

There is both much confusion and considerable misinformation surrounding the question “Who is Allah?” In addition there are many assumptions, perhaps even prejudices, which certainly influence any discussion of “Allah.” While some respond very favorably upon hearing the word Allah (He is the Creator God and the only One worthy of worship) there are also those whose immediate response is overwhelmingly negative (he is a false god, a tremendous fraud of cosmic proportions.) Both responses involve very strong emotions; emotions which sometimes interfere with our attempt to know what is the TRUTH or the FACTS of the matter.

Let us attempt to disengage ourselves for a few moments from our fortified “positions” on this topic and ask ourselves some important questions. And let us be as objective as we can possibly be.

Before we look at a few facts, I wish to acknowledge a few ASSUMPTIONS. The existence of an omnipotent God, A Supreme Lord of the universe is assumed. Additionally it is assumed that He deeply desires that all men should come to intimate knowledge of Him. Thirdly it is assumed that God’s general revelation of Himself to all cultures at the VERY LEAST includes a legitimate word WITHIN each culture by which He may be known.

Now there are a few apparent FACTS to consider.

Fact #1 Allah is the Arabic word for God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, used by Arabic speakers everywhere whether Arabic

speaking Christians, Arabic speaking Muslims, or Arabic speaking atheists.

Fact #2 Arabic is not a language which rarely spoken, but is in fact one of the 10 most widely spoken languages in the world.

Fact #3 In this widely spoken language Allah is the ONLY word used by Arabic speakers to refer to this Creator God who is also Master of the Judgment Day.

Fact #4 While there is evidence that there was a period of time where a moon god was referred to as Allah, there is just as strong evidence that legitimate worship of the true Creator God Allah PRECEDED this pagan worship.

Fact #5 Missionaries attempting to follow the Pauline example of “becoming all things to all men” have, when beginning work in an “un-reached” area, long observed the practice of using the established indigenous manner of referring to God. Sometimes there has been multiple gods, but usually even in those situations one of them is recognized as The God above all the others. It is a matter of God meeting people where they are.

Fact #6 Linguists, individuals specifically trained and experienced in studying languages, are OVERWHELMING in their consensus that the word Allah is a contraction or combining of two Arabic words i.e. the noun “ilah” which means “god” preceded by the article “al” which means “the”. The expression “al-ilah” (The god) became “Allah.” A word of explanation: an “article”, in linguistics, is that word or letter which precedes a noun to designate some-

thing specific. English speakers use “the” to indicate a PARTICULAR house, man, or god. A sentence WITHOUT using “the” would indicate “A” house, man or god.

Fact #7 God has always allowed and accepted various names to be used in referring to Him. The story in Gen 14 of Abraham’s interaction with Melchizedek seems to indicate that the Canaanite word for God *El Elyon* was just as acceptable as was Abraham’s use of the word *Yahweh*. Was it likely that the Canaanite term *El Elyon* had been tainted by pagan notions? Of course! But even so, both Abraham and Melchizedek saw fit to use it with no sense of a “correction” of this anyplace in scripture.

Perverted, even demonic beliefs, teachings, or practices have always clung to the various words used to refer to God throughout the history of languages. Even those noble Hebrews “called out” of Egypt, at times, lapsed into the most heathen of practices such as child sacrifice and temple prostitutes. But even these despicable practices done *in His name* changed neither the legitimacy of “Yahweh” as God nor the appropriateness of the word to refer to Him.

In light of this brief discussion of both *assumptions* about God and His desire for revelation and apparent *facts* about languages and word usage I would like to suggest a few observations.

Does it seem likely that God, the architect of the widely diverse peoples and languages, would leave such a major language as Arabic without a legitimate

word with which to refer to Him? It would not appear likely.

Just one of the several powerful lessons of Acts 2 is that God not only accepts but **ORDAINS** the usage of different languages to communicate His Good News. Each man has the right to hear the Gospel in that language (that grouping of words and phrases) which speaks to the HEART.

Having some experience in cross language communication I can testify to the intense response both emotionally and conceptually by the use of that word to refer to God which is native or indigenous to that individual or group. I have personally seen and heard Russian speakers utter the word *Bog*, Spanish speakers the word *Dios*, and Arabic speakers the word *Allah* with just as much reverence and awe as I ever have experienced using the word *God*.

I have a Bible in Arabic that reads in Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning *Allah*...and in John 3:16 reads “For *Allah* so loved the world...” These verses are dear and precious to the Arabic speaker because *Allah* is that word which conveys deep meaning. It would be foreign to them to hear “In the beginning *Bog* created...” However to the Russian speaker the last phrase would NOT be foreign, but would speak deeply to the heart.

Effective communication is always challenging. We fail to communicate as well as we would like with family, friends, and others. Accurately conveying spiritual concepts is particularly difficult for many reasons. Just one of which is the difficulty of

recognizing valid expressions of spirituality in other cultures. At times we have failed miserably in our spiritual discussions simply because from the very initial contact we have mistakenly attributed valid workings of God to the enemy; true and sincere worship of the Creator to misplaced loyalty to an imposter. Can there be a worse crime to other men and a sin against God than to falsely accuse men of false worship? **God forbid** that I should ever cause undue offense to one of His children without ample cause!

Consider the weight of evidence. Does it point to Allah as a fraud and an imposter? Not at all!! The overwhelming evidence is that Allah is none other than the Supreme God of the universe, Master of the Judgment Day, Creator and Sustainer of all!!

When I approach a rose bush I can focus on thorns or on roses. It depends on my approach or attitude. There are those who, for various reasons, when they hear or read the word Allah they think of the negativity we associate with thorns. There are others, not just Arabic speakers, who when they hear or read the word Allah think of the beauty and loveliness we associate with the rose.

There is a concept and saying in the world of linguists that “A rose is still a rose, by any other name.” May I suggest that “God is still God, by any other name”?

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**WHO IS
ALLAH?**

*A Rose or a
Thorn?*