

Of Faith and Eternity

No matter who you are, where you live, or how you make your living, you have beliefs about God, the creation of the world, and the meaning of life. Belief systems are as varied as groups of people and every culture brings its own views. Some people believe in Jesus, some Mohammed, some Krishna, and some people choose not to believe in anything. All of these are faith systems with their own origins and value systems. But a new line of thinking has entered into these previously separate faiths; many people believe that all of these beliefs can somehow “coexist,” and that all paths eventually lead to the same place. An analogy often given to describe this coexistence begins with an elephant: God is like an elephant in a room and every faith, like several blind people who are grabbing different parts of the elephant. One has grabbed his trunk, another his tail, and still another, his leg. Each is making a claim of what he has found, and while they all have very different claims (one describes the tail, another describes the trunk...), the bigger picture reveals that they all have found the same thing: an elephant. This analogy is an attempt in simplifying something core to every person, but this analogy (as analogies often are) is an oversimplification. If there is a place where people are going spend eternity, and there is a chance that some of those people will spend it in paradise and others will spend it in torment, then I believe it is something every person should research thoroughly, rather than just satisfying himself with simple stories. Careful examination (which we will do) of this subject will show that each belief system contradicts the other, and rather than each person holding a different part of the elephant, each has found a drastically different animal altogether. This topic is central to your very being. What you believe about faith and eternity make up who you are, your worldview, and the decisions you eventually make. For example, if you believe that there is a being (God) who has a moral code of his own, you will be more likely to strive to match that code. If you think that there is no such being, then you will be more likely to take an attitude, where everything is permissible without consequence. Interestingly enough, although beliefs on faith and eternity hold such power over who we are and what we do, we as human beings, rarely talk about it. This is a mistake that I will attempt to remedy with this publication. If we believe there is no God, no punishment, no reward, and yet time proves all of these things to be true, we would be in grave error. Some faith systems claim punishment for eternity. If they end up being correct, and you decide never to examine them because you didn't have time, or maybe it was too difficult to grasp, or you were afraid of getting your feelings hurt, you would regret that decision. This being the case, you owe it to yourself to research these things; the ramifications of this subject are too important to ignore. I came to this conclusion years ago as I began to contemplate the existence of God, the beginnings of the universe, and the meaning of life. This curiosity has led into a decade long study of belief systems around the world, and I have come to certain conclusions about each.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I will let you know the end of my journey up front. In this way, if you want to discard what I have to say based on my conclusion, I can save several minutes from your day. If, on the other hand, you too, are

interested in the afterlife, and what one person's research has found, I encourage you to press on and see if you agree or disagree with the information presented. I am now a Christian; I was not born that way; no one is. I was raised in a church, but did not understand Christianity as taught in the Bible. I now believe that the Bible is the most authoritative and historically accurate book we have on earth. I can't prove to you that these things are so, as they are ultimately received by faith. I can show you that the most reliable evidence we have on earth points to there being a God, and that that God came to earth as Jesus Christ, teaching his followers that the life of sin can be renounced, and a life of righteousness can be achieved in this present life. This being said, I want you to understand that I have researched many faiths in my search for truth. After all, if something is true, we should not be afraid to prove it against other points of view, but rather welcome it. We should all approach these matters with an open mind, for what does it benefit, if we end up believing a lie. To cover every religion and philosophy on this subject would be out of the scope. However, I will try to keep the discussion robust, yet as concise as possible. As such, we will cover the view of science as to the beginning of time, matter and the human race. Also we will cover the three major religions that are pervasive on that planet: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The Beginning of Time and Life

Ideas around this topic have been debated, contested, tested, and vilified by scientists and non-scientists alike. While I am not a scientist, I tackle problems logically and understand that any belief system one chooses to place his trust in should be supported by science. After all, if one claims there is a God that created the Heavens and the Earth and all that is in them, then He also created the natural laws that we observe today. Said another way, if God created the earth, logic would dictate that he created all of the laws of nature as well. Biology, Physics, Genetics, Chemistry, Mathematics and language should all have the imprint of the creator in them. If one can't find the creator in the creation, there is no creator. There have been others who have looked at this subject in much greater detail than I. My goal is to leave you with a few logical observations based on science that have led me to my current understanding.

The Big Bang

By this theory, we are told that since the universe is constantly expanding, it must have had a starting point. According to the theory, a swirling mass of all types of matter heated and cooled many times over to extreme temperatures. Eventually, the matter exploded into the Universe we now see. One of the items that people who oppose the big bang theory often raise is that there is no explanation of where the items came from. While this is true, there is also no explanation of where God came from. To be as fair as I can, we will call this a draw and throw the point out. Both of these items must be accepted by faith in the system. If God can have no beginning, so can an amorphous blob of matter, I guess. It is important to note, that at this stage of the game, no one was available to observe and take notes. As such, Big Bang is a theory not a scientific law; it is not observable; it is a faith, just as much as any religion on the globe. It is not provable; it is an idea, a belief system. There are some proofs that point to a Big Bang; there are also things that point to this being an incomplete understanding on how things came to be. No matter what, the things we observe with our eyes do have some order to them and there seem to be laws in place that govern our existence. For instance, regardless of the way we got here, gravity exists, and no matter what we believe about it; we must obey its law. If someone chooses not to believe in gravity, he or she will suffer the consequences. Whatever your explanation for the beginning of days, scientific law should bolster your case as a law is the only thing we can know for sure (I don't have a problem with people coming up with theories, the issue is really that these theories are presented as law). If a God created the universe, he created the laws that govern it, as his handprint would be on the creation and the order he mandated must be obeyed. If a random event such as the big bang set in motion this life we now experience, the same reasoning applies; the way we came into being is the foundation of all truth and existence. It might take a long time, but we should see the likes of it again. I want to take a look at a few laws that govern the world that are observable, demonstrable, and reproducible; this is necessary for the basis of everything that is a scientific law. The facts will point us to the true system of beliefs.

The First Law Of Thermodynamics

This law states that energy is neither created nor destroyed but is rather transferred to a new object¹. The energy that exists today is all of the energy we will ever get. The tree gains its energy from the sun, and transfers it to grow fruit, leaves, and stature. If we choose to do so, we can cut the tree down, pick the fruit for food and burn the wood for warmth. In each case whether calories or heat, energy is transferred to a new form but not created anew. The sun itself is not creating new energy but is slowly burning out. Years ago, it was much larger; it is supposed that at some point, the sun will burn out. Even the sun is not creating new energy, but rather transferring energy to the rest of the universe. This law is observable by all (have you ever seen a car wreck?), demonstrable, and reproducible. It is a law. It does however, go against the idea of a "big bang" which supposed that matter heated and cooled, cooled and heated, swirled, and then

exploded. This idea does not support the First Law of Thermodynamics. At best, something was needed to pour energy into the event to make it go. As some people say, someone had to light the match. At worst, the idea is a poor example of how the world was created. If the big bang occurred as suggested, events would be lining up with some regularity to demonstrate swirling matter combusting spontaneously. This however does not occur in the universe in which we observe, neither in the world in which we live. Something had to create the energy at the start. Something had to light the match to set these things in motion – every other argument in favor of this theory is not supported by what we observe.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics

While the first law states that quantity of energy remains the same, the second law states that the energy is in a state of increased entropy². This is the process of usable energy being transferred to unusable energy. Stated more simply, in time, we see things that are in order trend toward disorder. It is observed when we see a chemical compound breakdown, a person or animal age, or an unoccupied house begin to fall down⁴. We observe things trending towards chaos, never the other way around. This not only contradicts the big bang theory, but also the theory of evolution. Both theories support the idea that chaos turns into order; however, we never observe this phenomenon in our world. I have to believe if the foundations of this earth were created from chaos trending towards order, we would observe this in our everyday existence. Instead we observe perfection, trending towards the worthless. This is a scientific law; it is observable, demonstrable, and is reproducible. Things trend toward disorder. The big bang is neither observable, demonstrable, or reproducible. Chaos never produces order, but clearly the converse is true. Again it does not take long for one to consider the level of precision required for life to exist. Scientists with the best equipment and amazing levels of knowledge, are not able to succeed in forming a one celled organism, much less life as complex as a human being. How can we expect time and chance, which have no skill set, to come up with something better than that of an intelligent scientist. How much more then, an intelligent God?

Random musings about Evolution

Even before I believed in God, I didn't really understand the concept of evolution. The evidence on this topic is weak. When I say evolution, I don't mean adaptation. I agree that species adapt. When I refer to evolution, I refer to the leap of one species to another. Here are a few examples of how everyday observable science has failed to confirm evolution: Even though it supposedly takes millions of years for the process to occur, we have never observed anything less than a horse give birth to a horse, a centipede to a centipede or a beetle to a beetle, no matter how quick the animal reproduces, how short the life span, etc. We never observe changes from one species to another. If evolution is true (survival of the fittest), don't you think that

flies would start evolving bigger so that the fly swatter wouldn't kill them? Or better yet, why are there flies at all – if we all started from the same single cell organism, why are there so many species? If man is the pinnacle, why do we still have monkeys around- did they just become genetically lazy? Why do we have amoebas and starfish? One can't explain this with evolution – if evolution were true, you would have one species on earth, not diverse. This super species would have the brain of a man, the strength of a gorilla, gills of a fish (man has been drowning for a long time – evolution would dictate he not ever throw off the gills³ as they would still be useful to me!). He would be able to fly, and have eyesight like an eagle, hearing like a deer, and a nose like bloodhound. A tail would be nice, as well as the ability to continue survival when cut in half like a worm. Do I need to go on? Have you ever noticed that it is cold outside when you go out in the winter? Most animals are not cold– yet we somehow evolved out of that nice warm fur millions of years ago. Why? Centrally heated homes had their beginnings in about 37BC⁵ for the very wealthy, but recorded history does not show people with warm coats of fur at this time in place of skin. People could have used those nice coats of fur. No, this does not make sense. It is not scientific either. It is a guess at best. If you come down to it, the easiest and best explanation for all of this is that there is a God who created things in perfection, set things in order, and has allowed things to happen according to planning. After all, if we evolved, there would be no such thing as a moral code; it truly would be every man for himself. No matter where you are in the world, however, you do have an imprint of a moral code on you (don't kill, don't steal, etc.). These are ingrained into who we are. It is the imprint of God who created you in his image.

To wrap things up on the origins of the mankind and the propagation thereof, I would challenge you to question if the teaching of evolution is actually science or is it as much of a faith as any religion out there. Is it observable? Is it demonstrable? Is it repeatable? Clearly in every case, the answer is no, and as such, it is not science using a classical definition of the word. Because of this, all findings are pieced together and hypotheses are made which attempt to explain the unknown from a scientific standpoint. Plainly said, they are just guessing, and passing it off as truth. These things are not sound from a classical scientific standpoint; we also looked at the beginnings of the world from a logical perspective and saw flaws from what we know to be true in our world today, compared to how we are told things came to be. A person seeking truth in these matters cannot ignore these evidences. I submit that if he does, he is willingly ignorant.

The Bible

The books that comprise the Bible are the most historically accurate books of antiquity on the face of the earth. There is more historical evidence that, not only have these books been spiritual guides to people for thousands of years, but they are also more accurate to the original parchments, etc. than many other books which are not held to the same level of scrutiny. Consider the following Comparisons⁶:

Author	When Written	Earliest Copy	Gap from Earliest Copy to Most Recent Copy Currently Available	# of Copies
Caesar	100 -44 BC	900 AD	1,000 Years	10
Livy	59 BC – AD 17			20
Plato	427 – 347 BC	900 AD	1,200 Years	7
Tacitus	100 AD	1100 AD	1,000 Years	20
Pliny	61 – 113 AD	850 AD	750 Years	7
Thucydides	460 – 400 BC	900 AD	1,300 Years	8
Suetonius	75 -160 AD	950 AD	800 Years	8
Herodotus	480 – 425 BC	900 AD	1,300 Years	8
Sophocles	496 – 406 BC	1000 AD	1,400 Years	193
Lucretius	Died 55 or 53 BC		1,100 Years	2
Catullus	54 BC	1550 AD	1,600 Years	3
Euripides	480-406 BC	1100 AD	1,500 Years	9
Demosthenes	383 – 322 BC	1100 AD	1,300 Years	200
Aristotle	384 – 322 BC	1100 AD	1,400 Years	49
Aristophanes	450 – 385 BC	900AD	1,200 Years	49
Homer (Iliad)	900 BC	400 BC	500 Years	643
New Testament	40 – 100AD	125 AD	25 Years	24,000+

You can see from the above chart that the New Testament has more data to back up its authority than any other book from the same time period, of which we know. As a matter of fact, more than 37 times the next closest book (Iliad) and more than 480 times more than the works of Aristotle. Do you ever hear of anyone questioning his works? Not in the mainstream any way. People do question the Bible, though. This is because the Bible contains words that will challenge and question our actions. It challenges our authority to choose for ourselves and shows us that there are standards for life that may not fit our desires. Because of all of these things, it is constantly under attack. A closer examination would reveal that the Bible has more documentation to support it than many of the other readings, which we do not question. Not only are their many copies, the copies agree more than any other work of antiquity. It is also interesting to note that the gap between when the New Testament was written and the earliest copy held today is remarkably close - twenty times closer than the works of Homer. God has not left us on earth without clear markings towards the truth. However, today, we find that people are too preoccupied to find these truths.

As we conclude this section, you should know that God would be unrighteous if he were to have standards for his people, but he did not let them know what those standards were. He would have to preserve that word containing his standards for his people over time so that it would not become corrupt. If God cannot do these things, he is not very powerful and probably does not deserve our allegiance. I believe it is safe to say that if we are going to give credit to the authenticity of any ancient texts, the most accurate to the original authorship will be the Holy Bible. Moving from this subject we will begin to do a brief overview of the three major religions on the planet: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Judaism⁷

The Old Testament tells us the story of God's revelation of himself to mankind. He chose to do this through a people that would eventually be called Jews. God showed himself to Abraham who begat a son named Isaac. Isaac begat Jacob and Jacob would beget twelve sons, who would eventually make up the twelve tribes of Israel. Out of the tribe of Levi came a man named Moses to whom God chose to reveal much of himself. Characteristics of God were revealed to each of these early patriarchs. Times were much different then than they are now. The people of God did not know much about him. They knew that he existed, and was able to reward them if they obeyed his voice. Through Moses, God showed a way that he would receive worship: through a tabernacle surrounded by walls made of badger skins dyed red. In this temple was an altar for sacrifice, a laver full of water for cleansing, and some other items meant for purification and to show devotion to the Lord. By these instructions, God shows us that he hates sin (anything that is contrary to his own nature). He gave his people ten commandments to help them follow his will in their lives. If his people were to break one of these commandments, it would be necessary for them to take an animal from their flocks and sacrifice it to God so that it would be a covering for sin. God teaches us that the life of something innocent must be sacrificed for to cover the ugliness of sin. Can you put yourself in these shoes knowing that if you committed a sin, you would need to sacrifice a life to become right again with God? Nevertheless, many sacrifices were made during the year for each person. In fact, this was a full time job for a whole tribe in Israel. The tribe of Levi was solely responsible for these activities. It was most important to the Israelites. The Tabernacle was given up in favor of a temple, which was built during the reign of King Solomon between 960 and 922 BC. This served the same purpose as the Tabernacle of old, but was in a permanent location in Jerusalem. The Old Testament explains these many displacements from the "Promised Land" as punishments for not obeying God. God promised his people that if they would obey his voice, they would always have the land. These promises to remove Israel from being an independent nation was fulfilled beginning when the nation of Assyria defeated the nation of Israel in 722 B.C., and ending when the Kingdom of Judah fell in 586 B.C. with the ultimate defeat of the Jewish people being the destruction of their place of sanctification, the temple, the place where God had ordained that sins would be covered. The Jews were eventually allowed to return after a brief exile. During this time Ezra rebuilt the temple in 458 B.C., and the Jews celebrated the return of their most holy place. Eventually the Persian rule turned to a Roman one, and it was during this time that the temple was destroyed (A.D.70), and not rebuilt again as of the date of this writing. Since this time, there has been no place of sacrifice for the Jewish people. Where the temple once stood, now stands the Dome of the Rock, the third holiest site for the people of Islam. (Understanding this fact helps explain why tensions run so high between these people groups.) According to the Old Testament, the one way a Jewish person may be right before God involves a sacrifice in a temple which has been nonexistent for almost 2,000 years. Why was it removed? Was this God's plan? Does God not want his people to be right with him? Did he make another way? Surely, the God who moved so mightily for this people

versus the Egyptians, and with King David, and through the ministrations of the prophets, would not walk away from his people. Would God, who called Israel the Apple of his eye, allow this people to walk in sin for the past two thousand years without remedy? Based on historical fact, it is either this or he provided another way.

Christianity⁸

There are more than 300 prophecies about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. Some people believe that Jesus was a shrewd politician who made these prophecies come true though his own coniving. We will soon see that this is not possible.

One of these Old Testament prophecies states the following:

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation” for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence. Neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great. And he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many. And made intercession for the transgressors.

As other students of the gospel have observed, the above passage is so precise and specific to occurrences that actually happened, that if you were just handed a copy with no reference, you would assume it came from the New Testament. However, please note that it was written almost 300 years before Christ was born by the prophet Isaiah (chp. 53 vs. 3 – 12). In another place in the Old Testament, it is prophesied what Christ would do, and in what manner he would be killed.

My God My God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the dead, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. But thou are the that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts: I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mothers belly. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped

upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me: They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

The above passage from Psalm 22 was written by David before death by crucifixion was known by anyone from Israel. The above word of prophecy states, not only the way in which Jesus would be killed, but also speaks of the people who surround him as he is being crucified. None of these events could be planned beforehand. A person can not plan the way he will die (pierced my hands and feet), who he will die with (numbered with the transgressors), and what insults would be hurled his way while he is suffering (He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him) and lastly, that people would partake in a game of chance for his clothes (They cast lots for my vesture). However, the gospel accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, give witness that all of these events did indeed occur.

Jesus Christ came to continue the revelation of God to his people found on Earth. The Bible tells us that he was God and he came as flesh (John chp. 1), and that he did this to redeem a people who were not able to redeem themselves. He came to bring a better way to himself than that which was set up in the Old Testament. He came at the right time and set his throne in heaven on the line by coming in the form of sinful flesh. Jesus Christ could have sinned, but in all points he overcame, and at his death was sinless. How can one do this? The spirit of God, is not subject to sinful flesh. Since Jesus was filled with that spirit, he was able to put down the things human flesh craves. If he were to sin, the whole gambit would fail, and Satan would be able to lay hold on the claim to the throne in heaven, as God would then be found a liar. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death. If human beings never committed sin, they would not have to die. As a matter of fact, one of the offerings to Adam and Eve was the fruit of eternal life. They choose earthly wisdom instead, and gave up the immediate access to this blessing and were allowed to die. As sin increased upon the face of the earth, life spans began to shrink. Now in this time, our bodies suffer from ailments that were not known to previous generations. The wages of sin is death. Jesus blood provided a way for these sins to be cleansed, not just covered as it was in the Old Testament. As stated earlier, the only way to cover a sin according to the Bible is to shed the blood of something innocent. Herein lies the importance of Jesus living a sinless life. Being the innocent sacrifice of God, he was acceptable to God as a final sacrifice for the sins of man. The death of a sinless man is something that had not yet happened in the history of the world. This event signified a change in how things would be for the remainder of human history. The fact that Jesus died being a sinless man, meant that death held no power over him. And just as the Old Testament and New Testament both prophesied, on the third day after his death, the Power of God filled the lifeless body of Jesus and resurrected him into a glorified body. The power of death was broken, and because of this

occasion; Jesus returned to heaven and poured out his spirit on his people. The power of this spirit gave mortal man the same ability that Christ had on this earth. No longer would he read a command of God and “try his best” to accomplish it. It would now be in his heart to do it. His desires would now be to accomplish the will of God on this earth. Because the presence of God would now be in his life, he would be a representation of Christ on earth. He would walk in the same power of the ministry of Christ. This new creature would learn to put down the flesh and the body of sin. It is for this reason the Bible tells us that we must be born again to inherit the kingdom of God, and that the followers of Christ will be endued with power to cast out demons, heal the sick, and work miracles. This new creature will be able to cast away the desires of his flesh and overcome them as Christ did. He will be able to live a sinless life, as long as he abides in the spirit of Christ. He can cast off this spirit if he chooses by making his own decisions instead of submitting unto the spirit of Christ. This is the whole reason Christ came. To not understand this point, is to not understand the importance of the Gospel. Jesus did not come just to forgive sins and wipe them away; he came to allow his people to live and walk, even as he walked. People on every side who do not understand this truth currently surround us. They live like hell, but believe their sins are forgiven and that they are going to heaven anyway. The Bible makes no such guarantee, and we must take necessary precautions. Christ came not only to forgive sins, but also to make you live Holy in this present world. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Anything less is a perversion.

Islam⁹

It may come as a surprise to some of you that Islam does not deny the existence of Jesus Christ. In fact, he is mentioned many more times than is Mohammed in the Koran. The difference is that the Islamists do not believe the word of God that we call the Bible is the true work of God but rather think it a perverted version. This is all said in light of the fact that the Koran references the Old Testament Law, the Psalms, and the gospels many times¹⁰. As we have already discussed, the Bible that we use has a much stronger case for historical accuracy than does the Koran. Muslim people believe that Mohammed was a prophet of God and is the last revelation of God to mankind. Moses was first, Jesus second, and Mohammed third. Because of this, to a Muslim, the Islamic faith is the capstone of all religions. It is because of this claim that I have decided to cover Islam third. To understand the errors of Islam, you must understand this; it claims to be the capstone of all religions, which by inference would imply the best revelation of God's plan to his people that has been given to date. Now understanding this, let us dive into the plan of salvation as told to us through Mohammed.

In order for a person to find favor with Allah, a person must do the following five things¹¹:

1. They must believe that Allah is the only God and that Muhammad is his messenger. They do this by saying this sentence repetitively as sign of devotion and faith.
2. A Muslim will pray five times a day (dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and nightfall). It is important to note that these prayers are not necessarily the offerings of one's heart (while this is not forbidden), but rather a scripted prayer that comes from verses of the Koran which are said in repetition. No doubt you have seen videos of Muslim call to prayer and seen the discipline that they exhibit in carrying out their religion.
3. Muslims must give money back to God. For most of Muslims, this means giving a way 2 ½ percent of one's capital.
4. Fasting – for the month of Ramadan, a Muslim will fast from first light until sundown, abstaining from food and drink.
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca to visit the Holy Sight

If a person does these things faithfully he will get... no guarantees¹². The Koran states that at the end of time everyone's good deeds are placed on a scale that are an opposing force to his bad deeds stacked on the scales other side. If the good side outweighs the bad, then he gets to enter into eternal life. If the bad outweigh the good, you will go to eternal punishment.

God charges no soul save to its capacity; standing to its account is what it has earned, and against its account what it has merited.

Sura 2:286

Then he whose scales are heavy –they are the prosperers, and he whose scales are light – they have lost their souls in Hell dwelling forever, the Fire smiting their faces the while they glower there.

Sura 23:102

Seeing this is the case, you would think that all one need to do, is to obey these five pillars and they will outweigh the bad things that one might do, however it is not that simple. Sahih Bukhari, Volume 4, book 55 number 549 states:

“So a man may do deeds characteristic of the people of the (hell) fire, so much so that thee is only the distance of a cubit between him and it (Hell)...and enters Paradise. Similarly, a person may do deeds characteristic of the people of Paradise, so much so that there is only the distance of a cubit between him and it (Paradise)...and he enters Hell.”

Not even Mohamed was sure that he would make it to paradise.

I do not know what shall be done with me or with you. I only follow what is revealed to me; I am only a clear warner.

Sura 46:9

The one trump card in all of this is dying a martyr's death in Jihad.

If you are slain or die in God's way, forgiveness and mercy from God are a better thing than that you amass; surely if you die or are slain, it is unto God you shall be mustered.

Sura 3: 152

The verses in the Koran that refer to the immediate admittance into heaven for the Martyr countered with the uncertain destiny for those that are otherwise faithful help explain why one might be willing to be a suicide bomber.

Islam has verses within that seem peaceful while some that seem violent. The Bible also has verses that are violent, and some that are peaceful. We need to look at the difference before we conclude.

When you meet the unbelievers, smite their necks, then, when you have made wide slaughter among them, tie fast the bonds; then set them free, either by grace or ransom, till the war lays down its loads. So it shall be; and if God had willed he will, He would have avenged Himself upon them;

Sura 47:5

Say to the unbelievers, if they give over He will forgive them what is past; but if they return, the wont of the ancients is already gone! Fight them, till there is no persecution and the religion is God's entirely:

Sura 8:40

In these passages (there are many more like them), we see that a Muslim is to fight against every other religion, killing and imprisoning them until they all submit. And of course, this is what we see in the world today in most Muslim regions of the world in which they are the majority.

Perchance the unbelievers will wish that they had surrendered: Leave them to eat, and to take their joy, and to be bemused by hope; certainly they will soon know!

Sura 15:1

In the Name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate: Say 'O unbelievers, I serve not what you serve and you are not serving what I serve, nor am I serving what you have served, neither are you serving what I serve. To you your religion, and to me my religion!

Sura 109

As you can see from the above passages, they are very different from what we find in the previous passages, and can cause quite a bit of confusion to any reader. In the interest of time, I am going to tell you how you can make sense of these contradictions.

The Koran is not written chronologically, in fact there is no order to it whatsoever. Historically, after Mohamed received his vision, tried to convert the Christian and Jews to his new religion¹². He had limited success in this endeavor, and during these years, passed along the peaceful passages found in the Koran. After a decade of efforts and not many fruits, the sayings of Mohammed turned more violent and the faith blossomed! The main point? The violent sayings found in the Koran supersede the peaceful ones. This is important to note as while Muslims are in the minority, they do practice the passages we see in the lower sections. Just as their prophet practiced however, when their numbers grow, they also become more militant as found throughout the world in Islamic Republics today.

In the Bible, the violent passages take place in the Old Testament when God was teaching people what it was to be separate from the world. When the next revelation of God came in the person of Jesus Christ, it was made clear that this was not God's perfect plan for his people, but rather it was the way of God to love one's enemy and to forgive those who persecute you. Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself and to take care of the poor. The main point here? The God of the Bible revealed peace second. The fact that God commanded war is an article all to itself, which we will cover at another time. For the purpose here, just know that war was first in the Bible, and peace was second. Vice versa in the Koran.

After looking at salvation and holiness as found in both descriptions, which religion sounds like the capstone? Does the Koran, which leads us back to a way of ritual and unsure ground with our creator? Or does the Bible, which has a God who died for our sins so that we might live in spirit and desire to do his good will. Consider this as you answer the question:

Which sounds more like God's final capstone:

Recite that there is only one God and Mohammed is his profit	Pillar #1	Love the Lord with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself	
Pray 5 Times A day	Pillar #2	Pray Without Ceasing	
Give 2 ½ % to God	Pillar #3	Give all you have to God	
Fasting 1 month a year	Pillar #4	A lifestyle of fasting	
Make a Pilgrimage to Mecca	Pillar #5	You are the temple of God	
Destroy all of those who don't believe the way you do	Jihad	Love your enemy; be willing to lay your life down for your fellow Christians	

Clearly, the way of Islam is more a kin to the Old Testament way of doing things than is it a new life promised us in the New Testament. In reality, if we were dealing with the same God throughout all religions, his guidelines would not be contradictory as we see above. As a further note to the contradictory nature of Islam vs. the bible, consider that the Koran tells us that there was an 8 day creation¹¹ (Sura 41:9-12) that Jesus was a created human being (Sura 3:59), Jesus was an apostle (Sura 4:171) and was never crucified (Sura 4:157)¹³. The principles of Islam don't make sense to any logical thinker comparing facts instead of relying on emotion. Islam is not a true faith, but rather a man made religion that borrows from other religions and cultures to make it work. It rules by fear and that is how converts are made and kept. Consider this however, many Muslims risk alienation from their families every year (and death) to follow the living Christ¹⁴. This is a testimony of a true religion.

Conclusion

As we begin to wind this discussion down, let us go back to where we began: the analogy of the elephant in the room with blind men. If Jews, Muslims and Christians were simply grasping at a different part of the same God, and thus seeing things differently, there would not be drastic contradictions in what He commands his followers to do. A leg of the elephant is going to move with the rest of the beast, working together to accomplish whatever task is at hand. The mouth of the elephant is not going to bite off the tail. The legs will not trample the head. With religions of the world, they are fighting each other, and are following completely contradictory commands. The elephant analogy sounds nice to those who do not want to change their lives to please God, but it is clearly not logical.

Does God have different standards for different people? Consider this analogy, would I command one of my children to kill himself to gain my approval, and tell another that he can inherit my house simply by washing the dishes? Would I teach one child that it is my desire that he beat and destroy other children he doesn't like at school, and instruct my other child to love his enemies and to bless them? What if I promised one son he would inherit my land if he remained faithful to me, and told my other son he may or may not inherit the land even if he is faithful? Even we, as fallible human parents would not be so double minded when instructing our children. God surely would not be as unfair as to confuse and lead people astray with diverse and contradictory teachings. There is one God, and he has revealed his plan to anyone who will take the care to seek Him. For those who would prefer to believe a lie, there are plenty of lies out there for you. As for me, I choose truth as found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Only in this gospel will you find freedom from your old ways. When God abides in you, you act as he acts, not how you used to act. If you remain acting the way that you have always acted, then he is not in you. This is the truth. Let no man deceive you. He that says he abides in Christ will walk as Jesus walked. Anything else is not of the truth. A lot hinges on what you choose to believe about these things; in fact your eternity depends upon it.

Endnotes

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14. For current information on the persecuted church contact The Voice of the Martyrs, Inc. PO Box 443 Bartlesville, OK, 74005, (918) 337-8015