

SURAH 22

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

OVERVIEW

Surah 22 (Al-Hajj) serves as a potent theological treatise centering on the absolute sovereignty of God and the terror of the coming Judgment (the Hour). The text bridges the gap between the ancient monotheism of Abraham and the contemporary community of 'Submitters' (Muslims). It asserts that Abraham established the rites of the Hajj pilgrimage at the Sacred Masjid, emphasizing that the physical rituals—such as animal sacrifice—are symbolic, as only the righteousness of the believer reaches God. The Surah is notable for providing specific permission to fight against persecution, framing the defense of the faith as necessary to protect all houses of monotheistic worship (monasteries, churches, synagogues, and masjids). It sharply critiques idolatry, mocking the powerlessness of false gods, and concludes by defining the community's identity as the spiritual heirs of Abraham, tasked with maintaining prayer (Salat) and charity (Zakat).

KEY FIGURES

GOD (Allah), Abraham, Muhammad (implied recipient), Noah, Lot, Moses

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL SALVATION VIA WORKS AND BELIEF

Assertion: Salvation is contingent upon a combination of belief, righteous living, and ritual observance (Hajj, Salat, Zakat).

"GOD admits those who believe and lead a righteous life into gardens... (Surah 22:14); You shall bow, prostrate, worship your Lord, and work righteousness, that you may succeed. (Surah 22:77)"

Evangelical Comparison: While Evangelicalism teaches that good works are the fruit of salvation (Ephesians 2:10), this text presents works as the prerequisite for 'success' and entry into Paradise. The formula 'believe and lead a righteous life' (Surah 22:50, 56) implies a synergistic salvation where human merit is necessary to complete faith. This stands in contrast to the biblical assertion that salvation is a gift of grace, not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. ABROGATION AND SATANIC INTERFERENCE

Assertion: Satan interferes with prophets' wishes/messages, but God nullifies the interference and perfects His revelations.

"We did not send before you any messenger, nor a prophet, without having the devil interfere in his wishes. GOD then nullifies what the devil has done. (Surah 22:52)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text introduces a theological mechanism where Satan can temporarily influence or distort a prophet's message or desire, which God must subsequently correct. In Evangelical theology, the Holy Spirit superintends the authors of Scripture such that the original writings are free from error (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21). The idea that a prophet could deliver a Satanic suggestion as revelation—even temporarily—undermines the immediate reliability of God's word.

3. UNITARIAN MONOTHEISM (TAWHID)

Assertion: God is absolute Truth; invoking anything beside Him is falsehood and idolatry.

"GOD is the Truth, while the setting up of any idols beside Him constitutes a falsehood... (Surah 22:62)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text rigorously enforces a Unitarian view of God. While Christians agree that there is one God, the Quranic definition of 'idols' or 'partners' is often interpreted to include the Christian understanding of Jesus as the Son of God. The text asserts that those invoked beside God 'possess no power' (Surah 22:12), implicitly denying the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit as distinct persons within the Godhead.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the means of justification. Surah 22 posits that human righteousness and ritual observance (sacrifices, Hajj) are the mechanisms that please God (though v37 nuances this, it still relies on human 'righteousness'). Evangelicalism posits that human righteousness is 'filthy rags' (Isaiah 64:6) and that only Christ's imputed righteousness satisfies God's justice. Furthermore, the text's Christology is non-existent; Jesus is not mentioned as the Savior, and the 'Satanic interference' verse (v52) undermines the biblical view of prophetic infallibility.

Shared Values:

Monotheism; Reality of Judgment Day; Importance of Charity; Reverence for Abraham; Protection of religious freedom (v40)

Friction Points:

- 1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Claims to supersede the Bible and implies previous scriptures were tampered with or need correction (v52).
- 2. [Critical] Sola Fide – Salvation is conditional on works, rites (Hajj), and moral performance.
- 3. [Critical] Theology Proper (Trinity) – Strict Unitarianism that labels any association with God as 'shirk' (idolatry), implicitly rejecting Christ's divinity.

Semantic Warnings:

"Believer"

In Text: One who accepts the Quran, performs Salat/Zakat, and rejects idols (specifically a Submitter/Muslim).

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

Example: Surah 22:14 promises gardens to 'those who believe,' but this belief is defined by Islamic creed, not trust in Christ's atonement.

"Righteousness"

In Text: Moral behavior, ritual observance (Hajj/sacrifice), and piety of the heart.

Evangelical: Perfect legal standing before God, impossible for humans to attain, granted only through faith in Christ (Philippians 3:9).

Example: In v37, 'What reaches Him is your righteousness' implies human piety ascends to God; in the Bible, God's righteousness descends to man.

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Escape from the 'agony of burning' (Hell) and entry into 'gardens with flowing streams' (Paradise).

How Attained: By believing, leading a righteous life, performing Hajj, and maintaining Salat/Zakat.

Basis of Assurance: There is no absolute assurance; God guides/misleads whom He wills (v16), and salvation depends on the balance of one's submission.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text explicitly links reward to 'those who believe and lead a righteous life' (v50), creating a 'Faith + Works' model. This opposes Romans 4:5, 'to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

- 1. Reverence your Lord (v1)
- 2. Proclaim and observe Hajj pilgrimage (v27)
- 3. Eat from sacrificial livestock and feed the poor (v28, v36)
- 4. Avoid idol worship and false witness (v30)
- 5. Observe Contact Prayers (Salat) (v78)

6. Give obligatory charity (Zakat) (v78)
7. Strive for the cause of God (Jihad) (v78)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Physical defense of the faith when persecuted
2. Total severance of dependence on anyone other than God
3. Acceptance of Muhammad as the continuation of Abraham's religion

Ritual Requirements:

1. Hajj pilgrimage rites
2. Animal sacrifice (commemorating God's name)
3. Bowing and prostrating in worship

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 37, it says God receives your righteousness. How much righteousness is enough to satisfy a perfect God?
2. Verse 52 mentions Satan interfering with a prophet's wishes. How do you know which verses in the Quran were protected from this interference?
3. The text describes the terror of Judgment Day (v1-2). Do you have a guarantee that you will be safe on that day, or is it still uncertain?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Insufficiency of Flesh – This acknowledges that animal sacrifices are symbolic and cannot take away sin. However, since our own righteousness is flawed, we need the perfect righteousness of Christ. [Hebrews 10:4 - 'For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.']
2. The Powerlessness of Idols – We agree that false gods are powerless. The Gospel frees us from the ultimate idol—trying to save ourselves through our own power. [Galatians 4:8-9 - Turning from weak and miserable principles.]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety [Severe] – The adherent is burdened with the requirement to 'complete their obligations' and 'work righteousness' to succeed. There is no concept of 'it is finished.'
2. Fear of Judgment [Severe] – The graphic description of the Hour (nursing mothers abandoning babies) combined with the lack of a Mediator creates a deep existential dread.
3. Uncertainty [Moderate] – The text states God guides and misleads whom He wills (v16), leaving the believer unsure of their standing with the Almighty.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Revelation (The Quran) and Natural Theology (Signs in Creation).

Verification Method: Adherents are instructed to observe nature (embryology, rain reviving dead land) as proof of God's power to resurrect (v5-6).

Evangelical Contrast: While the Bible affirms natural revelation (Romans 1:20), it posits that specific knowledge of salvation comes only through the Word of God concerning Christ (Romans 10:17). This text relies on the self-referential claim of the Quran and logical deductions from nature, lacking the historical verification of the Resurrection of Jesus.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1978 (Translation date); Original Arabic text approx. 622-632 AD (Medinan period).

Authorship: Attributed to Muhammad via Gabriel; Translated/Interpreted by Rashad Khalifa.

Textual Issues: Khalifa's translation is known for its 'Quran Alone' bias (rejecting Hadith) and idiosyncratic capitalization of 'GOD'. Verse 52 is historically significant as the source of the 'Satanic Verses' controversy.