

THE GOD WHO LOVES THE WORLD

Often Muslim friends suggest that the love of Allah as portrayed in the Qur'an is far superior to that of the God revealed in the Bible. Whilst others accept He is merciful but consider it disrespectful to say that the Almighty God is loving. Close examination reveals that neither of these views is correct. Let us look at the Qur'an first.

THE LOVING ONE

Twice Allah is referred to as *Al-wadud*, the loving one.¹ So according to the Qur'an Allah is a loving God.

CONDITIONS ATTACHED

However in two other places where Allah's love is mentioned, it is dependent on mankind first loving Him; "Say, (O Mohammed, to mankind): *If ye love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you...*"² To gain Allah's approval, the Muslim is advised to love Allah; "*if ye love Allah ... Allah will love you...*" Loving someone to get in their favour is not genuine. It does not proceed from the heart.

TRUE, MANKIND SHOULD LOVE GOD

In the Bible, God does demand love. In the Torah it says: "...*what is the Lord your God asking of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul ...*". Further it says: "*So love the Lord your God and keep His requirements, His decrees, His laws and His commands - always.*"

TOTALLY AND UNRESERVEDLY

The Torah required them to "...*obey the commands that I am commanding you today - to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul...*"³

In the Injil (the Gospel) it is recorded "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your understanding*"⁴.

IT IS NOT AN OPTION

However the command to love God with "*all your heart, soul and understanding*" is not found in the Qur'an. Whereas the Qur'an leaves it as an option: "*if ye love Allah*", the Bible enjoins it: "*You shall love the Lord your God*". Jesus called this the "*Greatest and first commandment*"⁵. A command is binding. We must love God. We have no choice. Failing to love God, totally and unreservedly, is sin.

GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Is then the love of God more favourably stated in the Qur'an than in the Bible ?

Despite our failure to keep this command we learn from the Bible that, "...*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that everyone trusting in Him might not perish but have eternal life.*"⁶ This kind of spontaneous, unconditional love for mankind, is not found in the Qur'an. There, Allah's love is an expression of approval, solely to those who do good. For example "*Lo! Allah loveth the beneficent*" and "*Allah loveth not the disbelievers*"⁷.

GOD LOVES YOU !

The Injil says that God loves the world, which means the whole of mankind. God is offering peace and security to all, through the Lord Jesus. That includes you!

A GOD OF FATALISM OR COMPASSION ?

According to the Qur'an the outlook for everyone is bleak: "*There is not one of you but shall approach it (hell). That is a fixed ordinance of thy Lord. Then We shall rescue those who kept from evil-doers crouching there.*"⁸ You have no choice: "... *He sendeth whom He will astray and guideth whom he will ...*"⁹ Islam's traditions assert that everyone's destiny is sealed.

Mohammed is alleged to have said: "*God created Adam, then passed His right hand over his back and brought forth from it his offspring, saying, 'I have created these for paradise and they will do the deeds of those who go to Paradise.'* He then passed his hand over his back and brought forth from it his offspring, saying, '*I have created these for hell and they will do the deeds of those who go to hell.*'"¹⁰

If Allah has already decided exactly which individuals will go to paradise and which individuals will go to hell, is it intelligent of Allah to send (as Muslims believe) 124,000 messengers to this world to guide mankind into the straight path? How is it the Allah of the Qur'an "*misleadeth whom he pleases and guideth whom he pleases*" ?¹¹ A loving God would not be like that. God, as the Bible says, "*is very restrained with you ... not intending any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*"¹²

PERPLEXITY FACES THE MUSLIM

A Muslim cannot be sure whether he is fulfilling God's purpose or not, whether he will have any forgiveness or not. Even Mohammed was not sure, either for himself or his followers. His perplexity is revealed in the words, "... *I am no new thing among the messengers (of Allah), nor know I what will be done with me or with you ...*"¹³

GOD REACHES DOWN TO LIFT YOU UP

According to Islam, a Muslim is supposed to love God as a "*ghulam*" (slave). Such love cannot be exemplary. Genuine love could only be expected of man if the love of God himself is infinitely greater than man's. The Bible presents that side of God, clearly and emphatically; "*This is where you find love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son - a propitiation for our sins.*"¹⁴

We cannot fully love God unless He first reaches down to us. This brings us to the inevitable conclusion that "*We love because He first loved us,*"¹⁵ We keep His commandments not solely because it is our duty, but because His is such love that we are constrained by it to love and obey Him in return. Therefore we consider that the Bible's portrayal of the love of God is complete and far better than that given in any other book. It is the real and true view of our Almighty God. It portrays that depth of love which is the very essence of God. That is "*God is love.*"¹⁶

*"God advocates His own love to us in this: We were still sinners yet Christ died on our behalf."*¹⁷

ASSURANCE

The God of the Bible offers men total assurance of forgiveness of sins.¹⁸ You can bury your past way of life in baptism (immersion) and start completely afresh.¹⁹ Will you accept God's free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus ?

References:

1. Qur'an 11:90; 85:14
2. Qur'an 3:31
3. Deut. 10:12; 11:1,13
4. Matt. 22:37
5. Matt. 22:38
6. John 3:16
7. Qur'an 2:195; 3:32
8. Qur'an 19:71,72
9. Qur'an 16:93
10. Wall ad-Din Mohammed b.'Abdullah al-Khatib, "Mishkat Al-Masabih", trans. James Robson (Lahore:M.Ashraf,1981), p.27.
11. Qur'an 14:4
12. II Peter 3:9
13. Qur'an 46:9
14. I John 4:10
15. I John 4:19
16. I John 4:8
17. Romans 5:8
18. Acts 2.38-39
19. Romans 6.1-14
20. Romans 6.23

NOTE: Quranic quotations are from "The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an," trans. Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall (Taj Company, Karachi).

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