

Section 3: The Covenants with the Jews and the Christians

The covenants with the Jews – The covenants with the Christians – The actual position of Jesus

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 12

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

12. "And certainly Allah made a covenant with the Children of Israel, and We raised among them twelve chiftains, and Allah said: 'Verily I am with you, if you keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and believe in My messengers and assist them and lend Allah a kindly loan, I will most certainly cover your evil deeds and I will certainly cause you to enter Gardens beneath which rivers flow; but whoever among you disbelieves after that, has indeed strayed from the right path."

The chiefs of the Israelites were twelve persons. The ministers of Moses (as) and the custodians of the twelve tribes were from among them. It is narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S) who, in a tradition, said:

*"The vicegerents after me are twelve. They the Israelites"*¹.

The attempt of the opponents of Ahlul-Bayt (as) is in vain when they try to adapt this figure to Orthodox Caliphs, Umayyid Caliphs, and the Caliphs of Abbasids, though it adapts to neither of them.

There are, of course, many traditions recorded which denote that the Prophet himself (S) mentioned the names of these twelve persons. According to his statement recorded in a tradition² the first of them is Ali-ibn-Abi talib and their last one is Hadrat Mahdi (May *Allah* hasten his auspicious advent).

The Arabic phrase: /azzartumuhum/ is derived from the word /azzara/ which means: 'to assist with honour'. Therefore, the Arabic term /ta'zir/ refers to a kind of assistance to the sinner in abandoning the crime. That is why those Islamic punishments have the function of education rather than vengeance.

The Qur'anic phrase /sawa'-us-sabil/ means the middle way that swerving from which is going towards aberration and fall.

Explanations

1. *Allah* is with us when we observe some conditions including: prayers, poor-rate, belief in Truth, assisting prophets, and giving charity. So, if we leave them, the Grace of *Allah* will be ceased.
2. Prayer, poor-rate, and charity have existed in all the Divine religions. However, performing obligations alone is not enough, but following the totality of obligatory and recommended deeds, without approaching the prohibited things, is effective.
3. Prayer, poor-rate, and charity are meaningful when they are accompanied with leadership and master ship –with the acceptance of master ship of the whole prophets, not a part of them.
4. There is no room for the sinners in Heaven. Purification is first, and then being admitted to enter into it.
5. The only way to the forgiveness of *Allah*, is Faith and righteous deeds.

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 13

فَبِمَا نَقَضْتُمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ
وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ
عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

13. "So, for their breaking their covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They alter the words (of Allah) from their places and they have neglected a part of what they were admonished with, and you shall always discover treachery in them save a few of them. Yet forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds); verily Allah loves the good-doers."

In the first verse of this Surah, the fulfilment of contracts was referred to. In the previous verse, the

covenant of *Allah* (s.w.t.) with the Israelites, and the heedlessness of those people unto the Divine covenant, was pointed out.

In the current verse, the effects of breaching promise are stated. Therefore, this Surah has been entitled 'the covenant' too. However, the contents of the verses, as a whole, also warn about a great breach of promise.

Breach of promise causes deprivation from *Allah's* grace.³ It is also an origin of the appearance of hard-heartedness in persons.

The Israelites have always been treacherous. They used to pervert the religion of *Allah*, therefore, they encountered with punishment. The verse says:

"So, for their breaking their covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They alter the words (of Allah) from their places and they have neglected a part of what they were admonished with, and you shall always discover treachery in them save a few of them. Yet forgive them and overlook (their misdeeds); verily Allah loves the good-doers."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 14

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ

14. "And of those who say: 'We are Christians' We did take their covenant, but they (also like Israelites) have neglected a part of what they were admonished with. Therefore We have stirred up among them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection; and soon Allah will inform them of what they have been doing."

In the previous verse, the words were about the breach of promise among the Children of Israel. Now, in this verse, the statement is upon the breach of promise among the Christians. That verse introduced almost all the Israelites as breachers of promise, (except a few of them). But, in this verse, from the beginning, it separates a part of the Christians as breachers of promise when it says:

"...of those who say: 'We are Christians' ..."

This shows that the number of the deluded people among the Jews is larger than those among the Christians.

"And of those who say: 'We are Christians' We did take their covenant, but they (also like Israelites) have neglected a part of what they were admonished with. Therefore We have stirred

up among them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection; and soon Allah will inform them of what they have been doing."

Explanation

The Qur'anic term /nasara/ (Christians), mentioned in this holy verse, is the plural form of the word /nasrani/, and, therein, the Christians are entitled /nasara/ since the helpers and companions of Jesus (as) used to say:

"...We are helpers (in the cause) of Allah. ..."⁴

Therefore, we must take an example by the bitter results emerged from breach of promise that other people had suffered. The verse indicates that *Allah* took covenant from the Christians, but since they neglected it they encountered the infliction of Ahzab.

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 15

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ
وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ

15. "O' People of the Book! Indeed Our Messenger has come to you, expounding to you much of what you have been hiding of the Book, and overlooking much. Indeed there has come to you, from Allah, a Light and a clear Book."

Islam is a world-wide religion which invites the followers of all religions to the Truth and to itself. Islam is the simplest and the most conceivable religion among all religions.

Hence, do take care not to be despair of guiding and inviting people towards the Truth, and do invite the People of the Book too, though they are breachers of promise. The manifestation of the concealed matters is a sign of knowledge of hidden things, and it is also one of the ways of knowing the holy prophet.

"O' People of the Book! Indeed Our Messenger has come to you expounding to you much of what you have been hiding of the Book, and overlooking much. ..."

However, the world of humanity with the absence of the Qur'an is surely dark.

"...Indeed there has come to you, from Allah, a Light and a clear Book."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 16

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

16. "With it Allah guides whoever follows His pleasure into the ways of safety, and He brings them out of darkness towards the Light by His Will, and guides them to a right path."

The Arabic term /salam/ (peace) is one of the Names of God (His Attributes). In this regard, the Holy Qur'an says:

"He is Allah, there is no god save He; the king, the Holy, the Peace..."⁵

Paradise has also been called 'Dar-us-Salam' (the house of peace). So, guiding towards the ways of peace and safety can be rendered into 'the way of Allah (s.w.t.) and Paradise'. The person who wants to reach these two, should go via /subul-as-salam/, 'the ways of safety', which is specific to the followers of 'Truth'.

The concept of /salam/ (peace, safety) includes the peace of individuals and society, family members and off springs, thought and soul, and, even, the peace of honour.

Only those people are guidable who try to obtain the pleasure of Allah (s.w.t.). Then, those who try to gain the ranks and the wealth of this fleeting world, and also follow their low desires and do revenge, are not guidable.

Certainly, all the ways toward safety and prosperity are found in gaining the pleasure of Allah. So, whoever tries to please other than Him, is in aberration.

However, all the various secondary ways towards the Truth, lead to the main unity. 'The ways of safety, end to the Straight Way. Hence, all those who, by performing different good accomplishments, in variety of conditions, try to gain the pleasure of Allah (s.w.t.), reach to one single proper way.

"With it Allah guides whoever follows His pleasure into the ways of safety, and He brings them out of darkness towards the Light by His Will and guides them to a right path."

However, the Qur'an is the best remedy and it can save its followers from any darkness – the darkness of dubious things, lusts, superstitions, crimes, agitations, and so on.

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 17

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

17. "Indeed, they have disbelieved who said: 'Verily Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary'. Say: 'Who can hold anything against Allah, if He intends to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone, on the earth? And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth .and whatever is between them two. He creates what He pleases; and Allah is All-Powerful over all things.'"

Christians have some groundless claims about *Allah* to which the Qur'an hints:

1. Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost). The Qur'an says:

"... do not say (Allah is) a Trinity ..."⁶

2. The Lord of creation, one of the three gods (the Father) whom the Qur'an rejects:

"...who say: ". Verily Allah is the third of the three, '..."⁷

3. Saying that God, Jesus and the Ghost are the same, upon which, this verse is a rejection.

The Qur'anic phrase:

"....He creates what He pleases; ..."

mentioned in the above verse, refers to the creation of Jesus (as) without a father, and the creation of Adam without parents.

Islam disagrees infidelity, idolatry, and superstition in whatever ideology they may be.

If Jesus is God, then how was he slain (as you believe), and did the cross become the sign of oppression? God is an Essence that cannot be attempted against.

"Indeed, they have disbelieved who said: 'Verily Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary'. Say: 'Who can hold anything against Allah, if He intends to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone, on the earth? And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth .and whatever is between them two. He creates what He pleases; and Allah is All-Powerful over all things.'"

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 18

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ وَأَحِبَّاؤُهُ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ بِذُنُوبِكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ
بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

18. "And the Jews and the Christians say: 'We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones.' Say: 'Why does He then punish you for your sins?' Nay, you are mortals of those He has created. He forgives whom He pleases, and punishes whom He pleases. And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth (and whatever is between them two, and unto Him is the ultimate return (of all))."

It is cited in the commentary of the Qur'an by Fakhr-i-Razi that some of the Jews said: "We are the sons of Allah and his beloved" when the Messenger of Allah invited them to embrace Islam. 8

The Jews and the Christians did not consider themselves the real sons of God, but they imagined a kind of formal adoption for themselves. The Arabic phrase /abna'-ul-lah/ (the sons of Allah) is an implicit, declaration of their undue expectation and extravagance in ambitions.

This fact should also be mentioned that in Islam racial superiority, privilege demanding, knowing right only themselves and their own party, and applying 'relationship instead of regulations' totally are forbidden.

Another fact is that neither any person nor a nation nor a race should absolutely be assured of the forgiveness of Allah, nor despaired of His favour. But, the bold Jews, with those crimes they committed, in spite of having those abundant Divine signs, still knew themselves the specific friends of Allah.

Slaying prophets, concealing the glad tidings upon the advent of the Prophet of Islam (S), breach of promises, perverting the heavenly Books, being afraid of entering the city, worshipping the Calf, seeking for excuses, gluttonies, and being impatient regarding the uniformity of their food (Manna and Salwa) are some examples of their crimes.

Also, for the wrath of Allah upon them, there are some examples of divine retribution such as moving the mount from its place, being wandered for forty years, transformation and humiliation. The verse says:

"And the Jews and the Christians say: 'We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones.' Say: 'Why does He then punish you for your sins?' Nay, you are mortals of those He has created. He forgives whom He pleases, and punishes whom He pleases. And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth (and whatever is between them two, and unto Him is the

ultimate return (of all)."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 19

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ عَلَى فَتْرَةٍ مِّنَ الرَّسُلِ أَن تَقُولُوا مَا
جَاءَنَا مِن بَشِيرٍ وَلَا نَذِيرٍ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَشِيرٌ وَنَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

19. "O' People of the Book! Indeed our Messenger has come to you to explain (things) to you after a cessation of the (mission of the) messengers, lest you say: There did not come unto us any giver of glad tidings nor any warner¹; but, indeed, there has come to you a giver of glad tidings and a warner; and Allah is All-Powerful over all things."

The intermission between the time of Hadrat Messiah (Jesus Christ) (as) and the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S) lasted about six hundred years. During the time when there exists not an appointed Divine prophet, the globe is not empty of Allah's Authority, because the prophets' successors have always existed.

As the words of Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) indicates, the earth never lacks godly authority whether he has power, or not, because the way of Allah should not be concealed for those who want to pave it.

Hence, the existence of the time of intermission between coming one prophet after the former does not mean that people are left alone to themselves.

"O' People of the Book! Indeed Our Messenger has come to you to explain (things) to you after a cessation of the (mission of the) messengers, lest you say: 'there did not come unto us any giver of glad tidings nor any warner¹'; but, indeed, there has come to you a giver of glad tidings and a warner; and Allah is All-Powerful over all things."

By the way, the intermissions, whether they are long or short, are certainly useful in the system of divine educational arrangements. There are several examples of this meaning in the length of the history of prophets.

For instance; the separation of Moses (as) from people, the spiritual retirement of prophets, the cease of revelation unto the Prophet Muhammad (S), and minor occultation and major occultation are some distinguished references for the idea.

1. Musnd Imam Ahmad-ibn-Hunbal, vol. 1, p. 398 and many other books

2. Yanabi'-ul-Mawaddah. p. 117

3. Surah At-Taubah, No.9, verse 77 denotes that breach of promise consequences to hypocrisy.

4. Surah As-Saff, No. 61, verse 14
5. Surah Al-Hashr, No.59, verse 23
6. Surah An-Nisa', No.4, verse 171
7. Surah Al-Ma'idah, No. 5, verse 73
8. This claim is also mentioned in the Book of John, one of the books of the New Testament, Chapter 8, and No.41
9. Nahjul-Balagha, saying No.147

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