

IN HIS NAME & BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIS LAST HUJJAT (ATFS)

GHADEER LECTURE SERIES

Lecture 6: QURANIC VERSES ON IMAMAT

VERSE OF ULIL AMR (contd)

Fakhre Raazi, the famous exegetist of the Ahle Sunnah writes under the verse of Ulil Amr i.e.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِيَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ
إِن كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

O you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you believe in Allah and the last day; this is better and very good in the end.

In the light of the two evidences that we presented in our earlier lecture, it is clear that *Ulil Amr* must be infallible (Masoom). Fakhre Raazi says that if the order of unconditional obedience is given, then it implies that the *Ulil Amr* will be infallible (Masoom).

However, some of the Sunni exegetist say that the verse, in the later part says, “*if you differ on an issue, then turn to Allah and His Messenger*” Why turning to *Ulil Amr* is also not mentioned? As the verse says

فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ

“..... then if you quarrel about anything, **refer it to Allah and the Apostle**, if you believe in Allah and the last day.....”

They say that we have been asked to turn to Allah and His Messenger in matters of dispute. If *Ulil Amr* is infallible, then verse should have said ‘In matters of differences, turn towards Allah, His Messenger and the *Ulil Amr*’ But that is not the case.

Our Replies

1. Firstly, we would like to read this verse of Surah Nisa alongside verse 83

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ

“And when there comes to them news of security or fear they spread it abroad; and if they had referred it to the Apostle and to those in authority among them, those among them who can search out the knowledge of it...”¹

In the light of the above verse, the *Ulil Amr* too are one of the sources and avenues to solve the disputes of the people and resolve their differences.

Maybe, the need to mention the *Ulil Amr* is not needed in the later part of Surah Nisa v 59 as the religion originally belongs to Allah and His Messenger. The role and responsibility of *Ulil Amr* is to explain, interpret, propagate and defend the religion. They don't bring any new religion. Thus, Allah says in Surah Nisa v 59 that at times of differences, refer to the “owners” of religion i.e. Allah & His Messenger.

2. What if the people differ about the *Ulil Amr* itself? What if there is no unanimity about the *Ulil Amr*? Hence, the reason why *Ulil Amr* is not mentioned in the later part of verse 59 is that Allah was aware that the main dispute after the demise of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) would be about *Ulil Amr* itself. Who is the *Ulil Amr* of the nation? Is it the first caliph? Or is it Ameerul Momeneen (a.s)? Hence, since the debate is about *Ulil Amr* himself, the answers should be sought from Allah and His Messenger (sawa). Not from *Ulil Amr*.

Under this verse we have numerous traditions from Shia sources that clearly state that “*Ulil Amr*” in this verse refers to the twelve Imams (a.s). A few of them have been quoted by the Ahle Sunnah also with J Jabir Ibn Abdullah as it's narrator. When this verse was revealed, J Jabir stood up and asked Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) “O Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a)! We are aware of Allah and His Messenger. But who are these *Ulil Amr* whose obedience is obligatory upon us?”

¹ Surah Nisa v 83

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) replied “The first of them is Ali. Then his son Hasan. Then his brother Husain. Then his son Ali; then his son Mohammed – whose title in the Torah is ‘Baqir’ (Splitter). O Jabir, you shall meet him. Then convey my salam to him. After him will be his son Jafar Sadiq, then Moosa Kazim, then Ali Reza, then Mohammad Taqi, then Ali Naqi, then Imam Askari and finally Imam Mahdi – for whom Allah has destined a long occultation.”

At this point, J Jabir asked a second question. “O Messenger of Allah! Will the people benefit from a hidden Imam?” Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) replied, “I swear by the One who raised me as a Prophet! The people will derive benefit from the hidden Imam just as they obtain benefits from the sun when it is concealed by the clouds”

In this tradition, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) has compared the “concealed Imam” with the sun behind the clouds. Just as people benefit from the light, heat and gravity of the sun even when it is obscured by the clouds, in the same way people will benefit from the grace and blessings of Imam (a.s) even when he is in occultation.