

Fast 25: Prophets and Messengers — their submission to God (2)

- The Israelite prophets who appeared after Moses are also described as submitting to God:

“Surely We revealed the Torah, having guidance and light. By it did the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) judge for the Jews...” (5:44)

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَجْكُرُ بِهَا
التَّيْبُونِ الَّذِينَ اسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا...

- The story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba is given in ch. 27 of the Quran. She was the ruler of a neighbouring nation who were sun-worshippers, but Solomon persuaded her by argument that the sun is not a god and there is only one God:

“She said: My Lord, surely I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.” (27:44)

قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ
سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

When she accepted Solomon’s religion, they **both** submitted to Allah. It was not that she submitted to Solomon. The Bible says of Solomon that “his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God” (1 Kings 11:4) and that this made the Lord God angry with Solomon (1 Kings 11:9). The Quran says the opposite, that he convinced the mighty Queen of Sheba that there was only one God.

- We discussed in an earlier Study that all prophets taught that there is only one God and He is the one to be worshipped. After one such verse (21:25) it is added:

“And they say: The Beneficent has taken to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! No, they are honoured servants — they do not speak before He speaks, and according to His command they act.” (21:26–27)

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ بَلْ عِبَادٌ
مُّكْرَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ
يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

The reference in the opening words is to the Christian claim that Jesus was the son of God. This is rejected by the Quran, which says here that all prophets were honoured servants, who only taught people *after* God taught them Himself and they did not *presume* to teach in His name. They acted exactly according to His commands, and never against them. Both their speech and their actions were according to what God required. This shows that the prophets had the highest degree of sincerity because only then can a person’s words and deeds match and be in full accord.

The statement that they are “honoured servants” means that if you find a prophet being described, by himself or by others, as “son of God” it can only be taken metaphorically as meaning that he is close to God and held in high esteem by Him. However, he still remains a mortal human being, who himself serves God.

- In submission to God, Abraham is made the model for Muslims to follow:

“And who is better in religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah while doing good (to others) and follows the faith of Abraham, the upright one? And Allah took Abraham for a friend.” (4:125)

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ
مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۗ وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾

Note that here the doing of good to others (known as *ihsān*) is mentioned as a necessary addition to submission to God.

- Another verse tells the Muslims the following:

“And they say: Be Jews or Christians, you will be on the right course. Say: Rather, (we follow) the religion of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not of those who set up partners (with Allah).” (2:135)

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا ۗ قُلْ بَلْ
مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۗ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

The Jews and the Christians had added practices and doctrines to their religions which amounted to setting up partners with Allah. They were utterly in the grip of their priests, believing and doing whatever they told them, as if they had taken the place of God. In case of Christians, they had also raised Jesus to partnership with God. The right course was to go back to the original teachings of Abraham.

- Elsewhere it is stated:

“Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was upright, a Muslim; and he was not of those who set up partners (with Allah).” (3:67)

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ
حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا ۗ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

As Abraham lived when the Jewish and Christian religions had not come into existence, he could neither be a Jew nor a Christian, neither a follower of the law of Moses, nor a believer in Jesus being the son of God. Of course, he wasn't a Muslim either in the sense of following the religion known as Islam. What is meant is that the word ‘Muslim’ applied to him in its literal sense of one who submits to God.