

Why Did God Create Mankind? (part 1 of 4): The Worship of God

Description: The purpose for the creation of mankind is worship. Part 1: Human's need for worship.

By Dr. Bilal Philips

Published on 01 May 2006 - Last modified on 04 Oct 2009

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From the perspective of humankind, the question "Why did God create man?" implies "For what purpose was man created?" In the final revelation (the Quran), this question is answered without any ambiguity. Humans are first informed by God that every human being is born with an innate consciousness of God. In the Quran, God said:



"[Remember] when your Lord extracted from the loins of Adam's children their descendants and made them testify [saying]: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we testify to it.' [This was] in case you say on the Day of Judgment: 'We were unaware of this.' Or you say: 'It was our ancestors who worshipped others besides God and we are only their descendants. Will you then destroy us for what those liars did?'" (Quran 7:172)

The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, explained that when God created Adam, He took from him a covenant at a place called Na,maan on the 9th day of the 12th month. He then extracted from Adam all of his descendants who would be born until the end of the world, generation after generation, and spread them out before Him to take a covenant from them also. He spoke to them, face to face, making them bear witness that He was their Lord. Consequently, every human being is responsible for belief in God, which is imprinted on each and every soul. It is based on this inborn belief

that God defined the purpose of mankind's creation in Quran:

**"I have created the jinn and humankind only for My worship."
(Quran 51:56)**

Thus, the essential purpose for which humankind was created is the worship of God. However, the Almighty is not in need of human worship. He did not create human beings out of a need on His part. If not a single human worshipped God, it would not diminish His glory in any way, and if all of humankind worshipped Him, it would not increase His glory in any way. God is perfect. He alone exists without any needs. All created beings have needs. Consequently, it is humankind that needs to worship God.

The Meaning of Worship

To understand why human beings need to worship God, one must first understand what is meant by the term 'worship.' The English term 'worship' comes from the Old English *weorthscipe* meaning 'honor.' Consequently, worship in the English language is defined as 'the performance of devotional acts in honor of a deity.' According to this meaning, man is instructed to show gratitude to God by glorifying Him. In the Quran, God says:

"Glorify the praises of your Lord..." (Quran 15:98)

In glorifying God, man chooses to be in harmony with the rest of creation which naturally glorifies its Creator. God addresses this phenomenon in many chapters of the Quran. For example, in the Quran, God states:

"The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them glorify Him and there is nothing which does not glorify His praise. However, you do not understand their glorification." (Quran 17:44)

However, in Arabic, the language of the final revelation, worship is called '*ibaadah*, which is closely related to the noun '*abd*, meaning 'a slave.' A slave is one who is expected to do whatever his master wills. Consequently, worship, according to the final revelation, means 'obedient submission to the will of God.' This was the essence of the message of all the prophets sent by God to mankind. For example, this understanding of worship was emphatically expressed by Prophet Jesus (the Messiah or Jesus Christ),

"None of those who call me 'Lord' will enter the kingdom of God, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."

It should be noted that 'will' in this quote means 'what God wants human beings to do' and not 'what God permits humans to do,' because nothing happens in creation without the will (permission) of God. The 'Will of God' is contained in the divinely revealed laws which the prophets taught their followers. Consequently, obedience to divine law is the foundation of worship. In this sense, glorification also becomes worship when humans choose to obey God's instructions regarding His glorification.

The Need for Worship

Why do human beings need to worship and glorify God by obeying the divinely revealed laws? Because obedience to divine law is the key to success in this life and the next. The first human beings, Adam and Eve, were created in paradise and later expelled from paradise for disobeying the divine law. The only way for human beings to return to paradise is by obedience to the law. Prophet Jesus, was reported in the Gospel according to Matthew to have made obedience to the divine laws the key to paradise: Now behold, one came and said to him,

"Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So he said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Also Prophet Jesus was reported to have insisted on strict obedience to the commandments, saying:

"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Divine laws represent guidance for humankind in all walks of life. They define right and wrong for them and offer human beings a complete system governing all of their affairs. The Creator alone knows best what is beneficial for His creation and what is not. The divine laws command and prohibit various acts and substances to protect the human spirit, the human body and human society from harm. In order for human beings to fulfill their potential by living righteous lives, they need to worship God through obedience to His commandments.

Why Did God Create Mankind? (part 2 of 4): The Need to Remember God

Description: The purpose for the creation of mankind is worship. Part 2: How the religion of Islam has prescribed ways to keep to the remembrance of God.

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Published on 08 May 2006 - Last modified on 27 May 2007

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Remembrance of God

All of the various acts of worship contained in the divine laws are designed to help humans remember God. It is natural for human beings to sometimes forget even the most

important things. Humans often become so engrossed in fulfilling their material needs that they totally forget their spiritual needs. Regular prayer is ordained to organize the day of the true believer around the remembrance of God. It interweaves spiritual needs with material needs on a daily basis. The regular daily need to eat, work and sleep is linked to the daily need to renew man's connection with God. With regard to regular prayer, God states in the final revelation,

"Verily, I am God, there is no god beside Me, so worship Me and establish regular prayer for My remembrance." (Quran 20:14)

Regarding fasting, God stated in the Quran,

"O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you that you may become God-conscious." (Quran 2:183)

The believers are encouraged to remember God as much as possible. Although, moderation in all spheres of life, whether material or spiritual, is generally encouraged in divine law, an exception is made regarding the remembrance of God. It is virtually impossible to remember God too much. Consequently, in the final revelation, God encourages the believers to remember Him as often as possible:

"O believers! Remember God often." (Quran 33:41)

Remembrance of God is stressed because sin is generally committed when God is forgotten. The forces of evil operate most freely when consciousness of God is lost. Consequently, the satanic forces seek to occupy people's minds with irrelevant thoughts and desires to make them forget God. Once God is forgotten, people willingly join the corrupt elements. The final revelation, addresses this phenomenon in as follows:

"Satan got the better of them and caused them to forget God. Those are the party of Satan. Truly the party of Satan are the real losers." (Quran 58:19)

God, through Divine law, has prohibited intoxicants and gambling primarily because they cause human beings to forget God. The human mind and body easily become addicted to drugs and games of chance. Once addicted, mankind's desire to continually be stimulated by them leads them into all forms of corruption and violence among themselves. God says in the Quran:

"Satan's plan is to incite enmity and hatred among you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of God and regular prayer. Will you not then abstain?" (Quran 5:91)

Consequently, humankind need to remember God for their own salvation and growth. All humans have times of weakness in which they commit sins. If they have no means of remembering God, they sink deeper and deeper into corruption with every sin. However, those who follow the divine laws will be constantly reminded of God, which will give them a chance to repent and correct themselves. The final revelation accurately describes this

process:

"Those who, having done something shameful or having wronged their own souls, remember God and immediately ask forgiveness for their sins..." (Quran 3:135)

The Religion of Islam

The most complete system of worship available to human beings today is the system found in the religion of Islam. The very name 'Islam' means 'submission to the will of God.' Although it is commonly referred to as 'the third of the three monotheistic faiths,' it is not a new religion at all. It is the religion brought by all of the prophets of God for mankind. Islam was the religion of Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. God addresses this issue in the Quran with regard to Prophet Abraham, saying:

"Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was an upright Muslim who did not worship others besides God." (Quran 3:67)

Since there is only One God, and humankind are one species, the religion which God has ordained for human beings is one. He did not prescribe one religion for the Jews, another for Indians, yet another for Europeans, etc. Human spiritual and social needs are uniform, and human nature has not changed since the first man and woman were created. Consequently, no other religion is acceptable to God besides Islam, as He clearly states in the final revelation:

"Surely God's religion is Islam..." (Quran 3:19)

"And whoever desires a religion besides Islam will not have it accepted, and he will be among the losers in the hereafter." (Quran 3:85)

Why Did God Create Mankind? (part 3 of 4): Life as Worship

Description: The purpose for the creation of mankind is worship. Part 3: In the Islamic system, each and every human act can be transformed into an act of worship.

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Published on 08 May 2006 - Last modified on 04 Oct 2009

Category: [Articles](#) > [Beliefs of Islam](#) > [The Purpose of Life](#)

Every Act is Worship

In the Islamic system, each and every human act can be transformed into an act of worship. In fact, God commands the believers to dedicate their whole lives to Him. In the Quran, God says:

"Say: 'Surely my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for God, the Lord of all the worlds.'" (Quran 6:162)

However, for that dedication to be acceptable to God, each act must fulfill two basic conditions:

1. First, the act must be done sincerely for the pleasure of God and not for the recognition and praise of human beings. The believer also has to be conscious of God while doing the deed to insure that it is not something forbidden by God or the last Messenger, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him.

In order to facilitate this transformation of mundane deeds into worship, God instructed the last Prophet, to prescribe short prayers to be said before even the simplest of acts. The shortest prayer which may be used for any circumstance is: Bismillaah (In the name of God). There are, however, many other prayers prescribed for specific occasions. For example, whenever a new piece of clothing is worn, the Prophet, taught his followers to say:

"O God, thanks is due to You, for it is You who has clothed me. I ask You for its benefit and the benefit for which it was made, and seek refuge in You from its evil and the evil for which it was made." (*An-Nasa'i*)

2. The second condition is that the act be done in accordance with the prophetic way, called in Arabic the Sunnah. All of the prophets instructed their followers to follow their way because they were guided by God. What they taught were divinely revealed truths, and only those who followed their way and accepted the truths would inherit eternal life in paradise. It is in this context that Prophet Jesus, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him, was reported in the Gospel according to John 14:6, as saying:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Similarly, Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood related...

"One day Prophet Muhammad, drew a line in the sand for them and said, "This is God's path." He then drew several lines [branching off] to the right and to the left and said, "These are the paths [of misguidance] on each of which is a devil inviting people to follow it." He then recited the verse: 'Verily, this is my path, leading straight, so follow it. And do not follow the [other] paths for they will scatter you about from God's path. That is His command to you in order that you may be conscious of God.'" (*Ahmed*)

Thus, the only acceptable way to worship God is according to the way of the prophets. That being the case, innovation in religious affairs would be considered by God among the worst of all evils. Prophet Muhammad, was reported to have said,

"The worst of all affairs is innovation in religion, for every religious innovation is a cursed, misleading innovation leading to the hellfire." (*An-Nasa'i*)

Innovation in the religion is forbidden and unacceptable to God. The Prophet was also reported by his wife, Aa'ishah, to have said:

"He who innovates something in our religion, that is not of it, will have it rejected." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

It is fundamentally due to innovations that the messages of the earlier prophets were distorted and the many false religions in existence today evolved. The general rule to follow in order to avoid innovation in religion is that all forms of worship are prohibited, except those which have been specifically prescribed by God and conveyed to humans by the true messengers of God.

The Best of Creation

Those who believe in One Unique God, without partners or offspring, and do righteous deeds [according to the above-mentioned principles] become the crown of creation. That is, although humankind is not the greatest creation of God, they have the potential to become the best of His creation. In the final revelation, God states this fact as follows:

"Surely, those who believe and do righteous deeds are the best of creation." (Quran 98:7)

Why Did God Create Mankind? (part 4 of 4): Contradicting the Purpose of Creation

Description: The purpose for the creation of mankind is worship. Part 4: To contradict the purpose of one's creation is then the greatest evil that a human being can commit

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Published on 08 May 2006 - Last modified on 02 Dec 2007

Category: [Articles](#) > [Beliefs of Islam](#) > [The Purpose of Life](#)

The Gravest Sin

To contradict the purpose of one's creation is then the greatest evil that a human being can commit. Abdullaah reported that he asked God's Messenger (peace be upon him) which sin is the gravest in God's sight and he replied,

"To ascribe a partner to God, even though He created you." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Worshipping others besides God, called *shirk* in Arabic, is the only unforgivable sin. If a human being dies without repenting from his or her sins, God may forgive all their sins, except *shirk*. In this regard, God stated:

"Surely God will not forgive the worship of others besides Him, but He forgives sins less than that to whomever He wishes." (Quran 4:116)

Worshipping others besides God essentially involves giving the attributes of the Creator to His creation. Each sect or religion does this in their own particular way. A small but very vocal group of people down through the ages have actually denied God's existence. To justify their rejection of the Creator, they were obliged to make the illogical claim that this world has no beginning. Their claim is illogical because all of the observable parts of the world have beginnings in time, therefore it is only reasonable to expect the sum of the parts to also have a beginning. It is also only logical to assume that whatever caused the world to come into existence could not have been a part of the world nor could it have a beginning like the world. The atheist assertion that the world has no beginning means that the matter which makes up the universe is eternal. This is a statement of shirk, whereby God's attribute of being without beginning is given to His creation. The numbers of genuine atheists have historically always been quite small because, in spite of their claims, they instinctively know that God does exist. That is, in spite of decades of communist indoctrination, the majority of Russians and Chinese continued to believe in God. The Almighty Creator pointed out this phenomenon, saying:

"And they denied [the signs] wrongfully and arrogantly, though within themselves they were convinced of them." (Quran 27:14)

To atheists and materialists, life has no purpose beyond the fulfillment of their desires. Consequently, their desires also become the god which they obey and submit to instead of the One True God. In the Quran, God said:

"Have you seen the one who takes his desires as his god?" (Quran 25:43, 45:23)

Christians gave Prophet Jesus Christ the attributes of the Creator by first making him co-eternal with God, then by making him a personality of God whom they titled 'God the Son.' Hindus, on the other hand, believe that God has become man in many ages, by incarnations called avatars, and then they divided God's attributes between three gods, Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer.

Love of God

Shirk also occurs when human beings love, trust or fear the creation more than God. In the last revelation, God said:

"There are among men those who worship others besides God as equals to Him. They love them as only God should be loved. But those who believe have a stronger love for God." (Quran 2:165)

When these and other similar emotions are directed more strongly to the creation, they cause human beings to disobey God in a effort to please other humans. However, only God deserves a complete human emotional commitment, for it is He alone who should be loved and feared over all creation. Anas ibn Maalik narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

"Whoever possesses [the following] three characteristics has tasted the sweetness of faith: he

who loves God and His Messenger above all else; he who loves another human being for God's sake alone; and he who hates to return to disbelief after God has rescued him as he hates to be thrown into a fire." (*As-Suyooti*)

All the reasons for which humans love other humans or love other created beings are reasons to love God more than His creation. Humans love life and success, and dislike death and failure. Since God is the ultimate source of life and success, He deserves the full love and devotion of mankind. Humans also love those who benefit them and help them when they are in need. Since all benefit (7:188) and help (3:126) come from God, He should be loved above all else.

"If you try to count God's blessings, you will not be able to add them up." (Quran 16:18)

However, the supreme love which humans should feel for God must not be reduced to the common denominator of their emotional love for creation. Just as the love humans feel for animals should not be the same as what they feel for other humans, the love of God should transcend the love humans feel towards each other. Human love of God should be, fundamentally, a love manifest in complete obedience to the laws of God:

"If you love God, then follow me [the Prophet] and God will love you." (Quran 3:31)

This is not an abstract concept, because human love of other humans also implies obedience. That is, if a loved one requests that something be done, humans will strive to do it according to the level of their love for that person.

The love of God should also be expressed in the love of those whom God loves. It is inconceivable that one who loves God could hate those whom God loves and love those whom He hates. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was quoted by Aboo Umaamah as saying:

"He who loves for God and hates for God, gives for God and withholds for God, [and marries for God] has perfected his faith." (*As-Suyooti*)

Consequently, those whose faith is proper will love all those who love God. In Chapter Maryam, God indicates that He puts love in the hearts of the believers for those who are righteous.

"Surely, God will bestow love [in the hearts of the believers for] those who believe and do righteous deeds." (Quran 19:96)

Aboo Hurayrah also related that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said the following in this regard:

"If God loves a servant He informs angel Gabriel that He loves so-and-so and tells him to love him, so Gabriel loves him. Then Gabriel calls out to the inhabitants of the heavens: 'God loves so-and-so, therefore love him.' So the inhabitants of the heavens love him. Then he is granted the love of the people of the earth." (*Saheeh Muslim*)

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