

Can Islamic Eschatology Be Compared with Mythology?

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Abstract

This article elaborates on the distinctiveness of Islamic eschatology within the broader framework of religious and mythological narratives about the end of the world. While scientific theories and mythologies provide symbolic or speculative views on humanity's ultimate fate, Islamic eschatology provides a pragmatic, logical, and practical approach rooted in divine mercy and accountability. Through comparisons with mythological themes, pseudo-mythologies in Christianity and Judaism, and cultural imaginations such as Valhalla and Ragnarok, the paper discusses the theological depth and moral clarity of Islamic teachings. The discussion emphasizes how Islamic eschatology transcends speculative and punitive narratives by focusing on divine justice, individual responsibility, and the opportunity for redemption. In doing so, it underscores the unique position of Islamic eschatology as a comprehensive, timeless guide for moral conduct and spiritual reflection.

Keywords – Islamic Eschatology, Mythology and Religion, End of the World, Divine Mercy and Accountability, Comparative Religious Studies

Introduction

Eschatology, the study of ultimate events and the end of the world, has been a central theme in human thought across civilizations, spanning both religious and philosophical traditions. From scientific predictions about the eventual demise of the universe to deeply symbolic and spiritual narratives in various religious doctrines, eschatology captures the profound human quest to understand mortality, accountability, and destiny. Across cultures, these ideas have often merged with mythological constructs, producing rich but fictionalized tales of cataclysmic ends and utopian afterlives.

Islamic eschatology, however, stands apart as a framework grounded in pragmatism, logic and divine mercy, rather than cultural imagination. It offers a comprehensive, structured vision of the events leading to the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al Qiyamah). Despite this, misconceptions persist, often likening Islamic eschatology to mythology. These comparisons, while superficially intriguing, fail to appreciate the theological and practical underpinnings of Islam's eschatological narrative.

By examining its theological foundations, symbolic elements, and moral objectives, the discussion highlights the sharp contrast between Islamic eschatology and mythological traditions. It contextualizes these differences by comparing Islamic teachings with other Abrahamic faiths and popular mythologies, ultimately underscoring Islam's unique emphasis on divine mercy, personal accountability, and the best outcomes for humanity. In doing so, this article demonstrates that Islamic eschatology is not only distinct from mythology but serves as a profound guide for ethical living and spiritual reflection.

The Universality of Eschatology

The temporality of existence is a concept that finds agreement among both scientific and religious communities. Scientists assert that the cosmos, governed by natural laws, will inevitably reach an endpoint. Whether through the heat death of the universe, a big crunch, or other hypothesized scenarios, the material world is understood to be finite. Similarly, religious traditions, though differing in specifics, converge on the belief that the physical world will come to an end. This shared acknowledgment underscores a universal concern with what lies beyond the observable realm, framing the inquiry into humanity's ultimate destiny.

Eschatology, the study of the "end times," delves into these questions, addressing the fate of the cosmos, humanity, and individual souls. Across traditions, it is a field rich in diverse interpretations, ranging from apocalyptic visions to redemptive hopes. Islam's eschatological framework stands out for its clarity, coherence, and grounding in pragmatism and logic. The Qur'an and Hadith provide a detailed roadmap of events that will unfold as the world approaches its final moments, emphasizing not just cosmic phenomena but the moral and spiritual implications for humanity.

This distinctive approach is rooted in Islam's theological emphasis on accountability and divine mercy. The Islamic vision of the end times, far from being speculative or mythical, serves a practical purpose: to guide individuals towards righteous living and ultimate salvation. By addressing human concerns about justice, the afterlife, and divine judgment, it offers a framework that is both spiritually uplifting and logically compelling.

While eschatology is a universal field of inquiry, the way it is addressed varies widely across traditions. Mythological narratives, for example, often present eschatological themes in allegorical or fantastical terms, reflecting cultural imaginations rather than theological truths. In contrast, Islamic eschatology presents a detailed and structured account of the end, firmly grounded in divine revelation and moral responsibility. This distinctiveness is foundational to Islam's perspective on human destiny, setting it apart as a practical and purposeful theological construct.

The universality of eschatological concern highlights the profound human need to understand the end. Whether approached scientifically, mythologically, or theologically, the question of ultimate destiny shapes how humanity perceives its purpose in the world.

Islamic Pragmatism

One of the defining characteristics of Islam as a faith tradition is its inherent pragmatism, a quality that permeates every aspect of its teachings. Rooted in divine revelation, Islamic laws, principles, and beliefs are designed to align with the natural order, human psychology, and societal well-being. This pragmatism reflects Islam's mission of offering guidance that is practical, attainable, and beneficial for humanity in both this world and the hereafter. Islamic eschatology, which addresses the ultimate destiny of individuals and the cosmos, is no exception. It stands as a testament to this pragmatic approach, offering a framework that is deeply logical, morally compelling, and spiritually uplifting.

Pragmatism in Islamic Teachings

In Islam, every rule and directive is founded on its potential to promote the well-being of individuals and society. The Qur'an and Sunnah outline guidance that considers the complexities of human nature, addressing physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Whether it is the obligation of Salah (prayer) to maintain a connection with the Creator, the prohibition of intoxicants to safeguard mental and social health, or the emphasis on charity to balance societal equity, Islamic rulings are meticulously designed to achieve harmony and balance.

This focus on practical benefit extends to belief systems as well. Tawheed (the Oneness of God) offers a clear and coherent framework for understanding the Creator, free from the complexities and contradictions found in polytheistic or mythological systems. Similarly, the concept of Qadr (divine decree) provides a balanced perspective on free will and predestination, enabling believers to navigate life's challenges with faith and accountability.

Pragmatism in Islamic Eschatology

Islamic eschatology is firmly rooted in this pragmatic ethos. The vivid descriptions of the Day of Judgment (Yawm al-Qiyamah), Paradise (Jannah), and Hell (Jahannam) are not meant to overwhelm believers with fear or speculation but to inspire moral accountability and spiritual reflection. These eschatological narratives serve as a reminder of the consequences of human actions, encouraging individuals to strive for justice, compassion, and righteousness.

The concept of scales (Mizan) on the Day of Judgment, where deeds are weighed, exemplifies the balance that Islam seeks to establish. This symbolism underscores the importance of both personal accountability and divine mercy. Believers are assured that even the smallest good deed will not go unnoticed, instilling hope and motivation to act righteously.

Similarly, the detailed descriptions of Jannah and Jahannam are profoundly pragmatic. The rewards of Paradise are depicted in terms that appeal to human aspirations, i.e., peace, comfort, and proximity to the Divine, while the punishments of Hell reflect the consequences of moral and spiritual neglect. These

descriptions are not mere allegories but are firmly tied to the realities of human psychology, providing a framework that inspires individuals to choose virtue over vice.

Practical Implications for Humanity

The pragmatic nature of Islamic eschatology lies in its focus on outcomes. By emphasizing accountability, it encourages believers to take responsibility for their choices. This approach is both empowering and realistic, as it acknowledges human free will while guiding individuals towards a path that leads to salvation.

Islamic eschatology also addresses the collective well-being of society. The focus on justice, compassion, and mercy reflects the ideals of an equitable and harmonious community. Believers are urged to uphold these values not only for their personal benefit but also to contribute to a world that mirrors the principles of divine guidance.

The pragmatic design of Islamic eschatology ensures that it remains accessible and relevant to people of all backgrounds and intellectual capacities. By presenting a clear and logical framework for understanding the afterlife, Islam eliminates the confusion and ambiguity often associated with mythological or speculative eschatologies.

The Ultimate Merciful Approach

Central to Islamic theology is the belief in Allah's infinite mercy and justice, concepts that are woven intricately into the fabric of Islamic eschatology. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes that Allah is *Ar-Rahman* (The Most Compassionate) and *Ar-Raheem* (The Most Merciful), attributes that shape not only the structure of the universe but also the principles of accountability and salvation. Far from being a narrative of retributive punishment, Islamic eschatology presents a merciful and equitable system designed to guide humanity toward ultimate redemption and self-accountability.

Mercy as the Foundation of Divine Justice

In Islam, Allah's mercy precedes and outweighs His wrath.

It is the Qur'an: *وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ* [My mercy enfolds everything"]

Surah Al-A'raf, Verse 156

This divine assurance provides the cornerstone of Islamic eschatology, where every element of the afterlife, from the Day of Judgment to the eternal abodes of Jannah and Jahannam, is framed within a context of divine mercy and justice.

The concept of accountability, central to eschatology, is not designed to terrify but to encourage self-reflection and moral rectitude. Sins are not treated as immutable stains but as opportunities for repentance and divine forgiveness.

It is in the Qur'an: *قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ*
[Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves (by sinning), do not despair of the Mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is All Forgiving, Most Merciful.]

Surah Az-Zumar, Verse 53

This reflects an ultimate merciful approach where humanity is given the chance to rectify its path repeatedly, underscoring that divine justice is rooted in fairness and compassion.

Human Agency and Self-Accountability

Islamic eschatology posits that human beings are endowed with free will and are thus responsible for their own destinies. Rather than depicting God as an entity who punishes indiscriminately, the Qur'an and Hadith emphasize that people often bring harm upon themselves through their choices.

It is the Qur'an: *مَا أَصَابَكُم مِّن حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا أَصَابَكُم مِّن سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِن نَّفْسِكُمْ ۚ وَأُرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا*
[Whatever good reaches you, (O men), it is from Allah, and whatever ill reaches you is from yourselves. We have sent you (O Mohammad ﷺ) as an Apostle towards all mankind; and Allah is Sufficient, as a Witness.]

Surah An-Nisa, Verse 79

This perspective shifts the focus from external divine retribution to internal self-accountability. It reinforces the idea that Allah's role as Al-Adl (The Just) ensures that no soul is wronged. Every individual is judged fairly based on their circumstances, intentions, and deeds, creating a framework of moral responsibility that is both empowering and just.

Repentance as Redemption

A unique feature of Islamic eschatology is its focus on repentance (Tawbah) as a means of attaining divine mercy. Unlike eschatologies that center on punishment for covenantal breaches, Islam emphasizes the ability of individuals to seek forgiveness and transform their lives.

It is in the Qur'an: *وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ* [He is the One Who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons (their) sins. And He knows whatever you (all) do.]

Surah Ash-Shura, Verse 25

This merciful approach reflects the depth of Allah's compassion, where even the most grievous sins can be erased through sincere repentance. The Hadith literature is replete with examples of Allah's mercy, such as the story of the man who killed 99 people but was forgiven due to his genuine desire to reform. These narratives serve as a reminder of the limitless potential for redemption available to all.

The Role of Hell and Heaven

The Qur'anic descriptions of Hell (Jahannam) and Heaven (Jannah) are deeply tied to the themes of mercy and justice. Hell is not depicted as a vindictive punishment but as a consequence of wilful disobedience and rejection of truth. Similarly, Heaven is not simply a reward for righteous deeds but a manifestation of Allah's mercy, granted to those who strive for moral and spiritual excellence.

The Qur'an often portrays Hell as a temporary abode for many, where purification and realization of one's wrongdoings can occur, leading to eventual redemption. This aligns with the Hadith that states, *"A day will come when Hell will be empty, and none will remain in it"* (Musnad Ahmad). Such teachings reflect Allah's ultimate intention to guide all souls toward His mercy.

Conversely, the Qur'anic depictions of Paradise emphasize peace, joy, and proximity to Allah. The rewards of Jannah are described as eternal manifestations of divine grace, tailored to the desires of its inhabitants. These vivid descriptions are designed to inspire hope and encourage individuals to seek Allah's pleasure in all aspects of life.

Mercy in Balancing Justice and Accountability

Islamic eschatology strikes a profound balance between justice and mercy. While the emphasis on accountability ensures that no deed, however small, is overlooked, the overarching theme of mercy provides reassurance to believers.

It is in the Qur'an: *فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ - وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ* [Whoever has done good, equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it there, And whoever has done evil, equal to the weight of an atom, shall (also) see it there.]

Surah Az-Zalzalah, Verses 7-8

Yet, even this meticulous reckoning is tempered by Allah's forgiveness and leniency, as He is ever-willing to pardon sincere believers.

The Day of Reckoning

Islamic eschatology offers a vivid and comprehensive depiction of the Day of Reckoning, the afterlife, and the ultimate destinations of Paradise (Jannah) and Hell (Jahannam). These descriptions are deeply interwoven with the themes of divine justice, mercy, and accountability, creating a framework that not only inspires moral behaviour but also provides a logical and pragmatic perspective on the human journey beyond death.

Yawm Al Qiyamah

The Day of Reckoning, referred to in the Qur'an as Yawm al-Qiyamah (the Day of Resurrection) and Yawm al-Hisab (the Day of Accountability), is a central event in Islamic eschatology. It is described as a day of unparalleled magnitude, where all of creation will stand before Allah for judgment.

It is in the Qur'an: *فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ - وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ* [Whoever has done good, equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it there, And whoever has done evil, equal to the weight of an atom, shall (also) see it there.]

Surah Az-Zalzalah, Verses 7-8

This event begins with the blowing of the Trumpet (Sur) by the Angel Israfil (عليه السلام), an event that signals the destruction of the universe and the resurrection of all beings. The Qur'an vividly describes the upheaval of the cosmos during this time.

It is in the Qur'an: *فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذَنْبِهِ إِنْسٌ وَلَا جَانٌّ - فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ - فَإِذَا انشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ* [(How horrible will it be) when the skies will split apart, becoming rose-red like (burnt) oil! Then you (O' Jinns and humans) which of your Lord's favors will you deny? On that Day there will be no need for any human or jinn to be asked about their sins.]

Surah Ar-Rahman, Verses 37-39

Such imagery underscores the enormity and transformative nature of this event, reminding humanity of the temporal nature of the material world. Following the resurrection, humanity will gather on a vast plain, awaiting judgment. The Qur'an emphasizes that this judgment will be individualized, with no soul bearing the burden of another. The deeds of every individual will be weighed on the Mizan (the divine scale), and the outcomes will determine their eternal fate

Hell (Jahannam)

Hell, or Jahannam, is depicted in the Qur'an as a place of purification and consequence for those who consciously reject divine guidance and commit grave injustices. The Qur'an describes its severity in stark terms.

It is in the Qur'an: *إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا - لِلطَّاعِينَ مَأْبًا - لِالْبَاطِلِينَ فِيهَا أَحْقَابًا* [(Know that) Hell has been lying in wait, as a home for the transgressors, to stay in there for a long, long time.]

Surah An-Naba, Verses 21-23

The punishments of Hell are not arbitrary but correspond to the deeds and choices of the individual. For example, the Qur'an explains that those who indulge in arrogance, oppression, and corruption will face punishments reflective of their actions. However, Islamic theology emphasizes that Allah's mercy extends

even to those in Hell. For many, Hell is a temporary abode, serving as a place of purification before eventual redemption.

Hell also serves as a moral deterrent, encouraging believers to reflect on their actions and align themselves with the principles of justice, compassion, and obedience to Allah. This pragmatic function ensures that the concept of Hell fosters accountability without descending into despair or nihilism.

Paradise (Jannah)

In contrast to Hell, Paradise, or Jannah, is described as a realm of eternal peace, joy, and closeness to Allah. It is the ultimate reward for those who strive for righteousness and sincerely seek Allah's pleasure. The Qur'an paints a picture of Jannah as a place where desires are fulfilled, and there is no trace of pain or sorrow.

It is in the Qur'an: *لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيدٌ* [They will get whatever they wish: And with Us is (much) more (than they wish).]

Surah Qaf, Verse 35

Jannah is depicted as a lush garden with flowing rivers, adorned with palaces and abundant sustenance. These descriptions are not merely materialistic but symbolize the soul's ultimate fulfilment and contentment in the presence of Allah. The Qur'an emphasizes that the greatest reward of Jannah is the ability to behold Allah's divine countenance.

It is in the Qur'an: *لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ وَلَا يَرْهَقُ وُجُوهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَلَا ذِلَّةٌ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ* [For them who have done good is the best (reward) and extra. No darkness will cover their faces, nor humiliation. Those are companions of Paradise; they will abide therein eternally.]

Surah Yunus, Verse 26

The phrase “*the best (reward) and extra*” is interpreted by scholars as referring to the vision of Allah, a blessing that transcends all worldly pleasures.

The Role of Symbolism

The Qur'anic descriptions of Hell and Heaven are richly symbolic, intended to convey realities beyond human comprehension in terms that are relatable and motivating. For instance, the imagery of gardens, flowing rivers, and eternal light in Jannah represents spiritual tranquillity, while the descriptions of fire, torment, and darkness in Jahannam symbolize spiritual estrangement from Allah.

These symbols are not to be dismissed as mere mythology. Rather, they are pedagogical tools that help humanity grasp the profound consequences of their moral and spiritual choices. Islamic scholars have long emphasized the metaphorical and literal layers of these descriptions, underscoring their function as both spiritual truths and practical guides.

The Balance of Fear and Hope

Islamic eschatology balances the fear of Hell with the hope of Paradise, creating a dynamic that inspires both caution and aspiration. The Qur'an reminds believers of Allah's mercy and forgiveness, offering hope even to those burdened by sin. At the same time, it warns against complacency, urging individuals to remain vigilant and strive for righteousness. As it is said in the Hadith, *"If the believer knew the extent of Allah's mercy, he would not despair of Paradise; and if the disbeliever knew the extent of Allah's punishment, he would not feel secure from Hell"* (Sahih Muslim).

Mythological Eschatology

Throughout history, human civilizations have sought to explain the mysteries of life, death, and what lies beyond through mythology. Mythology, as a cultural construct, is a collection of stories, symbols, and allegories that attempt to provide meaning to human experiences and natural phenomena. Within this framework, mythological eschatology emerges as a reflection of cultural imaginations about the end of the world, often characterized by dramatic narratives, larger-than-life characters, and symbolic elements.

What is Mythology?

Mythology serves as a lens through which ancient societies interpreted their world. Myths are often tied to a particular cultural or religious tradition and are deeply symbolic, conveying moral lessons, existential truths, or cosmic order through allegory. While they often provide insight into the worldview of a civilization, myths are not historically grounded or divinely revealed. Instead, they are shaped by the collective imagination and cultural needs of their time.

Characteristics of Mythological Eschatology

Mythological eschatology, the subset of mythology dealing with the end of the world, tends to share several key characteristics. Myths often use *symbolic language* to depict cosmic destruction or renewal. These narratives are not meant to be taken literally but serve as metaphors for deeper truths. Mythological end-times scenarios frequently involve imagined deities or supernatural beings with human-like traits who play decisive roles in the world's fate. Many mythological traditions view time and existence as *cyclical* rather than *linear*. The end of the world is often depicted as part of a recurring cycle of creation, destruction, and rebirth.

Examples of Mythological Eschatology

In *Norse mythology*, *Ragnarok* represents the ultimate apocalyptic battle between the imaginary deities and their enemies, resulting in the destruction of the world. This narrative includes vivid imagery of chaos, i.e., the wolf *Fenrir* devouring the sun, the serpent *Jormungandr* poisoning the seas, and the imaginary deities falling in battle. Despite its violent end, *Ragnarok* also hints at renewal, with the world emerging anew from the ashes.

Greek mythology speaks of successive ages of humanity, each ending in destruction due to humanity's moral decline. The *Elysian Fields*, a realm for the blessed dead, contrast starkly with the chaos of *Tartarus*, a place of punishment. These eschatological themes reflect Greek philosophical notions of justice and morality.

Hindu eschatology describes the *cyclical nature of existence* through the concept of *Kalpas* (cosmic cycles) and *Pralaya* (dissolution). At the end of each cycle, the universe is destroyed by fire or water, only to be recreated by the *Brahma*. This cyclical eschatology emphasizes renewal and the eternal nature of time.

In Zoroastrian belief, *Frashokereti* refers to the ultimate renovation of the world. It depicts a final battle between the imagined forces of good, led by *Ahura Mazda*, and evil, represented by *Angra Mainyu*. The world is purified through fire, and humanity achieves immortality in a perfect, harmonious state.

Mythology in Christianity and Judaism

The eschatological frameworks of Christianity and Judaism, though claimed to be rooted in Abrahamic traditions, exhibit distinct features that have been influenced by cultural, theological, and primarily, mythological elements over centuries. This blending has, at times, introduced mythological aspects into their eschatologies, reflecting a marked departure from monotheism. While Judaism's eschatology remains relatively understated, Christianity's approach incorporates themes of divine retribution and imagery that, in many ways, equal pure mythological constructs.

Jewish Eschatology

Traditional Jewish eschatology, as derived from the *Torah* (within the contemporary Jewish tradition) and subsequent rabbinic interpretations, places a greater focus on collective redemption and the *restoration of Israel* than on individual afterlife destinations. Unlike Islam, the concept of Hell (or an eternal place of punishment) is largely absent in Jewish theology.

Jewish eschatology envisions a *Messianic era*, known as the *Olam Ha-Ba*, where peace, justice, and divine presence will be fully realized. The focus is less on personal accountability in the afterlife and more on a collective transformation of the earthly world. While the term *Gehenna* appears in Jewish texts, it is not analogous to the eternal Hell described in Islamic theology. *Gehenna* is depicted as a temporary purification process rather than a permanent place of punishment. According to rabbinic teachings, souls undergo cleansing before being admitted to the *World to Come*, with most staying no longer than a year.

The absence of a robust afterlife theology in early Judaism has led to later influences from Hellenistic and surrounding cultures, introducing certain speculative ideas about the soul, resurrection, and the *Messianic age*.

Christian Eschatology

Christian eschatology, shaped significantly by early theological debates and cultural influences, is heavily based on mythological elements. While its core ideas are claimed to be derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ, the interpretations that emerged in subsequent centuries reflect a blend of covenantal theology and external influences.

Christian eschatology places a heavy emphasis on Hell as a realm of eternal punishment for sinners. The vivid descriptions of Hell in Christian tradition, such as lakes of fire and eternal torment, owe much to the Hellenistic and Roman cultural context in which early Christianity developed. These descriptions often resemble mythological depictions of the underworld, such as *Tartarus* in Greek mythology.

The Book of Revelation, a key eschatological text in Christianity, contains apocalyptic visions based on pure symbolic imagery. The portrayal of *beasts*, *dragons*, and *cosmic battles* has been likened to mythological narratives. These images are meant to convey moral truths, their dramatic nature aligning with mythology.

In Christian mythology, the end times are often portrayed as a supernatural deity’s retribution for humanity’s sins and failure to uphold divine covenants. This focus on punishment, rather than purification or mercy, contrasts sharply with Islamic eschatology, where Allah’s mercy remains paramount even in accountability.

Heaven in Christian eschatology is depicted as a place of eternal bliss, often described in materialistic and anthropomorphic terms. The *streets of gold* and *pearly gates* echo the cultural imagination of the Roman Empire, where such imagery symbolized wealth and divine favour. These depictions, while rooted in Scripture, are heavily influenced by external cultural narratives.

Comparative Analysis

Aspect	Jewish Mythology	Christian Mythology	Islamic Eschatology
<i>Hell</i>	Temporary purification (Gehenna)	Eternal retribution for sinners	Just and temporary for many; a place of purification and consequence
<i>Heaven</i>	Not emphasized; focus on earthly Messianic era	Eternal bliss with material descriptions	Spiritual and physical fulfillment; proximity to Allah as the ultimate reward
<i>Accountability</i>	Focus on restoration of Israel	Individual retribution for sins	Individual accountability balanced with divine mercy
<i>Imagery</i>	Symbolic imagery	Apocalyptic and dramatic	Pragmatic and logical; rooted in divine justice

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Jewish & Christian Mythological Eschatology with Islamic Theological Eschatology

Jewish and Christian eschatologies reflect their respective mythological developments and external cultural influences. While Judaism’s eschatology remains focused on collective restoration, it lacks the detailed afterlife theology found in Islam. Christianity, on the other hand, incorporates mythological elements and

apocalyptic imagery that blur the line between theological truth and cultural imagination. In contrast, Islamic eschatology provides a balanced and logical framework, rooted in pragmatism, and logic, emphasizing accountability, mercy, and justice, making it distinct from mythological constructs.

Islam's Logical Approach to the End of the World

Islam aligns with the universal understanding that the physical universe is finite.

It is in the Qur'an: *كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ - وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ* [All that there is in the Cosmos shall vanish. The Countenance (stand alone) of your Lord (by Himself) shall endure, the Lord of Majesty and Glory.]

Surah Ar-Rahman, Verses 26 - 27

This acknowledgment of temporality situates Islamic eschatology within a logical framework, where the natural end of the world leads to a higher, eternal reality. While scientific perspectives focus on the mechanics of the universe's end (e.g., heat death, cosmic collapse), Islam addresses the moral and spiritual implications. The Islamic narrative connects the end of the material world to the ultimate accountability of human actions, providing a holistic perspective that integrates physical and metaphysical realities.

The Balance of Divine Mercy and Accountability

One of the most compelling aspects of Islamic eschatology is its balance between divine mercy and justice. Allah's mercy is emphasized throughout the Qur'an, with every chapter except one beginning with the invocation *Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem* (The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful). This foundational attribute of Allah underpins the eschatological framework.

A Logical Timeline of Events

Islamic eschatology presents a clear and logical progression of events leading to the Day of Judgment and beyond. The Qur'an and Hadith describe minor and major signs that will precede the end of the world, such as moral decay, widespread injustice, and the emergence of *Dajjal* (the Antichrist). These signs serve as warnings, encouraging humanity to reflect and reform.

The blowing of the Trumpet (Sur) by the Angel Israfil (عليه السلام) will mark the end of all life, as described in the Qur'an. All souls will be resurrected, and their deeds will be presented for judgment. The Qur'an describes this event as one of absolute justice.

The ultimate destinations of Jannah (Paradise) and Jahannam (Hell) are logical extensions of the moral and spiritual choices made in life. Jannah represents the fulfilment of human potential and proximity to Allah, while Jahannam serves as a consequence for wilful disobedience and rejection of divine guidance.

Comparison with Other Approaches

Islamic eschatology's logical coherence contrasts sharply with the mythological and pseudo-mythological elements found in other traditions. Unlike mythological eschatologies that depict arbitrary destruction or renewal cycles, Islam's narrative is purpose-driven. Every event serves to remind humanity of its responsibilities and the ultimate consequences of its actions. While Christian eschatological frameworks emphasize divine retribution, Islamic eschatology places divine mercy at its core. The emphasis on repentance and forgiveness ensures that no soul is beyond redemption. Islamic eschatology is not merely speculative or symbolic; it provides practical guidance for living a morally upright life. The vivid descriptions of Jannah and Jahannam are designed to inspire hope and caution, motivating believers to strive for righteousness.

Self-Determined Destiny

One of the most profound aspects of Islamic eschatology is the idea that individuals largely shape their own destinies.

It is in the Qur'an: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ* [Verily Allah does not change the state of a people till they change themselves.]

Surah Ar-Ra'd, Verse 11

This principle underscores the autonomy and responsibility granted to humanity, aligning the eschatological narrative with a logical and empowering worldview. By making righteous choices, individuals prepare themselves for the ultimate reckoning, knowing that their efforts will be met with Allah's mercy and justice. This approach integrates divine will with human agency, creating a balanced and rational system that resonates with both spiritual and practical concerns.

Conclusion

Islamic eschatology stands as a testament to the theological depth, moral clarity, and divine wisdom of Islam. It transcends the speculative and fictional narratives found in mythology and pseudo-mythological frameworks by offering a structured, logical, and pragmatic approach to the ultimate fate of humanity and the cosmos. Rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, it balances divine mercy with accountability, providing believers with both hope and a clear sense of moral responsibility.

Unlike mythological eschatologies, which are often cyclic, symbolic, and culturally bound, Islamic eschatology follows a linear progression from the temporality of the material world to the eternal realities of the hereafter. It avoids arbitrary or whimsical depictions of the afterlife, presenting instead a coherent framework grounded in divine justice and mercy. The vivid descriptions of Hell (Jahannam) and Paradise (Jannah) are designed not as mere allegories but as motivational tools to inspire righteous living and spiritual reflection.

When compared to the eschatologies of Judaism and Christianity, Islam's approach emerges as uniquely balanced and inclusive. Judaism's self-serving focus on the re-establishment of Israel, and Christianity's incorporation of mythological themes stand in contrast to the practical and comprehensive vision of Islamic eschatology. Islam emphasizes that God's ultimate purpose is not punishment but guidance and mercy, allowing every individual the opportunity to attain eternal peace and proximity to the Creator.

Ultimately, Islamic eschatology is not only a guide to the end of the world but also a blueprint for navigating the challenges of life. By highlighting the consequences of human actions and the boundless mercy of God, it inspires believers to strive for righteousness, compassion, and justice. Its logical coherence, moral pragmatism, and spiritual richness make it a uniquely compelling framework that continues to resonate across cultures and generations.

In a world searching for meaning and purpose, Islamic eschatology provides a profound and hopeful vision of human destiny, firmly rooted in divine revelation and aligned with humanity's innate sense of justice and accountability. It invites every soul to reflect, reform, and reconnect with the Creator, charting a path not only to salvation but also to eternal fulfilment.

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