

Regarding the Ḥadīth: “I Saw My Lord in the Best Appearance” and the Doubt of the Christians and Jahmites Regarding It

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Bismillāh wal-Ḥamdulillāh.

The Christians exaggerated in and raised Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) from his status of being a humble servant of Allāh (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) to being the son of Allāh and Allāh himself—glorified and exalted is Allāh from such a calumny. Christian apologists, in order to justify such exaggeration in their doctrine, devise doubts and misconceptions based upon certain verses of the Qur’ān or Prophetic traditions, whether authentic or otherwise, to defend their belief.

One of their arguments is based upon what is related from the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) from Mu‘ādh bin Jabal (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) and Ibn ‘Abbās (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) that he said:

رَأَيْتُ رَبِّي فِي أَحْسَنِ صُورَةٍ

“I saw my Lord in the best appearance...”

Shaykh al-Albāni states that the wording, “I saw my Lord, the Mighty and Majestic [in a dream]” is authentic.¹ However, there are numerous other narrations which go beyond this and mention specific details of the appearance, such as a “beardless youth” and so on. The scholars have differed over the authenticity of these narrations, with many of them considering them weak and rejected. However, they are agreed that this vision is what is seen in the dream and not in real life, as that is not possible in the life of this world.

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi‘ al-Sagħīr (no. 3466).

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) provided an answer for us against both the Christians and also the Jahmiyyah and Mu'tazilah who deny that Allāh will be seen in the Hereafter:

He said:

“The word ru'yah, [vision, seeing]—even though in its origin, corresponds [with what is viewed, seen]—can sometimes be non-corresponding,² such as in His saying:

أَفَمَنْ رُئِيَ لَهُ سَوْءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَّاهُ حَسَنًا

“Is he to whom his evil actions are made attractive so that he sees them as good...” (35:8).³

And He also said:

يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِّثْلَيْهِمْ رَأَى الْعَيْنِ

“They (the believers) saw them (the disbelievers) with their own eyes twice their number (although they were thrice their number)...” (3:13).

[Likewise], presumption and imagination may correspond [to what is being presumed or imagined] from one angle but not another. It is therefore correct in its own level, even if it is not like the external reality,⁴ such as what people see in their dreams. While awake, a person may see something similar to what he sees

² Ibn Taymiyyah is pointing out that the seeing of the eye (or the mind) can either correspond completely with what is seen in external reality or not correspond, either in some aspects only, or completely, not at all.

³ So here, there is no correspondence between what such a man sees with his own vision, or viewpoint about his own actions and the actual reality itself.

⁴ Meaning, that even though such a presumption or imagination does not match external reality from all angles, it can still be a correct presumption or imagination up to a certain degree or level.

in his dream. He sees appearances, actions and hears speech and those are only likenesses being set forth [in his dream] for external realities.

Like what Joseph saw of the stars, sun and moon prostrating to him. There is no doubt that this what he imagined in his self. However, its reality lay in his parents and brothers prostrating to him, as He, [Allāh], said:

وَقَالَ يَتَابَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا

“And he said, ‘O my father, this is the explanation of my vision of before. My Lord has made it reality...’” (12:100).

Likewise, the vision of the king which Joseph interpreted, when he saw grains and cows. He saw them through his imagination in his self, but the [external realities represented by the thin cows and dried grain] were [in the form of] famine and drought. This type of imagination is true and correct at its own level, with the meaning that it has a correct interpretation that is appropriate to it and which resembles it from some angles. For interpretation of dreams is based upon analogy, consideration, resemblance and suitability.

However, the one who believed that what he imagined in his dream is the very likeness of that thing in external reality and that those affairs are the very ones he saw [in his dream] is a falsifier [of the truth]. Such as the one who believes that the sun itself which is in the sky, and the moon and stars all left their places and prostrated to Joseph. And [who believes] that the cows were present in external reality, the seven fat cows eaten by seven lean ones, then this is false.

When the affair is like this, then a person may sometimes see his Lord in his dream and speak to Him. This is true with respect to the dream itself,⁵ but it is not permissible to believe that Allāh Himself is like what he sees in his dream. For it is not necessary that everything seen in the dream corresponds in its likeness [to what is in external reality]. However, it must be the case that the appearance that was seen has some suitability and resemblance to that person's belief regarding his Lord. If his faith and belief is true, such appearances will come to him [in his dream] and he will hear such speech which is appropriate [to his faith and belief] And if not, then it will be the opposite. Some of the shaykhs said: 'When a servant sees his Lord with an appearance [in his dream], that appearance is a veil between him and Allāh'.⁶

Righteous people and others have never ceased to see their Lord in their dream and hear Him speaking to them. I don't think an intelligent person will deny this. For it is not possible to oppose the existence of this because the vision [in dreams] occurs without a person's choice, this is a well-known matter. Scholars among our associates and others have mentioned these occurrences as being from the foundations of the religion⁷ when they cited the

⁵ Meaning that it is true within the confines of his dream that he is seeing Allāh.

⁶ Meaning that because such an appearance is not like Allāh, what he sees in his dream is actually a veil, or a barrier for him, between him and Allāh, because Allāh's reality cannot be seen or fathomed in this life, whether in a state of being awake or asleep.

⁷ Meaning, that believers may see Allāh in their dreams with an appearance that is in accordance with their faith, belief and good opinion of Allāh, this is something that cannot be denied, similar to the karāmāt (extraordinary things) that happen to righteous people, these are true and real and cannot be denied.

rejection of the Mu'tazilites of [the believers] seeing Allāh [in the Hereafter].

The reports of the one who saw his Lord in his dream are [of the level of] mutawātir, [having come through large-scale successive transmission]. However, perhaps they [the Mu'tazilah] said: 'It is not permissible to believe that he saw his Lord in his dream', and hence they made such dreams to be similar to confused, mixed up dreams [that come to people].⁸ This is from their excessive negation and denial, they denied that seeing Allāh in the dream is real, similar to all other things that are seen in the dreams. But this is what is said by those holding the doctrine of the Jahmites. It is futile and opposes what the Predecessors of this nation and its leading scholars have agreed upon. Rather, it is what the generality of intelligent people from the offspring of Ādam have agreed upon.

In seeing Allāh in the dream there is no deficiency or flaw in relation to Allāh the Sublime and Exalted. Rather, that is in accordance with the condition of the one who sees, [in accordance] with the soundness and corruption of his faith and in accordance with his uprightness and deviation.

The saying of he who said: 'Whatever one thinks or occurs to his imagination, then Allāh is other than it' and what is similar to it, when it is carried upon the likes of this [explanation which has preceded] then it is a correct consideration. For we do not believe that what a person imagines of appearances when awake or in his

⁸ In other words, the Mu'tazilites claimed that the dream is not real in and of itself, but the person is just having confused, mixed up dreams where he is presuming and imagining in his dream what is not really there.

sleep that Allāh is like that in His self. For He is not like that in His self. Indeed, the Jinn and Angels cannot be imagined by a person upon their actual realities. They are other than what he presumes and imagines about them when awake or in his sleep, even if what he sees may have some resemblance to them. [So when that is the case] then Allāh the Exalted is loftier and greater [than that He should be just like what a person sees or imagines when awake or in sleep].”⁹ End quote from Ibn Taymiyyah.

There is no evidence in this ḥadīth—alongside the difference regarding the authenticity of certain additional wordings of the ḥadīth—for the claim of the Christians that Jesus is the son of Allāh, or Allāh Himself. Ibn Taymiyyah stated the futility of the belief of the one who claimed that there is correspondence and likeness between the realm of dreams and external reality at all times. Rather, there may or may not be correspondence, and what a person sees is in accordance with his own state, his creed, his faith, his disposition, his uprightness and so on. And that thing which he sees is simply an analogy or metaphor for what exists in external reality. So for example, a person may see his great, great, grandfather in his dream and interact with him, and he sees what he sees on the basis of what he has been told or learned about this ancestor of his, in the absence of any pictures. So whilst in the context of the dream, he is really seeing his grandfather, as in, this is what is actually taking place in his dream, then there may be very little correspondence with the actual reality of the

⁹ Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah (1/325-328).

appearance of his ancestor and his speech and manner. Rather, what he saw came from his own imagination and presumption. Similarly, when a person sees Allāh in his dream, then his dream is true in the sense that that is what is taking place in his dream, but there is no correspondence with actual reality, with the reality of Allāh, His essence and being. Rather, what he sees is from his own self in accordance with his opinion of Allāh and his condition in terms of belief, faith, piety and so on.

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