

Misconceptions about Allah (part 1 of 3): Is Allah God?

Description: Who is one true God?

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Yes, Allah is God. He is Allah, the One and Only. He is the same God worshipped in the Jewish and Christian faiths and is recognisable as such. Across the globe and throughout history people of all faiths and beliefs have turned towards God, or a supreme deity, the Creator of the universe. He is Allah. Allah is God. God the Creator. God the Sustainer.



The word God is spelled and pronounced differently in many languages: the French call him Dieu, the Spanish, Dios and the Chinese refer to the One God as Shangdi. In Arabic, Allah means the One True God, worthy of all submission and devotion. Jewish and Christian Arabs refer to God as Allah, and He is the same One True God referred to in the Biblical passage,

"Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is One". (Deuteronomy 6.4 & Mark 12.29)

In all three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) God and Allah are the same. However, when asking the question, Is Allah God, it is equally important to understand who Allah **is not**.

He is not a man, nor is He an ethereal spirit, therefore when Muslims talk about Allah there is no concept of a trinity. He was not begotten nor does He beget, therefore He does not have sons or daughters. He does not have partners or underlings; therefore, there are no demi gods or minor deities inherent in the concept of Allah. He is not part of His creation and Allah is not *in* everybody and everything. Consequently, it is not possible to become allahlike or attain allahhood.

"Say (O Muhammad): He is Allah, [who is] One. Allah, the Self-Sufficient Master. He begets not, nor was He begotten; and there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him." (Quran 112)

The Quran, God's book of guidance for all of humankind was revealed in Arabic; therefore, non-Arabic speakers can become confused about terminology and names. When a Muslim says the word Allah, he is talking about God. God the Supreme, God the Magnificent, God the Omnipotent. The Creator of all that exists.

"He has created the heavens and the earth in truth. High be He Exalted above all they associate as partners with Him." (Quran 16:3)

Muslims believe that Islam is the final message of God to humankind, and they believe that God gave the Torah to Prophet Moses as he gave the Gospel to Prophet Jesus. Muslims believe that Judaism and Christianity, in their pristine forms, were divine religions. In fact, one of the tenants of Islam is to believe in all of God's revealed books. The Prophets of Islam include the same Prophets present in Jewish and Christian traditions; they all came to their people with the same message - to recognize and to worship the One God.

"...were you witnesses when death approached Jacob? When he said unto his sons, 'What will you worship after me?' They said, 'We shall worship your God, the God of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, One God, and to Him we submit (in Islam).'" (Quran 2:133)

Muslims love and respect all the Prophets and Messengers of God. However, Muslims believe that the Quran contains the only concept of God that has not been tainted by man made ideas and idolatrous practices.

He, Allah/God made it very clear in Quran that He had sent messengers to every nation. We do not know all the names, or the dates; we do not know all the stories or the calamities, but we do know that God did not create even a single person and then abandon him. God's message of mercy, love, justice, and truth was made available to all of humankind.

"And verily, We have sent among every community or nation, a Messenger (proclaiming), "Worship Allah (Alone), and avoid all false deities... ". (Quran 16:36)

"And for every nation there is a messenger..." (Quran 10:47)

For thousands of years humankind has lived and died across this wide earth. Every time a woman looks towards the sky in search of a Creator, she is turning to Allah. Every time a man buries his face in his hands and begs for mercy or relief, he is asking Allah. Every time a child crouches fearfully in a corner, his heart is searching for Allah. Allah is God. Whenever a person is thankful for the bright new day, or the cool refreshing rain, or the wind whispering in the trees, he or she is thankful to Allah, thankful to God.

Humankind has taken the purity of God and mixed it up with wild imaginings and strange superstitions. God is not three, He is One. God does not have partners or associates; He is Alone in His majesty and in His dominion. It is not possible to become godlike because there is nothing comparable to God. God is not part of His creation; He is beyond it. He is the first, and the last. God is Allah, the Most Merciful.

"... There is nothing like unto Him..." (Quran 42:11)

"And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him." (Quran 112:4)

"He is the First (nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him), the Most High (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him). And He is the All-Knower of

everything." (Quran 57:3)

Yes! God is Allah.

Misconceptions about Allah (part 2 of 3): Allah - the One and Only

Description: If God is One why does Quran use the word We?

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Allah is God. He is the one you turn to in your hour of need. He is the one you thank when the miracles of this life become clear. Allah is a word that contains many layers of meaning. It is the name of God (the master of the universe) and it is the foundation of the religion of Islam. He is Allah, the One worthy of all worship.

""He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He has no wife? He created all things and He is the All-Knower of everything. Such is Allah, your Lord! *La ilaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the Creator of all things. So worship Him (Alone), and He is the Trustee, Disposer of affairs, Guardian, over all things. No vision can grasp Him, but His Grasp is over all vision. He is the Most Subtle and Courteous, Well Acquainted with all things." (Quran 6:101-103)

In the Arabic language, the word for God (Allah) comes from the verb *ta'allaha* (or *ilaha*), which means, "to be worshipped". Thus, Allah means, the One, who deserves all worship.

Allah is God, the Creator, and Sustainer of the world, but differences and confusions arise because the English word god is able to be made plural as in gods, or change gender, as in goddess. This is not the case in Arabic. The word Allah stands alone, there is no plural or gender. The use of the words He or Him are grammatical only and in no way indicate that Allah has any form of gender that is comprehensible to us. Allah is unique. In the Arabic language, His name is unchangeable. Allah describes Himself to us in the Quran:

"Say (O Muhammad), He is Allah, (the) One. Allah-us-Samad (The Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need, He neither eats nor drinks). He begets not, nor was He begotten; And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him." (Quran 112)

This short chapter of the Quran is known as the chapter of purity, or sincerity. In just

a few short words, it sums up the Islamic belief system; that Allah or God is One. He is alone in His majesty; He is alone in His omnipotence. He has no partners or associates. He was there in the beginning and He will be there in the end. God is One. Some may ask, 'If God is One, why then does Quran use the word We?'

In the English language we understand the use of the royal "we", or the grammatical construction known as the majestic plural. Many other languages use this construction including Arabic, Hebrew, and Urdu. We hear members of various royal families or dignitaries using the word we, as in "we decree", or "we are not amused". It does not indicate that more than one person is speaking; rather it denotes the excellence, power or dignity of the one who is speaking. When we hold that concept in mind, it is obvious that there is none more worthy to use the royal we than Allah - God.

"(This is) a Book, which We have revealed unto you (O Muhammad) in order that you might lead humankind out of darkness into light (of belief in the Oneness of Allah)..." (Quran 14:1)

"And indeed, We have honoured the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, have provided them with lawful good things, and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment." (Quran 17:70)

"And if We willed, We could surely take away that which We have revealed to you (i.e. this Quran). Then you would find no protector for you against Us in that respect." (Quran 17:86)

"O humankind! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then verily We have created you (i.e. Adam) from dust..." (Quran 22:5)

Respected Islamic scholar of the 13th century, Sheikh al Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said that, "Every time Allah uses the plural to refer to Himself, it is based on the respect and honour that He deserves, and on the great number of His names and attributes, and on the great number of His troops and angels."

The use of the words we, *nahnu*, or verily we, *inna*, in no way indicate that there is more than one god. They have no correlation at all to the concept of a trinity. The entire foundation of the Islamic religion rests upon the belief that there is only One God, and Muhammad is His final messenger.

"And your god is One God; there is none who has the right to be worshipped but He, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful." (Quran 2:163)

Misconceptions about Allah (part 3 of 3): The moon god

Description: Religion in Pre Islamic Arabia.

Misinformed people sometimes refer to Allah as a modern interpretation of an ancient moon god. This gross misrepresentation of Allah is often combined with strange unsubstantiated claims that Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, resurrected this god and made him the focal point of the religion of Islam. This is categorically untrue. Allah is God, the One, and Only, the Most Merciful. Allah is the God of Abraham, the God of Moses, and the God of Jesus.



"There is no god but Allah (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, the One and the only True God, Who has neither a wife nor a son). And indeed, Allah is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." (Quran 3:62)

Very little is known about the religion of the Arabs before Prophet Abraham. There is little doubt that the Arabs wrongly worshipped idols, heavenly bodies, trees, and stones, and that some of their idols even had animal characteristics. Although a number of minor deities across the Arabian Peninsula may have been associated with the moon^[1] there is no evidence of the Arabs ever worshipping a moon god above other gods.

On the other hand there is evidence that the sun, constructed as a feminine god was worshipped throughout Arabia. The Sun (Shams) was honoured by the several Arabian tribes with both sanctuaries and idols. The name *Abdu Shams* (slave of the sun) was found in many parts of Arabia. In the North the name *Amr-I-Shams*, "man of the Sun" was common and the name *Abd-al-Sharq* "slave of the Raising one" is evidence for the worship of the rising sun.^[2]

One of Prophet Muhammad's uncles was named Abdu Shams, so to was the man nicknamed *Abu Hurairah*, a renowned Islamic scholar from the first generation of Muslims. When Abu Hurairah converted to Islam, Prophet Muhammad changed his name to *Abdur-Rahman* (slave of the Most Merciful).

Muslims believe with complete certainty that, since the beginning of creation, Allah has sent prophets and messengers to guide and teach humankind. Therefore, humankind's original religion was submission to Allah. The first Arabs worshipped Allah, however, over time their worship became corrupted by man made ideas and superstitions. The reason for this is shrouded in the mists of time but they may have fell into the practice of idolatry in much the same way as the people of Prophet Noah.

The descendents of Prophet Noah were one community, believing in the Oneness of Allah, but confusion and deviation crept in. Righteous men tried to remind the people of their obligations to Allah but time passed and Satan saw an opportunity to lead the people

astray. When the righteous men died, Satan suggested to the people that they build statues of the men to help them to remember their obligations to Allah.

The people built statues in their meeting places and their homes, and Satan left them alone until everyone had forgotten the reason the statues existed. Many years later, the devious Satan appeared amongst the people again, this time suggesting that they worship the idols directly. An authentic narration of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, sums up the beginning of idolatry in the following way.

"The names (of the idols) formerly belonged to some pious men of the people of Noah, and when they died Satan inspired their people to prepare and place idols at the places where they used to sit, and to call those idols by their names. The people did so, but the idols were not worshipped till those people (who initiated them) had died and the origin of the idols had become obscure, whereupon people began worshipping them." [3]

When prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael rebuilt the Holy House of Allah (the Kaba) most of the Arabs followed his example and returned to the worship of the One God, however as time passed the Arabs fell into their old habit of worshipping idols and demi-gods. There is little doubt and much evidence to suggest that in the years between Prophets Abraham and Muhammad the religion of Arabian Peninsula came to be dominated by idol worship.

Each tribe or household had graven images and statues, the Arabs believed in seers, used divining arrows to predict future events and performed animal sacrifices and rituals in the name of their idols. It is said that the principle idols of Noah's people were found buried in the area of present day Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and distributed amongst the Arabian tribes [4]. When Prophet Muhammad returned triumphantly to Mecca, the Kaba [5] contained more than 360 different idols.

The most well known idols that existed in pre Islamic Arabia were known as *Manat*, *al Lat*, and *al-'Uzza*. [6] There is no evidence linking any of these idols with moon gods or moon. The Arabs worshipped these idols and called on them for intercession. Allah repudiated this false idol worship.

"Have you then considered al-Lat, and al-'Uzza (two idols of the pagan Arabs). And Manat (another idol of the pagan Arabs), the other third? Is it for you the males and for Him the females? That indeed is a division most unfair! They are but names, which you have named, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. They follow but a guess and that which they themselves desire, whereas there has surely come to them the Guidance from their Lord!" (Quran 53:19-23)

In the midst of overwhelming paganism and polytheism the pre Islamic Arabs never called upon a moon god as a supreme deity, in fact there is no evidence that they ever called upon a moon god. For generation after generation they did not lose their belief in One supreme ruler of the universe (even though most of the time they held the wrong concept of belief in Allah). They were aware of His blessings and His punishment and

believed in a Day of Judgement. Poets of the time referred to Allah regularly.

An-Nabigha As-Zubiani, a well-known poet of the 5th century CE said, "I took an oath and left no margin of doubt for who else can support man, besides Allah, and Zuhair Ibn. Abi. Solma affirms his faith in the Day of Judgement by saying "The deeds are recorded in the scroll to be presented on the Day of Judgement; Vengeance can be taken in this world too". Quran also testifies to the fact that the pre Islamic Arabs were aware of Allah -God - the One.

"If you were to ask them "Who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon?" They will surely reply, "Allah." How then are they deviating (as polytheists and disbelievers)? Allah enlarges the provision for which He wills of His slaves, and limits it for whom (He wills). Verily, Allah is the All Knower of everything. If you were to ask them, "Who sends down water (rain) from the sky, and gives life therewith to the earth after its death?" They will surely reply, "Allah." Say: "All the praises and thanks be to Allah!" Nay! Most of them have no sense." (Quran 29: 61-63)

Endnotes:

[1] <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31651/Arabian-religion/68308/Pre-Islamic-deities>

[2] Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Article "Ancient Arab", Vol. 1, p. 661.

[3] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[4] Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarkpur, (2002) *The Sealed Nectar*, revised 2nd edition. Darussalam, Riyadh.

[5] The cube shaped building, in the centre of the Holy Masjid, in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

[6] Hisham Ibn Al-Kalbi, *Kitab al-Asnam*, edited by Ahmad Zaki Pasha. (Cairo, 1927), pp. 9-14.

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