

Islam The Message of the Prophets

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The concept of submission to Allah has thus been described as the core of the religion and the gist of faith. Here, Islam' as a special title given to the eternal Divine Religion - the Message of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) - and as a general title for the calls of all the prophets, will be discussed.

Since all the prophets called for monotheism and invited mankind to worship Allah alone and liberate themselves from servitude to others, Islam is thus a general title for their calls. In attempting to analyze this subject, one should refer to Qur'anic verses which deal with the concept of Islam'. Among these numerous verses which discuss religion, servitude and submission to the Lord of the worlds, preached by the prophets and messengers from Noah (a.s.) to Muhammad (s.a.w.), one should also note when and how the term Islam' has been used. In this way, the clear meaning of 'Islam' and its relation with the calls of all the prophets becomes readily apparent.

The Qur'an uses this word repeatedly and in diverse forms to define true faith and complete submission to Allah's commands. Islam' has been used in the form of commands, benedictions and other expressions by the prophets and their faithful followers, announcing their submission or response to its call Allah the Exalted, proclaims through His servant Noah (a.s.):

"But if you are averse I have asked of you no wage; my wage is only with Allah, and I am commanded to be of those who are Muslims (submit to Him). Holy Qur'an (10:72)

Also, Allah proclaims through Abraham (a.s.):

"When his Lord said to him; be a Muslim, he said: I submit to the Lord of the worlds. And the same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons, and (so did) Jacob, (saying): O my sons! Surely Allah has chosen for you this (true) faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims" Holy Qur'an (2:131-132) "... the faith of your father Abraham (is yours). He named you Muslims before (in previous scriptures)..." Holy Qur'an (22:78) Allah also relates, Joseph (a.s.) prayer:

"My Lord! You have given me (something) of the kingdom and taught me (something) of the interpretation of events: Originator, the heavens and the earth! You are my Guardian in this world and the hereafter; make me die a Muslim and join me with the righteous." Holy Qur'an (12:101) Allah the Exalted, relates Moses' proclamation in the Qur'an : "And Moses said: O my people! If you believe in Allah, then rely on Him (alone), if you have indeed become Muslims

(those who submit to Him). " Holy Qur'an (10:84)

Allah also says:

"Surely We revealed the Torah, in which was guidance and light, by which the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) judged the Jews..." Holy Qur'an (5:44) And, "And when I inspired the disciples, (saying): Believe in Me and My Apostle (Jesus), they said: We believe and bear witness that we are Muslims (have submitted)." Holy Qur'an (5:111)

Allah also commands Muhammad (s.a.w.) like all other prophets to say : "I am commanded only to serve the Lord of this land (Mecca), Who has made it sacred, and His are all things: And

I am commanded to be of those who are Muslims (submit to Him)" Holy Qur'an (27:91)

Thus, all these divine invitations meet along the line of submission - Islam - to the Lord of the worlds in its true context; that is, servitude and true faith in Allah, the Exalted. The explicit meaning becomes apparent in Abraham's (a.s.) words: "I submit to the Lord of the worlds; that is, he regards his submission as a religion for worship, as a trust he commits to his sons and his followers, as a slogan for the monotheists, and as a motto for the invitation to faith: "... the faith of your father Abraham (is yours); He named you Muslims before (in previous scriptures)" Holy Qur'an (22:78) Through these Qur'anic verses we understand that all the prophets followed this unified line of faith with a single aim: The implementation of servitude to Allah - mankind's submission to the Lord of the worlds liberating them from the worship of tyrants or their own inner desires. As such, the Qur'an regards belief in the prophets as a major basis of a Muslim's ideology and as a historical and logical proof of the truthfulness of Muhammad's (s.a.w.) message:

"Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit (become Muslims)." Holy Qur'an (2:136) "Say: I am not the first of the apostles, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you: I do not follow anything but that which is revealed to me, and I am (nothing) but a plain warner." Holy Qur'an (46:9)

All the prophets, as is understood from the above verses, offered to mankind the same religion and the same belief which Allah considered, to be the base and the starting point for the reformation of man. It would deliver him from the dark labyrinth of ignorance which has resulted from the ages of legends and myths fabricated by primitive peoples. Man has suffered from this ignorance as he has suffered from the oppression of tyrants, and from poverty, injustice and corruption. He will continue to suffer unless he turns to the path of the prophets

who all shared the same call. This call aimed at the salvation of humanity – generation after generation, nation after nation – from its sufferings and tragedies. Allah the Exalted, willed that all His messengers should pour their offerings into the same stream, that their flames should unite into a single illumination. This was the call of Islam, the message of Muhammad (s.a.w.), as the eternal religion, the final message, and the theme dominating and encompassing all other missions of the apostles "And We have revealed to you the Book (Qur'an) with the truth confirming whatever of the Book (s) was before it and a guardian over it, so judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires (to turn away) from the truth which has come to you; for everyone of you We have appointed a divine law and a (traced out) way..."

Holy Qur'an (5:48)

"He it is Who sent His Apostle with the guidance and the true religion; that He may make it overcome (other) religions, all of them, however much the polytheists may be averse." Holy Qur'an (61:9) Islam overcame all other religions as it is characterized by equality, rationality, universality and eternity, enabling it to expand over vast periods of man's history, encompassing all aspects of human growth and development. Religion is thus, like a great river which has flowed through all eras of man. This river is represented by Islam – the great religion that was preached by the prophets in accordance with the needs and potentials of their nations – which has flowed through all generations, nations and prophets. Men have taken from this river as much as they needed, yet it remained flowing with life; fertility and growth for all humanity through all ages. For this reason Allah sent the prophets throughout human history to guide man to the shores of this great spiritual river which endows him with prosperity and life. "O you who believe! answer (the call of) Allah, and the Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life..." Holy Qur'an (8:24)

Therefore, the calls of the prophets were alike as all of them advocated Islam, which is the religion of mankind for all time. As for differences among the messages of the prophets, these were due to the particular requirements of societies during the various periods of prophecy, the societies' level of comprehension and extent of tolerance. When man thus attained full maturity, he became ready to accept this religion-Islam-to carry its message, and to follow its guidance. This has been explained and confirmed by the Qur'an.

"Surely the religion with (acceptable to) Allah is Islam (submission to His will) and those to whom (formerly) the Book had been given did not oppose (about Islam) but after knowledge (of Islam's truth) had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the revelation of Allah then surely Allah is swift at reckoning. " Holy Qur'an (3:19)

"And whoever follows a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and he will be one of the losers in the hereafter. Holy Qur'an (3:85)

This was the religion from which the prophets derived their messages, but it was not their duty to insure the total acceptance of their nations. They had been given the task of informing their nations according to their nation's immediate needs and potentials, leading them to the way of righteousness and peace. This is what the Qur'an says about religion and messages, and about the unity of source and aim, stressing that religion is one- Islam - and the messages of all the prophets were derived from it:

"He has made plain to you of the religion which He enjoined upon Noah, and that which We have revealed to you (Muhammad), and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, (saying): Establish the religion, and be not divided therein; dreadful for the unbelievers is that which you call them to; Allah chooses for Himself whom He pleases, and guides to Himself him who turns (to Him) frequently. " Holy Qur'an (42:13) Consequently it is incorrect to describe the calls of the prophets as different religions, because these emanations originated from a single source, inviting towards the same religion, though the messages slightly varied, according to the times, the geographical location, the language and levels of comprehension of the peoples.

"And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them/" Holy Qur'an (14:4) In this way the Qur'an proves the oneness of the line and direction followed by the prophets, and affirms that all of them had been commanded to establish the true religion-Islam.

Going through the Qur'anic verses concerning the concepts of religion and its messages, we realize that Islam is the frame encircling all the divine revelations. Islam in fact is the final formulation of the complete divine message that draws a perfect picture of man and life on earth. It is the very base from which the divine calls and messages were made, such as those of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others (peace be upon them): "And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom ." Holy Qur'an (43:4) Thus, what was revealed to the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (s.a.w.) was the most advanced programme and the most perfect law of the divine religion, Islam ,which was to be conveyed to all humanity.

Since Muhammad (s.a.w.) is the last prophet and the divine message has been revealed in all its entirety and perfectness, therefore all the former messages are to be regarded as null and void, after the revelation of the holy Qur'an. Because the messages sent through the previous prophets were of a temporary nature and limited in time- span, and were the prelude fo1 the

final and great call of Islam. The divine message revealed to Muhammad (s.a.w.) embraces all future eras and generations, and is the final stage of mankind's historical march. Therefore it is incumbent upon mankind to mould life according to the final call and the message of Islam, .revealed through the Seal of the Prophets