

## SURAH 50 (Q.)

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

### OVERVIEW

Surah 50, often titled 'Qaf' (represented as 'Q.' in Khalifa's translation), is a powerful eschatological text primarily addressing the skepticism of the disbelievers regarding life after death. The text opens by confronting the incredulity of the Meccans who find the concept of returning from dust to be 'impossible.' The narrative argues for the resurrection by pointing to the regenerative power of God visible in nature—the sky, the rain, and the revival of dead lands—as a logical precedent for human resurrection. Central to the text is the terrifying intimacy of God's surveillance; He is described as closer to man than his 'jugular vein,' knowing even the whispers of the soul. This surveillance is operationalized by two recording angels who document every single utterance. The text moves chronologically through the human experience: from the skepticism of life, to the 'inevitable coma of death,' the blowing of the horn, and the final judgment where the 'veil' is removed. It concludes with a polemic against the biblical concept of God resting on the seventh day, asserting God created the heavens and earth in six days without 'fatigue,' and commands the believer to persist in prayer and praise.

### KEY FIGURES

GOD (Allah), The Warner (Muhammad), The Recording Angels (Right and Left), The Companion (Qarin/Devil), People of Noah, Dwellers of Russ, Thamoud, Aad, Pharaoh, Brethren of Lot

### DOCTRINES ANALYZED

#### 1. UNIVERSAL SURVEILLANCE AND RECORDING

**Assertion:** Every human has two angels recording every single word and deed; nothing is missed, and this record forms the basis of judgment.

*"Two recording (angels), at right and at left, are constantly recording. Not an utterance does he utter without an alert witness. (Surah 50:17-18)"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** In Evangelical theology, while God is omniscient (Psalm 139), the basis of judgment for the believer is the finished work of Christ. The 'record of debt' was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). Surah 50 presents a forensic soteriology where the 'record' is maintained by angels and presented as the primary evidence for or against the soul. There is no concept here of the record being expunged by vicarious atonement; rather, the human is confronted with their own history.

#### 2. BODILY RESURRECTION VIA DIVINE POWER

**Assertion:** Resurrection is physically certain and logically deduced from God's power to revive dead land with rain.

*"And we revive with it dead lands; you are similarly resurrected. (Surah 50:11)"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** Both traditions affirm a physical resurrection. However, the Quranic argument is naturalistic and power-based (if He can grow plants, He can grow you). The Evangelical argument is Christological: believers rise ~~because~~ Christ rose (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). The Quranic resurrection is a restoration for judgment; the Biblical resurrection for the believer is a glorification based on union with Christ.

#### 3. DIVINE TIRELESSNESS (ANTI-SABBATH)

**Assertion:** God created the universe in six days but experienced no weariness or need for rest.

*"We have created the heavens and the earth... in six days, and no fatigue touched us. (Surah 50:38)"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** This is a specific polemic against the Jewish and Christian understanding of Genesis 2:2. The text interprets the biblical 'shabbat' (to cease/desist) as anthropomorphic physical tiredness, which it vehemently denies to protect God's transcendence. Evangelical theology holds that God 'rested' not from exhaustion (Isaiah 40:28), but to establish a pattern of holiness and completion. The Quranic correction attacks a perceived theological weakness that does not actually exist in orthodox Christian theology.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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### Divergence Status: Yes

**Theological Gap:** The fundamental gap lies in the solution to the human predicament. Surah 50 diagnoses the problem as forgetfulness and disbelief, solved by a 'reminder' (The Quran) and the threat of judgment. Evangelicalism diagnoses the problem as spiritual death and sin, solved by substitutionary atonement. The 'Jugular Vein' passage (v16) illustrates this perfectly: in Islam, God is close to monitor and judge; in Christianity, God draws near to save and indwell. Furthermore, the denial of God's 'rest' (v38) reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the Biblical narrative, creating a barrier to accepting the Genesis account.

### Shared Values:

Monotheism; Reality of Judgment Day; Existence of Heaven and Hell; Moral accountability; Creation by Divine Fiat

### Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation is contingent on the record of deeds (v17-18) and being a 'repenter, steadfast' (v32).
2. [Major] Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) – Paradise is 'offered to the righteous' (v31) as a result of their behavior, not purely as unmerited favor.
3. [Critical] Christology (Sufficiency of Christ) – Christ is absent. The 'Warner' (Muhammad) and the 'Reminder' (Quran) replace the role of the Savior.
4. [Major] Theology Proper (Nature of God) – Explicit denial of the Biblical attribute of God 'resting' (v38), attacking the authority of the Torah.

### Semantic Warnings:

#### "Rest (regarding God)"

**In Text:** Fatigue/Exhaustion (which is denied of God).

**Evangelical:** Ceasing/Desisting from work to sanctify time (Genesis 2:2), not recovery from tiredness.

**Example:** When a Christian says God 'rested,' the Muslim hears 'God was tired.' Surah 50:38 reinforces this misunderstanding.

#### "Repenter"

**In Text:** One who turns back to obedience and law-keeping to merit mercy.

**Evangelical:** One who turns from sin to faith in Christ for forgiveness (Acts 20:21).

**Example:** In Surah 50:32, the repenter is promised paradise as a reward for their action; in the Bible, repentance is the hand that receives the gift of grace.

## SOTERIOLOGY

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**Salvation Defined:** Entry into Paradise (v34), termed the 'Day of Eternity,' and avoidance of Gehenna.

**How Attained:** By being righteous, a repenter, steadfast, and reverencing the Most Gracious (v31-33).

**Basis of Assurance:** There is no assurance in the text; it depends on the outcome of the recording angels' log and the final weighing.

**Comparison to Sola Fide:** The text demands 'steadfastness' and 'wholeheartedness' as prerequisites for entry. Romans 3:28 states a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Surah 50 establishes a tribunal of works.

## MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

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### Explicit Commands:

1. Praise and glorify the Lord before sunrise and before sunset (v39)
2. Meditate on His name during the night (v40)
3. Prostrate (v40)
4. Be patient in the face of utterances (v39)
5. Remind with this Quran those who reverence warnings (v45)

#### **Implicit Obligations:**

1. Believe in the physical resurrection despite its apparent impossibility
2. Monitor one's own speech knowing it is being recorded
3. Give charity (implied by the condemnation of the 'forbidder of charity' in v25)

#### **Ritual Requirements:**

1. Specific times of prayer (Fajr/Sunrise, Maghrib/Sunset, and Night prayer)
2. Prostration (Sujood)

## **EVANGELISM TOOLKIT**

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#### **Discovery Questions:**

1. Surah 50:18 says not a single word is uttered without being recorded. How does that make you feel about your daily conversations?
2. If the angels record everything, do you have a hope that some of those records can be erased? How does that happen?
3. Verse 16 says God is closer than your jugular vein. Do you experience this closeness as a comfort or as a fearful thing because He knows every secret?
4. The Quran says God didn't get tired creating the world (v38). Did you know the Bible agrees He doesn't get tired (Isaiah 40:28), but says He 'rested' to set an example of peace for us?

#### **Redemptive Analogies:**

1. The Jugular Vein (Closeness) – The text expresses a truth: God is near. But in Islam, He is near as a Judge. In the Gospel, God came near as a Savior. He didn't just stay close to our blood; He shed His own blood. [Ephesians 2:13 'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.]
2. The Recording Angels – We all fear a permanent record of our sins. The Gospel addresses this not by denying the record, but by canceling it. [Colossians 2:14 '...having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.]

#### **Spiritual Weight:**

1. Hyper-Surveillance/Paranoia [Severe] – The belief that two angels are recording every single syllable spoken creates an intense psychological pressure to self-censor and a constant fear of slipping up. There is no privacy, even in one's own mind.
2. Uncertainty of Salvation [Severe] – Since the judgment is based on the accumulation of these records (v24-26), the adherent can never know if their 'good' column outweighs the 'bad' until the Day of Judgment.
3. Fear of the 'Companion' [Moderate] – The text mentions a 'companion' (qarin) who tries to mislead (v27). This creates a worldview where spiritual warfare is internal and constant, with the individual solely responsible for resisting a supernatural enemy.

## **EPISTEMOLOGY**

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**Knowledge Source:** Revelation (The Quran) supported by Natural Theology (Observation of nature).

**Verification Method:** Adherents are instructed to look at the sky, the earth, and the rain (v6-11) to verify God's power to resurrect.

**Evangelical Contrast:** Biblical epistemology relies on the self-revelation of God in history and Scripture, centered on the person of Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). While nature declares God's glory (Psalm 19), it is not sufficient for salvation knowledge. Surah 50 implies that observation of nature should be sufficient to condemn the skeptic.

## **TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

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**Dating:** Meccan Period (Early to Middle).

**Authorship:** Attributed to Muhammad (as recipient of revelation).

**Textual Issues:** The opening letter 'Qaf' is one of the 'Muqatta'at' (disjoined letters), the meaning of which is considered a mystery in Islamic scholarship. Khalifa interprets these mathematically, but traditional scholarship views them as known only to God.