

Lessons in the Quran – 10

Translation of Mr. N.A. Faruqi's book
Mu'ārif-ul-Qur'ān

Translated by Dr. Mohammad Ahmad, Ohio

Al-Baqarah (The Cow)

“Who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them.” — The Holy Quran, 2:3.

Belief in the Unseen

In the last verse discussed, we are informed by Allah that this Book (Holy Quran) is a guide for those who keep their duty (*muttaqin*). In the verse under discussion today, those who keep their duty are further defined. They are the ones who believe in the Unseen (*Al-Ghaib*). Unseen is what cannot be perceived visually or by means of our other physical senses. The Unseen in this verse means Allah. By use of the word ‘Unseen’, attention has been drawn to this specific attribute of Allah and its effect on our spiritual development. *Taqwa* (root word of *muttaqin*) has previously been defined as abstaining from evil and anything injurious to one’s spiritual well being. This quality would fail to evolve in man if the presence of Allah (Who is Omnipresent) could be visualized by our physical senses. For example, if the chief law enforcement officer of a country is physically present in an area, then those who are aware of his presence are disposed towards following the laws and avoidance of criminal behavior. This does not mean that each one of those individuals is a truly righteous and law abiding citizen. The real measure of their character can only be established during the physical absence of the legal authority. If one abstains from evil while not being able to see the Divine Being, then only can it be said unequivocally that the quality of *taqwa* (abstinence from evil) has truly developed in that person. He rejected the evil of a wrongful action after recognizing it and accepted the goodness of righteous action on basis of a similar assessment. Only such a person can really be called a *muttaqi* (one who keeps his duty and abstains from evil). Allah has kept Himself in the unseen only from human visual perception, otherwise Divine presence is with mankind all the time. The Holy Quran refers to this in the verses:

“And He is with you wherever you are.” (57:4)

“And Allah is ever Hearing, Seeing.” (4:134)

If Allah was just confined to the heavens or to the mosque (place of worship), and man was in need of His help, which can arise at any time and in any place, then how could He have helped him? From the Holy Quran it is quite apparent that Allah helps His servants all the time as stated in these verses:

“And thy Lord suffices as having charge of affairs.” (17:65)

“Surely my Lord is Preserver of all things (including human beings).” (11:57)

If this was not the case the world would cease to exist. He is also the *Rabb-ul-'alameen*, One Who evolves and nourishes all His creation to perfection, from a lower to a higher state, so that it can achieve the purpose of its creation. I have discussed this in my commentary on the chapter *Al-Fatiha*. Thus in every moment of its existence there is a relationship between the Creator and His creation.

The Holy Quran repeatedly tells us that “Allah is Ever-Hearing, Seeing.” He listens to man and observes all his actions. He has knowledge of why man acts in a certain way as in the frequently stated verse:

“And Allah is Aware of what you do.” (2:234)

He also knows the hidden secrets of our inner self and the condition of our souls as in the Quranic verse:

“He is Knower of what is in the hearts.” (57:6)

This is not difficult to understand. God has created man from a state of non-existence to that of a fully developed human being. Not only has He fashioned his outer form, but also created his spirit within. How is it possible for such a Creator to be unaware of and be unresponsive to His creation, and to allow it to act according to its own design? Similarly it is inconceivable that the Creator of the human soul is unaware of its inner secrets and its moral condition. If one reads the histories of the prophets, and the appointed ones, it becomes quite evident that Allah listens to their supplications and responds to their actions and to those of their opponents in this very life. He brings to light the evil intentions of the evil doers, and informs His prophets and appointed ones of this beforehand. This proves that Allah is truly “Ever-Hearing Seeing” and is Knower of what is in the hearts, and He is with

His servants at all times. In addition hundreds of events in the lives of these people testify to the truth that He responds to His servants who call upon Him during times of distress and difficulty, by bringing about a change in their condition.

Unfortunately, the fact that Allah is not visualized by the human eye, has led many worshippers of form to go astray. Particularly in the last hundred years, people influenced by scientific materialism and Western culture started making such statements that until they see God, they cannot be expected to believe in Him. How truly magnificent is the excellence of the Creator! The very same scientists who influenced their thinking are now saying that although we can see and touch matter, we can never understand its real nature, because it extends far beyond atoms and electrons to a point beyond our comprehension. Thus we can only realize the real nature of matter through its properties (*The Mysterious Universe*, by Sir James Jeans). If something as insignificant as matter can only be recognized through its properties, then why are objections raised when the Holy Quran (at least in this material world) teaches us to recognize the Divine Being through His attributes? From the beginning to the end, the Holy Quran on numerous occasions identifies the Divine attributes relevant to any of His commands or actions. A Persian couplet describes this very appropriately:

“How very evident is the Source of all resplendence,

The whole universe is His reflection for those who can truly see.”

Limitations of Human Vision

These Western oriented persons do not realize that the eyes only fulfill our limited physical needs. In reality, not to mention God, they do not even give us reliable knowledge of His creation. Whatever information they do give us is flawed. Without light the human eye does not function, and even after its reception it can only visualize a limited spectrum of it. Even within this limited spectrum, it is unable to visualize the rays with shorter wave-length, such as ultraviolet and x-rays, and those with longer wave-length such as infra-red etc. Again the differences that are visualized by the human eye are merely in the outward form. In reality all things are internally composed of similar components of matter. The different colors seen in various objects by the human eye are not their actual colors. For example, something which appears red, is not really red in color. It absorbs all other colors except red which is the only color reflected back to

the eye, thereby giving the false impression that the color of that object is red. Our eyes cannot even stand a slight increase in intensity of light. This is the reason scientists advise us not to look at the sun directly. Although the sun is 93 million miles away even this type of minor exposure can result in permanent damage to the eye. Our sun is a small star, whereas there are billions of other stars which are thousands of times larger in mass and the quantity of light they generate. These heavenly bodies are only a reflection of the light (*nur*) and power of the Creator. As the Holy Quran states:

“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.” (24:35)

How can we then expect to see the Divine Being with our eyes?

The Holy Quran has explained this in the incident relating to Prophet Moses. The Israelites, like modern materialists, had asked a similar question from him:

“And when you said: O Moses, we will not believe in you till we see Allah manifestly.” (2:55)

The Holy Quran further describes this incident:

“And when Moses came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: You cannot see Me; but look at the mountain; if it remains firm in its place, then will you see Me. So when his Lord manifested His glory to the mountain, He made it crumble and Moses fell down in a swoon.” (7:143)

Thus when Allah cast the reflection of His power on the mountain, it was made to crumble, and Moses fell down in a swoon. If something as strong as the mountain could not bear the manifestation of Divine Power, how can the human eye (which is the most delicate part of the human body) stand up to it? This type of difficulty arises because association with God, which is a universal phenomenon, has corrupted the concept of Unity of the Divine Being. This has led people to the worship of stone idols, the cow, or at the most that of a mortal being like themselves. I would advise my young Western oriented friends to cast away this type of concept from their hearts. The One Who is Creator of such a magnificent, powerful and limitless universe, His strength, majesty and dignity cannot be measured. He is not a finite being that the human eye, which is the most delicate part of his body, could visualize Him with its extremely limited capacity.

The Holy Quran explains this in another verse:

“Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision; and He is the Subtile, the Aware.” (6:103)

Thus mankind or any other creation cannot visualize or comprehend the greatness and grandeur of the Divine Being. He, however, comprehends the full extent and degree of what they or any of His other creation can visually observe.

It is impossible to estimate the extent of Allah’s creation, or the limits of His universe. As progress is made in the development of telescopic instruments, and they become more powerful, the existence of previously unknown heavenly bodies is confirmed. The immensity of this universe is such that distances in it cannot be measured except by the speed of light. The knowledge of the existence of this universe is also obtained by noting the increase and decrease in the colors of the light spectrum. The speed of light is 186,000 miles per second. If we multiply this twice by 60, we get the distance that light travels in one hour. Multiply this by 24, and then by 365 to calculate the distance which light travels in one year. This is called a light year and is used to measure distances in this universe.

The human mind cannot comprehend the extent of this universe. Several years ago there was a news item that American scientists had discovered a galaxy 8 billion light years away which was estimated to be five to ten times our galaxy, the milky way. The sky we see full of stars is only a limited portion of our galaxy. There are hundreds of thousands of galaxies much larger than ours and these amazing pieces of the universe with their vast distances surround us on all sides. They are formed from the same elements and follow the same universal laws. This gives us only a small estimate of the power, unity and omnipotence of Allah. The human mind cannot fathom the depth of this limitless universe in which new discoveries are made every day. How can it be possible for the tiny human eye to envision the Creator and the Master of the Universe.

Vision of the Truthful

Right after the verse “Vision comprehends Him not,” the Holy Quran states:

“Clear proofs (*basa’ir*) have indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever sees (*absara*), it is for his own good; and whoever is blind, it is to his own harm.” (6:104)

The Arabic word used here is *basa’ir* which is the plural of *basirat*. This word stands for the discerning faculty of the human mind. The verses that I have just quoted, therefore, mean that the human visual faculty cannot comprehend the Divine Being. However, the discerning faculties of the human mind can recognize and find Him through the luminescent proofs and arguments presented in the Holy Quran, which appeals to human wisdom.

The Death of Jesus – 3

by Maulana Hafiz Sher Mohammad

Evidence of the Hadith

We have shown from numerous verses of the Holy Quran that Jesus is not alive in heaven but that he died in his own time as did other prophets. No doubt should, therefore, remain in the mind of any just and truth-loving person about this matter. But, for further satisfaction of the seekers after truth, we now present some sayings (Hadith reports) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who of course was the recipient of Quranic revelation and its premier commentator, to decide this issue so thoroughly that each and every Muslim would have to bow to the verdict.

First Hadith: Meaning of *Tawaffa*

“It is reported from Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet said in a sermon: O people! You will be gathered to your Lord (on the day of Judgment) ... and some people from my *Umma* will be taken and dragged towards hell. I shall say: ‘O Lord, but these are my people’. It will be replied: ‘You do not know what they did after you’. Then I shall say as did that righteous servant of God (i.e., Jesus) say: ‘*I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die (tawaffaitani) Thou wast Watcher over them’ ...*” (*Bukhari, Kitab al-Tafsir, under Surah Ma’idah*)

The last words of the Holy Prophet (“I was witness of them ...”) are taken from the verse 5:117 of the Holy Quran where Jesus is quoted as replying in these very words on the Day of Judgment. It is agreed by all Muslims that, when these words are used by the Holy Prophet in the above Hadith report, the meaning of

tawaffaitani occurring there is “Thou didst cause me to die”. So obviously they have the same meaning when used by Jesus, i.e., Jesus was taken from his people by *death*, not by rising alive to heaven.

Second Hadith: All Prophets had to die

In his last illness, during which he died, the Holy Prophet Muhammad entered the mosque with the support of two men to give the following address:

“O people! I have heard that you fear the death of your Prophet. Did any prophet before me live on so that I should be expected to live on amongst you? Listen! I am about to meet my Lord, and so will you. So I bid you to treat well the early *muhajirs*.” (*Al-anwar ul-Muhammadiyah min al-Muwahib al-Ladinya*, Egypt, p. 317)

This hadith settles the meaning of the three Quranic verses:

“Muhammad is only a messenger, messengers before him have indeed passed away” (3:144);

“And We made no mortal before thee to live on forever” (21:34);

and:

Nor did they (the prophets) live on forever” (21:8).

Had *any prophet at all* still been alive, the Holy Prophet could not have uttered the words above. So Jesus was dead by that time.

Third Hadith: Death within a century

1. “There is no one alive today but will be dead before a hundred years have passed over it.” (*Muslim, Kanz al-Ummal*, vol. 7, p. 170)
2. “The Holy Prophet said: ‘Allah sends a wind every hundred years which takes the soul of every believer’. This hadith is sound in transmission.” (*Mustadrak*, vol. 4, p. 475)

These hadith show that all those who were alive in the Holy Prophet’s time died within a hundred years. Had Jesus been alive (in heaven as is supposed) he too would have died within that period.

Fourth Hadith: Jesus’ age given as 120

“Aisha (God be pleased with her) said that, in his illness in which he died, the Holy Prophet said: ‘Every year Gabriel used to repeat the Holy Quran with me once, but this year he has done it twice. He has informed me that there

is no prophet but he lives half as long as the one who preceded him. And he has told me that Jesus lived a hundred and twenty years, and I see that I am about to leave this world at sixty’.”

(*Hujjaj al-Kiramah*, p. 428; *Kanz al-Ummal*, vol. 6, p. 160, from Hazrat Fatima; and *Mawahib al-Ladinya*, vol. 1, p. 42)

The *Tabarani* says concerning this hadith: “Its narrations are reliable, and it is reported in a number of different versions”. The hadith here leaves no room to doubt at all. It not only announces Jesus’ death but gives his age as 120 years. And it is reported through at least three channels: from Aisha, Ibn Umar and Fatima. This hadith is, therefore, sound and a very clear proof of Jesus’ death.

Fifth Hadith: Jesus dead like Moses

1. The Holy Prophet Muhammad said: “Had Moses or Jesus been alive, they would have had to follow me.” (*Al-Yawaqit wal-Jawahir*, p. 24; *Fath al-Bayan*, vol. 2, p. 246; *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, under verse 81 of *Al Imran*)
2. “Had Jesus been alive he would have had to follow me.” (*Sharh Fiqh Akbar*, Egyptian ed., p. 99)
3. “No. 19: If Moses and Jesus were alive, they would have but followed me.” (English text from *Al-Islam*, published by the Fiji Muslim Youth Organization, vol. 4, Oct. 1974)

The above hadith clearly show that *both* Moses and Jesus were considered to be dead by the Holy Prophet.

Sixth Hadith: Tomb of Jesus

The Holy Prophet said:

“May the curse of God be upon the Jews and the Christians who made the graves of their prophets into places of worship.” (*Bukhari, Kitab as-Salat*, p. 296)

The Holy Prophet said this because he was anxious that the Muslims should avoid the evil of making the tomb of their prophet into a place of worship, as Jews and Christians had done with their prophets’ graves. The *Jews* had had numerous prophets but the prophet properly recognised by the *Christians* is only one — Jesus. This hadith shows that the Holy Prophet believed that Jesus had a tomb. And, in fact, this is the place where Jesus was kept after being removed from the cross (till he recovered from his wounds), which

Christians revere greatly. Obviously, according to this hadith, Jesus did not rise up to heaven.

Seventh Hadith: Jesus in company of the dead

The various hadith about the Holy Prophet's *Mi'raj* record:

1. "Adam is in the first heaven ... Joseph is in the second heaven, and his cousins Yahya (John the Baptist) and Jesus are in the third heaven, and Idris is in the fourth heaven."
(*Kanz al-Ummal*, vol. vi, p. 120)

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw Yahya and Jesus *in the same place*; and as the former, indeed every other prophet seen, is dead, so must Jesus be.

2. The above hadith is corroborated by another that tells us that in the *Mi'raj* vision the Holy Prophet met the spirits of all the previous prophets (see *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Urdu ed. published in Karachi, vol. iii, p. 18).

Eighth Hadith: Jesus "descent" on night of Mi'raj

A hadith about the *Mi'raj* records:

"Then the Holy Prophet descended in Jerusalem, along with all the other prophets. At the time of prayers, he lead them all in prayer."

(*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Urdu ed., vol. iii, p. 23)

Among "all" the prophets is included Jesus. Had he, unlike other prophets, been alive physically in heaven, his "descent" to Jerusalem would have been with his material body. In that case he would have had to rise up to heaven physically *a second time*. But the Quran mentions only one *raf'* ("exaltation" which is misunderstood as "rising up to heaven") of Jesus!

This difficulty does not arise if we believe, as is clear from the various hadith about *Mi'raj*, that Jesus was in the same state (i.e. dead) as all the other prophets seen in the vision.

Ninth Hadith: Holy Prophet's discussion with a Christian delegation

"When a delegation of sixty men from the (Christian) people of Najran came to the Holy Prophet, their chief priest discussed with him the status of Jesus and asked him as to who Jesus' father was. The Holy Prophet said: 'Do you not know that a son resembles his father?' They replied: 'Yes'. He said: *A lastum ta'lamuna anna rabbana la yamutu wa anna*

Isa ata 'alaihi-l-fana', i.e., *Do you not know that our Lord lives for ever while Jesus perished.*"

(*Asbab an-nuzul*, by Imam Abu-l-Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad al-Wahidi of Neshapur, published in Egypt, p. 53)

What clearer testimony could there be that Jesus has died than this saying from the blessed tongue of the Holy Prophet!

Tenth Hadith: Two different descriptions of Jesus

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, there are recorded two different physical descriptions of Jesus — one applying to the past Messiah and the other to the Messiah whose advent in the latter days is prophesied.

1. In the *Mi'raj* the Messiah seen with Moses, Abraham and other prophets by the Holy Prophet, was described by him thus:

- i. "I saw Jesus. He was a man of a reddish complexion." (*Bukhari, Kitab al-anbiya*, ch. 24)
- ii. "I saw Jesus, Moses and Abraham. Jesus had a reddish complexion, curly hair and a wide chest." (*ibid.*, ch. 48)

It is clear from both these Hadith reports that by Jesus, who was seen here along with Abraham and Moses, is meant the Israelite prophet. He had a red complexion and curly hair.

2. Bukhari has recorded a hadith in which the Holy Prophet relates a dream of his *about the future*:

"In a state of sleep I saw myself circum-ambulating the Ka'ba, and I saw a man of a wheatish complexion with straight hair. I asked who it was. They said: This is the Messiah, son of Mary." (*Bukhari, Kitab al-Fitn*, ch. 22, 'Mention of *Dajjal*')

Thus, where Jesus is mentioned along with Abraham and Moses, he is described as of *a reddish complexion and curly hair*; but where he is seen along with the *Dajjal* in a dream about the future, he is said to have *a wheatish complexion with straight hair*. Evidently these two different descriptions do not apply to one and the same person. So Jesus, the Israelite prophet, whom the Holy Prophet saw in the *Mi'raj* vision, and the Messiah who was to appear in the latter days to kill the evil *Dajjal*, are two different persons.

The Israelite Messiah, Jesus, died, as is made clear by the Holy Prophet Muhammad's sayings. And the Messiah whose advent in the latter days has been prophesied by the Holy Prophet, was to be from the

Muslim community, and *not* an Israelite prophet. This is borne out by the following three Hadith reports:

1. *'Ulama'u ummati ka anbiya'i bani Israil*, i.e., "The learned ones of my community are like the prophets of the Israelites."
2. *Ala inna-hu Khalifati fi ummati min ba'di*, i.e., "Certainly he (the Messiah to come) is my khalifa after me in my community."
3. *Fa amma-kum min-kum*, i.e., "He shall be your Imam from among yourselves."

Conclusions

From all the Hadith reports quoted above, the following conclusions are drawn:

First hadith: The Holy Prophet Muhammad has referred to his own death using the words *falamma tawaffaitani*. Since these very words are used in the Holy Quran in respect of Jesus, it proves that he, too, has died.

Second hadith: The Holy Prophet asked his companions if *any one at all* of the previous prophets had survived so that he too would be expected to go on living. Had Jesus been alive the Holy Prophet could not have used this argument. Or, his companions would have argued back that as Jesus was alive the Holy Prophet need not die either. This shows that the Holy Prophet and his companions believed Jesus to be dead.

Third hadith: The Holy Prophet prophesied that all the believers living then would be dead within a hundred years. So even if Jesus had been alive then, he would have died in the specified period.

Fourth hadith: Just as the ages of various prophets, for example, Moses, David, Solomon, etc., are recorded in Hadith, Jesus' age is noted in a hadith as being 120 years.

Fifth hadith: Had Jesus been alive, the Holy Prophet could not have said that "Moses and Jesus would have been my followers *had they been still alive*".

Sixth hadith: The Holy Prophet has made a reference to the tomb of Jesus.

Seventh hadith: On the night of the great *Mi'raj* the Holy Prophet saw Jesus and Yahya (John the Baptist) together in the same place. Yahya being dead, shows that Jesus also was dead. The Holy Prophet met not the physical bodies but the souls of the prophets in the *Mi'raj* experience.

Eighth hadith: On the *Mi'raj* night all the other prophets, including Jesus, were led in prayer by the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the mosque at Jerusalem. This shows that Jesus was dead, for otherwise he would have descended to Jerusalem physically, and then ascended to heaven *a second time* — something which no one believes. This vision of leading all the previous prophets in prayer signified that the holy Prophet was the *Khatam al-anbiya*, and the one to whom the followers of these prophets would now have to render obedience.

Ninth hadith: The Holy Prophet's discussions with the Christian delegation from Najran show that he believed Jesus to be dead.

Tenth hadith: In *Bukhari* two different physical descriptions of Jesus are recorded: one where he was seen along with other prophets in the *Mi'raj*; and the other where he is seen circumambulating the Ka'ba with the *Dajjal* in a dream of the Holy Prophet relating to the latter days, i.e., in the distant future.

This proves that Jesus, the Israelite prophet was dead, for the Messiah of the latter days was to be another person. It should be noted that prophecies invariably require interpretation and are not necessarily fulfilled exactly literally. The reason is that when a prophet or other righteous person is shown future events by God Almighty, it is in the form of visions or dreams seen by their spiritual, not physical, eyes. All holy scriptures are agreed that most dreams and visions require interpretation. This also applies to the Holy Prophet's prophecies relating to "the descent of the Messiah", *Dajjal*, Gog and Magog, the *Dabbat al-ard*, etc.

Just because there are prophecies speaking of the "coming" of the Messiah, one cannot deduce therefrom that Jesus is still alive, while on the other hand numerous verses of the Quran and many Hadith reports declare forcefully that *Jesus is not alive but died*, and even his age is given as 120 years. ♦

To come in future parts:

- *Evidence of the Ijma of the Muslim nation.*
 - *Evidence of the great imams, scholars and ulama.*
-