

CHAPTER 2, VERSES 131-135: THE RELIGION OF ABRAHAM

Rating:

Description: Prophet Abraham's legacy to his descendants and how Islam remains true to that heritage.

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By: Aisha Stacey (© 2019 IslamReligion.com)

Published on: 09 Sep 2019

Last modified on: 10 Sep 2019

"When his Lord said to him, 'Submit [to My will],' he [Abraham] responded, 'I submit to the Lord of all worlds,' and Abraham instructed his sons to do the same, as did Jacob, [saying], 'My sons, God has chosen for you this faith; so do not die except in [a state of full] submission. ' Were you [Jews] there to see when death came upon Jacob? When he said to his sons, 'What will you worship after I am gone?' They replied, 'We will [continue to] worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac—the One God. And we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.' That community passed away. What they earned belongs to them, and what you earn belongs to you. And you will not be accountable for their deeds. They say, 'Become Jews or Christians, and you will be rightly guided.' Say [O Prophet], 'No! We follow the faith of Abraham, the upright—who was not a polytheist.'" (Quran 2:131-135)

These essential verses can be found in the middle portion of the second chapter of the Quran, The Cow. This chapter was revealed over several years, and the subject matter covers a range of issues, including doctrines of faith and fundamental Islamic concepts. Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, is known to have said that everything has its peak and the peak of the Quran is The Cow. It flows easily from one subject to another and is primarily addressed to the believers, the Jews from Medina, and the hypocrites.



The selected verses describe God choosing Prophet Abraham; the prophet that links the three great monotheistic religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. God asks Abraham to submit to Him and to leave this legacy of submission to his sons and future generations. When God asked for Abraham's submission, Abraham replied, 'I submit to the Lord of all worlds.' This is an example of a true believer; when God calls, the Muslim surrenders himself completely and obeys God in all things. He acknowledges God alone as His Lord, Master, Sovereign, Ruler, and Lawgiver, and he adopts the way of life prescribed by God. Abraham adopted this way of life, so too did all the prophets of God, no matter what nation or way of life they had previously been attached to.

Abraham's grandson Jacob is then mentioned because the twelve tribes of Israel were his descendants. The Jews God was addressing at the time of the revelation of the Quran, were not there (alive) when, on his death bed, Jacob asked his sons what they would worship after he was gone. They answered that they would worship God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael. And Jacob commanded his sons to devote themselves to God, warning them not to die unless they are Muslims. He uses the word Muslim in the full sense of the word which describes a person completely submitted to the will of God.

In the Talmud, the sacred text of Judaism, we find a similar description of Jacob's last words to his sons. 'Serve the Lord your God, and He will deliver ye from all trouble, even as He delivered your fathers... Teach your children to love God, and observe His commandments, for God will guard those who are just, and walk in righteousness.' And the sons of Jacob responded, 'All that you have commanded us, our father, we will do. May God be with us.'^[1]

However, God then tells us that, this community, the immediate descendants of Abraham and Jacob, has passed away. They worshipped God according to their laws, and they will be answerable to God for their own deeds, not the deeds of their descendants. Their descendants include the Jewish community in Medina at the time of the revelation of the Quran. These Jews worshipped God in a way that would have appalled Abraham and his immediate descendants. Some of them did not believe in an afterlife and others had only a flimsy concept of the Hereafter. Thus, God questions their right to claim that they belonged to the descendants of Abraham when they had departed from his devotion and obedience to God. They will be asked about what they earned, meaning the approval or disapproval of God; they will not be asked about the earnings of the earlier generations. God does not hold a person or a nation responsible for what their forefathers did or did not do.

Thus, in light of this, God instructs that if the believers are asked to be Jews or Christians and turn away from Islam, they should answer that they follow the way of Prophet Abraham. He did not associate anything with God—his worship was pure monotheism. Abraham was not a Jew, nor was he a Christian; that terminology came after him. In Chapter Three of the Quran, The Family of Imran, verses 67 and 68 tell us that Prophet Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian and inform us that, 'Indeed, those who have the best claim to Abraham are his followers, this Prophet (Muhammad), and the believers.'

It is important to understand that the religion of Islam, submission to the will of God, was the first religion of humankind has always been the only acceptable religion in the sight of God. It was taught to our father Adam and to all the prophets who came after him. For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad was not the founder of a new religion, as many people mistakenly think, but he was the final Prophet of Islam.

The scriptures of both the Jews and the Christians attest to the fact that Abraham believed and taught that worship, adoration, service, and obedience are due to God Alone. The religion of Abraham was one of submission to God. When we think of

Judaism and Christianity, we must remember that they are religions that came later. Judaism emerged in the third or fourth century BCE and for some time followed the way of Abraham, however, by the time Prophet Jesus was sent to correct their errors they had strayed far from the religion of submission. The body of work the Christians call the Gospels was collated and written well after the raising of Jesus.

Footnotes:

[1]

The Talmud: Selections by H. Polano [1876]

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