

SURAH 11:1-123

FAITH: Islam | TEXT: Surah 11 (Hud) | VOLUME: The Meaning of the Holy Quran | AUTHOR: Rashad Khalifa (Translator/Commentator)

OVERVIEW

Surah 11, titled 'Hud' after the prophet sent to the people of 'Aad, is a Meccan surah focused heavily on eschatology and the cyclical nature of divine judgment. The text follows a rigid homiletic structure: a messenger is sent to a specific people (Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, Shu'aib, Moses) with a call to strict monotheism and repentance. In every instance, the wealthy elite and majority reject the messenger, demanding supernatural proof or mocking the threat of judgment. God then intervenes, saving the messenger and a small remnant of believers while utterly annihilating the disbelievers through catastrophic means. The text culminates in an exhortation to Muhammad (and the reader) to remain steadfast in prayer and patience, asserting that God's retribution is inevitable for the ungodly. Theologically, it emphasizes that salvation is contingent upon belief coupled with righteous works, and that God's sovereignty includes the prerogative to guide or lead astray whom He wills.

KEY FIGURES

GOD (Allah), Muhammad, Noah, Hud, Salih, Abraham, Lot, Shu'aib, Moses, Pharaoh

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. STRICT MONOTHEISM (TAWHID)

Assertion: Worship is due to God alone; associating partners with Him is the ultimate sin leading to destruction.

"You shall not worship except GOD. I come to you from Him as a warner..." (11:2)

Evangelical Comparison: The text presents a unitarian monotheism that views any association of divinity with another being as idolatry. This directly conflicts with the Evangelical doctrine of the Trinity (God as one essence in three persons). While Evangelicals affirm 'The Lord our God is one' (Deuteronomy 6:4), this text interprets the worship of Jesus (implied in the rejection of 'partners') as a fabrication and a deviation from the path of the prophets.

2. SOTERIOLOGY OF MERIT (COUNTER-BALANCING)

Assertion: Salvation is achieved when righteous works outweigh evil works; repentance brings material and spiritual blessing.

"The righteous works wipe out the evil works." (11:114)

Evangelical Comparison: This text explicitly teaches a transactional system of righteousness where human effort ('righteous works') has the power to expiate sin ('wipe out the evil works'). Evangelical theology holds that 'all our righteous acts are like filthy rags' (Isaiah 64:6) and that sin can only be atoned for by the blood of Christ, not by human moral improvement. The text places the burden of atonement on the believer's performance.

3. DIVINE DETERMINISM

Assertion: God actively wills some to be guided and others to go astray; judgment is predetermined.

"Even if I advised you, my advice cannot benefit you if it is GOD's will to send you astray." (11:34)

Evangelical Comparison: The text suggests a form of double predestination where God not only permits but actively wills the error of the disbeliever ('if it is GOD's will to send you astray'). While Evangelicalism contains debates on election, the biblical view maintains God desires all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) and that God is light and in Him is no darkness (1 John 1:5), whereas this text implies God prevents the repentance of those He has destined for destruction.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the mechanism of salvation and the nature of God's justice. In Surah 11, God's justice is retributive and can only be satisfied by human obedience or destruction. In Evangelical Christianity, God's justice is satisfied by the substitutionary atonement of Christ (Romans 3:25-26). The Quranic text explicitly denies the need for or existence of a mediator ('nor will they find any lords or masters to help them against GOD' - 11:20), whereas the New Testament insists there is 'one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 2:5). Furthermore, the text's version of history (e.g., Noah's son drowning) contradicts the Biblical narrative, creating a barrier to Sola Scriptura.

Shared Values:

Reality of God; Reality of Judgment Day; Existence of Angels; Prophetic History (Noah, Abraham, Moses); Ethical Business Practices; Importance of Prayer

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Theology Proper (Trinity) – Explicit denial of any partners or plurality in the Godhead; implies Trinitarianism is idolatry.
2. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Teaches that righteous works 'wipe out' evil works (11:114), establishing a merit-based salvation.
3. [Critical] Christology (Sufficiency of Christ) – Replaces the Savior with a 'Warner'; denies the need for a redeemer, offering only guidance and law.
4. [Major] Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) – God's mercy is depicted as a reward for the deserving (11:3) or arbitrary selection (11:34), not unmerited favor to the helpless.

Semantic Warnings:

"Forgiveness"

In Text: A response to repentance and future good works; conditional.

Evangelical: A legal pardon granted based on the shed blood of Christ; judicial and relational.

Example: *In 11:3, forgiveness is followed by a blessing for a 'predetermined period' based on merit. In Colossians 2:13, forgiveness is total and based on the cross.*

"Believer (Mumin)"

In Text: One who accepts the specific messenger of the age and performs the required rituals.

Evangelical: One who trusts in the finished work of Christ alone for salvation.

Example: *The 'believers' in 11:23 are those who 'lead a righteous life' to earn Paradise. Biblical believers are those 'justified by faith apart from works of the law' (Romans 3:28).*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Deliverance from the 'shameful retribution' of Hell and entry into Paradise.

How Attained: By believing the Messenger, repenting, and performing righteous works (Salat, fair trade) that outweigh sins.

Basis of Assurance: None guaranteed until judgment; depends on the final balance of deeds and God's will.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Surah 11:114 ('works wipe out evil works') is the antithesis of Ephesians 2:8-9 ('saved by grace through faith... not by works'). The text demands performance for expiation.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Worship GOD alone (11:2)
2. Seek forgiveness and repent (11:3, 11:52, 11:90)
3. Observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) at both ends of the day and night (11:114)
4. Give full measure and weight in trade (11:85)
5. Do not cheat people out of their rights (11:85)
6. Steadfastly persevere (11:115)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept the messenger's authority without demanding supernatural signs
2. Reject the religion of parents/ancestors if it contradicts the revelation
3. Trust in God's provision rather than hoarding wealth

Ritual Requirements:

1. Contact Prayers (Salat) performed at specific times (Dawn, Sunset, Night)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 47, Noah fears he might be among the 'losers' despite being a prophet. If even Noah wasn't sure of his standing with God, how do you find assurance for your own salvation?
2. Verse 114 says righteous works wipe out evil works. How many righteous works are needed to wipe out one lie? How do you know when the scale has tipped in your favor?
3. The text mentions in verse 118 that God could have made everyone one congregation but didn't. How do you reconcile God's mercy with the idea that He wills people to differ and end up in Hell?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Ark of Safety – Just as there was only one door into the Ark to be saved from judgment, Jesus is the Door (John 10:9). Those outside the Ark, even if they climbed the highest mountain (like Noah's son), perished. [1 Peter 3:20-21 (The Ark as a type of salvation in Christ)]
2. The Need for a Mediator – Noah failed to save his own son because he was an imperfect mediator. We need a perfect Mediator who can actually save those he loves. [Hebrews 7:25 (Jesus lives to intercede)]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Uncertainty/Fear [Severe] – The believer lives under the constant threat that God might 'will' them astray (11:34). There is no 'Blessed Assurance,' only a hope that one is not among the predestined damned.
2. Performance/Legalism [Moderate] – The burden of 11:114 is that every sin creates a debt that must be paid off by a corresponding good work. This creates a treadmill of religious activity without rest.
3. Isolation [Severe] – The text emphasizes that family ties (Noah's son, Lot's wife) are severed by faith. While Jesus also spoke of division, the Quranic weight is that a father (Noah) is forbidden from even praying for his lost son (11:46), creating deep emotional anguish.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Revelation via the Messenger.

Verification Method: Literary Inimitability: The challenge to produce ten fabricated suras like it (11:13).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on historical testimony of the Resurrection and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 15, Romans 8:16). This text relies on the aesthetic/linguistic quality of the text itself as proof of divinity, a subjective metric compared to the historical falsifiability of the Resurrection.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Meccan Period (Late)

Authorship: Attributed to Muhammad (Divine Revelation); Khalifa translation (1978).

Textual Issues: Khalifa's translation is idiosyncratic, often translating 'Allah' as 'GOD' in all caps and interpreting verses to fit his 'Code 19' mathematical theory (though less visible in this specific narrative text).