

SURAH 25 (AL-FURQAN)

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

OVERVIEW

Surah 25, titled Al-Furqan (The Statute Book or The Criterion), serves as a vigorous defense of the Prophet's mission and the divine source of the Quran. The text opens with a doxology that immediately establishes a theological boundary: God possesses all sovereignty and has 'never had a son,' a direct refutation of Christian Christology. The narrative addresses Meccan objections that the Quran is a 'fabrication' or 'tales from the past' and that the messenger is too human (eating food, walking in markets) to be a divine envoy. The text employs a dualistic structure, alternating between the terrifying fate of those who deny the 'Hour' (Resurrection)—described as a raging fire—and the rewards of the 'Worshippers of the Most Gracious' (Ibad-ur-Rahman). It emphasizes that salvation is contingent upon repentance, belief, and the active pursuit of a righteous life, explicitly stating that God transforms sins into credits only for those who meet these conditions. The text also appeals to the natural world (shadows, wind, water, the barrier between seas) as teleological evidence of God's power. Uniquely to this translation, verse 56 inserts the translator's name '(Rashad),' reflecting Khalifa's controversial claim to messengership.

KEY FIGURES

The One (God/Allah), The Messenger (Muhammad; implied context), Rashad (inserted by translator in v. 56), Moses, Aaron, Noah

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. STRICT UNITARIANISM (TAWHID)

Assertion: God possesses all sovereignty, has no partners, and specifically 'never had a son' (v. 2).

"He never had a son, nor does He have any partners in sovereignty." (Surah 25:2)"

Evangelical Comparison: This doctrine is the fundamental theological gap between Islam and Christianity. While Evangelicalism holds that God is one Essence in three Persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) and that the Son is eternally begotten, not made, this text explicitly negates the possibility of God having a son. This is not merely a difference in terminology but a rejection of the nature of God as revealed in the New Testament (John 1:1-14, Hebrews 1:1-3). The Quranic assertion implies that 'sonship' necessitates a biological or created partner, which Evangelical theology also rejects, but the Quran extends this denial to the metaphysical reality of Christ.

2. CONDITIONAL ABSOLUTION

Assertion: Forgiveness and the transformation of sins into credits are contingent upon repentance, belief, and leading a righteous life.

"Exempted are those who repent, believe, and lead a righteous life. GOD transforms their sins into credits." (Surah 25:70)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical soteriology teaches justification by faith alone (Sola Fide), where the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer apart from works (Romans 4:5). Surah 25:70 presents a synergistic model where the 'transformation' of sin is triggered by the believer's performance ('lead a righteous life'). While Evangelicalism teaches that works follow faith as fruit, this text positions works as a condition for the redemption itself.

3. PROPHETIC HUMANITY

Assertion: Messengers are strictly human, eating food and engaging in commerce, distinguished only by revelation.

"We did not send any messengers before you who did not eat food and walk in the markets." (Surah 25:20)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text argues against the expectation that a divine messenger must be angelic or supernatural. Evangelicalism agrees that prophets (like Moses or Elijah) were ordinary men. However, regarding Jesus, Evangelicalism asserts He is the God-Man (Philippians 2:5-8). The Quranic argument here is often used

apologetically to deny Jesus's divinity by pointing to His human needs (eating, sleeping), failing to account for the dual nature of Christ in Christian theology.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The theological gap is foundational. Surah 25:2 ('He never had a son') is a specific negation of the core Christian confession (Matthew 16:16). Furthermore, the mechanism of salvation in verses 70-71 requires the adherent to 'lead a righteous life' to transform sin into credit. This is a 'righteousness of the law' approach, contrasting with the Evangelical 'righteousness of faith.' The text also presents a closed system where the Quran supersedes previous revelations, rendering the Bible abrogated in the eyes of the adherent.

Shared Values:

Monotheism (existence of one Creator); Objective Morality (murder, adultery, and false witness are wrong); Reality of Judgment Day and Hell; Value of humility and charity

Friction Points:

- 1. [Critical] Theology Proper (Trinity/Christology) – Explicit denial of God having a son (v. 2).
- 2. [Major] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation and the transformation of sin are contingent on works ('lead a righteous life') (v. 70).
- 3. [Major] Sola Scriptura – The Quran is presented as the final criterion (Al-Furqan), superseding previous scriptures.

Semantic Warnings:

"Believer"

In Text: One who accepts the Quran, rejects idols/partners to God, and performs righteous works.

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

Example: In v. 70, a 'believer' is paired with one who 'leads a righteous life' to attain redemption. In Romans 4:5, a believer is one who 'trusts God who justifies the ungodly.'

"Son of God"

In Text: A blasphemous concept implying biological reproduction or partnership in sovereignty (v. 2).

Evangelical: A title of nature and relationship, denoting Jesus as co-eternal, consubstantial Deity, not biological offspring.

Example: The text denies God has a son to protect His sovereignty; the Bible affirms the Son is the very expression of that sovereignty (Hebrews 1:3).

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Avoidance of Hell (v. 65) and entry into eternal Paradise (v. 15, 76).

How Attained: Repentance + Belief + Righteous Life (v. 70).

Basis of Assurance: There is no absolute assurance; it is based on the hope that God will accept the repentance and works. The phrase 'If He wills' (v. 10) hangs over the text.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Surah 25:71 states 'Those who repent and lead a righteous life, GOD redeems them.' This makes redemption a result of human action. Ephesians 2:8-9 states 'For by grace you have been saved through faith... not a result of works.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

- 1. Do not obey the disbelievers (v. 52)
- 2. Strive against disbelievers with the Quran (v. 52)
- 3. Put trust in the One who is Alive (v. 58)
- 4. Praise and glorify Him (v. 58)
- 5. Ask about God from those well-founded in knowledge (v. 59)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept the gradual revelation of the Quran (v. 32)
2. Reject the desire for supernatural signs as a condition for belief (v. 21)
3. Acknowledge the Prophet despite his ordinary human behaviors (v. 20)

Ritual Requirements:

1. Prostration (Sujud) to the Most Gracious (v. 60, 64)
2. Night prayers/meditation (v. 64)
3. Repentance (v. 70-71)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 70, it says God transforms sins into credits for those who lead a righteous life. How much righteousness is enough to pay for a lifetime of sin?
2. Verse 23 says the works of disbelievers are rendered 'null and void.' If a Christian does good works but believes Jesus is the Son of God (which this text denies), are those works wasted?
3. Verse 28 speaks of the regret of taking the wrong 'friend.' Who is the friend that can actually intercede for you on that Day?
4. The text says God 'never had a son' (v. 2). If God is love, and love requires an object, who did God love before He created the world?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Barrier between Waters – Just as there is a barrier between fresh and salt water, there is a barrier of sin between a Holy God and sinful man (Isaiah 59:2). We cannot cross it. Jesus is the only one who broke down the barrier (Ephesians 2:14). [Ephesians 2:13-14]
2. The Regret of the Wrong Friend – The text warns against friends who lead away from the message. Jesus is the 'friend of sinners' (Matthew 11:19) who does not lead us astray but lays down His life for His friends (John 15:13). [John 15:13-15]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety / Uncertainty [Severe] – The adherent must constantly 'strive' (v. 52) and 'lead a righteous life' (v. 70) to ensure their sins are transformed to credits. There is no moment of 'it is finished'; the verdict is suspended until Judgment Day.
2. Intellectual Isolation [Severe] – By defining the Trinity/Sonship as a 'gross blasphemy' (v. 4, 21), the text creates a high mental barrier against even considering the Gospel. The believer is conditioned to view the core Christian message as an insult to God.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Direct revelation to the Messenger, supported by natural theology (signs in creation).

Verification Method: Observation of the natural world (shadows, wind, water) serves as verification of the Speaker's power (v. 45-54).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the historical resurrection of Christ and the witness of the Spirit through the written Word (1 Corinthians 15, 2 Timothy 3:16). This text relies on the self-referential claim of the Quran's quality and teleological arguments.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Meccan Period (approx. 615-619 AD), except possibly v. 68-70.

Authorship: Traditionally Muhammad; Critical scholars view it as a composite of oral traditions. This specific translation is by Rashad Khalifa.

Textual Issues: In verse 56, the translator Rashad Khalifa inserts '(Rashad)' into the text: 'We have sent you (Rashad)...'. This is a significant interpolation not found in the Arabic text, which addresses the Prophet

Muhammad. Khalifa claimed to be a Messenger of the Covenant based on mathematical codes.