

Fate of non-Muslims

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

The Jews and Christians promised Paradise in the Qur'aan

The Jews and Christians promised Paradise in the Qur'aan were Muslims who were true monotheists, practiced Tawheed, believed in their prophets, did not commit shirk with Allaah, but died before the Prophethood of Muhammad, may Allaah praise him. A frequently misunderstood verse of the Qur'aan refers to them:

["Indeed, those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians (before Prophet Muhammad) – those (among them) who believed in Allaah and the Last Day and did righteousness will have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."]¹

The scholars of Islaam agree this verse is not talking about those who believe Jesus is the son of God, or equate Jesus to God, or those who believe Allaah is poor and they are rich, or who reject Prophet Muhammad, may Allaah praise him. This verse is talking about the original followers of Moses and Jesus who believed in their prophet and worshipped Allaah alone, but passed away before the coming of Prophet Muhammad. In fact, the Qur'aan contains a whole chapter, Soorah al-Burooj (Qur'aan, 85), which speaks of the Christian martyrs before the advent of Prophet Muhammad in the story of 'the People of the Ditch.'

As for the verse:

["You will surely find the strongest among people in animosity to the believers to be the Jews and idolaters, and you will find the nearest in affection to the believers those who say: 'We are Christians.'"]²

The rest of the verse explains the correct meaning. It is referring to Christians who entered Islaam, believed in Prophet Muhammad, and were affected by the teachings of the Qur'aan. Scholars of the Qur'aan say this verse was revealed regarding Negus and his associates who entered Islaam when a group of persecuted Muslims migrated to Ethiopia from Makkah. The Prophet offered the funeral prayer for Negus in absentia when he passed away. In the past and even today mostly Christians enter into Islaam. That is why Christians are said to be closer in love to the Muslims.

¹ Qur'aan [2:62]

² Qur'aan [5:82]

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[“That is because among them are priests and monks, and they are not arrogant. And when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognise the truth. They say: ‘Our Lord! We believe; so write us down among the witnesses. ‘And why should we not believe in Allaah and what has come to us of the truth? And we aspire that our Lord will admit us along with the righteous people.’ Allaah rewarded them for what they said with gardens under which rivers flow, they will abide therein forever. Such is the reward of good doers. But those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations they are the companions of Hellfire.”³

The End of non-Muslims

The Islaamic stand on Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims to be kaafir does not mean every non-Muslim is consigned to Hell. The Ahl ul-Kitaab in our times can be divided in two categories:

(I) Those to whom the message of Islaam has reached, who know Prophet Muhammad, on whom God’s proof has been established, yet they have chosen not to believe in him. According to Muslims scholars, they are kaafir in this world and after they die, they will reside in Hell-Fire forever if they die on disbelief, on rejection. Apart from the verses of the Qur’aan quoted previously, the Prophet Muhammad, may Allaah praise him, said:

“By Him in Whose hand is the life of Muhammad, he who amongst the community of Jews or Christians hears about me, but does not affirm his belief in that with which I have been sent and dies in this state (of disbelief), he shall be but one of the denizens of Hell-Fire.”⁴

“When the Day of Resurrection comes a proclaimer will summon: Let every people follow what they used to worship. Then all who worshipped idols and stones besides Allaah would fall into the Fire, till only the righteous and the sinners from those who worshipped Allaah and others of the people of the Book are left. Then the Jews would be summoned, and it would be said to them: What did you worship? They will say: We worshipped 'Uzair, son of Allaah. It would be said to them: You tell a lie; Allaah had never had a spouse or a son. What do you want now? They would say: We feel thirsty, O our Lord! Quench our thirst. They would be directed (to a certain direction) and asked: Why don't you go there to drink water? Then they would be pushed towards the Fire (and they would find to their great dismay that) it was but a mirage (and the raging flames of fire) would be consuming one another, and they would fall into the Fire. Then the Christians would be summoned and it would be said to them: What did you worship? They would say: We worshipped Jesus, son of God. It would be said to them: You tell a lie; Allaah did not take for Himself either a spouse or a son. Then it would be said to them: What do you want? They would

³ Qur’aan [5:82-86]

⁴ Saheeh Muslim

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say: we are thirsty, O our Lord! Quench our thirst, and they will also suffer the same fate.”⁵

(II) The second category: those for whom the message of Islaam did not reach, or it may have reached them but was distorted, or they did not hear about Prophet Muhammad, may Allaah praise him. They will be tested on the Day of Judgment. Those who obey will be saved, those who disobey will be doomed.

As can be seen, the fate of the two will be different in life after death, but in this world both are considered kaafir by agreement of Muslim jurists. What does it mean? First, it is obligatory to deliver the message of Islaam to them. Second, Islaam is the only true religion of all prophets with a universal plan of salvation; all other religions are false and unacceptable in the sight of Allaah. Third, the regulations for non-Muslims apply to them. For instance, regardless whether the message of Islaam reached a non-Muslim or not, a Muslim woman cannot marry a Jewish or a Christian man. Furthermore, they may not be buried in a Muslim graveyard. Their funeral prayer cannot be offered by Muslims.

In conclusion, Islaam is a universal religion. Its inclusiveness extends to the true followers of all prophets, including Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Yet, it is exclusive of those who distorted the pure teachings of the prophets, and who still choose to follow falsehood even after truth reaches them.

⁵ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Saheeh Muslim