



# **The Changing Religion**

*A New Understanding of Islam and the Unity of Religions*

**Joseph Ali bin Muhammad**



This book is dedicated to  
Allison B. Krause, Jeffrey Glenn Miller,  
Sandra Lee Scheuer, William Knox Schroeder,  
and the children of Iraq.

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# Prophecy and Science





## The Volcanic Prophecies

In Luke 17:23-30, Jesus confirms the world's destruction at his next coming to earth, saying it will be as the days of Noah and Lot. In the well-known Noah story, warning was given for people to repent but only a few would. God then flooded the earth to wipe out the vast majority of humanity and other life on the planet. In the days of Lot, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for unprecedented levels of sin. According to Genesis 19:24, fire and sulfur rained on them.

Scientists discovered super volcanoes during the past few decades, noticing formations in satellite photos of earth that looked volcanic but of enormous size. Studying the formations on earth, scientists confirmed they are indeed giant volcanoes. A few are spread across the planet. Scientists explain when a major eruption of a super volcano occurs, it wipes out all or mostly all life on the planet. A massive flood of volcanic ash smothers the atmosphere and leaves large parts of the earth covered under several feet of it. Scientists also explain that Yellowstone National Park in the United States is a super volcano, by its geological clock is due for an eruption, and is active. That is, it is preparing for eruption.

Massive electromagnetic energy released during volcanic eruptions causes lightning and thunder. Large earthquakes occur, and mud balls and hailstones formed around volcanic ash particulates fall from the sky. Christian prophecy in Revelation 16:17-21 clearly describes eruption of a super volcano: lightning, thunder, giant hailstones, and earthquakes causing cities to crumble across the planet and islands and mountains to disappear. Size of the hailstones is due to the enormous amount and size of particulates put into the air.

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When a super volcano erupts, earthquakes of unimaginable magnitude occur. When the inevitable major eruption of the Yellowstone or other super volcano occurs, it will rip apart and move land all over the world. This not only confirms the Christian prophecy in Revelation, but also prophecy of Islam. Qur'an surah 56, "Al Waqi'ah" ("The Inevitable"), says an event will come to pass to humble many, "the earth will be shaken to its depths, the mountains will crumble." Surah 99, "Al Zalzalah" ("The Earthquake"), says the earth will shake and throw out its inner burdens, that this will be Judgment Day when the souls are sorted. Notice that surah 99 adds information not in Revelation that with the great quaking, the earth will throw out its insides. Surah 101, "Al Quri'ah" ("The Great Calamity"), speaks of a clamorous day when men will be scattered like moths and the mountains carded like wool.

Science confirms the inevitable truth of the prophecy in Revelation 16:17-21, the Qur'an, and the Book of Mormon. In the Mormon scriptures, 1 Nephi 12:4-6, the super volcanic eruption is prophesied in vision as lightning, thunder, and earthquakes that cause rocks and mountains to tear apart, and cities to sink, burn, and fall to the ground. The scriptures from the different books combine to describe what will happen with major eruption of a super volcano. This gives scientific legitimacy to the holy books, prophets and prophecy, and God's existence. It also testifies that God has placed important information in different religions as well as within science.

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## The South African Runner

Among prophecies given through Prophet Muhammad is that during the final days before the return of Christ, it will become difficult to make physical distinction between women and men. Collapsing of social and occupational roles and styles of dress are seen by some Muslims as evidence of this coming true. However, those do not capture the prophecy's essence that science captures in evidence of endocrine-system disrupting industrial pollution as culprit in artificial hermafroditization of animals and that humans will experience the same fate. Evidence that some of us are already experiencing that fate was presented during Ramadan in 2009 in news stories about South African athlete Caster Semenya.

Semenya is a world-class female Olympic runner who was forced by her sport's governing body to undergo gender tests after other runners complained that Semenya's muscle bulk that gave her advantage over other runners was evidence Semenya is not female. Medical tests confirmed the complaint of the other runners. According to news reports, Semenya has undescended testes despite outward appearance of a female. She - or he - does not have ovaries or a uterus, which also suggests Semenya is not female but is a male with androgen insensitivity syndrome, one of the conditions classified as "disorders of sex development."

Chromosome pattern readings can determine a person's true sex, allowing for easy identification of those with DSDs. The DSD medical conditions promoted by bio-accumulative industrial pollution are common enough already that organizations such as Accord Alliance ([www.accordalliance.org](http://www.accordalliance.org)) have come into being to promote awareness of the

conditions and civil rights of those affected. Yet, neither news media nor governments took the opportunity presented by the Semenya story to educate their publics about these shocking birth defects or their causes. Congenital adrenal hyperplasia is a condition similar to androgen insensitivity syndrome, but affects females, causing them to appear outwardly as males. Another condition is persistent Mullerian duct syndrome (not to be confused with Mullerian duct anomalies that affect women), which causes males to have undescended testes and internal female reproductive anatomy, including uterus, ovaries, tubes, and cervix.

As both androgen insensitivity syndrome and persistent Mullerian duct syndrome are promoted by bio-accumulative industrial pollution, the more pollution accumulates, the more likely the disorders will occur and the more likely they will occur in combination. Ultimately, this opens the possibility of men - provable by their chromosome patterns - with both external and internal female anatomy, including egg-producing ovaries. Not only could such men become pregnant by other men, but because they have undescended testes, they may be capable of asexual reproduction. Either possibility may be clue to the Tanakh (Old Testament) cockatrice prophecy in Isaiah 11:8 (changed to viper in some translations). The cockatrice is a mythical creature born from a male bird that lays eggs, and while it has taken on sinister elements in mythical folklore, its context in Isaiah is connected to the return of Christ. Although aspects of Hinduism are not yet included in this new understanding of Islam and the unity of religions, ancient Hindu prophets were hermaphroditic in form and many Hindus expect the next major prophet to also be hermaphroditic.\*

News media have reported in recent years on female sharks in captivity, having no contact with compatible male sharks for several years, who have given birth to babies with no DNA contribution from a father. A similar report has been made on Komodo dragons. Science had not known sharks nor Komodo dragons to be capable of asexual reproduction prior to these developments first reported in 2002. The news reports do not say if scientists read chromosome patterns to confirm the sharks and lizards are females rather than hermaphroditic males with the shark equivalents of androgen insensitivity and persistent Mullerian duct syndromes and the ability for self-fertilization. Also possible is they could be females who have developed hermaphroditic conditions to give them testes and self-fertilization ability rather than reproducing through the asexual cell-division process called parthenogenesis.

Science linking industrial pollution to artificial hermaphroditization has studied both human and genetically-related species. One study examining a common herbicide suspect in hermaphroditization of frogs showed human cell tissues respond to the chemical in the same way as the frog cells. Studies of polar bears have found PCB pollutants to be culprit in hermaphroditizing female members of that species, notes the bears exposure to bio-accumulative toxins is magnified at the top of the food chain, that this could contribute to threat of the bears' extinction, and that humans similarly could be at risk. Studies have found other affected species and identified a number of sources of endocrine-disrupting pollutants such as refining and use of fossil fuels (including manufacturing of plastics), wood products manufacturing, paper bleaching and other chlorine use, herbicides, pesticides, spermicides, detergents, cosmetics, and industrial waste products. The herma-



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phrodization effects of endocrine-disrupters has been known by science and western governments without denial since at least the late 1990s, but chemical manufacturers have lobbied governments to ignore the problem, also since at least the late 1990s, and that is what governments have done in order to buy industrial economic prosperity at the cost of quality of life, health, and well-being of the human species.

\*Genesis 15:4 also makes subtle suggestion that Abraham was herma-phroditic, as it says he would have an heir born from his own body. Some translations have slightly different wording, "from your own issue." This raises possibility that one or both of the stories of Hagar and Sarah as the mothers of Ishmael and Isaac may not be correct.

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## Disappearing Men

One prophecy of Islam given through Prophet Muhammad is that during the days just before Christ's return, women will come to greatly outnumber men by a ratio skewed as much as 50 to 1. Though not to that number, Tanakh gives support for the Muslim prophecy in the book of Isaiah's indication of the necessity for plural marriage (seven women will marry one man) due to a shortage of men (Isaiah 4:1). The traditional interpretations of the prophecy by Muslim scholars has been that a massive number of men will die in a tremendous war foretold in prophecy of Islam as well as in Tanakh (see Joel, for example) and in Christian scripture (Revelation 9:16-19).

The Mormon scriptures include instruction for plural marriage (Doctrine and Covenants 132:61) but also instruction that a man is to have only one wife (D&C 49:15-16). The mainstream Mormon church does not currently practice plural marriage but understands the instruction to be for the future when the male-shortage prophecy indicated in Isaiah comes to fruition. Mormons interpret self-selection to the church as another reason women will come to greatly outnumber men among true followers. A massive influx of single women to the church, many of them single moms via widowing, divorce, or abandonment, will usher in a necessity for plural marriage among true followers. The plural marriage instruction in the Mormon scriptures indicates specifically that a man will be given multiple wives in order "to multiply and replenish the earth" (D&C 132:63), which suggests a massive war and/or other catastrophic calamities occur to cause significant reduction to the human population (see also Revelation 8:10-11, 9:15, 9:18, and 19:19-21).

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Theories that self-selection and war will cause women to greatly outnumber men among true followers are valid. A third contribution to an impending shortage of males is effect of bio-accumulative industrial pollution. Scientific evidence is industrial pollution is responsible for a drop in births of baby boys reported in industrial nations around the world, a trend that will accelerate as the pollutants continue to be created, released, and stored in our air, soil, water, plants, animal fat, and human cells. A study of Italy found that while the nation had experienced an overall increase in boys, a decrease in boys born occurred in Italy's largest metropolitan - or industrial - areas. Other studies have also traced the phenomenon to a father's occupational or a community's general exposure to industrial pollutants. Until chromosome pattern readings become a standard procedure for newborns, it is unknown how many among the increased ratio of girls born are hidden males with androgen insensitivity syndrome, some of whom may also have persistent Mullerian duct syndrome.

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## The Inevitable Sinkholes

According to prophecy of Islam, immediately before or after Imam Al Mehdi emerges before the world (see the *Understanding Elijah* section), large earthquakes cause giant sinkholes that swallow a portion of at least one city and killing several thousand people. At least one of the sinkholes occurs in the east and at least one in the west. Science explains that sinkholes occur when underground holes fill in with dirt and cave-ins up to the surface occur. The dirt can be drawn along a slanted horizontal path so that a sinkhole emerging at the surface may not be directly above the underground hole that it fills in. Rivers and lakes can also drain into underground holes, causing water level droppage or even complete dry ups.

Science notes sinkholes tend to form in places where certain types of rocks and soil are more easily washed away underground, but also explains sinkholes can occur anywhere there is a hole underground to be filled in, including where humans have left underground holes of enormous magnitude, with billions or trillions of gallons of material being removed from any given location by oil drilling or other extractions. When a significant magnitude earthquake occurs at the right spot, enormous holes left by oil drilling and other extractions will suddenly fill with dirt, causing massive cave-ins to come to the surface. The giant sinkholes prophecy is by scientific understanding inevitable to come true. We are in danger of both enormous sinkholes and of lakes and rivers disappearing.

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# Understanding Elijah



## Jesus on Religious Diversity and Unity

In the New Testament Gospel books, Jesus prophesies that prophets will be given to other peoples besides the Jews and that a religious unity will come about. In Matthew 21:43, he tells the Jewish high priests and elders the kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to another people who will produce its fruits. Continuing in 22:1-14, he tells the parable of the wedding banquet a king prepares for his son. When the invited guests refuse invitation, the king sends servants to summon them. The servants are mistreated, some even killed. The king responds by sending an army to kill the murderers of his servants and burn their city. Then he sends servants to the streets to invite anyone they come across so that the wedding hall is filled with guests. The king finds one among them who is not properly dressed and tosses him out in the darkness "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Jesus ends the story, "Many are invited, but few are chosen."

The metaphor is of God as the king who invites the Jews to the metaphorical marriage of Christ to the world. He keeps inviting them to accept the message and teachings of Christ, sending prophets again and again, even the Christ himself, but the servants were mistreated, some even killed. In response, as promised many times in Tanakh, God sent punishment. Christ states that God also responds by sending servants to invite other people to salvation, in fact, to invite "anyone they come across." Among those people too, standards of moral law must be met or they too will be rejected (tossed from the wedding banquet). In the closing remark, Christ indicates many are invited, but in relative terms, few of us will actually make it into heaven.

In slightly different form, the metaphor is also presented in Matthew 21:33-43, Mark 12:1-11, and Luke 20:9-17 as the parable of the tenants. A man leases land to other men for farming. When the landowner sends servants to collect his share of the crop, each time the servants are beaten and killed by the tenants. The landowner finally sends his own son, thinking he will be respected by the tenants, but they kill his son too. Jesus asks his listeners, what do you think the landowner will do then? They reply, he will come and kill the men and then lease his land to others who will give him his crop share at harvest. Jesus ends the story in Matthew 21:43, again, saying the kingdom of God will be taken from the Jews and given to a nation that will produce proper fruit.

In Luke 10:25-37, in parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus explains to look for true followers of God among all groups, to not be racist or judgmental toward others, that differences in religious practice and ethnic groupings are not valid ways to discern true followers, and that some in your own religious group may not be the true followers of God that they claim to be. In John 10:16, speaking in metaphor of Jewish followers as his sheep and him the shepherd, Jesus says he has other sheep who are not of that pen, but who also must be brought. They too shall listen to his voice, and the flock will be one.

In Matthew 7:15-20, 10:41, 23:34, 24:5, 24:11, and John 13:20, Christ says both true and false prophets will come after him, and he instructs on how to discern between them: false prophets are wolves in sheep's clothing, you will recognize them by their fruit (their works, deeds, actions), they cannot produce good fruit (they will not do the good things they promise); accept the true prophets and assist them and you will be rewarded by the same measure as the prophet; Christ

will send prophets, wise men, and teachers, some of these will be killed, others flogged and driven from town to town; many will be fooled by false prophets who claim they are the Christ; who ever accepts the true prophets accepts the Christ and the One who sent Christ.

To discern a true prophet, wise man, or teacher from the false, what the person teaches must match what Christ taught. If a person presents doctrines and interpretations of scriptures different from the ones presented through the words and logic of Christ, they are false prophets and messengers who are sent to lead people astray. Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 that false prophets are sent for the very reason that people do not want to accept the truth (that can be found and cross-referenced in the words of Christ and true prophets) that will lead to salvation. That is, a good number of people exist who may believe in God on a basic level, but who will not accept that to qualify for heaven requires diligent personal effort to repent of wicked ways taught to us by the world and/or will not accept belief that anyone other than those in their own religious grouping can qualify for heaven. The words of false messengers will appeal to many people.

In addition to what a prophet or messenger teaches, the person must also live by what is taught. Wise men, teachers, and prophets who surround themselves in leisure, luxury, and personal indulgence while claiming to teach the message of Christ are false messengers. The Mormon scriptures call such behavior "priestcrafts," in which men preach to set themselves up as a light for the world, but do so for their own wealth, fame, and status among others rather than for the welfare of the church and other people (2 Nephi 26:29). The scriptures says God has outlawed such behavior and instead commands

charity for all men, for charity is love, and true teachers will labor for God's cause, not for money (2 Nephi 26:30-31).

Christ also says in the New Testament that it is not possible to serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13). This does not mean a true teacher cannot have any money or some means of economic support provided by a church or ministry in order to keep a modest home and food on his own table. Rather, it means beyond providing for his own family's basic needs and security, a true messenger or teacher will demonstrate by example how to use any excess personal wealth for service to others. True messengers and teachers follow a moral code that includes honesty and adherence to God's commandments. Church leaders who buy expensive autos, live in lavish homes, and who wear expensive jewelry and clothing are false teachers. True teachers live in modest homes, wear inexpensive clothes, and have few indulgences.

In the New Testament passages cited in this chapter, Christ indicates more than once that prophets will be sent to other peoples besides the Jews, in fact, messengers will be sent to "anyone they come across." This appears to confirm the idea that messengers are sent to all nations of the earth to extend invitations to the Gospel. Qur'an 10:47 and 2 Nephi 29:7-12 in Book of Mormon both indicate the same, that God sends messengers to all nations. Another aspect of prophecy given by Christ (Matthew 21:43) is that a new kingdom of God will be established in another nation, not among the Jews. That prophecy will be explored more in subsequent chapters.

Finally, prophecy of both Islam and of the Mormon scriptures (1 Nephi 13:42, 19:15, 2 Nephi 6:11, 10:7, 25:16, and 30:7) is that Jews will come to accept the Christ before his return. In Matthew 23:39 and Luke 13:35, Jesus gives the same

prophecy. He says the Jews will not see him again until they say, "blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

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## **Elijah-John the Baptist-Al Mehdi**

The New Testament Gospels provide few details on the life of John the Baptist, but still give critical information regarding his place in God's plan of the return of Christ. Qur'an provides even less information about John the Baptist (or Yahya as he is called in Arabic) than the Gospels, but tells us he was member of the family that adopted Maryam, the mother of Jesus. Ayats (verses) 3:38-41, 6:85, 19:2-15, and 21:89-90 confirm Yahya as a prophet, say both he and his father Zachariah were devout followers of God, and confirm that Zachariah was visited by angels to announce his son's impending birth. Despite the few details we have on John, in both Qur'an and New Testament, the story of Christ is not told without him.

In Christian scripture, John's imminent birth is announced to his father by Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:11-20). John is said to be filled with the Holy Spirit even before birth (Luke 1:15), and he fulfills prophecy of Isaiah as a voice "crying out in the wilderness" before the coming of Christ in order to prepare people to accept the Christ (Matthew 3:3, 11:10, Mark 1:2-3, Luke 3:4, 7:27, John 1:23). John preached repentance and the covenant of baptism (Matthew 3:1-11, Mark 1:4-5, Luke 3:1-3, John 1:31) in which sins are symbolically washed away when a person commits to a path of repentance. He taught charity, honesty, humility, and generosity as part of repentance (Luke 3:11-14). John preached that Christ would soon arrive and surpass him in ministry (Matthew 3:11-12, Mark 1:7-8, Luke 3:15-17, John 1:15, 26-30, 3:27-31). John serves as a herald or trumpet announcing the imminent arrival of Christ.

Also in the New Testament, Christ calls John the Baptist more than a prophet (Matthew 11:9, Luke 7:26). Before the

public ministry of Christ began, John answered the Jewish leaders that he was not Elijah (John 1:21). Either that passage is an incorrect report (see “The Resurrection Conflicts,” “Jesus on Jesus,” and “Paul’s Letters and the Judas Curse” for more discussion on errors in the Christian scriptures), or Christ later corrected John the Baptist and identified him as Elijah “who is to come” (Matthew 11:14). Though some translations have changed that phrase to “who was to come,” both *present and future tense* is used by Christ in subsequent passages where he says Elijah will come “and restore all things” (Matthew 17:10-11, Mark 9:11-13). In Tanakh, God promises to send Elijah “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,” and that he will turn children’s and fathers’ hearts toward one another (Malachi 3:23-24; in Protestant Bible, Malachi 4:5-6).

Islam prophecies a descendant of Muhammad, referred to as Imam Al Mehdi (also spelled Mahdi; an imam is a priest, mehdi means “rightfully guided” or “one who leads to truth”) to emerge before the world shortly before the return of Christ. By prophecy, Mehdi stands before the world in opposition to the anti-Christ and to re-live the role of John the Baptist on a global scale. He prepares true followers for Christ’s return by reminding of Jesus’ true teachings, reforming and reconciling Islam’s competing sects, and leading a religious unity movement that sees millions each of Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and others merging into one religion.

In misunderstanding and fear of Islam, some Christian churches have overlooked prophecy of Elijah’s return before Christ given by Christ in the Christian scriptures, and have adopted a false doctrine that the Muslim Mehdi is the anti-Christ rather than return of Elijah as a global John the Baptist to prepare the world for Christ’s return. Islam prophecy is that

Dajjal (the anti-Christ) and Mehdi emerge before the world around the same time and are foes. The churches that have adopted doctrine against Mehdi are not accounting for Christ's New Testament prophecy of Elijah's return before his own nor for the Muslim prophecy that Mehdi reforms and corrects a severely disjointed and corrupted Islam. These churches even argue that the era of world peace under Mehdi prophecied in Islam will be a false peace the anti-Christ uses to fool us. But Christ says in the New Testament this is not possible, that "the elect" will not be fooled by false messengers (Matthew 24:24). He also said in reply to people who said he was from the devil that he could not preach the message he did if he were from the devil because "a house divided against itself cannot stand" (Matthew 12:24-26, Mark 3:22-26, Luke 11:15-20).

In the same way, Mehdi cannot deliver a message of peace, justice, and righteousness, nor a message consistent with the words of Christ, and he cannot lead the world to a brief era of peace, justice, and prosperity for all based on the teachings of Christ, if he is not a true messenger of God. Christ tells us in the New Testament both true and false prophets would come after him, and he instructed on how to discern between them (Matthew 7:15-20, 10:41, 23:34, 24:5, 24:11, John 13:20), as discussed in the preceding chapter. Though they both may claim to be devout true followers of God, differences in the messages and actions of Mehdi and Dajjal will be striking. The true followers will know the difference between them by what these men preach and what they do. Mehdi will teach what Christ taught and will live out his words in his actions. Dajjal will teach a corrupted message meant to ensnare those who will not accept Christ's message of repentance and effort to diligently follow God's commands to qualify for heaven.

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Whatever Dajjal produces, it cannot be good nor be consistent with the message of Christ (Matthew 7:15-20).

Islam prophecy explains the brief era of peace and equality for all mankind under Mehdi is later upset by a re-emergent anti-Christ whom Mehdi had previously defeated. A new war against the true followers will be launched, but the anti-Christ will be defeated again by the Christ himself. This appears to match Christian prophecy in Revelation 13:1-8 in which “the beast” (given power by the dragon, or Satan, Revelation 20:2) appears to have a mortal wound, but later recovers and has people - except the elect - following him again until Christ defeats his armies (Revelation 16:14-16, 17:12-13, 19:19-21).

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## The Mormon Scriptures

Qur'an 10:47 says God gives prophets to all nations, but most Muslims believe Muhammad was the last prophet. This does not allow them to accept Joseph Smith Jr. as prophet nor legitimacy of the Mormon scriptures. Muslims base argument of Muhammad as last prophet on Qur'an 33:40 which says he is seal of the prophets. In some translations of New Testament, John 6:27 reads the same to say Christ is seal of the prophets. Other translations of John 6:27 say Christ has the seal of the prophets, meaning a type of seal of approval from God, which suggests Qur'an 33:40 and in some cases also John 6:27 are being misinterpreted from the original text. In addition, if any cap was placed on prophethood after Muhammad, it was done with condition that at any time God may abrogate the decree, remove the cap and once again send or choose messengers in His cause, as Qur'an 2:106 indicates God reserves the right to abrogate any decree with something similar or better.

Smith is accused by some people of making up the Book of Mormon just as some accuse Muhammad of making up the Qur'an. Even if both men had been geologists, however, they would not have known about super volcanoes. These giant volcanoes erupt only once during several tens of thousands of years, and were only discovered by scientists in recent decades with the aid of satellite photography. Yet, as demonstrated in "The Volcanic Prophecies" chapter, both Qur'an and Book of Mormon confirm the prophecy of the Christian scriptures in Revelation 16 which with scientific understanding can be recognized as eruption of a super volcano.

In 1 Nephi 12, Nephi describes a vision he was shown of the future destruction of the land to which he and his family

were traveling (North America). The vision featured thunder, lightning, earthquakes, land and rocks tearing apart, mountains crumbling to pieces, and cities sinking, burning, and tumbling to destruction. The destruction Nephi was shown is not limited to North America and not everyone dies. A vapor of darkness that preceded the great quaking moves off from the earth to reveal a remnant of people spared. Jesus descends from heaven to these people. Verse 17 explains the mists of darkness are metaphors for temptations that led so many astray. 1 Nephi 22:23 describes the people to be consumed in the destruction: those who build up churches for gain, seek power over others, focus on image, are promiscuous in sexuality and materialism, and are unjust and wrong others.

Discovery of super volcanoes and matching end of the world prophecies in Qur'an, Book of Mormon, and the Bible gives credibility to all three books and to true prophethood of Muhammad, Smith, Christ, and Apostle John as super volcanoes were not known about during their times. Another argument used against legitimacy of the Book of Mormon is that Native American DNA does not match Jewish DNA, yet the Jewish Nephi and his brothers are supposed to be the forefathers of Native Americans. However, according to the Book of Mormon, the Jaredites, a lost tribe of Israel, lived in the Americas before Nephi's family. Their separation and isolation over time would have given them distinctive DNA markers by limiting genetic makeup of the descending population to its own tribe. When progeny of Nephi and his brothers intermarried with the Jaredites to become ancestors of today's Native Americans, they would have inherited those markers and with continued separation and isolation again, would have again produced a distinctive line of DNA.

Other arguments against the Book of Mormon include description of animals Nephi says he saw in the Americas (cows, horses, donkeys, and oxen) and use of metals during that time to produce the thin plates upon which Nephi wrote as well as other objects. The animals may have been different from what Nephi reports but given names by Nephi according to some similarity in form to animals he knew names for, and Mormon scholars have effectively answered the plates and metal ore questions as well. Note that Lindsay (see References) follows the standard Mormon belief that Nephi and his family landed in Central America rather than North America. This author believes a landing in North America is suggested by the Book of Mormon in its prophecies of “the land of promise” as the United States and that the land of promise is also where Nephi and his family were traveling. Mormon scholars base the belief of a landing in Mexico or slightly further south on the visit of Christ reported in the Book of Mormon that they believe was codified in ancient meso-American religions as the deity Quetzalcoatl. However, it is possible Nephi's family landed further north and that later migrations of Nephites to the south took place. It could be that the gold and other ores reported in the Book of Mormon were found in Northern California, for example, and that this also helps explain the meso-American legends that were told to the Spanish of lost cities of gold to the north.

Echoing Islam, the Mormon scriptures also say the Bible has been corrupted, and give prophecy of the return of Elijah, the Jews accepting Christ, and a religious convergence before the return of Christ. The Mormon scriptures explain “plain and precious” parts along with many covenants were removed from the Christian scriptures when they went through the



hands of a “great and abominable church” that was founded by the devil (1 Nephi 13:26-29). Note that Revelation 2:12-13 in the Christian scriptures identifies a church in Pergamos (located in what is now Turkey) where Satan has a seat. One suggestion is the Revelation reference is to Constantine's later calling of the Nicaea council which declared Christ and God to be the same being (see discussion of this doctrine in “Jesus on Jesus” and “Paul's Letters and the Judas Curse” chapters) and laid foundation for the later council at Carthage (located in Tunisia) which chose the books, including Paul's letters, that we know today as the Christians scriptures.

The religious unity movement given prophecy in Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi 29 is further defined in an elongated metaphor in Jacob 5 as a grafting together of the unspoiled parts of the various religions into one and a casting away of what is spoiled. The movement will bring together the uncorrupted parts of different religions into one church while shedding the corrupted parts of each religion. 2 Nephi 29:7-11 and again in verse 12, explain that God has prophets from all nations of the earth write his word. Verses 13-14 say a time will come when the various scriptures will be shared among the different nations, God's word will be gathered into one, and also that the fight against God's word and people will be shown. 2 Nephi 30:7 indicates that Jews will come to accept the Christ, also prophesied in 1 Nephi 13:42, 19:15, 2 Nephi 6:11, 10:7, and 25:16.

The scriptures in 2 Nephi do not make explicit mention of Elijah, but appear to give prophecy of both Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. and of Elijah to come after him. In chapter 3, Lehi (Nephi's father and also a prophet, identified as descendant of ancient Biblical Joseph who was son of Jacob, grandson of

Isaac, and great grandson of Abraham) recounts prophecy of ancient Joseph while speaking to his youngest son, also named Joseph. Verses 6 and 7 say God will raise up a seer (verse 5 indicates this is not the Christ, but will be a seer among one of the broken off branches, or lost tribes, of Israel) who will be one of ancient Joseph's descendants. He will do no other work than what God has him do and he will be great like Moses (2 Nephi 3:8-9). He will not only bring forth the word of God to the descendants of Nephi's family, but will also convince them of the truth of scriptures and prophecies they already have (2 Nephi 3:11). Verse 12 says ancient Joseph's descendants will write, descendants of Judah will write, those writings will come together and confound (or correct) the false doctrines, resulting in a laying down of conflict and for peace to be established between these descendants as they regain the knowledge their forefathers had of God's word and covenants. This can be interpreted as different scriptures being brought together to remove false doctrines and lead to a world peace, or as stated in Christian scripture, of Elijah "restoring all things." Verses 13-15 indicate the name of the seer to begin this work will be Joseph, as will the name of his father. Those who seek to destroy him (or seeking to destroy the church Joseph Smith Jr. established) will not be able to do so. His work will be the start of God's work among all people to bring about the restoration of the house of Israel.

Verses 3:16-21 say God will "raise up a Moses" who will speak little of his own, but who will write God's word and for whom God will make a spokesman. In these passages, it is not clear if the same or a different person from the seer named Joseph whose father was also named Joseph is being spoken about. In 3:22-24, Lehi ceases his recounting of prophecy of

ancient Joseph and gives his son Joseph prophecy that among his descendants will rise up a mighty one who will do much good in words and deeds, will be an instrument of God, will work wonders, and will accomplish much toward the restoration of the house of Israel. Verse 4:2 indicates the prophecies of ancient Joseph recounted by Lehi are in the still untranslated plates his family brought from Jerusalem.

Later chapters of 2 Nephi give clearer suggestion of Elijah to follow the work of Joseph Smith Jr. An “ensign to the nations” will be lifted up (2 Nephi 15:26, also Isaiah 5:26 in Tanakh). In that day, a “root of Jesse” will be an ensign for the people (2 Nephi 21:10). The Lord will set his hand a second time to recover his people (21:11). The Lord will set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah (21:12). Envies and hostilities will cease (21:13). The Lord will set his hand the second time to restore his people from their fallen state . . . he will do a marvelous work among men (25:17). He will bring forth his words to the Jews, which will judge them on the last day, for the purpose to convince them of the Messiah, whom they rejected (25:18).

In chapter 27, we are told the Lord will bring forth the words of a book from those who have slumbered (27:6). The book will contain revelations from God, from the beginning to the ending of the world, but the book will be sealed and will not be delivered during the days of abominations and wickedness (27:7-8). The book shall be delivered unto a man (Joseph Smith Jr.) who will deliver the words of the book to another (27:9). This may indicate another messenger to come after Smith Jr. who will build upon his work to restore the house of Israel. From context of

other scriptures in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, this next messenger would logically be Elijah.

He (Smith Jr.) will not deliver the words of the book that are sealed, but the revelation which is sealed will be kept sealed until a day the Lord chooses (27: 10). A day will come when the words of the sealed book will be read from the roof tops and all things that have been and that will be until the end of the earth will be revealed (27:11). This suggests the plates which Smith Jr. did not translate (the larger plates of Nephi as well as the plates taken by Nephi from Laban in Jerusalem that contain the Tanakh as it was known 600 years before Christ - that is, with many corruptions and changes not yet introduced) are still to be translated by someone else (the story of the plates is told in 1 Nephi).

When the book is delivered to the man spoken of in verse 27:9 (Smith Jr.), the book shall then be hid from the world, except for that man and three witnesses who will view the book. No others shall view it unless God wills it (27:12-13). Smith Jr. showed the plates to three witnesses and then later to eight others. Statements of each group are included in introductory pages to the Book of Mormon.

In a part that appears to not be about Elijah, but about Smith Jr.'s attempt to have the Book of Mormon accepted by religious and archaeological scholars of his time, it is said the Lord will proceed to bring forth the words of the book, telling the man (Smith Jr.) to take the unsealed parts to another who will take them to "the learned," who will offer to read the book (27:14-15). The learned will be saying this to get glory from the world rather than for God's cause, hence that second man will reply he cannot bring the book because it is sealed and the learned will respond it cannot be read (27:16-18).

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The Lord will deliver the book and its words to someone who is not learned (27:19). The Lord will tell that man (this now appears again to be speaking of Smith Jr.) that the learned will not read the book's words, that they have rejected God's word, and that God does not need their help in his work (27:20). The man (Smith Jr.) will be told to not touch the sealed parts of the book for God will bring them forth later, thus showing the children of men that he is able to do his own work (27:21). When the first man (Smith Jr.) has read the unsealed parts and shown them to the witnesses, the book will then again be sealed and hid that it may be preserved until the time the Lord chooses to reveal it (27:22), for God is a God of miracles (27:23).

The Lord will tell the man (Smith Jr.) who will read the words delivered to him, that these people honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far from God (27:24-25). God will then do a marvelous work and wonder among them that will cause the wisdom and understandings of the wise, learned, and prudent to vanish and be hidden (27:26).

Next is a passage condemning those who seek to hide their secret counsel from God and warning them that they will be shown their works and will not be able to deny them on Judgment Day (27:27). This seems to suggest some people will conspire in secret to work against this marvel and wonder the Lord will bring forth. All of this will be done at a time at which in just a short while, Lebanon will become a fruitful field and the fruitful field will be esteemed as if it were a forest (27:28). This could be interpreted to suggest this marvel and wonder God has planned will appear in the near or current era of both global deforestation and global climate change in which science says some areas now abundant with

vegetation will become dry and barren, while some areas that are currently dry and arid will become vegetation abundant (see "Epilogue: Need for Change").

When this comes about, the blind will see out of darkness and the deaf will hear the words of the book (27:29). Deaf and blind are likely metaphors for those who are without religion or following false doctrines that have corrupted the religions. Numbers of the meek (presumably the poor and powerless) shall increase in that time, but they will rejoice (27:30) as they will see "the terrible one" defeated and all who prefer iniquity will be cut off (27:31) along with those who deny freedom of speech and belief to others and who work against what is good and just (27:32). Those who erred in religion will come to new understanding and those who previously rejected religion will learn religion (27:35). These last few verses of chapter 27 appear to indicate the prophesied time of Elijah (or Mehdi) in which religions are reformed, the anti-Christ is temporarily defeated, and peace and prosperity for all mankind rather than just for a privileged class will come about.

The Mormon scriptures state prophecy of Elijah's return at least five times. In revelation to Prophet Joseph Smith Jr., Christ referred to Sidney Rigdon, one of Smith's associates, saying that Rigdon was sent forth as John was to prepare the way both before him, and before Elijah, who should come (Doctrine and Covenants 35:4-5). In a 1918 revelation given to Joseph F. Smith (son of Hyrum Smith, Joseph Smith Jr.'s brother upon whom Christ conferred the keys, blessings, and office of church patriarch (D&C 124:91-96, 124), just as Shia Muslims believe was placed upon Ali), reference is made to Elijah who is to come before the Last Day (or the Judgment Day) (D&C 138:46). "Church patriarch" can be interpreted to

mean the next major prophet the Mormon church is waiting for - which will apparently be return of Elijah to precede the return of Christ - should be a descendant of Hyrum Smith. (For how this can be reconciled with Islam prophecy of Elijah, or Mehdi, as a descendant of Muhammad, see the next chapter, "A Missing Link.")

In section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants, Christ says Elias (or Elijah) has been given the keys to restore all things prophesied since the world began regarding the last days. This seems to suggest Elijah will provide corrections to prophecies that have become corrupted or otherwise misunderstood over time. He will also have the keys (knowledge or wisdom) to turn the hearts of fathers and children toward one another so that there will be a group of humans whom God will spare (D&C 27:6-9). This passage specifically identifies those who will follow Elijah as the ones to be spared God's wrath.

Section 2 of Doctrine and Covenants is three short verses which speak of Elijah, saying the priesthood will be revealed through him before the Last Day and again that he will turn the hearts of fathers and children to one another so that the whole earth will not be a waste at Christ's coming. This indicates Elijah is to restore something that is currently missing in the priesthood as well as lead people to repentance and to follow the correct message of Christ so that there is a portion of the earth to be spared when Christ comes again.

Fifth reference to Elijah's return is in the Book of Mormon itself. During his visit of Biblical times to the Americas, Christ said he will send Elijah before "the great and dreadful day" of our Lord (3 Nephi 25:5). This great and dreadful day is understood to be the Last Day, or the day of great calamity described in Tanakh, New Testament, Qur'an, and Book of

Mormon, in which the earth is "harvested" and souls are divided for Judgment. Doctrine and Covenants 65:5 further supports prophecy of Elijah to prepare the world for Christ's return with a global repentance movement that unifies true followers and establishes peace and justice on the planet, saying that Christ will come to meet the kingdom of God that has been set up on earth.

Explicit in Mormon understanding of Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. is that the role of the ensign described in Book of Mormon is left incomplete. Smith established the Mormon church but did not bring about the prophesied gathering of true followers or unity of religions, nor the defeat of "the terrible one," nor cause enmities and hostilities to cease to bring about a time of world peace and prosperity for all. Just as other Biblical prophets came before Elijah and his successor Elisha, and as other prophets came before John the Baptist and Jesus, Smith Jr. serves as a precursor to Elijah who in turn is to build upon and complete the work Smith Jr. was chosen by God to begin.

A final note on the Mormon scriptures concerns Doctrine and Covenants section 76 which gives description of a vision given to Smith Jr. and Rigdon. They were shown and told about three places a person might go in the afterlife. The celestial kingdom is for those who complete requirements to enter heaven. The terrestrial is for those who did not receive the message of Christ during earth life, but did while "in prison" in the afterlife. They have not completed requirements for heaven, but are freed from the prison. The telestial is for those who did not deny the Holy Spirit, but who also did not accept the gospel of Christ. They are put in hell to not be redeemed "until the last resurrection."



In further explanation of the telestial kingdom, it is said that those who follow Paul, Apollos, and Cephas will be among those who are cast into hell. Holy Spirit says they did not receive the gospel of Christ nor the testimony of the prophets and they will not be caught up with "the Church of the Firstborn" in the cloud. Further, they are described as liars, sorcerers, adulterers, and whoremongers, and again it is said they love lies and to make up lies. They will suffer the wrath of God on earth and then be sent to the fire (D&C 76:98-104). Those who follow Paul claim they follow Christ, but according to Holy Spirit's words in the Doctrine and Covenants, this is an empty claim for they are not following the teachings of Christ. According to the Mormon scriptures then, it is not a good idea to follow the teachings of Paul found in the New Testament. This suggests or hints that Paul's letters were put in the New Testament by the "great and abominable church" founded by the devil and are part of the war against God's word that is to be revealed (see "Paul's Letters and the Judas Curse" chapter for more discussion).

Oddly, Paul's letters have remained in Mormon printed editions of the Bible without critical commentary and also remain influential in church doctrine. To further confuse the issue, D&C 18:9 also says that two early important members of the Mormon church, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, were called to the church with the same calling as Paul. This suggests not only a need for the church to re-examine scriptures to come to understand what is being said about Paul and those who follow his teachings, but also the need to re-examine the actions and influence of Cowdery and Whitmer in church history. Cowdery served as early church historian and recorder before being re-assigned by revelation through

Holy Spirit (D&C 47). Mormon scholars have noted that Whitmer's accounts of early church history sometimes conflict with accounts of Smith Jr. The question remains, though, why did God not give explicit warning to Smith Jr. and others that Cowdery and Whitmer were called to the church with intention to subvert it as Doctrine and Covenants section 76 suggests against Paul, Apollos, and Cephas?

On page 322 of *Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Joseph Smith*, Smith is quoted saying that in every age of the church, it has been infiltrated by those in opposition to it. Smith wrote that those who have made the greatest statements of friendship to the church have frequently been its most determined foes. In his New Testament letters, Paul himself tells us that false prophets (this can be extrapolated to other teachers and influential church members) are sent for the very reason that people do not want to accept the truth that will lead to salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). One theory then is that even though warning was given against Paul, the early Mormon church was fragile and in the social and political climate of the time, many coming to it were not ready to reject influence of Paul from their beliefs. Hence, the Lord did not press the issue with the early Mormon church, but left clues in the Doctrine and Covenants to be taken up at a later time within the context of Elijah's work. The issue of Paul's letters presents a tremendous political snarl for the Mormon church, particularly in the depth of emotions tied to anti-homosexual sentiment within the church that is based on teachings of Paul and not those of Christ. Church scholars and leaders bear responsibility to address the issue with courage and bravery. Salvation of the church membership is at stake.

## The Changing Religion

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## A Missing Link

According to prophecy in Book of Mormon (see prior chapter), to complete his plan leading to the return of Christ, God will do a marvelous work and wonder, raising an ensign from the lineage of descendants of Nephi's brother Joseph, whom like Nephi is identified as descendant of the ancient Biblical Joseph (son of Jacob, grandson of Isaac, great grandson of Abraham). Furthering work begun by Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. - also from that lineage - the ensign will lead a time when wisdom of the wise and learned will perish, the poor (the meek) shall rejoice, hostilities between the religions and nations will cease, the war against God's word will be shown, "the terrible one" (anti-Christ) will be defeated, the religions will be reformed and their uncorrupted parts merged together, and those previously without religion will become believers. Mormon scriptures suggest the ensign will be a descendant of Hyrum Smith who was named church patriarch in revelation received by his brother, Prophet Joseph Smith Jr.

According to prophecy of Islam, Imam Al Mehdi will be from the lineage of Muhammad. He will emerge before the world with a green ensign and will be perplexing and difficult for Muslims to accept. He will be rejected by the majority of Muslims at first, but a later event causes mass acceptance. He resembles the Children of Israel, which may be literal in his appearance or reference to identification of him as Elijah, or both. He will receive help from "strangers" who come before him and are described in prophecy as people who leave their tribes to fight corruption. These may be Muslim and other authors who defy sectarian and other boundaries on thought in order to produce scholarship on Islam and Qur'an that

helps Mehdi discover and bring forth the true religion. Before he emerges suddenly to capture the world's attention (the nations have a cause to bow to him), he has a small following with whom he communicates though he is not in the same place with them and they cannot see one another. This was traditionally interpreted as telepathic communication, but today some believe Mehdi can be found and communicated with via the Internet.

By prophecy of Islam, Mehdi was to be a 12th generation descendant of Muhammad. As part of the saga of the Sunni-Shia conflict, a 12th generation descendant went into hiding at the age of 5 and eventually disappeared altogether from the Shia Muslim community. Shia call him the Hidden Imam and have a set of beliefs about his disappearance in which they believe God took him into "occultation." First he experienced the minor occultation which rendered him invisible but still able to communicate with the Shia, followed by the major occultation in which he was taken to heaven by God and Shia can not communicate with him until his return.

The disappearance of Muhammad's descendant coincides in time with legend of the arrival of a bearded holy man to the Toltec Indians of pre-Columbian Mexico. The legend is tied to a man history records with the name Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl, an actual ruler who led a religious and cultural revival among the Toltecs. By legend, he came to the Toltecs on a boat from across the ocean. He would have used the mid-trans Atlantic Ocean current, the route historians believe Columbus used. Not willing to accept a legend with suggestion and obvious tie in time to Islam, western historians have still not been able to confirm parents or uncover information about Topiltzin's childhood among the Toltecs. Nor can they

explain why surviving artwork depicting Topiltzin shows him with beard when isolated (or pure) Native Mexican/Native American DNA does not produce males with facial hair.

The timing of Topiltzin's reign over the Toltecs has been estimated to have been as early as 885-897 or as late as 920 AD. In either case, the timing for him to have been the Hidden Imam, born 869 AD, is correct. If he was the Hidden Imam, possibility exists the lineage of Nephi's brother Joseph and the lineage of Muhammad came together in the Americas, and that Imam Al Mehdi - possibly an American - connects to them both through Native American lineage found in the Smith family tree. Both legend and secular historians say Topiltzin eventually left the Toltecs, according to historians, to possibly establish colonies elsewhere in the Americas, but according to legend, to return home across the ocean. The Hidden Imam of course never returned to the Shia, and it is possible that Topiltzin's ship was swept by currents and winds to land not far from the Yucatan Peninsula, perhaps some place along the southeast coast of North America.

This author's familiarity with the legend of the bearded holy man who came across the ocean on a boat to Central America goes back 20-plus years to a collegiate Native American studies class, to a specific guest lecturer telling stories from Native American folklore. Information about the legend, however, is elusive in the research literature. In addition, whether he came on a boat or was born in Central America, the research literature says much information about Topiltzin was destroyed during the Spanish conquest of Mexico and in fact that some artifacts were only preserved because individual Spanish soldiers took it upon themselves to hide them instead of destroy them as ordered to do.

The orders to destroy artifacts and information associated with Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl are suggestive of an attempt to hide truth about him. Some information that was collected and recorded by the Spanish about him during and after the days of conquest may also be tainted with corruptions to his story meant to discredit the idea of connecting his legend to the Hidden Imam, particularly suggestions he taught certain religious practices that a Muslim cleric would not teach. Additionally, some information about him has been conflated by western scholars with legends of the original Quetzalcoatl, a deity from ancient Central American religion whom Mormon scholars believe was the ancient visit of Christ to the Americas described in the Book of Mormon. Still, among the information about Topiltzin that did survive is prophecy he gave before leaving the Toltecs that another people would come and destroy their way of life, but later he would return and restore it in conjunction with his emergence before the whole world and the involvement of bearded holy men.

The journal of Christopher Columbus' first voyage to the Americas has some details that could suggest the people he met had been influenced by the Hidden Imam. Columbus describes an amazingly peaceful, compassionate, and generous people he met in the Caribbean Islands. In fact, by the end of the trip, he is saying he cannot imagine a finer people any place on the planet. The people are also described repeatedly warning Columbus to not go to one other particular island, telling him the people there eat other humans and that they only have one eye. Columbus at first did not believe those people actually consumed human flesh nor that they had only one eye. Upon finally going to that island, Columbus had one brief and violent encounter with the people, decided to heed

the warning about them eating human flesh, and he and his men left. In Islam prophecy that the Hidden Imam would have taken with him and taught to the Toltecs and tribes they influenced, Dajjal (the anti-Christ) has only one eye. Muslims do not know if that is literal that he has lost an eye, or if it is metaphorical that he teaches half truth and half falsehood. That the monstrous people on the one island were called "one eyes" by the peaceful people whom Columbus described as the most marvelous he could ever imagine meeting, is a small clue but suggestive of a link to the Hidden Imam.

Tanakh suggests another way to understand the 12th generation prophecy. In Genesis 6:3, God decrees the years of man shall be 120. Most do not live 120 years, but God is still defining one use of the term "generation" as 120 years. By that definition, 12 generations would be 12 times 120 years, or 1440 years. Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 AD. Adding 1440 to that date gives the answer 2010. In this understanding using the western calendar, Mehdi will be born or emerge before the world in or near 2010. He did not emerge in 2010, but we should consider that God has right to round to the nearest 10th and that Mehdi could be born or emerge soon, perhaps during 2011 or 2012.

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# Bible Re-Examined



## The Resurrection Conflicts

Careful reading of the New Testament finds the Gospels' four accounts of events surrounding the resurrection of Christ contain conflicting, incompatible details. In Matthew 28, Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary go to Jesus' tomb. In Mark 16, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and a third person named Salome visit the tomb. In Luke 24, an undetermined number of women go to the tomb, identified as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and other women with them. Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb alone in John 20. Did she go to the tomb alone or with others? If with others, how many and who were they?

In Matthew, one angel speaks to the women outside the tomb. In Mark, one angel speaks to the women inside the tomb. In Luke, two angels speak to the women inside the tomb. In John, two angels speak to Mary Magdalene only, but not until after Peter and another disciple visit the tomb. Did one or two angels appear? Inside or outside the tomb? Did the angel(s) speak to Mary Magdalene and others, or only to her?

The opening of Luke tells us the Gospels are handed-down stories from eyewitnesses. Written by humans, using their own and memories of others to provide a recounting and understanding of events, we can understand the holy books are divinely inspired but not perfect. Just as humans are created by God and remain imperfect, so too are holy books inspired by God but written through human hands and are imperfect, as the conflicting details demonstrate. Written a few decades after Christ, the Gospels' differing details of events after the Resurrection demonstrate how over a short period of time stories can take on changes introduced by

different storytellers who cannot remember every detail exact. A second issue is purposeful alteration of scripture. Revelation 22:18-19 warns that anyone who alters that book will receive severe punishment. A warning would not be given if the book had divine protection to make it incorruptible. If God gave no such protection to Revelation, is it sensible to argue God gave such protection to other scriptures?

Qur'an affirms the Bible contains much truth, correctness, knowledge, and revelation from God to be followed. Yet it also cautions several times the Bible has corruptions. Many Christians respond to this claim with statements such as, "every word of the Bible is true." This is alarming for two reasons. One, they either do not read the New Testament scriptures carefully and repeatedly to locate the conflicting details that prove not every word of the Bible is true; or two, they read carefully, locate the conflicts, but then deny they exist. In the first case is a group that misses small but important details that determine truth and that may believe it is following Christ's teachings when it is not because it does not pay attention to details of his teachings. In the second case is a group knowingly denying truth, disqualifying itself outright as true followers of God and Christ.

Examples of other incompatible Christian scriptures:

*Judas and the Field of Blood*

Matthew 27:5-8 - Judas leaves the money in the temple and then hangs himself. The money is used by the priests to buy a burial field for foreigners and that is why it is called the Field of Blood.

Acts 1:18-19 - Judas buys a field with the money, falls on a rock in the field, bursts open and dies, and that is why it is called the Field of Blood.

*The Cross Bearer*

Matthew 27:32, Luke 23:26, Mark 15:21 - A Cyrenian named Simon carries Jesus' cross on the way to crucifixion.

John 19:17 - Jesus carries his own cross.

*The Fig Tree*

Matthew 21:18-20 - Jesus curses a fig tree, saying, "may you never bear fruit again." The tree immediately withers.

Mark 11:12-14, 20-21 - Jesus curses the fig tree, but it is not found withered until the next day.

*Men in the Cemetery*

Matthew 8:28-32 - Calming the storm and arriving on the other side of the lake in Gadarenes, Jesus drives out demons from *two* men who live in a cemetery. The demons enter a herd of swine that runs down a hill and drowns in the lake.

Mark 5:1-13, Luke 8:26-33 - After calming the storm and arriving on the other side of the lake in Gerasenes, Jesus casts out demons from *one* man who lives in a cemetery. The demons enter swine herd that runs down a hill and drowns in the lake.

*Yeast*

Matthew 16:5-6 - The apostles forget to bring bread. Jesus tells them to beware the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Mark 8:14-15 - The apostles forget to bring bread. Jesus tells them to beware the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod.

*Peter and Andrew*

Matthew 4:18-20, Mark 1:16-18, Luke 5:1-11 - Christ finds Andrew and Peter fishing together by the sea of Galilee.

John 1:29, 35-42 - On two consecutive days, John the Baptist calls Christ the lamb of God. Two of John's disciples hear this and leave him to follow Jesus. One of those disciples is Andrew who then goes to find his brother Simon Peter.



What God Said

Matthew 17:5 - "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, listen to him."

Mark 9:7 - "This is my beloved son, listen to him."

Luke 9:35 - "This is my chosen son, listen to him."

Feeding the Crowd

Matthew 14:15-16, Mark 6:35-37, Luke 9:12-13 - Apostles ask Jesus to disperse the crowd to buy food. He tells them to feed the crowd instead.

John 6:5-7 - As a test, Jesus is the one who first asks the apostles where they can buy food to feed everyone.

Peter by the Fire

Matthew 26:69-75 - Two *different* servant girls, then others identify Peter as a disciple of Jesus. He denies this each time and calls a curse upon himself the third time, then the rooster crows.

Mark 14:66-72 - The *same* servant identifies Peter twice, then others identify him. The rooster crows after his first denial. After the third denial, Peter calls a curse on himself, then the rooster crows again.

Luke 22:54-62 - A servant girl then two others identify Peter. He denies he knows Christ and then calls a curse upon himself. When the rooster crows, Jesus turns from where he is being held by Pilate to look at Peter.

John 18:15-27 - A servant girl, an unidentified person, and then another servant ask Peter if he a disciple of Jesus. He says no each time and then the rooster crows.

Brood of Vipers

Luke 3:7-9 - John the Baptist calls the crowds coming to him for baptism a brood of vipers and asks who warned them to flee from God's coming wrath.

Matthew 3:7-10 - John the Baptist calls only Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him a brood of vipers.

Lineage

Matthew 1:2-16 - Lineage is traced through Joseph (who is not his father) to place Jesus as a descendant of Solomon.

Luke 3:23-38 - Lineage is traced through Joseph to place Jesus as a descendant of Solomon's brother Nathan.

These incompatibilities are not an exhaustive list. Names of the 12 apostles are different in the books and other variance in quotes and details can be found. Christians can truthfully argue these conflicts are minor aspects that do not alter the story line nor degrade teachings of Jesus found in the New Testament. Indeed, the point of identifying the inconsistent details to prove that not every word of the Bible is true is not to challenge teachings of Christ, but to challenge other aspects of scripture that can be demonstrated suspect.

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## Jesus on Jesus

The New Testament Gospel books were not written down from oral tradition until a few decades after Christ's departure, as is explained in the opening of Luke and is well-documented by Biblical scholars. The differing details of the Resurrection presented in the four books, the question of what happened to Judas Iscariot (did he hang himself or die in a field?), and the incompatible lineages for Jesus among other discrepancies all document the imperfections of these scriptures (see prior chapter, "The Resurrection Conflicts"). While all details may not be accurate, repeated messages of Christ's ministry in the Gospels are in line with the messages of the other holy books for how to get to heaven: repentance, prayer, charity, eschew wealth, be just, honest, fair, non-violent, chaste, respect elders, treat others as you would want them to treat you.

The Trinity belief followed by some but not all Christian churches holds that God divided Himself into three beings - God (the Father), a spirit (the Holy Ghost), and a son (Christ). In this belief, Jesus is God in human form who throughout the New Testament Gospel books prays to himself and speaks of himself as a different entity whom he calls the Father. Trinity belief rests mostly upon the opening of the book of John, a few supporting passages from that same manuscript dated five or six decades after Christ, and a few statements of corroboration from within the letters of Paul (see next chapter, "Paul's Letters and the Judas Curse").

In fact, it is within the letters of Paul that the teaching of Christ and God as the same is first introduced. The teaching is not present in the first three Gospel books, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, written between 55 to 65 AD. Nor is the teaching

found in Acts, dated 60 to 70 AD, nor in Revelation, circa 90 AD. John is dated 85 to 90 AD, but it is in Paul's letter to the Colossians, circa 60 AD, where the teaching is first found, in verse 1:19 in which Paul says God was pleased to live in Christ. Significance of teachings originating with Paul and not from Christ is further explained in the next chapter. Understanding produced from careful analysis of Paul's letters is there is no cause to consider this teaching authentic.

John 10:30 is just one place where Christ says that he and the Father are one. In 14:9, he says if you have seen him, you have seen the Father. Other scriptures from the Gospels - including scriptures in John - do not support interpretation that Christ literally meant he himself was God, but rather support an interpretation that he was making a metaphorical statement of his situation as God's ambassador, representative, or stand-in, as well as God's spokesperson, who did God's will rather than follow his own desires and that through him, God was being put through assault and trial by the corrupt. In John 5:30, Jesus is quoted saying that by himself he can do nothing, he seeks not his own will but the will of the Father who sent him. He makes a clear distinction to say he seeks God's will and not his own. Jesus identifies himself as being sent by someone whom he must obey. In numerous other places in John, Jesus keeps distinction between himself as the son and God as the Father. A few examples: 8:18 - Jesus refers to himself and God as two separate witnesses agreeing upon a fact; 15:1 - Jesus is the grapevine, God is the gardener; 20:17 - Jesus tells Mary Magdalene he has not yet gone to the Father, "to my God and your God."

In John 14:20, Christ says "you will know I am in my Father, and you are in me and I am in you." In 15:4, he tells

the disciples to remain in him and he will remain in them. In 17:21, he prays his disciples will become one just as he is one with God. If Christ saying that he is one with God means he is literally God, then Christ saying his followers are one with him would mean his followers are literally Christ and in this logic, therefore also literally God. These verses can instead be interpreted to suggest that Christ means to “be one” in a metaphorical sense, as to “be one” with a teammate or partner. That does not mean the team does not have hierarchy. Rather, it means team members' beliefs are in alignment and actions are coordinated to work for a common goal.

John 1:1 says the Word of God (a reference for Christ) is God. But again, this claim of Christ and God as the same is not found in the other Gospel books, nor is it supported by the weight of scripture within John itself. A helpful hint is given by John the Baptist, quoted in John 3:34, explaining that the one God sends speaks the word of God and that God gives the Spirit without limit. John the Baptist is saying that when a prophet speaks revelations given to him by Holy Spirit, you are not listening to the prophet speak his own will or ideas, but you are listening to God speak through the prophet. You are listening to the word of God delivered through the conduit, or medium, of that prophet. Where Jesus says he is one with God, it can be understood then that he means that he speaks the word of God, so that if you listen to him, you are listening to God Himself. That does not make Jesus literally God. It makes him more like a radio broadcast; in that sense, he is understood to be "the Word of God." Not only does Jesus speak the word of God, but he also lives out the word of God by his example. This is another way to understand him as the personification of God's word. For Jesus' followers then to

become one with him and God would mean they have advanced in spiritual development (they are making conscious effort to repent and reform to obey God's law) and their work in God's cause to have qualified to also receive revelations from Holy Spirit. Christian scriptures make reference to people who were not major prophets but still received and gave prophecy (see Luke 2:25-38, for example).

"The world came to be through him" (John 1:10) may be piece of authentic teaching identifying Christ as Adam, as John 1:2-4 appears to say that what came to be through Christ was the human race. The Mormon scriptures confuse the issue by referring to Christ as both the son of God and as God, but the two ways of speaking about Christ in those scriptures give clue to two different understandings of the word "God." One is of the supreme Creator of the universe, the other is of a deputy endowed with God-like powers as Christ was. In the Christian scriptures, Christ casts out demons, heals people of mental and physical ailments, and brings the dead back to life. In Qur'an, Christ creates a bird from clay and then breathes life into it (3:49). Further, Qur'an 3:59 tells us in God's eyes, Jesus is like Adam, he created him from dust, said to him "be," and he was. Qur'an 2:30-39 explains God created Adam to be a vicegerent (also translated deputy or successor) on earth and taught him knowledge above the angels. A rivalry between Adam and Iblis (Satan, a disobedient angel) began in heaven and then extended to earth. When the angels were instructed to bow to Adam, all did except Iblis who also later fooled Adam and his wife into disobedience. Qur'an 2:97-98 tells us Michael and Gabriel work with God. Gabriel is identified as the angel who delivers revelations to the prophets (Gabriel is identified as Holy Spirit). Nothing more is said about Michael.

In Tanakh, Michael is called a prince of the people who is to come forth at the end of time, to be a time of great calamity during which those who have their names written in the book of life will be delivered (Daniel 12:1). The New Testament says Michael and his angels fought a war in heaven against Satan, causing Satan and his angels to be cast from heaven to earth (Revelation 12:7-9). In Mormon scriptures, Michael is identified as Adam (D&C 27:11). If the Mormon scriptures are authentic, and Michael is understood in Daniel 12 and Revelation 12 to be Christ, then Adam and Christ are the same soul. Support for this is also found in Revelation 22:16 in Christ saying he is the root and offspring of David, as well as in references to Christ as "the first born."

In addition to Tanakh references of God calling other prophets his sons (such as reference to Jacob in Hosea 11:1), and New Testament statement from Jesus that others may be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9, 5:44-45), Qur'an helps us understand that God is using metaphorical language to call prophets his sons. In Qur'an 33:4, he tells humans that he has not made adopted sons their literal sons, but that this is a manner of speaking for humans to call an adopted son a son. Adam was the first human created by God, and can be seen as his metaphorical son, as he is referred to in Luke's lineage for Christ (Luke 3:23-38), and Christ himself made statement that others could be called sons of God. In his teachings in the New Testament, Christ makes no clear claim to be God nor a literal biological son of God. Christ is identified, however, as special even among prophets, a teaching supported by Qur'an and Islam prophecy. Indeed, while Qur'an 4:171-172 says Christ is "no more" than a messenger who serves and worships God, 4:159 says belief in Christ is required to enter heaven.



## The Changing Religion

Examples from the other Gospels in which Jesus speaks of God as a higher being in heaven, makes no claim to be God, and repeatedly makes distinction between himself and God:

Matthew 5:8 - the pure of heart shall see God (Jesus does not say he is God before them)

Matthew 5:9 - peacemakers shall be called sons of God (he did not say they will be called "my sons")

Matthew 5:44-45 - do good and pray for your enemies so you may be sons of the Father in heaven (again, not "my sons")

Matthew 5:16 - shine your light before men, do good works and glorify your Father in heaven (not, "and glorify Me")

Matthew 10:32-33 - Jesus will confess before his Father in heaven those who confess him

Matthew 10:40-41 - Jesus says those who receive him, receive the One who sent him

Matthew 11:25-27 - Jesus thanks the Lord of heaven and earth, says all things have been given to him from his Father

Matthew 12:50 - whomever does the will of the Father in heaven is member of Jesus' family

Matthew 13:57 - referring to himself, Jesus says, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and house" (Jesus identifies himself as a prophet)

Matthew 16:16-17 - Peter tells Jesus he is the Christ, the son of God; Jesus blesses him and says this was revealed to him by the Father in heaven

Matthew 19:17, Luke 18:19 - "Why ask me about good, there is only One who is good" (Jesus indicates himself as imperfect and not God)

Matthew 24:36 - Jesus says no one knows the hour of the coming Judgment Day except the Father (he made no claim to know the hour himself)

Luke 2:49 - Jesus says he is busy with his Father's business

Luke 2:52 - Jesus grows in wisdom and gains favor with God

Luke 3:38 - lineage for Jesus ends with identification of Adam as the son of God

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## Paul's Letters and the Judas Curse

Despite codification into the Christian scriptures centuries ago, Paul's letters remain a source of controversy and debate for many Christians and would-be Christians not because he had prior been a persecutor of the church, but because many believe Paul's letters introduce ideas and doctrine that are not found in the New Testament teachings of Christ and that even conflict with and overwrite some of Christ's teachings. This chapter examines seven of Paul's letters, and part of an eighth, to determine if the teachings within them coincide with the teachings of Christ or if they present distracting and misleading false doctrine. To analyze them, the letters were divided first as signed or unsigned (in 2 Thessalonians, Paul says he signs all of his letters, leaving open possibility the unsigned letters could be forgeries), then in chronological order by approximate year written rather than by their order in the New Testament. The draft analysis was then rewritten to reorganize the material by topic.

The letters examined here and their approximate dates:

### Signed

Galatians 50 AD

2 Thessalonians 51 AD

1 Corinthians 55 AD

Colossians 60 AD

Philemon 60 AD

### Unsigned

1 Thessalonians 50 AD

2 Corinthians 55 AD

Romans 57 AD

### **A General Question of Validity**

Not mentioned in the New Testament until his appearance first by the name of Saul at the end of Acts 7, Paul was a lead

persecutor of the Church, sending Christians to prison and some to death (Acts 7:58, 8:1, 8:3, 9:1, 22:4, 26:9-11, Galatians 1:13). He claimed to have undergone a conversion after Christ spoke to him in a vision while he was traveling to Damascus to persecute more Christians (Acts 9:3-7). In Acts 9:7, it is reported by Luke that the others traveling with Paul stood speechless as they could hear a voice but not see anyone speaking. The details of 9:4-8 indicate Saul was the only one who fell to the ground when the vision began with a blinding light all around him. In Acts 22:9, the others with Paul witness the blinding light. Paul does not say if the others fell to the ground or not, but only adds that they did not understand the voice speaking to him (implying they heard the voice but did not recognize the language being spoken). In Acts 26:12-14, Luke quotes Paul saying they all fell to the ground when the light surrounded them and then Paul heard a voice speaking to him in Aramaic (or Hebrew).

Already, the story raises questions. The others either fell to the ground with Paul because they also saw the blinding light or they did not as suggested in the first reference that only Paul fell to the ground. While that seems a minor point, the question is, if the others did see the blinding light as reported in the latter verses, why did none of them experience the blindness that Paul did from the brightness of the light? A second question is, who was with Paul on the road that none of them understood Hebrew? Historical context suggests Paul could have been traveling without any other Jews but only Roman soldiers ordered to assist Paul in arrest of Christians, but it does not explain why only Paul would have been blinded by this light.

Acts 10 tells of a vision given to Peter in which he was

instructed to preach to the Gentiles as well as the Jews (Acts 10:9-28, 34-36). This instruction was presumably not for Peter alone and other Jewish-Christian teachers helped spread the message of Christ to the Gentiles. Indeed, Peter shared the vision and message with others (Acts 11:1-18). Beginning in his first letter, "Galatians," Paul makes repeated claim that he was specially chosen to preach to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:16; this claim actually begins in Luke's quoting of Paul in Acts, for example, Acts 13:47 and 26:17). Hence, Paul spent most of his ministry away and in isolation from the Jerusalem church and its leadership of Peter, James, and John.

In Galatians, Paul tells his readers he has not been taught by the apostles or disciples of Christ, but by direct revelation from Christ himself (1:12). Paul makes no claim of having learned anything about the Church's beliefs or Christ's ministry while he was actively persecuting it. He goes on to explain that after teaching for Christ a few years in Arabia and Damascus, he returned to Jerusalem to finally meet Peter and James. After an exceptionally short visit (he spent 15 days with Peter), he left and did not return for another 14 years. His stated purpose in visiting 14 years later was to make sure with the church leadership that what he had been teaching for the past 14 years was correct (1:18-19; 2:1-2). He says the Church leaders had nothing to correct nor add to his teachings and that they accepted that God had given Paul responsibility to teach to the Gentiles (2:6-8).

No confirmation from the Apostles that Paul was accepted by them as a legitimate teacher of Christ is found in the other Christian scriptures except for one suspect reference in 2 Peter. Paul himself tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 that there were people carrying forged letters claiming to be from him.

Paul suggests then the possibility that any of his letters as well as those of Peter and others could be forgeries. 2 Peter gives a long admonishment and warning against false teachers before four verses from the end, it turns to defend one and only one teacher who is a topic of debate: Paul (2 Peter 3:15). No names of false teachers are given to warn people against them, and no other teacher is defended. Other curious aspects of Peter's letters are there are only two of them and they cease at the same time as Paul's letters, around 67 AD.

In Galatians 2:11-21, Paul tells of a rift between him and Peter in which he says he had to reprimand Peter. According to Paul, during Peter's visit to the Antioch church, he ate with uncircumcised Gentiles, but when friends of James arrived, Peter would not eat with them again because he was afraid of being criticized by James' friends for doing so (2:11-13). This contradicts what Paul said in verse 2:3 that Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, went with him and Barnabas to visit Jerusalem and Church leaders did not require Titus to be circumcised in order to accept him into the Church. It also contradicts the vision and instructions to preach to the Gentiles and to share meals with them received by Peter before or around the same time Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Paul and bring him to Antioch. If Luke's telling of events in Acts is presented chronologically, Peter received and told others about the vision (Acts 11:1-18) before Paul ever went to Antioch (Acts 11:22-26). While Acts 15 confirms that Paul and Barnabas traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem to ask for clarification from Peter and other Church elders on the circumcision issue, Luke makes no mention in Acts of Peter traveling to Antioch or of any conflicts between Peter and Paul, whereas he does tell of the conflict between Barnabas

and Paul (Acts 15:36-40). Paul mentions neither the letter nor Peter's vision and instructions in his claim against Peter, but again, if Luke's ordering of events is correct, Peter had already received and shared instructions regarding the Gentiles that contradicts Paul's claim against him.

In 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, Paul says the Corinth church is being split into factions of followers of different teachers. He mentions himself, Peter, and Apollos specifically. Paul never addresses the content of the different teachings, but instead avoids the issue and tells the Corinthians in chapter 3 that all the teachers belong to them. The message of Christ in the New Testament Gospels, however, is that both true and false teachers would be sent and that true followers could discern the false from the true by what these teachers say and do (Matthew 7:15-20, 10:41, 23:34, 24:4-5, 24:11, 24:24, Luke 11:17-20, John 13:20). Paul makes no mention of that instruction from Christ, but instead contradicts himself on telling the Corinthians they do not need to choose between teachers by later telling them they have only one spiritual father and that he became their "father in Christ" when he brought the teaching of Christ to them (5:15).

In 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, Paul questions himself. He says he does not care how others judge him and that he does not trust his own judgment on himself. He claims a clear conscience, but says that does not prove he is right. He instructs the Corinthians not to make judgments about anyone before the return of Christ, for Christ will judge us, bring secrets to light, and "reveal private motives." In other words, he offers no advice to discern between true and false teachers, but makes subtle suggestion that he himself could be a false teacher.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul indicates there are others who do



not accept him as an apostle. To answer critics, he asks if he and his associates have the right to stay in church member's homes, share meals, and to bring a Christian wife with them (in chapter 7 he had said he is not married) as the apostles and Jesus' brothers do, or is it that he and Barnabas are singled out with requirement to support themselves. He suggests that he should be fed and paid by the churches for his work but says he has never exercised that right and that he would rather die than lose his right to boast about doing his work without charge (1 Corinthians 9:15). In this chapter, we can see that Paul is being questioned by people who accept the other apostles and teachers of Christ as legitimate but he does not say why it is that people who accept them as legitimate do not also accept him and his associates. Paul also suggests the apostles and disciples teaching the message of Christ were somehow wrong for accepting food, shelter, and clothing from the churches, despite that is the instruction Christ gave them (Matthew 10:9-11, Mark 6:8-10, Luke 9:3-4, 10:4-9).

In 2 Corinthians 6:8, Paul notes that he and his associates are called imposters, but he does not say by whom. In chapter 10, he says some believe he and his associates are "of the world" and not spiritually inclined and that some say his speeches are worthless (10:2, 10). In chapter 11, he says he does not consider himself inferior to the "super apostles" who teach messages different from his. Though he does not say who those are, one would assume he means the actual apostles of Christ such as Peter, James, and John. Rather than address and reconcile differences in his teachings from theirs, he resorts to emotional manipulation, asking the Corinthians if he was wrong in not asking them for pay and telling them he robbed other churches to work with them for free (2

Corinthians 11:8). Yet, in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul said he had never accepted pay from any of the churches and that he would rather die than do so.

Paul goes on in 2 Corinthians 11 to say he will undercut other teachers who claim their work is equal to his and that such people are false apostles. He does not call such people super apostles, and one would hope he is not referring to the actual apostles of Christ to challenge their legitimacy, but to other teachers. In 12:11-12, he defends himself again against comparisons to the "super apostles," saying he showed the Corinthians that he was an apostle through signs, miracles, and wonders. In this, Paul is asking the Corinthians to accept him based on a false premise that only those who serve Christ can be endowed with power to perform signs, miracles, and wonders. Yet, Christ taught that false teachers and prophets would come with signs, wonders, and miracles to lead people astray (Matthew 7:15-20, 24:4-5, 24:11, 24:24).

In summary, Paul tells us in his letters that his claim to be an apostle of Christ was questioned by others, including those he calls "super apostles," whom we can assume were most likely the actual apostles of Christ. Paul alludes to differences in teachings between him and those he claims are false apostles, between him and those he calls super apostles, and specifically between him and Apostle Peter whom Paul claims he had to correct and whom he is set in opposition to among members of the Corinth church splitting into factions. Paul gives a suspect reason for his conflict with Peter and does not discuss the differences in teachings between him and others at any point but instead asks the Corinthians to accept him as a legitimate teacher of Christ because he performed miracles that Christ said false prophets and teachers would also

perform and because he worked hard and was never a burden. He pleads for acceptance, but offers no points of legitimacy upon which he should be accepted as a teacher of Christ.

He also teaches against the instruction Christ gave to his disciples to devote their time to spiritual work and to accept food, shelter, and clothing from others. In addition, if none of these letters are forgeries but all were indeed written by Paul, then he reveals himself to be a liar, in one letter saying he never accepted pay from any church and he would rather die than do so, and in the next saying he robbed other churches so that he could work with the Corinthians for free. Other validity issues concern a suspect defense of Paul at the end of 2 Peter and that others traveling with him to Damascus were not blinded by the brilliant light that blinded Paul.

### **Subverting the Law**

The earliest and perhaps most consistent theme through Paul's letters is his argument that the Law of Moses no longer applies. Paul says a person is made right by God through faith in Jesus Christ and not by following the law, that he has ceased trying to follow the law, and that if keeping the law could make people right with God, then God had no reason to send Christ (Galatians 2:16-21). He criticizes efforts to follow the law, but quotes scripture saying those who do not obey the law are cursed, then he immediately contradicts that scripture to say those who follow the law to make them right with God are cursed (Galatians 3:3-5, 10-12). He tells the Galatians that if they become circumcised in hopes of being made right by God, they must obey the entire Law of Moses, but they will be cut off from Christ (Galatians 5:1-4).

Paul claims the law was given to last only until Christ arrived, that we are freed from sin not by obeying the law and

by repentance, but by belief in Jesus. He says the law was designed to be our guide only until Christ came to show the way of faith, so now people no longer need the law (Galatians 3:19-25). Paul says God sent Christ to free us from being "slaves to the law" (Galatians 4:5). Declarations against the Law of Moses are also found in 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul again says he is free from the law. In 2 Corinthians 3, he refers to the Law of Moses as "the ministry that brought death" and that condemns men but does not allow their righteousness as the new covenant of the Spirit does (3:7-11). Paul also tells the Colossians to not let anyone condemn them for what they eat or drink, or for not celebrating or observing holy days, new moons, or the sabbath; that they do not have to follow rules about what they can touch or taste (Colossians 2:16-23). He says such things are doctrines from men, thus negating the law's food restrictions and requirement of the sabbath.

By saying the Law of Moses led to death, Paul is saying even Jews who faithfully follow the law are condemned to hell. According to Paul's arguments against the Law of Moses, the law only pointed out to men their sins but did not allow them to use the law as a guide to become righteous. Hence, Paul says a person cannot be made right by God by following the law, but only by faith in Jesus. Thus, Paul negates the idea that following God's commandments is a demonstration or measure of a person's faith. Paul apparently believed keeping the law was not good enough for God, so Jesus had to be sent not to point out that Jews were not following the law, but to point out that doing what God said to do was either not good enough or is impossible. If having faith in Christ does not mean to follow the Law of Moses, then it must mean

something else and hence Paul redefines what it means to have faith in Christ in his letters. First aspect of redefinition is to separate the Law of Moses from the teachings of Christ.

In the New Testament Gospels, Christ teaches that the Jews, particularly the priests, were not following the law and that that was the problem. He instructed people to follow the Law of Moses and said not one aspect of the law was abolished or repealed by his presence (Matthew 5:17-19, Luke 16:17). Paul's teachings then are in direct opposition to those of Christ. Jesus taught in order to be made right by God, it is necessary to repent of sins and follow the Law of Moses. The basics of the Law of Moses are the 10 Commandments that tell us to love God with all our heart and soul, to love others as ourselves, to not lie, to not steal, to be good to our parents, to not be adulterers, and other moral instructions to follow if we want heaven. By his own teachings, Christ did not come to free us from the law but to tell us if we want to make it into heaven, we need to choose to make ourselves slaves to it.

### **Christ as Blood Sacrifice**

The second aspect of Paul's redefinition of what it means to have faith in Christ is introduced in Galatians 3:13. An errant teaching unfortunately accepted and preached by a number of churches, Paul states that Christ saved us from being punished for not following the law by taking punishment for our sins upon himself. Nowhere in the messages of Christ in the New Testament Gospels does Christ give such a teaching. In fact, Christ not only says to follow the Law of Moses, but he also clearly describes people who claim to be his followers whom he will not recognize on Judgment Day, but who will be sent to punishment (Matthew 5:17-19, 7:21-23, 25:41-46, Mark 10:19, Luke 5:32, 12:42-46, 13:5, 16:17, 18:18-24, 24:47, John

5:14, 14:21-24, 15:10). The message of Christ is to repent of sins. Christ does not promise in the Gospels that people who believe in him will not be punished because he took punishment for them, but instead gives message that only those who repent will escape punishment.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul says that Christ died on the cross so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but live for Christ. He then says Christ was a sin offering for the rest of us (5:15, 21), that is, a blood sacrifice that is somehow supposed to appease God's anger so that our sins are forgiven. On the first point, living for Christ is living for the self. When we follow Christ's teachings, we are trying to save our souls - not the soul of Christ - from damnation. We live by Christ's teachings in order to save ourselves from hell. On the second point, Paul is referring to sacrifices called for in corruptions to the Law of Moses. Christ taught those sacrifices were unwanted and that mercy was wanted instead (Matthew 9:13). Christ taught that forgiveness of each other and not sinning against one another are what God wants from us rather than blood sacrifices after we sin to pretend our sin has been washed away through sacrificing the life of an animal.

Some Christians argue the exchange between Isaac and Abraham described in Genesis 22:7-8 is prophecy that God would have Christ offered as a blood sacrifice to forgive our sins. While the exchange does appear to be prophecy of Christ being sacrificed on the cross, it does not legitimize the belief that God forgives our sins if we believe this is why it was done. The belief that Christ was sacrificed on the cross so God forgives our sins has the problem of resting upon premise that the animal sacrifices were legitimate way of obtaining forgiveness from God. This allows us to see Christ as a simile

for an animal sacrifice. However, if the animal sacrifice simile is legitimate, meaning animal sacrifice is a legitimate way of obtaining forgiveness for sins, then why did God send Christ? There were still plenty of animals that could have been sacrificed instead.

We also might consider that if God gives instruction to a prophet or to a people to do something one time (such as sacrifice an animal), it does not mean God wants this repeated as a ritual with belief that doing so will result in forgiveness of sins. Abraham was not asked by God to sacrifice an animal. He was asked to sacrifice his son. God asked Abraham to make a deeply meaningful sacrifice whereas the sacrifice of an animal by humans can be understood as quite meaningless unless it is among the last food resources those humans have. Genesis 22 does not report God giving Abraham any instruction to sacrifice an animal. It reports that Abraham saw a ram and decided to sacrifice it, but it does not say God told him to do so nor does it say or suggest Abraham did so for forgiveness of sins. In fact, Abraham had just passed test proving his ultimate obedience to God and at that point had no sins to be forgiven. We might even consider that Abraham “sacrificed” the ram in celebration of having passed the test and in tremendous relief that his son was still alive. Perhaps he and Isaac proceeded to have a happy afternoon barbeque and picnic, sharing quality time together as father and son.

### **Christ the Magic Purifier**

Third aspect of Paul's redefinition of having faith in Christ is of Christ as the magic purifier who takes away all sinful desires. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul declares that Christ made us pure, holy and free from sin. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says we must all appear before Christ on Judgment Day to receive

punishment or reward for the good or evil we have done on earth. That is correct, however, he goes on to say that when Christ died, believers in Christ also died to our old ways of life and that because Christ died, God will not hold us accountable for our sins (5:1-19). In Colossians, he adds God reconciled everything in heaven and earth to Himself through Christ's blood on the cross and that this has made Christians "holy and blameless" before God (1:20-22). Paul continues that when God raised Christ from the dead, he forgave the sins of all who believe in Christ by taking the records of those sins and nailing them to the cross (2:11-15).

According to the teachings of Christ, however, Christ did not free us from sin but taught the covenant of repentance that requires humans to repent from sin if they wish to go to heaven. No removal of our sinful natures or impenetrable protection from temptation is offered or given to Christians upon baptism. Baptism is a symbolic washing away of sins and acceptance of the message of Christ, but that message is that the sins are not truly forgiven unless you repent of them. Baptism is symbolic demonstration of commitment to repentance and does not remove sinful nature or make one blameless. Christ taught that those who do not repent - even those who prophesy and preach in Christ's name - remain unholy and are doomed to hell (Matthew 5:17-19, 7:21-23, 25:41-46, Mark 10:19, Luke 5:32, 12:42-46, 13:5, 16:17, 18:18-24, 24:47, John 3:36, 5:14, 14:21-24, 15:10). By his teachings, Christ did not free us from sin, but told us to free ourselves from sin if we want to be counted among the righteous.

### **Christ as God**

Paul says Christ is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Without reference to where this teaching



originated, he then says that Christ existed before anything else and that God created everything through him, including kingdoms and rulers of the unseen world (Colossians 1:15-18). This teaching is also found in John 1:1-4, written around 85 to 90 AD, but not in the other three Gospel books dated 55 to 65 AD, nor in Acts (60 to 70 AD), nor in Revelation (around 90 AD). He then introduces another concept not present in prior letters, saying that God was pleased to live in Christ (1:19). This idea is also present in John, but not in the other three Gospel books, Acts, nor Revelation. Pre-dating John by two or three decades, Colossians, circa 60 AD, is earliest indication of conflating Christ with God (see “Jesus on Jesus” chapter for more discussion) that later led to the Trinity belief.

### **Contradictions and Odd Comments**

Paul tells the Galatians to not use their freedom from the law to sin against one another but to serve one another in love (5:13-14). In echoing Christ's understanding of "the Golden Rule" (Matthew 7:12), Paul then says the law - which he has told them they are free from and do not have to follow - is summed up in the one commandment to love others as yourself. So at once, Paul tells them they are both free from the law and are bound to it.

Paul says he told Peter “we are Jews by birth, not sinners like the Gentiles” (Galatians 2:15). Paul apparently considered himself sinless by being born a Jew. That is definitely not part of the message Christ delivers in the New Testament Gospels. According to Christ, there is only One who can be considered sinless, and that is God (Matthew 19:17, Luke 18:19).

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul tells the Corinthians to ban from their church a man who is guilty of sexual immorality, that they are responsible for judging members of their church. In

chapter 6, he admonishes the Corinthians for lawsuits they have filed against one another in secular court. He tells them they should be able to decide these matters among themselves or to simply accept the injustice. Contradicting his stance on the man guilty of sexual immorality, he does not tell them to cast out from the church those sinners who cheat or steal from their fellow believers.

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul answers a question about eating food sacrificed to idols. Rather than say to not do so (the answer given in the letter from the Jerusalem church, see Acts 15), he says it is okay for stronger believers because they know the idols are not real. However, he suggests they may not want to because weaker believers might see them and think eating the food means it is okay to worship the idols. In chapter 10, he says to flee from idol worship and changes his instruction regarding food offered to idols to say not to eat it.

2 Corinthians 11 is one of the several places Paul defends his boasting. Here he also says he is talking like a fool and then tells the Corinthians that they gladly put up with fools who enslave, exploit, take advantage, and slap them.

In 2 Corinthians 12, he says his boasting will do no good, but he must continue. He says he will boast of things of Christ but not about himself except his weaknesses, though it would not be foolish to boast about himself because it would be the truth. Paul is saying, on the one hand, a person should not boast, but on the other, as long as the person is telling the truth, it is okay.

### **Oddly Twisting Scripture**

As part of his teachings against the Law of Moses, Paul goes into a strange metaphor involving Abraham's two sons and their mothers. He says the Law of Moses was human attempt -

note that he is saying the Law of Moses, the foundation of which is the 10 Commandments, did not originate from God through revelations given to Moses - to bring about salvation just as Ishmael was born through human attempt to bring about God's promise to Abraham whereas the birth of Isaac was God's fulfillment of that promise (Galatians 4:21-31). He says Christians are free from the law and are like Isaac, children of the free woman (Sarah) whereas those believing they need to follow the law are like Ishmael and are children of the slave woman (Hagar).

The only scriptural support Paul gives for this argument is Genesis 21:10, which he presents as if it had been a command from God that Ishmael should not share in Isaac's inheritance. Paul misrepresents what is actually said in Genesis. In Genesis 16, Abraham's wife Sarah tells her husband to have a child with her maidservant Hagar in an attempt to have a family through her as Sarah had not born children and was in old age. After Hagar became pregnant, Sarah began to treat her so badly that Hagar ran away. An angel of God spoke to Hagar, telling her to return to Sarah and gave a promise to Hagar that her descendants would become too numerous to count. The angel told her that her son, whom she was to name Ishmael, would be a wild man in opposition to others around him, but the angel did not say that was a bad thing.

In Genesis 17, God gives Abraham a specific promise that Ishmael will be the father of a great nation and of 12 princes (or rulers, chieftains, or patriarchs). Paul says in his account that Ishmael persecuted Isaac. However, Genesis 21:9 says that Ishmael (then a teenager) was mocking the celebration being held when Isaac was weaned. Sarah then demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away and it was Sarah - not God -

who said that Ishmael will not share in the inheritance. That distressed Abraham, but God told him to do as Sarah wanted and that his descendants would be counted through Isaac. Yet, God also promised that a great nation would come through Ishmael and that God was with Ishmael (Genesis 21:11-20).

### **Curses and Threats**

Galatians opens with lament that the church is being led astray by people who deliberately twist Christ's teachings. Paul calls curses upon those who do so (1:6-9).

To the Corinthians, Paul says he is sending Timothy to remind them of his teachings, but admonishes them for being arrogant to think that he himself will not visit them again. He threatens, "Should I come to punish you?" (1 Corinthians 4:17-23). He later tells them that once they come into complete obedience, "we will punish any acts of disobedience" (2 Corinthians 10:6). Further, he says he gave them warnings on his first two visits, but since they are wanting proof that Christ speaks through him, on his next visit he will not spare any of them who are still sinning (2 Corinthians 13:1-3). Paul does not say what he will do to the Corinthians, nor is it clear why he is putting himself in the position of someone who delivers punishment. Christ did not teach his disciples to punish people who will not accept his message and give up sin. He said to shake the dust off your boots as you walk away and abandon such people to their fate (Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5, 10:11). He also did not teach to call curses upon anyone, but to forgive those who wrong you and pray your enemies will repent (Matthew 5:44, 6:14-15, Luke 6:27-28).

### **Emotional Manipulations**

Paul's letters contain numerous attempts to emotionally manipulate his audience. For example, in Philemon, the last

and shortest of Paul's signed letters, he says the purpose of the letter is to ask a favor that he could order them to do in the name of Christ, but because of the love between them, he merely asks for it rather than orders it. His request is that they welcome Onesimus, who previously had not been helpful to them but whom Paul promises will now be of service. He says he will repay them any debt Onesimus might owe them and that he will not mention that they owe their souls' very salvation to him. He of course mentions it by saying he will not mention it. It would be difficult to refuse a request from someone reminding you that you owe eternal life to them.

In one of several other places he resorts to emotional manipulations, he admonishes the Corinthians for making judgments between him and Apollos, and suggests they are arrogant and jealous of one another (1 Corinthians 4:6-8). He says he thinks sometimes that God has "put us apostles on display" as one would put prisoners of war on display for a victory parade. He boasts about the hard work and suffering they go through, but how they are treated badly by everyone (1 Corinthians 4:9-16).

Paul also uses emotional manipulation to encourage the Corinthians in donations that are allegedly being given to the Jerusalem church. In 1 Corinthians 16, Paul reminds the Corinthians to set aside money each week for the Jerusalem collection, and tells them that when he arrives again in Corinth, he will write letters of introduction for the men the Corinthians choose to send to deliver the collection. He says he might accompany them to Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 8, he compares the Corinthians with the Macedonians whom he says despite their poverty have begged him for the privilege of taking up a collection for Jerusalem. He says the Corinthians

were the first to give and encourages them to continue. He then subtly introduces a change to the plans. He says he is sending Titus and two unnamed others who are to accompany him and Titus as they deliver the offering to Jerusalem. No statement that anyone from the Corinth church will go along is given. Sprinkling some religious themes in his plea, he continues emotional manipulation in chapter 9, saying it was Corinth's example that encouraged the Macedonians to give, and that he does not want to be proved wrong in his boasting about the Corinthians. He says if he happens to bring some Macedonians with him to Corinth, the Corinthians will experience embarrassment if their collection is not ready. He then tells them he wants their gift to be made willingly and not in response to pressure.

### **Giving Authority to Satan**

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul admonishes the Corinth church for sexual immorality because of one man's relationship with his stepmother. He says the church is boasting about this sin that threatens to infect the whole church. Paul says he has passed judgment on the man in the name of Jesus and they must banish the man "and hand him over to Satan" to destroy his sinful nature (5:1-7). Paul says God will judge those outside the church, but it is responsibility of church members to judge each other and cast out those who are sinning (5:9-13). In the New Testament Gospels, however, Christ does not teach that Satan will destroy anyone's sinful nature and he does not teach to call upon Satan to discipline anyone.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul assures them that he and his companions did not try to trick them or teach them wrongly to steal their money. He says as teachers of Christ, they had right to make demands while there, but

instead they worked to pay their own way and have been like children among them or like a mother or father to their children (1 Thessalonians 2:1-13). Paul then attributes Satan, rather than God, with power and control over his life, saying he tried several times to make a return visit to Thessalonica, but Satan prevented it (2:17-20). Compare this to Luke's writing in Acts 15:6 that Holy Spirit kept Paul and his companions from teaching in Asia. At least in chapter 3, Paul says they have been praying to God to allow their return to Thessalonica. In 2 Corinthians 12, he says that even though he received revelations from God, a thorn was put into his side to keep him from being too prideful. He calls the thorn a messenger or angel from Satan, though it is to God that he begged for it to be taken away.

### **Marriage**

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul gives his views on marriage. First he says that every man should have a wife and every woman a husband. Then he contradicts that instruction, saying he wishes everyone would stay unmarried like him, and that widows and anyone else not currently married should remain unmarried, unless they cannot discipline themselves (7:1-9). This teaching places a negative stigma on marriage, ignoring realities of human biology given by God by suggesting only those who are incapable of controlling lust should marry, and also failing to recognize any non-sexual benefits of marriage. After instructing that those now married should stay married even to non-Christian spouses (except in case of adultery or if the non-Christian spouse suggests divorce), he summarizes that everyone should remain as they were when they first became followers of Christ (7:10-16). He then specifically addresses unmarried young women, saying he has no

command from God for them, but that God has given him wisdom and they should not marry. However, if they do marry, it is not a sin, though he says those getting married at that time will have problems that he is trying to spare them (7:25-28). He gives no indication of what those problems are or if they differed from normal stresses married couples face in their relationships.

Next he tells men who are married that they should live as if they are not (7:29-31). Though he provides no explanation what he means by that, one can assume he is telling the men to ignore their wives and families and spend all their time in devotion to God, as he next suggests marriage is a distraction to serving God, but that unmarried men and women can devote all their time in service to God (7:32-35). He clarifies again that marriage is not a sin, saying the man who marries does good, but the man staying unmarried does better. He closes the chapter saying a woman who becomes a widow is free to remarry, but in his view, it is better for her to remain unmarried. Paul provides no scriptural support for any of his views on marriage, which in summary are that it is okay to marry but much better to not marry. He does not suggest two people in a marriage might actually increase their spiritual development by putting worship, obedience, and service to God as the center and guiding force of their relationship.

### **Male Superiority**

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul introduces more doctrine not found in Christ's teachings, declaring men in authority over women. He says that while men reflect God's glory, women reflect only the glory of men, that Adam did not come from a woman, but a woman from him, and that men were not made for women, but women for men. He then contradicts himself,



saying man is not independent of woman in his relationship with God, that as woman came from man, now men come from women, and all come from God. In chapter 14, he returns to his doctrine of sexism, saying women should not speak at church meetings. If she has a question, according to Paul, she should not ask it in church but wait until she returns home and ask her husband. Despite having given advice that unmarried women should remain unmarried, he does not say what an unmarried woman should do if she has a question. In Colossians 3:18-19, he makes another brief return to his male superiority doctrine, telling wives to submit to their husbands without a similar instruction for husbands to submit to their wives. He does at least, however, tell husbands to love their wives and to not mistreat them.

### **Hair Rules**

Interspersed with his male superiority doctrine in 1 Corinthians are Paul's hair rules, also not found in Christ's teachings: a man with long hair is disgraceful, a woman with short hair is disgraceful, a man must not cover his head while praying, a woman must cover her head while praying (11:1-16). He also makes contradictory statement that a woman's hair is her head covering. Paul gives impression that God is concerned about our hair rather than our morality. He does not discuss clothing so fails to suggest that Christians should dress modestly to not attract attention to the body and that immodest dress in tight or revealing clothing is disgraceful.

### **Speaking in Tongues**

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul seeks to answer the Corinthians questions about special abilities given by Holy Spirit. He explains that Spirit gives different abilities to different people but they should be used together for the benefit of the whole

church. In listing possible gifts, he includes ability to speak and interpret unknown languages. In chapter 13, the idea that angels speak in languages not known to earth is introduced. He makes no mention that demons might also then speak in languages not known to earth and therefore uninterpretable by humans. In chapter 14, he says ability to prophesy is the greatest of the gifts. He compares that to speaking a language unknown to humans, which he says helps that person spiritually but does nothing for the whole of the church. He goes on for several verses explaining that the ability to “speak in tongues” is a useless gift unless someone can interpret what is being said. He encourages those who speak in tongues to pray for ability to interpret what they are saying. He notes that he speaks in tongues more than anyone, but it does little good since neither he nor others understand what is being said. To support the idea of speaking in tongues, he quotes Isaiah 28:11-12 that God said he would speak to his people in strange languages. However, Isaiah 28:11 does not say in untranslatable languages, but may be referring to prophets of various languages who should be listened to by all true followers. It may also refer to metaphors, similes, allegories, and parables used in the speeches of Christ and by prophets supporting the message of Christ.

Paul does not explain why God, who knows every thought of every human, would need for any of us to speak in languages in which we do not understand what we are saying. He also makes no reference to the Day of Pentecost miracle described in Acts 2, in which members of the church were given ability by Holy Spirit to speak in earth languages they had previously not known (thus fulfilling prophecy of Mark 16:17 in which people will speak in new languages). In Jeru-

saalem for commerce, 3,000 people of various languages were so impressed by the miracle of the Christians speaking their languages that they joined the Church that day (Acts 2:1-41). Acts does not suggest that believers spoke in languages not known to other humans on earth. The "speaking in tongues" doctrine also fails to capture an essential message that can be interpreted through the Day of Pentecost miracle: all earth languages are understood in heaven, when true followers enter heaven, they will have ability to understand and speak all the languages of earth, just as Christ does.

In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul makes complaint against the "super apostles" and says that if a different teaching of Christ or a different spirit from the one given by him and his associates is offered, the Corinthians too easily accept it. In speaking of a different spirit, Paul suggests that while he was delivering Holy Spirit to people, those he calls "super apostles" (presumably the actual apostles of Christ from the Jerusalem church) were delivering a different spirit. A different spirit would mean a spirit in opposition to Holy Spirit. He appears to be claiming he delivered Holy Spirit but the "super apostles" delivered a demonic spirit. While of course the actual apostles of Christ would not have delivered a demonic spirit, Paul is still introducing an important idea regarding false teachers: a different spirit other than Holy Spirit can be delivered to a person if the person accepts false rather than true teachings of the Christ. This should probably be considered in relation to Paul's discussion about speaking in tongues in which his description of speaking languages unknown to earth does not match the Day of Pentecost miracle described in Acts.

The Mormon scriptures mention being able to speak with a new tongue, "the tongue of angels," after one has repented,

been baptized with water, demonstrated they can and will follow God's commandments, and received the Holy Spirit and been baptized by fire (2 Nephi 31:13-14). "Baptism of fire" likely has meaning similar to Christ's words in the New Testament that a person must take up their cross and follow him - the cross being a symbol for trial, tribulation, and persecution of true followers; in other words, the trying circumstances by which a person's commitment to faith is tested. 2 Nephi 32:2-3 explains to speak with "the tongue of angels" means to speak the words of Christ, a different definition than Paul gives of the angels speaking words uninterpretable to humans. Some Mormons have reported instances in which they or people of other languages with whom they are trying to communicate have been given sudden ability to speak each other's language to aid in that communication. That matches the Day of Pentecost miracle described in Acts, whereas Paul's description of speaking in tongues does not.

### **Demonizing Homosexuality**

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul lists a number of sins that will disqualify a person from heaven. He includes those who "practice homosexuality," which is not spoken about by Christ in the New Testament Gospels. The closest Christ comes to speaking on homosexuality is in his brief mention of three types of eunuchs (Matthew 19:11-12). In a teaching he said will be hard for many to accept, Christ says some are born eunuchs by God's design, some are made eunuchs by others, and some choose to not marry for the kingdom of heaven. By description of the third type of eunuch as a man who chooses to not marry, we understand that Christ is speaking of both literal and metaphorical eunuchs. A literal eunuch is a castrated male who cannot father children. Christ mentions

the literal in the second type, those made eunuchs by others. The third type is of metaphorical eunuchs: men who do not marry but keep a vow of celibacy and devote all their time to the church. These men are capable of fathering children, but choose not to so as to make themselves into metaphorical eunuchs. The first type of eunuch Christ mentions, those born as eunuchs by God's design, may be both metaphorical and literal. Men who are homosexual by biological design are like the religious men who choose not to marry: they can father children but are unlikely to even make an attempt, hence metaphorical eunuchs. Yet another type of eunuch are men born with certain medical conditions that cause undescended testes and aspects of hermaphroditism that significantly decrease their chances of fathering children.

In Paul's defense, emerging and accumulating science offering proof that God makes some people homosexual by biological design was not known in his time. The emerging scientific knowledge does not negate homosexuality as among the reasons for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah told of in the Jewish scriptures, spoken of by Paul in Romans, and confirmed in Qur'an (Genesis 19:1-26, Qur'an 7:80-84, 11:77-83, 26:160-175, 27:54-58, 29:26-35, 51:31-37). Key to the Sodom and Gomorrah verses is that they do not describe a minority percent of the population that is born biologically-homosexual, but are describing a wholesale abandonment of heterosexuality and marriage by all. The various scriptures on those cities do not describe giving biological homosexuals the right to same-sex marriage as the problem. Rather, they describe a wholesale abandonment of heterosexuality in favor of all men engaging in promiscuous homosexual behavior. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah took their sin to a new level

in developing a culture in which heterosexual men purposefully delayed heterosexual marriage in order to engage in homosexual promiscuity. The scriptures on Sodom and Gomorrah do not condemn the biologically homosexual.

That some are homosexual by God's design is suggested in the words of Christ in Matthew 19:11-12 and is demonstrated in emerging science. According to scientific research, male homosexuality often associates with factors related to a man's mom, in particular, the likelihood of having a homosexual son increases with the number of children a woman bears, and with the number of older biological male siblings a man has. Researchers call this a "birth-order effect on male homosexuality." They believe it occurs because the male fetus produces an antigen suspected of playing a role in masculinizing the developing brain, but that mothers develop increased immunity to that antigen with each male fetus they carry. In other words, science appears to be discovering a natural mechanism affecting a minority percentage of the population and put in place by God as a measure of population control. Male homosexuality appears more often in families with large numbers of children and more likely to be among the last male siblings born in the family. The researchers report that homosexuality may occur through a polymorphic gene (a gene that can take more than one form).

In another study, researchers found environmental factors specific to an individual, which may include exposures to different hormones while in the womb, and genetics are both significant in determining homosexuality. Noting that sets of identical and fraternal twins are often used when trying to determine genetic vs. environmental influence on behavior as greater genetic similarity exists for identical twins, researchers

compared 3,826 sets of same-sex twins to find genetics accounted for 35 percent of the difference between men who had engaged in homosexual behavior and those who had not. Another 64 percent was accounted for by individual-specific environmental factors that did not include societal attitudes, family, or parentage. The researchers concluded genetics are a significant factor, but that other biological processes - such as levels of exposure to antigens or hormones in the womb, which can be affected by other influences - are also involved.

In another study, researchers found lesbians did not experience sexual arousal when exposed to either male or female pheromones. Prior research found both heterosexual women and homosexual men respond with sexual arousal to smelling the male pheromones, which again, suggest a biological determination of homosexuality. Animal studies have noted homosexuality present in more than 1,500 species, negating argument that homosexuality is against nature. Again, this scientific research indicating a minority of the population is homosexual by God's biological design does not negate homosexuality as among reasons for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Biblical and Qur'anic scriptures discussing those cities indicate they experienced a wholesale abandonment of heterosexuality and marriage norms in favor of all men engaging in promiscuous homosexual activity.

### **Truth Among Falsehoods**

1 Corinthians 15 discusses resurrection of the dead. Paul correctly says if the Corinthians take the view resurrection does not occur it negates the message of Christ and their faith, though he points out only that Christ could not have risen from death if resurrection does not occur. He does not also mention that belief in the promises of heaven and hell (the

underlying motivations for following a moral path) rests upon belief in resurrection of the dead. He also states they are still in sin if Christ did not rise from the dead, once again wrongly suggesting Christ freed humans from committing sin or from being punished for sins without requirement of repentance.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul talks of suffering through hardships and persecutions. He remarks that suffering allows Christians to share in the death of Jesus (or be given over to death for Christ's sake) so that the life of Jesus may be seen in them (4:5-11). While Paul does not explain the concept, Christians remaining resilient and persevering against adversity and persecution - through their baptism of fire - demonstrate the way of Christ and that can be considered to be the life of Jesus showing through his followers. Chapter 4 closes with more correct teaching that enduring through troubles is a way of achieving life in heaven and that true followers have their sight on the unseen rather than earth life (4:17-18).

Paul's letter to the Romans opens with several verses and paragraphs of general Christian greetings and themes before he begins to describe a past people who once knew God but fell into apostasy, not worshiping or thanking God and creating idols in the images of men and animals to worship instead. He says for that, God allowed them to be overtaken with sinful desires and so the people all began to practice homosexuality. Further depravity was found in characteristics that sound much like the world we live in today: greed, envy, prideful boasting, maliciousness, murder, gossip and slander, disrespect for parents and elders, and many other forms of wickedness even though they had knowledge of God and his laws against such things. He continues correctly in chapter 2 that it is not right to pass judgment on them as those who pass



judgment are guilty of similar sins and this also demonstrates contempt for God (the true Judge).

In Romans 2, Paul also briefly supports the Law of Moses, saying those who obey it will be judged righteous. He also describes an innate sense of morality that causes people to follow moral laws even without having been taught the Law of Moses. He argues that all people have a moral conscience that guides them. He says those who fail to follow that moral conscience will be judged by the same standards of the laws given to the Jews. He then admonishes hypocrisy of those who teach the law but do not follow it and points out that such behavior by those claiming to be religious causes other people to blasphemy (as they are driven away from the hypocritical church and denounce all religion and even the very idea of God's existence).

Paul's string of suddenly correct teachings in Romans ends in chapter 3 when he starts a hard to follow argument against those who say their propensity to sin serves to illuminate God's righteousness. He asks, "are we any better?" than such people, to which Paul quotes scripture primarily from Psalms that all humans are flawed and commit sin. However, that last correct statement leads him back to the argument made in other letters that following the Law of Moses will not result in being declared righteous before God but only serves to make people conscious of their sin. Thus, he contradicts what he had said in chapter 2 that those who follow the law will be declared righteous. The rest of chapter 3 takes the form of Paul's signed letters, preaching that Christ took penalty for our sins and that we are free from the law.

In chapter 4, Paul presents another incorrect argument that Abraham was considered righteous by God and given promise

for his faith alone and not for following God's laws. He says if those who follow the law are to inherit God's promise, then faith has no value. This again contradicts what Paul said in chapter 2 that those who follow the law will be judged righteous. It also makes faulty argument that we do not need to demonstrate faith through actions that follow God's laws. He also states that without the law, there is no transgression of it, contradicting his statement in chapter 2 that the law exists innately in human consciousness.

### **Unknowns**

Paul makes reference to proxy baptism for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29), a practice of the Mormon church mandated by revelation (D&C 124: 29-39, 127:5-9; see section 138 for additional context). Paul gives no other information in his letters about the practice. His mention neither confirms nor disconfirms it as a practice of the Jerusalem church.

1 Thessalonians 4 mentions the rapture, a belief that those going to heaven will ascend to meet Jesus in the clouds upon his return. No indication of the teaching's origination is given.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul says he knew a believer who was taken 14 years ago to the third heaven where the person was shown things that he was not permitted to tell about. He is possibly talking about Apostle John whose vision of heaven is described in Revelation. In Revelation 10:4, John says he is not permitted to reveal some things shown to him. If speaking of John, since 2 Corinthians is dated circa 55 AD, this would date John's vision around 40 AD, though Revelation as a written manuscript is dated around 90 AD.

### **Conclusion on Paul's Letters**

Paul makes ironic statement that false teachings are like a little bit of yeast that spreads through a whole batch of dough

and that God will punish the one causing confusion in the teachings, "whoever he is" (Galatians 5:9-10). Paul also reminds us in 2 Corinthians 11 that Satan and his servants often disguise themselves as workers of righteousness. Though the analysis here does not go past Romans 4 (and does not include everything it could for or against Paul from the letters examined), Paul continues his odd, contradictory, and errant arguments mixed with occasional truths and religious themes through the remainder of Romans and other letters. Without any further analysis, it can be said that signed or unsigned, the letters of Paul in the New Testament emphasize faulty doctrines that lead to beliefs such as Jesus' death on the cross means that a person's sins are forgiven without repentance, it is not necessary to follow the 10 Commandments (the central aspect of the Law of Moses), and that Jesus is literally God, the timeless supreme Creator of the universe.

Throughout Paul's letters, sprinklings of truth are found among his subversions and redefinition of the message of Christ. That truth is found among the falsehoods is of course what makes Paul's writings so dangerous. Truthful teachings are used to convince people in their hearts and minds that all of Paul's teachings are correct and infallible, even if they overwrite the very teachings of Christ. Hence, these letters were codified into the Catholic Bible and have been allowed to remain in the Catholic and Protestant Christian Bibles for hundreds of years. They even remain in Mormon editions of the Christian Bible, yet the Mormon scriptures specifically say to not follow Paul (see "The Mormon Scriptures" chapter).

Millions of Christians accept Paul's letters without debate, argument, analysis, or any critical thought because they believe the faulty doctrine (proved faulty in "The Resurrection

Conflicts" chapter) that every word of the Bible is true. In giving equal (or in some cases more) weight to Paul's teachings, these Christians undermine their claim to be followers of Christ, for they do not hold Christ to be special and above other teachers. In their practice and beliefs, Paul is just as good as Christ. Paul's letters have more debatable content. The point of this analysis was not to exhaust the topic, but to present a solid argument that his letters should not be regarded as pure scripture and should not be allowed to overwrite Christ's teachings.

### **The Judas Curse**

"The Judas Curse" is a theory developed from clues in the New Testament Gospels and the letters of Paul regarding the fate of Judas and the identity of the anti-Christ. As explained in "The Resurrection Conflicts" chapter, two different reports are given in the New Testament regarding the death of Judas. In one report, it is said he took the 30 pieces of silver used to bribe him to betray the Christ, threw the money on the temple floor, and then hung himself. The priests used the 30 pieces of silver to buy a field to bury foreigners and that is why it is called the Field of Blood (Matthew 27:5-8). In a different report, Judas bought a field with the money, fell on a rock in the field, burst open and died, and that is why it is called the Field of Blood (Acts 1:18-19).

Not only do these conflicting reports introduce a question of how did Judas really die, but also the question, what is the real reason it is called the Field of Blood? This author believes that a plot of land that became known as the Field of Blood most likely was the site of a massacre of Christians. It is possible this massacre also helped spread the fame of Christ through the region and to Rome because the Christians

offered no resistance to their slaughter but instead prayed to God to forgive the ones murdering them as they were doing so, as Stephen does in Acts 7:59-60. While that may or may not have happened, the point is to suggest that neither of the reasons given for the Field of Blood name may be accurate. But what of the reports of Judas' two different deaths?

“The Judas Curse” theory seeks to answer not which one of Judas' death is the real one, but to explain how it is that Judas could have actually died twice and also provides explanation for the strange ending to the book of John in which Apostle Peter ask Christ about another disciple who is walking up to them. In response, Christ appears to say the one walking up to them will be kept alive until Christ returns (John 21:20-22). The manner in which the question is asked appears to place that disciple as someone the other apostles are not interested to have among them. Christ's response is also a bit of a retort that it is not the decision of the apostles and to mind their own business (John 21:20-23).

The one walking up is described as the disciple Jesus loved *and* as the one who leaned his back on Christ at the Last Supper and asked him which one of them would betray him. At the Last Supper, Christ had told all the apostles that one of them would betray him. They asked him and each other which one of them it might be. Jesus answered it is the one who dips his hand in the same dish with him (Matthew 26:21-23, Mark 14:18-20), which implies it was someone sitting next to him or across from him. Judas asks if he is the one who will betray him, to which Jesus answers yes (Matthew 26:25), which implies Judas was sitting next to or across from Jesus so as to share the dipping bowl with him. The disciple whom Jesus loved was reclining next to him and leaned his back on

him (John 13:23-25). If Judas was sitting next to him and the disciple whom Jesus loved was sitting next to him, then Judas is either the disciple whom Jesus loved or Judas was on one side of Christ and the disciple whom Jesus loved was on the other. However, the scriptures give no indication that there was a disciple sitting on each side of Jesus. Reference is made to only one disciple sitting next to and leaning upon the Christ. This would have been the one who shared the dipping bowl with Christ, who was also his betrayer, hence, that disciple sitting next to Christ and leaning on him would have been Judas. Hence, the disciple who approaches Peter and Christ in John 21:20-23 is Judas.

Additionally, the second to last verse of John appears to also identify that same disciple as the author of the book of John (John 21:24). Biblical scholars note authorship of John has been assumed to be John or a scribe from a congregation founded by John, but is not actually known. Indeed, Luke is the only book of the four Gospels in which the author actually identifies himself. By the exchange that occurs at the end of John and the references given, it appears John (the only Gospel that claims Christ is God, but does not substantiate that claim well) was written by a resurrected Judas.

The Judas Curse theory explains this by suggesting that the offer the devil made to Christ, reported in Matthew 4:8-10, to have wealth and rulership over the earth's cities if he would serve the devil, that Christ turned down, was then extended to Judas. Unlike Christ, Judas accepted the offer. After his betrayal of Christ, he was so overcome with regret and remorse that he did indeed commit suicide by hanging himself, thinking he could end his deal with the devil in this manner. Instead, Judas came back to life. He died a second time either at

the field of blood massacre or in some other way, or he did not actually die but simply vanished.

Either through transfiguration of his appearance, or by his soul leaving the body of Judas and “walking in” to another body to take possession of it, he reappears in the form of Saul, changes his name to Paul, and writes his half-truth/half-false doctrine letters to subvert the message of Christ and lead many astray. Paul tells us in those confusing, conflicted, and contradictory letters that the anti-Christ was alive on earth and at work in secret then and would continue working in secret until he is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 6-8). Paul makes several other suggestions in his letters that can be seen on a whole to be clues that he was the anti-Christ.

If the Judas Curse theory is correct, after being Paul (whom history records no death of and no known remains), he would have went from one body to another either through power of transfiguration to change his appearance or through death of one body and overtaking another one as a walk-in in a succession down through history. He would have of course been Hitler (whom history also records no death or known remains), but also a number of others in history of wealth and power. According to prophecy of Islam, the anti-Christ cannot die until Christ returns. This is also stated in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (some translations say Christ will consume or overthrow him, some say Christ will kill him) and matches John 21:22 where Christ says it is his business if that disciple is kept alive until he comes back.

Also according to the prophecy of Islam, Imam Al Mehdi (Elijah) is persecuted by the anti-Christ before Mehdi's emergence before the world through the anti-Christ's control of a government position. Dajjal, the anti-Christ, may hold

that position himself or he may control it through wealth by bribery, blackmail, and other coercions. According to Islam prophecy, Mehdi and Dajjal emerge before the world around the same time. According to Islam prophecy then, wherever Mehdi is and can finally be identified, there also will be the anti-Christ as the mastermind and ringleader of a persecution against Elijah/John the Baptist/Imam Al Mehdi.

One final note is that the Mormon and Christian scriptures suggest the anti-Christ does not work alone, or that we should consider the anti-Christ to be a trio. Doctrine and Covenants sections 76 condemns not just followers of Paul, but followers of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. Apollos and Cephas are not simply included as followers of Paul themselves, but as key figures, as anti-Christ's leading people astray. Revelation 13 also seems to suggest there is more than one anti-Christ, as it speaks of a beast given power by the dragon, and in subsequent passages of a second beast who deceives people on behalf of the first beast who recovers from the mortal wound (Revelation 13:1-3, 11-14). Revelation 16:13 also suggests a trio of anti-Christ's: a dragon (Satan), a beast, and a false prophet (the second beast).

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## The Changing Religion

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## Tanakh and Baptism

A prescribed covenant of baptism has possibly been altered in corruption to at least two places in Tanakh. Qur'an 3:67 says that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, though the Ali and Picktall translations state he was not a Jew, "nor yet a Christian." The Daryabadi translation reads he was neither a Jew "nor a Nazarene." If the "nor yet" Christian or Nazarene is correct translation, it could suggest what might be expected, that like other prophets in the Jewish scriptures, Abraham received and gave prophecy regarding the coming of Christ, also known as the Nazarene.

The Tanakh story of Abraham and wife Sarah in Genesis has some strange twists, including the oddly perplexing covenant of circumcision that says if males are circumcised, they are righteous before God (Genesis 17:1-14). The covenant makes no mention of repenting of sins or living a moral life, but requires men to be victims of sexual violence at 8 days old. Granted the assumption is these men are raised in families that follow and teach moral law, but given that all humans err and commit sin, the covenant does not explain why a painful alteration of the human body that God created is required for God to forgive sins that have not yet been committed nor repented from at 8 days old.

The covenant holds that God did not make men properly so infant males must experience sexual mutilation, and if parents force their infant sons to experience this, everyone involved is a good person. Genesis does not explain why God would make this odd covenant with humans. Effect of this early experience of sexual violence on male psychology is also generally not discussed in societies that practice it.

In juxtaposition, the covenant of baptism symbolizes an acceptance of the prophecies and teachings of Christ and of making personal commitment to repentance. Past sins are washed away in metaphor, but Christ makes clear in the New Testament that baptism does not guarantee heaven as some who call on, prophesy, and teach in his name will be rejected for not doing what he taught. In the covenant of baptism, if and only if a person follows through on living a moral life, following the teachings of the Christ and the prophets, and obeying God's commandments, then the past sins are literally erased from the record of deeds used on Judgment Day to determine heaven or hell. It seems likely that the covenant of circumcision is a fraud and that Abraham instead would have been instructed in the covenant of baptism by God and that he also would have received prophecies of the Christ.

A second place in Tanakh where the covenant of baptism may have been perverted is in Numbers 6. No mention of Christ is found in discussion of "the vow of the Nazirite," though it likely received its name in connection to prophecies of the Nazarene. In this vow, the Nazirite undergoes a "period of separation" during which he must abstain from alcohol (as well as grapes and raisins), let his hair grow long, and may not go near a dead body even if an immediate family member dies. If someone dies in his presence, the Nazirite must shave his head and bring two small birds for the priest to sacrifice in order to purify the Nazirite of *his sin* of someone having died in his presence. The same day, the defiled Nazirite is to bring the priest another offering for sacrifice, a year-old lamb.

At the end of the separation (the instructions do not say how long this period is to last), the Nazirite is to bring two lambs and one goat, as well as grain, drinks, breads, cakes, and

wafers to the priest. The Nazirite shaves his head and throws the hair into the burnt offering fire. The priest then gives the Nazirite a portion of the food (the animals, bread, and wafers brought by the Nazirite) and the Nazirite may drink wine. The Nazirite is to bring the required offerings to the priest *along with anything else he can afford.*

Covenant of baptism was possibly re-established through prophecies and instructions given to Moses, but later altered by self-interested Pharisees (members of the priesthood) to gain wealth from requirement of offerings. That was the nature of the Pharisee culture described and criticized by Jesus in the New Testament. The period of separation and vow of the Nazirite also may have originally been part of a legitimate entry process into the priesthood that was altered to serve the self-interested with requirements of offerings to be given to the priests. The legitimate entry process to the priesthood would have required a period of isolation from the world to devote to prolonged study and contemplation of the scriptures as well as frequent prayer and meditation to improve and deepen relationship with God before re-entry into the world to use the wisdom, knowledge, and strength gained to resist and to teach others to resist temptations of greed, anger, dishonesty, lust, exploitation and other sins.

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# Qur'an Re-Examined





## Muhammad's Missing Qur'an

Muslims are told very early in Qur'an to accept the prior scriptures (2:4) while given warnings throughout Qur'an to guard against corruptions to those scriptures. Also in surah 2, Muslims are told changes were made to the Jewish scriptures by self-interested misbelievers or nonbelievers who usurped positions of authority in the Church (2:59, 2:75, and 2:79). A number of small stories are given in Qur'an to correct misinformation recorded in the Bible.

For example, Muslims are told in surah 2 that the Tanakh contains corruptions regarding the story of Solomon (2:101-2). In surah 3, Muslims are told that Zachariah (father of John the Baptist) was unable to speak for three days after angels told him of his son's future birth (3:39-41), whereas in the New Testament, Zachariah was unable to speak for many months between being given this information by Angel Gabriel and John's actual birth (Luke 1:19-24, 57-64). Surah 3 also appears to speak against the "speaking in tongues" doctrine defined by Paul in the New Testament as speaking languages unknown on earth (3:78). In surah 19, Muslims learn that Maryam gave birth to Christ under or near a tree, rather than a manger, and that she was alone at the time (19:23-25). They are also told Christ spoke from the cradle as an infant (3:46), and are given his first words (19:29-33).

Muslims are told in Qur'an to accept the prior scriptures while guarding against corruptions they contain. Muslims were given this information in Qur'an with concurrent prophecy given through Muhammad that Muslims would follow the path of the religious groups God had established before them and commit all the same mistakes. This then

would include accepting and following corruptions to the Qur'an put in place by usurpers who gained or were granted authority over the Muslim community after Prophet Muhammad's departure.

Indeed, the first possible source of corruption occurred shortly after Muhammad's departure, when a re-compilation of Qur'an was ordered by the next leader of the Muslim community. In *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam*, Yahiya Emerick does not give as many details on the re-compilation of Qur'an after Muhammad as Ahmad Ali Al-Imam does in the far more academic *Variant Readings of the Qur'an*. Yet neither book, nor other Muslim scholarship, provides legitimate explanation for why Muhammad's chief scribe, Zayd bin Thabit, did not simply make copies of the Qur'an he had compiled for Muhammad.

In his introduction to translation of Qur'an, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem also does not suggest a reason why Abu Bakr ordered the Qur'an re-compiled when 29 scribes had recorded the Qur'an in writing under the prophet's direction during his lifetime. Bakr, a close friend and companion of Muhammad's, was chosen leader of the Muslim community after the prophet in one of the central events that eventually led to the Sunni-Shia division and 1400-year conflict in Islam. Shia believe that Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's son-in-law, cousin, and father of his descendants through Muhammad's daughter Fatima and who was also raised in Prophet Muhammad's household, should have been named the first caliph after Muhammad. However, the Shia story goes, while Ali was burying the prophet's body, a decision was made by Bakr and others to place Bakr as the community's new voice of leadership and authority. A number of subsequent events through the years

led to splintering of the Muslim community into two sects that remain in enmity to this day.

Muslim scholarship does not explain why Bakr did not order the copy Zayd assembled for Muhammad to be copied rather than ordering a re-compilation through secondary sources. According to Haleem, Bakr ordered the new copy to be made and stored with him. This decision gave private control of the text to Bakr, his successor Umar, and Umar's successor Uthman who ordered that copy to be disseminated and all other existing versions of the Qur'an destroyed. Tarif Khalidi explains in his Qur'an translation introduction that these orders caused political upheaval, a rebellion, and ultimately Uthman's murder.

Despite the five-year leadership of Ali that followed, the Uthmanic Qur'an (often called "the Uthmanic writ") remains the Qur'an in use today. Emerick dismisses possible alteration of Qur'an by repeating argument that all the sources used for recompilation had memorized Qur'an while the prophet was alive and that hundreds of other memorizers (some of whom were illiterate) would have noticed alterations in the written text. Death of all but a handful of memorizers in battle is the contradictory reason offered for Bakr's re-compilation order, though that still does not answer why the prophet's completed copy was not used as the source text for other copies.

Admitting a problem exists in the Bakr-Umar-Uthman story is an extraordinary political hurdle for Sunni Muslims. To admit that any of the first three caliphs after Muhammad may have altered the Qur'an is to admit Shia are correct in scrutinizing those caliphs. In essence, it is to admit a defeat in a 1400-year-old battle for control and understanding of the religion. However, it is to admit a defeat on only one aspect of

that battle while opening opportunity for reconciliation of Sunni and Shia beliefs in which neither side should be seen as all correct or all incorrect.

Muslims argue that ayat (verse) 15:9 says God will keep the Qur'an safe and ayats 41:41-42 say no falsehood can blemish it. They argue these statements mean God has provided the Qur'an with a divine protection not given to the other holy books. Rather than interpret against evidence that those ayats mean God has protected the Qur'an we are using from any corruptions, the ayats can be interpreted instead to mean corruptions to the text will not keep true followers from identifying and disregarding those corruptions. Ayats 85:21-22 provide another clue that a copy of the original Qur'an is kept "in a well-guarded tablet." God may be saying that he is keeping the original book hidden, but it may eventually be found here on earth. Some Shia Muslims believe Qur'an has corruptions and that Imam Al Mehdi will somehow have the knowledge or keys to bring forth the original Qur'an. Sunni hadith includes that Mehdi will bring forth the true morality of the Qur'an; in other words, that he will provide corrected interpretations to Qur'an in use today.

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## Sunnah and Hadith

The story of Muhammad's missing Qur'an is incomplete without discussion of overwriting Qur'anic instructions with instructions from sunnah and hadith collections that Muslims were told to not collect. While Qur'an is strictly revelations received by the prophet, sunnah and hadith record the ways and sayings of the prophet and also contain a good amount of prophecy not found in Qur'an, some of which may have been given to the prophet in visions rather than in words to be recorded in Qur'an. They are the source books for Islam's prophecy of the return of Christ, emergence and leadership of Imam Al Mehdi (Elijah) that precedes Christ, and emergence of the anti-Christ in opposition to Mehdi. Sunnah and hadith should aid in understanding Qur'an instructions. Often, however, they impose rules and practices not supported by Qur'an. According to sunnah and hadith books themselves, God forbade their collection and Muhammad gave prophecy a false sunnah would be followed.

Collected 200 years after the prophet, it is not possible the sunnah and hadith collections are pure. Muslims acknowledge this and discuss how reliable a particular story is by examining lineage of its narration - who told the story to whom, who was next in the chain to receive the story and so forth as the story was passed through oral history before put into writing. This reliability-ratings scheme rests upon dubious premises that the chain of narration for a story is reported accurately, the true character of every narrator in the chain is known and was consistent (the better character of the narrators the more likely the story is truthful), and that people of upstanding character have perfect memories, never exaggerate, never



forget or confuse information, and do not introduce any other errors when re-telling a story.

A number of practices of mainstream Islam are not found in Qur'an instruction. One example is the endorphin-releasing group prayer ritual that is almost a dance, involving light aerobic exercise and memorized chanting. The image of the prostrate Muslim bowing with face pressed to the floor is a somewhat deceptive one. Only a few seconds during each repetition of this exercise routine are spent in prostration in a mainstream prayer ritual that is not described nor mandated in Qur'an. Qur'an instructs prayers can be done prostrate, sitting, standing, laying on the side, and even while fleeing an enemy, but nowhere does it mention that a light aerobic endorphin-releasing exercise routine using memorized chanting should be offered as prayer. The endorphins released and happiness of group unity may serve to falsely convince Muslims they are connecting with God through this memorized chanting and exercise. Daily exercise is healthy and righteous. Endorphin release that serves to fight stress and keep us healthy from illness is but one benefit of exercise. However, endorphins can also be released through quiet meditation, which means they can be released through prayer that does not involve exercise routine of which good feelings from endorphin release may be falsely attributed to prayer.

Another example of sunnah overwriting Qur'an is in the strict separation of men and women in traditional Muslim nations that is done based on hadith that says when a man and woman are alone together, Satan is with them. That hadith contradicts several Qur'an passages, such as 7:7 and 57:4 which state that God is with us wherever we are, and 58:7 which specifically says that if three people gather together, or

more than that, or less than that, that God is also there with them and there is nothing they do that will not be witnessed by God. The hadith rightfully acknowledges that temptation to sin exists between men and women who are physically, emotionally, or intellectually attracted to one another, but it also dis-allows for the idea that believers are actually capable of following God's instructions to not give in to temptations. Use of the hadith imposes a strict restriction that even those who support the restriction acknowledge sunnah and hadith indicate was not practiced during the prophet's time. Because it was not practiced during the prophet's time, it is by definition false sunnah. This is not to suggest that unmarried men and women should spend time alone together in private. Rather, it is to suggest that strict separation that does not allow Muslims of the opposite sex to even talk to one another in public places (unless they are courting for marriage and have a chaperon, called a wali, present) and that requires separation for prayer into different rooms, is a faulty doctrine and that a sensible balance should be found that allows for avoidance of temptation while also allowing belief that true followers can actually follow what God says to do and will not fall into sin at the first and every opportunity.

Traditional Islam also has belief Muslim males may marry women of other faiths but Muslim women may marry only Muslim men. Qur'an indicates Muslims, male or female, may marry believers, which is further defined in Qur'an to mean Muslims and true followers found within other faiths. The traditional requirement for the female to have permission of her father or other male guardian to marry (the male needs no such permission) is also not in Qur'an. Women are also not allowed to be imams in traditional Islam, despite that at least

one of Muhammad's wives sometimes led prayers of the early Muslim community. News reports in recent years have noted some Canadian and American mosques are breaking with tradition and allowing female imams, and a Muslim sect in China has allowed female imams for a number of decades.

Traditional Islam also holds belief that women are not to pray during menstruation; this is also not supported by Qur'an. Menstruation is mentioned in Qur'an as a time for men to not attempt physical relations with their wives and it is said that menstruation is unclean (2:222), but it does not say this makes the woman unclean or unholy during that time, nor that she is not allowed to pray or read Qur'an during that time. Some discussions defending use of hadith that suggest a woman should not pray during menstruation argue a woman is being given some sort of benefit or reward by being considered unclean and being prohibited from prayer, and speak of prayer as if it were a dreaded task of drudgery no one really wants to do rather than a joyful task and celebration of communion with God that Muslims should be eager to do several times a day. Another belief of traditional Islam is that a wife cannot refuse a request from her husband for physical relations unless menstruating or experiencing post-partum bleeding. Qur'an makes no statement wives are obligated to their husbands in this manner or that they are not allowed to have say in when relations with their husbands occur.

Another example of faulty sunnah and hadith is in racism aimed at Jews. In *Al Mahdi and the End of Time*, Muhammad ibn 'Izzat Muhammad 'Arif presents some of the prophesied signs and conditions leading up to the emergence of Imam Al Mehdi. The signs include the international monetary banking system now in place, of which no person living anywhere in

the world can escape the taint of usury connected to these banks. Usury is forbidden by Qur'an as it is in Biblical writ. On page 48, 'Arif says the actions of the banks are based on the Jewish usury system and that the wealth made from them goes to people who are enslaved by the Golden Calf. Jewish people did not invent usury, a practice predating Moses that was likely in use during Abraham's and Noah's times. In addition, scores of non-Jewish bankers have become wealthy from the usury system all over the world. The Golden Calf, however, is symbolic for worship of false idols, which includes idolization of wealth and luxury. Beneficiaries of usury (defined by this author not only as charging of interest, but also of unfair wage practices and exploitative pricing in the marketplace that combine to keep a small group wealthy and a large group struggling to house, feed, and clothe themselves) do indeed worship wealth and luxury, but these beneficiaries include a number of fabulously wealthy people who claim to be Muslims and Christians.

The inclusion of anti-Jewish racism in what is otherwise a highly-informative and fairly presented book can most likely be attributed to corrupt sunnah and hadith, some of which is also quoted. For example, the final battle between Christ and the anti-Christ has the anti-Christ with 70,000 Jewish troops behind him, but there being no place for a Jew to hide, be it a tree, rock, animal, or wall, that God will not make to say come and kill the Jew behind it. This alleged prophecy overwrites Qur'an which says true followers are not determined by religious group or label, but that both hypocrites and true followers exist in each of the religions. The alleged prophecy also does not match reality of an isolated Jewish army against an alliance of opposition. Only a similar alliance of forces

would present serious challenge to the unified nations of true followers prophesied to come into existence under Mehdi's leadership. The alleged prophecy also does not match another prophecy of Islam (supported by New Testament and Book of Mormon prophecy) in which Jews come to accept Jesus as the Christ and millions of Jews fold into the one true religion along with millions of Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and others.

Another major problem of sunnah and hadith concerns age reported for Muhammad's wife Aisha at the time of marriage. Faulty report saying Aisha was a child of 9 when married is taken as truth by some Muslims and some haters of Muslims, both of whom do not explore hadith literature more carefully to note the reports of Aisha's age at 18 or 19 at marriage. At 18 or 19, she was still significantly younger than the prophet (his first wife had been significantly older than him), but inter-generational relationships are not forbidden among adults seeking marriage. Many Muslims failure to know Aisha's real age at marriage allows vile people to launch disgusting assault of lies at Prophet Muhammad and the religion without an effective defense against the vile assaults.

Much more could be written on problems in the sunnah and hadith, including that they contain many falsehoods invented to discredit Prophet Muhammad or to justify wrong actions by others after him. Muslims are aware the collections contain many corruptions and some arguments persist over what is authentic and what is not. Given that they were not supposed to be collected, an argument can be made to throw out all sunnah and hadith. Yet, despite human defiance of the orders to not collect them, and despite many details within them that conflict with each other, God has allowed for some

goodness to come out of them. They are the source books for Islam's prophecy on the return of Christ and emergence of Mehdi and Dajjal. When explored in conjunction with Tanakh, New Testament, and the Mormon scriptures, they help us understand a unity of religions as the prophecies of the religions overlap and interweave, confirming and informing each other to present fuller understanding of events to come. In addition, the collections contain unique prophecy being proved true by science (see "The South African Runner," "Disappearing Men," and "The Inevitable Sinkholes" chapters). Thus, while Muslims may not want to discard the books altogether, they may want to be more discerning and more skeptical in their use of these books that were never supposed to be produced and that contain many falsehoods.

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## Analysis of Surah 2

Surah 2, called "Al Baqarah" ("The Cow"), named in reference to an incident among the followers of Moses, is 286 ayats, one of the longest in Qur'an. A reader seeking meaning is at first overwhelmed by length and variety of topics. Careful reading, though, finds a certain continuity to the text for about 177 ayats before taking a turn in topics. This continuity of topics focuses on general spiritual themes of prayer and repentance, charity, promise of heaven or hell, and story of Adam and the devil, but then gives its prolonged attention to the Children of Israel, or members of the Jewish faith.

The lengthy focus on the Children of Israel could give the impression that Qur'an begins with goal of instilling a dislike for Jews in the hearts and minds of Muslims. Such conclusion undermines the message of surah 2 and also overlooks Tanakh scriptures that repeatedly admonish the Jews for disobedience. Islam prophecy found in sunnah and hadith is that Muslims will repeat the mistakes of the religious groups prior to them. Allah explains in Qur'an that religions become corrupted over time after departure of the prophet used to re-establish the true religion. Discussion of corruptions to the Jewish faith and scriptures can be understood then to be a foretelling to Muslims of what would occur to their own religion.

Surah 2 is among a set of surahs in Qur'an that begin with stand alone letters, or what Muslims refer to as the mysterious letters. Muslims have not yet been able to discern the reason for the stand alone letters. Surah 2 begins with the Arabic letters alif, lam, and mim. According to an electronic translator, these spell a word meaning "pain." Hence, it could be interpreted the chapter opens with either identification of



pain to mark the life of a true follower or that the surah will discuss painful things that occur in the religions after Allah has established them. Next, a statement of Qur'an's general purpose is made: guidance for those who fear God and offer regular prayer and charity, who believe in Qur'an, the scriptures sent before it, and the unseen, and who are sure of the after life (2:2-5). Qur'an's 11th ayat (2:4) tells Muslims to not just believe in Qur'an, but also in the scriptures and prophets that preceded it. This instruction is modified later to tell Muslims to guard against corruptions in those scriptures without disregarding truth they contain.

Ayats 6-20 admonish people who will not believe in God or accept correct guidance, including those who claim to believe and offer prayers, but who do not follow a righteous path. Qur'an's first admonishment then is against both outright unbelievers as well as hypocrites within the religions. However, God then points out that it is pointless to admonish people who do not believe, whether you warn them or not, they will not accept faith and that he has placed a seal over their hearts causing them to further distance themselves from him. Later ayats say if God wanted to, he could lead all to guidance but he allows those who refuse his message to stray.

The ayats continue that people who say they believe in God and Judgment Day but who really do not, fool only themselves but not God nor the true followers. Such people refer to true followers as fools, yet when meeting with them, claim to also be believers. These people cause mischief over the earth while claiming they seek peace. God promises to throw mockery back on them, refers to them as deaf, dumb, and blind, and describes them accepting God when things are good for them but rejecting God when they have troubles.

Ayat 2:22 is first mention against worship of rival gods, a key message repeated many times in Qur'an. Idol worship can be literal, such as praying to wooden, glass, rock, or metallic objects as representation of gods. It may also mean offering prayer to saints or prophets instead of God. Just as important, it may also be allegorical (metaphorical), meaning to focus attention on secular people, objects, ideas, and distractions that are allowed to define moral behavior rather than God. In some cases, these distractions and false doctrines compete with a person's study and understanding of the holy books, but in many cases they completely replace such study.

In 2:23, God challenges any who claim Qur'an is forged to produce ayats like it, but says they can not do so. In mind with Islam's history (see the "Muhammad's Missing Qur'an" chapter) and ayat 4:82 (careful study can identify anything in Qur'an not from God), if Qur'an does contain forged or altered ayats, careful reading should identify them. However, God subtly points out (for those who contemplate as they are supposed to) in 2:22 that distractions and allegiances to other things (to individuals or groups of people, to ideas of others, and to other activities) cause people to not give time to worship of him or to focused study of the holy books.

In ayats 24-29, God tells us he uses similitudes (metaphors) in Qur'an and other holy books in speaking of the highest and lowest things. In other words, heaven and hell and behaviors that determine to which a person will go are described in both literal and metaphorical language. Qur'an then must be read for surface level and metaphorical meanings. He tells us again that he only leads or allows to stray those who have already forsaken his guidance. He reminds that he created everything on earth, us, and seven levels of heaven, he has perfect know-

ledge, and he causes us to die and then brings us back to life. Resurrection of the dead - of God bringing us back to life for reward or penalty on Judgment Day - is a major theme spoken of throughout Qur'an.

In ayats 30-39, we are told of the rivalry between Adam and Iblis (Satan) began in heaven and extended to earth, and that the angels lack perfect knowledge and are sometimes curious about what God is doing. God created Adam to be a vicegerent (also translated deputy or successor) on earth and taught him knowledge he did not give the angels. Unlike the angels, Adam was taught the names of all things. The angels were instructed to bow to him, all did except for Iblis. Adam and his wife were told to live in the Garden and partake of its bounty, but to not approach one tree or it would bring harm upon them. Iblis fooled them into disobedience, causing God to toss them out from the Garden "for a time" for humans to live in hostility with each other on earth, though God would send guidance and those following it have nothing to fear. Adam accepted guidance from God. Those rejecting guidance will have the fate of the fire.

Next begins the long set of ayats addressing the Children of Israel, once more calling upon Jews to fulfill their covenant with God and that instructs them to believe in revelations of Qur'an, also confirming the revelations given to them. In 40-46, we are told that true followers do not reject faith, do not trade the word of God for worldly gain, fear none but God, do not cover truth with falsehood or conceal truth when known, nor preach right practice but fail to do it themselves, but that they do practice regular prayer and charity, bow in worship, seek God's help via prayer and perseverance, are humble before God, and are certain of a day they will return to God.

In ayats 47-53, Jews are asked to remember the special favor when God preferred them over all others, and to guard against a day when no soul shall have any helper, intercessor nor mediator before God. They are told to remember God delivered them from a people who enslaved them and slaughtered their sons, that God divided the sea to spare them while drowning Pharaoh's people, and that God forgave them even after the calf-worshiping incident.

Ayats 57-59 give a correction to the Jewish scriptures that appears to be about the battle at Jericho described in the book of Joshua. God told the Jews to enter a town and eat of the plenty therein, but to enter the gate in humility, teaching repentance. Wrongdoers changed wording of the revelations, so God sent plague upon the Jews for repeated infringements.

In 60-64, we are told God commanded Moses to strike a rock to cause 12 springs of water to gush forth for the thirsty Jews in the desert. Each group knew its own place for water. This is Qur'an's only detail on division of the Jews into 12 tribes. God answered their prayers for diversity in food, yet they still rejected God's message and slew prophets. Still God showed mercy and still invites them to fulfill their covenant.

Ayat 62 takes a quick but not unnoticeable departure from addressing the Children of Israel to remind that God is not dismissing all Jews as unrighteous. Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sabians (some debate exists as to who are the Sabians), indeed any who believe in God and Judgment Day and do righteous works shall have reward with God. The key presented in 2:62 is that they believe God will hold them accountable on Judgment Day. These are people active in their faiths, who implement moral code in all aspects of their lives.

Next are two references to disobedience by the Jews. God

turned sabbath breakers among the Jews into apes to make examples of them so that other Jews would fear God (65-66). The surah's title comes from the story beginning in ayat 67. God instructs Moses to instruct the Jews to sacrifice a cow. A terse exchange between Moses and an insolent people follows as they ask their prophet a series of seemingly insignificant and mocking questions about what type of cow they are to sacrifice. The story ends in ayat 71 with the people sacrificing the carefully identified cow, but not with good will.

An interesting aspect of this story and surah title is that the cow the Jews are asked to sacrifice is a golden calf, not one made from molded gold, but an actual young live calf golden in color. This suggests the Tanakh story may have been altered and the people may have worshiped an actual golden-colored calf born while Moses was away on the mountain receiving the 10 Commandments. It also suggests the possibility that the ancient Jewish practice of animal sacrifice as atonement for sins is a corruption put in place by Jewish leaders who manipulated the story of the golden calf.

The surah continues, God performed miracles for the Jews but they responded with hardened hearts. Plotters claimed to be believers as did those who did not know the scriptures but conjectured about them without study (72-78). Ayat 79 gives third mention of corruption to God's word by either changing it (2:59), misinterpreting it (2:75), or in this third case, inventing it. Those who believe they will receive only light punishment for altering the word of God are wrong (80-81).

Ayat 83 says except for a few among them, the Jews have not followed the law God gave them: worship God only; treat parents, relatives, orphans, and those in need with kindness; be fair and honest; pray regularly, give regular charity. They

made covenant with God to not banish or slay any among their own people, but broke that covenant too (84-86).

In 87-90, Jews are admonished for being puffed up with pride. God gave the Book to Moses and followed him with a string of messengers up to Mary's son, Jesus, to whom God gave signs and strengthened with the Holy Spirit. But each time a messenger is sent, some are called impostors, others are killed. The Jews pray for victory over unbelievers, yet reject the messengers God sends. Ayats 90-91 remind that God may choose anyone he wants to receive revelation, but he says envy causes others to reject his chosen messengers, even if the messengers confirm what is in their holy books.

Ayats 94-96 rebuke the Jewish claim that heaven is for them alone. If that were true, they would seek death, God says, but they fear death instead.

Ayats 97-98 tell us Michael and Gabriel work with God. Gabriel is identified as the angel who delivers revelations to the prophets (Gabriel is identified as Holy Spirit). Nothing more is said about Michael. In Tanakh, Michael is called a prince of the people who is to come forth at the end of time, to be a time of great calamity during which those who have their names written in the book of life will be delivered (Daniel 12:1). The New Testament says Michael and his angels fought a war in heaven against Satan, causing Satan and his angels to be cast from heaven to earth (Revelation 12:7-9). In Mormon scriptures, Michael is identified as Adam (D&C 27:11). If the Mormon scriptures are authentic, and Michael is understood in Daniel 12:1 to be Christ, then Adam and Christ are the same soul. Support for this is found also in Revelation 22:16 in Christ saying he is the root and offspring of David, as well as in references to Christ as "the first born." \*(Please see note at end of this chapter.)

Ayats 101-102 give another correction to Jewish scriptures, saying Solomon was given a book confirming what the Jews already had, but a party against Solomon threw the book away and fabricated scriptures about him. They followed evil ones who teach men magic and other things such as was taught by the angels Harut and Marut, who were sent to Babylon as tempters, teaching bad things but not without first telling people that they were temptations and they should worship God instead.

Examination of the Tanakh books involving Solomon finds no obvious problems with Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. The Song of Solomon, however, focuses on romantic love without a placement of that love in the context of spiritual and religious significance. Solomon is also mentioned near the end of 1 Chronicles. 2 Chronicles focuses on his reign over Israel.

In 2 Chronicles 9, Solomon is said to have amassed great wealth and that governors and all the kings of Arabia sent him gold and silver. A man of God would use wealth to ensure all in his community are fed and clothed and that the word of God is taught. He would extend work programs and charity to other communities and use his wealth to see that the word of God is taught to others too. Yet, Solomon is described in these scriptures as obsessed with material objects, having hundreds of targets and shields made from gold, an ivory throne overlain with pure gold, a footstool of gold, twelve lions (presumably made also from ivory or gold) around the ivory-gold throne, and every cup and glass in his palace made from gold (2 Chronicles 9:15-19). Rather than description as a man of God who gives great charity and uses wealth to help others, Solomon is described in 2 Chronicles as collecting, hoarding, and flaunting wealth.

Qur'an continues with ayats 104-105 instructing believers that they do not tell the prophet to listen to them, but instead ask for guidance and listen to the prophet. Also, unbelievers, apostates, and idolaters do not want anything good to come to the prophet or the religious community. In 106, God tells us He will not abrogate any scripture or instruction without giving something similar or better in its place. Next, 107-108 ask if Muslims will dare to question their messenger as Moses was questioned by the Jews and stray from belief to unbelief. Ayat 109 warns that people of other religions will try to influence Muslims away from their faith out of jealousy even though they know Muhammad was a true prophet. Muslims are told to forgive and overlook this. 110 reminds us those who give charity, pray, and do good deeds will go to heaven.

Ayats 111-112 address Jewish and Christian claim that only they will be allowed in heaven, reminding again that whoever submits the whole self to God and does good works will enter heaven. 113 says Jews and Christians each say the other has nothing to stand upon, even though they claim to study the same book. 114 asks who can be more unjust than one who forbids God's name from celebration in houses of worship. This may be reference to Christians who worship Christ as God, but also may be referring to any suppression of any of the religions that worship God despite their corruptions.

Ayats 115-117 say everything in the universe belongs to and owes its creation to God alone and that God does not have a literal son. That God can create anything instantly, has no need for a son, does not produce offspring to share in divinity, and does not produce offspring with humans is stated several times in Qur'an. Muslims do not accept the idea that Christ is a literal or biological son of God. The Qur'an does not negate



Christ as the lead messenger of God, nor does Islam negate the idea of his return. Rather, Islam supports the prophecy of his return and reign and adds to it.

The ayats continue, those without knowledge ask God for a sign, but God gives signs only to those who have faith. The prophets are sent as warners and to give glad tidings to true followers. They are not responsible for those who will not listen. In Muhammad's case, Jews and Christians will not be happy with him and will try to influence him to follow their religion. He is instructed to stay true to God's guidance and will be punished if he disobeys to follow what other people want instead (2:118-120).

Ayat 124 tells us God tested Abraham with commands that he fulfilled. Abraham asked God if his descendants could also be prophets. God answered that his promise does not extend to those who do wrong. This passage seems to be saying that God did not intend for Abraham's descendants to be prophets, but other ayats confirm Jewish scripture that Abraham's sons Isaac and Ishmael, his grandson Jacob, and his great-grandson Joseph were all prophets. The ayat must mean that Abraham was promised that some but not all of his descendants would be prophets. While discussing Abraham, God has taken a departure from speaking about the Children of Israel under and after Moses. In speaking of Abraham, a connection still exists and therefore a certain continuity between the topic, themes, and scriptures important and central to the Jews.

Ayats 125-133 continue to discuss Abraham, saying God made "the House" for assembly, safety, and prayer. The prophet is instructed to take Abraham's place there. Abraham and Ishmael made covenant they would purify the House for those who make pilgrimage and pray in prostration. They

prayed for God to accept their service and repentance, and they asked God to send another messenger to their people. God says only fools reject the religion of Abraham. Abraham told his sons and Jacob to not die except while in submission to God. Jacob asked his sons what they would worship after he died. They answered the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, the one true God.

Ayat 134 (and again in 141) delivers an important message: the people of Abraham's time are gone, they are accountable for their deeds, you are accountable for yours and will not be held responsible for theirs. The message is there is no virtue in engaging in prolonged arguments about people who lived long ago. Whatever they did, good or bad, they are responsible for their deeds. Muslims of today are responsible for their own deeds and not those of Muslims who lived before them. Applicable to the Sunni-Shia conflict, with each side arguing about the superior righteousness of different companions or family members of the prophet, Muslims of today will not be judged by what those people did so there is no virtue in defending them or arguing over these people who lived 1400 years ago.

Continuing with the theme of Abraham, God says in 135-140 that Jews and Christians say you must be one of them to be on the right path, but the religion of Abraham was right, though he was neither Christian nor Jew. God instructs that Muslims are to believe in God and the revelations given to Muhammad, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Tribes, Moses, Jesus and other prophets. Muslims are also not to make distinctions among the prophets (they are not to prefer some prophets over others). God says this is the way of the rightfully guided and God is sufficient for them against those in the wrong.

God next says it makes no real difference which direction you face during prayer, both east and west belong to God. The ayats explain, changes were made to the prayer direction to test who would follow Muhammad and who would turn away from belief when changes were ordered. The change to face Jerusalem during prayer was hard for Muslims to accept, so Muhammad turned to God for guidance in the matter. God then decreed a change in direction more pleasing to Arab Muslims, toward Mecca (142-143). Discussion of this topic ends that Jews and Christians are not going to follow Muslim prayer practices, nor will Muslims follow theirs. Jews and Christians know this, but some conceal truth (145-147).

God next instructs us to compete with one another in doing good works and gives promise to bring doers of good together. From where ever you start, he tells us, turn toward the Sacred Mosque. Do not fear wrongdoers but fear God and God will give guidance. God has now sent a messenger from among you, reciting God's message and teaching new knowledge and wisdom of the scriptures. If you remember God and are grateful, then God will remember you (148-152).

This instruction to turn toward the Sacred Mosque comes immediately after information that indicates it makes no real difference which direction is faced during prayer, that God ordered prayer directions and changes to it merely as a test to see who would follow the instruction. This is reminiscent of God's instructions to Abraham to sacrifice his son, an order God never intended to be carried all the way through but given as a test to see if Abraham would follow the instruction. The Sacred Mosque might be considered to be different from "the House" or Kabbah in Makkah (Mecca), the mosque to which Muslims make yearly pilgrimage, on the site where it is

believed Abraham also once stood and called people to prayer. The Sacred Mosque might be considered a metaphorical place, a turning to God within a person's heart and mind. This is confusing, though, because just a few ayats later it appears the Sacred Mosque is identified as the House, or the Kabbah.

Muslims will be tested with fear, hunger, poverty, and loss, but pray and be patient through adversity. Remember you are to return to God for judgment. Those slain for the religion are not dead. They are alive, though we do not perceive it (153-157). Safa and Marwah are symbols of God, so those visiting the Sacred Mosque may also visit them (158). Footnote in the Abdullah Yusuf Ali translation explains that Safa and Marwah are hills located within Makkah, believed to be the place where Hagar prayed for God's help during Ishmael's infancy.

If those concealing what is in these revelations from God repent and declare truth, they will be forgiven, but those who die while in a state of rejecting faith will be punished (159-162). There is one God. Signs he exists include alteration of night and day, rain, wind, variety of creatures, and ships that sail the seas. Great penalty awaits those who take others as an equal to God. On Judgment Day, those being equated with God will rebuke those who worship them. People will long for another chance but will have no way out of the fire (163-167).

Eat from what is lawful and good on the earth but do not follow the evil one who has you say ignorant things about God. When told to follow what God reveals, they answer they will follow instead the ways of their fathers even though their fathers were lacking in wisdom and guidance. Those who reject faith are like a goat-herd, shouting to things that listen only to calls and cries. They are described as deaf, dumb, blind, and devoid of wisdom (168-172).

Starting around ayat 142, God begins to move further away from discussion of the Children of Israel. However, like the discussion of Abraham that immediately precedes 142, God continues to speak for 30 more ayats in general religious themes familiar to Jews, and still giving general instructions about accepting all the prophets, not taking belief that others share in divinity with God, and about establishing regular prayer and worship and doing good deeds to secure a place in heaven. In 173, an instruction is given that is suddenly more specific: eating dead meat, blood, swine, and anything that has had a name other than God's invoked upon it is forbidden, but if forced out of necessity rather than willful disobedience to transgress these bounds, God forgives this. By "dead meat," one presumes this means meat found dead from some other cause other than the animal being specifically sacrificed for human consumption. In giving this instruction, 173 begins to break continuity of surah 2, but ayats 174-176 then re-connect with the surah's general spiritual themes, speaking again against those who conceal what is in revelation from God, that such people trade guidance for error and forgiveness for torment as they mis-interpret the scriptures. Ayat 177 again indicates one does not need to face toward Makkah during prayer. God says there is no righteousness in this practice.

Ayat 178 is problematic. It addresses the topic of what to do if a murder has occurred. These are some of the words various translators have used in ayat 178: law of equality (Ali), fair retribution (Haleem), retribution (Khan), retaliation (Picktall, Khalidi), just retribution (Asad), legal retribution (Saheeh), retaliation on equal terms (Hamza/Tafsir). At first the ayat appears to order retaliatory killing if a murder occurs, "a free man for a free man, a slave for a slave, a female for a

female." However, it is difficult to find a coherent translation of the next part of the ayat, but it seems to suggest that overlooking the transgression of a murder rather than performing a retaliatory killing will be rewarded by God. The ayat does not suggest that the actual murderer be the one subject to a retaliatory killing. Rather, it appears the ayat suggests to kill a random person related to the murderer, or is from his social group and who is otherwise of equal social standing to the person murdered. The ayat suggests holding accountable people who did not necessarily commit the murder. It is hard to accept that as just or fair. In light of ayats 2:23, 24, 59, 75, 79, 159, 174, and 4:82, it is possible 2:178 is a forged or altered ayat and this is why it is difficult to understand and provide coherent translation.

The ending of the ayat gives another clue to meaning. It says whoever transgresses after this decree has been given will receive penalty from God. This suggests God is replacing a form of law and is saying he has forgiven what was done wrongly in the past though it is not to be repeated. In putting the original Arabic text in an electronic translator, the ayat reads in part near the end, "retribution for the dead is behind." This suggests the ayat has been somewhat mis-interpreted and mis-translated and that God is telling Muslims to not retaliate murder for murder, but to stop this practice of the pagan Arab tribes before Islam.

Another aspect suggesting 2:178, the related 2:179, and some ayats following are altered or forged is that surah 2 loses continuity completely at 178 and 179. Immediately following those ayats are instructions for people to make wills, warning of penalty on any who change what a will says (180-182), and then jumps to a string of instructions on unrelated topics:

fasting, consumption, the moon, which door to enter your home, defending in warfare, and instructions for hajj (183-203). Ayats 204-209 then bring back some continuity with the first 177 ayats, describing two types of humans: those who do mischief on the earth and seek their own vain desires, and those who follow God in humility instead. For one ayat only, 211 again mentions the Children of Israel, giving admonishment for anyone who would substitute something else for God's word. Ayats 212-215 also return to the general spiritual themes of the first 177 verses, saying unbelievers laugh at the believers, and explaining that humans were once a single community but when God sent prophets to guide and settle disputes between them, some rejected God's guidance even though clear signs were given.

The subject of fighting returns in 216; it is an obligation upon Muslims. The ayat includes a key message applicable to many aspects of life, that we may dislike some things that are good for us and like some things that are not good for us. 217 says to not fight during the holy months, but that it is even worse to deny access to the path of God. It continues that the unbelievers will keep attacking the believers to try to induce them to denounce or abandon their faith, but doing so will result in punishment of hell. 218 reminds that those who believe and sacrifice for God's cause will receive reward.

The fighting instructions are immediately followed with ayats on another set of hodgepodge topics: wine and gambling, orphans, instruction to not marry unbelievers, menstruation, marriage, oaths, divorce, weaning children, re-marriage of widows, divorce again, prayer while fleeing from an enemy, widows again, and divorce again (219-242) before finally returning to the subject of fighting in 243 with reminder that

God causes us to die but also brings us back to life again. The short and simple instruction of 244 follows, telling us to fight in God's cause. The reminder of resurrection of the dead is reminder of Judgment Day, on which those who made sacrifice for God's cause will receive reward, but those who cowered in fear and did not fight for God's cause will be punished. Hence, 245 says if you give Allah a beautiful loan (dedicate your life, even sacrifice it), your reward with God will be multiplied. Ayats 246-252 loosely connect the fighting instructions to earlier themes involving the Children of Israel, as the story of David's defeat of Goliath is told to remind that a smaller army with unseasoned soldiers can defeat a more powerful force if God is on its side.

Ayat 253 reminds God sends messengers, endowing them with different gifts and signs. 254 encourages charity. 255 reminds us of God's omnipotence: he never tires or sleeps, he knows all things. 256 bans use of compulsion (coercion, force) in the religion. 257 says God is protector of those with faith and will lead them from darkness to light, whereas rejecters of faith are led from light to darkness. 258-260 contain messages again about Allah's omnipotence, ability to perform miracles, and to create, suspend, or resurrect life.

Requirement of charity to others is emphasized for several ayats. Muslims are to give from what they have, but charity with or followed by insults at the poor will not be to your credit with God. It is also not right and will not be counted in your favor if you give for charity things you yourself would not accept (for example, do not give a sub-standard portion of your crop that contains spoilage) (261-267). The evil one uses poverty to invite you to wrong conduct, but God promises forgiveness and bounty for those who do right instead. God



knows what you give and is aware of who is not giving (268-270). Charity given in secret and private is more to your credit with God than charity that is public (271). Charity benefits a person's soul and will be repaid by God. Give also to those who restrain themselves from asking for help but are in need. Those who give charity in private and in public will have reward with God (272-274).

Juxtaposed with charity is usury. Trade is allowed, but usury is forbidden. Any who cease in usury may keep past profits, but if he returns to the practice, he will go to hell (275-279). If someone in debt to you is having difficulty making payment, delay the debt or even better is to forgive the debt as an act of charity. Be mindful that God will give every soul its rightful punishment or reward (280-281).

Detailed instructions for writing financial contracts are given next (282-283) before the last three ayats re-connect with the general spiritual themes of the first part of the surah. God has power over all things, knows our every thought, and forgives and punishes as he wills (284). The messenger and his followers believe in God and the angels, and the various scriptures and messengers, making no distinctions between them (285). That is, Muslims are to respect prophets of all religions and read and accept the various scriptures. God will not place burdens on a soul greater than the person can endure. Pray for God's mercy, forgiveness, protection, and help against unbelievers (286).

The financial contract instructions include that two men are to be used as witnesses, but if two men are not available, then one man and two women. While this at first may seem to be a corrupted ayat promoting a doctrine of male superiority, scientific research suggests validity to argument that men can

remember numbers, facts, and figures better than women. The science also says women remember other things better than men, and that overall, women have the advantage in memory.

### **Conclusion**

After 177 ayats, surah 2's continuity of general religious themes and topics of or related to the Children of Israel is broken by a nearly incoherent ayat followed by a string of important, but in this context, random topics. Prior to the break in continuity, ayats addressing members of the Jewish faith are in a holy book given through a prophet who gave prophecy that Muslims would repeat the mistakes of the religious groups before them. That would include mistakes of Jews and Christians that are described in Qur'an, beginning in surah 2. Hence, Qur'an's address of the Jewish faith should be regarded as addressing all religious faiths, including Islam. A major point of Qur'an is to instruct true followers to work to identify corruptions in doctrines and practices of their religions. Our entry into heaven depends upon rejecting the corruptions. It is a test true followers must pass.

Ayats on war and fighting are included in surah 2 after the break in continuity; that is, after the point where remainder of the surah becomes suspect as having altered or forged ayats. Argument could be made to toss out all remaining ayats after the continuity break, so as to throw out surah 2's ayats on fighting. However, none of the ayats allow Muslims to initiate warfare against others, but only to fight defensive battles. As well, none of the ayats allow Muslims to engage in acts of terrorism. Muslims are told to not contribute to destruction and to drive oppressors from their own communities, not to carry out random attacks of civilians on foreign soil (see "A Better Solution" chapter for more discussion of this). The

fighting ayats appear authentic, as do the ayats on financial contracts, but it is not clear why these instructions are placed at the end of surah 2 when they do not match the general theme of surah 2 and are placed randomly within a string of disjointed topics. Suggestion emerging from close examination centers on the difficulty of interpreting and translating ayat 178 which may or may not give instructions for a retaliatory killing of a murder. This author's theory is the ayat is telling Muslim's to cease a pagan practice of retaliatory killing, but was altered in attempt to convince Muslims that it says the opposite, and that the string of random topics after the ayat is a clue left by Zayd of corruption to the surah.

The lessons of Qur'an are for all humans. All are extended mercy and forgiveness from God despite repeated insolence and disobedience. If we repent and change our errant ways, God forgives the past. Qur'an warns like the other holy books that God has a limit and at some point the time will be up for humans to repent. According to surah 2, common traits shared by true followers across religious groups are: belief in God, the unseen, Judgment Day, and the promise of heaven or hell; fear of God; consistent prayer and charity; lack of hypocrisy; honesty; humility; and patient perseverance during adversity, turning to God for guidance and help.

\*October 3, 2011 update - Upon deeper study of the Mormon scriptures, the author has discovered a misunderstanding he developed in trying to reconcile the Muslim, Mormon, and Christian scriptures in information they give regarding Adam and Michael. As will be explained in *The Changing Religion, Part 2*, the author's new understanding is that Adam and Christ are not the same soul but that Christ and Holy Spirit

are the same soul (but still not the Supreme Creator, who created Holy Spirit and sometimes sends Spirit to earth embodied in human form). Adam is a separate soul, also known by the name Michael (and possibly others in the holy scriptures through various reincarnations). Rather than correct the misunderstanding presented in this chapter, the author has chosen to let the chapter stand as is so that he may use the misunderstanding as an example of a false belief that the author discarded when he acquired correcting knowledge.

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## Restoring the Qur'an

Using historical information and supporting clues from Qur'an in ayats discussing corruption to the Jewish scriptures, argument is made that the Qur'an in use today, often referred to as the Uthmanic writ, is not identical to the original Qur'an received through Prophet Muhammad. Further support for this argument is found in analysis of surah 2 that demonstrates a continuity of topics and themes for about 177 ayats before a nearly incomprehensible passage on a suddenly divergent topic introduces a string of jumps through random topics for the next 100 ayats. The topics are not unimportant. Indeed, each is discussed other places in Qur'an. Their hodgepodge inclusion in a surah named for a story involving the Jews, and with most of the surah dedicated to discussion of Moses, the Jews, and otherwise mostly general spiritual themes is, however, odd literary structure, especially given that the author is God, a being of the highest intelligence in the universe. Therefore and in context of ayats 4:82, 2:59, 2:75, 2:79, and Qur'an's known history, they are suggestive that not all in surah 2 is authentic.

Discussion of ayats 85:21-22 (Qur'an is in a well-guarded or preserved tabled) lead to belief in possibility that the original Qur'an is hidden someplace on earth and may eventually be found. While waiting for that possible event, true followers in the meantime have challenge of seeking comprehension and clear meaning from the Uthmanic Qur'an. Similar to the instruction of 4:82 to contemplate the words of the Qur'an carefully, ayat 42:12 adds "nothing resembles God" to suggest some unauthentic material may be identifiable not just by inconsistency with other text in instructions and information,

but also by speech pattern, literary style, and structure or organization. Ayat 17:106 (Qur'an has been revealed bit by bit so it may be recited slowly in intervals) provides another clue that Qur'an should probably not contain surahs that take so long to recite they cannot maintain the attention of an audience. Most of Qur'an's surahs are fairly short and can be recited in less than or close to 10 minutes. A number of surahs near the end can be recited in less than one minute. Yet, Qur'an also contains a few amazingly long surahs that require 15 minutes or more to recite and that do not maintain consistency of topics. These surahs should be studied carefully to identify out-of-place and inconsistent information. However, even some shorter surahs that can be recited within 10 minutes present suspect material. Until God replaces the Uthmanic writ with the original Qur'an, or has Imam Al Mehdi do so, Muslims are challenged to restore what they can for themselves through careful reading and contemplation to identify possible corruptions to discard from their individual understandings and practices of the religion. The rest of this chapter presents some of this author's restoration efforts.

### **Apostasy and Violence**

Unlike corrupted ayats, apostasy is example of clear and consistent instructions from Qur'an being discarded in favor of false doctrines of men. A number of Muslim clerics state that apostates should be killed. Qur'an does not allow for that. Some clerics modify this to say only those apostates attacking and actively working against Islam should be killed. Qur'an does not allow for that either. God says in 2:109 to forgive and overlook those who try to turn you from faith until God has accomplished his purpose. Thus, Qur'an's first instruction on what to do about those who insult, denounce, or disparage the

prophet or the religion is to forgive them and overlook what they do. In 2:137, God says that if others turn from faith, God is sufficient in defense against them. In other words, Muslims are not to attack unbelievers or apostates, even if actively working against the religion, for God will take care of them. Muslims then are not to build up hatred at those who speak against Islam and should not be issuing death decrees or become stuck in anger at those who disparage Muhammad or any of the prophets through words, cartoons, book burnings or other actions. Muslims are to forgive and overlook these things and teach the true religion through patience.

Ayats 2:256 and 50:45 also forbid compulsion or force in the religion. 50:45 says Muslims are not to use force to compel others to believe or follow the religion; the prophet and the religious community are only to admonish and warn of God's punishment. 68:44 says to leave those who disparage the religion to God alone for punishment. 88:21 again says the prophet is a warner - to admonish, exhort, and remind. 88:22 says the prophet is not to compel others or manage their affairs. 88:23-24 say if any turn away and reject God, then God will punish them. Indeed, throughout Qur'an, God promises he will punish apostates, unbelievers, mis-believers, betrayers, and hypocrites. These ayats instruct Muslims that God does not need their help in this. By Qur'an, death decrees, stoning people, and other violence are not allowed in the religion.

### **Poets or Politicians?**

Surah 26 contains brief admonishment near the end of the chapter against poets and those who follow them. 26:224-227 say poets are followed by those who are astray, and the poets themselves go about the land claiming and teaching things they do not actually do, except for a few among them who are



true followers. Despite that the surah title is also, "The Poets," no other mention of poets or poetry is found in the surah. Rather, it reminds of several prophets and their opposition:

*Moses vs. Pharaoh*

Pharaoh is not described as a poet here nor any other place in the Qur'an or Tanakh. Rather, he is described as a man of wealth, having an over-bloated ego, and believing that people should worship him.

*Abraham vs. His Father and Idol Worshipers*

Neither in this surah nor at any other place in the Qur'an or Tanakh is it said that Abraham was opposed by poets, but rather by people following a religion of idol worship.

*Noah vs. the High and Lofty*

Those opposed to Noah remark only the lowest (translated also as the worst, meanest, or the riff raff) people follow him. Most likely Noah was leading the poor and powerless (the "riff raff") against people of wealth and power. No mention is made of poets or poetry.

*Hud vs. the Ad People*

Described as having built marvelous mansions and palaces, Qur'an makes no mention of poetry as a sin of the Ad people.

*Salih vs. the Thamud People*

The Thamud are described as having gardens, fountains, plantations, palms, and homes carved from the mountains of which they brag and boast. No mention is made of poetry.

*Lot vs. Cult of Maleness*

The scriptures in Qur'an and Tanakh describe the people opposed to Lot as having developed cultural abnormality in which male homosexual behavior was glorified for all men to participate in while delaying and degrading heterosexual marriage. Poets are not mentioned.

*Shu'ayb vs. People of the Thicket*

Shu'ayb's main admonishment to his people was to be fair in weights and measures, to not shortchange others, and to not cheat people in the value of their goods. No mention is made of poets or poetry.

In the seven prophet stories told in surah 26, no mention is made of poetry or poets. No other place in Qur'an has admonishment of poets but only statement that God has not taught the prophet poetry nor is he reciting poetry (36:69, 69:41). Qur'an and other holy books, however, do speak repeatedly against those who hoard wealth while others struggle for food and shelter. These are the type of people (with exception of the Lot story) described in surah 26, elsewhere in Qur'an, and in the other holy books as opposing the prophets. Ayats 34:34-35 say every time God sends a warner to a people, the wealthy reject the message and boast of their wealth and children as proof that God will not punish them.

Poets can have cultural influence on individuals and on society but of limited effect. Like other art and media, poetry (including forms such as popular music) can have messages that are antithetical to the true religion and that lead people astray. Yet poetry often also has messages in support of morality that help people develop and maintain proper values. In both cases, the poets are not operating in a vacuum, but in situation where many other sources of ideological influence are present upon people. Poets rarely develop religious or political followings and are rarely elected, appointed, or granted office to have decision making powers over others. They also rarely go about the land boasting of things they have not done or have no intention of doing, except within context of their art which is understood to be largely fictional.

On the other hand, religious gurus and false prophets do occasionally come along to boast of things they do not do, corruption exists among clergy of different religions, and a few of them occasionally obtain followings beyond local small congregations. Far more routinely, though, two other sources are largely responsible for leading people astray. One is promotion of an ideology of pursuit of wealth, luxury, and leisure that has existed and been promoted throughout history in various forms of media content controlled by governments and the wealthy. In contemporary media, it is glorified by both the advertising industry and in idolization of consumer objects and wealthy celebrities. Second is politicians who are known to boast of accomplishments and to make promises to do many things that they fail to do.

As an example, many American politicians claim to serve the common people while their campaigns and in some cases personal wealth are funded by wealthy individuals and corporations whose primary concern is maximizing their own profits rather than what will serve the best interests of all. If elected politicians do not control legislation to serve interests of their campaign funders, they will not receive funding for re-election campaigns, but the money will go to others who will control legislation to maximum benefit of the wealthy. Majority of the campaign funding is spent on advertising to convince the mass of voters who are not wealthy that these candidates will serve their best interests. Hence, promises to serve with best interests of all in mind are made with no intention of them ever being kept.

It is not a secret to Americans that their political system works this way, yet common folks as political activists still line up to be campaign volunteers and workers for people

funded by the wealthy. Activists of mainstream political parties argue rhetoric and policy proposals of candidates who are controlled by the wealthy, failing to scrutinize these proposals to find they offer empty promises to the majority of the populace while serving the interests of wealth. After election, the common people campaign workers and voters are asked to be understanding for why campaign promises cannot be kept in compromises that must be made with the opposing political party, whose candidates were also funded by the wealthy. This is not to say that all politicians are bad, nor all people who line up to promote their promises in attempt to influence voters, nor all of the wealthy who give money to candidates. As surah 26 says, exceptions among them do worship God and will do what is right.

The point of this discussion is that the prophet stories in surah 26 and elsewhere, as well as common knowledge, suggest surah 26 does not have a thing to do with poets or poetry, but rather gives admonishment and warning against those who use media to promote false values and those who lie and twist words to position themselves as saviors for the common people when they support the wealthy, their grand palaces, and their exploitative ways above and against "the riff raff" who would chose humility, fairness, and just outcomes for all. This group would include politicians who make grand claims for solutions to problems but then rarely oppose wealth to serve the interests of the majority who elected them.

#### **Ayat 4:34**

Ayat 4:34 allegedly tells Muslim men to hit disobedient wives. Discussions defending interpretation and translation of the ayat to instruct men to hit their wives rest largely upon hadith or sunnah that reduces the hitting almost to a mocking

gesture (giving a tap on the shoulder or hitting her with a folded handkerchief) that causes no harm, but that might serve to break tension and cause both partners to laugh. Further interpretation based on sunnah reports is that he can not hit her in the face or any sensitive areas and may not hit hard enough to cause injury or leave a mark. An ineffectual or humorous gesture causing no harm but that merely serves to communicate growing dissatisfaction and frustration of the male, however, may not be interpretation used by individual Muslim males in relationships with their spouses and so the ayat remains a topic of controversy.

The Laleh Bakhtiar translation of Qur'an is touted as the first by an American woman. A promotional website for the translation stresses the importance and achievement of restoring correct reading, interpretation, and translation of 4:34. Bakhtiar points out the word translated so often to mean "to hit" has more than 25 different meanings in Arabic, among them "to go away." Thus, she translates the ayat to tell men to go away from wives who are not obedient to morality. Bakhtiar's translation is not the only one that uses one of the other 25 or so meanings for the Arabic word "idriboo."

### **Plural Marriage**

The context of surah 4's early instructions for a Muslim man to marry up to four wives (4:3) is to do so if there exists a shortage of believing men for the women to marry. The instruction is given in answer to a question of what to do about the orphans. Context of Muslim history indicates these would have been war orphans without full means of support due to deaths of their fathers. Hence, the answer given is to marry their mothers. Yahiya Emerick correctly notes this context - when a shortage of believing men exists in ratio to

believing women - in his guide to Islam, but context of the instruction is often ignored by Muslim men, some of whom also do not stop at four. While in some cases the man has enough resources to provide for multiple wives (who may or may not also be working) and all their children, in other cases Muslims have developed forms of marriage in which partners remain living separately and that require no real obligation between the spouses. These are marked as "mutah" or "misyar" marriages, meaning the couple has no intention of them being permanent. The marriage contract can even stipulate the marriage is to last only a few hours. Qur'an has no allowance for this form of marriage that westerners rightly recognize as short or long-term extramarital affairs despite a name of marriage. Ayat 4:3's instructions to not marry more than one wife unless a man can treat them equitable, as well as ayats that instruct marriage is not to be done for the purpose of lust (4:24, see also 4:27), are statements against mutah and misyar.

At certain times, Prophet Muhammad had more than four wives at once. Ayat 33:50 gives allowances of additional wives and who he may marry that the ayat also clearly states are only for the prophet and not other men (33:52 also places some limit on the prophet). While this can be seen as a type of reward for the prophet, it should be remembered by other men that with each wife in these true marriages came obligation for an emotional relationship that the average man may not have ability nor interest to fulfill for so many wives.

### **The Mother and Child Bond**

Ayat 65:6 is not authentic. Prime among the problems with its instructions is that it places the idea of paternity above maternity, yet stories of Moses and Jesus in Qur'an emphasize importance of their mothers not their fathers (see 28:8-13, for

example). It calls for children of divorcing parents to stay with their fathers rather than mothers but offers no suggestion for who will care for the children while fathers work to provide food and shelter for the family or are serving in the Muslim military. It gives no reason for why it is better for children to go with fathers than with their mothers or why they cannot go with either. It also fails to note the deep emotional bond mothers have with children and the importance of their role in nurturing and teaching a child proper values and behavior.

### **Bedouins**

In surahs 9, 48, and 49, admonishment is given toward the Bedouins who offered excuses for why they could not join the Muslim military under Prophet Muhammad to help defend the Muslim community against violent attack. According to Muslim beliefs and definition, Bedouins are nomadic "desert Arabs." Some translations simply say "desert Arabs" and do not use the word "Bedouin." As nomadic desert dwellers, they would not have been landowners and they would not have had many possessions. Yet the Bedouins used excuses of needing to care for property and families for why they could not help defend against those trying to destroy the Muslim community and slay the prophet. Bedouins were more likely land and shop owners from the merchant (middle) class rather than landless nomads without property.

### **Surah 24**

Surah 24 includes instruction to not enter another person's home when the homeowner is not there unless you have been granted permission, but if you are asked to leave, then leave. One wonders both how the homeowner could tell someone to leave if the homeowner is not home, and if this instruction were not given, would Muslims believe it is okay to intrude

into another person's home without permission? The other holy books' absence of instruction on this matter suggest it is assumed that those with moral knowledge would know to not intrude into other people's homes and do not need that specific instruction. The other holy books are also absent of instruction telling people they can eat at their own homes or at the homes of others, and that they may eat in a group or separately. With heavy sarcasm, it can be said surah 24 ends the divisive moral debate about whether you can have friends to your home for dinner. The comic elements serve as alert that the surah has unauthentic ayats.

Both surah 4 and 24 require four witnesses to convict a person of adultery. 4:15 says women convicted are to be confined to their homes until death or "until God provides another way." The next ayat says if two men commit a lewd act to punish them harshly, but if they repent to let them be. Oddly, the offer of repentance is not extended to women. Surah 24 contradicts surah 4, saying the adulterers are to be flogged with 100 lashes (neither surah says to stone them, yet this is a practice of some Muslim communities). Surah 24 also says if four witnesses cannot be found, the one who made the accusation is to receive 80 lashes and his or her testimony never accepted again. Apparently, they are also not granted offer of repentance.

A question in response to both surahs is, how likely is there to be one witness to adultery, let alone four? Another question is why are adultery and petty theft - crimes and sins that can be deeply personal but still of limited and small-scale effect to the community - covered in Qur'an for punishment while crimes of blackmail, bribery, and extortion that may have significant political, economic, and social ramifications on the



entire community are not? That the punishments for adultery contradict each other and also defy the prohibition against force or compulsion in the religion suggests neither set of instructions is authentic.

After the instruction on punishing adultery, surah 24 goes into discussion of a slander that occurred among the Muslims during Muhammad's time when a small group conspired to lie about someone else. It is said because four witnesses could not be produced, they are liars in God's eyes. The problem of this passage is that God knows all that people do. Whether no witnesses or four witnesses, he would know whether they are liars or truth tellers. The statement that God sees them as liars because they did not have four witnesses is antithetical to teachings of Qur'an and other holy books that God knows and sees all. In addition, 27:48 says that nine among the Thamud conspired to murder Prophet Salih. If nine can conspire to murder, four or more can conspire in lie to discredit, harass, embarrass, humiliate, and persecute to cause suffering for a targeted person or family. More than four can conspire, more than nine can conspire, and God is aware of this. Neither the number nor the community positions of witnesses produces evidence of wrongdoing on their words alone.

Surah 24 is similar to surahs 2 and 5 in that it contains a hodgepodge of disjointed topics that suggest Zayd left clues in the re-compiled Qur'an of corruptions and errors. After the adultery and slander discussions, the surah proceeds in this order: do not gossip, do not enter homes of others un-invited or un-announced, a short set of modesty and then marriage instructions, instructions on freeing a slave, instructions to not force female slaves into prostitution if they desire chastity (problematic "if" suggests if they do not want chastity, you

may make them prostitutes, which cannot be correct), a poem about God being the light of the heavens and earth (the only element of the surah correlating to its title, "Light"), admonishment against apostates and those who refused to serve in the Muslim military, promise of reward for the righteous, the three times during the day when servants and children must ask to enter your room for you might be in a state of undress (contradicting earlier instruction that you do not have to keep modesty around children or servants), women after child-bearing years do not need to keep the modesty rules as strict, you may eat at your own home or at a relative's or friend's, you may eat together or scattered, do not depart company from the prophet until given permission, and do not speak to the prophet as you do with others.

### **Surah 5**

After brief introductory remarks, surah 2 has a consistent theme mostly discussing the Children of Israel during the days of Moses. The surah loses continuity after 170-some ayats, becoming a string of randomly intermixed instructions and topics, suggesting corruption to the latter part of surah 2. Surah 5 has similar difficulties. The title is translated as "The Feast" or "The Table" and refers to a story just before the end of the surah (similar to how "The Cow" story is found within surah 2) in which disciples of Jesus ask him to ask God to send a feast from heaven (5:112-115). The surah begins with instructions about food that are found in other surahs, then gives brief instructions on marriage, and then on washing before prayer. It then discusses 12 chiefs being chosen from among the Children of Israel and Christ being sent as a messenger. Next, the surah goes back and forth between days of Moses and Christ, followed by out of place instructions on

food, hajj, making a will when nearing death, and prohibitions against wine, gambling, and idol worship, before it finally comes to focus near the end of the surah on Jesus again and the specific reference of the feast story.

Intermixed with the out of place information on food, pilgrimage, making a will, and the prohibitions, are ayats that contradict prior ayats given in surah 2. Surah 2 says God will judge between Jews and Christians on Judgment Day, and that among Jews and Christians (just as Qur'an indicates is found among Muslims) are both hypocrites to guard against as well as true believers to be taken as brothers and sisters in faith. Within the hodgepodge of random topics in the middle of surah 5, however, are statements that God has condemned the Jews and prefers the Christians, with no distinction made between hypocrites and true followers in either group. The text appears to be indicating a carte blanche purity among Christians that contradicts statements and instructions found in the main part of surah 2 (before it loses continuity) and elsewhere in Qur'an to discern between true believers and hypocrites within all of the religions. Nor does it address the Trinity belief among Christians that is spoken against several times in Qur'an. The ayats condemning Jews carte blanche and ascribing purity to all Christians are not authentic.

Another set of suspect ayats are the instructions to wash before prayer. In 4:43, Muslims are told not to come to prayer drunk or in a state of "ceremonial impurity" until they have washed the whole body. However, if on a trip, or having used the toilet or engaged in physical relations with spouse and they cannot find water then they are to rub "clean" sand or earth on their hands and faces to clean themselves. Notice that not only is dirt being used as a cleanser but also that the

instructions do not cover cleaning parts of the body that have been dirtied under the stated conditions. The instructions are only slightly different in 5:6. Before prayer, Muslims are to wash their faces, hands, arms to the elbows, feet up to the ankles, and to rub their heads with water, but if in a state of “ceremonial impurity” to bathe the whole body. If ill, on a journey, having come from the toilet, or having had physical relations with a spouse and they can find no water, they are to rub clean sand or earth on the face and hands.

The instructions cover three conditions. First is not to be drunk when going to the mosque. In general, Islam forbids alcohol and drunkenness, making the instruction a bit strange. Next is condition of being on a journey or having dirtied oneself and no water can be found to shower or bathe. In that case, Muslims are to rub dirt on their faces and hands. Even if this did clean a person, it does not cover body parts that have been dirtied. Third condition is when water is available. Muslims are given conflicting instructions, 4:43 telling them to take a complete shower or bath before coming to prayer, but 5:6 saying they only need to wash certain parts of the body unless they are in a state of “ceremonial impurity” which is not defined. If interpretation is made that ceremonial impurity means conditions such as when someone has used the toilet or has had physical relations with a spouse, then the instruction is to take a complete shower or bath. If a person has done this and does not re-enter a state of impurity before going to prayer, what purpose is there to wash the hands, feet, ankles, elbows, face, and hair? Also, if a person has showered or bathed and does not enter impurity except for necessary biological function of using the toilet, how does washing hands, feet, ankles, elbow, face, and hair cleanse the impurity?

Another aspect of the instructions suggesting they are not authentic is their placement. The 4:43 instructions are in a surah titled “Women,” and are preceded by an ayat that says God wrongs no one (believers and good doers will receive rewards, unbelievers and evil doers will be fairly punished) and followed by an ayat discussing corruption to scriptures sent prior to Qur'an. The 5:6 instructions, in a surah titled, “The Feast” (having to do with a story about Christ), are preceded by ayats on food and marriage and followed by ayats on keeping covenant with God and behaving righteously. Neither set of instructions fits with the title or theme of its surah, and neither fits into a continuity of topics.

In practice, Muslims call the washing ritual before the five daily salah (obligatory) prayers “wudu.” It is done in addition to keeping normal standards of cleanliness from showers or baths and not just by people who work the fields or do other physical labor so might be expected to have cause to wash before noon and afternoon prayers. The ritual can use an inordinate amount of water and seems odd for a religion given to a prophet and people living in a desert. Accounting for that, the instructions include if no water can be found, to use “clean” desert sand or earth. Wouldn't desert sand be part of what desert-dwelling Muslims wash off before prayer? Also, how clean is a person who rubs sand onto his face and hands?

Given the water resources in Arabia 1400 years ago, the water resources there today serving an increased population and industry, and the issue of dwindling clean water resources all over the planet, it is hard to believe that God sent down such instructions then or would want them followed now. Taking a shower or bath before going to the mosque makes sense, as does taking time to re-clean areas of the body if the

person has used the toilet after the bath but before prayer, as does re-washing hands, feet, and face before prayer if one has been doing physical labor. Beyond that, the instructions make little sense. Granted, true followers do not always understand why God does things the way he does, but the Qur'an's re-compilation leaves open possibility the original Qur'an did not include the wudu instructions but instead a one-time baptism. In Christianity, baptism is a symbolic washing away of sins, a cleansing of the soul as one accepts religion and devotes the self to God. By teachings of Christ in the New Testament, this is acceptance of a religion of repentance. God says many times in Qur'an, just as Christ teaches in the New Testament, that sins are forgiven upon repentance. God says in Qur'an that the Bible has been corrupted, but still has much truth in it. One can speculate then that either the Muslim scriptures were corrupted to replace proper instructions on baptism or that the Christian scriptures were corrupted to include baptism instead of the repeated wudu ritual. Given the odd nature and placement of the wudu instructions, instruction for a one-time baptism seems more likely to be authentic.

### **Better Translations**

Many Muslims argue one must learn Arabic to gain a better understanding of Qur'an. They argue translations of Qur'an do not capture some essential elements of the text, too much is lost in translation, and furthermore, that better translations of the text cannot be provided. According to this argument, since better translations cannot be provided, it is essential that all Muslims learn Arabic to read the Arabic text. This argument presumes God did not make Qur'an fully translatable into other languages. Since every Muslim understands God could easily do such a thing, the way to account for why God did

not has been by creation of racist ideology that not only must all Muslims learn Arabic, but also even that prayers are not accepted unless said in Arabic, and that Arabic is the language of heaven, despite God saying in the Qur'an that he sends messengers who speak a variety of languages (14:4).

A response to that argument is that God did make Qur'an fully translatable, but did not make it an easy task in order to test the dedication and devotion of translators to his cause. Another possibility is that God made it somewhat easy to provide a full translation of Qur'an, but humans circumvent their own ability to provide full translations in their efforts to provide easy to read translations conforming to modern and common English language usage (or of whichever language to which the text is being translated). That is to say, translators are changing too many words and are making it difficult upon themselves by trying to change the speech pattern of Qur'an into modern language.

Haleem notes on page 159 of his translation that his translation of ayat 14:9 differs in literalness from the actual Arabic text. Where the translation says they tried to silence the messengers, Haleem includes a footnote that the original text says, "they pushed their hands into the prophets' mouths." The literal translation could be interpreted to mean they took violence on the prophets by hitting them in the face. Stories of prophets found in Qur'an and other holy books, however, suggest being punched in the mouth was only one of many possible types of physical and emotional (or psychological) attacks put upon prophets. The phrase is rightly interpreted as an idiom to mean any of many measures used to harass or harm prophets to try to silence them. The original phrase of pushing their hands into the prophets' mouths denotes an

aggressiveness, anger, and violent intent that may not be captured with re-wording to "tried to silence them." One can also ask, what real reason exists to take idioms such as "they pushed their hands into the prophets' mouths" given by God, and translate them to say they tried to silence their prophets? God sent the original text as it is, why is it changed by humans in translation to allegedly be easier to read and understand?

In the example above, difference between the literal and translated text is not great. Readers can understand from the stories in Qur'an that the prophets were harassed and harmed in a variety of ways. What is lost in translation in other places, though, from reducing idioms and other aspects of literal text into common English or another language may be greater and may affect understanding of some instructions and concepts. Millions of Arabic speaking Muslims argue this is the case but offer that all true followers must learn Arabic as the solution rather than offering better translations. In that one footnote in his translation, Haleem demonstrates fuller translation of Qur'an can be provided, that the idioms do not have to be rewritten. By keeping literal translated text, ability for readers to gain understanding is increased and argument that better translations cannot be provided is debunked.

Another possibility is that God is far more clever than some Muslims have credited him. In addition to Qur'an being fully translatable, God has possibly placed different readings waiting to be discovered within Qur'an through translations. Ahmad 'Ali Al-Imam's discussion in *Variant Readings of the Qur'an* refers to hadith in which it is said Qur'an has multiple ways of being read. Those ways are not explained in hadith, leaving room for centuries of debate over what is meant that Qur'an can be read acceptably several different ways.



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The Quranicpath.com excerpts of ayat 4:34 translations include photographic image of a page from a word-for-word translation of Abdur Rasheed Kamptee, Dr. Abdulazeez Abdulraheem, and Shaikh Abdul Ghafoor Parekh (other word-for-word translations of Qur'an exist, some complete copies of which can be found on the Internet). The translators break the Arabic text into smaller pieces and place under each piece of text the translated words in English. In Arabic, Qur'an is written in poetic rather than paragraphic form. Hence, when first looking at the translated text of 4:34 as a native English reader, line by line:

Allah (has) bestowed because the women of (are in) charge (The) men  
their wealth. from they spend and because others over some of them  
in the (husband's) absence guarding (are) obedient. So the righteous women  
you fear And those (from) whom Allah would have them guard. that which  
the bed in and forsake them then advise them, their ill-conduct  
then (do) not they obey you Then if and make (it) clear to them/strike them  
Most Great. Most High, is Allah Indeed, away. against them seek

Key to understanding how this ayat is understood in Arabic is that Arabic is read right to left, unlike English read left to right. In Arabic, then, the order of words is reversed to:

(The) men (are in) charge of the women because Allah (has) bestowed  
some of them over others and because they spend from their wealth.  
So the righteous women (are) obedient guarding in the (husband's) absence  
that which Allah would have them guard. And those (from) whom you fear  
their ill-conduct then advise them, and forsake them in the bed  
and make (it) clear to them/strike them. (If) they obey you then (do) not  
seek against them a way. Indeed, Allah is Most High, Most Great.

Reading the text as you would Arabic, but without translators' added punctuation *and believed to be implied words*:

men charge of the women because Allah bestowed  
some of them over others and because they spend from their wealth  
so the righteous women obedient guarding in the absence  
that which Allah would have them guard and those whom you fear  
their ill conduct then advise them and forsake them in the bed  
make clear to them (or strike them) and then if they obey you then not  
seek against them a way indeed Allah is most high most great.

Implied and chosen words to replace literal text are often added based on a translator's pre-existing beliefs. For example, here is an alternate version of 4:34 based on the above translation but with different implied words added:

Men task women because Allah bestowed  
some over others and because they spend money on them.  
So (to) the righteous women, obedient, guarding in the absence (of righteous men)  
that which Allah would have them guard, those (men) you fear  
their ill-conduct, advise them and forsake them in the bed.  
make clear to them (the issue). Then if they obey you, do not  
seek a way against them. Indeed, Allah is Most Great, Most High.

In this translation, it is women who are being told to separate from husbands (or to not marry such men at all) they suspect of ill conduct and to tell them why.

In regards to God's cleverness, a word for word translation can also reveal alternate meaning for 4:34 if the text is read backwards to the Arabic. Reading the English translated words from left to right (removing punctuation and implied words added to correct syntax):

Allah bestowed because the women of charge men  
their wealth from they spend and because others over some of them  
in the absence guarding obedient so the righteous women  
you fear and those whom Allah would have them guard that which  
the bed in and forsake them then advise them, their ill-conduct  
then not they obey you then if and make clear to them/strike them  
most great most high is Allah indeed away against them seek

## The Changing Religion

Next, correcting for syntax and adding implied words based upon a different set of pre-existing beliefs:

Allah bestowed women are in charge of men. They spend from their wealth [give charity], some of them over others [some of them more than others], in the absence of guarding obedience [but do not follow God's other rules]. So you [they] fear the righteous women and those whom Allah would have them guard. Forsake them in the bed (they make for themselves) [an idiom meaning, abandon them to their fate]. Advise them of their ill conduct. Then if they do not obey you, Allah is the most great, indeed the most high and will make it clear to them [will strike them]. Seek a way against them.

Correcting to final understanding and modern English usage:

Allah bestowed women are in charge of men. Many men give charity, some more than others, without obedience to Allah's other commands. They fear righteous women and those raised by them. Abandon those men to their fate. Advise them of their ill conduct. Then if they do not obey you, indeed, Allah the Most High, the Most Great, will strike them. Seek a way against them.

The point of this discussion is that Arab-speaking Muslims are correct that some meaning is lost in translation of Qur'an, but are incorrect in suggested solution that all Muslims must learn Arabic and adopt belief that prayers are not accepted unless in Arabic and that Arabic is the exclusive language of heaven. Better translations of Qur'an can be provided by providing more literal translations. Not only can this increase the richness of understanding that is translated, but it even opens possibility, demonstrating once again God's incredible power, of finding a secret Qur'an or possibly a set of secrets hidden within literal translations to other languages. Perhaps the "well-guarded tablet" keeping safe the original Qur'an is the Uthmanic writ itself and the key to finding Muhammad's missing Qur'an is in the process of translating Qur'anic text to other languages. Perhaps even in God's power and cleverness,

corrupted ayats can be discovered by identifying those ayats that cannot be translated both forwards and backwards to make coherent and consistent moral statements.

### **Odds and Ends**

Surah 2 should not have much more material other than that addressing the Children of Israel. It appears to have material that belongs in surahs 7 (Battlements), 65 (Divorce), and surahs containing information on rites and holy months, wealth and charity, and marriage. Surah 4 (Women) contains a small amount of suspect material but an even greater amount of misplaced material not about women or marriage. Surah 66 (Prohibition) should have the general instructions to not forbid what God allows and to not allow what God forbids, as well as the food instructions that are dispersed in several surahs. It probably should not have ayats referring to wives of Muhammad, Noah, Lot, and Pharaoh, nor mention Maryam, mother of Jesus. None of the stories connects to the title of the surah except for the first ayat which says in order to please his wives, Muhammad prohibited something that God allowed. The surah does not tell what that was nor does it mention any other prohibitions but instead tells brief stories about various prophets and their wives (and wife of Pharaoh) that might more appropriately belong in surah 65 (Divorce). With exception of the ayats on Maryam, each of the other stories illustrates importance of choosing God over loved-ones who might prefer to lead you away from keeping God's commands. The surah threatens divorce for two of Muhammad's wives.

These suggestions do not present an exhaustive list of suspect or mis-organized material in the Uthmanic writ, but only an initial attempt at identifying suspect material.

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# Economy and Politics





## Jesus and God on Wealth

Matthew 6:19-21 - Do not store up treasures on earth . . . but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13 - No one can serve two masters. He will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Matthew 6:31-33, Luke 12:29-34 - Do not worry about what you will eat, drink, or wear. Unbelievers worry about these things. Seek the kingdom of God first and those other things will be provided.

Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 18:22 - If you sell your belongings and give the money to the poor, you will have treasure in heaven.

Matthew 19:24, Luke 18:25 - A camel can go through the eye of a needle easier than a rich man can enter heaven.

Luke 6:20-26 - Blessed are the poor who hunger and weep now, theirs is the kingdom of God. Woe to the rich, they have received their reward. They shall be hungry and they will mourn and weep.

Luke 12:15 - Guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

Luke 16:15 - What men value highly is detestable to God.

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Luke 19:1-9 - Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector, tells Jesus he is giving half his possessions to the poor, and he will pay back four times the amount to anyone he has cheated. Jesus responds that salvation has come to the man's house.

Luke 16:19-31 - Jesus tells the story of a rich man and a beggar he would not help. When they die, the poor man goes to heaven. The rich man goes to hell. The rich man looks into heaven and sees the beggar next to Abraham. He pleads with Abraham to send the beggar to give him a tiny bit of water. Abraham tells him he lived in luxury and had everything he wanted in life while the poor man had nothing so now the poor man is being comforted and the rich man must stay in torment. The rich man pleads with Abraham to send the beggar back to earth to warn the rich man's family members so they will not also end up in the torment of hell. Abraham responds if they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, then they will not listen even if someone rises from the dead.

In addition, the book of Revelation admonishes worship of wealth and luxury, placing the pursuit of them as primary cause of God's wrath at humans. Wealth and luxury are the offerings of the anti-Christ that tempt people to do wrong and break God's moral code in their dealings and relationships with other humans (Revelation 18).

A few examples of what God says in Qur'an about wealth:

Surah 102:

Greed and competition for things of this world distracts you until death. You soon will know with certainty. You will see the hell fire. You will be questioned about your indulgence.

Surah 104:

Woe to the slanderer and those who pile up wealth, thinking that wealth would make him live forever. He will be thrown into the torment. What is the torment? The fire God kindles. It will rise over their hearts and surround them in columns.

Surah 107:

Have you considered the one who denies faith? He does not help the orphan and does not encourage feeding the poor. Woe to those who give false prayer, who want to be seen by men, but do not help others.

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## Why the Terrorists Are Mad

The Muslim terrorists follow a specific ideological sub-sect of Sunni Islam, sometimes referred to as "salafi" or "wahhabi," though not all Salafi Muslims are considered "jihadist." Jihadists, or jihadis, is defined as those who justify, support, and commit acts of terrorism, claiming it is required as part of a holy war (jihad). Members of groups such as Taliban, Al Qaeda, and other terrorist organizations, as well as their supporters, also practice violence within their own Muslim communities to enforce their version of the religion. Their ideology of religion by violence does not represent the views and practices of the majority of the world's Muslims, nor a majority of the world's Sunni Muslims. However, they have enough adherents that they were successful to put together an army that with support and aid of the United States thwarted Russia's invasion of Afghanistan, that for a brief time controlled the Afghan government, and that continues ability to wage war against the Afghan people and allies with stronger and better equipped armies.

Some books on terrorism suggest collaboration between groups such as Al Qaeda and Taliban with intelligence agents from Iran. This is most likely based on misinformation from American intelligence agents or government officials in effort to tie Iran to terrorism in the minds of American citizens. Iran is largely a Shia nation with a Shia government. Iran is not seen as an ally to Sunni-salafi-jihadists, but as enemy to the true religion and to be destroyed. A number of Shia mosques have been bombed in Iraq in recent years by the jihadists who have also now been bombing Shia mosques in Iran. Shia in Iraq launched retaliatory attacks against Sunni mosques in

escalating violence that saw the loss of thousands of lives on both sides of the Sunni-Shia division during the Iraq war. The jihadists also bombed Sunni mosques where imams or clerics had denounced their movement, in one case killing 40 people in a truck bomb explosion.

Another aspect of salafi/wahhabi Islam is that for decades it has been the state religion of Saudi Arabia, which is said to be the United States' closest ally in the Middle East. News reports during the Iraq war told Americans that Saudi was the largest source of Sunni insurgents fighting against American forces in Iraq. The Shia in Iraq had their own militia, the Mahdi Army directed by an exiled cleric living in Iran, which fought both American forces and Sunni insurgents so that each group was fighting two enemies.

According to the U.S. State Department, the U.S. is Saudi's largest trading partner and Saudi is the largest U.S. export market in the Middle East. Saudi sells the U.S. a good portion of its crude oil and has been helpful to the U.S. during military conflicts in the Middle East by allowing staging of American troops and equipment on its soil before they are sent to battle elsewhere. On the other hand, Saudi operates on a version of the religion that encourages its citizens in a hypocritical violent ideology of hatred at the west for the impoverishment of the common Saudi people and that promotes the ideology of terrorist actions at westerners while a set of wealthy elite rulers and their business partners within Saudi live in unfathomable luxury and wealth built from sale of crude oil.

A long list of books, articles, and web sites, just a few of which are included in reference list of this book, can be found on the ideology and mechanisms of the Muslim terrorists. A number of these books begin from a pretend position of

ignorance that suggests Americans have no idea why the terrorists are angry at us. Most of the authors then present at least a subtle argument that the terrorists are responding to our aggression against Muslim nations in our pursuit to control their crude oil supplies. A few authors, however, present mis-information about the terrorists' motivations. For example, one author reiterates several times the terrorists wanted to kill as many Americans as possible on September 11, 2001, and states their motivations as purely twisted religion - a hatred at us for being Christian or Jewish. Yet even as the author denies their motivation having to do with economic exploitation, the author then presents information demonstrating that as their motivation.

The terrorists are not angry because we are Christian or Jewish, neither did they try to kill as many Americans as possible on September 11, 2001. According to the information presented by western authors in these books on terrorism, the terrorists could have taken on a much larger operation against us if that had been their goal. They are mad at us because we have created a debased culture that we are promoting in their nations and because we are money-mongering hypocrites who mis-use military force and covert violent operations to get our way. This is not to say they are not also guilty of cultural infractions. However, promotion of western materialism, alcohol, a lack of modesty, and sexual promiscuity through media products and personal dress and behavior of westerners does not address the issue of their cultural infractions, but only launches assault upon proper moral culture and the fundamental religious values of the Muslim nations. Correct practice of Christian or Jewish faith would not present reason for the terrorists to be angry. Correct practice of Judaism or



Christianity does not allow for the immorality of an economic system that promotes pursuit of wealth and luxury at the expense of other people, nor does it allow for promotion of a lack of modesty, alcohol, and sexual promiscuity.

Turkish Sunni author Harun Yahya describes the objection of the terrorists to a political and economic ideology followed in the west of “dog eat dog,” or what is termed “social Darwinism,” a belief that humans are meant not only to compete with one another for economic resources, but also that they are meant to conquer, exploit, and even enslave each other, and that this is the natural and logical order of how the world should determine division of resources, use of labor, and distribution of wealth. History of the west's actions toward the Muslim nations (as well as historical actions of western nations against one another and the entire world) are based upon such ideology coming from western political philosophy of liberalism extended by Adam Smith to mean that if each person pursues self-interests, somehow good for all will occur. Such philosophy, followed and espoused by many people who claim to be Christians, is in direct conflict with the teachings of Christ, Moses, and all true prophets who have taught instead that humans are to cooperate, serve, and take care of one another, and that the pursuit of selfish self-interests that will cause detriment to others is immoral.

Not long after invention of the automobile and airplanes, crude oil became a wealth-making commodity. Not long after that, crude oil reserves were discovered in Iran, Iraq, and then Saudi Arabia. The crude oil riches found under and near the Euphrates River brought more turmoil and warfare to a region that has been invaded time and again by one conquering group after another in addition to its internal wars. Important

to note is the Arab and Muslim nations are not innocent. They have practiced their own forms of false values. The failure to correctly follow Islam is akin to the story of the Jews found in Tanakh and reiterated in Qur'an: God will punish your group, letting others conquer and vanquish it if you do not keep your covenant. Many Muslims recognize this, including those within the terrorists groups whose main objective is to restore what they believe is correct practice of the religion.

The majority of the incredible wealth made from crude oil has gone to westerners and been squandered by creation of a wealthy elite in the Muslim nations while millions in those nations still suffer in poverty. The terrorists are not blind to the lack of innocence in the Arab and other Muslim nations. They are against corrupt governments and leadership in their nations, but they can not wage terrorism against citizens in those nations and hope to recruit other Muslims in the region to their organizations and school of thought (although they did attack other Sunnis during the Iraq war, blowing up other Sunnis is not their normal mode of operation). They also cannot wage a war against the wealthy elites in Saudi Arabia and other oil nations and hope to continue to receive support and funding from the wealthy elites who prefer they blame and hate westerners for the poverty of their nations and forget about the wealthy elite within their own nations.

One example from many of why the terrorists are angry can be seen from examination of U.S. policy and actions toward Iran and Iraq in the last few decades. These actions follow a legacy of political interference by western nations in the Muslim nations. After oil was discovered in Iran in the early 1900s, the U.S. and Britain helped to install and prop up a government that was beholden not to the Iranian people,

to the profit-maximization business interests of western oil companies. The Shah of Iran, a successor to that government, came to power in 1941 also beholden to western governments and their oil interests. The U.S. lost control of the Iranian oil supply in 1979 when the Iranian Islamic Revolution forced the Shah to flee his nation into an exile from which he would not return. Following what began as a massive peaceful revolution, Iranian college students made mistake of taking Americans hostage and demanding the Shah be returned to Iran for trial and execution.

The error allowed the American government to not only paint the Islamic revolution as extremist and violent, but provided the political weaponry needed for what would occur next: the U.S. government helping Saddam Hussein solidify his power in Iraq by providing \$40 billion of American money, along with intelligence information and other aid for Iraq to wage war against Iran for eight years. When the U.S. could not win this war-by-proxy to regain control of Iran's oil supplies, and when Iran and Iraq eventually came to a truce after eight years of devastation to both sides, the U.S. then turned on Hussein and began using against him the very same record of heinous brutality against Iraqi citizens that the U.S. had previously dismissed as permissible so long as he continued our war-by-proxy against Iran.

Over time, the Shah had become a brutal dictator in Iran, instituting an increasing number of repressions and assaults against political enemies and citizens. By comparison, Hussein made his intentions of violent dictatorship known from the start. His first major act as leader was to have high-ranking members of his political party executed by other high-ranking members of the party as a way to immediately instill terror

and fear by letting it be known from the start that anyone stepping out of line or questioning him would be put to death. Those asked to commit the executions were in position of doing as asked or joining the group to be executed.

When the U.S. turned on Hussein, first defeating his war-weary army in Kuwait, we then led a movement within the United Nations Security Council to force economic sanctions on Iraq that were specifically meant to starve Iraqis in hopes of provoking Iraqis to rise up and overthrow Hussein. This resulted in the death of 500,000 Iraqi children from starvation and a lack of medicine, an outcome the U.S. government during President Bill Clinton's administration heralded as evidence and good news of the sanctions' success.

Rather than engage in open war with Iran or Iraq, in both cases the U.S. chose to wage war by proxy, in Iran by proxy of supporting Iraq's invasion and war against it that otherwise would not have occurred, and in Iraq through a knowing and purposeful attempt to starve to death human beings that was celebrated by the American government for its success at killing and causing suffering to children. The American government's response to criticism at the time that its actions in Iraq were terrorist and a declaration of war against the civilian population of Iraq was to deny any wrongdoing. To say that the U.S. actions toward Iran and Iraq were not forms of terrorism is absurd and hypocritical to its core. In the case of the Iraq sanctions, this was recognized by many in the west including former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, dozens of Congress members, Christian, Jewish, and political activist groups, and others.

The Jason Leopold article, "Eager to Tap Iraq's Vast Oil Reserves, Industry Execs Suggested Invasion," published on

the truthout.org website and republished by the Global Policy Forum on its site, examines documents from President George W. Bush's administration that show war against Iraq was being planned months before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and at the very specific request of oil companies. Plans and maps for dividing Iraq's oil fields between the companies had been drawn up months before September 11.

Reading books that discuss American actions toward Iran and Iraq causes ill feelings of both disgust and remorse to overtake the reader. Americans need to question themselves whether it is right to support terrorists in business suits while waging war to defeat terrorists carrying holy books. Should not both types of terrorism be fought against?

From a common sense perspective, the Muslim terrorists must be stopped from inflicting more death and destruction on civilian populations and they must be stopped from regaining control of Afghanistan as a prelude to attempt to take control of a fragile and unstable Pakistan and its nuclear weapons. Yet, it will continue to remain illogical and irresponsible to believe that America can carry on with the type of policies it has historically followed in the Muslim nations and not expect retaliation against us. How long should the common American people be asked to sacrifice their daughters and sons in warfare against Muslim terrorists when the terrorist threat would dissipate - and the salafi/wahhabi ideology of violent religion could be effectively challenged and defeated - if the U.S. would cease behaving as terrorists toward the people of the Muslim nations and practice the values of Christ instead?

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## A Better Solution

Most Muslims do not engage in nor support terrorism, but the terrorists are still able to capitalize on anger at oppression to attract a continuing supply of warriors and other forms of support to their organizations. God gives repeated instruction in Qur'an that Muslims are not to violently attack others, yet calls upon Muslims to be prepared to defend themselves from violent attack. Muslims are not only allowed to defend themselves if others wage violent war against them, they are obligated to fight to defend the community. In response to oppression that is inflicted in other ways, the Qur'an counsels Muslims to be patient and persevere through adversity.

Indeed, Qur'an states that Muslims will be tested with such adversity and counsels patience, not terrorism. These are ayats from just one surah (surah 2) that speak against the actions of the terrorists:

44: Do not ask others to behave correctly but fail to do so yourselves.

45: Seek Allah's help with patient perseverance and prayer.

153: Allah is with those who seek His help with patient perseverance and prayer.

155: You will be tested with fear, hunger, economic loss and exploitation; glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.

177: The virtuous are strong and patient during pain, adversity and danger.

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195: Do not contribute to destruction with your hands.

268: Satan threatens you with poverty and invites you to wrongful conduct.

Surah 2 also has a number of ayats that speak to defending the religious community:

190: Fight in God's cause against those who fight you, but do not overstep limits (or initiate aggression).

191: Slay them where you find them, drive them out from where they drove you out, oppression is worse than killing.

192: If they stop, God forgives them (you forgive them too).

193: Fight them until there is no more oppression and they worship God; if they cease hostilities, also cease.

194: Retaliate if attacked, but be mindful of God.

195: Spend in God's cause but do not contribute to destruction with your own hands.

216: Fighting is an obligation.

217: Do not fight during the holy months, unless they keep you from the mosque, oppression is worse than killing; unbelievers will keep attacking to try to make you rebuke faith.

218: Those who sacrifice for God's cause will be rewarded.

243: God causes us to die and then brings us back to life again.

244: So fight in the cause of Allah.

245: If you give Allah a beautiful loan (dedicate your life, even sacrifice it), your credits with God will be multiplied.

246-252: David's defeat of Goliath is re-told to remind that a smaller army with unseasoned and inexperienced soldiers can defeat a more powerful force if God is on its side; also reminds through retelling of a Tanakh story that sometimes God requires his followers to defend themselves in warfare.

In 190-195, Muslims are told specifically to defend against those who attack them and to drive the enemy out from where it has driven out the Muslims. This is justified by Allah because inflicting prolonged suffering and misery is worse than killing people out right without causing them to suffer. Explicit in the instructions is that Muslims have been driven out of (or conquered within) their own territories. Within that context, Muslims are told to slay the enemy wherever found during the battle to regain control of Muslim territory. If the enemy ceases hostilities (leaves the Muslim territories and stops attacking), Muslims too are to cease. But if the enemy continues to fight and oppress, Muslims are to keep fighting until what is left of the enemy's forces accept God's laws and repent. The final instruction of 195 encourages Muslims to be willing to give their lives for God's cause, but to not purposefully contribute to the violence of the world.

In 216, Muslims are told fighting to defend the religious community is an obligation. In 217-218, Muslims are told to

avoid fighting in the holy months if they can. In 243-245, they are told to fight in the cause of Allah, and that if they die in the battle, they will be brought back to life and given their reward in heaven. Finally again, 246-252 remind that a less powerful force can defeat a larger force if God is with them.

The ayats in surah 9 on fighting and war also do not allow for terrorism. The instruction to “slay them where you find them,” (9:5) is given in context of war being waged against the Muslims within their own territory, in the specific case of surah 9's instructions, within Makkah and concerning a peace treaty already broken by the other side (9:1-4). Those groups who kept their treaties were not to be attacked in the war and any defectors from the treaty-breaking group were to be spared and protected (9:4, 6, 7). Muslims were instructed to slay, seize, put them under siege, and to lay in wait for them with the goal of their repentance (9:3, 5, 11). The war, again, was in context of defending the Muslim community within Muslim territory.

Other ayats also speak against actions of terrorism. Muslims bear with patience all the hurt put on them by placing their trust in God (14:12). Goodness and evil are not equal. Repel evil with goodness and your enemies will become your best friends (41:34). Only those who practice patience and self-restraint can achieve such goodness. (41:35). If the devil tempts you to anger, seek refuge with God (41:36). Muslims going abroad are to carefully investigate others and not denounce everyone as an unbeliever (4:94). Believers are not to kill other believers (4:92). At a battle within Makkah, the Muslims would have incurred sin had they not been held back by God because a group of believers was among the opposing group whom God also held back (48:24-25). Terrorism targets

to kill a mass of civilians at once, with no regard to whether any true followers of God might be killed. Muslims waging terrorist strikes risk incurring a great sin upon themselves.

God's instructions in Qur'an tell Muslims to drive the enemy from Muslim soil but to not purposefully contribute to violence and destruction. The instructions do not allow for Muslims to attack civilian population targets on a foreign enemy's home soil. They allow and even demand Muslims push the enemy off of Muslim soil, but they do not allow for terrorism. They also instruct Muslims to return evil put upon them with goodness whenever possible so that they might turn the hearts of their enemies.

Surah 2 also explains what will happen to Muslims who misuse Qur'an to justify wrongful actions:

159, 174: Doom for people who would conceal what is in the revelations from Allah.

175: Such people exchange guidance for error and forgiveness for torment.

176: Those who overwrite Qur'an instructions with their own ideology are in the wrong (see Asad translation).

Terrorist ideology denies the instructions of Qur'an for patience and restraint. The terrorists invoke torment while saying they are against torment. Violent terrorist acts have no potential chance of overthrowing any governments in the west or causing policy changes to the world economic system. They have resulted instead in increased security and surveillance measures and were used as excuse for a war that had

been planned months before the September 11, 2001 attacks on American soil. The intent of terrorist attacks seems to be as desperate measures to get the attention of westerners and hopefully affect our conscience by causing us to ask, "why are the terrorists so mad?" and then seeking an answer to that question. However, the attacks are ineffectual in that as well, for they face propaganda that claims the terrorists hate us because we are Christians and Jews, moral disgust at their violent tactics, and an otherwise pacified and indifferent population in the west that is not ready to challenge its own behaviors even as its own cultures drift toward increasing random violence.

The terrorist attacks add to the death and misery toll of a battle that is allegedly against inflicting death and misery. They contribute more destruction rather than solutions and they offer no real way to defeat the western economic system imposed upon the Muslim world. As well, the terrorists cannot attack the wealthy elite within Arab and surrounding nations to drive that economic system from their lands. To do so is to attack a primary source of funding and ideological support and to invite a fight against those nation's armies that will surely be told the terrorists have betrayed the faith, are only seeking power for themselves, and will take away all freedoms the people of those nations do have. It would cause bloody civil war in their own nations.

However, the terrorists have one other option to use that could succeed in overthrowing governments and instituting new ones that continue to sell oil to the west but minimize profit-sharing with western companies and maximize profits to be equally distributed to their citizens. (It should be noted that an oil economy that distributes profits fairly to citizens is

still against Islam as environmental effects of crude oil usage include many impending calamities of global climate change, artificial hermaphrodization, and other birth defects.) To gain control of governments only requires a radical alteration in their ways of thought so that they are no longer terrorists.

If they renounce violence in wake of grasping a new understanding of instruction in the Qur'an, they might also consider they have misunderstood some other instructions and rebuke other faulty doctrines. It should be noted, though, that not all aspects of salafi/wahhabi Islam are wrong. For just one of several examples, they are correct in rebuking prayer offered to saints or anyone (including to Prophet Muhammad or Imam Al Mehdi) other than God, as well as in not building monuments or shrines to saints and prophets, even those within Islam. This has been a major point of contention between salafi/wahhabis and Shia Muslims in which the salafi/wahhabi stance against idolization is correct by Qur'an.

Qur'an instructs Muslims to respect true followers in other religions, forbids use of force in the religion, and counsels restraint against those who oppress you. Yet Muslims in the Middle East and surrounding areas have little example from Islam's history for non-violent resistance, but have inherited a legacy of armed struggle against each other and outside occupiers. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that he used his anger to inspire him in his writings. He acknowledged anger as a valuable asset. He understood to act violently is not the purpose of anger. Anger must be tied to intellect: we must be smarter to use it to forge non-violent solutions and peaceful rather than angry responses that can defeat enemies of justice and morality. Recent decades have seen people in various places across the planet demonstrate this can be done:



Mohandas Gandhi, the Hindu, led a non-violent revolution in India, leading Indians to self-rule, forcing the British colonialists to leave. The Indians accomplished this through ideology and practice of love of their enemies and massive non-violent resistance.

Dr. King, the Protestant Christian, took over leadership of a prolonged non-violent fight in the post-Civil War United States against racist oppression, violence, and apartheid. He led African Americans to follow the Indian example in their fight for respect and rights within the United States, using love for the enemy and massive non-violent resistance.

The Iranians, Shia Muslims, forced the Shah to flee and took down his government through non-violent revolution.

The Filipinos, Catholic Christians, in what they called the EDSA Revolution, known in the world media as "the people's power revolution," overthrew a U.S.-supported entrenched corrupt oppressive dictator through massive non-violent action.

Germans from both east and west sides of their nation danced together on the Berlin Wall before they took it apart as they non-violently toppled an oppressive East German government and ended a 40-year punishment of separation forced on them by the world community.

In the "velvet revolution," Czechs and Slovaks peacefully overthrew an oppressive government and ended a union that had been forced on them in political maneuvering of cold-war politics. Other oppressive East European governments followed, being overturned without violence. Even the mighty and powerful Soviet Union saw its government suddenly collapse and the union forced apart through non-violent revolution.

It is possible for people to overthrow corrupt governments and systems without the use of violence, but they can only do so if they act with singularity of purpose. Non-violent massive action is the easiest type of massive action to fund and the least likely to face repressive bloody measures of retaliation in a world of globalized media, now augmented with hand-held digital cameras and video-taking cell phones that can easily bypass restrictions on journalists to post images and descriptions to the Internet - or to easily transmit them to people in other nations for them to post to the Internet - for the whole world to see. It has been only the exceptional government, such as the Chinese response to the student protests in Tiananmen Square and their actions against Tibet, that has responded with violent repression. However, it might be argued in the Tiananmen Square case that it is not likely soldiers would have obeyed orders to fire on their own people if the Chinese students had a singularity of purpose and if the people of China had come out en masse to support what the students were asking.

Technology of e-mail and text messaging has also been used by some westerners to coordinate mass actions on a moment's notice. Though this "smart mob" phenomenon so far has been done by young adults in the west usually for the purpose of game playing and fun, it has already been recognized for its potential as a revolutionary tool to assist in mass non-violent political action. The Iranians used tape recordings of Ayatollah Khomeini smuggled into the country to build a movement unknown to the government that was about to be overturned. The Czechs used skits and plays that were performed in people's living rooms to build a movement unknown to the government that was about to be overturned.

Messages carried in lyrics of rock music have been credited by some scholars as assisting in the movements in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that overturned those governments. African Americans during the Montgomery bus boycott that brought Dr. King to national and international prominence used hand-crank mimeograph machines of the era to print fliers with instructions and words of inspiration that were then handed out at church meetings or passed from home to home. Where a people are willing to put their intellect to the task of non-violent tactics to bring about positive change, the record has shown God is willing to aid them with inspiration.

In most cases, non-violent resistance is more effective than violent action would be for it does not spill blood, does not cause bitterness, nor does it spiral into competing factions warring against one another for power. Its effective use, however, requires a citizenry that has matured so that a stable, fair, and democratic government can be put in place of the corrupt system that is overturned. Salafi/wahhabi and Sunni Muslims in general are not unfamiliar with ideas of democracy, only with its practice. "Ijma'" or consensus is a major concept in Sunni Islamic and legal scholarship.

### **February 2011 Update**

The author watches excitedly with the rest of the world as massive non-violent resistance movements have taken some Middle East and adjacent area governments by surprise. The author's prayers are with the Egyptians, Sudanese, Tunisians, Algerians and others who risk being met with oppressive violence as they seek democratic governments and fair economic policy. News stories have indicated use of digital communication technologies (specifically, use of Facebook by Egyptian protestors) in organization of these actions.

### **April 2011 Update**

According to prophecy in the hadiths (as reported in Arif's *Al Mahdi and the End of Time*), events preceding emergence of Imam Al Mehdi before the world include "seven severe trials" in different places, among them Yemen and Syria, another in "the valley of Syria," two in Saudi Arabia, and the remaining two identified as one in the east and one in the west. These trials may be the current non-violent mass protests movements that have been met with repressive and murderous violence by dictatorial governments in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and other Muslim nations.

Muslims marching and risking their lives for overthrow of corrupt, inequitable, and repressive governments should keep in mind God's counsel in Qur'an that he will not change the condition of a people until those people change themselves. For example, angry Muslims in Libya not only embarrassed themselves before the world with anti-Semitic display when they referred to Muammar Qaddafi as a Jew and drew the Star of David on images of him, but they also made it difficult for the world community to give them greater political and military support. The Libyans may want to study the Harun Yahya websites, "Islam Denounces Anti-Semitism" and "Union of Faiths," as well as make public statement and display of apology and repentance. Yahya makes a poignant "Statement to the Jews" that should also be read by Muslims that Qur'an confirms Israel as a land given to the Jews, but that this does not allow for what Yahya calls "godless Zionism" which has no moral virtue but is based on the pursuit of wealth and promotes division and violence between Jews and Muslims rather than mutual respect, equality, and interfaith dialogue. Perhaps with their own reform and repentance, God might

yet grant the Libyan people reconciliation and a democratic victory without further bloodshed.

As well, Muslims may want to give further study to the tactics and principles of successful non-violent movements while also calling upon the world community to increase pressure upon dictatorial governments to embrace political, economic, social, and democratic reforms. They may want to demonstrate their own reform through explicit and repeated renunciation of violence in the religion, demonstrating Muslims grasping and returning to the morality of the Qur'an by its own ayats and throwing off invented hadiths and false doctrines that have allowed violence to come into the religion in violation of Qur'an. Explicit and repeated statement to the world that human rights abuses will no longer be tolerated in Islam - that people are free to follow the religion or are free not to without threat of violent reprisal - will assist Muslims in gaining political support from the world community for this democratic movement that is sweeping across their lands.

Finally, a positive note is that both Arif's book and Yahya's website *AwaitedMahdi.com*, appear to indicate from hadith reports that a massive non-violent movement will succeed in Turkey without bloodshed. It is not clear whether this occurs before or after Mehdi's emergence. It may be an event that must occur before Mehdi can emerge. Only God knows for sure and only time will reveal the answers to us.

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## Jesus on Repentance

Christian churches vary in theological beliefs just as Islam has splintered into multiple sects. Many Christian churches argue Christ's message of repentance correctly, but an odd number of churches put forth a message that Christ took punishment for our sins. They argue that to earn forgiveness for your sins and not be punished you must become Christian and believe that Christ took punishment for you. They speak about how humans are unredeemable so God sacrificed his son (or himself in the form of a son) in order to forgive us and not punish us as he promises to punish in the Tanakh and in Christ's ministry presented in the Christian scriptures. Aspects from the letters of Paul support mis-interpreted passages such as Matthew 20:28, 26:28, and Mark 10:45 (Jesus gives his life as a ransom for many; his blood is poured for the forgiveness of sins) to overwrite Jesus' other teachings to produce a doctrine that says he took punishment for other people's sins and that if we believe this, our sins are forgiven without any effort on our part to redeem or reform ourselves.

Those passages should instead be understood that his life was given for preservation and spread of his message of repentance that will save many from the clutches of Satan on earth and the punishment of hell. Only his sacrifice would ensure his message of repentance would endure and spread from Israel to people across the planet so that people can be forgiven for their sins when they follow his teaching and repent of their sins. According to the New Testament Gospels, Jesus taught a message of repentance and that one cannot get to heaven without walking a narrow road of righteousness.



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Examples of what Jesus taught:

Matthew 4:17 - Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 5:29-30, 18:8-9 - If your eye or hand causes you to sin, it would be better to cut them off the body than for you to end up in hell.

Matthew 7:13-14, Luke 13:24 - Wide is the way that leads to destruction and many go by it, narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life; few find the way.

Matthew 7:21-23 - Not everyone who says to Jesus, "lord, lord," will enter heaven, but only those who do the will of God; many will say to Jesus, we prophesied, cast out demons, and did many wonders in your name, but Jesus will tell them that they practice lawlessness and to depart from him.

Matthew 9:13, Luke 5:32 - Jesus says he did not come to call the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance.

Matthew 11:20-24, Luke 10:12-15 - Jesus rebukes cities where he taught because the people would not repent, says they are doomed on Judgment Day.

Matthew 12:41, Luke 11:32 - The people of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment to condemn this generation, they repented at Jonah's preaching and one greater than Jonah is here.

Matthew 13:49 - At the end of this age, the angels will come and separate the wicked from the just.

Matthew 15:8-9 - Jesus quotes Isaiah, these people honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. They worship in vain; their teachings are rules of men.

Matthew 18:3-4, Luke 18:17 - To enter heaven you must change, become like little children and humble yourself.

Mark 6:7-12 - Jesus sends out the 12 to preach repentance.

Luke 13:3, 13:5 - Unless you repent, you will perish.

Luke 15:7 - Heaven rejoices more over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who never strayed.

Luke 15:10 - Angels rejoice even over one sinner who repents.

In Qur'an, God gives repeated instructions for repentance and repeated promises of forgiveness and reward for those who will examine their behavior, root out moral flaws, and make effort in a difficult struggle to reform the self to follow God's Law. Most Muslims understand that internal struggle as the true jihad, or holy war, each person is invited to fight to rescue themselves from Satan's influence. Muslims understand no one can do this for another person. Christ, Muhammad, and other prophets serve as leaders and role models, teachers and guides, but they cannot repent for us nor can they deflect punishment promised by God if we do not repent. Muslims are also given important instruction in Qur'an in several ayats to forgive and accept the repentance of others, including ayat 9:11 which says if they repent and establish regular prayers and charity, then they are your brothers and sisters in faith.

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## Epilogue: Need for Change

The American political community received a jolt a few years ago when a report funded by the U.S. Defense Department gave a startling suggestion based upon a scenario that is likely to come true despite disclaimer in the report that it is a theoretical scenario of "abrupt climate change." Science explains abrupt climate change becomes more likely to occur as climate change processes accelerate upon themselves. For example, such as when warmer ocean water causes polar ice caps to melt faster which causes the surrounding water to warm more which causes the remaining ice to melt faster.

Ecological collapse from climate change conditions will bring unprecedented chaos to our planet. That was the report's finding in its most general terms. More specifically, droughts, increasing occurrence of amplified storms, floods, alteration of growing seasons, crop failures, starvation, and unending warfare loom. The science is very clear on the issue: the ice caps and glaciers are melting, the average earth temperature is rising, the melting is accelerating upon itself, and this all will result in catastrophic conditions coming across the entire earth. The large-scale changes required of our industrial economy have not been implemented and cannot be now in time to stop the catastrophic reality of our industrial pollution from coming back on us.

The science on climate change explains the warming of the earth is an average temperature from a situation that involves evolution of our weather into increasing extremes of hot and cold as well as shortening of the seasons between winter and summer. The effects will be mixture of catastrophic paradox, of increasingly colder winters, increasingly hotter summers, a

near disappearance of spring and fall, violently worsening storms that appear more suddenly (giving little time to issue warnings), upheaval of growing seasons, massive flooding *and* prolonged drought, and greening of some arid desert areas while massive crop failures occur in places now abundant. Shortages of food and water will be augmented by worsening disease from warmer temperatures and declining human immune strength from effect of industrial pollution upon our bodies, and cause factional warfare all over the world over the dwindling supplies of food, water, and cultivatable land.

While this scenario creeps closer to reality, the supply of crude oil that fuels our ecologically-disastrous industrialized economy runs low as wars are waged still for control of it, economies teeter on collapse, pollution is hermaphroditizing and causing men to disappear, religions are confounded with politics, values have gone astray, corruption runs rampant, violence continues to rise, terrorists plot, college campuses and shopping malls sometimes become shooting zones, people are still starving in Africa, and everywhere seems to prove Psalms 14 which speaks to "the leader of David" telling him that God looks down from heaven to look for any humans who are mindful of God, but all have turned bad.

The iconic American Christian evangelist Billy Graham, a man who has dedicated his entire life to preaching Christ's message to millions in America and across the world, considers the question in his book, *Storm Warning*, can we halt these events leading to the world's end? He answers, "We may, like Elijah, be used to slow their approach," and he suggests true followers pray God gives us a time of silence that God's word might be heard by others to bring them to a state of salvation before the calamities resume.

The good news in Psalms 14 and many other scriptural passages is that God has not given up on us even though non-corrupted humans cannot be found. God promises that some of us will recognize a need for change and will do so. That portion of humanity will be brought to repentance, will embrace God's ways, will be cleansed and refined, and will make it to salvation. According to Zechariah 13:8-9 and Revelation 13:18, two-thirds (or .666) of humanity will choose to perish, while one-third of us will make it to heaven.

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