



Imam Ali (as): Divider of Heaven and Hell

the importance of knowing imam Ali (as), based on the famous hadeeth

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[according to the narration] The Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, told Ali, peace be upon him... O Ali, you are the divider of heaven and hell. None shall enter the heaven unless he has recognized you, and you have recognized him! And none shall enter hell unless he has rejected you and you have rejected him. O Ali, you and your descendants shall be on the heights (al-A'araaf) on the Day of Judgment, recognizing the sinners by their marks, and the believers by their signs. O Ali, the believers would not have been distinguished, after I have departed, if you were not there. [1]

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"O Ali, you are the divider of heaven and hell"

This statement is a clear indication of the imam's (as) status before Allah and His messenger (saw), such that his every action and belief is in complete accordance with Islam. The Imam (as) represents Islam in such a perfect and complete manner that recognising and being like him is the only route to heaven, and rejection of who he is - the living embodiment of Allah's wish for mankind - can only lead to hell. This point is explained in the lines of the hadeeth which follow it.

"None shall enter the heaven unless he has recognized you..."

The first point in explanation of this concept is that none can enter heaven unless he has recognised imam Ali (as). This statement makes it clear that any believer who fasts, prays, gives alms and performs pilgrimage will still not attain true Islam unless he has accepted and acknowledged the role of imam Ali (as). Wilaya of Imam Ali (as) is so introduced to us as a foundation and requirement of being a good Muslim, and all other good deeds cannot bear fruit without it. This idea has been supported in the famous hadeeth, "**Whoever dies and does not know the Imam of his age, he dies the death of Ignorance (Jahiliyya)**", but outlines the **specific role** of the first imam, Ali (as) in relation to all believers following the prophet (saw). It should be noted that the criterion of imam Ali (as) as divider of heaven and hell is not limited to a timeframe such as the duration of his life, but is stated in relation to **all believers** after the Prophet (saw) for all time.

"...and you have recognized him"

The second point is that imam Ali (As) must also recognise the believers in order for them to enter heaven. It is not enough for the believers to agree to the role of the imam (as), but they must work hard to learn about him so that they are able to recognise him, and follow his teachings and manifest their beliefs through their actions such that they can be recognised as followers of him (as). This mutual recognition - of imam Ali (as) by the believer and of the

believer by imam Ali (as) - could be accomplished and strengthened if believers gain knowledge about the imam (as), and build a personal, spiritual relationship with the imam (as) through acts like supplication, ziyarat and good deeds on his behalf.

Points one and two present to us the importance of knowing and following imam Ali (as) for all believers, no matter what time they live in.

"And none shall enter hell unless he has rejected you and you have rejected him"

The third point is that none shall enter hell unless he has rejected the imam (as), in complement to point one. This completes and strengthens the force of the statement in point one, serving as a sharp warning to any who may believe that they can gain entry to heaven while denying the imam (as). Similarly, the fourth point that none shall enter hell unless he has been rejected by the imam (as) complements point two, in which those who reject a relationship with the imam (as) and manifest this in their actions can never enter heaven.

The following line of the hadeeth states that imam Ali (as) and his descendents will be able to recognise everyone on the Last Day through their marks, leaving no argument that there is another group which is not of either the first party (followers of the imam (as)) or the second (those who earn hell). This underlines the status of imam Ali (as) as a complete example of the laws of Allah's religion, being the absolute criteria by which men are divided into those reaching heaven and those for hell, and there is no way around this.

The final point made in this hadeeth states that the believers could not be distinguished from others after the prophet (saw) if it was not for imam Ali (as). ***In light of the teachings of this hadeeth, none other can take the place of imam Ali (as) as leader of muslims. Recognition of imam Ali (as) and following him truly is guaranteed to lead to success and entry to heaven, and rejection of him is rejection of the laws of Islam and the khalif appointed by Allah over mankind, and can only lead to hell.*** We must all learn about the imam's (as) life and become familiar with his deeds and sayings, until we are able to recognise him as more than just a distant historical figure. We must also strive to follow his example and his teachings, as they are in complete accordance with what the prophet (saw) brought of Allah's laws. ***Our success in this life and the next is subject to our being able to recognise the imam (as), and making ourselves such that we are recognisable as followers of his. There is no middle ground: if we do not try to recognise him and be recognised by him as believers, we have no other destination but the Fire. For, as given in the last line, the believers are only distinguished from sinners by knowing him.***

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