

7 REASONS WHY GOD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP (PART 2 OF 6)

Rating:

Description: 7 reasons for why we must worship God and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. Part 2: Associating partners with God is the gravest sin.

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By: Hamza Andreas Tzortzis (hamzatzortzis.com)

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The gravest sin

Associating partners with God is the gravest sin.  The consequence of this sin is that the one who dies in such a state and has not repented dies in a state of disbelief. This will never be forgiven by God. (This applies to major forms of associating partners with God. There are lesser forms that do not lead to disbelief, such as giving charity for other than God, obeying someone instead of God and showing off one's good deeds. However, major forms of associating partners with God such as praying to other than Him and believing other things are worthy of worship lead to disbelief. This however is a nuanced topic with many variables to consider, I suggest further study on this topic, as it is not the objective to go in to detail here.):

"Indeed, God does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with God has certainly committed a tremendous sin." (Quran 4:48)

However, if one associates partners with God and repents to Him and returns to the path of oneness, he or she will be forgiven, and their transgressions will be transformed into good deeds:

"And those who invoke not any other deity along with God... Except those who repent and believe, and do righteous deeds; for those, God will change their sins into good deeds, and God is Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Quran 25:68 & 70)

The one who has associated partners with God and has never repented, and dies in that state (and has no excuse), has essentially oppressed themselves by closing the door to God's mercy. Their hearts have 'eternally' rejected God's guidance and mercy; therefore, they have alienated themselves from the Divine. Those who reject God will

plead to go back to earth to do righteousness, but their hearts have 'eternally' rejected:

"[For such is the state of the disbelievers], until, when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, send me back that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind.' No! It is only a word he is saying." (Quran 23:99-100)

This self-imposed spiritual reality is a form of denial. The person has denied all the just and fair opportunities that God has given them to embrace His mercy and love:

"God has not wronged them, but they wronged themselves." (Quran 3:117)

"This is reward for what your hands have done. And God is never unjust to His servants." (Quran 8:51)

It must be noted that according to Islamic theology, if someone was not given the right message of Islam, and sought the truth, they will have an excuse and will be tested on the Day of Judgment.^[1] God is The-Just and no one will be treated unjustly. This is why, when a non-Muslim has passed away, it is considered un-Islamic to pass judgment on their final abode (however, some scholars have said this may not apply to those who never sought the truth or had sufficient knowledge of Islam). No one knows what is in someone else's heart and whether someone was given the right message in the right way. However, from a creedal and societal point of view, non-Muslims who died will be buried as non-Muslims. This does not mean that this is their final judgement. In reality, God is maximally and perfectly just and merciful, so no one will be treated unmercifully and no one will be treated unjustly.

People who have heard the message of Islam in a sound and correct way will have to account for their denial. However, whoever dies without having heard the message of Islam, or heard it in a distorted form, will be given an opportunity to accept the truth. Echoing the principles from the various verses of the Quran and the Prophetic traditions, Al-Ghazali summarises this nuanced approach. He argues that people who never heard the message of Islam will have an excuse: "In fact, I would say that, God willing, most of the Byzantine Christians and the Turks of this age will be included in God's mercy. I'm referring here to those who live in the farthest regions of Byzantium and Anatolia who have not come into contact with the message... They are excused."^[2]

Al-Ghazali also argues that the people who heard negative things of the Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, and his message will also be excused: "These people knew the name 'Muhammad', but nothing of his character or his qualities. Instead, all they heard since childhood is that a liar and imposter called 'Muhammad' claimed to be a prophet... This party, in my opinion, is like the first party. For even though they've heard his name, they heard the opposite of what his true qualities were. And this does not provide enough incentive for them to investigate [his true status]."^[3]

The true teachings of Islam are a barrier to extremism. In my view, all forms of extremism are based on an 'ideological hardness' that hardens people's hearts. What I mean by this is that people adopt non-negotiable, binary and negative assumptions about the world and other people. This makes one group of people 'otherize' another. Otherization is not simply labelling people as belonging to other groups. This is natural and part of modern society. Otherization usually happens when one group describes another group in a negative way and maintains that each member is the same. This hardens people's hearts and prevents them from positively engaging with other people who seem to be different. Islam does not otherize people. It does not assert that everyone who is not a Muslim is ultimately doomed or evil. The Quran makes it quite clear that people constituting other groups "are not all alike"^[4] and describes some of them as "upright"^[5]. The Quran also applies this concept to believers too; some are righteous and some are not. Nevertheless, Islam teaches that every human being must be treated with mercy, compassion and fairness.

Footnotes:

[1]

This is based on the following authentic tradition narrated by Ahmad and Ibn Hibban: "There are four (who will protest) God on the Day of Resurrection: the deaf man who never heard anything, the insane man, the very old man, and the man who died during the *fatrah* (the interval between the time of Jesus (upon whom be peace) and the time of Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him. The deaf man will say, 'O Lord, Islam came but I never heard anything.' The insane man will say, 'O Lord, Islam came but the children ran after me and threw stones at me.' The very old man will say, 'O Lord, Islam came but I did not understand anything.' The man who died during the *fatrah* will say, 'O Lord, no Messenger from You came to me.' He will accept their promises of obedience, then word will be sent to them to enter the Fire. By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, if they enter it, it will be cool and safe for them." There are other hadiths and verses of the Quran that indicate that God will not allow anyone to enter hell until people have been given the correct message of Islam.

[2]

Al-Ghazali, M. A. (1993) *Fayasl al-Tafriqa Bayn al-Islam wa-l-Zandaqa*. Edited by M. Bejou. Damascus, p. 84. An online copy is available at: <http://ghazali.org/books/fiysal-bejou.pdf> [Accessed 21st November 2016].

[3]

Ibid.

[4]

The Quran, Chapter 3, Verse 113. This verse refers to the 'people of the book'. However, the principle applies to all groups of people.

[5]

Ibid.

The web address of this article:

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