

Fast 16: Islam rejects doctrine of salvation of any group — 2

- We continue the discussion from the last Study on the meaning of this verse:

<p>“Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.” — ch. 2, v. 62</p>	<p>إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّبِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾</p>
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What it says is that reward from God and salvation in the Hereafter are achieved by believing in God and believing that a time will come when you will be held accountable for your actions, and doing good deeds in this world. **To whatever degree** anyone follow these principles, to that extent they reach the state of salvation.

- These principles are accepted by the Jewish and Christian religions as well. But their concept of God acts as a hindrance. If a religion teaches its followers that God has chosen them, as a tribe or race, to be His exclusive favourites on the basis of their birth, then **if** (and I stress, **if**) the followers **truly act according to this**, we may ask: how can they deal justly with people of other nations, and do good towards them, when they regard them as rejected by God?

Similarly, if a religion teaches its followers that their sins have already been forgiven for accepting the founder of that religion as their saviour, then **if** (and I stress, **if**) the followers **truly believe this**, their belief in the Day of Judgment will not act as a deterrent to wrongdoing and an incentive to doing good to others.

- Thus the above verse says that it is indeed the principles which various religions have in common that lead to salvation, but to follow and act upon them **with full effect** requires having the right concepts about those principles. This is what the teachings of Islam provide — the removal of all barriers which prevent these principles from being followed to the full.
- Whoever acts on the core, purest and uncorrupted principles of belief in God and the Last Day, and the doing of good to others, attains reward from God and salvation. Those core, pure principles, the Quran clearly tells us, were taught by all earlier prophets, not only the Prophet Muhammad.
- Note that this verse, by listing Muslims along with Jews and Christians, shows that Muslims don't have some special guarantee that they will not deviate from the true religion, as Jews and Christians did.

- The wording of this verse, and its repetition in 5:69, also removes the wrong impression that the Quran speaks badly about Jews and Christians. What it speaks badly about are their wrong-doings and deviations from the true religion, and it warns Muslims that they too are liable to do the same. If the Quran was denouncing Jews and Christians as such, for being Jews and Christians, it could not make this statement about them in ch. 2, v. 62, repeated in ch. 5, v. 69.
- A verse occurring shortly later in chapter 2 sheds more light on this:

<p>“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</p>	<p>وَقَالُوا لَنْ نَدْخُلَ 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﴾</p>
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The Jews claimed on their part, and the Christians likewise claimed on their part, that only they will find salvation and enter the garden of the next life. The Quran rejects these claims as “their vain desires”, their wishful thinking. It says to them that they cannot provide any proof of their assertion. We may pause here to note, incidentally, that this shows that, according to the Quran, baseless claims, without argument or proof in their support, cannot be accepted, especially when these claims are based not on broader justice but on narrow self-interest.

Note also that verse 62 of ch. 2 mentioned **belief in the Last Day** as one requirement to receive salvation, whether for a Jew, or a Christian or a Muslim. But if Jews and Christians are claiming, each religion for itself, that only they will “enter the garden”, then their belief in the Last Day is not at all in accordance with belief in the Last Day as required by the Quran. Their belief will also undermine their capacity to do good to others in this world, which is another requirement of ch. 2, v. 62 for gaining salvation. Moreover, with their beliefs about who can enter the Garden they are **excluding** people of other religions, while the Quran in ch. 2, v. 62 is trying to **include** others in salvation.

Most notably, in rejecting their claims, the Quran **does not make the counter-claim**, that it will **not be you** (O Jews and Christians), **but we Muslims** who will enter the Garden. Rather, it says that “whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others)”, such ones shall enter the Garden. Again, it mentions a principle that leads to heaven, and not by merely belonging to any named group.