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'Abd Allsh ibn Mas'sd, the Forerunner and Propagator of the Glorious Qur'an

'Abd All®h ibn Mas'®d belonged to the tribe of Hudhayl of Mecca and was the sixth person to convert to Islam. He migrated twice in his life; first from Mecca to Ethiopia, and, in the thirteenth year of the prophetic mission, from Mecca to Medina. He took part in all the confrontations, wars and battles with the other Muslims and the Noble Prophet (S).

Ibn Mas' Id was one of those people who had been promised paradise in the afterlife. He had memorized the whole of the Glorious Qur'an during the lifetime of the Noble Prophet (S). After the death of Allah's Prophet (S), people used to refer to him in order to learn the correct and proper way of reciting the Glorious Qur'an.

His occupation was teaching the Qur'anic sciences, propagating the Noble Prophet's (S) way of life and sayings [had ths], educating the ignorant, informing those who lacked knowledge, making the hearts of men firm and steadfast and strengthening the foundations of faith and religion. He was one of the twelve people who did not recognize the caliphate of Ab Bakr and declared his leadership illegal according to Islamic tenets.

It is for this reason that he used to gather people in the Prophet's (S) Mosque and tell them about the usurpation of the caliphate by the enemies of the *Ahlul Bayt* ('a). His constant protest against the illegal usurpation of the caliphate led to manifold hardships and physical injury which eventually caused his death. In his will to 'Ammer Yesir, he stated that 'Uthmen (the Third Caliph) must not participate in his funeral rites or mourning ceremonies.

While still young, he learnt about the Noble Prophet's (S) divine call to Islam and the revelation of the Holy Qur'an upon Muhammad (S) from Allah. Eager to know, he went to see the Noble Prophet (S) and said, "O Prophet of Allah! Teach me some of the revelation that is inspired to you."

When 'Abd Allsh ibn Mas'sd met the Noble Prophet (S) of Allah, he had just attained the age of puberty

and hence the performance of religious obligations had become incumbent upon him. The Noble Prophet (S) placed his hand on Ibn Mas's head and stated, "You are the son of Ibn Mas's d used to recall, 'From then on, I learnt and memorized seventy chapters of the Glorious Qur'an directly from the Noble Prophet (S). I learnt these seventy chapters so well that no one, not even the ill-wishers and fault-finders, could criticise my recitation of the Glorious Qur'an'."

'Abd All®h ibn Mas'®d was the first Muslim who daringly recited the Glorious Qur'an aloud in the midst of the polytheists of Mecca. One day a group of new Muslim converts gathered together and said, "Up to now the polytheists of Mecca have not heard anyone of us recite the Glorious Qur'an. Who among us will volunteer to carry out this duty?"

'Abd All®h ibn Mas'®d, a lover of divine revelation, enthusiastically said, "I volunteer." The other youths present said, "No. Not you. The one who volunteers to carry out this dangerous duty should have relatives in Mecca so that if the polytheists intend to harm him, his kith and kin will protect him from the fury of the infidels. But you, 'Abd All®h, do not have any family members in Mecca. Therefore, this duty is too dangerous to be entrusted to you."

'Abd All®h ibn Mas'®d insisted, "Let me carry out this task and do not fear for me because Allah is my supporter and protector." Early next morning, Ibn Mas'®d went and stood where the Prophet Abraham [Ibr®h®m] (S) stood and prayed after making the Ka'bah. As soon as the elders of Quraysh gathered together around the Ka'bah after sunrise, 'Abd All®h ibn Mas'®d started reciting the Noble Qur'an loudly.

He had memorized just a few verses of the *S*rat al-Rahmn, which he courageously recited among the polytheists for the first time, and made them hear the word of Allah with their own ears. The polytheists noticed him, and were curious to know who he was and what he was reciting. Some of them said, "He is reciting a (small) part of what Muhammad (S) has brought."

When the polytheists realized that Ibn Mas' dwas not a well-connected youth, but had gathered courage and dared to recite the Glorious Qur'an in their midst, they surrounded him to intimidate him, but failed to do so. Unperturbed, he continued to recite the Holy Qur'an.

The idol-worshippers felt belittled by his unconcern and started manhandling him. 'Abd All®h ibn Mas'®d resisted them with astounding resilience. After a while, he freed himself from their clasp and returned to his comrades, the Muslims.

When they saw him badly beaten, with his head and face covered in blood, they said, "This is exactly what we were afraid of." 'Abd All®h ibn Mas'®d said, "This is exactly not anything to worry about. If need be, I will go again and recite the Glorious Qur'an in their midst tomorrow morning." The Muslims said, "It is not necessary anymore. The important thing was to make them hear the holy word, even if just once."

Ibn Mas'Ed is one of the greatest Muslim memorizers, reciters and commentators of the Noble Qur'an. Very few scholars of his calibre can be found in the history of Islam.

He is one of those people regarding whom the following verses of the Glorious Qur'an were revealed,

"As for those who responded to the call of Allah and the Apostle after the wound had befallen them, those among them who do good to others and guard against evil shall have a great reward."1

"And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, they desire only His favor; neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs, nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours, so do not drive them away and thus be one of the unjust."2

We will conclude this story by quoting Ibn Mas' d himself, "The basis and proof of good actions is visible at the end of the road and the noblest end is annihilation in the way of Allah."3

- 1. Strat tl 'Imrtn 3:172.
- 2. Strat al-An'tm 6:52.
- 3. Al-Ghader, vol. 13, p. 11; Al-Isebah, vol. 3, p. 992; Usd al-Ghebah, vol. 3, p. 259; Ibn Abe al-Haded, Sharh Nahj al-Baleghah, vol. 13, p. 225; Qemes al-Rijel, vol. 6, p. 136; Hayet al-Sahebah, vol. 3, p. 136; Ibn Hishem, Al-Serah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 2, p. vol. 1, p. 337; Ibn Ather, Al-Kemil, vol. 2, p. 319.

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