

SURAH 84

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

OVERVIEW

Surah 84, titled 'Al-Inshiqaq' (The Rupture), presents a vivid eschatological narrative focused on the inevitability of the Day of Judgment. The text opens with cosmic imagery—the sky splitting open and the earth flattening and ejecting its contents—depicting nature in total submission to the command of its Lord. The central theme addresses the human condition as a journey of labor towards a final meeting with God. The text bifurcates humanity into two distinct categories based on the manner in which they receive their 'record' (the account of their earthly deeds). The righteous receive their record in their right hand, leading to an easy reckoning and joy. Conversely, the wicked receive their record 'behind their back,' resulting in remorse and damnation in Hell. The surah concludes by contrasting the arrogance of disbelievers, who refuse to prostrate to the Quran, with the reward of those who believe and lead a righteous life—a reward the text describes as 'well-deserved.'

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (God), The Righteous (Recipient of the Right Hand), The Wicked (Recipient Behind the Back), Humans

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. WORKS-BASED ESCHATOLOGY

Assertion: Final judgment is determined by a record of deeds; a righteous life results in a 'well-deserved' reward.

"As for those who believed and led a righteous life, they receive a recompense that is well-deserved. [084:025]"

Evangelical Comparison: In this text, the outcome of the Day of Judgment is contingent upon the contents of the individual's record. The text explicitly states in verse 25 that the recompense for the righteous is 'well-deserved,' implying a system of merit where human effort obligates divine reward. Evangelical theology, by contrast, teaches that no human works can merit salvation (Isaiah 64:6) and that eternal life is a free gift of God through Christ Jesus (Romans 6:23), not a wage earned by the believer.

2. UNIVERSAL SUBMISSION

Assertion: All creation, including the sky and earth, possesses a consciousness that submits to God's command to expire.

"It will submit to its Lord and expire. [084:002]"

Evangelical Comparison: The text depicts the physical universe (sky and earth) as sentient entities that 'submit' to the Lord's command to be destroyed. While the Bible speaks of creation groaning for redemption (Romans 8:22), this text emphasizes the total, irresistible sovereignty of God in dismantling creation. The focus is on the power of the Commander and the obedience of the created order.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental theological gap lies in the mechanism of salvation. Surah 84 posits a direct correlation between human performance ('righteous life') and eternal reward ('well-deserved recompense'). There is no mention of atonement, sacrifice, or mediation. The individual stands alone before God with their record. Evangelical Christianity asserts that all records are damning (Romans 3:23) and that salvation is only possible because Jesus Christ took the penalty of the record upon Himself (Colossians 2:14). The Quranic text reinforces the self-saving capacity of man through obedience, whereas the Bible asserts man's total depravity and need for a Savior.

Shared Values:

Belief in a Sovereign Creator; Reality of a Day of Judgment; Existence of Heaven and Hell; Moral accountability; Omnipotence of God

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation is explicitly linked to leading a righteous life and is described as 'well-deserved' (merit-based).
2. [Critical] Christology (Sufficiency of Christ) – Total absence of a mediator. The individual faces God alone with their own record.

Semantic Warnings:

"Belief"

In Text: Acceptance of Islamic monotheism and the Quran as divine revelation.

Evangelical: Trust and reliance on the finished work of Jesus Christ for salvation.

Example: *In Surah 84:25, 'those who believed' refers to those accepting the Quranic message; in John 3:16, it refers to trusting in the Son of God.*

"Righteous Life"

In Text: Adherence to moral laws and religious duties sufficient to merit reward.

Evangelical: A standard of perfection only met by Christ, imputed to the believer by faith.

Example: *The text implies a righteous life makes heaven 'well-deserved'; Isaiah 64:6 calls human righteousness 'filthy rags'.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: An 'easy reckoning' and returning to one's people joyfully; avoidance of Hell.

How Attained: By believing and leading a righteous life (v. 25).

Basis of Assurance: There is no present assurance; assurance is only granted at the moment the record is handed over.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text explicitly contradicts Sola Fide by stating the reward is 'well-deserved' based on lifestyle, whereas Ephesians 2:8-9 states salvation is 'not of works, lest any man should boast.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Believe (implied by condemnation of disbelievers in v. 20-22)
2. Lead a righteous life (v. 25)
3. Prostrate when the Quran is recited (v. 21)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Prepare for the inevitable meeting with the Lord
2. Avoid arrogance (v. 13)
3. Acknowledge accountability for actions (v. 14)

Ritual Requirements:

1. Prostration (Sujud) during Quranic recitation

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The text says we are 'irreversibly heading for a meeting' with the Lord. How do you prepare for that meeting?
2. Verse 25 says the reward is 'well-deserved.' Do you feel that your life is righteous enough to truly *deserve* paradise from a perfect God?
3. If your record contains everything you've ever done, how do you deal with the pages that contain your sins?
4. What happens if you get to the meeting and your record isn't good enough?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Record (Kitab) – We all have a 'record' of debt/sin. We cannot erase it. Jesus steps in to pay the debt of our record so we can receive His record of righteousness. [Colossians 2:13-14]
2. The Inevitable Meeting – The meeting is scary if we are defendants representing ourselves. It is joyful if we have an Advocate (Lawyer) with the Father. [1 John 2:1]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Fear of Exposure/Judgment [Severe] – The believer lives with the knowledge that every action is recorded and that this record will determine their eternal fate. There is no certainty of the outcome until the moment of judgment.
2. Performance Pressure [Severe] – The phrase 'well-deserved' places the onus of salvation entirely on the believer's performance. If the reward is earned, the failure is also entirely the believer's fault, creating immense pressure to perform perfectly.

EPISTEMOLOGY

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

Verification Method: Observation of natural cycles (dusk, night, moon) as parallels to spiritual stages.

Evangelical Contrast: While the Bible affirms general revelation in nature (Psalm 19), it rejects post-apostolic scripture. This text posits the Quran as the test of belief (v. 21), whereas Evangelicalism posits the Bible as the sole test (2 Timothy 3:16).

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Meccan Period (Early Islamic history)

Authorship: Attributed to Muhammad via Gabrielic revelation; Khalifa translation (1978).

Textual Issues: Khalifa's translation uses 'well-deserved' in v. 25. Other translations (e.g., Sahih International) use 'unfailing' or 'uninterrupted'. Khalifa's choice emphasizes the merit-based theology of his specific interpretation.