

## Fast 25: Submission to God and service of humanity as the fundamentals of Islam

- The Quran often treats the same subject in different ways to make its teachings clear. We have been looking at the verse: “who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them” (ch. 2, v. 3). There is a later passage in chapter 2 in the Quran as follows:

“And they say: None shall enter the Garden except he who is a Jew, or the Christians. These are their vain desires. Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful. No, **whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others)**, he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve.” — ch. 2, v. 111–112

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ  
نَصْرِيًّا تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١١﴾ بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ  
لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا  
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

- Here, the keeping up prayer of v. 3 is mentioned in the terms “whoever submits himself entirely to Allah”. Spending out of what God has given, of v. 3, is expressed here as “and he is the doer of good (to others)”.
- The words translated as “himself” (in “submits himself”) are *wajha-hu* which mean literally “his face”. In the Muslim prayer, the face is physically made to bow and prostrate before Allah, as a token of our intention to submit ourselves entirely to Allah. Submitting “**entirely**” means submitting also with the heart, the mind, the feelings, the thoughts, and the deeds, not only with postures of the body.
- The above verses begin by mentioning the claims of followers of earlier religions, each group claiming for itself that only its members will go to heaven and find salvation, and no one else will. The Jewish belief was that only a member of the Israelite race, following the laws of Moses, could find favour with God and enter the bliss of paradise. According to the Christians, anyone who believed that Jesus was his saviour, and only such people, would be “saved” and given eternal life.
- The Quran rejects these claims and calls it their “vain desires” based on wishful thinking. But in reply it does **not** say: You both are wrong, but it is actually only Muslims who shall go to paradise! What it says in reply is to mention the *principles* that anyone must act upon to find reward from God and the bliss of paradise: “whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others)”. So if Muslims are to find favour with Allah and enter paradise, it will only be *if they act*

*on these two principles.* It cannot be because they merely had a formal membership of the Muslim community, they paid lip-service to Islamic beliefs, and they performed the acts of worship of Islam in only a ritual manner.

- These principles were also taught to the Jews and the Christians in their scriptures, and can be found there. Jesus was asked, “Which is the first commandment of all?” He replied:

“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And **you shall love the Lord your God with all** your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘**You shall love your neighbour** as yourself.’” (Gospel of Mark, ch. 12, v. 29–31)

A similar statement is found in the Gospel of Matthew, ch. 22, v. 37–39, and Luke, ch. 10, v. 27. Immediately after this statement, Jesus emphasises the importance of these two commandments, and it is in different words in the three Gospels:

“There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark).

“On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew).

“Do this and you will live” (Luke).

Jesus was only repeating the commandments given by Moses to the Jews:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy, ch. 6, v. 4–5)

“...you shall love your neighbour as yourself...” (Leviticus, ch. 19, v. 18)

- It can be seen that to love God with **all** your heart, etc., mentioned above in the Bible, is the same as what the Quran describes as “submitting **entirely**” to Allah. And the love of neighbour is the same as what the Quran puts as doing good to others or being their benefactor (*muhsan*). So the Quran, in the verses quoted at the start of this Study, is telling the Jews and the Christians that it is by acting on these two commandments, which Moses and Jesus had earlier brought to them, that a person earns the favour of God and the bliss of paradise. Merely being a Jew as defined by Judaism, or a Christian as defined by Christianity, does not at all count for anything with God.
- Although Islam has repeated these two same principles that were in the Bible, it has presented them in a greatly developed form, so that they can lead a person to love God and to serve humanity in a much higher way than is possible through the concepts taught in the Bible. God as presented in the Bible is God only of the

Israelites, but in the Quran God is described right at the beginning as “Lord of all the worlds”, and mankind is declared as a single nation, among all of whom God sent His prophets and messengers. Therefore, the Quran says to the Jews and the Christians in these verses that the path to salvation *is the same as it was before*, as already taught to you, but you have neglected it and have put other ideas in its place which you have made as the fundamentals of your religion. And now the Quran has been revealed to show how to follow that way again, and to do so in the best and most effective manner.