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Lesson 11: Allah the Unique

From the first day that man set foot on this earth, he has always wanted to know the cause and the source of creation, and this springs from his pure nature which seeks the original cause and source so as to worship it.

When someone who lives far from the rush of society and the habits of his cultural environment looks about himself for the first time, he notices the earth and the sky, day and night, the sun and the moon, their rising and setting, the wind and the rain, the succession of the seasons, the bearing forth of fruit from plants and trees, the various species of animals, their movement, growth, feeding reproduction, and their being equipped for what they require in life.

He turns to himself, and sees his hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, teeth and the other parts of his body, each of which has its own task. All of them pursue the one aim, namely to live.

He then goes on to think about the relationship between each of these things, and he realises that there is a kind of connection and harmony between all of them, in such a way that all of them make one harmonious unit over which one order rules. In this unique harmonious order, the following particularities are to be remarked:

1. It must have a founder and a creator, because this marvellous order and harmony cannot be the result of an aimless accident.

2. There is a purpose in the whole of creation and every part of it and in the midst of it in man, and it is not created for amusement.

3. The Creator of this universe is powerful and great, worthy of adoration, and so He must be given complete respect and be worshiped.

4. This Great Creator is aware and comprehends the whole of the universe and what happens in it and within it the actions of man.

Thus man is not in need of an intermediary to worship Him, it must be a direct activity between man and

God; and to worship such things as angels, stars, idols, saints and holy men as intermediaries is not good or lawful.

Why man leaves the worship of One God

What was mentioned above concerned the propensity of the nature of a right– minded person whose thinking is not tainted with the false habits of his environment and from copying bad family influences; is what man's propensity towards the worship of one God would mean. There are different causes for an unaware person to leave his own nature and to wander in the way of unbelief, some of which shall be mentioned here.

1. Some idol worshipers have said that because God is beyond our understanding and comprehension and does not exist in any particular place that we can turn to and worship. We worship persons who have been respected and honoured by Him, so that they may be pleased with us become intermediaries between us and Him and bring us nearer to Him.

They have ignored the fact that although God is not in any direction, He encompasses everything and is Omnipresent. Therefore, wherever we turn, there is God, and we can speak with Him without the need for any intermediary.

"Wherever you turn, there is Allah, God present." (***2: 15***)

2. Again, Sometimes after the death of one of the elders of a tribe who had been respected and honoured by the members of that tribe, they made him into a statue as a memorial, and honoured this, turning towards it at the time of worshipping God. However, soon they stopped remembering God and their honouring of the statue turned into worship of it, and then the making and worshipping of statues became widespread. Thus we read in history that the descendants of Cain made a statue in memory of their great father a figure called Wadd, but gradually, in paying respect to the statue, they prostrated themselves in front of it and worshiped it.

3. Man sometimes respected other beings for the benefit they had for him, and he counted them among the manifestations of God. This respect gradually turned into worship. Worship of fire among the ancient Persians and of the Sun among the Aryans of ancient India was in this category. This was the origin of the appearance of the belief in many gods and of idol worshipping and because the generations who came afterwards did not think carefully about the ideas and beliefs of their ancestors, they fell into polytheism and were lost.

The Confrontation between True Religion and Polytheism

True religion has always strove to turn people away from the misleading ways of polytheism towards the path of tawhid the belief in One God. The Qur'an mentions and praises the endless fight of the great

messengers to eradicate polytheism and to guide people to One God.

For example, about Ibrahim it says that he said to the people of his land:

“What are these statues that you worship?”

“We follow the same way as our forefathers did.” They replied.

“You and your forefathers,” he said, “have clearly gone wrong.” And Ibrahim decided to make these ignorant people aware through word and example.

One day he entered the house of the idols and struck them down with an axe. When people understood that he had done this, they became very angry, and demanded:

“Was it you who did this to our gods?”

Ibrahim gave them an answer through which they might understand the vanity of their beliefs and thinking, and told them to ask their idols themselves.

The people thought much about this, and after considering his answer they answered shamefully:

“You know idols do not speak.”

“Why then,” said Ibrahim; “do you worship these weak beings who have not the strength to defend themselves. Why is your thinking so distorted?”[1]

To Abraham We gave the right guidance and We knew him very well (***21:51***)***. Abraham asked his father and his people, “What are these statues which you worship?”*** (***21:52***)***. They replied, “We found our fathers worshipping them.”*** (***21:53***)***.***

He said, “Both you and your fathers have certainly been in error.” (***21:54***) ***They exclaimed, “Have you brought the Truth or are you joking?”*** (***21:55***)***. He said, “Your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. It was He who created them and I testify to this fact”*** (***21:56***)***.***

Abraham said to himself, “By God! I will devise a plan against their idols when they are away.” (***21:57***) ***He broke all the idols into pieces, except the biggest among them so that perhaps people would refer to it*** (***21:58***)***.*** (***When the people came to the temple and saw the broken idols***) ***they asked each other, “Who has done this to our gods? He certainly is an unjust person”*** (***21:59***)***.***

Some of them said, “We heard a youth called Abraham speaking against the idols” (***21:60***)***. Their chiefs said, “Bring him before the eyes of the people and let them testify that he has spoken against the idols.”*** (***21:61***) ***They asked, “Abraham, did you do this to our idols?”*** (***21:62***)***.***

He replied, “I think the biggest among them has broken the smaller ones. Ask them if they are

able to speak" (***21:63***)***. Thereupon they realised their own foolishness and said, "We ourselves are wrong-doers"*** (***21:64***)***. With their heads cast down they said, "Abraham, you know that idols do not speak. How then can you ask such a question?"*** (***21:65***)

He said, "Do you, instead of God, worship things that can neither harm nor benefit you?" (***21:66***)***. Woe to you for what you worship instead of God. Have you no understanding?"*** (***21:67***)***. They said, "Burn him to ashes if you want to help your gods"*** (***21:68***)***. We said to the fire, "Be cool and peaceful*** (***with Abraham***)***"*** (***21:69***)***. They had devised an evil plan*** (***against Abraham***)***, but We turned it into failure."*** (***21:70***)***.***

These great guides, the Messengers, always reminded men that they could establish a relationship between themselves and God at any time and in any place without the need of an intermediary, and they reminded men that in worshipping God they must not look towards anything or anybody, for any reason, and that their worship must be only for God. If in their worship there is the least attention to anything other than God, then that worship would be for the two – God and the other – and this is unacceptable to God.

The consequence of tawhid

One who knows that God is One and believes that He is Aware of everything and has Power to do everything, and believes that all creatures are formed and made by Him, will, because of this, never give allegiance to other things. The greatest power the most abundant wealth, will never enslave him and make him bow down for anything. Such a person will submit only to God and will prostrate only in front of His Glory.

The ancient Iranians believed that their autocratic and arrogant kings were manifestations of God, and they submitted to their monarchs without asking for any reason. They had no social or individual freedom. When the emissary of the Arabs met the Iranian general at the time of the war between the Muslim Arabs and the Iranians (16 AH.), he sat on the ground without ceremony and ignored the luxurious surroundings of Iranian life. When the general inquired of the intentions of the Muslims, the emissary replied:

"Allah has raised us up to lead people away from the worship of the servants of Allah towards the worship of Allah Himself, and to invite them from the narrow confines of the world towards the expanses of freedom, from the tyranny of other religions to the justice of Islam." Tabari in his Tarikh vol. 5, p. 2269–71.

In the light of tawhid there is no alternative for the servants of God but to follow the Divine Law who is founded on wisdom and justice. It is clear that following the Divine Law will cause real justice to increase, and any kind of tyranny and aggression to come to nothing. On the other hand, idolaters, and those who do not believe in One God can never create real justice among themselves, because every tribe or group has its own god, which is different from the others, and reliance on this god encourages to

be aggressive towards other groups or tribes. In this way real justice is of no avail, and ignorance, disunity and tyranny in word and in deed take its place.

In conclusion, belief in One God – in the true meaning of the phrase – makes man free, pure and unified and gives him peace of mind. He will not be subjected to oppression, tyranny and discord.

Thus we can understand the real sense of the phrase “Say, there is no god but Allah, and you will prosper.”

Questions

1. Why does man want to know the creator?

2. What goals do the parts of the human body pursue?

3. What do human beings look at around them in the world?

4. What conclusion do human beings reach upon reflecting one different creature?

5. Can you mention in some brief remarks and conclusion 1–4?

6. Why do some people worship other things besides one God?

7. What reasons do the idol worshippers give for worshipping their idols?

8. What fact is it that idol worshippers have ignored?

9. What does v 115 of ch. 2 say?

10. What reason for idols worshipping are mentioned in the text 2?

11. What reason for idols worshipping are mentioned in the text 3?

12. What kind of relations had polytheism and monotheism been having throughout history?

13. Can you answer the questions by Ibrahim and the adversaries 1–3?

14. What does Verse 51 chapter 70 say?

15. What kind of worship is the worship with divided intentions?

16. What was the attitude of the Muslim emissary?

17. What kind of tradition did the Islamic Iranians have with their monarchy?

18. What was the answer to the Islamic emissary to the Iranian General?

19. What result would worship only one God produce in the society?

20. What fact is it that gives purity, unity and peace of mind to man?

1. See Ch. 21:51-70

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