

Lesson29: The Return

“You have been created for eternity; you are merely being moved from one home to another.” The Prophet of Islam (S)

All divinely revealed religions have specified that man is not destroyed by death but only goes from this world to another world and in that world will receive the due reward for his deeds, good or bad.

All divine prophets and their followers have mentioned this point, that the amazing harmony and order of the universe is not in vain, and that after the removal from this world, all the actions that were done here will be investigated, so we should prepare ourselves for such a sure and certain future and always say:

“Our Lord, Thou hast not created this for vanity. Glory be to Thee! Guard us against the chastisement of the Fire.” (3: 191)

Now let us look at some of the clear proofs of the Return

1. The Wisdom and Justice of Allah

The matter of the Return, which all religions specify and about which God's prophets have warned people with all insistence, is not just something to be accepted blindly, for the intellect acknowledges it to be sure and certain on the basis of the wisdom, justice and mercy of Allah.

God's wisdom requires that those who do good should not be left without reward, and that those who do evil should not be left without punishment, and that the oppressed be delivered from their oppression. We can see that this world is not a place of complete reward and punishment, and that man good-doers and evil-doers die before they receive a complete, just reward for the deeds. Evil-doers, with all their crimes and wrongs, benefit from the resources of life, and the oppressed are not delivered from their oppression.

Thus, if the records of these people were to terminate right here, and there is no Return and Resurrection, what would have happened to God's infinite justice, wisdom and mercy?

How can it be said that the Just, Wise and Merciful Creator brought a world into existence where important people are troubled with oppression and injustice, and after a while become nothing?

We all know that this would be nothing less than injustice. The insignificant justice and wisdom of man, even, is not compatible with such works, so how is it possible that an All-wise God should be like that? How is it possible that a God Who had no need to create us, and Whose aim in creating us was only to train us and make our existence productive, could be satisfied merely with this present world? How could He cut the root of man's existence before he became aware and reached fruition and annihilate him?

Without doubt, God will give complete reward and punishment for all deeds and behaviour in another world, and will neglect nothing.

“Or do those who commit evil deeds think that We shall make them as those who believe and do righteous deeds, equal their living and their dying? How ill they judge! Allah created the heavens and the earth in truth, and that every soul may be recompensed for what it has earned; they shall not be wronged.” (45: 21-22)

Also, in this limited world it is impossible to punish some deeds and works. For example, someone who drops an atom bomb and blows millions of people into blood and dust. His death, in the face of the death of millions of people, cannot be called punishment, and his complete reward will come in the next world which is an eternal world.

Similarly, the life of this world, mixed with difficulties and discomforts, is too small for God to reward the doers of good there, the people who have devoted themselves throughout their lives to service to God and to good towards other creatures, or who have saved countless numbers of souls from certain death.

Retribution

We have seen and heard with our own eyes and ears in this world how many people have, for example, dealt unjustly with their mothers and fathers, but have had no triumph in their lives, or who have killed their parents and died themselves young. We have also seen how many people have been kind to the mothers and fathers, and have received their reward in this world and lived successful lives; and again how many people have not observed the rights of orphans, and have seen the ominous fruits of their work in this world.

The Qur'an has threatened people with the consequences of injustice towards orphans and has said:

“And let those fear (from hurting orphans) who, if they left behind them weak seed, would be afraid on their account, and let them fear Allah.” (4: 9)

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said: “Allah has allotted two punishments for consuming the property of orphans, a torment in this world and a retribution in the next.”

Sometimes the afflictions and blights from which a man suffers are the result of bad deeds which originate from him, and truly retribution will come in this world till that person becomes aware of what he is doing and ceases from it. In many ayahs, the Qur'an explains this matter.

“Whatever affliction visits you is for what your own hands have earned.” (42:30)

“So let those who go against His command beware, lest a trial befall them, or there befall them a painful chastisement.” (24:63)

“Allah changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves.” (13: 11)

Some tribes and peoples who rebelled against the prophets of God sometimes saw the worldly punishment for their deeds in the world itself. The Qur'an narrates the tortues of the people of Nuh, the people of Hud, the people of Salih, the people of Lut and the people of Shu'ayb and others.¹

These retributions are a living witness to the fact that Cod, the Just and Merciful is no. pleased with evil-doing and oppression and will give complete rewards for all deeds in another world. Generally, tile retributions of this world are a sample of the complete retributions for deeds in the other world. And anyone who takes notice of the rewards of this world will soon see that man is not left to himself, and will meet with an exact reckoning in the next world for all his deeds and behaviour.

It must be remembered that it is sometimes necessary for the building and perfecting of righteous individuals that troubles and hardships should occur, and these should in no way be thought of as rewards. Thus, also, some evil-doers may not get the just reward they deserve for their deeds, but this is not a proof that they are subject to a special grace from God, or that they have been overlooked, for their punishment will be meted out to them in the next world.

About people being believers or unbelievers, and in description of what will be given to the unbelievers in hell and the believers in heaven, it says:

“Then as for him who was insolent and preferred the life of the world, surely Hell shall the refuge. But as for him who feared the station of his Lord and forbade the soul its caprice, surely the Garden shall be the refuge.” (79: 37)

“Whosoever does an evil deed shall be recompensed only with the like of it, but whosoever does a righteous deed, be they male or female, believing – those shall enter the Garden, therein provided without reckoning.” (40: 40)

The Qur'an explicitly states the difficulties of Resurrection and the severity of the punishment so that people should fear Allah and do good.

“O men, fear your Lord! Surely the earthquake of the Hour is a mighty thing; or that day when you behold it, every suckling woman shall neglect the child she has suckled, and every pregnant

woman shall deposit her burden, and thou shalt see mankind drunk, yet they are not drunk. but Allah's chastisement is terrible.” (22: 1-2)

“And when the Blast shall sound, upon the day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father his consort, his sons, every man that day shall have business to suffice him.” (80: 33-36)

“The day that every soul shall find what it has done of good brought forward, and what it has done of era, it shall wish if there were only a far space between it and that day.” (3:30)

Hundreds more ayahs expound the subject of the Return and the reckoning of the Day of Resurrection. If these ayahs are considered with care and attention, it will transform man's behaviour in this world to such an extent that he will not touch a thing more without reckoning it and he will fear Allah. He will gather together provisions for his eternal life here in this world, which is a kind of farm.

Pure-hearted Muslims, out of fear of the next world, will carefully weigh their acts and words and even thoughts, they will keep the nights free of sleep, and devote themselves to worship, to supplicating Allah. They will not do things dictated by their pleasure, and spend the night and day, thinking how to improve themselves and the community.

Sa'sa'ah ibn Suhan said: "I was present in the mosque at Kufah for the morning prayer. Hazrat 'Ali, Amir al-Mu'minin prayed with us, and, after the salam he sat facing the qibla, engaged himself in remembrance of Allah (dhikr), not looking at all to the right or to the left of himself, until the sun had risen. Then he turned to us and said: 'In the time of my beloved Prophet of Allah (S), there were people who were engaged in sajdah and ruku' in this night till the morning, and when it became light they were disheveled of hair and covered in dust, and their foreheads were marked with the effects of sajdah. When they remembered death, like trees whipped by the wind, they fell into great commotion and wept, soaking their clothes in their tears.' Then Hazrat 'Ali stood up, but he said: 'It would seem that those who have lived in forgetfulness.'"

One day after the Prophet of Islam (S) had prayed the Morning Prayer in the mosque, he saw a youth named Haritha who was dozing, he had become pale, emaciated and his eyes were sunken. The Prophet asked him how he felt. He said 'In a state of certainty.' The Prophet was surprised at his answer and said: 'Every certainty has a reality. What is the reality of your certainty?'

He said: 'O Prophet! My certainty has made me depressed and steals sleep from my eyes, and makes me hot with thirst in the middle of the day. I renounce this world and all that is in it. Now it is as if I see the Resurrection taking place and the people coming to be reckoned. I also am among them, and I can see that one group is enjoying the blessings of heaven and are sitting on the heavenly thrones around them and are speaking to each other. And I can see that another group is being punished in the Fire; their cries for help and protection are loud, and it seems that right now the crackling of the flames of the Fire is resounding in my ears.'

The Prophet (S) told his companions: 'He is a slave whose heart Allah has filled with a brilliant faith.'¹ Then he told the youth: 'Be watchful that this state does not leave you.' The youth said: 'O Prophet! Pray to Allah that I may be martyred in your service.' The Prophet prayed for his martyrdom, and it was not long before he attained his glory in one of the wars along with other persons.

Questions

1. What has the Holy Prophet said man is created for?
2. What did the Prophet say we must look forward to?
3. What does Verse 91 ch. 3 say?
4. On what basis does reason say resurrection is certain?
5. What does God's wisdom require?
6. Will everyone's account close after his/her death?
7. What would be the meaning of Divine Justice without resurrection?
8. What does verse 21–22 ch. 25 say?
9. Can the worldly rewards and punishments be considered compatible to the good deeds or crimes of the people?
10. What does verse 9 ch. 4 say?
11. What does verse 30 ch. 42 say?
12. What does verse 63 ch. 24 say?
13. What does verse 11 ch. 13 say?
14. Did any of the enemies of the prophet receive punishment in this world?
15. What is worldly punishment in relation to those of the next life?
16. What for are the worldly troubles?
17. What does verse 37 ch 79 say?
18. What does verse 40 ch. 40 say?
19. What do verse 1–2 ch. 22 say?

20. What do verse 33–36 ch. 80 say?
21. What does verse 30 ch. 3 say?
22. What would an understanding of these verses do to man?
23. What did Sa'sa'ah experience in the Mosque of Kufa one morning?
24. What did the Holy Prophet ask Haritha one morning?
25. What was his answer to the Prophet and how was his physical condition?
26. What did the Prophet say to the others about him?

1. See Surah Hud and elsewhere.

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