

SURAH 27 (AN-NAML / THE ANT)

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

OVERVIEW

Surah 27, titled 'The Ant' (An-Naml), presents a series of prophetic narratives designed to establish the authority of the Quran and the oneness of God (Tawhid). It begins by declaring the Quran a beacon for believers who perform prayer and charity. The text recounts the calling of Moses, emphasizing miraculous signs given to Pharaoh. A significant portion is dedicated to Solomon, depicted not merely as a king but as a prophet with dominion over jinns, birds, and nature. The narrative of the Queen of Sheba serves as a theological model: she transitions from sun-worship to submission to the Lord of the Universe after witnessing Solomon's God-given power. The text also covers the destruction of Thamoud and the people of Lot due to their rejection of God's messengers and moral corruption. The latter half of the Surah employs a rhythmic interrogation ('Is there another god with GOD?') pointing to creation's complexity as proof of monotheism. It concludes with eschatological warnings, including the emergence of a beast from the earth and the terror of Judgment Day, where salvation is explicitly tied to the presentation of righteous works.

KEY FIGURES

God (Allah), Solomon (Sulaiman), Queen of Sheba (Bilqis), Moses (Musa), The Hoopoe, Saleh, Lot (Lut), The Ant, The Beast of the Earth

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. STRICT MONOTHEISM (TAWHID)

Assertion: God is the sole creator and sustainer; associating partners (shirk) or other gods with Him is the ultimate error.

"Is it another god with GOD? Most exalted is GOD, above having any partner. (Quran 27:63)"

Evangelical Comparison: The Surah repeatedly asks rhetorical questions attributing creation, provision, and guidance solely to Allah to negate the possibility of other deities. In Evangelical theology, Trinitarianism asserts that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the one God. This text's definition of monotheism ('Is there another god with GOD?') is Unitarian and implicitly rejects the deity of Christ, viewing any 'partner' as a violation of God's sovereignty. This creates a fundamental theological gap regarding the nature of God.

2. SALVATION BY WORKS AND SUBMISSION

Assertion: Eternal security is achieved by bringing good works to the judgment; evil works result in Hell.

"Those who bring good works... will receive far better rewards... As for those who bring evil works, they will be forced into Hell. Do you not get requited for what you did? (Quran 27:89-90)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text explicitly links eschatological safety to the 'bringing' of good works. It frames the final judgment as a transaction: deeds are presented, and rewards or punishments are dispensed accordingly ('requited for what you did'). Evangelicalism teaches that no amount of human works can satisfy God's justice (Isaiah 64:6) and that salvation is a gift of grace received through faith in Christ's finished work (Ephesians 2:8-9), not a wage paid for human effort.

3. PROPHETIC CONTINUITY AND SUPERIORITY

Assertion: The Quran clarifies disputes among the Children of Israel and serves as the ultimate guide.

"This Quran settles many issues for the Children of Israel; issues that they are still disputing. (Quran 27:76)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text positions itself as the final arbiter of truth, claiming to resolve theological disputes found in previous scriptures (specifically addressing the Jews). This implies that the previous texts (Torah/Bible) are either corrupted or insufficient. Evangelicalism holds to Sola Scriptura, believing the Bible is the sufficient, final, and uncorrupted Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16), rejecting the need for post-apostolic correction.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the nature of God and the means of salvation. Surah 27 presents God as a solitary monarch who demands submission and rewards works. Evangelicalism presents God as a Trinity who provides redemption through the Son. The Quranic narratives of Moses, Solomon, and Lot are stripped of their redemptive-historical context (leading to Christ) and repurposed as moralistic warnings about submission. The text's insistence on 'requital for what you did' (v. 90) stands in direct opposition to the Gospel of Grace, where Christ is requited for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Shared Values:

Monotheism (existence of one Creator); Reality of Judgment Day; Moral accountability; Condemnation of homosexuality; Rejection of idolatry

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Theology Proper (Trinity) – Explicit denial of any partner with God, framing Trinitarianism as polytheism.
2. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation is contingent on personal righteousness and works presented at judgment.
3. [Major] Sola Scriptura – Asserts the Quran is the final authority that corrects the Bible.

Semantic Warnings:

"Believer"

In Text: One who accepts the Quran, performs Salat/Zakat, and submits to Allah.

Evangelical: One who trusts in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Example: In Surah 27:2, 'believers' are those who do works (Salat/Zakat). In Acts 16:31, a 'believer' is one who trusts on the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Works"

In Text: The basis for security on Judgment Day (v. 89).

Evangelical: The fruit of salvation, not the root or cause of it (Ephesians 2:10).

Example: Surah 27:90 implies works save from Hell; Galatians 2:16 states by works of the law no one will be justified.

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Security from the 'horrors of that day' (Judgment) and avoidance of Hell.

How Attained: By being a 'submitter' (Muslim), believing in the revelations, and bringing 'good works' to the judgment.

Basis of Assurance: There is no assurance of salvation in the present; it is prospective, based on the quality of works presented at the end.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Surah 27:90 asks, 'Do you not get requited for what you did?' This is the antithesis of Sola Fide. Romans 4:5 states, 'However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Worship God alone (v. 91)
2. Recite the Quran (v. 92)
3. Observe Contact Prayers (Salat) (v. 3)
4. Give Obligatory Charity (Zakat) (v. 3)
5. Put trust in God (v. 79)
6. Do not grieve over disbelievers (v. 70)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Recognize signs of God in nature
2. Reject homosexuality (implied by Lot narrative)
3. Submit to God's will (Islam)
4. Believe in the Hereafter with certainty

Ritual Requirements:

1. Salat (Contact Prayers)
2. Zakat (Obligatory Charity)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 90, it says people are requited for what they did. How many good works are enough to make you feel secure against the 'horrors of that day'?
2. The Queen of Sheba realized she was mistaken when she saw the crystal floor (v. 44). Is it possible that our own good works are like that 'pool of water'-an illusion that isn't solid enough to stand on?
3. Verse 62 asks who rescues the desperate. When you feel desperate about your standing before God, who do you call upon?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Letter of Peace – God has sent us a 'letter' (The Word/Jesus) inviting us not just to submission, but to reconciliation and peace. [2 Corinthians 5:19-20]
2. The Illusion vs. Reality – We often think our religious efforts (idols/works) are real water that can save us, but they are illusions. Christ is the solid rock/crystal. [1 Corinthians 10:4]
3. The Safe Sanctuary – Christ is the true city of refuge and sanctuary for the sinner. [Hebrews 6:18]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Uncertainty/Fear [Severe] – The believer lives with the constant threat of the 'horrors of that day' (v. 87), never knowing if their works are sufficient to avoid being 'forced into Hell' (v. 90).
2. Performance Pressure [Moderate] – The requirement to 'bring good works' creates a treadmill of religious performance where peace is impossible because the work is never finished.
3. Intellectual Dissonance [Mild] – The believer must accept legendary tales (talking ants) as literal history to maintain faith in the text's authority, often conflicting with historical reality.

EPISTEMOLOGY

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

Verification Method: Observing the complexity of nature (heavens, earth, rain) as proof of a single Creator; historical retribution against past nations.

Evangelical Contrast: While the Bible affirms general revelation in nature (Romans 1:20), it teaches that specific saving knowledge comes only through the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:17), not through a post-biblical text or mere observation of nature.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Meccan Surah (Middle Period), approx. 615-620 AD.

Authorship: Attributed to Muhammad via revelation (Jibril).

Textual Issues: The narrative of the Hoopoe and the Queen of Sheba bears striking resemblance to the 'Targum Sheni' to the Book of Esther, a Jewish folklore text. This suggests the incorporation of oral traditions into the Quranic text.