

Sunday School—**LIKE NO OTHER**

Lesson 1

The Bis-mil-lah.

I hope those of you who actually listen to this will realize that what you hear has been hidden in plain sight for over a thousand years. No unusual intelligence or skills are required to finally see it. Only the willingness to believe one God is behind just 1 message in all 3 volumes of the historical revelation.

You can expect Believers who participate in this project to equalize the various parts of God's message to have His full support. It's actually easy to start where He directs. Namely, where He stitches the beginning of the third volume—the Koran—to the end of the Gospel accounts. The Koran is the volume we haven't yet sewn into the fabric of the other 2 volumes of God's revelation. And the Koran commands Believers take up that task to equalize the volumes of His message into a single awesome tapestry with the highest level of care that they can.

The Koran is divided into chapters. 114 to be exact. Each chapter, except one, (#9) begins with the Bismillah. And what is the Bismillah? Well, for one, it is a phrase which, along with its twin, the Bismalab that Christ gave us, has been repeated by more human tongues than any other. . .ever. Why would that be?

You can assume the first rule for looking at God's message is "keep it simple". God doesn't require His revelation to be interpreted by intellectuals. The Bismillah, at the beginning of each of those chapters in the Koran, is almost certainly a reminder or reference to something basic, and critical, for understanding this and the rest of God's revelation.

The most common translation of that first line, theme-setting verse, in basic Arabic says “in the name of God, the gracious, the merciful”. But if we’re going to try to set ourselves the task of “equalizing”, to use the Koran’s word, God’s single message, we should start knowing the similarly important phrase or concept in the previous volume, the New Testament.

Arabic speaking Christians have already made the connection, it seems. They call it the Bismalab: “in the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy spirit”. But they likely didn’t do it to try to equalize but rather to claim something just as precious to them as the Bismillah is to Muslims. Implying that Christians have a theme phrase that was there long before the Koran’s Bismillah.

The New Testament phrase was, of course, said by Jesus just before he went into heaven telling his followers to go into the whole world and baptize all nations using this phrase found in the Bible’s book of Matthew(Mt 28:19).

The reality for this class isn’t competition or contradiction but rather equalization. That’s why we’re going to carefully look at the Bismillah to see if the Koran’s phrase somehow correlates with, supports, even augments Jesus’ phrase, the Bismilab, in the Bible.

One of the joys of this project for me is discovering how rich and deep the Arabic language is. Most words and concepts are built on roots that have 3 consonants or sounds. The Bismillah is built of three, 3 sound roots.

The first root is i-l-a. It is the Arabic root and word for the generic idea of a god. Most people, including Muslims, think that Allah is the Koran’s name for God. It is not. It is very simply the Arabic word indicating a specific singular god: The God

Western languages have capital letters. Semitic languages, Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, do not. If you want to have the equivalent of capitalizing the word god, you use the expression “the god”. The word ila becomes al ila, or if you say it as a single word, alila, it’s saying God “in caps”—Allah. Namely The God, the one and only God. Which is the real meaning of the word Allah. Simple and precise.

When you see the word “Allah” in the Koran you can translate God with a capital G and everyone gets it. That’s why Arabic speaking Christians use this word, Allah, for God.

I should mention that I have a preference for using English translations for Islamic words and phrases where many Muslims use Arabic. Like using God instead of Allah and using the common name “Koran” instead of the Arabic word Qur’an. It’s easier to understand and makes the subject more familiar to most English speakers. So let’s carefully inspect the Arabic Bismillah to see what it really says. . .in English.

The first syllables in the Bismillah are, obviously, “bi” and “ism”. Together “bism” meaning “in the name of”. So bi-ism-al-ilah is the phrase “in the name of God”. It is not a stretch to see this as the equivalent of “in the name of the Father” which is bi-ism-al-ab in Arabic, the Arabic word for father being “ab”.

With this we have the beginning of something much fuller and deeper than either of the individual phrases in Matthew or the Koran. That light comes on when we unpack how the last 2 words in the Bismillah correlate with this amazing intersection of phrases in the Gospel and the Koran.

These clips are quite brief for several reasons. When you get a minute and are in the mood, go to lesson 2 to see the marvelous correlation of the Biamillah and the Bismillab not only supporting each other but supplying a depth of meaning that you can’t see unless you see them both .