

Why Did God Create? (part 1 of 3): God, the Creator



From the point of view of God, a... fundamental question needs to be asked, “Why did God create?” This question should be asked because humankind is not, in fact, the greatest creation. God says in the Quran:

“Indeed, the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most of mankind do not realize it.” (Quran 40:57)

The composition of human beings is far less complex than the composition of the universe in which they exist. However, very few people reflect on this reality. Because of the apparent supremacy of human beings over the other creatures on this earth, man’s journeys through space and the continued advancement of their technology and knowledge, humankind in every age becomes arrogant and considers itself the greatest thing in this world. It is worth noting that the majority of humankind’s amazing discoveries are not concerning the human being, but his surroundings. Thus, human efforts tend to be focused on the material world rather than human beings. In this verse, God brings human beings back to their actual status in this world. Humankind is merely a small part of the existence which resulted from the miraculous act of divine creation. Thus, in order to understand why God created mankind, one first needs to answer the even more fundamental question of why God created.

The Creator

Creation is fundamentally the consequence of the divine attribute of being the Creator. A creator who does not create is something of a contradiction in terms. This is not to say that God needs His creation. God is free from all needs. It is creation which needs Him. But, as the greatness of a writer becomes apparent in his writings, the perfection of the divine creative attribute is manifest in creation. Creation in the true sense is unique to God alone. Although humans ascribe the act of creation to themselves, what they do is not true creation. Humankind merely manipulates what already exists - what was already created by God. A table is made from wood which came from trees and is held together with nails and screws made from metal that came from rocks. Human beings did not make the trees or the rocks. In fact, all human creations can be traced back to basic elements which humans cannot make. Even the artist 'creates' designs based on what he has seen. It is not possible to imagine what has not been perceived by the senses. Thus, all of the artist's thoughts are reflections on what was already created. Only God alone creates from nothing. This basic fact was and still is incomprehensible to some. Some ancient as well as modern philosophers, who could not comprehend how God could create from nothing, claimed that the created world and its contents are all originally a part of God. That is, according to them, God took a part of Himself and made the universe. This conclusion is based on comparing God to man, who can only 'create' by modifying what already exists. However, God denies any such comparisons which would give Him human limitations. In the Quran, He states:

“...There is nothing like Him and He is hearer and seer of all.” (Quran 42:11)

Thus, the act of creation is a consequence of the divine attribute of being the Creator. God describes Himself as the Creator in a variety of verses throughout the final revelation to emphasize to humankind that everything belongs to Him alone.

“God created all things and He is the agent on which all things depend.” (Quran 39:62)

“And God created you all and whatever you do.” (Quran 37:96)

Man needs to realize that nothing takes place in this universe without the permission of God. To seek protection from evil or to seek to acquire good from any source other than God is a major mistake. Due to ignorance, many people attempt to avoid misfortune and to gain good fortune through a variety of charms and amulets, astrology, palmistry, etc. Consequently, in the Quran, God informs human beings to seek refuge in God from evil:

“Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn, from the evil of what He has created.” (Quran 113:1-2)

Allah, God Almighty, is not evil; He is good. He created a world in which evil or good can be done by beings to whom He gave this ability. However, no evil or good can take place in this world without the permission of God. This is why it is futile to turn to others besides God for help and protection.

“No calamity strikes except by God’s permission...” (Quran 64:11)

The final prophet of God, Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, further elaborated on this concept, saying:

“Be aware that if the whole of mankind gathered together to do something to help you, they would only be able to do something for you which God had already written for you. Likewise, if the whole of mankind gathered together to harm you, they would only be able to do something to harm you which God had already written to happen to you.” (Al-Tirmidhi)

(part 2 of 3): Divine Mercy and Justice

The Merciful, the Forgiving

In the creation of humankind, the divine attributes of forgiveness, mercy and kindness are also manifested. Human beings were created good and pure with a natural awareness of good and evil. The Almighty also created in humans desires, and gave them an ability to control those desires according to divine law or to turn them loose and follow them blindly. God created mankind knowing that they would disobey Him. Consequently, He taught human beings, beginning with Adam, how to repent and thereby purify themselves of their sins. Adam and Eve represent a pattern for all mankind to follow. They forgot the commandment of God, and Satan played on their desires. After they had disobeyed God, they turned back to Him in repentance, and He forgave them. In humankind’s disobedience and turning back to God in repentance, the divine attributes of total forgiveness and infinite mercy become manifest. The final Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, informed his followers of this reality, saying:

“If you did not commit sins and turn to God, seeking His forgiveness, He would have replaced you with another people who would sin, ask God’s forgiveness and He would forgive them.” (Saheeh Muslim)

Every one of the 114 Chapters of the final revelation, except one, begins with the prayer, “In the name of God, the Beneficent the Most Merciful.” God’s attributes of mercy and forgiveness are stressed to encourage humans not to fall

into despair. No matter how great the sins of human beings may be, God can forgive them if man turns back to Him in sincere repentance. The Messenger, was quoted as saying:

“When God created the universe, He made an obligation on Himself [recorded] in a document kept by Him: ‘My mercy supersedes my wrath.’” (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

He was also reported to have said:

“[God created] mercy with one hundred parts, one of which was sent down upon the jinn, human beings and other living beings. It is out of this one part that they love each other, show kindness to each other and even the animals treat their offspring with affection. God has reserved the remaining ninety-nine parts for His true worshippers on the Day of Resurrection.” (*Saheeh Muslim*)

Had God wished, He could have created mankind like angels, incapable of committing sin. However, that was not His wish, as He had already created angels. Human beings were created capable of making mistakes and when they realize their errors and seek God’s forgiveness, the divine attributes of mercy and forgiveness become manifest.

Supreme Justice

In the judgment of mankind at the end of this world, God’s attributes of supreme justice and fairness also become manifest. Based on His infinite knowledge, God could have created all members of the human race who were to live on earth and immediately placed some of them in paradise and the remainder in hell. Before creating man, God already knew what choices they would make in this life, what provision and opportunities He would give them, and in what state of belief or disbelief they would die. Therefore, in one sense it could be said that some people were created for paradise and others for hell. Aisha, wife of the Prophet Muhammad, quoted him as saying:

“Don’t you know that God created paradise and hell, and He created inhabitants for each?” (*Abu Dawood, An-Nasai*)

If God had immediately placed those headed for paradise in paradise, they would not question God’s decision. Those in paradise would happily accept an everlasting life of bliss and be thankful that they were not placed in hell. However, those immediately placed in hell would ask why. They would feel a sense of unfairness due to their ignorance of what they would have done had they lived on earth. Those in hell would relentlessly argue that had they been given a chance to live out their lives on earth, they would have believed and done righteous deeds. Consequently, God allows human beings to live out their lives on

earth and make all the choices they would have made, so that everyone who enters hell will know that they chose hell by themselves. They will recognize God's mercy in their lives and acknowledge their sin in rejecting His signs and guidance. And they will accept His judgment as being just and beyond reproach. However, they will still beg for another chance to do good in this world, as God says in the Quran:

“If only you could see [the time] when the sinners will bow their heads before their Lord, [saying], ‘Our Lord! We have now seen and heard, so send us back and we will do righteous deeds. Verily, we now believe with certainty.’” (Quran 32:12)

However, if God were to send them back to this world having forgotten what they had seen of hell, they would again choose evil and end up in hell as before. God spoke about this in the Quran:

“But if they were returned [to this world], they would certainly go back to what was forbidden to them. Indeed they are liars.” (Quran 6:28)

(part 3 of 3): Divine Love and Grace

Divine Love

God's love is manifest in beings brought into existence, whether believer or disbeliever, to enjoy life, if only for a brief moment. It is also realized in the creation of paradise for those who choose righteousness over evil. God states in the final revelation that He loves those who do good (Quran 5:13), those who are just (Quran 5:42), those who are pious (Quran 9:4), those who are patient (Quran 3:146), those who put their trust in Him (Quran 3:159), those who frequently turn to Him in repentance and those who purify themselves (Quran 2:222). However, it is He who has defined for human beings through the scriptures and the prophets what is good, just and pious. Consequently, those who follow the prophets are most beloved to God. In the Quran, God instructed Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, to say the following to the believers:

“If you really love God, follow me and God will love you and forgive your sins...” (Quran 3:31)

The prophets should be followed not only in the compulsory acts ordained by God, but also in their eagerness to do acts of voluntary worship.

The love of God is also manifest in His mercy and blessings which He grants to those who deserve them as well as those who do not. But, it is particularly manifest in His willingness to forgive the sins of whomsoever turns to Him in sincere repentance. From the creation of Adam and Eve, repentance was granted

to them to erase their sins as an example to all human beings who would follow them into this world. No matter how great human sins may become, the door for sincere repentance remains open until the last day of this world. Anas quoted God's Messenger, as saying:

“God, the Almighty, has said: O son of Adam, as long as you call on Me and ask of Me, I will forgive what you have done, and I do not mind. O son of Adam, even if your sins reached the clouds and you asked My forgiveness, I will forgive you. O son of Adam, if you came to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and you met Me without giving Me partners, I will give you a similar amount of forgiveness.”

Divine Grace

As for those in paradise, they will not enter it solely based on their good deeds. It is the grace of God which will ultimately carry them there. The final Prophet of God, said in this regard:

“Try your best to do right, and be happy. For none will enter paradise only because of his deeds.” His companions said, “O Messenger of God! Not even you?” He replied, “Not even I, unless God envelops me in His mercy and grace. And bear in mind that the deed most loved by God is one done constantly, even though it is small.”

However, God's grace is not arbitrary. It is based on both correct faith and righteous deeds. In the Quran, God says:

“Whoever brings a good deed, will have [the value of] ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed will only be punished with one like it, and they will not be wronged.” (Quran 6:160)

Were God to hold humankind to account strictly, no one's good deeds would outweigh their evil deeds. However, God has manifested His grace by multiplying the value of good deeds, while keeping evil deeds at their face value. It is by the grace of God that the true believers enter Paradise. This does not mean that deeds have no role. Deeds have a major role, but they are not the deciding factor. God's grace outweighs them.

Consequently, the creation of human beings, the errors that they make and the good that they do are all circumstances for the manifestation of God's attributes of mercy and forgiveness, His attribute of justice and His attribute of grace.

Humankind should not question why God chose to manifest His attributes in this way. It can only be assumed that this was the best way, because God describes Himself as being the Most Wise and the Most Knowledgeable. Humans can only understand what God chooses to reveal to them.

“...They will only encompass of His knowledge what He wishes...” (Quran 2:255)

Thus, they should not try to equate themselves with God. If He has told humankind why He decided to do something, it is not for them to question why He decided to decide. Such questions are without end and thus beyond human scope. It is they who will be questioned on the Day of Judgment about their actions and intentions and not He. In the Quran, God addresses this point:

“He cannot be questioned as to what He does, while they will be questioned.” (Quran 25:23)

In this regard Prophet Muhammad, was reported by Ibn ‘Abbaas to have said:

“Reflect on the creation of God but do not reflect on God.”

To reflect on the reality of God is to reflect on the infinite. And, as the mind boggles when it reflects on the limits of the finite universe and the galaxies and stars within it, it will be more confounded when it attempts to understand the uncreated. The Prophet, warned that the satanic forces would seek to introduce doubts in the hearts of the believers by raising unanswerable questions about God. Aboo Hurayrah related that God’s Messenger, said:

“Satan will come to everyone of you and ask: Who created this and that? - until he questions: Who created your Lord? When he comes to that, one should seek refuge in God [say: I affirm my faith in God and His prophets] and avoid [such thoughts].”