

Lesson 1: Why Religion?

We shall (continue to) show them evidence of Our existence in the world and within their souls until it becomes clear that the Qur'an is the truth. Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord witnesses all things? (41:53).

They are certainly doubtful about their meeting with their Lord. God indeed encompasses all things (41:54).

There are some people who maintain that they have no obligation to investigate and find out if it is necessary to learn about religion. They think that there is no reason and need to make them consider religion?

The following explanations will demonstrate in two ways the necessity and need of inquiry into religion.

Wisdom dictates that every man should give thanks for those benefits, which he has received.

Wisdom also dictates that he acknowledge the need to prevent every kind of possible danger or harm.

Let us consider each of these two points.

We gave wisdom to Luqman so that he would give thanks to God. Those who give thanks to God do so for their own good. Those who are ungrateful should know that God is Self-sufficient and Praiseworthy (31: 12).

The Obligation of Thanksgiving

It is our good fortune to benefit from and the excellencies of life in this world: Consider how our digestive system, respiratory apparatus, the heart and other organs of the body work. Each one of these is in its turn greater than the limit of our knowledge and even our imagination. Likewise the light of the sun, the existence of plants, the mines and resources hidden deep in the heart of the earth; all of them are great benefits which, by the knowledge and power that has been given to him, man can make use of.

Greater than all of these, however is the genius and understanding of man himself, which can break a mighty mountain into pieces and create from water and iron the most enormous power and the most delicate objects.

Now this question poses itself: Should we not engage ourselves in research and inquiry until, if there is a benefactor, we acknowledge that benefactor, so as to fulfil our duty and offer him our thanks?

Suppose a benevolent and charitable man adopts a baby who has lost his father and mother, and provides for him every kind of sustenance for life and growth. He arranges for the child to be brought up, and when he is ready for education provides him with the best teachers and books. Similarly he places every possible facility within his reach, and, in short, provides in every way for his welfare. Does this child not then have an obligation to try to find out first who this man is, and secondly, about his great generosity, his whole soul overflowing with thanks for his benefactor?

It is the same in the field of existence, and we are obliged to engage in inquiry till we acknowledge the existence of the Benefactor and Creator Himself and render our thanks.

Making efforts to acquire the true religion is also a command of wisdom. He who has not yet found the right way, and is wandering without direction must not rest his feet until he has found the way of Truth and the true religion, satisfied by enlightening proofs and clear evidence. And when he has reached the source of spiritual life and the true religion, his heart full of peace and rejoicing, he should begin to give his thanks to the Creator Himself.

Believers, save yourselves and your families from the fire, wherein people and stones used as fuel and is guarded by stern angels who do not disobey God's commands and do whatever they are ordered to do (66:6).

The Prevention of Possible Danger and Harm

If a child were to come and tell you that he saw a poisonous snake. Also if he saw it go into the room you were in, you would immediately jump up from where you were and undertake a thorough search of every nook and cranny until you found it, or were satisfied that it was not there

Similarly, if, while travelling by night in a dangerous country, you learnt that bandits were waiting on the road ahead to ambush you, without doubt you would wait until the way ahead was clear of danger, and would not take a single step forward until then.

In these two examples it has been made clear that we are compelled by reason to investigate conceivable dangers. It is possible that some of the harmful things may turn out to be nothing at all, and other people may not pay any attention to them, but if an injury carries the price of a human soul, and a life is destroyed, it cannot be ignored.

The Most Dangerous Harm

In the history of mankind, we learn of people who were famous for telling the truth and acting honestly. They claimed that they were messengers of God, and they called people to have faith in God and to act in a certain way. As a result of the efforts and the persistent sufferings of these special people in all corners of the world, many groups had faith in them. Thus the birth of Jesus became the beginning of the Christian calendar and the migration of the Prophet Muhammad started the Muslim calendar.

Now, we see that these messengers attracted men to religion and to follow particular rules, caused them to fear punishment for their bad deeds and made them sure that they would be tried in the Great Court of Justice before the Righteous and Wise Judge. They trembled at the hardships and perils of Resurrection and the harshness of the punishment there, and made men fearful of these things. The question is, do their warnings make us realize the possibility of harm and danger in the same way as did the warning of the small child?

Is it right that we should ignore the words and deeds of the real religious people of this world, when it is they who, in their belief and faith stood watch over the soul, and spared themselves no kind of sacrifice?

Clearly, the words of the messengers, if they do not make a man certain, at least provoke him to think; perhaps what they say is true. Then what in fact is our duty, if it is correct that the messengers tell the truth? What answer will we give in the Court of Justice of God?

Here reason reckons the necessity of preventing this “at least possible” harm, and religion urges us to follow.

What is more, these messengers call man to a healthy and civilized life. They also say that after death an extensive new world and everlasting blessings await one who has performed his duty, and give glad tidings that in that place is another existence overflowing with peace of mind and certainty of spirit, where there is no disease, distress, agitation, anguish or fear. Does reason allow us to ignore this important message?

Must we not give weight to the fears and threats of the messengers, who say that sins and transgression have their penalty, and follow religion and give our thought to it?

The main points:

To those who have said, “God is our Lord,” and who have remained steadfast to their belief, the angels will descend saying,

“Do not be afraid or grieved. Receive the glad news of the Paradise, which was promised to you (41:30).”

We are your guardians in this world and in the life to come, where you will have whatever you call for, (41:31)

...a hospitable welcome from the All-forgiving and All-merciful God.” (41:32).

- a. It is necessary to acknowledge the existence of a benefactor. Allah, God is the greatest benefactor.
- b. It is necessary to seek protection against a danger that may befall one. Allah, God is the greatest protector.

Questions

1. What kind of people does not like thinking about religion?
2. What does the obligation of Thanksgiving prove?
3. What is the value of the different parts of our body?
4. What should be our attitude to someone who does us favors?
5. What should be our attitude to one whom made all these good things for our body and all natural resources for our benefits?
6. What is the greatest of all these favors and why?
7. After considering all these, what questions do arise?
8. Is the case of our creation similar to bringing up an orphan baby and educating the same?
9. What would be the obligation of such a baby after growing up?
10. Do we need to learn about our creator and why?
11. What would wisdom require us to do in this matter?
12. Is prevention of possible danger necessary?
13. What would we do if a child said that a poisonous snake is approaching?
14. What would one do after learning bandits have blocked the road what would you do?
15. What compels us to investigate in both snake and bandit cases?
16. What is the most dangerous harm for man?
17. What kind of people were the Prophets?

18. To whose warning should we pay much attention, to the warning of the snake and bandits or to the warnings of the Prophets?
19. Is it right to ignore what religious peoples concern about?
20. If the warnings of the messengers are true, what is our duty?
21. Where can man find true peace, happiness and everlasting comfort?
22. Can you think of some other evidence of the existence of God?
23. What do verses 53–54:41 say?
24. What does verse 12:31 say?
25. What does verse 6:66 say?
26. What do verses 41:30–32 say?

Translation of two Hadith, reports about the two very heavy matters that the holy prophet of Islam just before leaving this world said he will leave behind for the guidance of his followers:

1) Muslim (the author of Sahih of Muslim) has said, “ Zuhayr Ibn harb and Shuja’ Ibn Mukhallad both reported through certain narrators who reported from Zayd Ibn Arqam who said, “One day Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) addressed us at the oasis called Khumm, which is located between Mecca and Madina. The holy Prophet after praising Allah and mentioning His glories preached and reminded people of their duties. He then said, “O people I am only a mortal thus, perhaps the messenger of my Lord will call me soon and I shall then have to accept and follow his call while I will be leaving among you two heavy matters.

a) The first of the two is the book of Allah in which there is guidance and light. You must hold firmly the book of Allah and hold it as (Authentic source of) guidance. He exhorted people about the book of Allah and spoke about the attractive matters of the holy book.

b) Then he said, “Another heavy matter is my Ahlul Bayt (my family). I remind you of Allah in the matters of my Ahlul Bayt. I remind you of Allah in the matters of my Ahlul Bayt. I remind you of Allah in the matters of my Ahlul Bayt.

Husayn asked Zayd, “ Who are of his Ahlul Bayt (family), Zayd? Are his wives of his family? He Zayd said, “His wives are of his family but of his Ahlul Bayt are those to who alms is prohibited to use after him. He said, “They are the family of Ali, the family ‘aqil, the family of ja’far and the family of Abbass. He said to all of these people the use of alms is prohibited.”

2) Muslims has said, “Abu Bakr Ibn Abi Shaybah and Muhammad Ibn Abdullah Ibn Nummayr (in the

words of Abi Bakr) has reported through a chain of narrators from ‘a’ishah who said, “One morning the holy Prophet came out with a murahhal (printed material) gown made of black wool.

Then Hasan (one of his grandsons) came and took him inside the gown. After him his grandson Husayn came. He took him inside the gown. Then Fatimah (his daughter) came. He took her inside the gown. Then Ali came. He took him inside the gown. Then the holy Prophet said,

“People of the house, God wants to remove all kinds of uncleanness from you and to purify you thoroughly. (33:33)”.

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