42573 - What Does Islam Say About Redemption?

the question

Why do Muslims persist in denying that the Messiah came to redeem us?

Summary of answer

Muslims believe that Jesus did not die on the cross and therefore there is no sacrifice, no salvation, and no trinity. Muslims do not believe in the original sin; rather they believe that no one can bear the sin of anyone else, or redeem him with his own self. Allah promises those who repent that their repentance will be accepted. The Messiah affirmed the importance of righteous deeds. He did not tell them of redemption by which they would be saved from the reckoning.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Meaning of redemption

The doctrine of redemption, and the basis of this doctrine which is their belief that the Messiah (peace be upon him) was crucified, is one of the basic doctrines of Christianity , so much so that they would gamble the entire religion on this doctrine.

The English cardinal Manning says in his book “Eternal Priesthood”: “The importance of this confusing topic is obvious, for if the death of Christ on the cross is not real, then the basis of the church’s doctrine will crumble from its foundations, because if Christ did not die on the cross, then there is no sacrifice, no salvation , and no trinity … Paul, the Apostles and all the churches say that, i.e., if Christ did not die then there was no resurrection either.”

This is what Paul said:

“And if Christ has not been raised, then preaching is useless and so is your faith.” I Corinthians 15:14 – New International Version (NIV)

Just as they struggle with their belief in trinity and what it means, and how they can reconcile it with the belief in monotheism which is affirmed in the Old Testament (See the question: 12628), and just as they also struggle with everything that has to do with the crucifixion and its details, which is the basis of their belief in redemption which they believe is the reason for the crucifixion , we say: as confusion is inevitable for everyone who turns away from the light of revelation that came down from Allah, similarly they are confused about the doctrine of redemption.

Does redemption mean saving all of mankind?

Does redemption mean saving all of mankind, as John says:

“…Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” I John 2:1-2 (NIV)

Or is it only for those who believe and are baptized:

“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” Mark 16:16 (NIV)

The one who studies the life and sayings of the Messiah will see clearly that the call of the Messiah was addressed to the Children of Israel, and that throughout his mission he forbade his disciples to call anyone else. So salvation must have been only for them. This is what we see in the story of the Canaanite woman who said to him:

“… ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.’

Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, ‘Send her away, for she

keeps crying out after us.'

He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.'

The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said.

He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.'"

Matthew 15:22-26 – NIV

The Messiah did not heal the daughter of the Canaanite woman, although he was able to do so, so how could he redeem all of mankind?

Was this salvation from the "original sin" of Adam only?

Was this salvation from the "original sin" of Adam only, or does it include all of our sins?

But no one can bear the sin of anyone else, or redeem him with his own self, as Allah tells us in His Noble Book (interpretation of the meaning):

"And no bearer of burdens shall bear another's burden; and if one heavily laden calls another to (bear) his load, nothing of it will be lifted even though he be near of kin. You (O Muhammad) can warn only those who fear their Lord unseen and perform As-Salah (Iqamat-as-Salah). And he who purifies himself (from all kinds of sins), then he purifies only for the benefit of his own self. And to Allah is the (final) Return (of all)." [Fatir 35:18]

This is what the texts of their Bible also say:

"The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him." Ezekiel 18:20-21-- NIV

Is there an original sin?

There is no inherited sin (“original sin”):

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin.

He who hates me hates my Father as well.

If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father” John 15:22-24 – NIV

When there is sin – whether a person has committed it himself or inherited it from Adam or from another of his forefathers – can this sin not be erased through repentance?

The people of heaven rejoice over the one who repents like the shepherd rejoices when he finds his lost sheep, and the woman rejoices over her lost penny when she finds it, and a father rejoices over his prodigal son when he returns:

“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” (Luke 15:7)

Will God accept our repentance?

God promises those who repent that their repentance will be accepted :

“But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.

None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. Because of the righteous things he has done, he will live.” Ezekiel 18:21-23 – NIV. See also Isaiah 55:7

Putting one's trust in one’s lineage without repenting or doing righteous deeds is a kind of

madness; if a person's deeds slow him down, his lineage will not help him to speed up, as our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said. (Sahih Muslim, 2699)

John the Baptist (Yahya – peace be upon him) taught you the same things:

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" Matthew 3:7-10 – NIV

Forgiveness of sins through the sinner's repentance is what befits the kind and merciful God – not sacrifice and crucifixion and the shedding of blood. This is what the Bible says:

"I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners (to repentance)" Matthew 9:13 – NIV

(the words "to repentance" do not appear in the NIV but are present in the "King James" or "Authorized" translation of the Bible).

Hence Paul says:

"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." Romans 4:7-8 – NIV

We believe that if Allah had commanded some of His slaves to kill themselves in repentance from their sins, that would not be too much for them to do, and that would not contradict His being kind and merciful. He commanded the Children of Israel to do that when they asked to see God directly, but even then no one was to be killed for anyone else, rather a person was to be killed for his own sins, not for the sins of another. That was the heavy burden and fetters that were upon them (cf.

al-A’raf 7:157), from which Allah has spared this ummah (nation/community).

Another matter that disproves the belief in original sin is the texts which mean that each person is responsible for his own actions, as Allah says in His Book (interpretation of the meaning):

“Whosoever does a righteous good deed, it is for (the benefit of) his own self; and whosoever does evil, it is against his own self. And your Lord is not at all unjust to (His) slaves” [Fussilat 41:46]

“Every person is a pledge for what he has earned” [al-Muddaththir 74:38]

Similarly it says in your Bible:

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” Matthew 7:1-2 – NIV

“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done” Matthew 16:27 – NIV

Jesus affirmed the importance of righteous deeds

The Messiah affirmed the importance of righteous deeds, and said to his disciples:

“Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'

Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'” Matthew 7:21-22 – NIV

Similarly, he said:

“The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that

causes sin and all who do evil.

They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:41-42 – NIV

He did not tell them of redemption by which they would be saved from the reckoning.

Those who do righteous deeds are the only ones who will be saved on the Day of Resurrection from the reckoning, whilst those who did evil deeds will be carried off to Hell, with no salvation by the Messiah or by anyone else:

“… for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice

and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. John 5:28-29 – NIV

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory…

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” Matthew 25:31-42 – NIV

The Messiah said to them:

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?” Matthew 23:33 – NIV

Adolf Hernck noted that the epistles of the Apostles did not include the idea of salvation by redemption, rather they suggested that salvation is attained by good deeds, as it says in the Epistle of James:

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

… faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

… faith without deeds is useless (or dead).” James 2:14 – NIV

And Peter says:

“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism

but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” Acts 10:34-35

There are many similar examples in the words of the Messiah and the disciples.

Allah the Almighty has spoken the truth (interpretation of the meaning):

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa [i.e. he is one of the Muttaqun (the pious)]. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware” [Al-Hujurat 49:13]

What is strange is that Paul himself, who abolished this teaching and said that deeds were to no avail, and that salvation is only by faith, affirmed the importance of righteous deeds on other occasions, such as when he said:

“A man reaps what he sows

… Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” Galatians 6:7 – NIV

“and each will be rewarded according to his own labour” I Corinthians 3:8 – NIV

(For more information on this matter see: Dr Mundhir al-Saqqar: Hal iftadana al-Masih ‘ala al-Salib)

So you have no way of resolving this contradiction unless you ignore your common sense and reasoning, and delude yourself with false wishes, as you do in the case of the doctrine of trinity and unity, which is what John R Stott advises you to do in his book Basic Christianity: I do not dare

to deal with this subject, before I admit frankly that a great deal of it must remain a hidden mystery… I wonder how our weak minds cannot comprehend it fully, but there will inevitably come a day when the veil will be lifted and all mysteries will be resolved, and we will see the Messiah as he really is!

… How is it possible that God was incarnated in Christ, whilst making Christ a sacrifice for our sin? I cannot answer this, but the Apostle himself places these two truths side by side and I accept the idea completely, just as I accept that Jesus the Nazarene is human and divine in one person… If we cannot resolve this contradiction or solve this mystery, we should accept the truth as proclaimed by Christ and his disciples, that he bore our sins." (Basic Christianity, p. 110, 121, quoting from Dr Sa'ud al-Khalaf, al-Yahudiyyah wal-Nasraniyyah, p. 238)

Yes, you and we will see the Messiah as he really is, one of the slaves of Allah who are close to Him, and one of His prophets who were sent, on that Day when the veil will be lifted and he will disavow himself of all those who took him as a god besides Allah, or who attributed to him words that he did not say. At that time there were no mysteries or puzzles:

"And (remember) when Allah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): 'O 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Did you say unto men: Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah?' He will say: 'Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, You would surely have known it. You know what is in my inner-self though I do not know what is in Yours; truly, You, only You, are the All-Knower of all that is hidden (and unseen).

'Never did I say to them aught except what You (Allah) did command me to say: Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them, but when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them; and You are a Witness to all things. (This is a great admonition and warning to the Christians of the whole world).

'If You punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, verily, You, only You, are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.'

Allah will say: 'This is a Day on which the truthful will profit from their truth: theirs are Gardens

under which rivers flow (in Paradise) — they shall abide therein forever. Allah is pleased with them and they with Him. That is the great success (Paradise).

To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all that is therein, and He is Able to do all things." [Al-Maidah 5:116-120]

Will you think about it before it is too late?

"Say (O Muhammad): 'O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah (Alone), and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah.' Then, if they turn away, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims'" [Aal 'Imran 3:64].

And Allah knows best.