

Core Curriculum

6 Measuring Good and Bad in Islam

6.4 **Life and Death in Islam**

INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to our channel!

In this lesson, we will be looking at the concept of life and death in Islam and how it is directly connected to the idea of guidance in Islam.

BODY OF TEXT

But those who disbelieve say, “The Hour (i.e. the Day of Judgment) will not come to us.” Say, “Yes, by my Lord, it will surely come to you. [God is] the Knower of the unseen.” Not absent from Him is an atom’s weight within the heavens or within the earth or [what is] smaller than that or greater, except that it is in a clear register - That He may reward those who believe and do righteous deeds. Those will have forgiveness and noble provision. But those who strive against Our verses [seeking] to cause failure (i.e. to undermine their credibility) - for them will be a painful punishment of foul nature. (Chapter 34, verses 3-5 of the Holy Qur’an)

Muslims believe that this life is a trial and test in preparation for the Hereafter. Allah says the following in the Qur’an:

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.

(Chapter 51, verse 56 of the Holy Qur'an)

The purpose of our creation is not simply belief in Allah. If belief in Allah is all that counts, then there is no reason for Iblīs or the Devil to be cursed by God. The purpose of human existence, and the ultimate preparation for the Hereafter is to establish a healthy and good relationship with God. By purifying our souls and having a good relationship with Allah, we find salvation.

This world therefore acts as a nurturing ground for our souls to be saved in the next life. As the Prophet Muhammad (s) once said, "this world is the farming field of the Hereafter"

In this world, we learn from our mistakes, we face problems and learn to overcome them. By learning to tame our desires and our egos, we purify our souls and open them up to the Light of God. The purified soul or heart is the only thing that counts in the next life.

Allah says in the Qur'an says:

The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart." (Chapter 26, verse 88-89 of the Holy Qur'an)

Without belief in life after death, one cannot purify the heart. Denial of the after life results in nihilism. Nihilism is a world view where there is no ultimate purpose or meaning to anything. Without belief in the Hereafter, morality becomes totally subjective and spiritual progress becomes completely meaningless.

If there is no Hereafter, all of morality becomes inconsequential. Spiritual progress also becomes meaningless for it leads to no where. The spirit only has value if it can live beyond the lifespan of the body.

As life is a test, death is the end of the test. It is when people need to put their pencils down and hand back their exams to the invigilator. Death, according to Islam, is not a tragedy in the strictest sense. Some

people complain that death is evil. How can God allow the death of a young person? Should not the person have the chance to live a longer life?

If life stopped in this world only, that statement might have been true. But true life, that is, eternal life, begins after the death of our bodies. Death in this world is not evil, it is merely the end of a test and the beginning of eternity. As the Hereafter is eternal, it is all the more important that we take advantage of our short time here to lead the best possible life in the next.

The accumulation of good deeds and closeness to God is what makes us pass this test and find success in the next life. The Qur'an says:

[For such is the state of the disbelievers], until, when death comes to one of them, he says, "My Lord, send me back that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind (i.e. in that which I neglected)." No! It is only a word he is saying; and behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected. So when the Horn is blown, no relationship will there be among them that Day, nor will they ask about one another.

And those whose scales are heavy [with good deeds] - it is they who are the successful. But those whose scales are light - those are the ones who have lost their souls, [being] in Hell, abiding eternally. The Fire will sear their faces, and they therein will have taut smiles (i.e. their lips having been contracted by scorching until the teeth are exposed). (Chapter 32, verses 99-104 of the Holy Qur'an)

Historically speaking, many of the Prophet's companions became moral people after they learnt about the Hereafter. This demonstrates that often enough, the lack of belief in the Hereafter leads to an immoral life. As Dostoevsky once remarked, if God does not exist, everything is permitted.

Here is a question that people often ask. We know how belief in life after death benefits us in the next life but how does it benefit us in this world?

Genuine belief in the Hereafter brings peace and happiness in this world. Think about it, if you know that you will only live a few years in this life (half of which is spent in sleep) and that eternity awaits you in the next, few things can sadden you in this world.

This is because you know that in the long wrong, your short lived suffering is nothing compared to the eternal bliss that awaits you. It is like waiting in line and being uncomfortable, but being mentally at ease for you know that in a few minutes you will be out of the line and on the way to where you want to go!

In fact, even thinking about hell is a therapy for humans for it belittles any tragedy that this world has to offer.

Although in our minds we know that one day we will die, our hearts are often not convinced. We suffer much as we subtly believe that we're going to live forever in this world and by extension, suffer forever. Understanding and really grasping the impermanence of this world and the reality of death is freedom from the temporary suffering of this world.

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu 'Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh