

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 120 – 123

(١٢٠) وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ ۖ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۗ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۗ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

(١٢١) الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ ۗ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ ۖ بِهِ ۗ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

(١٢٢) يٰبَنِي إِسْرٰٓءِيلَ ۗ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي ۖ أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَأَنَّىٰ فَضَّلْتُكُمْ ۗ عَلَىٰ الْعٰلَمِينَ

(١٢٣) وَأَتَّقُوا يَوْمَ ۖ مَا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَن نَّفْسٍ ۖ شَيْئًا ۚ وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنَّا عِدْلٌ ۗ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةٌ ۗ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians until you follow their religion. Say; “Surely Allah's guidance, that is the (true) guidance”. And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allah, nor any helper (120).

Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it aught to be read. These (it is who) believe in it; and whoever disbelieves in it, these it is that are the losers (121).

O Children of Israel, call to mind My bounty which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations (122).

And be on your guard against a day when no soul shall avail another in the least neither shall any compensation be accepted from it, nor shall intercession profit it nor shall they be helped (123).

Commentary

Qur'an: *And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians...*: The Speaker turns again to the two groups, after a cursory glance at the others. These two verses give the sum and substance of the foregoing talk.

After all those admonitions and reprimands of the Jews and the Christians, Allah turns to His Apostle and says: They will never be pleased with you until you follow their religion which they have invented according to their desires, composed of their own opinions.

Then He orders him to confute their views and tell them: "Surely Allah's guidance, that is the (true) guidance". Why should a man follow the other for guidance? And the only guidance is the guidance of Allah; that is the truth which must be followed.

There is no guidance in any thing else; and certainly not in your religion. And what is that religion? Just an amalgam of your desires glorified as religion.

"Allah's guidance" stands for the Qur'an – revealed by Allah and, therefore, attributed to Him. The sentence, "Surely Allah's guidance is the (true) guidance", restricts the guidance to that of Allah. Conversely, it means¹ that their religion is devoid of guidance; in other words, it is just a set of their desires.

It follows that what the Prophet has got is knowledge, and what they hold in their hands is ignorance. Therefore, Allah says to the Prophet: "And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allah, nor any helper."

One cannot help admiring this verse:

How logical, solid and well-grounded is the argument it offers; how many fine points of eloquence it holds, in spite of its brevity; how lovely is the language and how clear is the style!!

Qur'an: *Those to whom We have given the Book...*: The restriction of the clause, "These (it is who) believe in it", gives rise to the belief that this verse is a reply to an unspoken question. The preceding words, "And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians...", gave an indication that there was no hope of their believing in the Prophet.

If so, then how any of them could be expected to believe? Was it not in vain to invite them to Islam? This verse clears the air, and says: Those to whom We have given the Book (i.e., the Torah or the Injil) and who read it as it ought to be read, these it is who truly believe in their Book and as such they shall believe in you. 1

Or that, they believe in a revealed book; and therefore shall believe in any other book revealed by Allah. Or that, these it is who shall believe in the Qur'an. (According to some of the above interpretations, the pro-noun, 'it', in the phrase, "believe in it", would stand for more than one noun by turns.)

The phrase, "Those to whom We have given the Book", refers to a group of the Jews and the Christians, who did not follow their desires, who wanted to follow the truth. "the Book" refers to the Torah and the Injil.

Another possible explanation: "the Book" might be referring to the Qur'an, and, "Those to whom We have given the Book", to the believers. In that case the meaning would be as follows: Those to whom We have given the Qur'an and who read it as it should be read, these it is who believe in the Qur'an, and not the Jews and the Christians who follow their desires. The restriction, in this case, would give a converted pro-position.

Qur'an: O Children of Israel!... nor shall they be helped: These two verses are almost similar to the verses 47 and 48. Here the present talk with the Children of Israel comes to its end. The Qur'an, by repeating the prologue in the epilogue neatly ties the two ends together.

Traditions

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, explaining the word of Allah, ***Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read:*** "They recite its verses slowly, and understand it, and act according to its orders, and hope for its promise, and are afraid of its threat, and take lesson from its stories, and obey its commandments, and desist from what it prohibits. By God, it does not mean memorizing its verses, and studying its letters, and reciting its chapters, and learning its one-tenths and one-fifths.

They remembered its words and neglected its boundaries. And what it means is meditating on its verses and acting according to its orders. Allah, the High, has said:

(It is) ***a Book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses***" (38:29).

(*Irshadu 'l-qulub*, ad-Daylami). as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allah, *read it as it ought to be read*, that: "(It is) stopping at (the description of) the Garden and the Fire." (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: What the Imam means is the meditation on the Qur'an.

The same Imam said about the verse, ***Those to whom We have given the Book...***, that: "They are the

Imams.” (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: This explanation is based on the principle of the “flow of the Qur'an”, and gives the best example of those to whom Allah has given the Book.

1. Because their books foretell of the Apostle's coming. (tr.)

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