

SURAH 69 (AL-HAQQAH)

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

OVERVIEW

Surah 69, titled 'Al-Haqqah' (The Incontestable or The Reality), serves as a stern warning regarding the certainty of the Day of Judgment. The text begins by recounting the historical destruction of the tribes of Thamoud and 'Aad, Pharaoh, and the people of Noah, establishing a pattern of divine retribution against those who deny God's messengers. The central theological pivot occurs in the depiction of the Eschaton, where the cosmos is dismantled and humanity is divided into two categories based on their earthly performance. The 'companions of the right hand' are those who lived with an awareness of accountability, rewarded explicitly for their 'works in days past.' Conversely, the 'companions of the left hand' express deep regret, acknowledging that their wealth and power are useless against divine wrath. The Surah concludes with a defense of the revelation itself, asserting that it is not poetry or soothsaying, but absolute truth from the Lord of the universe, with a specific warning that if the messenger had fabricated it, God would have immediately destroyed him.

KEY FIGURES

God (The Lord of the Universe), The Messenger (Muhammad), The Righteous (Recipients of the Right Hand Record), The Disbelievers (Recipients of the Left Hand Record), Thamoud, Aad, Pharaoh, Noah (implied via 'floating ark')

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. SOTERIOLOGICAL MERITOCRACY

Assertion: Entrance to Paradise is a payment or return for good works performed previously.

"Eat and drink happily in return for your works in days past." (Quran 69:24)

Evangelical Comparison: In this text, the transaction of salvation is explicit: happiness in the afterlife is a 'return' (payment/reward) for 'works in days past.' This establishes a merit-based system where human effort is the primary cause of final justification. Evangelical Christianity teaches that salvation is a gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9) and that works are the fruit of salvation, not the root or payment for it. The text places the burden of the verdict on the historical performance of the believer.

2. INFALLIBILITY OF REVELATION VIA THREAT

Assertion: The authenticity of the Quran is guaranteed by the fact that God allows the messenger to live; a false prophet would be instantly destroyed.

"Had he uttered any other teachings. We would have punished him. We would have stopped the revelations to him." (Quran 69:44-46)

Evangelical Comparison: The text argues for its own authority by claiming that God would physically intervene to stop a lying prophet. Evangelical theology acknowledges that false prophets may thrive temporarily (2 Peter 2:1-3) and that truth is verified by consistency with prior revelation (Isaiah 8:20) and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, rather than the immediate physical execution of the claimant.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the mechanism of justification. Surah 69:24 explicitly frames salvation as a transaction: reward given 'in return' for works. This is the antithesis of the Evangelical doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone (Sola Fide), where works are the evidence, not the currency, of salvation. Furthermore, the Christological gap is absolute; Christ's atoning work is absent, replaced by individual accountability where 'no friend' can help (v35), directly denying the role of Jesus as Mediator and Advocate (1 John 2:1).

Shared Values:

Belief in a singular, powerful Creator; Reality of a final Judgment Day; Existence of Heaven and Hell; Moral obligation to care for the poor; History of Noah and Pharaoh

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation is explicitly stated as a return/payment for works (v24).
2. [Critical] Christology (Sufficiency of Christ) – Denies mediation; the sinner has 'no friend here' (v35), rejecting Christ's role as Intercessor.
3. [Major] Sola Scriptura – Asserts a post-Biblical revelation as the 'absolute truth' (v51).

Semantic Warnings:

"Believer"

In Text: One who accepts the Quranic message, fears the judgment, and performs specific works (feeding poor).

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

Example: *In Surah 69, a 'believer' is safe because of their works (v24); in Romans 4:5, a 'believer' is justified precisely because they do not work but trust God who justifies the ungodly.*

"Truth (Al-Haqq)"

In Text: The Quranic revelation and the inevitable judgment event.

Evangelical: Jesus Christ Himself (John 14:6) and God's Word (John 17:17).

Example: *Verse 51 calls the Quran 'absolute truth'; Christians hold Jesus as the personification of Truth.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Escape from Hell and entrance into an exalted Paradise with physical pleasures (food/drink).

How Attained: Through belief in the accountability of God and specific works (feeding the poor) performed in the past.

Basis of Assurance: The text offers conditional assurance based on the quality of one's record. There is no assurance of grace, only the hope that one's works are sufficient.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Surah 69:24 ('in return for your works') stands in direct opposition to Romans 11:6 ('And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace').

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Glorify the name of your Lord, Most Great (Verse 52)
2. Believe in God, Most Great (Implied by Verse 33)
3. Advocate the feeding of the poor (Implied by Verse 34)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Live in constant anticipation of accountability (Verse 20)
2. Accept the Quran as absolute truth, not poetry (Verse 41, 51)
3. Fear the inevitable judgment event

Ritual Requirements:

1. Glorification (Tasbih)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 24, it says people enter Paradise 'in return for works in days past.' How do you know if your past works are enough to pay for Paradise?
2. Verse 35 says the sinner has 'no friend' to help them. As a Christian, I rely on Jesus as my advocate. Does it worry you to face judgment with no advocate?

3. The text mentions the 'record' being read. If your record contains sins, how are they removed before they are read aloud?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Record (The Book of Deeds) – We all have a record of debt we cannot pay (Colossians 2:14). Jesus cancels the record of debt for those who trust Him, effectively giving us His 'Right Hand' record. [Colossians 2:13-14]
2. The desire for an Advocate – The text highlights the terror of being friendless in judgment. The Gospel answers this fear by providing the Advocate. [1 John 2:1]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety [Severe] – The believer must constantly accumulate works to ensure their record is heavy enough. There is no rest, as the verdict is only known at the end.
2. Isolation in Judgment [Severe] – The explicit statement that there is 'no friend' (intercessor) creates a terrifying sense of isolation. The individual stands alone against the infinite holiness of God.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Divine Revelation transmitted through a Messenger.

Verification Method: The internal consistency of the message and the survival of the Messenger (the argument that God would kill a forger).

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the illumination of the Holy Spirit through the written Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:12-14), whereas this text demands submission to the Messenger's utterance as the 'absolute truth' based on the threat of divine retribution.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Meccan Period (Early to Middle)

Authorship: Attributed to Muhammad via Gabriel; Khalifa translation (1978) is a modern sectarian translation.

Textual Issues: Khalifa's translation of verse 17 ('eight universes') differs from the orthodox majority translation ('eight angels'). This reflects Khalifa's 'Code 19' numerological theology.