

God to be the Promised One.

Bahá'u'lláh in Exile

After some months, Bahá'u'lláh was released from prison. The authorities wanted to get rid of Him so, although He was very ill, He was sent away to another country - to Baghdad in Iraq. Many Bábís followed Him there and He also attracted many new followers in the city. Eventually the authorities decided to send Him further away. Before he went, He gathered everyone in a garden just outside the city. This place became known as the Garden of Ridván, which means the garden of Paradise. There He announced that He was the Promised One of all religions, the One promised by the Báb. Many people had realised this already but they were all overjoyed to hear the announcement. But they were also sad because Bahá'u'lláh was being sent away from them, on a long journey through Syria and Turkey, ending some years later in the Holy Land, in the city of Akká.

The whole of this unhealthy city was a prison. Bahá'u'lláh, all His family and more than 70 of His followers, were imprisoned in two rooms within the fortress there. They all suffered very badly and one of Bahá'u'lláh's sons died there. After more than two years they were moved to a house where they had a little more space, although they were not allowed to leave the house. Eventually the authorities realised that Bahá'u'lláh was not a danger to anyone and for the last few years of His life He was allowed to live just outside the city. It was while He was there that He had a visit from Edward Granville Browne, a professor of Oriental Studies at Cambridge, who wrote this about his visit:

The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow... A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued: "Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile... We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of nations... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; ... so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the Most Great Peace shall come. Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? ... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country, let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."

After a life of sacrifice in the path of God, Bahá'u'lláh passed to the next world on May 29th 1892. He had given up His life of luxury and ease and devoted Himself to the service of mankind. His mission was to remind the world of the love of God, to tell God's purpose for this age, that the time has come for the people of the world to live in peace together. During His long years of imprisonment, He wrote many books and letters. He also wrote to the leaders of the world, telling them that they should not spend money on weapons while their people starved, but should get together and make peace.

After Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh appointed His son, `Abdu'l-Bahá, to carry on His work. The name `Abdu'l-Bahá means Servant of Glory, for he had always served his Father and shared in His sorrows. Most of his life was spent in prison but he was always happy and cheerful because his spirit was free. He spent his time in serving God and serving others. Bahá'u'lláh said that `Abdu'l-Bahá was a perfect example of how a Bahá'í should behave and that Bahá'ís should try to be like him.

`Abdu'l-Bahá was eventually set free in 1908 and, although he was now old and not very strong, he travelled to Europe and to North America to tell everyone about his Father's message. In 1921 he passed away in the Holy Land. In his will he appointed his grandson to be the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.

Under the guidance of the Guardian the Bahá'í Faith spread across the world. The Guardian died in 1957 and in 1963 the Bahá'ís of the world were able to elect the world council known as the Universal House of Justice. Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá had described this council, how it should be elected and what its duties and responsibilities should be. The Bahá'í community has continued to grow and flourish under the care of this body.

The Age of Peace

Bahá'ís believe that Bahá'u'lláh fulfilled the prophecies of all the religions of the past for a great World Teacher - the return of the spirit of Christ, of Muhammad, of Buddha and of all the other Messengers of God. He came to bring God's Message for today.

The central message of Bahá'u'lláh is unity. This is what humanity desperately needs today – unity between individuals and unity of the entire world.

Bahá'u'lláh promised that there would be more Messengers in the future, because God will always guide and help mankind. However, the next one will not come for at least a thousand years after Bahá'u'lláh. Our task in this age is to put Bahá'u'lláh's teachings into practice. Bahá'ís believe that this is how we can build a better world and bring peace and happiness to every soul.

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