

SURAH 59

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

OVERVIEW

Surah 59 (Al-Hashr), presented here in the Khalifa translation, serves as a post-conflict commentary on the expulsion of the Banu Nadir, a Jewish tribe in Medina. The text asserts that this 'mass exodus' was orchestrated by God, who cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers, rendering their fortifications useless. A central theological argument is the distinction between spoils of war won by combat and those restored by God without fighting (Fay'); the latter belongs exclusively to God and His Messenger to be distributed to the needy, preventing wealth concentration among the rich. The text sharply contrasts the faithful community—comprising the Immigrants (who sacrificed everything) and the Helpers (who showed selflessness)—against the Hypocrites, who made false promises of alliance to the People of the Scripture. The Surah concludes with a powerful exhortation to 'reverence God' (Taqwa) and a dense listing of Divine Names, emphasizing strict monotheism and the awe-inspiring weight of Divine revelation, which is described as heavy enough to make a mountain crumble.

KEY FIGURES

GOD (Allah), The Messenger (Muhammad), The People of the Scripture (Banu Nadir/Jews), The Immigrants (Muhajirun), The Believers/Helpers (Ansar), The Hypocrites (Munafiqun), The Devil

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THEOCRATIC SOVEREIGNTY IN WARFARE

Assertion: God directly intervenes in military conflicts to evict disbelievers, and the results (exodus/terror) are His direct doing, not human effort.

"Whatever GOD restored for His messenger was not the result of your war efforts... GOD is the One who sends His messengers against whomever He wills. [059:006]"

Evangelical Comparison: In this text, God is a divine warrior who orchestrates specific geopolitical outcomes (evictions, terror) for the benefit of the theocratic state. Evangelical theology, based on passages like John 18:36 ('My kingdom is not of this world') and Ephesians 6:12, generally views spiritual warfare as a battle against sin and spiritual powers, rather than a mandate for territorial conquest or the dispossession of ethnic groups. The text conflates spiritual victory with military dominance.

2. SOTERIOLOGICAL PREPARATION (SENDING AHEAD)

Assertion: Salvation requires the soul to 'examine what it has sent ahead' for the future, implying a works-based accumulation of merit.

"O you who believe, you shall reverence GOD, and let every soul examine what it has sent ahead for tomorrow. [059:018]"

Evangelical Comparison: The phrase 'sent ahead' (taqdim) suggests a transactional view of salvation where human deeds are the currency for future security. In Evangelicalism, the believer looks back to the finished work of Christ (John 19:30) for security, rather than looking inward at their own accumulated merit. This doctrine places the burden of justification on the believer's performance.

3. STRICT UNITARIANISM (TAWHID)

Assertion: God is One, with no partners, and possesses absolute attributes that exclude any plurality.

"He is the One GOD; there is no other god beside Him... GOD be glorified; far above having partners. [059:023]"

Evangelical Comparison: The text emphasizes God's singularity ('The One GOD') and explicitly rejects 'partners' (shirk). In the Islamic context, this is a polemic against the Christian Trinity (viewed as associating partners with God) and Meccan polytheism. Evangelical theology holds to Trinitarianism (Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14), affirming one God in three persons, which this text categorically rejects as a violation of God's glory.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the nature of God and the means of redemption. Surah 59 presents God as a sovereign retributor who aids His messenger in warfare and demands 'reverence' (fear) and works ('sending ahead') to escape Hell. Evangelicalism presents God as Triune, where the Son absorbs the retribution due to humanity (Romans 3:25). The text's rejection of 'partners' (v23) is a rejection of the Incarnation. Furthermore, the text's reliance on military victory as proof of divine favor contradicts the Theology of the Cross, where strength is found in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Shared Values:

Monotheism (existence of one Creator); Charity to the poor and orphans; Reality of Judgment Day and Hell; Existence of Satan/Devil; Condemnation of hypocrisy

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – The text asserts the Quran's authority supersedes previous scriptures and establishes the Messenger's command as absolute law.
2. [Critical] Sola Fide – Salvation is contingent on 'sending ahead' deeds and personal reverence, not faith alone.
3. [Major] Christology – Implicit denial of Christ's peace and kingdom by establishing a theocratic kingdom through warfare and terror.
4. [Critical] Theology Proper (Trinity) – Strict Unitarianism explicitly rejects any plurality in the Godhead (v22-24).

Semantic Warnings:

"Believer (Mu'min)"

In Text: One who follows Muhammad, supports the political/religious community, and performs required deeds.

Evangelical: One who trusts solely in Christ for salvation (John 3:16).

Example: *In v10, believers pray for those who preceded them; in Evangelicalism, believers are defined by union with Christ, not just community affiliation.*

"Success (Al-Falah)"

In Text: Overcoming stinginess and attaining Paradise through obedience (v9, v20).

Evangelical: Being justified by faith and sanctified in Christ (Romans 8:30).

Example: *Verse 9 says those who overcome stinginess are successful; the Bible says those who have the Son have life (1 John 5:12).*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Avoiding Hellfire and becoming 'dwellers of Paradise' (v20).

How Attained: By believing, immigrating (if necessary), supporting the Messenger, overcoming stinginess, and reverencing God.

Basis of Assurance: No absolute assurance; the believer must constantly 'examine' their deeds (v18).

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text demands works (charity, loyalty, reverence) as the basis for success (v9), whereas Sola Fide asserts that works are the fruit, not the root, of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Reverence GOD (v18)
2. Take what the messenger gives you (v7)
3. Abstain from what the messenger forbids (v7)
4. Examine what your soul has sent ahead for tomorrow (v18)
5. Give spoils to relatives, orphans, poor, and traveling aliens (v7)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept the Messenger's military and political decisions without question

2. Prioritize the needs of the community over personal needs (v9)
3. Avoid friendship or alliance with those who oppose God and His Messenger

Ritual Requirements:

1. Glorification of God (Tasbih) implied by v1 and v24
2. Charitable giving (Zakat/Sadaqah context in v7)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. Verse 18 commands you to examine what you have 'sent ahead' for tomorrow. How much must you send ahead to be certain you are safe from the Fire?
2. Verse 21 says the Quran is so heavy it would make a mountain crumble. If a mountain cannot bear God's holiness, how can your heart bear it without a Mediator?
3. The text says God cast terror into the hearts of the people of the scripture (v2). How does this compare to Jesus' command to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you?
4. Verse 7 says to take what the Messenger gives you. If the Messenger is no longer physically present to distribute wealth, how do you apply this command today?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Crumbling Mountain – This acknowledges the crushing weight of God's holiness and law. A mountain cannot stand it. Neither can we. We need a Rock that was cleft for us. [Exodus 33:21-22 (Cleft of the rock); 1 Corinthians 10:4 (That Rock was Christ).]
2. The Exile – The text speaks of physical exile as judgment. The Bible speaks of spiritual exile from Eden due to sin. We all long for a home we cannot return to on our own. [Hebrews 11:13-16 (Desiring a better country); John 14:2 (I go to prepare a place for you).]
3. Overcoming Stinginess – We are naturally selfish (stingy). We cannot overcome this nature by willpower alone; we need a new heart. [Ezekiel 36:26 (Heart of stone to flesh); 2 Corinthians 5:17 (New creation).]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Fear of Judgment [Severe] – The believer lives under the constant threat of 'painful retribution' (v15) and the knowledge that God is 'strict in enforcing retribution' (v4, v7). There is no concept of 'no condemnation' (Romans 8:1).
2. Performance Anxiety [Moderate] – The command to 'examine what it has sent ahead' (v18) creates a perpetual anxiety about whether one's good deeds are sufficient to outweigh sins.
3. Us vs. Them Isolation [Moderate] – The text creates a sharp, hostile division between the community of believers and everyone else (hypocrites, people of scripture), fostering isolation and suspicion.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Revelation (The Quran) and Empirical Observation of History (God's victory).

Verification Method: Adherents are told to 'learn from this' (v2) by observing the physical defeat of the disbelievers as proof of God's favor.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the testimony of the Spirit through Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:13-14) and the historical resurrection of Christ, not on military or political success, which the Bible notes is often possessed by the wicked (Psalm 73).

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Medinan period (approx. 4th year after Hijrah/625 AD).

Authorship: Attributed to Muhammad via Gabriel; Khalifa translation assumes divine authorship verified by mathematical code (Code 19).

Textual Issues: Khalifa's translation is unique in its rejection of Hadith and specific interpretive choices (e.g., translating Allah as GOD).