

Episode 13

N: *My dear viewers, we welcome you to a new episode of our program “Questions About Faith”. As always, it’s our pleasure to receive your questions, and with love we will answer them. It’s also our pleasure and honor to have with us Father Zakaria Botros. Welcome to you, Father.*

Father: Thank you

Nahed: *Our dear viewers, we’re about to resume talking about the crucifixion of Christ. We have covered this subject over several episodes, and if you please Father, can you give us a short summary, so that those who are watching us for the first time may be able to follow along. So, would you please?*

Father: I welcome the viewers, both old and new. As said before, we are discussing the fact of the crucifixion of Christ, and we were led to discuss this subject by the topic of the incarnation of God to become man, and why? The reason is because of redemption. So redemption is the goal; redemption is the salvation of mankind, the salvation of everyone, because when God created man He created him in His own image and likeness with great love, but when Adam sinned and ate of the forbidden tree, he was separated from God, he was separated from life, and he became subject to the death sentence. That’s the punishment. But as we have also said, God is also merciful; that is, He is willing to show mercy to man, and deliver him. But would God retract His words? **No way, impossible.** God is just and “There is no way to change God’s words.” Ok, can’t God show mercy? How? **Impossible;** He must show mercy, and herein is manifested the wisdom of God, in reconciling the principle of justice and mercy in the principle of ransom; that is, redemption. We also said that this principle exists in the Gospel and in the Quran- the offering up of the son of Abraham as a sacrifice. In the Bible, it says that he found a ram which he slaughtered in his stead, and likewise in the Quran it says, “And we have ransomed him with a great sacrifice.” It’s an established principle, isn’t it? And hence God started talking about the principle of redemption, to highlight the concept of redemption. This becomes evident again in the Passover Lamb when the Israelites were in Egypt, and the command was given to kill all the children of the Egyptians. The first-born among the Israelites was to be redeemed by means of a ram, so that the angel would "pass over" upon seeing the blood. The same thing, again, we have seen in the redemption of Abdullah Ibn Abd Al-Muttalib, as he offered up redemption on his behalf and the redemption was accepted. We also had a look at the sacrifices of the Jews, which were being offered at the Temple for the people’s sins- sheep, oxen, and so forth. We also had a look at Islam during the Feast of Sacrifice and the sacrificial offerings (Hady), and that Muhammad himself said, “May your bones be for my bones, and your flesh for my flesh, and for those among my nation who have

not sacrificed.” And also he said to Fatima, “Hurry up to catch the first drop of its blood; it will pardon your sins.”

N: *We have established that the principle of redemption is, of course, Biblical, as well as Quranic, and is being practiced among Muslims.*

Father: Exactly so. This is quite essential.

N: *Yes.*

Father: So, the divine concept of redemption is established in all. Now we come to the following point: God wants to redeem humanity; God’s judgment of the death of humanity must be removed. So after having paved the road for redemption by this means through all those symbols, God started to fulfill the reality, because He has to redeem. But with what should He redeem? What are the prerequisites of the redeemer?

N: *That’s right. Last time we spoke about the first prerequisite of the redeemer, which is what?*

Father: That God the Redeemer must be infinite. This is an essential prerequisite and the reason being that man’s sin is commensurate with the status of the worth of the person offended. So the offence against the unlimited God must be an unlimited offence, because anything multiplied by infinity equals infinity. Therefore an infinite offence requires an infinite punishment.

N: *We also mentioned that the punishment is eternal death.*

Father: Eternal or infinite.

N: *And that there are three types of deaths: spiritual death, eternal death, which is separation from God and shame,*

Father: and also eternal death in the everlasting fire.

N: *Right.*

Father: Alright? God must redeem man. But the redeemer must be.. what? Unlimited. And why? Because sin is unlimited. And the two other prerequisites at the end of the previous episode- I referred to them but I put them off till this one because it would take a long time to talk about them. So the first prerequisite is that the redeemer must be unlimited, and the second prerequisite is that the redeemer must be a human being, having the same nature of the ones to be redeemed.

N: *It's here where the difficulty lies, Father. How can we combine humanity with the unlimited, unless he is immortal?*

Father: Now you're talking. This is the concept of divine incarnation.

N: *Exactly.*

Father: But let me first clarify why the redeemer must be human. Let me bring it a little bit into focus. The redeemer must be human, having the same nature of the ones to be redeemed. For example, as I said in the illustration in the previous episode, if I total your Rolls Royce car, I should not replace it with a Fiat car, or Nasr or Ramsis; it must be of the same type, mustn't it? If I damage a chandelier, I should also replace it with a chandelier.

N: *Yes, not with a bare bulb!*

Father: Yes, not with a bulb. Isn't that right? So the ransom must at least be of the same type of the thing ransomed. The redeemer must be of the same kind as the redeemed; he must be human. In the past this was symbolized by sheep. They offered up sheep for sacrifices, a ram, but that was not of the same type of the redeemed. They are acceptable only as far as being symbols; they serve as types. For example, if you want to have a building built, the architect provides you with a model, a model that looks exactly like the building, but it isn't the building itself; he's only showing you. Do you accept this? You tell him, "Yes, it's good, it's beautiful, but if you..." And then he builds the real one. He should then build the real building. So these symbols were as good as models-to prepare the minds to the reality. Are you following? The reality. And that's the reason why today I can't come and greet someone and say, "Hello, Mr. Sheep." Are you cussing me? *Of course*, you're calling me a sheep? Why not? Haven't you redeemed yourself with a sheep? Haven't you offered a sheep as redemption for yourself? That means you are equal to a sheep. And now when I call you a sheep you get upset? It won't work?

N: *Of course it won't work!*

Father: Because a man has more worth than a sheep; he has even more worth than an ox. Even if he sacrifices an ox, it won't be correct, because he's more worthy than being a sheep or an ox. Right?

N: *Yes.*

Father: So, the redeemer must be human, and for that reason divine incarnation took place, in the man Christ Jesus. Christ as man comes from the Virgin Mary; He was born of her a human, and the Godhead resided in Him, which is unlimited, the unlimited Spirit of God resided in Him. So in Him the two prerequisites were met: That He was unlimited and is capable of atoning for an unlimited sin, and that He was human of the same nature of those people he had to *atone for their sins* and redeem them, because He's human. Right?

N: *Yes.*

Father: And this is the foundation. And that's why God was incarnated in the Virgin Mary. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you." So He dwelt in her. And that's why the Quran says, "Christ Jesus the son of Mary is only a messenger of God [A human. A mere messenger] and Spirit of him, His word and Spirit of Him." And here is the divinity: He is a messenger; that is, human, His Word and Spirit of Him .. is what? The divinity. The Word and Spirit of God.

N: *If you'd excuse me, can you give the reference of this verse? Isn't it in Surah 4, verse 171?*

Father: Surah 4, 171.

N: *I learnt it by heart.*

Father: And the other verse I've mentioned is in Surah 5, verse 32. I've mentioned it in the previous episode. It says the following, "We have prescribed to the children of Israel that everyone who kills a soul [here it is a human soul] without a soul being involved, acts as if he had killed all mankind, and whoever brings it back to life, as if he has granted life to all mankind." Here a soul means a human being who dies and is being considered atonement for the sins of mankind, as he rises he is considered as if he has raised all mankind to life. That's why it says in the Bible, "He has raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Is that clear? So much for the human part, and now we come to the third prerequisite.

N: *Yes, that's the cincher!*

Father: We said as first prerequisite he must be unlimited because sin is unlimited and its punishment is unlimited, and its redemption must therefore is unlimited; and only God is unlimited. And the second condition

N: *And the second condition?*

Father: The second prerequisite is that He must be human from the same type as the redeemed whose sins must be atoned for; soul, flesh and blood. He must be human taken from the womb of the Virgin Mary, in whom dwells the Spirit of God as He dwelt in the tree and in the mountain, but for a holy purpose. That's it. Now, the third prerequisite..

N: *And the most important.*

Father: And the most important, that this man must be pure from all sin, otherwise he would be guilty as sinner, worthy of death for his own sin, and in need himself of atonement. So, he must be pure, sinless.. but has this prerequisite been fulfilled in Christ? Can we say that Christ is really pure without sin?

N: *Let's prove this first from the Quran.*

Father: From the Quran. Okay. The Quran speaks about Christ and Islam, not just the Quran, even the books of the commentators and so forth, speak about Him.

N: *And the traditions.*

Father: Yes and the traditions. Surah Mary says the following, "I am only your Lord's messenger to bestow.. [that's the angel when he appeared to Zachariah. He says to him:] Am only your Lord's messenger to bestow [I am sorry, here he is talking about Christ. When the angel appeared to the Virgin Mary. This is the good news the angel brought to Mary in Surah 6] I am only your Lord's messenger to bestow a clean-living boy on you." What does clean-living mean?

N: *Will you please clarify it.*

Father: Pure. Pure. Clean-living means pure. And in Surah 3, it says the following, "I have named her Mary, and ask You to protect her and her offspring [that is, Christ] from Satan the Outcast." To protect her from Satan the outcast. Imam Al-Razi exegeted this verse in volume 3, page 676, as follows: He says, "Christ was named Massih because He has been wiped clean of transgressions and sins. Gabriel wiped Him clean with his wing at the time of His birth, so that this might serve as preservation for Him from the touch of the devil. And Abu Huraira said, "I heard the Messenger of God, may God's prayer and peace be upon him, say, "There isn't a single newborn among the sons of Adam whom the devil has not jabbed at the time of his birth, so that he raises his voice in a scream, but for Mary and her son." That is, all mankind are sinners, except for Mary and her son. It's also reported in Al-Bukhari: The son of Adam is being stabbed by the devil

in both his sides by means of his finger once he's born, except for Issa, the son of Mary. The devil meant to stab Him, but he stabbed the screen." That is, he never touched Him. So, Christ is then pure.

N: *This is an irrevocable confirmation that the Lord Jesus is the only sinless person, through the Quran and the prophetic traditions.*

Father: And that's the reason this verse was revealed: "We prescribed with the Children of Israel.. [Pay close attention, Children of Israel; this concerns you in particular, because you killed Christ.] that anyone who kills any person without another soul being involved [that is, an innocent soul] or causing mischief in the land [that is, a pure soul and that's redemption], acts as if he had killed all mankind, and he who brings it back to life acts as if he had granted life to all mankind." Such a pivotal verse. This corresponds to another verse in the Bible, in Corinthians.

N: *Certainly, certainly.*

Father: O, yes. You know sometimes certain things are agreed upon and come from a common source. Here it is. Hear what it says. "If One died for all, then all died." If One died for all, then all died.

N: *That's exactly the same meaning.*

Father: Exactly the same. *The same words.* For Christ died for all [that's the redemption] as though all mankind died. So now we have spoken about the prerequisite of unlimitedness and the prerequisite if humanity, and the prerequisite of being pure, and all were met in the person of Christ. And that's the mystery of redemption, or the mystery of incarnation itself. So why then was Christ crucified? Why was God incarnated in a man? To redeem mankind, to deliver them from death, to deliver them from punishment, eternal salvation. "By grace you have been saved, through faith- and that's not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Christ saved us from our sins and "He was named 'Jesus' because He saves His people from their sins." Is that clear?

N: *Very.*

Father: Any other inquiries?

N: *Again, I would like to repeat to our beloved Muslims: I would like that you ask yourselves: why is it that Christ, in particular, is sinless. This is generally accepted, that the Lord Jesus Christ is sinless- both in the Quran and the Bible.*

Father: What about you yourself, when you were a Muslim, have you ever thought of Christ like that?

N: *This is the question that made me think and research, and, by the grace of God, I found the Lord Jesus.*

Father: I mean you believed that He was sinless, that He is...

N: *Of course. It's so evident. And no Muslim should miss that, to ask himself: why this unique person? Even the Quran says he is a unique person. He came into the world miraculously, went out of the world miraculously, and lived in the world miraculously. And there is no one else without sin but Him. This, in itself, is a miracle.*

Father: You know what I hope from the viewers, both male and female: to think why Jesus was incarnated and why He came. Why God was incarnated and came into the world? Once you know the reason you'll cease to wonder.

N: *Certainly.*

Father: I mean it would be understood. Yes, Christ is a miracle, Christ is pure, but why? Yes, because he came to redeem mankind. And therefore the Bible says about the Cross- the Apostle Paul says, "I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God for redemption."

N: *If we have a look at the prerequisites of redemption, we will find that they don't correspond to anyone in the whole world, except to the Lord Jesus. Okay, let's move on to the next question, which is: what are the blessings of redemption? O well, I know this is a big issue, quite an extensive one, but as much as possible let's try to get it across to our beloved ones.*

Father: Yes, that's the important thing. That's the magnificent result. That's the reason why Christ came.

Number one: To forgive us our sins, for on the Cross Christ said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." He asked for forgiveness. Then later He said, "It is finished." So He forgave sins, He redeemed mankind, He offered Himself up as redemption for all mankind- for me, for you, and for the viewers who are watching and listening, and for all mankind, as redemption. He was the One appointed from God to be the Redeemer of mankind. That was number one.

Number two: He restored the relationship between myself and God, which was, you know, we were driven out of paradise. All mankind were kicked out. He reopened the way. He made reconciliation through Himself; that's what the Bible says. What does it say? In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 19. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." Reconciling the world to Himself. Not imputing their trespasses to them. How much of a sinner am I? How much of a sinner is everyone? Even the esteemed viewers may be recalling their sins and evil now; the deeds they have committed, and God is willing to blot them out, He's willing to forgive, He's willing to pardon. Yes, even the woman who was caught in the very act, in the very act *flagrante delicto*, Christ forgave her, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first. Go and sin no more. Go in peace." Christ came to fulfill a noble goal; which is our peace, our comfort, our happiness, and therefore it says that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." He granted us His mercy, which is the foundation- mercy. "According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." Mercy. Moreover, He granted us the blessing of salvation. "By grace you have been saved." Salvation which man desperately seeks, salvation from sin, salvation from the power of the devil, salvation from everlasting death, salvation. He accomplished the salvation. He worked salvation in the midst of all the land, "as You spread Your pure hands on the cross." Salvation. Also one of the major blessings He granted us is eternal life, which we were denied. We were doomed to everlasting hell. No, He says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is life everlasting." The gift of God, life everlasting. He says, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Gifts, blessings, and endowments. But does Islam, I wonder, have statements to prove those blessings and redemption? Wonder of wonders! We find the same things in Islamic books, the Quran included. What does it say? There is a prophetic tradition in Al-Bukhari's Sahih that says, "There's none among you, no one will enter paradise except by the mercy of God, most high." It was then asked, "Not even you, O messenger of God?" he said, "Not even I, unless God encompasses me with His mercy." So then, it is mercy that encompasses man, and makes him forgivable. And mercy is impossible ...

Okay, please?

N: *What's the relation between this and that, in order to get the meaning across?*

Father: There is no mercy without redemption.

N: *Yea.*

Father: There is no mercy without redemption, because mercy without redemption is like a cheque without signature, without balance, a bad cheque. I do give a cheque but it

has no balance. It will bring me into debt and will do you no good. Do you follow? So what is the balance of mercy? What is the balance of forgiveness? This is the problem; this is the issue. Do I have mercy on you because you offer a ram as a sacrifice? Of course not. It's only a symbol. Christ also intercedes for us with God, the Father,. And that's it. He starts to take us. To intercede means to advocate our cause. An intercessor is an advocate who intercedes for our infirmities, and says, "I will strengthen them." Just as a father treats his children, He starts to treat us. In the Quran is Christ an intercessor? Yes, of course. Christ is an Intercessor. At first...

N: *Well, please this one. This is very important.*

Father: At first in the Quran it was claimed that there is no intercessor but God. In Surah 32 it says, "God is the One who created heaven and earth. You all have no patron nor any intercessor besides Him." No intercessor besides Him! But Al-Jalalayn comment on this verse, saying, "'Besides Him' means other than Him. 'Patron' that is, intercessor. You have neither a patron nor an intercessor. Patron means an advocate. Intercessor, that is someone who defends you." This is what Al-Jalalan say. Intercessor means a defender; an advocate. But intercession as a whole in the Quran is ascribed to Christ. How is that? In Surah 3 "Thus the angels said: "Mary, God announces to you good news about a Word from Him whose name will be Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, ... well-regarded in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those drawn near [to God]. Well-regarded.

N: *Can you explain this word well-regarded, Father? Because it's often misunderstood.*

Father: Let's explain "well regarded." Quite right. You know as someone coming from a Muslim background that no Muslim would accept a priest to explain the Quran to him. So I don't claim I'm going to explain the Quran, but I'll cite the comments of Islamic scholars on the word "well-regarded", alright? Al-Razi, Al-Zamakhshari, Al-Baydawi, and Al-Nassafi -four among others- say the following. They all came to agreement on this one thing: that to be "well-regarded" in the Hereafter denotes intercession. An intercessor.

N: *And this is now what they say.*

Father: Well, I haven't invented that. I haven't invented it. I only quote their statements.

N: *Would you please repeat their names again? Al-Razi..*

Father: Al-Razi, Al-Zamakhshari, in their own commentaries. Al-Baidawi, and Al-Nassafi were unanimous on the fact that "well regarded in the hereafter" denotes

intercession. Well regarded in this world and the Hereafter. That's an intercessor. And, you know, there are prophetic traditions on that.

N: *Could you please mention them, too?*

Father: Yes. There's that tradition about the day of resurrection. They all went to Adam in order to intercede for them and he said, "I am sorry. I can't intercede." They went to Abraham to intercede for them and he said, "I am sorry. I can't intercede. I am a liar." They also went to Moses to intercede for them, he said, "I am a murderer; I can't intercede." Isn't that right? Until they reached Christ, and they were told, "This is the one to intercede for you." And Christ did intercede for them.

N: *Is this a confirmed tradition?*

Father: A confirmed tradition from Al-Bukhari's *Sahih*.

N: *Yes.*

Father: Are you following? People just don't read. People need to read and understand, and make decisions accordingly. Reading! Search the Scriptures. Understanding. Not just a cursory reading. And once you understand what's required of you, make a decision. What do I do according to the things I now understand? You see, bringing mankind also to everlasting life, bringing mankind to life, which occurs in the Surah I told you about, Surah 5, verse 32 "And anyone who brings a soul back to life acts as though he brought all mankind back to life." And Christ did bring mankind to life. "And peace be upon Me the day I was born, the day I die, and on the day I will be resurrected alive." So God said in Surah 3, "So God said: "Jesus, I shall cause You to die, and lift You towards Me." "Cause You to die" that is, He died for mankind and "lift You up towards Me.". He raises mankind to life with him. This is a very pivotal verse. I would like the Muslim brother to consider it very well. Read all the commentaries about it, which is Surah 3, verse 32. "We have prescribed to the children of Israel that everyone who kills a soul without a soul being involved, or not for having caused mischief in the land, acts as if he had killed all mankind, and anyone who grants life, acts as if he has granted life to all mankind." We are full of gratitude to God who planned this plan of redemption, to come near us, save us, atone for our sins, and grant us everlasting life. But then what's so shocking is that there are those people who don't accept this initiative of love from God.

N: *Ok. A message in a minute, to be directed to all the viewers.*

Father: Yes, Amen.

N: Please, go ahead.

Father: My dear viewers, my brothers and sisters, the most important message for each and everyone of you is to lift up your heart to God right now, right now before you leave, as you sit, to pray and say, "God, You Who have provided a plan of redemption and atonement. You came in human form, holy and pure, to make atonement for us. Here is my soul, O Lord, in need of your salvation. Forgive me my sins, blot out my transgressions, deliver me from everlasting perdition, from the fire of hell. Since you came as a Redeemer, raise me up with you to a new life. My brother and sister, trust that God is just waiting to hear you pray, is waiting to hear your voice, to grant you the riches of His love, because He loves each and everyone of you. Amen.

N: My dear viewers, I ask God to touch your heart, that you may draw near to Christ Who died for you. My dear viewers, it's our utmost joy to answer all your questions. Please mail us at the address that appears on the screen at the end of the episode. Please mail us and ask, and we will answer you. If you want a Bible or any religious books, please mail us and we will send them to you for free. Thank you, till we meet again.

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