

Sura 98: Al-Bayyina (The Clear Evidence)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 8:

1. *Those who disbelieve among the People of the Scripture, and among the idolaters, could not have separated themselves (from misbelief) until there had come to them the clear evidence:*
2. *A messenger from God, reciting purified pages;*
3. *In them there are valuable books.*
4. *Nor were the People of the Scripture divided until after the clear evidence had come to them.*
5. *And they have been commanded only to worship God, devoting their faith to Him alone, to establish regular prayer; and to give alms. That is the upright religion.*
6. *Those who disbelieve, among the People of the Scripture and the idolaters, will abide in the fire of Hell. They are the worst of creation.*
7. *Those who believe and do good deeds are the best of creation.*
8. *Their reward is with their Lord: Gardens of Eden underneath which rivers flow, wherein they dwell forever. God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. All this is for those who stand in awe of their Lord.*

Many of the narrations indicate that this Sura was revealed in Medina. However, there are some narrations which indicate that it was revealed in Mecca. The style of the Sura may support the opinion that it was revealed in Medina. However, one cannot completely dismiss the opinion that it was revealed in Mecca.

“Those who disbelieve among the People of the Scripture, and among the idolaters, could not have separated themselves (from misbelief) until there had come to them the clear evidence: a messenger from God, reciting purified pages; in them there are valuable books.” The earth was desperate for a new message. Corruption was prevalent. The only hope for abolishing corruption was a new message, a new project, and a new movement. Disbelief crept into the doctrine of faith of all people, whether those who received Scriptures before or the idolaters. The only way that they would relinquish the state of disbelief that they arrived at was through the belief in a new message that would be conveyed by a new messenger; a Messenger who recites purified pages. These pages are purified of disbelief and idolatry. These pages include valuable books. The word books in this verse may mean writings or topics; as we call the information about the rituals of purification the book of purification, and the rituals of prayer the book of prayer. These purified pages, meaning the Qur'an, brought valuable information to people.

“Nor were the People of the Scripture divided until after the clear evidence had come to them.” The first division occurred among the Jews before the coming of Jesus (PBUH). They became divided into five sects: the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes, the Extremists, and the Samaritans. Although all sects believed in one Messenger, Moses (PBUH), and one book, the Torah, each sect had its own characteristics and direction. Then the Christians were separated from the Jews, although Jesus (PBUH) was one of the prophets sent to the Children of Israel. He came to confirm the Torah. History tells of great many massacres that happened as a result of the enmity between the Christians and Jews.

Then the Christians became divided in spite of the fact that they all have the same book and the same Messenger. First, they were divided in matters of doctrine then the different sects became mutually antagonistic to each other and they started fighting among themselves. There were also differences among the Christian sects about the nature of Jesus (PBUH), his mother Mary, and the doctrine of trinity.

However, the religion was clear and the faith was simple, *“and they have been commanded only to worship God, devoting their faith to Him alone, to establish regular prayer; and to give alms. That is the upright religion.”* They were only commanded to worship God alone, become fully devoted to Him, establish prayer, and pay alms. These are the elements of the upright religion; pure faith in the psyche and rituals that express this faith in practice, and spending in the way of God. Whoever fulfilled these principles has fulfilled the principles of faith as was mentioned in the revealed books. It is one religion and one doctrine that came in different messages conveyed by different messengers. It is a clear religion with no mysteries and no complexities.

The destiny of those who received the clear evidence through their messengers and through this last Messenger, who recited to them purified pages, and still disbelieved is clear, *“Those who disbelieve, among the People of the Scripture and the idolaters, will abide in the fire of Hell. They are the worst of creation. Those who believe and do good deeds are the best of creation. Their reward is with their Lord: Gardens of Eden underneath which rivers flow, wherein they dwell forever. God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. All this is for those who stand in awe of their Lord.”* Muhammad (PBUH) is the last Messenger of God. Islam is the last Message. The two represent the last chance for people to be guided. They have to choose one of two alternatives: either belief and salvation or disbelief and destruction. The disbelievers will abide in Hell forever; these are the worst of creation. The believers will be admitted to the Gardens of Eden; these are the best of creation. God will be pleased with them and they will be pleased with God. This is the best reward for those who stand in awe for God.