

Review paper

Some Muslims Views on Grave and Benefits of its Visit to the Life of Contemporary Muslims

Abubakar Bako

Department of Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Author E-mail: abubakarbako2014@gmail.com

Received 4 October 2022; Accepted 25 October 2022; Published 12 November 2022

ABSTRACT: From the time of death until the appointed time of resurrection, the grave serves as a barrier between this world and the next. It is, in fact, the first stage of the Hereafter. If a person is delivered from its torment, what follows is relatively simple. If one is not saved, what follows is far more severe. Remembering and visiting graves is not only encouraged in Islam, but it also has numerous effects or benefits in our lives, as we will see in this paper. Based on the nature and scope of the topic, an analytical method was used to conduct this research.

Keywords: Grave, benefits and contemporary Muslims

INTRODUCTION

The grave (Qabr) is one of the terrifying stages of the Hereafter, calling out daily: I am the abode of loneliness, I am the house of terror, I am the home of worms. Muslims believed in limbo life (Hayatul barkahiyah), which is the time between death in this world and resurrection (Ba'as) on the Day of Judgement. Muslims believed that two divinely appointed interrogating Angels would visit the dead after burial and inquire about his life, including his religion (Faith). If the deceased individual was a righteous believer, a gateway to paradise would be opened for him, and he would enjoy his time in the hereafter. Contrarily, if he is a disbeliever, a gateway to Hell will be opened before him, and from there he will start to suffer all forms of retribution for his terrible deeds in this life until the Day of Judgement.

Some Muslim factions have doubts about the afterlife's punishment. The Glorious Qur'an just briefly describes life after death. Here are a few verses from the Glorious Qur'an that described how the dead were feeling in their graves. If you could see how disbelievers are tortured when they face death while the Angels spread their hands towards them and remove their souls, you would understand.

Angels tell them, "You will be punished today because you used to say false things about Allah." You used to be arrogant about Allah's messageⁱ.

The above verse clearly states that people may be punished at the time of their death depending on their evils.

Similarly, Allah (S.W.T) says in another verse, "They were drowned because of their sins, and thus they entered the Fire." They did not find any other helper for themselves than Allahⁱⁱ.

According to the verse quoted here, the followers of Pharaoh (Fir'aun) were thrown into the Hell fire as soon as they drowned in water, indicating that there is punishment at the time of death. It's odd that fire punishment is mentioned alongside drowning in water. According to Imam Razi, this is very strong proof of punishment in Barzakh and grave. He points out that the letter "FA" is used to indicate that the punishment of fire was administered immediately following the drowningⁱⁱⁱ. This does not allude to the punishment on the Day of Judgement.

Another proof of the grave punishment for those who doubt it can be found in the following verse of the

Glorious Qur'an, where Allah (S.W.T) says So Allah delivered him from the evils that they plotted (against him), while Pharaoh's people were engulfed in an evil torment. They are exposed to it in the morning and afternoon. And one day, when the Hour is established (it will be said to the angels), send Pharaoh's people into the most severe torment^{iv}.

This verse clearly demonstrates that, in addition to the punishment to come on the Day of Judgement, there is punishment in the grave for evildoers.

According to Abdullah bn Mas'ud (May Allah be pleased with him), the spirits of the Pharaoh's people are brought to hell in the form of black birds every morning and evening. They are informed that this is their final home. In surah al kathur, Allah (S.W.T) says, "Abundance diverts you, until you come to the graves." Nay! You should find out soon. Nay! You should find out soon^v.

Here there is repetition of the phrase " Soon you will should know about it" The explanation of this phrase mentioned above is given by Caliph Ali (May Allah be Pleased with him) as narrated by Zir bn Hubaish '(May Allah be pleased with him)The first phrase refers to the Punishment in the grave and the second is pointing towards the Day of Judgement^{vi}. Apart from the above evidences quoted earlier Allah (S.W.T) says in the Glorious Qur'an concerning punishment in the grave. And whoever ignores my reminder will have a miserable life. Life, and we will raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection^{vii}.

According to Ibn Mas'ud and Abu Sa'ed Khudri (May Allah be pleased with them), the meaning of this pleasant life is punishment in the grave. Similarly, Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reports that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said that the above phrase in this verse means that Allah (S.W.T) will send 99 snakes into the grave of the unbeliever. These snakes will continue to pick at his flesh until the Day of Judgement.^{viii}

In fact, there are numerous verses in the Glorious Qur'an and authentic traditions of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) that confirm the existence of punishment or not in the grave. As a result, despite all of these evidences, it is wrong for any Muslim believer to reject the punishment in the grave. In addition to the evidences mentioned previously, Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) relates that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that when a person is buried after death and his family and friends leave the grave, the dead are resurrected. Person can hear the steps of the leaving crowd. Two angels come to the person in the grave.

The angels make the person stand up and ask him, "What do you know about that person Muhammad (peace be upon him)?" The true believer responds, "I stand witness that he is an obedient servant of Allah and true messenger of Allah." The angels tell him, "If you had not

believed, your place would have been in Hell." View it right now. Similarly, angels will ask hypocrites and disbelievers, "what do you know about that person Muhammad (peace be upon him)?" The disbeliever responds, "I do not know anything." Angels will say to him, "Neither did you try to recognize him, nor did you ever follow the believers." Angels will beat him with iron rods. He will cry so loudly that everyone in the universe, except Jinn and humans, will hear him^{ix}.

Denying punishment in the grave

Despite the evidence provided by the Glorious Qur'an and authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), there are a few Muslims who deny the existence of the punishment in the grave. We have these types of people both in the past and in the present. Among those who denied the existence of punishment in the grave in the past are Khawarij and some section of Mu'u tazilah. Mu'utazilah denied the punishment in the grave and its rewards. This is due to their belief and invented condition that only mutawatir ahadith constitute knowledge, whereas authentic (Sahih) aahad ahadith do not. By implication, this aahad ahadith does not amount to knowledge because it contains falsehoods. With this incorrect belief, they concluded that all aahad ahadith cannot be used as "Hujja" in Islam. They finally denied or rejected punishment in the grave based on what we mentioned earlier as a condition for accepting hadith to them. We also have a small number of people nowadays who disagree with the establishment of the death penalty in Nigeria. Here is the viewpoint of a select few people that were interviewed for this study. Here are some of them:

-There is no such thing as punishment in the grave in Islam because there is no single verse from the Glorious Qur'an that explicitly states it; all we have is interpretation of Qur'anic verses on the subject.^x

-In the hereafter, wrongdoers will be punished by Allah (S.W.T) in the hell fire. Numerous verses in the Glorious Qur'an have indicated this, but there is no clear evidence in the case of punishment in the grave^{xi}.

-How do we establish punishment in the grave (Qabr) when there is no clear verse or chapter indicating such an issue? Even the ahadith that have been reported on this subject are aahad ahadith, which are narrations that cannot be used as evidence in Islamic Shariah^{xii}.

Some of the weak Muslims mentioned above deviated from the actual teachings of the Glorious Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). These viewpoints contradict Islamic Shariah teachings.

Views of past Islamic scholars

Imaam Ahmad (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

"The Punishment of the Grave is a true fact; and no one denies it except one who is misguided and misguiding others."^{xiii} An-Naasiree (May Allah be Pleased with him) – said:

"We have believed in the Punishment of the Grave and its bliss...this is the madhhab of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah. So it is obligatory to have 'aqeedah in this"^{xiv}.

Imaam al-Qurtubee (May Allah be pleased with him) said: "To have believe in the Punishment of the Grave and its trials is obligatory, due to what the most truthful (Muhammad – Peace be upon him) has mentioned. This is the belief of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah."^{xv}

Imam Shafi'i (May Allah be pleased with him) said: Verily Al Qadr; both good and bad are from Allah(S.W.T), Indeed the punishment in the grave is true fact, Resurrection is a true fact, accountability fact, paradise and hell fire are true fact"^{xvi}.

Imam Abi Zamnin (May Allah have mercy on him) was reported to have said:

Ahl Sunnah have Iman (belief) in the punishment in the grave, may Allah save us and you from this"^{xvii}.

Ibn Qutaybah (May Allah have mercy on him) was also reported to have said: The people of hadith are in unity upon the fact that whatever Allah wills happens, and whatever He does not will, does not happen; that He is the Creator of good and evil; and that the Qur'an is the speech of Allah, uncreated; that Allah will be seen in the Day of Judgement, giving precedence to Abubakar and Umar (May Allah be pleased with them), upon iman in the punishment in the grave. They do not differ in need of these fundamentals. Whosoever opposes them in any of these matters, then they reject, hate, and declare such an innovator, cut themselves off from him"^{xviii}. The following are the views of some of the world's most renowned Muslim scholars on the punishment in the grave. None of these scholars denied the existence of grave punishment.

Views of some contemporary scholars

-Iman in the Punishment of the Grave and its trials is obligatory, due to the facts rooted from the Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)"^{xix}. The Punishment of the Grave is a true fact; and no one denies it except one who does not have sound Islamic Aqidah"^{xx}. Iman in the punishment of the grave is something very fundamental in the matters of Islamic Aqidah no one reject it except one who don't have sound belief in Islam"^{xxi}. Scholars one will admit that no one will deny the punishment in the grave except those do not sound Islamic Aqidah and knowledge.

Visitation of grave in Islam

Islamic Scholars with the backing of Qur'anic verses and Sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) urged and recommended visit of grave in Islam more

especially the visit of the Noble Prophet's grave (Peace be upon him) and that of the righteous people and consider this to be a virtue and honor. The following are some of the evidences from the Qur'an and Sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) concerning the permissibility of grave visitation Islam. "Visit the graves; for visiting them becomes the cause of remembering the next world"^{xxii}. Evidence from the Qur'an.

Allah (S.W.T) in the Glorious Qur'an clearly commands the Noble prophet (Peace be upon him) not perform prayer over the dead body of the hypocrites and should not stand near their graves. It says:

And never offer prayer for anyone of them who dies and do not stand by his grave, surely they disbelieve in Allah and His prophet and they shall die in transgression"^{xxiii}.

In this verse, for destroying the character of the hypocrites and rebuking the members of this group, the God commands the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him):

1. Not to perform salat over the dead body of anyone of them.
2. Not to stand over their graves; and this reality is presented with the sentence; "Do not stand over their graves"

When the Holy Qur'an commands that one should avoid these two actions with regards to the hypocrites it means that for others who are not hypocrites these actions are good and worthy to be performed.

In the case of the prophetic Sunnah we can cite the following ahadith:

Visit the graves; for visiting them becomes the cause of remembering the next world"^{xxiv}.

-I had prohibited you from ziyarat of graves. From now on, go for ziyarat because It will make you feel unattached towards this world and make you remember the hereafter"^{xxv}.

- he Noble Prophet (Peace be upon him) visited the grave of his mother and cried near her grave and also made others around him to cry. Thereafter he said: I have taken permission from my Lord to visit the grave of my mother. You too should visit the graves because such a visit will remind you of death"^{xxvi}.

- Aisha (May Allah be please with her) says that the Noble Prophet (May peace be upon him) freely allowed the visit of graves:

"The Prophet of God permitted the visit of graves."^{xxvii}

Aisha (May Allah please with her) says: The Noble Prophet (Peace be upon him) taught me the manner of visiting the graves. Here is the text of the tradition:

"My Lord commanded me to come to Baqi" and seek forgiveness for them. (Ayesha) says: I asked him how

one should seek forgiveness to which the Holy Prophet (S) replied: Say Peace (Salaam) be upon the people of this place from the believers and Muslims, May God have mercy on those who have left and those who are to follow. We shall join you all very soon.^{xxviii} In another tradition it says

"Peace be with you the groups of believers and Muslims, and certainly we will join you. You will exhilarate us and we will follow you. We ask welfare from you for ourselves and for yourself."^{xxix}

- From the tradition of Aisha, we got knowledge that whenever the last part of night was approaching, the Noble Prophet (Peace be upon him) would go towards Baqi' and say:

"Peace be with you! The groups of believers and what has been promised to you will be given to you, soon in future your destiny will reach you. And certainly, we will be the joiners to you soon. And if God wishes, will be with you. O God! Have mercy on all those (buried) in Baqi' Al-Gharqad."^{xxx}

The above traditions of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) clearly shows the stands of Islamic shariah concerning graves visitation.

Benefits of grave to the contemporary Muslims

In Islam, visiting graves is not only encouraged, but it also has numerous benefits for modern Muslims. Some of these advantages are as follows:

Its softens the hard heart

Visiting graves on a regular basis is an excellent way to soften the heart of a Muslim. It softens the heart, causes the eyes to cry, aids in the conversion to Islam, and expels base desires. According to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

Remember often the destroyer of pleasure (meaning death)^{xxxi}. Visiting graves helps one remember death, and remembering death keeps one from committing sin and softens his heart. Nobody remembers death during a difficult time, but he will feel at ease knowing that nothing lasts forever. Similarly, no one remembers death during times of joy, but he will feel restricted. Yazeed Ibn Tameem was quoted as saying:

One who is not prevented from sinning by remembering? death and hearing the Qur'an, nothing else can prevent him, even if he were to see the mountains move in front of his very eyes^{xxxii}.

No doubt visiting graves regularly is a path/ road to good death/good ending. Imam Qutubi was reported to have said in his book titled "At-Tadkhirah Fi -Ahwalil Mawt wal -Akhirah"

Whoever remembers death on a regular basis will benefit in three ways: he will be quick to repent, content, and active in worship.

Visiting graveyards is one of the most powerful ways for a Muslim believer to be reminded of death. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) urged Muslims to visit graves in order to soften their hearts. This is evident in the tradition in which he says:

I have previously prohibited you of visiting graves, but now

I ask you to do so as they help disregard this worldly life And reminds you of the hereafter^{xxxiii}.

We can conclude from the preceding tradition that visiting graves is the most effective way of softening hearts. The visitor benefits from remembering death, while the dead benefits from the visitor's prayer/du'a. Evidence of the dead benefiting from the visit can be found in the Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) tradition, where he says:

Peace be with you, Believers and Muslims of this land. May Allah have mercy on those who have gone before us and those who will come after us. We will join you soon, in sha Allah^{xxxiv}.

The person visiting the graveyard should be God-conscious, and the purpose of his visit should be to increase his fear of Allah. He should remember his brothers, sisters, friends, and well-wishers who died and are now buried. He should consider all of the worldly materials they accumulated while on earth, their wives, and all of the worldly pleasures they experienced before dying in the grave. In fact, the visit should make him forget about the here and now and focus on the hereafter.

-It made a Muslim believer to lose hope in living longer, which is a hope that causes evil ending Hoping for Long life is one of the means that lead to bad ending. In this regard Allah (S.W.T) says in the Glorious Qur'an Allow them to eat and enjoy themselves while they are preoccupied with (false) hope. They will find out^{xxxv}.

The above verse clearly shows that desire and hope for a long life in this material world is one of the signs that may lead to a bad ending in an individual's life. Regarding this, Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) was said to have said:

What I fear for you is following your desires
Hoping for a long life, for following one's desires
Makes a man ignore the truth and hoping for
Long life makes him forget the hereafter.^{xxxvi}

Ali's (May Allah be pleased with him) statement is self-explanatory.

As a result, whoever has this in mind will eventually fall into the hands of the devil.

As a result, one of the major consequences of remembering death is that it makes one lose hope of living longer in this material world. It makes the world seem insignificant.

- It makes one content with very little, as Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) related when the prophet (Peace be upon him) passed by a group of laughing people and said:

"Profusely mention the destroyer of pleasures", and he (Peace be upon him) said:" It is never mentioned during the time of need but would make one feel content, and never mentioned during prosperity but would make one feel restricted. This is because remembering death makes a man content with the little he has during hardship/poverty. It also makes him realize how he will account for his worldly possessions before Allah (S.W.T) on the Day of Judgement. The world, in fact, deceives its own lovers. Early academics used to say:

Anyone who remembers death frequently saves Himself from the hypocrisies of the world^{xxxvii}.

In fact, it makes worldly life and hardship insignificant. It also reminds him how death overtook the people of the past generations and prepares for it before it strikes him.

- Visiting grave also made Muslim to be inclined towards the Hereafter and obedience of Allah. It is also one of the main causes of attaining good ending in life which would give birth to good death. The more the slave humble himself before Allah (S.W.T) the closer he becomes to Allah. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was reported to have said:

The closest slave can be to Allah is when he is prostrating to Him, so make lots of dua then^{xxxviii}.

In fact, closeness to God implies God's consciousness, and God consciousness will never allow one to sin. With this, we can conclude that it humbles a person and prevents arrogance, oppression, and other forms of evil.

- Another advantage of visiting a grave is that it inspires a Muslim believer to repent and make amends for what he has missed in the past. This is because anyone who sees death and awaits him will never delay in his daily worship because he knows that time is limited and death can strike him at any time without notice. In fact, it causes him to become God-conscious and repent. Ad-Daqqaq claims that He who frequently remembers death will be granted:

Three things: a rapid repentance, a content heart and Enthusiasm to worship Allah; and the one who neglects Remembering death will be afflicted with three things: delay in repentance, discontentment and laziness in Worshipping Allah^{xxxix}.

The preceding quotation demonstrates the value of death remembrance in repentance. According to Muslim scholars, the following things regularly remind Muslims of death:

-Visiting the graves: This is the most effective means of reminding one about death. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

Visit the graves because they remind about the Hereafter.^{xi}

-Visiting the places where the dead are washed and witnessing the washing.

-Being around people who are dying to see how they suffer and to try to get them utter the shahadah.

-Accompanying funerals and the funeral prayers and attending the burial of the dead. Indeed, one of the ways of increasing remembrance about the death is by attending funerals, carrying the dead body on one's shoulders, going to the graveyard, taking part in the burial process, putting in his grave. This no doubt will remind one the hereafter. This can be seen in the tradition which says:

Visit the sick, and follow the funeral procession; this Reminds of the hereafter.^{xii}

Apart from reminding one of death, there is another advantage, which is receiving reward from Allah (S.W.T), as shown in the following narration.

Whoever follows the funeral procession of a Muslim Out of faith and hoping for reward (From Allah), then He stays until the funeral prayer and burial, will return With two Qirats, each of them is as huge as the amount of uhud. And whoever attends it until the funeral prayer Will a reward equal to one Qirat^{xlii}.

The preceding quotation clearly demonstrates that attending funeral prayer has another benefit for Muslims. Apart from being a reminder of death, it also earns a large reward from Allah (S.W.T).

Conclusion

Since the early days of Islam, no righteous Muslim has denied the existence of punishment or otherwise in the grave, with the exception of those who lack sound Islamic aqidah. Salaf and those who followed them all agreed that the Punishment in the Grave will undoubtedly occur (for disbelievers and some of the sinful Muslims) and that it is obligatory to have iman in it; they also consider it to be part of the Islamic 'aqidah. As a result, anyone who doubts or denies this cannot be considered as a Muslim believer based on the evidences found in the Qur'an and Sunnah of Muhammad (Peace be

upon him).

REFERENCES

- ⁱ AlQur'an 6:93
- ⁱⁱ AlQur'an 71:25
- ⁱⁱⁱ I.Ahmad, Speeches for an inquiring mind, Al rasheed printers, Almadinah munawarah, 2001, p32
- ^{iv} AlQur'an 40:45-46
- ^v AlQur'an 102:1-5
- ^{vi} I. Ahmad, Opcit, p33
- ^{vii} AlQur'an 20:124
- ^{viii} I.Ahmad, Opcit, p33
- ^{ix} Bukhari and Muslim.
- ^x Mallam Abdullahi, (45yrs), Islamic Preacher, Abuja, Nigeria, 20/10/22.
- ^{xi} Mallam Shafiu, (55Yrs), Islamic Scholar, Kebbi State, Nigeria, 11/9/2022
- ^{xii} Mallam Aliyu, (64yrs), Islamic Preacher, Sokoto state, Nigeria, 9/8/2022
- ^{xiii} Ibn Abi, Ya alaa, Tabaqatu hanabilah,, Np, Nd, p, 174
- ^{xiv} .A.Nasiree, Nurul-laami, np, nd, p110
- ^{xv} I.Qurtubi, At-Tadhkirah fi Ahwalil Mawta wal –Akhirah, Dar Amanah, Egypt, P137.
- ^{xvi} Ibid.
- ^{xvii} B.Dawud, Iman in the Punishment in the Grave, np, nd, p33
- ^{xviii} Ibid.
- ^{xix} Mallam Habeeb, (42yrs), Islamic scholar, Sokoto state, Nigeria, 25/7/2022.
- ^{xx} Mallam Ibrahim, (43yrs), Islamic Scholar, Kebbi State, Nigeria, 27/8/2022
- ^{xxi} Mallam Lawal (49yrs), Islamic Preacher, Zamfara State, Nigeria, 29/7/2022
- ^{xxii} Bukhari And Muslim.
- ^{xxiii} AlQur'an 9:84
- ^{xxiv} Hadith (Muslim)
- ^{xxv} Hadith (Bukhari)
- ^{xxvi} Hadith (Bukhari and Muslim)
- ^{xxvii} Hadith (Muslim)
- ^{xxviii} Hadith (Bukhari)
- ^{xxix} Hadith (Muslim)
- ^{xxx} Hadith) Muslim,
- ^{xxxi} Hadith (Muslim)
- ^{xxxii} E.d.Watan, Opcit, p14
- ^{xxxiii} I.Qurtubi, Paradise and Hell-fire, Dar-manarah, Egypt, 2004, p5
- ^{xxxiv} Hadith (Bukhari)
- ^{xxxv} AlQur'an 15:3
- ^{xxxvi} M.Salih, Opcit, p43
- ^{xxxvii} I.Qurtubi, opct, p54
- ^{xxxviii} Hadith (Muslim)
- ^{xxxix} E.d.watan, Opct, p15
- ^{xl} Hadith (Bukhari)
- ^{xli} Hadith (Muslim)
- ^{xlii} Hadith (Bukhari)