

SURAH 112 (AL-IKHLAS)

FAITH: Islam | TEXT: The Holy Qur'an | VOLUME: The Meaning of the Holy Quran | AUTHOR: Rashad Khalifa (Translator)

OVERVIEW

Surah 112, known as Al-Ikhlas (The Sincerity/The Purity), is considered one of the most significant chapters in the Quran, often described in Islamic tradition as equal to one-third of the Quran due to its theological weight. In the Khalifa translation, the text opens with a command to 'Proclaim' the nature of God. It establishes four primary attributes: God's singularity (The One and only), God's absoluteness (The Absolute), the negation of parental or offspring relationships (neither begetting nor begotten), and God's incomparability (None equals Him). From a comparative religious perspective, this text serves as a direct polemic against the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the Sonship of Jesus Christ. By asserting that God does not 'beget,' the text rejects the Nicene Creed's formulation of Jesus as 'begotten, not made.' It establishes a Unitarian theology where God is a monad—numerically one—rather than a compound unity. For the believer, this Surah defines the boundaries of orthodoxy; to violate these precepts is to commit 'Shirk' (associating partners with God), the only unforgivable sin in Islamic theology.

KEY FIGURES

GOD (Allah)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. TAWHID (ABSOLUTE MONOTHEISM)

Assertion: God is numerically one, unique, and indivisible.

""He is the One and only GOD." (112:1)"

Evangelical Comparison: While Evangelical Christianity affirms that God is One (Deuteronomy 6:4), it understands this oneness as a compound unity allowing for the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Surah 112 defines oneness as mathematical singularity, explicitly excluding any plurality of persons within the Godhead. This doctrine renders the Trinity as polytheism (Shirk) in the eyes of the text.

2. DIVINE ASEITY (AS-SAMAD)

Assertion: God is Absolute, Self-Sufficient, and Eternal.

""The Absolute GOD." (112:2)"

Evangelical Comparison: The term translated by Khalifa as 'Absolute' (As-Samad) implies a Master who is obeyed, immutable, and upon whom all depend while He depends on none. This aligns with the Evangelical doctrine of Aseity—that God is self-existent and needs nothing. However, the text uses this attribute to argue against the possibility of God having a Son, assuming that having a Son implies need or division.

3. NEGATION OF SONSHIP

Assertion: God does not reproduce, have children, or originate from parents.

""Never did He beget. Nor was He begotten." (112:3)"

Evangelical Comparison: This is the primary theological collision. Evangelicalism holds that Jesus is the 'only begotten Son' (John 3:16), referring to eternal generation and relational ontology, not biological reproduction. Surah 112 rejects 'begetting' entirely, viewing it through a biological lens that would imply God has a consort or physical offspring, which is blasphemous in Islam. This negates the Incarnation.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The gap is fundamental and unbridgeable without redefining terms. The Evangelical Gospel relies on the Father sending the Son to be the propitiation for sin (1 John 4:10). Surah 112 declares that God has no

Son. Therefore, the God of Surah 112 cannot be the Father of Jesus Christ, and cannot have provided the atonement described in the New Testament. The text attacks the ontological foundation of the Christian faith.

Shared Values:

Monotheism (existence of one Creator); God's Eternity; God's Self-Sufficiency; Rejection of idolatry

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Theology Proper (Trinity) – Explicit denial of plurality within the Godhead.
2. [Critical] Christology – Denial of Jesus's divine Sonship and eternal generation.
3. [Critical] Sola Fide – By denying the Son, the text removes the Object of Faith necessary for justification.

Semantic Warnings:

"Beget"

In Text: To procreate or reproduce biologically (implying sexual activity or division of essence).

Evangelical: To generate eternally (of the Son) or to bring forth relationally; distinct from 'making' or 'creating'.

Example: In Surah 112, 'beget' is denied to protect God's transcendence. In Psalm 2:7 and John 3:16, 'beget' describes the eternal relationship between Father and Son.

"One"

In Text: Mathematical singularity; indivisible monad.

Evangelical: Compound unity (Echad); one essence in three persons.

Example: Deuteronomy 6:4 uses 'Echad' (compound unity), while Islamic theology interprets oneness as absolute numerical singularity.

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly, salvation is escaping the wrath due to those who commit Shirk (polytheism).

How Attained: By maintaining pure belief (Tawhid) and rejecting the divinity of Christ.

Basis of Assurance: None explicitly in this text, but generally in Islam, assurance is tied to the mercy of Allah and the weight of one's deeds/belief.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Diametrically opposed. Sola Fide rests on the merit of the Son. This text denies the existence of the Son.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Proclaim the oneness of God (Verse 1)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Reject any concept of God having a son
2. Reject the Trinity
3. Maintain a strict mental concept of God's incomparability

Ritual Requirements:

1. Recitation of this Surah is a standard part of daily Salah (prayer)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. When the Quran says God is 'Absolute' (As-Samad) and needs nothing, I agree. But if God is love, who did He love before He created the world?
2. The text says God does not 'beget' (like a human father). Christians agree God has no wife or biological children. Could 'Son of God' mean something spiritual and relational rather than biological?
3. If God is 'One' and 'Absolute,' how can we as finite humans ever have a personal relationship with Him without a mediator who shares His nature?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Absolute (As-Samad) – Humans long for an Absolute foundation that does not change. Jesus claims this attribute for Himself in Hebrews 13:8 ('Same yesterday, today, and forever'). [Colossians 1:17]
2. Incomparability – God's holiness means He is separate from sin. The Gospel shows that only God (in Christ) could bridge the gap to a holy God. [Isaiah 40:25 connected to Philippians 2:6]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Intellectual/Theological Fear [Severe] – The believer lives under the constant threat that misunderstanding God's nature (e.g., accepting the Trinity) constitutes the unforgivable sin of Shirk, leading to eternal damnation.
2. Relational Isolation [Moderate] – By defining God as 'Absolute' and 'One' without internal relationship (Trinity), God remains a distant Monad. The believer is a slave to a Master, never a child to a Father, because 'He begets not.'

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Direct Revelation (Wahy)

Verification Method: Recitation and acceptance of the Quranic miracle; the text is self-authenticating to the believer.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on historical witness to the Resurrection and the consistency of Scripture (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This text relies on a dogmatic assertion that contradicts the historical record of Jesus's claims.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Early Meccan Period (approx. 610-615 AD)

Authorship: Attributed to Muhammad via Gabrieleic revelation.

Textual Issues: Khalifa's translation uses 'GOD' (all caps) to emphasize his 'Code 19' mathematical miracle theory, which is rejected by mainstream Islam. The Arabic 'As-Samad' is difficult to translate, rendering as 'Absolute,' 'Eternal,' or 'Self-Sufficient.'