

The Disciples of Jesus

1. It is reported that al-Baqir (‘a) said, “Verily, Allah sent Jesus only to the Children of Israel and his prophecy was at the Sacred House [Jerusalem], and after him there were twelve apostles.”¹

2. It is reported that Ibn ‘Abbas said, “I said, ‘O Apostle of Allah! How many imams will there be after you?’ He said, ‘The number of the disciples of Jesus, the number of tribes of Moses, the number of the chief tans of the children of Israel.’ I said, ‘O Apostle of Allah! How many were they?’ He said, ‘They were twelve, and the imams after me will be twelve....’”²

3. It is reported that ‘Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Fadal reported that his father said, “I said to Al-Ridha’ (‘a), ‘Why were the disciples (*hawariyin*) called *hawariyin*?’ He said, ‘According to the people, they were called *hawariyin* because they were bleachers who used to clean clothes from filth by washing, and this name is derived from *hawari* (bleached) bread, but according to us they are called *hawariyin* because they were pure in themselves and purified others from the filth of sin by sermons and remembrance.’

Then it was asked, ‘Why the Christians (Nasara) were called *Nasara*?’ He said, ‘Because they were from a village named *Nasirah* among the towns of Syria. Mary and Jesus settled in it after they returned from Egypt.’”³

4. Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) said, “Verily the disciples of Jesus (‘a) were his followers, and our followers are our disciples. The disciples of Jesus were not more obedient than our disciples are to us. Jesus (‘a) said to the disciples, ‘Who are my helpers for Allah?’

The disciples said, ‘We will be the helpers of Allah.’⁴ By Allah, they did not help him from the Jews and they did not fight with them for him, but our followers, by Allah, always have helped us since Allah, may His remembrance be magnified, took [the soul of] the Apostle of Allah, and they have fought for us, have been burned and tormented and frightened away in the cities. May Allah give them the best reward for us.”⁵

5. Anas ibn Malik said, “I asked the Apostle of Allah (S) about the disciples of Jesus. He said, ‘They were those chosen by him as best, and they were twelve who were unmarried and quick to help Allah

and His Apostle. There was neither pride in them nor weakness nor doubt.

They helped him with vision, influence, seriousness and suffering.’ I said, ‘So, who are your disciples, O Apostle of Allah?’ He said, ‘The leaders (*imams*) after me who are twelve from the loins of ‘Ali and Fatimah. They are my disciples and the helpers of my religion, may peace be granted to them from Allah.’”⁶

6. Mufaddal reported in a lengthy narration that he said to Al-Sadiq (‘a), “O my guardian and master! Why are the people of Moses called *Yahud* (Jews)?” He said, “Because of the saying of Allah, the mighty and magnificent,

‘Verily, we turn (hudna) unto You’ (7:156),

that is, ‘we seek Your guidance.’” He said, “What about the *Nasara* (Christians)?” He said, “Because of the saying of Jesus (‘a),

‘Who will be my helpers in the way of Allah?’ The disciples said, ‘We are the helpers (ansar) of Allah. We believe in Allah and bear witness that we are ones who submit.’ (3:52)

So, they were called *Nasara* because of their help to the religion of Allah.”⁷

7. It was said to Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a), “Why is it that the companions of Jesus (‘a) walked on water, while it was not this way with the companions of Muhammad (S)?” He said, “Verily, the companions of Jesus were saved the trouble of livelihood, but the latter were tested by livelihood.”⁸

8. It is reported that Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) said, “When Jesus (‘a) wanted to wish farewell to his disciples, he called them together and order them to be for weak creatures and he prohibited them from despots. Then he sent two of them to Antioch. They arrived on the day of a festival.

They found the people there had uncovered idols and were worshipping them. They hurried toward them violently. They were put in irons and thrown into prison. When Simon found out about this, he went to Antioch and visited them in the prison. He said, ‘Did I not prohibit you from despots?’

Then he left them, and sat with the weak people. He began gradually to discuss matters with them. Then the weak spoke of these things with those who were stronger, while they kept it a most confidential secret. Their words kept ascending until they finally reached the king. He asked, ‘Since when has this man been in my kingdom?’ They said, ‘For two months.’ He said, ‘Bring him to me.’ They brought him.

When the king saw Simon, he felt love for him. He said, ‘I will not sit, unless he is beside me.’ Later after having had a frightening dream, he asked Simon about it. Simon gave a good answer that gladdened the king. Later he had another terrifying dream. Simon interpreted it in such manner that the king’s happiness increased.

They conversed thus until Simon came to have influence over the king. Then he said, 'Verily, there are two men in your jail who insulted you.' The king said, 'Yes.' Simon said, 'Bring them to me.' When they were brought to Simon, he asked, 'What is the god you worship?' They said, 'Allah.' He said, 'When you ask Him for something, does He hear you, and does He answer you when you pray to Him?' They said, 'Yes.' Simon said, 'I want to ask you something to gain assurance from you about this.'

They said, 'Ask.' He said, 'Does He cure the leper?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Bring a leper.' He said, 'Ask Him to cure this leper.' They laid hands upon him and he was cured. Simon said, 'I, also, can do the like of what you have done.' Then he said, 'Bring another.' Simon laid hands on the leper and he was cured. Another mark remains; if you answer this I will believe in your God.' They said, 'What is it?'

He said, 'Can you revive the dead?' They said, 'Yes.' Then Simon faced the king and asked, 'Do you have a dead person who's passing has been hard for you?' He said, 'Yes. My son.' Simon said, 'Bring us to his grave.' Then he said, 'They have put themselves at risk for you.'

Then they turned to the grave and raised their hands [in prayer], as did Simon, then suddenly the grave cracked open and the youth stood up. He faced his father who said to him, 'How are you?' He said, 'I was dead, and terrified, when I understood there to be three persons standing before Allah with their hands raised in prayer to Him.'

They prayed that He revive me. They were those two and he.' Simon said, 'I am a believer in your God.' The king said, 'O Simon, I believe in Him in Whom you have come to believe.' The viziers of the king said, 'And we believe in Him in Whom our master has come to believe.' The weak always followed the strong. In Antioch none remained who did not believe."⁹

9. Abu Hamzah al-Thumali said that he asked Imam Baqir ('a) about the exegesis of the *ayah*,

And set out to them an example of the people of the town, when the messengers came to it. When We sent to them two, the rejected both of them, then We strengthened them with a third, so they said: Surely we are messengers to you. (36: 13-14).

He said, "Allah commissioned two men to go to the people of Antioch. They brought things that were unfamiliar to those people, so the people were coarse with them, arrested them and imprisoned them in the house of idols. So, Allah commissioned a third. He entered the town, and said, 'Lead me to the gate of the king.' When he stood before the gate of the king, he said, 'I am a man who has worshiped in the deserts of the earth, and I would like to worship the God of the king.'

His speech reached the king, who said, 'Bring him into the house of the gods.' They brought him in it, and he remained there a year, with his two companions, to whom he said, 'In this way we transfer a people from one religion to another, not by bungling. Why were you not friendly?' Then he said to them, 'Do not admit to knowing me.'

Then he was brought before the king. The king said to him, 'It has reached me that you have been worshipping my god. You will always be my brother, so ask me for what you need.' He said, 'I need nothing, O king! But I saw two men there in the house of the gods, so, how is it with them?' The king said, 'Those two are men who came here, misled people from my religion, and invited them to a heavenly God.'

He said, 'O king! What a beautiful debate! If they prove right, we will follow them, and if we prove right, they will enter our religion with us. So, whatever is for us is for them, and whatever is against us is against them.' The king sent for those two.

When they came before him, their companion said to them, 'What do you have for us?' They said, 'We came to invite to the worship of Allah, Who created the heavens and earth, Who creates what He wills in the wombs, Who forms as He wills, Who grows the trees and fruits and Who sends rain from the sky.'

He said to them, 'This God of yours, to Whom and to Whose worship you invite, if we bring to you a blind person, can He restore him to health?' They said, 'If we ask Him to do it, He will do it, if He wants.' He said, 'O king! Bring a blind person who has never seen.' One such person was brought. He said to them, 'Supplicate your God to restore his sight.'

They stood up and prayed two prostrations (*raq'atayn*). All at once, the eyes of the blind man opened, and he looked to the sky. Simon said, 'O king! Bring another blind person to me.' One was brought. Simon prayed one prostration (*sajdah*), then he lifted his head and all at once the blind person was seeing. He said, 'O king! A proof for a proof! Bring a cripple.'

One was brought. He said the same [sort of thing as was previously mentioned to them about the blind person]. They prayed and supplicated Allah. All at once the cripple straightened his legs, stood and walked. He said, 'O king! Bring another cripple to me.' One was brought. He did the same [thing that he did in the case of the blind person]. The cripple got up. He said, 'O king! They brought two proofs, and we have brought the like of both of them. One thing remains. If they do this, I will enter their religion with them.'

Then he said, 'O king! Word has reached me that the king had an only son, and that he died. If their God revives him, I will enter their religion with them.' The king said to him, 'And I with you, too.' Then Simon said to them, 'One thing remains. The son of the king has died, so, supplicate your God to revive him.' They fell to prostrate themselves to Allah.

They lengthened their prostration (*sajdah*). Then they raised their heads and said to the king, 'Send someone to the grave of your son, and you will find that he has been raised from his grave, God willing.'

The people went out to look. They found him to have come out of his grave, wiping the dust from his head. They brought him to the king. He recognized his son and said to him, 'How are you, my son?' He said, 'I was dead. Then I saw two men before my Lord, in prostration, supplicating Him that I be revived.'

Then He revived me.’ He said, ‘O my son! Would you recognize them if you saw them?’ He said, ‘Yes.’

He brought the people out to a field. One by one they passed him, and the father told his son, ‘Look.’ The son said, ‘No. No.’ Then, after many had passed, the king had one of them pass, and the son said, ‘This is one of them,’ and he pointed to him. Then many passed by, until he saw the companion of the other. The son said, ‘This is the other one.’

The prophet who was the companion of those two men said, ‘As for me, I believe in your God. I know that what you have brought is the truth.’ The king said, ‘I, also, believe in your God.’ Then all the people of his kingdom believed.¹⁰

10. It is reported that Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) said, “Between David and Jesus (‘a) there were four hundred eighty years. There descended to Jesus admonitions, parables and sanctions in the Gospel. There was no retaliation nor commands for punishments, nor obligatory inheritance.

There descended upon him a lightening of what was descended upon Moses (‘a) in the Torah, and this is what He said, reporting the words of Jesus to the Children of Israel,

Likewise confirming the truth of the Torah that is before me, and to make lawful to you certain things that were forbidden unto you. (3:50).

And Jesus ordered those who were with him, who followed him and who were believers to believe in the law of the Torah and the laws of all the prophets and the Gospel.” And he [Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a)] said, “Jesus (‘a) waited for seven or eight years, then he informed them [the people] of what they ate and what they stored in their houses.

And he stood up among them, and made the dead to live, and cured the born blind and the leper, and he taught them the Torah. Then Allah descended the Gospel upon him when He wanted to bring an authority for them.

And he [Jesus (‘a)] sent a man to Rome. All he treated were cured of their illnesses, and he cured the born blind and the leper, until it was mentioned to the king there. So, he was brought to him. He [the king] said, ‘Do you make well the born blind and the leper?’ He said, ‘Yes.’

He said, ‘Bring a youth who has no eyes and has never seen anything.’ He took two hazelnuts and looked at them sharply, then he put them in his eye sockets, and prayed. At once he became seeing. The king sat him next to himself, and said, ‘Be with me, and do not leave my city.’ He conferred upon him the best positions.

Then the Messiah sent another, and taught him something for reviving the dead. He entered Rome, and said, ‘I am more knowledgeable than the physician of the king.’ This was mentioned to the king. He said, ‘Kill him.’ The [first] physician said, ‘Do not do it. Bring him. If you find him to be in error, you will kill him. In that case, you would have authority to do so.’

He was brought to him. He said, 'I revive the dead.' The king mounted and so did the people and they went to the grave of the son of the king who had recently died. The apostle of the Messiah prayed, and the first apostle who was the physician of the king said, 'Amen.' The grave split open and the son of the king emerged. Then he came walking until he sat in the lap of his father.

Then he said, 'O my son! Who revived you?' Then he looked and said, 'This one and that one.' Then they stood and said, 'We are messengers to you from the Messiah. You had not listened to his messengers. You even ordered them to be killed when they came to you.' Then he obeyed and glorified the affair of the Messiah until the enemies of Allah said what they said about him and the Jews belied him and wanted to kill him.¹¹

11. It is reported that Jesus the son of Mary ('a) raised John the son of Zachariah among twelve apostles to teach the people and to prohibit them from marrying their sisters' daughters. The king of those people was attracted to the daughter of his sister and he wanted to marry her.

When her mother was informed that John had prohibited this kind of marriage, she brought her daughter adorned to the king. When the king saw her, he asked her what she desired. She said, "I want you to slaughter John the son of Zachariah." He said, "Ask me for something else." She said, "I will not ask you for anything but this."

When she refused him, he sent for a basin and sent for John. Then he slaughtered him. A drop of his blood fell at once to the earth and the stain of it remained until Bukht Nassar reigned over them. Then an old man of the children of Israel came to him and guided him to that blood. Bukht Nassar decided to kill the children of Israel because of that blood until the stain would be obliterated. So he killed seventy thousand for this in one year until it was obliterated.¹²

12. Abu Ja'far ('a) said, "The foremost¹³ are four: the murdered son of Adam, the foremost of the community of Moses, who was a believer among the Pharaoh's people, the foremost of the community of Jesus, who was Habib the carpenter, and the foremost of the community of Muhammad, who was 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a)."¹⁴

1. Bihar, 14, 250, 40

2. Bihar, 36, 285, 107

3. Bihar, 14, 273, 2

4. See (61: 14)

5. Kafi, 8, 268, 396

6. Bihar, 36, 310, 149

7. Bihar, 53, 5

8. Kafi, 5, 71, 3

9. Bihar, 14, 252

10. Bihar 14, 240-242, 20

11. Bihar, 14, 251, 43

12. Bihar, 14, 182, 24

13. See (56:10)

14. Bihar, 66, 156

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