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Lesson 3: An Example of the Trial of the Day of Judgment is within You

Since the issue of the afterlife and the great court of the Resurrection would seem strange for someone who has lived inside the prison in this world, God has established a small court inside each one of us which is called the court of conscience.

To explain in more detail: A person will be tried in many courts for the crimes he has done the first court is the usual courts in this world with all its shortcomings.

Although the very presence of such courts would lessen the number of crimes, they are based on such feeble foundations that nobody expects them to act in complete accordance with justice.

If wrong laws are enforced in a court, if judges are busy taking bribes and are subject to nepotism and partisan influences, then we could not expect justice to prevail in such a court.

Even if some courts might be presided over by pious judges, there are still those clever criminals who could escape punishment.

The second type of court, which functions better than the first one, is the court of the consequences of our own deeds. Our acts have consequences which affect us sooner or later.

We have seen many governments that were engaged in tyranny and engaged in all forms of injustice, but were soon caught up in the traps they had made for themselves. They collapsed as a result of their wrong actions, caught in the consequences of what they had done earlier.

Such a court has the shortcoming that it is neither public nor universal. Therefore, it could not make us feel that we do not need the court of the resurrection.

The third court, which is more elaborate than the preceding one is the court of the conscience. In the

same way that the solar system, with its wonderful system can be observed in the tiny structure of an atom, we could claim that the court of our conscience is a tiny example of the court of the resurrection.

This is because there is a mysterious force inside our inner self which is called "practical wisdom" by the philosophers, "the reproaching soul" by the Holy Qur'an and "conscience" by others.

As soon as man does a good or bad act, this court starts to operate immediately and issues its verdicts in the form of mental punishments or mental rewards.

This court of conscience at times beats the wrongdoer inside with such a force that he or she would prefer death to this life. Such a person would write in his will "if I commit suicide it was because I wanted to get rid of the tortures of my conscience."

This court of conscience at times encourages man for his good work to the extent that he becomes extremely delighted. He then feels at ease in his soul, and he could never find such a source of delight anywhere in the world.

Such a court has its own characteristics:

1. In this court, the judge, the witness, the officer to carry out the court's verdict, and the audience are the same person. It is the force of conscience that acts as a witness, that judges and finally carries out the verdict.
2. Contrary to normal judicial procedures which would sometimes take years to complete, the trial here at this court is momentary; it does not take time. Occasionally some time is needed to remove the obscurities from the eyes of the beholder, however, as soon as the documents are in, the verdict will be issued.
3. The verdict of such a court does not require one to go to a court of appeal; it only has one stage.
4. This court will not only punish; it will also reward those who perform their duties. In such a court, both the good-doers and the wrongdoers are tried and receive rewards or punishment accordingly.
5. The punishment of such a court does not have anything in common with ordinary punishment in the sense that they do not require prisons, whips, or executions. However, at times they are so torturous for a person's soul that no punishment could compare to it.

In sum, such a court does not resemble any worldly court; it rather resembles the court of the Resurrection. The greatness of the court of conscience is so tremendous that the Holy Qur'an swears by it, associating it with the court of the Resurrection:

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ نَجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ بَلَىٰ قَادِرِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ

Nay! I swear by the Day of Resurrection. Nay! I swear by the self-accusing self. Does man think that we shall not gather his bones? Yea! We are able to make complete his very fingertips.
(Qur'an 75: 1-4)

Naturally, such a court, due to its material nature, does not make us feel that we do not need the court of the Resurrection. This is because:

1. The sphere of human conscience is not all-inclusive; rather, it is based on one's way of thinking.
2. At times, a treacherous man could deceive even his own conscience.
3. At times, the call of a wrongdoer's conscience is so weak that he cannot hear it.

Here, the significance of the fourth court, i.e., the court of the Resurrection will become clear.

Think and Answer

1. In reality in how many courts is a person tried?
2. What are the particularities of the first court and what is it called?
3. What particularities does the third court have?
4. What are the particular characteristics of the second court?
5. Describe the merits and weaknesses of the court of the conscience.

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