

## Suratul Baqarah: Verses 211-212

(٢١١) سَلِّ بِنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُم مِّنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ ۗ وَمَنْ يُدِدِ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

(٢١٢) زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۗ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

***Ask the children of Israel how many a clear sign We gave them; and whoever changes the favour of Allah after it has come to him, then surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil) (211).***

***The life of this world is made to seem fair to those who disbelieve; and they mock those who believe; but those who guard (against evil) shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and Allah provides with sustenance whom He pleases without measure (212).***

### Commentary

***Qur'an: Ask the children of Israel ... severs in requiting (evil):***

It reconfirms and emphasizes the threat contained in (2:209), that Allah shall seize the sinners, in the manner of the One who is Mighty and Powerful.

It says: these Israelites are within your sight and hearing. They were the people to whom Allah gave the Book and the rule and prophethood and territory, and provided them with good things and made them excel other nations.

Ask them how many a clear sign We gave them; and then see from when they started and where they went.

They changed the words of Allah from their places; they followed some self-invented things in opposition

to Allah, His Book and His signs. And all this was done in revolt after they were given the knowledge.

Then Allah punished them with the most severe punishment: They went astray, became disunited, disagreed among themselves; they unlawfully ate the property of their brethren; their power was gone, their happiness vanished; and humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them in this world, and the chastisement of the Hereafter is more humiliating and then they shall not get any help.

This is the tradition of Allah: whoever changes the favour of Allah and uses it wrongfully, Allah surely chastises him and of course Allah is severe in chastisement.

The sentence, ***whoever changes the favour of Allah ... then surely Allah is severe in requiting*** gives the general principle and describes the unchangeable habit of Allah, so that the hearers may know the firm decree of Allah in such cases.

**Qur'an: *The life ... make those who believe:***

It explains the reason why the Israelites and the people like them went astray. The main reason is that the life of this world seems alluring to them.

When materialism allures someone, it encourages him to fulfill the lust and desire of his heart and to satisfy his sensuous appetite; it makes him forget all truth and reality.

The only aim of such a man remains to get whatever he can from this world status, dignity, wealth, beauty, and so forth. He makes use of everything to reach this goal — and 'everything' includes religion.

Thus, he misuses religion to gain privilege and distinction. Religion becomes a means of honouring the leaders and the bosses and bestowing on them the prestige befitting their status and place in the world; it encourages the common man to seek nearness to those leaders, not to Allah; it allows them to find ways to seek the favours of these nobles and leaders.

This we see in the Muslim *ummah* today, just as it was seen in the Israelites before.

Those who disbelieve *kufir* (translated here as disbelief, الكفر) is apparently used in the Qur'an in its literal meaning, i.e. to hide. In this general meaning it is comprehensive; it includes "disbelief" as well as "hiding the truth".

The life of this world is made to seem fair not to the disbelievers only but to them also who hide any religious truth or change any religious favours.

Accordingly, such a man also is hider of truth (*kafir*, الكافر) who has been allured by the beauty of this life, and he also should prepare himself for the severe punishment.

**Qur'an: *but those who guard (against evil) shall be above them ... without measure:***

“Those who believe” of the preceding sentence has been changed in this sentence to ***those who guard themselves*** (against evil). It is to emphasize that mere belief (*iman*, الإيمان) without *taqwa* (guarding oneself against evil; piety, fear of Allah, التَّقْوَى) is of no use.

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