

Lesson 20: Muhammad the Foretold Prophet

Time of Expectation and Hope

The prophets of ancient times – especially Hazrat Musa and Hazrat Isa (a.s.), had given their followers news of the advent of Islam, even to the extent that indications of the special attributes of the Prophet of Islam appeared in their Holy Scriptures. For this reason, the Jews and the Christians and the followers of other religions were watching out for the advent of Islam. They would watch like people who see their ship with torn sails and broken anchor in danger of sinking in the sea and therefore direct their gaze at the shore of future safety.¹

Some of the Jews had even found, through much searching, a place between the hills of ‘Ayr and Uhud which were named in their own books as the center of Islamic rule, and migrated there, waiting for the advent of Islam.²

The Qur’an is a testimony to the truth of these facts, that the Torah and the Injil³ had given news of the advent of the prophet of Islam.

There are those who follow the Messengers, the illiterate Prophet (not conventionally educated), whose description they find written in the Torah and the Gospel. [He (the Messengers) enjoins them to do good and forbids them to do all that is unlawful, makes lawful for them all that is pure and unlawful all that is filthy, removes their burdens and the entanglements in which they are involved]. Those who believe in him, honor and help him, and follow the light, which is sent down to him, will have everlasting happiness. (7:157)

Muhammad is the Messenger of God and those with him are stern to the disbelievers yet kind among themselves. You can see them bowing and prostrating before God, seeking His favors and pleasure. Their faces (foreheads) are marked due to the effect of their frequent prostrations. That is their description in the Torah and in the Gospel they are mentioned as the seed which shoots out its stalk then becomes stronger, harder and stands firm on its stumps, attracting the farmers. Thus, God has described the believers to enrage the disbelievers. God has promised forgiveness and a great reward to the righteously striving believers (48:29).

This example indicates that the Prophet and his devoted companions started from nothing, and reached to the summit by self-sacrifice, dedication and faith. They surprised the world. God has promised forgiveness and a great reward to those Jews and Christians who become believers and Muslims and cultivate righteousness.

And when Isa son of Maryam said: 'Children of Isra'il I am indeed the Messenger of Allah to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad And when he brought them clear signs, they said: 'This is a manifest sorcery. (61:6)

Those unto whom We have given the Book, and they recognise it as they recognize their sons, even though there is a party of them who conceal the truth and that wittingly. (2:146)

Those to whom We have given the Book recognise him (Muhammad) as they recognize their own sons. Those who have lost their own souls they do not believe. (6:20)

It comes out clearly from these verses (ayahs) that the previous prophets informed the people of the coming of Muhammad (S) and of his characteristics. Clear glad tidings exist in their religious books, so that when Muhammad (S) appeared together with Islam, no room remained for any kind of doubt.

If there had been no such news in the Christian and Jewish Holy Scriptures at the time of Muhammad (S) it would not have been expected from the radiant thought of someone like Muhammad (S) to stand up and proclaim. In order to prove his messengership before all the people of the Book proclaim and say, "My name and my characteristics have appeared in the Torah and the Injil which are in your possession at this very moment." Because the enemies of Muhammad (S) did not give up, and to annihilate his message, they collected together the copies of the Torah and Injil to prove that such characteristics were not in these books.

History is a witness that they tried every way that there was in their opposition to Prophet Muhammad (S) and even rose up to fight him. But they never managed with this facile and simple ruse to prove that these characteristics were not mentioned in their holy Scriptures. It is clear that abundant information concerning the Prophet of Islam existed in the sacred books.

Some More Historical Evidence

Before the rise of Islam, two circles or groups of people had grown up in Medina The first were Jews who had left their original lands in the hope to witness the advent of the Prophet of Islam (S).

The second were the tribes of Aws and Kharaj, who were the descendants of Tubba' the king of Yemen. Tubba' came to Medina and learnt that that place would be the place of migration of the Prophet and the place where Islamic Government would take shape. He said to these two tribes to remain in that place until such time as the Prophet of Islam appeared and then to support him. 4

They stayed there and Gradually increased in numbers and became powerful to the point that they seized the houses and property of the unconcerned Jews. They committed aggression and gradually forgot the cause of their ancestors' staying in that town and became ignorant of why their ancestors had come there and made their settlement there.

However, the Jews, who were unequal with them in power, continued to tell each other of the advent of the Prophet of Islam (S) and of safety from the aggression. The Qur'an says about the Jews:

And from before they, had been praying for victory over the unbelievers, (but) when there came to them that they recognised, they disbelieved in it. (2:89)

Ibn Hawash (or Ibn'l-Ilayyaban), a Jewish scholar, left Syria seeking to meet the Prophet of Islam (S) and came to Medina, but while he was alive, Muhammad (S) was not yet called to his prophethood. For this reason, when he was dying, Ibn Hawash said to the Jews: "I left my extensive, comfortable life in Syria out of love to see Prophet Muhammad (S) came here, and bread and date were enough for me. Alas! I did not achieve my wish. But know that he will rise up in Mecca and will migrate here. In eating he will be content with morsels of bread and dates; he will be so humble that he will ride on unsaddled mount. His rule will spread to an amazing extent. He will be afraid of none, and those who are an obstacle to the way of right and truth will be cast aside..."⁵

Zayd ibn Umar of Hijaz came in search of the true religion of Ibrahim. On his way he had crossed from Mecca to Syria and to Mawsul but the more he searched, the less he found. In the end a Christian scholar said to him that there remained no trace of the original religion of Ibrahim, but that in those very days a prophet was to blossom forth in his own homeland from whose message and sayings he could obtain that original religion.

Zayd returned towards Mecca, but on the way he was killed. The Prophet instructed to goodness through his example, saying: "Zayd was someone who left this world in seeking the way to Allah."⁶

Buhayra, a Christian scholar, saw Prophet Muhammad (S) in the latter's childhood. He recognised him from the signs he had read in the Holy Scriptures. He said to Abu Talib who was accompanying Muhammad (S), "He will be a prophet. Look after him, and take him to his country quickly."⁷

Another Christian scholar, Nistur also when he saw Muhammad (S) in the latter's youth, gave the news that he would become a prophet in a clear way, "He is the last prophet of time."

On the basis of these predictions of the holy Books, numerous of people became Muslims at the very beginning of the rise and appearance of Islam without any coercion.

The Predisposition of the People of Medina towards Islam

When the Prophet received the order from God to invite people to Islam, and at the time of Hajj which

existed in a form before Islam, he addressed the people and presented Islam to them. During this time he held a meeting with some people from the tribe of Khazraj whom he asked, “What tribe are you from?”

“From Khazraj.” They replied.

“Are you ready to sit together for a few moments and talk?” The Prophet said.

“Yes, we are.” They replied.

“I am calling you to One God.” Said the Holy Prophet.

Then the Prophet read for them some verses from the sweet words of God and they were so entrapped by the Qur’an that they said to each other without thinking: “We swear that this is what the Jews were telling us of. Let not the Jews reach it before us.” Then they all became Muslims, and when they returned to Medina they commenced the propagation of Islam. The Prophet also sent Mus’ab ibn ‘umir after them to teach them the Qur’an and also to call others to Islam.

Mur’ab brought many groups in Medina to Islam; among them the Asid the heads of the Aws tribe, became Muslims and said to their tribe, “Muhammad (S) is the very one whose coming the Jews were always announcing.” And their tribe also became Muslims, and in this way Islam spread in Medina and became strong. Groups of Muslims from Mecca also moved there, and, in the end, the Prophet himself went to Medina and there he set up the Islamic government.

The Attraction of Salman to Islam

Salman was an Iranian from a peasant family; his mother and father were Zoroastrians, fire-worshippers Salman whose name was then Ruzbeh, they loved very much. They taught him the beliefs of their religion, and entirely prevented him from mixing with others.

One day, Salman went on his father's orders to inspect their fields. On his way he fell upon a church in which a group of God's slaves were engaged in prayer. Ruzbeh started to think deeply, and he stayed with them till dusk approached, meditating. At last he understood that their way was superior to his fathers' and ancestors' way.

“Where is the center of this religion?” He asked.

“It is in Syria.” They answered.

His father became anxious because of his late return and sent someone to look for him. When he returned home, his father asked him where he had been. He described what had happened, but his father said, “The religion of your ancestors is much better.”

“With my own thinking,” he replied, “I have seen that their way is purer.”

His father became even more disturbed and rebuked him. He then locked him up in the house.

Ruzbeh secretly sent someone to the Christians and informed them that when merchants came from Syria and had done their work, and when the time came for their return they should tell him and he would secretly leave his house and accompany them to Syria.

And thus it was that he went to Syria, and into the presence of one of the great Christian scholars, and begged him to take him as his servant and to instruct him on the acquisition of knowledge and servitude to God. The scholar accepted him.

When the scholar died, Ruzbeh went to some of the other great Christians of the day, in accordance with his master's instructions. From the last of these scholars, who lived in the Umuriyah district of Damascus, he asked guidance to another, but he replied:

“I have no idea of anyone else, but in the very near future a prophet will arise in the lands of the Arabs who will migrate from his birthplace to a place covered in date– palms. This land is situated between two lava belts. Some of the signs of his magnanimity and special habits are these. He will accept what is given to him out of respect, but he will not take food and alms given out of compassion and aid. Among the signs is the mark and seal of prophethood on his skin. If you can go there, then you should go. “

After the death of that scholar, Ruzbeh asked the caravan leaders who were setting out for business in Arabia to take him with them to that place. They accepted, but on their way they betrayed him and sold him in slavery to a Jew from the Bani Qurayza who put him to labor in the vicinity of Medina. Ruzbeh recognized the very place he had reached as one of the signs told to him by the old scholar. So he was happy to start work in the date–groves of his master, but he was always looking out for the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S) and searched for him, but, because he was in difficult circumstances, he could not make many inquiries.

At last the day of meeting arrived; the Prophet had gone, together with some of his companions, to a place near Medina and Ruzbeh got to hear of this.

He said to himself that this was the best time to look for the signs from this person himself and to compare them with what he had heard from the Christian scholar. So he took some morsels of food, which he had with him and gave them to that honored person and said: “This food is for the special benefit of the needy, and since your companions are needy, please accept it from me.”

The Prophet gave it to his companions. Ruzbeh looked carefully, but he saw that the Prophet did not touch the food, and he could not contain himself with joy, for one of the signs had been found true in him.

With excitement he brought another morsel of food, which he had with him to the Prophet, presented it to

him and said: “This is my present to you, please accept it from me.” The Prophet gladly accepted it and ate from it.

Ruzbeh was looking at him and was enthralled. He then walked around the Prophet of Islam – the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him and his family – to see the mark on the Prophet's shoulder. The Prophet understood what he wanted and took off the clothes that were on his back so that he sees the mark. Ruzbeh saw it and accepted Islam.

He was renamed Salman and the means to free him were collected. He became close to the group of the companions around the Prophet and with his insight and deep and wide faith he became in the shortest period of time, the greatest of the Prophet's disciples.⁸

All seekers after truth, who were suffering from the dryness and burning heat of that time like an unquenchable thirst, were looking for the source of being and the water of life. Since the signs which they had read or heard of in the holy books were present in the Prophet they gave their hearts to the ocean and washed their souls in that spring of the water of life and wisdom. Group after group gave their hearts to the pure religion of Islam and became followers of Muhammad (S) The Qur'an says:

People, group after group, turned to Islam. (110:2)

But together with these seekers after truth, there were groups of Jews and Christians and other enemies who did not embrace Islam, through bigotry or because their businesses or positions were endangered, although they were aware of the truth of that great, divine person.

They knew where the source of salvation was, but through obstinacy they clung to their illusions and did not desist from their stubbornness, but became caught in everlasting perdition and failed to reach contentment.

And when there came to them that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it; therefore the curse of Allah is on the unbelievers. (2:89)

Two examples:

Safiyah, the daughter of Hayy ibn Akhtab said, “When the Prophet (S) migrated to Medina and alighted at Qaba', my father and my uncle, Abu Yassir went to call on him in the half-light of dawn. The sunset came and they returned, and I went to them with childish joy. But they were very tired, and, contrary to their custom, they paid no attention to me. My uncle said to my father:

“Is he the one?”

“By God, I swear he is!”

“Did you recognize him?”

“Yes.”

“Now what do you think of him?”

“By God, I swear that as long as I live I will be his enemy.⁹”

The following is another example of this hardheartedness. One day the Holy Prophet said to Ka'b ibn Assad, “Do you not remember the example of Ibn Hawash (the Jewish scholar who went from Syria to Medina – see above)? Has it had no effect on you?”

“Yes I do,” replied Ka'b, “and if the censure of the Jews did not torment me when they say “Ka'b is frightened to be killed”, I would believe in you. But now I am in the faith of the Jews and I am safe from their censure, and I shall stay in that religion till I die.”¹⁰

The Qur'an tells of the injury caused by this hardheartedness which is the origin of the destruction of life and contentment, and speaks of these people thus:

Vile is the thing they have sold themselves for, disbelieving in that which Allah sent down, grudging that Allah should send down of His bounty on whomsoever He will of His servants, and they were laden with anger upon anger; and for unbelievers awaits a humbling chastisement. (2:90)

Questions

1. Who had given the news of the advent of Islam?
2. How anxiously were the people waiting for the advent of Islam?
3. Who were some of the people searching for the place named in their Holy Book?
4. What does verse 157 ch. 7 say?
5. What does verse 29 ch. 48 say?
6. Did the Prophet and the Muslims establish Islam with suffer or not?
7. What does V 6 ch. 61 say?
8. What does V 146 ch. 2 say?
9. What does V 20 ch. 6 say?
10. What do these verses indicate?
11. What would the enemy do if Prophet Muhammad was not mentioned in the Bible?

12. Which groups of people settled around Madina and why?
13. Which group forgot the reason of the settling and which group did not?
14. What does verse 89 ch. 2 say?
15. What did Ibn Hawash say to his people when he was about to die?
16. What did the Christian scholar say to Zaid ibn Umar?
17. What did the Holy Prophet say about Zaid Ibn Umar?
18. What did Buhayra say about Abu Talib?
19. With who did the Prophet have a meeting with during Hajj?
20. Can you answer the Questions of the Holy Prophet 1–3?
21. Who became Muslim because of the preaching of Mus'Ali?
22. Who was Salman and what was his previous religion?
23. Can you mention the experience of Salman before Islam in one paragraph?
24. Which signs of Prophet Muhammad were mentioned to Salman by the Christian scholar?
25. When and how Ruzbeh experimented the predictions of the Christian Scholar?
26. What is considered in the text is the water of life and what did the people do with it?
27. What does verse 2 ch. 110 say?
28. Were all the people in the early Muslim community sinners?
29. What does verse 89 ch. 2 say?
30. Can you mention the experience of Safiyah?
31. What question did the Prophet from Ka'li Ibn Assad and what was the reply?
32. What does verse 90 ch. 2 say?

1. See Ibn Hisham's Life of Muhammad translated by A. Guillaume (London, 1955) pp. 90–95

2. See Rawdah Kafi p. 308.

3. See also lessons 17 & 18

4. Bihar al-Anwar vol. 15

5. See Ibn Hisham pp. 94–95.
6. See Bihar al-Anwar vol. 15 pp. 204.
7. See Ibn Hisham pp. 79–81.
8. See Sirah of Ibn Hisham vol. 1, p. 212–214: Tabaqat Ibn S'd vol. 4, p. 54.
9. See Sirah Ibn Hisham vol. 2. p. 518.
10. See Ithbat al-Hudat vol. 1. p. 350

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