

Quran Appreciation - Spring Term (Apr-May 2018)

The Disciples of Nabi Isa (a)

The Hawariyyun - Historical Details

A disciple is a follower. Nabi Isa had disciples who learned from him, followed him, and then spread his teachings to others. Nabi Isa faced opposition from many of the people he preached to. They rejected his call to the worship of One God and dismissed his miracles as magic. To distinguish between his supporters and his enemies Nabi Isa asked them who would be his helpers in his mission and the disciples said they would be the helpers of Allah.

The Quran says;

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ
أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ

O you who believe! be helpers in the cause of Allah, as Isa son of Maryam said to his disciples: Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah? The disciples said: We are helpers in the cause of Allah.

Sura Saff, no.61, verse 14

They were known as the Hawariyyun. The word 'Hawari' means white, or pure. According to Imam Ridha (a) they are called hawariyin because they were pure in themselves and purified others from the filth of sin by sermons and remembrance.

The number of the disciples of Nabi Isa is reported to be twelve. These were the men who supported him with deep conviction. The following hadith verifies that.

It is reported that Ibn 'Abbas said, "I said, 'O Apostle of Allah! How many Imams will there be after you?' He said, 'The number of the disciples of Jesus, the number of tribes of Moses, the number of the chieftains of the children of Israel.' I said, 'O Apostle of Allah! How many were they?' He said, 'They were twelve, and the imams after me will be twelve.

(Source: Biharul Anwar, Vol. 36, pg 285, H#107)

The Holy Prophet described the Hawariyyun as having the following qualities;

- 1) They were quick to help Allah and His Messenger.
- 2) They had no pride in them, nor weakness, nor doubt.
- 3) They helped him with vision, influence, seriousness and suffering.

Nabi Isa put great effort in training and nurturing these disciples. He would take them wherever he went and would discuss lessons from the world around them.

Story

One day Nabi Isa gathered his disciples and said he had a favor to ask of them. ‘Consider it done, O Messenger of Allah’ they said. Nabi Isa stood and washed the feet of each of his disciples (this was a way to show humility and respect for the other person in the culture at that time). ‘It was more fitting that we do this’ they told him. At this Nabi Isa replied, ‘The person most fit to serve is a scholar. I have only humbled myself like this so that you will humble yourselves after me before people just as I have humbled myself before you.’

Then Nabi Isa said; ‘Wisdom is imparted through humility, not through pride, just as plants grow in soft soil, not in rock.’

Sources

Mahdi Muntazir Qaim, *Jesus through Shia Narrations*

Shaykh Rizwan Arastu, *God’ Emissaries: Adam to Jesus*