

INTER FAITH PROGRAM
SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION: DEATH
(ACCORDING TO THE ISLAMIC BELIEF)

Greetings to you all, dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

This discourse is definitely Not from a Muslim scholar, but from an ordinary creature of God.

A saying: “There is no birth without Death”

Whatever a good practicing Muslim believes in regard to the religion or performing religious acts (deeds), be it obligatory worship or optional deeds, they are based on two major resources:

- I) The Book of God, i.e. the Holy Qur’an
- II) The Hadith, i.e. Traditions of the Holy Prophet/Messenger of God.

There are numerous verses in the Holy Qur’an talking about our today’s subject: “DEATH”. I will, God-willing, deliberate on some of the verses as cite some ahadith (traditions) from the Holy Prophet and / or from his vicegerents, the Immaculate Holy Imams.

Let me explain a little about the quotations that I will make / use from the Holy Qur’an; the number appearing first is the number of Chapter, followed by the number of Verse. For instance, 2:28 means Chapter 2, Verse no. 28.

When a Muslim is told / informed about Death of a person he declares by saying, “*They on whom calamity befalls, they say, ‘Verily we are from God and unto Him is our return’*” [2:156]. It means death is a return journey to God.

God says in His book, “*His is the Kingdom (of heavens and earth) and He is All-Powerful over all things; Who created death and life that He may try you, that who is the best (amongst you) in deeds and He is Ever-Prevalent, the Oft-Forgiving*” [Qur’an 67:1-2]

Elaborating on the above verse, a scholar, Mir Ahmed Ali says God talked about death first and then life, for we all were dead, God brought us to this life (through our parents) then He will cause us to die, after we have been tested, in regard to our deeds, as to who amongst us performed better deeds, (in His obeisance).

He also mentions that death is Not cessation to our existence, in fact it is a ‘Transformation’ from one form to another.

We may classify ‘Death’ as occurring in three ways:

- a) Death achieved while a person is firm in the Belief, either being killed / slain or even on a hospital bed dying of natural causes. This is the death of 'Martyrdom'.
- b) Death caused by Natural disasters, i.e. floods, earthquakes, land slides, accidents, or by bodily organs failing to function, such as heart attack, uncured diseases, etc.
- c) Death caused by committing suicide; this death is the most abhor-able and wretched one. According to Islamic Sheria (law) this 'act' is forbidden.

The most cherished or desirable death, is the one discussed in a) above i.e. to die a death of Martyrdom.

Death cannot come by except with God's permission, as God says: "*Death comes by God's permission, none can delay it nor can one hasten it*" [Qur'an 3:145]. In this verse, it is also mentioned that one who desires (his) reward in this world would be given and one who desires (his) reward in the hereafter would be given; And shortly God will reward the grateful ones.

Again God says: "*Every self tastes death*" [3:185]. The verse also speaks about recompenses being paid in full, and whoever is removed away from the (Hell) fire and admitted in Paradise has gained his object. Life of this world is not but a provision of vanity (pride).

Death of the wrongdoers:

"Those whom the angels terminate their life, while they are unjust to themselves, then they would offer submission (saying): "We used not to do any evil" (the angels will reply:) "Aye! Verily knows God well what ye were doing. Therefore enter ye the gates of Hell, to abide in it; Woeful indeed will be the abode of the haughty (arrogant) ones." [16:28-29]

Death of the Righteous:

"And it is said unto those who guard themselves against evil: What is, that hath sent down your Lord? Say they: "Good: For those who do good in this world, is good; and indeed the abode of the hereafter is better; and excellent indeed is the abode of the pious ones. Garden of the eternity, they shall enter therein, beneath them flow rivers, they shall have in them whatever they desire for; Thus doth God reward the pious ones. Those whom the angels take away in good state, (the angels) while receiving them will say; "Peace be on you; Enter ye, the Garden, for what ye were doing." [16:30-32]

Death, not the End of all things:

“Say thou (O Our Apostle) ‘God giveth you life, then He causes you to die, then will He gather you unto the Day of Reckoning, about which there is no doubt, but most people know not.’ [45:26]

Death, Changed form thereafter:

“It is We, who have decreed death among you, and we are not frustrated (i.e. prevented). To our changing your forms and raising you in that ye know not.” [56:60-61]

Commentaries on above verses: The decreed respite given to man in this world until his death which none can ever change or avoid. If God wills, He can replace any people with any other, or our soul and put into new forms, not known to us – But this is not transmigration in this world.

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, having talked so far, let me now tell you about the agonies, difficulties or pangs of death. It is stated by an Infallible (error/sin-free) Imam, the more you attach yourselves to the materialistic world, the more you will experience agonies at the time of death. Therefore one should have little attachment to the worldly affairs.

A person asked the Holy Prophet (PBUH & HF) to explain how a dying person feels the pangs of death, what happens to him; In reply, the Holy Prophet (PBUH & HF) gave an example of a silken sheet spread on a tree full of thorns, and then holding one end of the sheet, it is pulled away from the tree, what happens to the sheet is what will happen to the dying person!.

What is the remedy? Or how should a person act, to avoid or lessen the pain? Remain obedient to God and act according to His commandments and be Not disobedient to Him. And love those whom God loves and hate those whom God hates, of course God loves not the disobedient ones (sinful people).

A person, hearing about the death, went to his friends; asking them as to how they could help him out. The first friend said; Well, as long as you are alive, I am your friend. Once you are dead, I can do nothing except to carry your body to a grave.

The Second friend said; “I can only give you a shroud”.

He was so very sad, and in that state, he went to a third friend. The third friend said; “Though I am weak, I will accompany you to your grave and stay with you till the Day of Reckoning.”

Gentlemen and Ladies, the first friend was none but his children / relatives who would carry him to his grave. The second one is his wealth, which offered him shroud and the third friend is his good deeds which he performed lazily, hence the weak companion.

It will be not out of place, I hope, if I quote some of the statements by the Fourth Immaculate Imam (PBUH):

“O God, the remembrance of death, and the frightening conditions of the observer and standing before You, make me stay away from my food, drink and keeps me away from my pillow and prevents me from sleeping. How can one sleep, who fears the angel of death? And the calamities of the Day, rather, how can an intelligent person sleep while the angel of death does not sleep, neither at night nor in the day and seeks his soul in the state of sleep and in the middle of the hours. I beseech You to give me ease and comfort at the time of death and forgiveness when I meet You.”

Let us conclude our talk with a beautiful supplication (Du'a) taught by the Fourth Immaculate Imam (PBUH), which is recited during the late night optional prayers, which runs as follows:

“My God and my master, have mercy on me when I am lying on my bed (dead) and the hands of my loved ones turn me,
Have Mercy on me when I am placed on the place of washing and the virtuous near ones wash me,
And have mercy on me when I am being carried and my relatives have surrounded my coffin
Have mercy on me in that dark house, on my fear, my separation and my loneliness.”

Greetings to you all.

Notes:

PBUH &HF – Peace Be Upon Him & His Immaculate Family

PBUH – Peace Be Upon Him

Quotations in Italics: Verses from the Holy Qur'an.

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