

GOD: AL-AWWAL, AL-AKHIR (THE FIRST & LAST)

Rating: 5.0

Description: God is the First and nothing precedes Him and He is the Last whose existence persists without end. This is a belief which humbles us and reminds us of the inevitable end of ourselves and this world.

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God says: "He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is the Knower of all things." (Quran 57:3)

God precedes all things; He has no beginning. He abides after all things without ever coming to an end.

Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said, addressing God in supplication: "You are the First, so nothing precedes You. You are the Last, so nothing comes after You. You are the Manifest, so nothing comes above You. You are the Hidden, so nothing comes below you. Fulfill our debts for us and enrich us so we will not be poor."^[1]



God says: "Say: He is God, the One. God, the Self-Subsisting. He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him." (Quran 112:1-4)

"He begets not, nor is He begotten" expresses a fundamental aspect of God's perfection. Everything in our limited human experience must have a beginning and end. We ourselves are born and we ultimately die. This is the case with our parents and forefathers as well as with our children and descendants. Such relationships permeate creation.

So God says: "God, the Self-Subsisting. He begets not, nor is He begotten" and immediately follows it with: "and there is none like unto Him." We cannot compare God with anything in our experience. Likewise, we find that God commands us: "**Do not give likenesses to God.**" (Quran 16:74) This is the way our faith in God should be.

God is the First who is not preceded by anything else. Though our imaginations cannot grasp this idea of something that is not preceded by something else, our hearts and minds easily accept it. Likewise, God is the Last, whose existence persists without end. As such, God is truly the Inheritor: **"And remember Zechariah, when he cried unto his Lord: 'My Lord! Leave me not childless, though You are the Best of inheritors.'" (Quran 21:89)**

God is timeless and eternal, without beginning or end. By contrast, all created things have a beginning and end.

God says about the Sun: "And the Sun runs its course to a point determined." (Quran 36:38) The Sun and other celestial bodies are far older than the living things on Earth. But just like the fleeting lives of terrestrial beings, the stars are born and they die. All things in the universe must come to an end.

God cannot be understood according to the terms of material existence. He is not bound by the laws of physics which are themselves part of the nature of what He created.

It is no surprise that the mind cannot fully grasp the Creator, since the mind is itself created and subject to the limitations of its created nature. The mind can only fall into confusion and self-deception if it tries to rationalize that which is beyond its powers. Rather, we should apply our mental efforts to matters our minds are capable of engaging with – like the universe that God created and the vast horizons of knowledge that it presents. God has given us the ability to uncover the physical laws of nature, and we can harness such knowledge to benefit humanity in ways that please God.

Benefits of Knowing these Names

Knowing that God is the First and the Last, we realize that the best things we can invest in for ourselves in this world and the next is that which pleases God. What we do for God's sake of is what shall endure. God says: **"All that is on Earth will perish: and there shall remain the countenance of your Lord, the Lord of Bounty and Honor."** (Quran 55:26-27)

This world will come to an end. However, we shall return to our Lord, and the deeds we did in our worldly lives seeking His pleasure will avail us at that time. This is one of the points the verse makes when it says "and there shall remain the countenance of your Lord, the Lord of Bounty and Honor." Our words and deeds that God will reward us for, in His infinite bounty, will remain for us when everything else is gone.

We should endeavor to keep God's pleasure in the forefront of our minds and be mindful of the Hereafter as we go about our daily lives. We should not simply strive for material gain, but make the Hereafter our priority. God says: **"Nay, they prefer the life of this world, when the Hereafter is better and more enduring."** (Quran 87:16-17)

Knowing that God is the First and the Last also helps us to face up to our own demise, and also that every state that we experience in life will come to an end. We enjoy a period of youth. If we do not die while we are young, then we will certainly suffer the loss of our youth. We will grow old, and then we will die. There is no escape from death in either case. This is the end that God has ordained for all people. He alone never dies. He alone is eternal, without beginning or end.

However, in His infinite grace, He has promised the believers who are sincere and true an eternal life in Paradise that He will bestow: "**Lo! the righteous will dwell among gardens and rivers, in the seat of honor with a Mighty King.**" (Quran 54: 54-55)

May God bless us to be among the righteous.

Footnotes:

[1]

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