307198 - What is meant by al-wathaniyyah (idolatry)

the question

What is meant by the term al-wathaniyyah (idolatry)? Is it mentioned in the hadiths of the Prophet or in the Qur’an?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What is meant by al-wathaniyyah (idolatry) is the worship of awthaan (sing. wathan, meaning idols) and being attached to them. This term refers to man-made religions that worship idols, such as the mushrikeen (polytheists) of ancient Arabia, India, Japan and so on, in contrast to the people of the book, the Jews and Christians.

In the Qur’an and the hadiths of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) it is forbidden to worship idols, and it is enjoined to worship Allah only.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“So avoid the uncleanliness [rijs] of idols and avoid false statement”

[al-Hajj 22:30]

“And uncleanliness [rujz] avoid”

[al-Muddaththir 74:5].

Abu Salamah said: Rujz refers to idols. This was narrated by al-Bukhaari in a mu‘allaq report in the chapter on the verse “And uncleanliness [rujz] avoid” [al-Muddaththir 74:5], in Kitaab at-Tafseer in his Saheeh.

And Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning:

“And [We sent] Abraham, when he said to his people, Worship Allah and fear Him. That is best for you, if you should know.

You only worship, besides Allah, idols, and you produce a falsehood. Indeed, those you worship besides Allah do not possess for you [the power of] provision. So seek from Allah provision and worship Him and be grateful to Him. To Him you will be returned”

[al-‘Ankaboot 29:16-17]

“And [Abraham] said, You have only taken, other than Allah , idols as [a bond of] affection among you in worldly life. Then on the Day of Resurrection you will deny one another and curse one another, and your refuge will be the Fire, and you will not have any helpers.”

[al-‘Ankaboot 29:26].

In the story of Heraclius and Abu Sufyaan,-Bukhaari (7) narrated that Heraclius said: I asked you what he enjoins upon you, and you said that he enjoins you to worship Allah and not to associate anything else with Him, and he forbids you to worship idols, and he enjoins you to pray, give charity and remain chaste. If what you say is true, then he will gain surely dominion over the place where these two feet of mine are standing.

Abu Daawood (4252) and at-Tirmidhi (2219) narrated that Thawbaan said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah drew the ends of the earth together for me to see, and I saw its eastern and western lands, and the dominion of my ummah will reach as far as that which was drawn together for me to see. And I have been given two treasures, the red and the white. … The Hour will not begin until some tribes of my ummah join the mushrikeen and some tribes of my ummah worship idols.”

This hadith was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

Al-Bukhaari included in his Saheeh a chapter entitled Baab Taghyeer az-Zamaan hatta tu‘bad al-awthaan [Chapter: Things will change with the passage of time until idols are worshipped], in which he quoted the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), according to which

the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The Hour will not begin until the backsides of the women of Daws wobble (as they go) around Dhu’l-Khalasah.” Dhu’l-Khalasah was a false god of Daws that they used to worship during the Jaahiliyyah.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (7116).

Conclusion: idolatry, which is the worship of idols, was widespread in the Arabian Peninsula, and still exists now in some countries, such as India, Japan and some African countries.

In the hadith it states that this practice will return to the Arabian Peninsula at the end of time, before the onset of the Hour.

And Allah knows best.