



by my own name ... Every knee will bend to me,
and every tongue will confess allegiance to me.

(Isaiah 45:21-23)

God commands everyone to look to him for salvation. All of us have disobeyed God, even as Jonah did. We are all under God's wrath but thankfully the Lord shows forbearance. If he did not exercise restraint the Bible says, "*all people would pass away – all the souls I have made.*" (Isaiah 57:17) The Qur'an also testifies to this truth, saying, "*If God were to punish men for their wrong doing he would not leave on the (earth) a single living creature; but He gives them respite for a stated Term...*" (Surah 16:61) I urge you to take this warning seriously.

In conclusion, let me encourage you to reflect on a prophecy of a joyous day of salvation when God will *swallow up death forever [and]... wipe away all tears.*" (Isaiah 25:7-9) These hope inspiring words resonate with a longing for eternity which God has "planted in our hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Isaiah's prophecy rings true with our aspiration to reach a destination where there is no more death, fear or sorrow – a heavenly home mentioned in both the Qur'an and the Bible. May I encourage you to read a meditation entitled *Is Death the End?*² that explains this in more detail.

Note: All Biblical quotations (unless specified otherwise) are taken from the New Living Translation. All Qur'anic quotations are from Yusuf Ali's translation.

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¹ <http://tinyurl.com/yz2nx8k>

² http://www.injil.org/clarke/death_end.pdf



A Dialog about the One True God

by

Roland Clarke

Insights that Inspire Hope



Testimony of the Prophet Moses

The Bible tells this same rescue story, putting it at the very beginning of 10 commandments. We read,

I am the LORD your God who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You must not have any other god but me. (Exodus 20:2,3)

Later prophets often recalled this epic story using it to re-emphasize the first commandment.

But I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me. ... I made you, and ... I will save you. To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal? Some pour out their silver and gold and hire a goldsmith to make a god from it. Then they bow down and worship it... when someone prays to it, there is no answer; it can't rescue anyone. ... Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other;... there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. (Hosea 13:4, NIV, Isaiah 46:6-9, NIV)

Notice how false gods are contrasted with the LORD. This same contrast is seen in the Exodus story where Moses met his father-in-law, Jethro, a Midianite priest and told him, everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians on behalf of Israel. He also told about all the hardships they had experienced along the way and how the LORD had rescued his people from all their troubles. Jethro was delighted when he heard about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel as he rescued them from the hand of the Egyptians. "Praise be to the LORD," Jethro said, "for he has rescued you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. ... I know now that the LORD is greater than all other gods." (Exodus 18:8-11)



God's oneness is inseparably linked with his saving power. Idols are proved false because they cannot save. The LORD God is the only one worthy of worship because he alone can save. This same message is confirmed by the other prophets.

Testimony of the Prophet Jonah

The truths of God's oneness and saving power are also seen in the story of Jonah. You may remember how Jonah was caught in a terrible storm. The sailors, tried desperately to avoid drowning by every possible means – including praying to their gods – but to no avail. Finally, the underlying cause of the storm came to light. Jonah confessed he was to blame and humbly accepted the punishment that was rightfully his. He was duly thrown overboard.

But it so 'happened' that Jonah was swallowed by a huge fish, and was vomited on shore three days later. Jonah's prayer from the fish's belly affirms God's oneness – again, in contrast to idols. He prayed,

But you, O LORD God, snatched me from the jaws of death! ... Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies. But I will offer sacrifices to you with songs of praise ... For my salvation comes from the Lord alone. (Jonah 2:6-9)

Testimony of King David

These same two truths are echoed again in the writings of David the harpist. He wrote,

praise God our savior! ... Our God is a God who saves! The Sovereign Lord rescues us from death. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. He is most worthy of praise!



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that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”(Exodus 9:16)

Many other rescue stories could be cited, such as Joseph, Daniel, Shadrack, Meshak and Abednego. Each of these stories highlights God’s intervention in a dramatic rescue (salvation) which shows God’s surpassing greatness – in contrast to false gods. I encourage you to read these stories for yourself in Genesis chapters 37-50 and Daniel chapters 3 and 6.

Question

Do Muslims and Christians agree there is only one true living God? Yes. Do the Qur’anic accounts of the prophets mention God’s saving power? Yes, however, Muslim scholars have not deemed this title ‘Saviour’ to be worthy of inclusion in the list of 99 beautiful names of Allah. The Qur’an does not seem to recognise this attribute as a prominent name – one which stands out as a distinguishing mark of the one and only true God. Indeed, it seems that this omission has caused Muslims to undervalue an important attribute that was intended to enhance God’s honour and praiseworthiness on a global scale.

We have already glimpsed how Moses’ victory over Pharaoh revealed God’s surpassing greatness among “all nations” – in contrast to Pharaoh’s gods who were powerless to save. Similarly, the rescue of King Hezekiah shows how God honoured himself before “all kingdoms of the earth.”

This global perspective is confirmed again by Isaiah, There is no other God but me, a righteous God and Savior. There is none but me. Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other. I have sworn

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He is to be feared above all gods. The gods of other nations are mere idols (Psalm 68:19,20; 96:2-5)

David could confidently make these statements because of many personal experiences. For example, as a young man he volunteered to fight the giant Goliath, saying, “*The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine.*” (1 Samuel 17:37)

Notice how Goliath sneered at David with contempt and “*cursed him by the names of his gods.*” The outcome clearly proved that his idols were false. They couldn’t save him.

Testimony of King Hezekiah

We read another story in Isaiah 37 which highlights these same two truths. King Hezekiah was besieged by the vastly superior armies of the King of Assyria. Sennacherib taunted Hezekiah in a letter, describing how all the gods of other nations had failed to protect them against his mighty army. He bragged that Hezekiah’s God also could not save him.

Faced with this life threatening situation, Hezekiah prayed, It is true, LORD, that the Kings of Assyria have destroyed all these nations. And they have thrown the gods of these nations into the fire and burned them. But of course the Assyrians could destroy them! They were not gods at all – only idols of wood and stone shaped by human hands. Now, O LORD our God, rescue us from his power; then all the kingdoms of the earth will know that you alone, O LORD [Yahweh], are God. (Isaiah 37:18-20)

God heard Hezekiah’s prayer and vindicated himself before the world. It is interesting to see how Sennacherib’s defeat had a similar outcome to Pharaoh’s defeat. God said to Pharaoh, “*I have raised you up for this very purpose,*

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A Dialog about the One True God

Early in his presidency Barack Obama delivered two key speeches in the Middle East urging people to build bridges across our deeply divided world. A year earlier King Abdallah of Saudi Arabia made a similar appeal for mutual respect and understanding in his inaugural speech at a World Conference on Dialogue in July 2008. “Religion should be a means to iron out differences and not to lead to disputes.” He admitted that “most of the dialogue has ended in failure” but he was hopeful that we can succeed by emphasizing “the common link between us, which is a belief in God.”

This conference continued an earlier dialogue initiative in which 138 Muslim leaders sent a letter to prominent Christian leaders expressing their earnest desire “not to let our differences cause hatred and strife between us [Christians and Muslims].” This same concern was voiced in Africa Perspectives (Feb. 2008) which summarized the keynote address as follows, “Islam is anchored on the concept of Tawheed ... the spread of peace is central to the message of Islam and the existence of diversity create[s] the opportunity for interaction and dialog rather than a reason for conflict.”

It is well known that the prophets called people to worship the one true creator God. Indeed this call was grounded in the rescue story known as the Exodus. The Qur’an clearly says that Allah intervened when Moses’ people were enslaved and oppressed by Pharaoh in “*the Great Calamity*”. Allah “*saved*” them from Pharaoh’s murderous intentions. (Surah 2:50; 37:115)

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