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The Key to Zion, Illinois is Now in Safe Hands

“Our only weapon is prayer, and we are certain that Allah listens to our supplications” – Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad

Reception held for new Ahmadiyya Mosque opened in Zion by Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

On 1st October 2022, the *World Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa (Caliph)*, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad delivered the keynote address at a special reception held to commemorate the opening of the *Fath-e-Azeem Mosque* (the Great Victory) in Zion, Illinois. His Holiness had officially inaugurated the Mosque a day earlier with his weekly Friday Sermon.



The reception was attended by more than 140 guests, including politicians, faith leaders, and local residents.

The highlight of the event was the keynote address delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad during which he spoke of the grand prophecy of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) regarding John Alexander Dowie, founder of the city of Zion, and how it was fulfilled.

His Holiness mentioned how the response and reaction of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) to Dowie's hatred for Islam, more than a century before, was a ***“magnificent example of restraint in the face of immense provocation and hostility,”***.

Throughout his address, His Holiness spoke of the vital importance of religious freedom within society.



Introducing the mission of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him), His Holiness said that he came according to the prophecies of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to revive the teachings of Islam at a time when Muslims had moved away from the spiritual roots of Islam.

Explaining the message of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him), Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad stated:

“The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) proclaimed that he would convey the teachings of Islam, whilst walking upon the spiritual footsteps of the Messiah of Moses, the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). Thus, like Prophet Jesus, the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) exhibited sympathy and compassion for mankind. His every word and deed were for the sake of peace and to cultivate a spirit of reconciliation in society. He reminded his followers that the very meaning of ‘Islam’ is ‘peace and security’. And that, following his advent, Islam would return to its spiritual roots and would, one day, be recognised the world over as a religion of love, tolerance, peace and harmony.”

His Holiness further explained that the wars fought by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs that succeeded him were defensive in nature and never once did they initiate warfare or inflict cruelties or injustice of any kind.



Rather, His Holiness said, ***“any wars or battles they partook in were fought to end all forms of inhumanity and oppression.”***

In light of this, highlighting the entirely peaceful objectives of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Let it be crystal clear that the objective of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is not to conquer lands, seize territories, overcome cities or vanquish nations. Nor, in those lands or nations where our teachings and beliefs have been accepted in large numbers have we ever asserted a desire to gain political power or worldly influence. Our only mission and our sole aspiration is to win the hearts of mankind through love and to bring people closer to God Almighty so they become true worshippers of Him and fulfil the rights of one another.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad quoted a couplet of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) which affirms that he desired no political or worldly status.



The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) wrote:

“What can I have to do with any country? For, my country is distinct from all others.

“What can I have to do with any crown? For, my crown lies solely in the pleasure of my Beloved.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“This complete indifference to worldly or political power has remained the hallmark of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community ever since its inception and will continue to remain so in the future. We only yearn to convey Islam’s teachings of love and peace, as we have for more than 130 years... We have no grievance, quarrel or enmity with any person or any religion. As for those who stand against God Almighty or seek to destroy His religion, our answer will never be to take up arms or initiate violence of any kind. To the contrary, our only response will be to bow before Allah the Almighty in all humility. Our only weapon is prayer, and we are certain that Allah listens to our supplications. Indeed, the 133-year history of our community bears witness to this fact.”



Speaking on the theme of religious freedom, during his address, His Holiness appreciated the fact that the new monarch of the United Kingdom, King Charles has expressed, in the past, a desire to be known as the ‘Defender of *all* Faiths’, as opposed to the ‘Defender of *the* Faith’.

Commenting upon the fact that this change in language has been described as potentially ‘wishful thinking’ in the media and unlikely to be universally welcomed, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Whilst some may consider such efforts to foster religious harmony as futile or ‘wishful thinking’, in my view, defending all religions and establishing true freedom of religion and belief is, in reality, the foundation for establishing peace in the world.”

Speaking of Islam’s emphasis on establishing world peace and religious freedom, His Holiness said chapter 22 verses 40 and 41 of the Holy Quran contain a ***“momentous and ground-breaking principle, ensuring universal religious freedom.”***



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad explained the verses and said:

“The Quran explicitly states that if a forceful response to the injustices perpetrated against the Muslims was not forthcoming, no church, synagogue, temple, mosque or any other place of worship would remain safe. Thus, the Holy Quran is the one divine scripture that not only grants absolute religious freedom to the people of all religions and beliefs but goes further, by instructing Muslims and those who enter Mosques to protect the religious rights of non-Muslims. It is that heavenly scripture which is the protector and defender of all religions, faiths and beliefs.”

His Holiness went on to speak about the City of Zion and how its founder, John Alexander Dowie expressed severe prejudice against Islam. Upon his vile abuse of Islam and its Holy Founder, the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) directly responded to him.

His Holiness said some people may question why the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) used firm language against Mr Dowie whilst claiming to preach love and compassion, however, there is no such contradiction.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) never once called for any form of violent or extreme reaction. Indeed, when he first became aware of Mr Dowie’s venomous pronouncements against Islam and its Founder (peace and blessings be upon him), the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) sought to reason with him respectfully and to persuade him to show restraint and to respect the sentiments of Muslims.”

However, Mr Dowie continued his intense vilification of Muslims and called for their extinction.

His Holiness quoted Mr Dowie, who said:

“I pray to God that Islam should soon disappear from the face of the earth. O God, accept my prayer. O God, destroy Islam!”



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“He [Dowie] wrote that if Muslims did not embrace Christianity, they would meet with death and destruction. In response to such extreme rhetoric and vitriol, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (peace be upon him) sought to ensure that thousands or even millions of innocent people were not harmed, which would have been the case if Mr Dowie’s desire for a religious war between Christians and Muslims was realised. Accordingly, he challenged Mr Dowie to a prayer duel. He said that rather than call for death or destruction, he and Mr Dowie should both engage in solemn prayer and pray to God that whichever of them was a liar should die during the life of the other party.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

“This was actually an act of compassion and a means to defuse the situation. Rather than risk an all-out confrontation between Muslims and Christians, the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) asserted that he and Mr Dowie should resort to prayer and leave the matter in the Hands of God Almighty. It was a fair and peaceful means to determine the truth. It is no exaggeration to state that it was a magnificent example of restraint in the face of immense provocation and hostility.”

When Dowie received the challenge, he did not desist from his previous ways. In fact, as per his hateful ways, he went on to compare the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) to 'gnats and flies' whom he would 'crush to death' were he to put his foot on them.



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“The Promised Messiah reiterated his challenge and it received widespread publicity in the United States and elsewhere. Journalists reported on Mr Dowie’s towering status in his community, his wealth and power and compared it unfavourably with the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him), who they noted was from a distant and remote village in India and whose wealth and worldly power were no match for Mr Dowie. Furthermore, in purely physical terms, Mr Dowie was younger and in better health than the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him). Yet, despite the discrepancy in material terms, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community never hesitated, never took a backward step or considered withdrawing his challenge.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Against all worldly odds, the result soon became apparent in his favour. In quick succession, Dowie lost his supporters, wealth and physical and mental faculties. He ultimately suffered what the US media described as a ‘pathetic end’... A famous Boston Herald headline declared that: ‘Great is Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, The Messiah’. In short, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community never sought to assert his views or values upon anyone forcefully. Nor did he ever countenance responding to the hatred of Mr Dowie or other opponents of Islam with physical force or might. For Ahmadi Muslims, this incident serves as a sign of the truth of our Founder, and so, in this respect, the city of Zion holds a significant place in our history.”



Concluding his address, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Today, the followers of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (the Guided One) offer thanks to Allah the Almighty that we are inaugurating the Fath-e-Azeem Mosque (The Mosque of the Grand Victory) in Zion as a symbol of true religious freedom. Its doors open with an enlightened message pronouncing that the religious rights and peaceful beliefs of all peoples and communities are to be forever protected and cherished. It is the paramount objective of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to direct mankind to the path of spiritual salvation and to ensure that all peoples, irrespective of their caste, creed or colour, live together with a spirit of goodwill and harmony and in true peace and security.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad further stated:

“From the depths of my heart, I pray that this Mosque will, God Willing, always serve as a beacon of peace, tolerance and love for all mankind. I pray it proves to be a place where people congregate, in all humility, to recognise their Creator, to bow before Him and to fulfil the rights of mankind. For, we earnestly believe that we can only be successful and prosperous if we fulfil the rights of worship of God Almighty and the rights of humanity.”

Prior to the address, attendees heard from a number of guest speakers who took to the stage.



Honourable Billy McKinney, Mayor of Zion said:

“It’s an absolute honour and privilege for me to welcome His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the world leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to the City of Zion for the inauguration of the Fath-e-Azeem Mosque. We are truly honoured that you have travelled thousands of miles to be with us here this evening here Zion... This [the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community] is a community that reveres the Prophet of Islam Muhammad, who made a covenant with Christians, promising that his followers would help and support Christians in repairing their churches and would even lay down their lives to protect and defend those churches from any threat... This is the creed and tradition that the Ahmadiyya Muslim community embodies here today in the City of Zion. Blessed to be guided by His Holiness. The community has reached out to people of all faiths with a message of peace, justice, universal human rights and service to humanity.”



Presenting the key of the city to His Holiness, Honourable Billy McKinney said:

“It is with deep gratitude for the outstanding services rendered by the Ahmadiyya Muslim community to the City of Zion and your commitment to furthering the development of the city and improving the well-being of its people, that we present the key of the City of Zion to His Holiness.”

Later, His Holiness expressed his gratitude for the gesture and said:

“I thank the mayor for giving me the key of this town and I am sure that now the key of this town is in safe hands.”

Representative Joyce Mason, member of the Illinois General Assembly said:

“His Holiness is a leading Muslim figure for promoting peace who, in his sermons, lectures, books and personal meetings, has continually advocated the Ahmadiyya Muslim values of service to humanity, universal human rights, and a peaceful and just society. He has spoken to lawmakers and other leaders around the world, emphasizing peaceful coexistence. His Holiness is also a champion of women’s rights. As I can personally attest from spending time with the Ahmadi Muslim Women of Zion. The female members of this community command respect and are integral to the life of the community. The building of this mosque is living proof of that. Nearly half of the money raised for construction was from Ahmadi Muslim women. How special is that? The City of Zion is fortunate that such a peace-loving and service-oriented community has decided to settle down here and build such a beautiful mosque. It is my fervent wish that this mosque becomes a beacon of hope, not just for this city, but for all around.”

Honourable Joyce Mason provided official commendation for Fath-e-Azeem Mosque on behalf of the 61st District of Illinois General Assembly.

Honourable Joyce Mason said:

“I am introducing a House Resolution congratulating the Community on the inauguration of the New mosque, and I’m grateful to be part of this joyous day and part of this very special community.”

U.S. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Illinois) recorded an official statement in the Congressional Record recognizing the historic milestone of the inauguration of Fath-e-Azeem Mosque and honouring the visit of Huzoor to the United States.



Honourable Raja Krishnamoorthi said:

“I’m so thrilled to be part of his arrival (of His Holiness) that we entered into the congressional record of the United States, a commemoration of this historic day that will live on in history to remember what happened today and this joyous occasion. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is some of the finest people you’ll ever meet. They have dedicated themselves to service from their establishment of hospitals to schools, to blood drives, to helping people in need, to going to natural disasters. His Holiness, you would be very impressed that these people live out and embody the very values, the very values that you preach and that you talk about every single day... I believe that the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, one of the finest communities, America and the world, dedicates itself in service to humanity.”

Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, professor at Tufts University and president of the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice said:

“I know of no other community of faith that I’ve ever encountered who so fully embody the teachings that they profess, who strive in a profound way every day to live the high ideals and the deep principles that are at the very foundation of their life. And I think those of us in this room, know that that spirit, that commitment, of course, comes from God, but it really also flows from your extraordinary leader, His Holiness. And I just feel so lucky, so privileged, so uplifted, and so blessed to be here with all of you today.”



Speaking of her experience of hearing about the prayer duel, Dr Katrina Lantos Swett said:

“At first you sort of say, wait, that really happened? That really happened. And one of the things that I found so fascinating about the story was that in a time long before everybody had their little handheld devices and their cell phones in their computers, this prayer duel went viral. It really did become sort of a phenomenon in the world... This beautiful mosque, which is now being inaugurated this weekend, is, in fact, called the Fath-e-Azeem Mosque, which means a great victory, because the victory in that prayer duel went yes, to the Ahmadis. Yes, to the first founder and leader of the Ahmadi community. But really, I think we would have to say that the victory went to humanity as well, because it was a victory for respect, for love, for tolerance, for all of those virtues that we now see embodied in this marvellous community.”

Prior to the formal proceedings, His Holiness held several meetings with the media and dignitaries

End Release

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