

284361 - Meaning of the verse “and [I will] make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection” [Aal ‘Imraan 3:55]

the question

I have question from a Christian about chapter 3 verse 55 of the Quran. He asking why are the followers of Jesus not above the disbelievers when Allah promised

Summary of answer

Conclusion:

Allah foretold that those who truly follow ‘Eesaa (peace be upon him), who are the ones who believed in him during his lifetime and believed in the Messenger of Allah Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) after he was sent, would be superior to those who disbelieve, by means of the proof and evidence that they had, until the Day of Resurrection, for their proof is more perfect and stronger.

If they truly follow the Messenger, then Allah will support and help them by giving them authority and the upper hand over those who disbelieve.

Detailed answer

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“[Mention] when Allah said, ‘O Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is your return, and I will judge between you concerning that in which you used to differ’”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:55].

This is a promise from Allah, may He be exalted, to the followers of 'Eesaa (Jesus - peace be upon him) that He would make them superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. The scholars differed as to whom Allah, may He be exalted, meant by those who follow 'Eesaa (peace be upon him) in this verse:

1.

Some of them said that his followers are those who believed at his time, and the Muslims after the sending of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). What this means is: following 'Eesaa (peace be upon him) requires believing in Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and this superiority is connected to that.

2.

Ibn 'Atiyyah said: The majority of commentators are of the view that the phrase "those who follow you" is general and comprehensive in meaning. Thus it includes the ummah of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) because they follow 'Eesaa... Similarly, they regarded the phrase referring to the disbelievers as being general and comprehensive in meaning.

So what we may conclude from this verse is that Allah was informing 'Eesaa (peace be upon him) that those who believed in him - in the proper manner - would be superior to those who disbelieve, by means of the proof and evidence that they had, and by means of the honour that would be granted to them and the upper hand they would be given.

3.

Some of them said that what is meant is that Allah would make the Christians superior to the Jews, and this is quite clear.

So the verse may be telling us of the disgrace and punishment of the Jews, by making the Christians superior to them throughout the world until the Day of Resurrection.

Some commentators said that what is meant is those who followed him at the time when he sought their help. This refers to the disciples, whom Allah made superior to the disbelievers, because he honoured them and made their names renowned among the righteous. Therefore they were made superior by means of the proof and evidence that they had, and the signs of Allah's pleasure that became apparent in them.

See: Tafseer at-Tabari (5/453-455); Tafseer Ibn 'Atiyah (1/444-445).

Moreover, the scholars also differed as to what is meant by superiority here:

1.

Some of them said that it refers to religious superiority, meaning that they were superior to them in terms of good characteristics, perfect etiquette, closeness to truth and distance from falsehood.

2.

Some of them said that it refers to superiority in worldly terms, such as their being in positions of leadership and authority over them.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: With regard to the words of Allah, may He be exalted (interpretation of the meaning): “[Mention] when Allah said, ‘O Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection’ [Aal ‘Imraan 3:55], this is true, as Allah told us. Whoever follows the Messiah (peace be upon him), Allah will make him superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Those who followed him in his true religion, and not that which was altered, Allah made them superior to the Jews.

Furthermore, the Christians will be superior to the Jews who disbelieved in him [‘Eesaa] until the Day of Resurrection.

As for the Muslims, they believe in him and do not disbelieve in him; rather when the Christians changed his religion and Allah sent Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with the religion of Allah with which Allah sent the Messiah and other Prophets, Allah made Muhammad and his ummah superior to the Christians until the Day of Resurrection...

So whoever has a higher level of faith in Allah and belief in His Messengers is more deserving of the help of Allah, may He be exalted.

End quote from al-Jawaab as-Saheeh (2/178).

Imam Ibn Katheer said:

“and make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection” – and this is what happened. When Allah took the Messiah (peace be upon him) up to heaven, his companions split into groups after he was gone. Some of them believed in that with which Allah had sent him, that he was the slave of Allah and His Messenger, the son of His female slave. Some of them exaggerated about him, regarding him as the son of God. And others said that he was God, or that he was the third of three. Allah mentioned their views in the Qur’an and refuted each group.

They persisted in that for nearly three hundred years, then there came a Byzantine ruler called Constantine who became Christian. It was said that this was a trick aimed at corrupting the religion, because he was a philosopher. It was also said that he did this out of ignorance. But he is the one who altered and distorted the religion of the Messiah, adding to it and taking away from it. He set out laws and the “great commission” – which was in fact a vile betrayal. Pork became permissible during his time, and the people prayed to him facing towards the East. They depicted his image in the churches, and added ten days to their fast because of a sin that he had committed, or so they claimed.

The religion of the Messiah became the religion of Constantine, but he built churches, places of worship, hermitages and monasteries – more than twelve thousand places of

worship. He also built the city that is named after him, and he followed the Melkite [or Melchite] Christian tradition.

In all of that, they had the upper hand over the Jews, and Allah supported them against them, because they were closer to the truth than the Jews, even though they were all disbelievers.

When Allah sent Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), those who believed in him believed in Allah, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers in the correct way, so they were the followers of every Prophet on the face of the earth, for they believed in the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, the final Messenger and the leader of the sons of Adam, who called them to believe in the entire truth. So they were closer to every Prophet than his own nation, who claimed to follow his religion and path even though they had distorted it and changed it.

Moreover, with his [Muhammad's] system of law, Allah abrogated the systems of law brought by all other Messengers, as He sent Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with the true religion, that cannot be altered or changed until the onset of the Hour; it will continue to have the upper hand over all other religions.

Hence Allah enabled his [the Prophet's] companions to conquer the world, East and West, and they were able to gain control of all lands, and all countries came under their control. They defeated Khusraw and Caesar, confiscated their treasures and spent them in Allah's cause, as their Prophet had told them in the words that he conveyed from their Lord, may He be glorified and exalted (interpretation of the meaning):

“Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security...”

[an-Noor 24:65].

Because they (Muslims) are the ones who truly believe in the Messiah, they captured Bilaad ash-Shaam (Greater Syria) from the Christians and pushed them towards Byzantium, where they sought refuge in their city Constantinople. Islam and its people will remain superior over them until the Day of Resurrection.

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told his ummah that the last of them would conquer Constantinople, capture its wealth as booty, and kill many of its inhabitants in an unprecedented manner.

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (2/48). See also: Hidaayat al-Hayaari (1/340).

And Allah knows best.