

Feb. 23 Topic: Islam

Homework Feb. 24 - 29 (for discussion on March 1)

To view the Islam lecture online:

<http://www.tlc.org/tuesday-morning-bible-study/>

Islam questions and rejects a number of central beliefs of the Christian faith: 1) the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus; 2) the deity of Jesus; 3) the love of God; 4) the necessity of atonement for man's sins; 5) salvation by grace alone; 6) the meaning and method of prayer. These will be our homework topics this week.

DAY 1: THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Based on Qur'an 4:157, Muslims reject the crucifixion (and therefore the resurrection) of Jesus. Let's look at the historical evidence for this event.

Read I Corinthians 15:3-8

I Corinthians was written by Paul in about 55AD, about 25 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It's likely that it was written earlier than the four gospels. Scholars tell us that in this passage, Paul uses technical terms (common in rabbinical circles) for receiving and transmitting an oral tradition: "*received*", and "*passed on*" or "*delivered*". This means the story about Jesus was not hearsay—casually retold and embellished for decades around campfires—but a carefully worded creedal statement that was memorized and passed on "*as of first importance*".

List out all the events that are included in this transmission:

vs. 3

vs. 4

vs. 5

vs. 6

vs. 7

vs. 8

Why do you think Paul mentions that some of the people who saw the risen Jesus "are still living".

Read Luke 1:1-4

In verse 2, Luke uses the same word as Paul did, for *handing down*, *delivering*, or *passing on* information as authoritative tradition. According to Luke, where did this information come from?

In verse 3, how does Luke describe his method?

The following quote is from Tacitus, a Roman historian writing in the last half of the 1st century. He is referring to the time when Nero blamed the Christians for a dreadful fire in Rome in 64 AD.

“Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.” Tacitus, Annals 15:44.

So here we have a carefully worded credal tradition (I Corinthians), investigations that included eyewitnesses (Luke), and confirmation from a Roman historian who was not a Christian (Tacitus). All confirm the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus. In fact, there are very few biblical historians (believers or non-believers) who doubt the crucifixion.

Despite overwhelming early evidence, Muslims believe a verse in the Qur'an that came along 600 years after the event. Why do you think it's hard to convince Muslims that the Qur'an has made a mistake?

Prayer: Pray for the Muslim world to awaken to the truth of the good news of Jesus and what he did for us on the cross.

DAY 2: THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Islam takes issue with the Christian proclamation that Jesus was “the Word made flesh”. In their view God could *never* take on human form. They insist that Jesus was a prophet who never claimed to be God. But it was Jewish monotheists—the earliest followers of Jesus— who after the resurrection recollected, recognized and came to believe that not only was Jesus the Messiah, but that he was the one and only son of God (and therefore God) who came to personally accomplish our redemption.

This topic would take several days to explore properly, but today we are going to look at five things Jesus said and did that a good *prophet* would *never* say or do! And these five things point to his deity. We'll use the acronym H.A.N.D.S.* to help you remember these five things. (*from *Putting Jesus in His Place* by Robert Bowman).

Read John 17:5 and Isaiah 42:8: Jesus receives the HONORS due to God alone.

What does Jesus ask of the Father? Why would this be a cheeky request, according to Isaiah 42:8, if he were not the son of God?

Read John 14:8-9 and Isaiah 40:25: Jesus shares the ATTRIBUTES of God.

When Jesus claims that if you have seen him you have “seen” the Father, how does that square with the LORD's statement in Isaiah?

Read John 8:56-59 and Exodus 3:14: Jesus takes the NAMES of God.

Why do you think pious, Torah observant Jews would have a problem with Jesus taking this name for himself? Since the name “I AM” basically means “the one who was, and is, and is to come”, what is Jesus claiming?

Read Mark 2:1-12 and Isaiah 43:25: Jesus does the DEEDS of God.

What deed does Jesus do that only God can do? Why were the teachers of the law upset? What does Jesus demonstrate by his miracle?

Read Matthew 25:31-32, 34a and Isaiah 6:1; 33:22: Jesus sits on the SEAT of God’s throne.

What words are similar between Jesus’ description of his future exaltation and the descriptions of YHWH in Isaiah? How does Jesus’ story show that he sees himself as more than a prophet?

Prayer: Praise Jesus as the incarnate son of God, worthy of all honor, power and glory! Pray that Muslims will have a vision of who he is!

DAY 3: THE LOVE OF GOD

One of the 99 names of Allah is *Al-Wadud*, sometimes translated “All loving” or “Most loving”. We can easily jump to the conclusion that Islam teaches the same God of Love taught in the Bible. But there is actually a big difference between the two.

Read Exodus 34:5-7

This is the most often re-quoted passage in the whole Bible! In this dramatic scene, the LORD (YHWH) proclaims his “name” to Moses. Of course, Moses had already asked God’s “name” and received it

(Ex. 3:13-14—YHWH, “I Am”). But in this proclamation the LORD reveals his *character*, his *nature*—not just *what* he is (the Ever-Living, Almighty God) but *who* he is.

List the characteristic God ascribes to himself:

At the end of verse 7, the LORD says that he does not leave the guilty unpunished. How is allowing there to be consequences for sin in this life consistent with God’s love and compassion?

Read 1 John 3:1; 4:9-10 & 18-19

The love of God for mankind is fully, climactically displayed when he sends the Son into the world. What are the results of this love, if it is accepted by us? (Hint: There are at least eight results described in these verses)

Does God still love those who do NOT accept his love? Why? (Read Romans 5:8 if you aren’t sure how to answer this question!)

The way Allah loves:

Read these verses from the Qur’an:

3:31-32 “Say, ‘If you love God, then follow me [Muhammad]; God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is most forgiving, most merciful.’ Say, ‘Obey God and the messenger [Muhammad].’ Then if they turn back, God does not love the scoffers.”

Read this list of what Allah does or does not love:

2:190 *Allah does not love brutal aggressors*
2:276 *Allah does not love any ungrateful sinner*
3:32 *Allah does not love the scoffers (or unbelievers)*
3:57 *Allah does not love the unjust*
3:140 *Allah does not love wrongdoers*
4:36 *Allah does not love any who are arrogant & vain*
4:107 *Allah does not love anyone who is treacherous and immoral*
5:64 *Allah does not love the violent (or mischief-makers)*

5:87 *Allah does not love the excessive*
 6:141 *Allah does not love the wasteful*
 7:55 *Allah does not love the aggressive*
 8:58 *Allah does not love the treacherous*
 9:7 *Allah loves the conscientious*
 9:108 *Allah loves those who purify themselves*
 22:38 *Allah does not love any faithless ingrate*
 28:76 *Allah does not love those who exult in riches*
 28:77 *Allah does not love the corrupt*
 42:40 *Allah does not love oppressors*
 57:23 *Allah does not love the pompous and proud*
 60:8 *Allah loves the just*

Based on your reading of the Bible and your reading of the Qur'an, how is God's love *different* in these two religions?

Prayer: Thank God for loving you before you could love him back! Thank him for his consistent love, even when you fall or fail him. Thank him for the grace and love he lavishes on you, so that you can live without fear, wondering if you are "good" enough.

DAY 4: THE ATONEMENT

The Qur'an says that other than idolatry, Allah "*forgives all else for whomever Allah wills.*" Qur'an 4:116 Muslim theology says that Allah just forgives sin, if he wants to—no atonement is necessary.

Christian theology actually has a higher view of the utter purity and holiness of God, and therefore sin creates a more catastrophic situation for human beings—it breaks our relationship with God, because his "eyes are too pure to look on evil" (Habakkuk 1:13). But God's love and mercy cannot let this situation remain. And so we see God's holiness, justice, love, mercy, and grace all come together in the doctrine of the atonement.

Read Isaiah 6:1-7

In this passage, Isaiah has a vision of God. When the prophet sees the holiness and exalted nature of YHWH (the LORD), what is his response (vs. 5)? Why do you think he would respond that way, even though he is a holy prophet?

Read Romans 1:28-32 and Romans 6:26a

Paul gives quite the laundry list of human sins. Do you tend to breeze through this list and think it's talking about someone else? How do we tend to minimize sin today? What are the deserved consequences of sin against a holy God?

Read Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 5:1-2 and 8

The Mosaic Law showed us that blood atonement (life substituting for life, Lev. 17:11) was needed to restore our right relationship with God. God's holy justice and righteousness must be satisfied. But throughout the Scriptures we also learn of his love and mercy.

vs. 25 The sins committed beforehand were left unpunished because the blood of bulls and goats could never *actually* take away the sin of human beings (Heb. 10:4)—they were a symbolic foreshadowing. So how does the atonement that came through Jesus Christ demonstrate God's full justice and satisfy the demands of his righteousness?

vs. 24 and 5:8 How does the atonement also demonstrate God's love, mercy and grace?

vs. 22 How do we receive the benefits of the atonement?

5:1-2 What are the results of the atonement? Why can I be assured that my relationship with God is restored?

This doctrine is very important. In Islam, even though Allah is merciful and compassionate, you have no idea if he has forgiven you or not, if he will accept you into paradise or not. Even someone who lives an ideal Muslim life has no guarantee, because Allah just chooses to forgive or not forgive. There's no other *basis* for forgiveness.

In the Christian faith, God makes a covenant—an agreement—with sinful human beings. He has paid for our sins through the atonement of Christ, and will declare us righteous (and therefore worthy of living in his presence) when we place our faith in him. The *basis* for forgiveness, and my assurance, is the Christ's atonement and the faithful promise of God.

What is the difference, then, between a Christian's relationship with God and a Muslim's relationship with Allah? (Re-read 1 John 4:17-18 for some ideas!)

Prayer: Thank God for the profound gift of love, grace and mercy that has been given to you through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Reaffirm your faith in that atonement, and ask God to help you live in the joy and freedom it brings. Pray that Muslims will come to understand what Jesus accomplished for them on the cross.

DAY 5: SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE

Muslims don't all agree about exactly how salvation works. Some emphasize the necessity of doing more good deeds than bad—based on this verse in the Qur'an:

"Then, when the trumpet is sounded, those whose balances are heavy will be the happy ones, while those whose balances are light are the ones who have lost their souls, to abide in hell." Qur'an 24:101-102

Others seem to see Allah helping out in the process—you submit, he helps you submit more. Here's how one Muslim put it:

A muslim in order to reach heaven needs to obey God, submit to him. As a muslim every bad we do, we will be questioned for, every good we do, we will be rewarded for. Our intentions must always be correct. If we submit fully.. pray.. give charity.. perform pilgrimage when we are able.. and strive in the way of God, then through his mercy, if he in his knowledge deems fit, he will guide us towards such actions which will help us attain his mercy and thus enter heaven. To THINK one is going to heaven is WRONG!

Whether or not salvation is a simple matter of doing more good deeds than bad, or a more give and take situation, the bottom line is that Islam rejects the idea that *God does it all* and rejects the idea that you can *know* you are saved. But that's exactly what the Bible teaches.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

How does Paul describe our situation before being saved?

vs. 1

vs. 2

vs. 3

vs. 4-8 Describe God's part in accomplishing our salvation and then describe our part.

vs. 10 Good works are very much a part of the Christian life. If they don't "earn" us our salvation, what are they for?

Read Romans 8:15-16 and 31-39

Muslims are pretty much agreed that no one can *know or* assume they will be granted paradise by Allah. According to these scriptures, what is the status before God of those who have received his salvation? What difference does this make in a person's life?

Prayer: Thank God for his amazing gift of grace! Pray that Muslims will come to know this amazing grace!

DAY 6: PRAYER

Christianity and Islam are both faiths that value prayer as part of a proper relationship with God. However, there are significant differences in how each faith sees the purpose and method of prayer.

In Islam, "prayer" technically always refers to the prayers that are done five times a day as one of the pillars of the faith. *"Verily, the prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours"* (Qur'an 4:103) A Muslim must perform ablution (washing) before doing the prayers. The prayers have required recitations (in Arabic) and various required movements, such as bowing, kneeling and prostrating. All of aspects of how to do the ablution and prayer are carefully spelled out in the Sharia, the Islamic Law that guides the life of Muslims. If the prayers aren't done carefully, according the Sharia, they may be invalid.

The opening, 7 verse chapter of the Qur'an is always included in the prayers:

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,

The Compassionate, the Merciful:

Owner of the Day of Judgement.

You alone we worship; You alone we ask for help.

Show us the straight path:

The path of those whom you have favored;

Not the path of those who earn your anger

nor of those who go astray.

The purpose of Islamic prayer is to strengthen belief in Allah, to purify the heart, to help the Muslim keep away from sin, and to prevent forgetfulness of Allah.

What might be some of the benefits of praying prayers five times daily? What might be the drawbacks?

Personal or voluntary prayers are called *du'a*. These prayers are personal requests made to Allah at any time. Du'a may have extra "potency" if they are repeated many times (100x or more) or said during the holy month of Ramadan.

Some Muslims do speak about feeling close to Allah when they pray, but it's important to remember that the essential relationship taught in the Qur'an is that Allah is the master, and people are his servants or slaves.

Let's review the Biblical view of prayer:

Prayer runs through the Bible from beginning to end! It is the way humans relate to God. Through prayer, we praise God, worship God, ask forgiveness for sins, make requests, express our fears and worries, complain about life, and give thanks to God.

Read Matthew 6:5-13

Muslims sometimes call Christians "prayerless ones" because we do not have daily prescribed prayers (although there are daily prayers in some Christian traditions, they are not prescribed in the same way as Islamic prayers). What did Jesus see as a potential problem with highly visible prescribed prayers? What about prayers that are repeated as a way to make them more "powerful"?

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us that we can address God as "Our Father in heaven". How does this title effect how you think of God and your relationship to him?

Look at the Islamic prayer above and compare it to the Lord's Prayer. What do you see that's similar? What do you notice that's different?

Read Romans 12:12; Philippians 4:6-7; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; I Thess. 5:17; James 5:16

These are some of the most beloved New Testament verses about prayer. What are some of the things you observe about biblical prayer from these verses? Why do you think the New Testament does not prescribe ritual, fixed-time prayers for Christian believers?

Prayer: Thank God for the gift of prayer! If prayer is difficult for you, ask him to help you unwrap and enjoy this gift!