

Lesson 14: Introducing The Religion Of Islam In The Presence Of Christian Philosophers

In The Name Of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

At the advent of Islam, the number of Muslims were few, and the idol-worshippers of Mecca opposed and harassed them severely.

These Muslims, because their number and power was limited, could not struggle against them so at the Prophet's command and instruction they decided to migrate to Ethiopia in order to freely perform the required duties of Islam and prepare themselves to confront the oppressive idol-worshippers.

For this reason, group by group, they boarded ships and secretly migrated to Ethiopia. Negus was the king of Ethiopia, and he was a Christian. When he heard of the Muslims who had arrived he graciously granted them safety and treated them well.

When the idol-worshippers found out about the migration of the Muslims, they became angry. They sent two representatives laden with valuable gifts to Ethiopia to arrest the Muslims and bring them back to Mecca. They travelled to Ethiopia and went to Negus and presented him with their gifts.

Negus asked: "Where have you come from?" and "What do you want?"

They said, "We came to see you from the city of Mecca. A few of our ignorant young people have left our religion and refused to worship our idols and have run away to your country. The elders of Mecca request that you arrest them and hand them over to us. So that they may return to their country and face punishment."

Negus said, "I must look into this". He then invited the Muslims to his castle and in the presence of the two from Mecca and his Christian philosophers asked them questions. He asked, "What was your religion before?" and "Now what is your religion?" and "Why have you migrated to this country?"

Ja'afar ibn Abu Talib, the Prophet's cousin, who was a self-sacrificing and faithful youth, answered, "In our city the powerful oppress the weak and the people worship idols. They act badly and are disloyal and unkind to their kinsmen and torment their neighbors..."

Under these circumstances, Allah has sent us a messenger to introduce to us honesty and trustworthy. He has brought the religion of Islam from Allah for us. The religion of Islam...

At this time Negus leaned forward in order to hear every word and learn what this religion of Islam was all about.

Ja'afar was silent for a moment and looking at the Christian philosophers said, "The religion of Islam tells us to be honest, trustworthy and loyal. And that we must be kind to our kinsmen and relatives. Not to speak ill of others and not to swear. Thou shall not bear false witness against thy brother. Do not control the wealth of orphans oppressively. Pray. Spend a part of your income for charity..."

Negus and the philosophers listened carefully and were pleased with what they heard from Ja'afar. But the two from Mecca glanced at them angrily.

Ja'afar ibn Abu Talib continued, "O King of Ethiopia! Muhammad has brought the religion of Allah and we have accepted it. And we have faith in Allah and all of His prophets. We have accepted the leadership of the prophet-hood and have become Muslims. The idol-worshippers of Mecca are displeased because we have become Muslim and bother us incessively, even torture us. We had no other choice but to migrate from our city and seek safety in this country, so that we may worship Allah and freely practice the religion of Islam..."

Negus was pleased by Ja'afar's speech and said, "The words of your messenger and of Jesus spring from the same source. Both are the words of Allah; you are free in this country. And you may freely perform the worship and practices of your religion ... Truly what a good religion!"

Then he turned to the two idol-worshippers and said, "I don't accept bribes, take what you have brought and return to your country. Be sure that I will never turn the Muslims over to you, swiftly return to Mecca!"

Those two, embarrassed and upset, took their gifts and left disgraced.

Think And Answer

1. What is migration? Why do Muslims migrate?
2. What was the religion of the king of Ethiopia?
3. Who was Ja'afar? What did he say about the Prophet and Islam in the presence of the king and his philosophers?

4. If you were asked about the Prophet and Islam, what would you answer?

5. What did Negus say after he heard Ja'afar's speech? What did he say to the idol-worshippers? Did he accept their gifts? ... Why?

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