232218 - I looked for a sound religion, and I found what I am looking for in Islam

the question

I am a young woman; my name is ****. I really like Islam, but I have some questions:

If marriage and children are something that is predestined in al-Lawh al-Mahfooz – i.e., if a girl will be born and given a particular name, or Muhammad will marry Julia, or if a child's fate is predestined when he is still in his mother's womb, then how can he be regarded as having freedom of choice? If Allah has already decreed the problems that will take place, then on what basis is a person predestined to be doomed or blessed? Has Allah already decreed for a particular individual that he will be the Dajjaal because of his sins, for example, or that he will be like Iblees? Does Allah know what we will do and has He already decreed it, or does He just know the situation? I really hope you will give me an answer, because I do not feel that I am following the true religion, as I am Christian, but I am currently looking into other religions, and I really like Islam.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

, and blessings and peace of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, the final Prophet, and his fellow-Prophet 'Eesaa ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary), and upon all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah.

To proceed: we are very happy that you have contacted our website and sent a message which clearly reflects sincerity and a true desire to attain the light of guidance. We ask Allah, by His mercy which encompasses all things, to enable us to do that which is good for us and for you in this world and the hereafter, and to open your heart with the light of faith and guidance to the true

religion.

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First and foremost, we should note that the foundation of the religion in which people devote themselves to their Lord, and the foundation of belief in the Lord of the Worlds and Sovereign of all things, is to know with certainty and believe that this Lord is one God, with no son, no wife, no rival and no partner in His dominion and power. This great and significant belief is summed up in a soorah of few words in the holy Book of Allah, but it contains great meanings. We call it Soorat al-Ikhlaas, in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful

Say, He is Allah, [who is] One

Allah, the Eternal Refuge.

He neither begets nor is born,

Nor is there to Him any equivalent”

[al-Ikhlaas 112:1-4].

This great and important meaning is instilled in the sound human nature of the sons of Adam, if they are left with the natural inclinations that Allah has created in them, without them being corrupted by false teachings.

“And it is He who begins creation; then He repeats it, and that is [even] easier for Him. To Him belongs the highest attribute in the heavens and earth. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

He presents to you an example from yourselves. Do you have among those whom your right hands possess any partners in what We have provided for you so that you are equal therein [and] would fear them as your fear of one another [within a partnership]? Thus do We detail the verses for a people who use reason.

But those who wrong follow their [own] desires without knowledge. Then who can guide one whom Allah has sent astray? And for them there are no helpers.

So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.

[Adhere to it], turning in repentance to Him, and fear Him and establish prayer and do not be of those who associate others with Allah"

[ar-Room 31:27-31].

Allah, may He be exalted, has created His slaves and instilled in them the sound nature (fitrah) that He loves, which is the natural inclination towards pure monotheism (Tawheed – affirmation of the Oneness of Allah). if they were left with this original inclination, they would not have associated others with Allah, but the devils among mankind and the jinn diverted them away from that straight path, and led them into the depths of darkness and crooked paths that divert from the straight path of Allah.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "There is no child who is not born in a state of fitrah, then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian, just as animals bring forth animals with their limbs intact, do you see any deformed one among them?" Then Abu Hurayrah said: Recite, if you wish: "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know …" [al-Room 30:30].

The phrase translated here as "animals with their limbs intact" means, with no limbs missing, in good physical shape.

"do you see any deformed one among them?" that is, one whose ear or nose or any other part has been cut off, which is something that people do to them; this is a metaphor for what people do to

the child who is born in a sound natural state (fitrah).

“Recite, if you wish” to affirm this meaning

“the fitrah of Allah” means, the true faith, tawheed (affirmation of the oneness of Allah) and knowledge of the Creator, may He be glorified.

Allah, may He be exalted, said in a hadith qudsi, which is not part of the Qur’anic text, but is revelation that He sent to His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “… Verily I have created all My slaves as monotheists, but the devils came to them and diverted them from their religion, forbidding to them things that I had made permissible for them, and instructing them to ascribe partners to Me for which I have not sent down any authority.”

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Anyone, of any religion, who believes in God Almighty knows that God (Allah), and God alone, is the One Who created all of creation, and that He is the Sovereign of all things. No one helped Him in creating all things, for He is mighty and no one shares His sovereignty with Him. Allah is independent of means, for He is Allah, the One, the Prevailing. So how can any weak created being be a partner of the One, the Creator, the Mighty, the One, the Prevailing?

“Say, ‘Who is Lord of the heavens and earth?’ Say, ‘Allah.’ Say, ‘Have you then taken besides Him allies not possessing [even] for themselves any benefit or any harm?’ Say, ‘Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Or is darkness equivalent to light? Or have they attributed to Allah partners who created like His creation so that the creation [of each] seemed similar to them?’ Say, ‘Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Prevailing’”

[ar-Ra‘d 13:16].

The natural order among the sons of Adam is that a man gets married, because he needs a wife, and she needs him. The instinctive impulse in both sexes is the need that motivates them to come together and get married…

The desire for posterity, continuity and heirs, and to have a child who will help him, are motives that make the father keen to have a child.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is the Ever-Living, Who does not die, the Sustainer of [all] existence, Who does not sleep…

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is Eternal; He has always existed and will always exist, and is far above ever ceasing to be.

“Whatever is in the heavens and earth exalts Allah, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

His is the dominion of the heavens and earth. He gives life and causes death, and He is over all things competent.

He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is, of all things, Knowing”

[al-Hadeed 57:1-3].

He is the First, so there is nothing before Him; and He is the Last, so there is nothing after Him.

He is the Manifest, so there is nothing above Him; and He is the Hidden, so there is nothing closer than Him.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is the Strong, the Dominant One, Who controls the universe; He is the Magnificent, the High Exalted; the Self-Sufficient Who has no need of anything or anyone else, for need is weakness, and that is not befitting for God.

Anyone who seeks to have a child does so because he needs that child, for either practical or psychological reasons, so that he can help him when he grows old and weak, or so as to continue the family line and remember him when he dies.

Allah is Self-Sufficient and has no need of anyone, for the Creator has no need of His creation.

“Allah - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither

drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great”

[al-Baqarah 2:255].

And if someone wants a child, then he must have a wife, but Allah – may He be glorified and exalted – is far above needing a “wife”.

“[He is] Originator of the heavens and the earth. How could He have a son when He does not have a companion and He created all things? And He is, of all things, Knowing”

[al-An‘aam 6:101].

What is meant by the word translated here as companion is a wife.

“Say, [O Muhammad], It has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened and said, 'Indeed, we have heard an amazing Qur’an.

It guides to the right course, and we have believed in it. And we will never associate with our Lord anyone.

And [it teaches] that exalted is the nobleness of our Lord; He has not taken a wife or a son”

[al-Jinn 72:1-3].

There was an Arab man who was held in high esteem among his people, noble and good in character, a praiseworthy individual, but he followed his father’s religion, Christianity.

When he heard about the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who had come to call his people to Islam and spread the religion among his tribes, that man fled from him to the farthest reaches of Arabia, but not long after that, he decided to come back and meet this

new Prophet, Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and listen to what he had to say, face-to-face. ‘Adiyy, whose story this is, said:

When Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, sent the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), I fled from him until I reached the farthest point of the land of the Muslims, which was the border of Byzantine territory. But I did not like the place where I found myself, to the point that I disliked it more than the place from which I had come. So I said: I shall surely go to this man and, by Allah, if he is telling the truth, I will surely listen to him, and if he is a liar, then meeting him will not do any harm. So I came to him, and the people recognised me and said: ‘Adiyy ibn Haatim, ‘Adiyy ibn Haatim. He [the narrator] said: I think he said it three times. [‘Adiyy] said: He [the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)] said to me: “O ‘Adiyy ibn Haatim, become Muslim; you will be safe.” I said: I belong to a people who have a religion. He said: “O ‘Adiyy ibn Haatim, become Muslim; you will be safe.” I said: I belong to a people who have a religion. He said it three times. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “I am better acquainted with your religion than you.” I said: Are you better acquainted with my religion than me? He said: “Yes.” … Narrated by Ahmad in al-Musnad (19378).

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) asked him why he had fled from him.

He said to him: “O ‘Adiyy ibn Haatim, what is it that made you run away from saying Laa ilaaha ill-Allah (There is no god but Allah)? Is there any other god but Allah? What made you run away from saying Allahu akbar (Allah is most great)? Is there anything that is greater than Allah, may He be glorified and exalted?” So I became Muslim, and I saw his face beaming with joy.

Narrated by Ahmad in al-Musnad (19381).

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We have noted the above, before answering your question, because it is directly connected to it, as we shall see in our answer below, in sha Allah.

So let us go back to your questions:

The problem of predestination, compulsion and free choice is worrying you and causing you some confusion.

So we say to you here:

Yes, Allah indeed has prior knowledge of all things; He already knows everything that has to do with His creation, and this is something that is very logical: how can any maker make something and not know about it?

“And conceal your speech or publicize it; indeed, He is Knowing of that within the hearts.

Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?”

[al-Mulk 67:13-14].

The Book of Allah, the Holy Qur’an, and the Sunnah of His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are filled with affirmation of this great principle. In fact all the divinely-revealed religions affirm this great principle, that God is the Knower of the unseen and the seen, and that He has knowledge of all things:

“It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven, [His being above all creation], and made them seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things”

[al-Baqarah 2:29]

“Say, Would you acquaint Allah with your religion while Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and Allah is Knowing of all things?”

[al-Hujuraat 49:16].

Furthermore, we should tell you about another confirmed, important principle, which is that Allah –

may He be glorified and exalted – by His prior knowledge of His creation, wrote in al-Lawh al-Mahfooz that is with Him all that is to happen in His creation, about people's religious and worldly matters, before He created this creation. This is something that is also clearly affirmed in the Book of Allah [the Qur'an] and in all His previously-revealed Books.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darknesses of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record"

[al-An'aam 6:59]

"And, [O Muhammad], you are not [engaged] in any matter or recite any of the Qur'an and you [people] do not do any deed except that We are witness over you when you are involved in it. And not absent from your Lord is any [part] of an atom's weight within the earth or within the heaven or [anything] smaller than that or greater but that it is in a clear register"

[Yoonus 10:61]

"Do you not know that Allah knows what is in the heaven and earth? Indeed, that is in a Record. Indeed that, for Allah , is easy"

[al-Hajj 22:70].

And the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah decided the decrees of creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth… And His Throne is above the water." Narrated by Muslim (2653).

This is an important principle, and no one's faith is valid unless he believes in it: belief in predestination, good and bad, sweet and bitter.

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If there was any confusion or difficulty about understanding and believing in the prior knowledge of Allah, and His having written and decreed all things (before He created the universe), there would not be so much emphasis on this matter and there would not be so much discussion on it in the Book of Allah in clear verses, of which there are so many that we cannot quote them all here.

But you should understand that the divine will and decree refers to what Allah causes to happen in His creation.

This is one of the matters of the unseen, the secrets of which we do not know except a few. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little”

[al-Israa’ 17:85].

Knowledge of the unseen is not an empirical matter or a matter of physics that can be subjected to experimentation in a laboratory, or to rational human analysis, or to the evidence that is used to prove tangible matters.

It is an unseen world; no anxiety, confusion or distress, and not even purely rational thinking or physical or empirical testing can lead to guidance and peace of mind.

There is no way to attain this peace of mind and reassurance except by means of faith, and faith alone.

That is, faith in the mercy of the Most Merciful of those who show mercy, Whose mercy encompasses all things. Just as we believe that Allah, may He be exalted, has prior knowledge of the deeds of His slaves, and He wrote the decrees of creation, we also believe that He decreed something else:

“Say, ‘To whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth?’ Say, ‘To Allah.’ He has decreed upon Himself mercy. He will surely assemble you for the Day of Resurrection, about which there is no doubt. Those who will lose themselves [that Day] do not believe”

[al-An‘aam 6:12]

“And when those come to you who believe in Our verses, say, Peace be upon you. Your Lord has decreed upon Himself mercy: that any of you who does wrong out of ignorance and then repents after that and corrects himself - indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful”

[al-An‘aam 6:54].

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “When Allah created the universe, he wrote in His Book, which is with Him above the Throne: “My mercy prevails over My wrath.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (3194) and Muslim (2751).

Belief in the perfect justice of Allah, as befits His might, majesty, perfection, and beauty:

“Indeed, Allah does not wrong the people at all, but it is the people who are wronging themselves”

[Yoonus 10:44]

“Indeed, Allah does not do injustice, [even] as much as an atom's weight; while if there is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward”

[an-Nisaa’ 4:40]

“And We place the scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection, so no soul will be treated unjustly at all. And if there is [even] the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it forth. And sufficient are We as accountant”

[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:47].

Belief that Allah is the Self-Sufficient, the Most Praiseworthy; He, may He be glorified, has no need of His creation and has no need of their deeds. So why would He wrong them, and what need does He, may He be glorified, have for doing such a thing? Moreover, He is the Most Praiseworthy; He is praiseworthy in what He creates, and in all that He does, and He is far above all shortcomings.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing”

[an-Nisaa’ 4:147].

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What need does God have to wrong people, when they are His creation and His slaves?

What need does He have to bring them for account for something that is beyond their means to control, and has nothing to do with their efforts and striving?

What need does He have to cause them to fall into sin and disobedience, if they have no means of avoiding that, then bring them to account for that which was not their fault?

This sadism, desire for vengeance and enjoyment of others’ pain is only befitting for sick-minded people and perverse tyrants, and the only thing that is appropriate for them is to be treated for their sickness and punished for their crimes!

But when it comes to the Most Merciful of those who show mercy, the Lord of the Worlds Whom we acknowledge and believe in, He has protected us from injustice, even of the slightest degree, even as much as an atom’s weight.

“And We place the scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection, so no soul will be treated unjustly at all. And if there is [even] the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it forth. And sufficient are We as accountant”

[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:47].

He has summed up the foundation of the relationship between Him and those who believe in Him as follows: “people whom He loves and who love Him” [al-Maa’idah 5:54].

His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has told us that the sweetness of true faith appears in the heart when this love is attained:

“There are three characteristics, whoever attains them has found the sweetness of faith: when Allah and His Messenger are dearer to him than all else, when he loves a man and does not love him except for the sake of Allah, and when he would hate to return to kufr after Allah has saved him from it as he would hate to be thrown into the fire.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (16) and Muslim (43).

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Faith, and only faith – and casting away doubts, never letting them take root in the heart – is the way to attain peace of mind and tranquillity in this regard.

“No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah . And whoever believes in Allah - He will guide his heart. And Allah is Knowing of all things”

[at-Taghaabun 64:11].

This applies to the believer, and the believer only: when disaster strikes him, as happens to all people, he knows that it has happened by the will and decree of Allah, and that what befalls him would never have missed him, and what missed him would never have befallen him. Therefore he accepts it and submits. By this means only is his heart guided and he attains peace of mind.

Because of that, Mu‘aadh ibn Jabal, the companion of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to say in every gathering in which he sat with his companions, reminding them and teaching them what would bring them peace of mind: Allah is a just Judge, may those who doubt perish. Narrated by Abu Dawood (4611).

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Yes, Allah knows all things and has decreed all things.

How can there be any harm to people in that?

Rather the likeness of that is that of a teacher who teaches his students all his life, and knows which of them work hard and which of them are careless.

The student who works hard does so by his own efforts and striving…

The student who is careless is like that because he wastes time and is heedless.

How many teachers say of a careless student from the beginning, before he marks his test paper, This one is going to fail! Because he knows him and sees him all year long, if not for several years in a row.

Perhaps the teacher writes in a book of his own, that he does not show to anyone, that one student will fail, and another will pass, whilst this student will not be judged for anything, except for what actually writes on his test paper.

He will not be judged for anything, except for his actual answers.

He will not be judged for anything, except for what he gets wrong and gets right.

To Allah belong the most sublime attributes in the heavens and on earth; every beautiful attribute is more appropriate to be ascribed to Him.

He knows the condition of all of His slaves, for He is their Creator, and He decreed what He already knew they would do.

But He will not judge them for what He decreed for them on the basis of what He knew they would do before He created them.

Rather He will judge them for what they themselves do, on the basis of their own free will, for they have the perfect ability and freedom to choose whatever they wish of good or evil, as every person understands and knows with certainty in his heart of hearts.

The prior knowledge of Allah and His decree are like the heaven above us; we cannot go beyond its confines, for it is more vast than us, and we move within its limits, no matter how far we go to the right or the left.

But this heaven does not force us to move in a certain way; rather we can choose our movements and efforts, whether we stand up or sit down…

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Confusion about the divine decree is the way of lazy people who do not want to strive or make any effort, or exert themselves in pursuit of truth or giving up falsehood. Moreover, they blame Allah, when He is the one for Whom every beautiful attribute is more appropriate to be ascribed to Him, and they want to prove they are not responsible for their actions or the consequences thereof.

If we truly believe in Allah and believe in His perfection, majesty and beauty, and if we are serious about examining this matter, we may assume something else, away from what lazy people think and choose:

We can choose another way of thinking, which is that we may choose to believe that Allah has decreed for us in al-Lawh al-Mahfooz that we will be believers, righteous people with certain faith.

Why should we assume the worst, if we do not really know what is written in al-Lawh al-Mahfooz?

Is it not the case that Allah is deserving that every beautiful attribute should be ascribed to Him?

Allah, may He be exalted, says in a hadith qudsi: “I am as My slave thinks I am, and I am with him when he remembers Me.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (7405) and Muslim (2675).

Why would one of us not think positively of his Lord and assume that He has decreed that he will be a believer, then strive hard in the path of faith? Thus he will have righteous deeds to his credit, on the basis of which he will be judged by his Lord.

“Whoever should desire the immediate - We hasten for him from it what We will to whom We intend. Then We have made for him Hell, which he will [enter to] burn, censured and banished.

But whoever desires the Hereafter and exerts the effort due to it while he is a believer - it is those whose effort is ever appreciated [by Allah].

To each [category] We extend - to these and to those - from the gift of your Lord. And never has the gift of your Lord been restricted”

[al-Israa’ 17:18-20]

“By the night when it covers

And [by] the day when it appears

And [by] He who created the male and female

Indeed, your efforts are diverse.

As for he who gives and fears Allah,

And believes in the best [reward],

We will ease him toward ease.

But as for he who withholds and considers himself free of need

And denies the best [reward],

We will ease him toward difficulty.

And what will his wealth avail him when he falls?

Indeed, [incumbent] upon Us is guidance.

And indeed, to Us belongs the Hereafter and the first [life]”

[al-Layl 92:1-13].

The connection between the Islamic teachings that Allah commanded us to follow in fulfilment of

our religious duties and the divine decree in which we are commanded to believe was not very clear in the minds of some of the Companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), so they thought that whatever was written and predestined [in al-Lawh al-Mahfooz] was sufficient on its own; if everything is already known to Allah and is already written (predestined), then what is the point of striving?

It was narrated that ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was at a funeral. He picked up something and started tapping the ground with it, then he said: “There is no one among you but his place in Hell or his place in Paradise has already been decreed.” They said: O Messenger of Allah, shouldn’t we then rely on our destiny, and give up striving? He said: “Keep striving, for everyone is helped to do that for which he is created. Whoever is one of the blessed, will be helped to do the deeds of those who are blessed, and whoever is one of the doomed, he will be helped to do the deeds of those who are doomed. Then he recited the words, “As for he who gives and fears Allah, And believes in the best [reward]…” [al-Layl 92:5-6].

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (4949) and Muslim (2647).

The entire issue (of judgement) is based on a person’s effort and deeds.

It will be said to the people of Paradise: “Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise for what you used to do” [an-Nahl 16:32].

And it will be said to the people of Hell: “Taste the punishment of eternity; are you being recompensed except for what you used to earn?” [Yoonus 10:52].

So he should not place his trust in anything except his Lord;

And he should not worry about anything except his sin;

And he should not blame anyone except himself.

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There remains another question about this issue: a person may be born in an environment that he did not choose, to parents whom he did not choose; they may be Jews or Christians or Zoroastrians, so they change this little child’s religion, transferring him from the true religion and inherent monotheism that Allah created in him, so that the child becomes a Jew or a Christian, then he will be judged on that basis!

In response to that, we say:

If we call to mind the guidelines discussed above throughout this answer, and we understand that Allah is the most just of judges, and the most merciful of those who show mercy, and He does not wrong people in the slightest – rather it is people who wrong themselves – and Allah is appreciative and forbearing, accepting little and giving much… If we understand all that and other principles of faith, then it will be very easy to find an answer to every question on this issue, and we will realise that no one will be doomed on the Day of Resurrection except one who deserves it, because he brought doom upon himself.

Here we will note another important guideline: Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will only hold his slaves accountable for their deeds, sins and acts of disobedience if proof was established against them and the call of the Messengers reached them, then they themselves chose to disbelieve in the Messengers of Allah, and if, when the light of faith flashed before their eyes, they covered their eyes and preferred themselves to live in darkness.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And [We sent] messengers about whom We have related [their stories] to you before and messengers about whom We have not related to you. And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech.

[We sent] messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that mankind will have no argument against Allah after the messengers. And ever is Allah Exalted in Might and Wise”

[an-Nisaa’ 4:164-165]

“And [for] every person We have imposed his fate upon his neck, and We will produce for him on the Day of Resurrection a record which he will encounter spread open.

[It will be said], ‘Read your record. Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as accountant.’

Whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] his soul. And whoever errs only errs against it. And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. And never would We punish until We sent a messenger.”

[al-Israa’ 17:13-15].

Whoever hears that Allah sent a Prophet after ‘Eesaa ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary – peace be upon him), and knows that he called people to a new religion that came from Allah, is obliged to start searching for the religion of this final Prophet, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdillah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and to find out more about him, and to stop blindly following his parents and to rid himself of the impact of the environment in which he grew up; he must overcome all these obstacles and find out about that new light by himself, for he is responsible for doing that and will be brought to account for it. It will not avail him anything before Allah to say: I grew up in a Jewish or Christian environment, and so on. That is an invalid argument; it is the argument that all peoples used with their Prophets, and if it were acceptable there would have been no point in sending down the Books and sending the Messengers.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And when it is said to them, ‘Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger,’ they say, ‘Sufficient for us is that upon which we found our fathers.’ Even though their fathers knew nothing, nor were they guided?”

[al-Maa’idah 5:104]

“Rather, they say, ‘Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are in their footsteps [rightly] guided.’

And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following.'

[Each warner] said, 'Even if I brought you better guidance than that [religion] upon which you found your fathers?' They said, 'Indeed we, in that with which you were sent, are disbelievers'"

[az-Zukhruf 43:22-25].

As for the one who did not hear that another Prophet was sent after his Prophet, and his message did not reach him, and he lived with the religion that he had grown up with, worshipping Allah, may He be exalted, according to what had reached him and what he was able to know, he is excused, in sha Allah, and his fate in the hereafter will be decided by the most merciful of those who show mercy, the most just of judges.

Similar to that is the case of one who did not hear anything about the Messengers or their messages at all. No proof is established against him in this world, and in the hereafter his fate will be decided by the most merciful of those who show mercy and the most just of judges.

Also similar to that is one who died as a young child, and his parents had changed his fitrah (natural disposition) so that he was a Jew or a Christian or a Buddhist, and so on. He is also excused, because he did not have the mental ability to reason and realise the falseness of the religion that he was following, and he did not have the intellectual capacity to look for the true religion and find it.

However, in the case of one who grew up and reached the age of accountability (which is fifteen years at most), but was content to follow in the footsteps of his forefathers, he is not excused, for Allah gave him the ability to understand, seek knowledge and reason (by thinking, hearing, looking and speaking), and He preserved for him the Holy Qur'an as it had come down from Allah, without any distortion, addition or subtraction, and He preserved for him the hadiths of the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), as he uttered them, verbatim, so that he could reflect upon the Qur'an and hadiths and thus reach the truth.

Yes, there are difficulties in overcoming and achieving that.

Yes, it involves effort and trouble.

Yes it involves pain and anguish, trials and tribulations, punishment and threats.

There is all of that, and more.

But there is also Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, in which are all kinds of delights such as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and it has never entered the mind of any human being; eternity without death, provision that will never run out; no doom, but there is bliss with no misery, health with no sickness, no pain, no worry, no grief…

The life of this world is but a few days. Moreover, since when could sublime goals and aims be achieved in an easy way, without hardship and difficulties?

“Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while Allah has not yet made evident those of you who fight in His cause and made evident those who are steadfast?”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:142]

“O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:200].

The road to Paradise is difficult, surrounded with hardships… but Allah has promised those who bear it with patience that He will help them to adhere to the path:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good”

[al-‘Ankaboot 29:69].

In this regard, the reward of one who believed in an earlier Prophet or Book, and lived for a long

time as a Jew or a Christian, then came to know of the religion of Allah that was brought by Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and followed him, will be increased; he will have a twofold reward.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There are three who will be given a double reward: a man from among the people of the Book who believed in his Prophet, then lived to see the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and followed him and believed in him– he will have a double reward; and a slave who fulfils his duty towards Allah, may He be exalted, and towards his master – he will have a double reward; and a man who had a slave woman whom he fed and fed her well, and taught her and taught her well, then he set her free and married her – he will have a double reward.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (3011) and Muslim (154).

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Finally, we totally agree with you when you say that you feel that you are not following the true religion. You are not the first among the followers of Christianity to feel this way. Millions have come before you, including priests and theologians, who had reached the highest ranks in the church in their countries. Their search for the true religion led them to give up their former religion and embrace Islam. They have written books about that, and held debates, and some of them have become among the most famous callers to Islam, not only in the modern age, but that has happened throughout the fourteen centuries of Islam. With a quick search on the Internet you can find out about them and what they say, the comparisons they made between Islam and Christianity, and the reasons why they turned to Islam... we ask Allah, may He be exalted, to guide your search for the true religion and help you to reach the same conclusion that they did.

We, for our part, hope that you will continue to correspond with us, whenever you feel you need any further explanation of what we have mentioned above in brief, or if you need an answer to any other questions you may have, until Allah opens your heart to guidance and to the true religion, after which you will be like any of our brothers and sisters in Islam, who contact us when they

need to find out anything or they need an answer about anything having to do with their religion.

We ask Allah to open your heart and guide you, to bless you with faith in which there is no doubt, and to make you steadfast in it until death.

And Allah knows best.