137241 - Did Allah, may He be exalted, send the table down to the disciples?

the question

{Said Jesus, the son of Mary, “O Allah , our Lord, send down to us a table [spread with food] from the heaven to be for us a festival for the first of us and the last of us and a sign from You. And provide for us, and You are the best of providers.”

Allah said, “Indeed, I will send it down to you, but whoever disbelieves afterwards from among you - then indeed will I punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds.”} [Al-Maa’idah 5:115].

There is a difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether Allah, may He be exalted, sent down the table or not. I hope that you can tell us what you think about this matter.

Detailed answer

The scholars of the early generations differed concerning the table: did Allah, may He be exalted, send it down to the companions of ‘Eesa (peace be upon him), or did they become afraid when Allah, may He be exalted, said to His Prophet ‘Eesa: {but whoever disbelieves afterwards from among you - then indeed will I punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds}, so He did not send it down to them?

The majority of the scholars of the early generations were of the view that Allah, may He be exalted, did send it down to them, because He, may He be glorified and exalted, said: {Indeed, I will send it down to you}, and the promise of Allah is true and will definitely be fulfilled.

This is what was narrated from Salmaan al-Faarisi, ‘Ammaar ibn Yaasir, Ibn ‘Abbaas, Ishaaq ibn ‘Abdillah, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Sa‘eed ibn Jubayr, ‘Ikrimah, Qataadah, ‘Atiyah al-‘Awfi, Abu ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan as-Sulami, ‘Ata’ ibn as-Saa’ib, and others.

Mujaahid and al-Hasan said: He did not send it down to them.

The reason for that was that when Allah warned them against disbelieving after the sending down of the table, they feared that some of them might disbelieve, so they changed their minds about asking for the table to be sent down. Based on this view, the words {Indeed, I will send it down to you} may be understood to mean: if you insist, but they changed their minds about asking, so it was not sent down.

Imam Ibn Jareer at-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The correct view concerning that, in our opinion, is that Allah, may He be exalted, sent down the table to those who asked ‘Eesa to ask his Lord for that.

Allah, may He be exalted, does not break His promise and what He says will happen will definitely happen. Allah, may He be exalted, tells us in His Book about the response to His Prophet ‘Eesa (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when he asked Him for what he asked Him, and He said: {Indeed, I will send it down to you}. It is not possible that He, may He be exalted, could have said {Indeed, I will send it down to you} and then not sent it down, because He, may He be exalted, told of what He would do, and He would not do something other than what He said He would do. If it were possible that He would say {Indeed, I will send it down to you} then not send it down to them, it would be possible that He might say, but whoever disbelieves afterwards from among you - then indeed will I punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds}, then some of them might disbelieve after that and He would not punish them. In that case, neither His promise nor His warning would be true, and it is not possible that this could be said of our Lord, may He be exalted." (*Tafseer at-Tabari* 11/232).

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

All these reports indicate that the table was sent down to the Children of Israel at the time of ‘Eesa ibn Maryam by Allah, in response to his prayer. That is also indicated by the context of these words in the Holy Qur’an: {but whoever disbelieves afterwards from among you - then indeed will I punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds}.

Some people said that it was not sent down, and this view is supported by the fact that the story of the table is not known to the Christians, and it is not found in their scripture. If it had been sent down, there would have been motives to transmit the story, and it would be found in their scripture either widely narrated or at least through some chain of narrator. And Allah knows best.

But the view of the majority is that it was sent down. This is the view favoured by Ibn Jareer. This – and Allah knows best – is the correct view, as is indicated by the reports from the early generations and others." (*Tafseer Ibn Katheer* 3/230-231).

The correct view regarding this issue is that it was indeed sent down. This is the view of the majority of scholars, and is the view favoured by Ibn al-Jawzi, as-Sam'aani, Abu Ja'far an-Nahhaas, Ibn Jizzi, al-Qurtubi, Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn 'Aashoor, ash-Shawkaani, and others.

See: *Tafseer al-Baghawi* (3/118), *Zaad al-Maseer* (2/462), *Ma'aani al-Qur'an* (2/387), *at-Tas-heel* (1/342), *Tafseer al-Qurtubi* (6/369); *at-Tahreer wa't-Tanweer* (p. 1236); *Fath al-Qadeer* (2/136), and *al-Jawaab as-Saheeh* (3/127).

Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This highlights some of the might of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted; that He, may He be glorified is All-Powerful and He is able to do all things; and that He, may He be glorified, is on high, because when something is sent down, it comes from a higher place to a lower place.

The sending down of the table, and the request to send it down, all indicate that the people knew that their Lord is on high, so they had greater knowledge of Allah than the Jahamis and their ilk, who denied that Allah is on high. The disciples requested that, and 'Eesa explained that to them, as did Allah, may He be exalted, hence He said: {Indeed, I will send it down to you}. This indicates that our supplication is to be addressed to our Lord on high, may He be glorified and exalted, believing that He is on high, above the heavens and above all of creation and above the Throne, and that He rose above it in a manner that is befitting to His majesty and greatness;

none of His creation resembles Him in any of His attributes, may He be glorified and exalted." (*Majmoo' Fataawa Ibn Baz* 2/56-57).

And Allah knows best.