

## *Last verses of Surah al-Baqarah (ch. 2)*

**Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 11 March 2022**

أَمَّنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَكِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نَفَرْتُمْ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٨٥﴾

“The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. They all believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messengers. And they say: We hear and obey; our Lord, Your forgiveness (do we crave), and to You is the eventual course.” (The Quran, 2:285)

In the last *Khutba* I covered verse 284 of ch. 2. This is the second of the three verses which bring chapter 2 to a close. It shows that Islam is based on the revelation which the Holy Prophet received from God. In the first place, the Holy Prophet himself believes in his own revelation. It is alleged that when he received his very earliest revelations, the Holy Prophet was not certain that it was revelation from God. In fact, he never had any doubt that it was revelation from God. If he had any doubt and needed reassurance for it, it was his apprehension that he was not equal to the great task being assigned to him. Then it is mentioned here that the believers also in his revelations. It was the depth and strength of his belief which made others also believe in the revelation.

After this, the fundamental beliefs of Islam are mentioned relating to revelation. All believers, including the Holy Prophet himself, believe in God, His angels, His Books and His Messengers. God is the One Who sends revelation. The angels bring it to human beings, in particular to the messengers. The revelation is passed down to later generations through the Books of God. Along with these fundamental beliefs it is stated that the believers “make no distinction between any of His messengers”. These messengers arose among all nations. Earlier in the same chapter it was stated: “Man-kind is a single nation. So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as

warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed” (2:213). Because mankind is a single nation, it means that each of its divisions into countries, races and nations must be treated by God in the same way. Hence God raised prophets with books in all nations. And just as God did not make any distinction between nations, the believers in Islam are told not to make any distinctions between the messengers sent to the various nations, so as to believe in some but not in others.

In a verse in the middle of ch. 2, Muslims are required to believe in all the revelations of God: “Say: We believe in Allah and (in) what has been revealed to us, and (in) what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) what was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) what was given to the prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit” (2:136). Here, after mentioning some prophets by name, it is stated in general terms: “and what was given to the prophets from their Lord”.

Another point may be clarified here. It is generally thought that there is a difference between messengers, or those known as *rasūl*, and prophets, those known as *nabī*. It is said that a messenger was a special kind of prophet who received in his revelation a book from God. The other prophets, which was the vast majority of them, did not receive any book although they did receive revelation. But the Quran does not support this idea. In the way in which these words ‘messenger’ and ‘prophet’ are used in the Quran, every prophet was also a messenger. As prophet, he received revelation from God, and as messenger he conveyed that revelation to the people. Take the verse I have just quoted, v. 136 of ch. 2. It says that Muslims believe in Allah, and in what was revealed to various named prophets. Out of those six named prophets, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jesus, three did not receive any book (Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob). Moreover, the verse goes on to say that Muslims believe in the revelation to all the prophets. But in the verse which I read at the beginning, v. 285 of chapter 2, it says that Muslims believe in Allah and in his Book and His Messengers. So the same group of people is called “prophets” in one place and as “messengers” in another place. There is yet another verse in chapter 2 which begins as follows: “It is not

righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets...” (2:177). In this verse, what is called “the Book and the prophets” is called “His Books and His Messengers” in v. 285.

It is often thought that while Moses was a messenger of God (a *rasūl*), as he brought a book from God called the Torah, his brother Aaron, who was his helper, was not a messenger but only a prophet (*nabī*) as he brought no book. But according to the Quran God addressed both of them, saying “go both of you to Pharaoh” and say to him “We are **two messengers** of your Lord” (20:43 and 20:47). At another place the Quran says about Moses and Aaron: “And We gave **them both** the clear Book. And We guided **them both** on the right way. And We granted **them both** among the later generations (the salutation): Peace be on Moses and Aaron” (37:117–120). They were both on an equal footing, but responsible for different tasks: Moses for giving and teaching the law, and Aaron for teaching the acts of worship

What exactly does it mean, as it says in the verse I read at the beginning, that Muslims believe in “His books and His messengers”? It does not mean that they believe, like they do in the Quran, in the books which are considered as the books of the earlier prophets. The original revealed texts of those books were not recorded and passed down to the next generations in the way that the Quran was recorded as it was revealed and then passed down to the next generations. What we have in the earlier scriptures are words reported by people as to what the prophets said. Muslims are required to believe that the teachings of the prophets themselves were revelations from God. Therefore we respect the earlier scriptures and can learn from them about the lives of the earlier prophets, and how they presented the same principles and truths which the Quran also teaches. For example, the Quran tells us that fasting is being prescribed for Muslims as it was prescribed in the previous religions. Therefore, we should look in the books of the earlier prophets, especially the Bible, to see what is taught about the principle of fasting there. What we read there is not binding on us in terms of the specific way and manner of fasting, but it does illustrate to us the reasons for fasting.

We can also learn more details about the lives of the prophets through the earlier scriptures, such as the stories of Joseph and Moses. However, we cannot accept anything which goes against the teachings of the Quran. For example, the earlier scriptures, including the Bible, relate certain incidents from the lives of their prophets which show them to have committed sins and immoral acts. We do not accept those incidents as true because the Quran teaches us that prophets, while being mortal human beings who had human limitations, could never commit such acts. If the Holy Prophet Muhammad had been a self-seeking person, he could have exploited those incidents to present himself as superior in character to the earlier prophets. But, as opposed to this, the Quran taught that no prophet committed sins. In fact, the Quran directly repudiates some of the allegations made in the Bible against the prophets of the Bible. I mentioned Aaron just above. In the Bible story, when Moses left his people for a few days, they reverted to idol-worship. They asked Aaron to make for them a golden calf to worship, and he made the calf for them which they then worshipped. According to the Quran, it was someone else who misled the followers of Moses into making the calf, and Aaron had, in fact, warned them not to worship the calf and told them to obey his order (20:90).

The Muslim belief in the earlier scriptures may be compared to the Muslim belief in books of Hadith. While Hadith is recognised as a source of Islamic teachings by the vast majority of Muslims, yet the same believers in Hadith reject many reports in Hadith books as inauthentic. Even as regards the reports which are accepted, no Muslim believes that every word in such a report was uttered by the Holy Prophet in the exact form in which it is reported. Hadith reports are always judged by how far they conform with the Quran. If a report is in conflict with the Quran, it is either rejected or given an interpretation which fits in with the Quran. If a report is not in conflict with the Quran, it could still be rejected on the basis of reason or of known historical facts. Otherwise, it can be accepted as giving us more details on some point mentioned in the Quran.

It is stated in the verse which I read at the beginning (2:285), and in another verse in the same chapter (2:136), that believers in Islam (*mu'minūn*) and Muslims are those

who “make no distinction between any of His messengers.” Muslims thus believe in all messengers of God equally. Making no distinction between them refers to how the Jews and the Christians made distinctions between them. The Christians make a distinction between Jesus and the Israelite prophets who came before him because they regard Jesus as the beloved and dear of God in an exclusive sense, far above the other prophets. He is the only sinless one, while all other prophets committed sins, they claim. The Jews make a distinction by refusing to believe in non-Israelite prophets. They said: “And do not believe except in him who follows your religion” (3:73).

The Prophet Muhammad required his followers to believe in all the messengers, even though almost all of them were from outside his own nation of the Arabs.

May Allah enable us to believe in His revelations and make them our chief source of guidance, ameen.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لَنَا وَنَاوَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ  
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-