
Sūrah 98: al-Bayyinah

Period of Revelation

Where it was revealed, at Makkah or Madinah, is also disputed. Ibn Zubair and Ata bin Yasar hold the view that it is Madani. Ibn Abbas and Qatadah are reported to have held two views, first that it is Makki, second that it is Madani. Ā'isha regards it as a Makki Sūrah. As for its contents, there is nothing in it to indicate whether it was revealed at Makkah or at Madinah.

Theme and Subject Matter

Having been placed after Sūrah al-ʿAlaq and al-Qadr in the arrangement of the Qurʾān is very meaningful. Sūrah Al-ʿAlaq contains the very first revelation, while Sūrah Al-Qadr shows as to when it was revealed, and in this Sūrah it has been explained why it was necessary to send a Messenger along with this Holy Book.

First of all the need of sending a Messenger has been explained, saying: The people of the world, be they from among the followers of the earlier scriptures or from among the idolaters, could not possibly be freed from their state of unbelief, until a Messenger was sent whose appearance by itself should be a clear proof of his apostleship, and he should present the Book of God before the people in its original, pristine form, which should be free from every mixture of falsehood corrupting the earlier Divine Books; and which should comprise sound teachings.

Then, about the errors of the followers of the earlier Books it has been said that the cause of their straying into different creeds was not that God had not provided any guidance to them, but they strayed only after a clear statement of the Right Creed had come to them. From this it automatically follows that they themselves were responsible for their error and deviation. Now, if even after the coming of the clear statement through this Messenger, they continued to stray, their responsibility would further increase.

In this very connection, it has been stated that the Prophets who came from God and the Books sent down by Him, did not enjoin anything but that the way of sincere and true service to God be adopted, apart from all other ways, no one else's worship, service or obedience be mixed with His, the salat be established and the Zakāh be paid. From this also it automatically follows that the followers of the earlier scriptures, straying from this true religion, have added unrelated things to it, which are false, and God's Messenger has come to invite them back to the same original faith.

In conclusion, it has been pointed out clearly that the followers of the earlier Books and the idolaters who would refuse to acknowledge this Messenger are the worst of creatures: their punishment is an everlasting Hell; and the people who would believe and act righteously, and would spend life in the world in awe of God, are the best of creatures: their reward is eternal Paradise wherein they will live forever. God became well pleased with them and they became well pleased with God.

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they with Him. That is for whoever has feared his Lord.

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,
the Most Merciful

1. Those who disbelieved among the People of the Scripture and the polytheists were not to be parted [from misbelief]¹⁸²⁷ until there came to them clear evidence -
2. A Messenger from God, reciting purified¹⁸²⁸ scriptures
3. Within which are correct writings [i.e., rulings and laws].
4. Nor did those who were given the Scripture become divided¹⁸²⁹ until after there had come to them clear evidence.
5. And they were not commanded except to worship God, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakāh. And that is the correct religion.
6. Indeed, they who disbelieved among the People of the Scripture and the polytheists will be in the fire of Hell, abiding eternally therein. Those are the worst of creatures.
7. Indeed, they who have believed and done righteous deeds - those are the best of creatures.
8. Their reward with God will be gardens of perpetual residence beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, God being pleased with them and

¹⁸²⁶ *Al-Bayyinah*: Clear Evidence.

¹⁸²⁷ i.e., from their erroneous beliefs and superstitions.

¹⁸²⁸ i.e., containing no falsehood.

¹⁸²⁹ Into sects and denominations.