

The Journey into the Hereafter (part 8 of 8): Conclusion

Description: Some reasons for the existence of Paradise and Hell.

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Published on 02 Oct 2006 - Last modified on 25 Jun 2019

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Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, who passed away in 632, related:



"This world is a prison for the believer, but for the disbeliever it is a Paradise. While for the disbeliever, the Hereafter will be a prison, but for the believer, it will be his Paradise."

Once, in the early period of Islam, a poor Christian happened upon one of the great scholars of Islam, who was at the time mounted upon a fine horse and clad in fine garments. The Christian recited to the well-to-do Muslim the *hadeeth* quoted above, before remarking: **"Yet I stand before you a non-Muslim, poor and destitute in this world, while you are a Muslim, rich and prosperous."** The scholar of Islam replied: **"Indeed so. But if you knew the reality of what might await you (of eternal punishment) in the Hereafter, you would consider yourself now to be in Paradise by comparison. And if you knew the reality of what might await me (of eternal bliss) in the Hereafter, you would consider me now to be in prison by comparison."**

Thus, it is from the great mercy and justice of God that he created Heaven and Hell. Knowledge of the Hellfire serves to dissuade man from wrong-doing while a glimpse into the treasures of Paradise incites him towards good deeds and righteousness. Those who deny their Lord, work evil and are unrepentant will enter Hell: a place of real pain and suffering. While the reward for righteousness is the place of unimaginable physical beauty and perfection that is His Paradise.

Often, people testify to the goodness of their own souls by claiming that any good they do is purely and solely out of a genuine love of God or to live by a universal moral and virtuous code, and for that, they do not need any sticks or carrots. But when God speaks to man in the Quran, He does so knowing the fickleness of his soul. The delights of Paradise are real, physical, tangible delights. Man can begin to appreciate just how

desirable the perfect, abundant and unending food, clothing and homes of Paradise can be precisely because he is aware of how satisfying and sweet those things can be in this present reality.

"Beautified for men is the love of things they covet: women, children, hoards of gold and silver, branded beautiful horses, cattle and well-tilled land. Such is the pleasure of the present life; but with Allah is the excellent return (to Paradise)." (Quran 3:14)

Likewise, man can begin to appreciate just how tortuous and terrifying Hellfire and its furnishings could be precisely because he is aware of how awful a burning by fire can be in this world. So, the journey of the soul after death, as described to us in vivid detail by God and His Prophet, Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, should and must serve as nothing but an incentive to what all of humanity surely and truly recognizes as its noble purpose: the worship and service of its Creator in selfless love, awe and gratitude. After all,

"...they were not commanded except that they should worship Allah (alone), being sincere to the upright religion (of Islam)." (Quran 98:5)

But, as for those many multitudes amongst mankind who, throughout the ages, neglect their moral duty to their Lord God and their fellow man, let them not forget that:

"Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection. So whoever is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, it is indeed he who has succeeded. And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion." (Quran 3:185)

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