicted His own death, then they'd have a problem: a prediction of death that didn't happen would be a lie, so He would not qualify as a prophet; yet they say He didn't die.

^ | ▼ • [Share](#)**Greg Cowen** → **4Commencefiring4** • 7 days ago

Good point, they have to deny both his death and his prophecy... might as well detach completely from reality and deny he ever lived. Of course he gave repeated prophetic warnings to the Apostles about his death (Matthew 16:21, 20:17, Mark 8:31, Mark 10:32, Luke 18:31, etc.)

^ | ▼ • [Share](#)



Jason • 7 days ago

#3 is the big one for me. Most people I've talked to (*especially* in the church) tend to see God's forgiveness as him basically saying "boys will be boys" and moving on.

When we read about how prophets prayed for destruction, we look down our noses and remark about how little they understood of grace back then. In truth, we don't understand grace now because we don't understand the seriousness of lawlessness. Jesus sweat blood when considering the judgement of God for our sins, and we act like it's no big deal.

^ | v • Share ›



Gary Bixler • 7 days ago

Great article, great comments. Thanks. It points out what A. Brother prophecies in his www.narrowgatepub.com postings. Religion itself is in opposition to God, whether Islam, Buddhism, or Christianity as practiced by religious Christians. God hates religion, because it draws millions away from seeking Him, and following Christ. Islam is a great deception, and it takes the Spirit of God to remove the scales of blindness from the eyes of Muhammed's followers.

^ | v • Share ›



Gary Bixler • 7 days ago

<https://narrowgatepub.blogspot.com> Hope others will read this, as it enforces Eric's fine article with further proof from the Word of God that Religion is not the answer.

^ | v • Share ›

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