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THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 23

SURAH AL-MU'MINUN

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

023

SURAH AL-MU'MINUN

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Introduction and Summary

This Surah deals with the virtues which are the seed-bed of Faith, especially in an environment in which truth is denied and its votaries insulted and persecuted. But Truth is One and must prevail. Those who do wrong will be filled with vain regrets when it is too late for repentance.

It belongs to the late Makkan period.

Summary- Faith, coupled with humility in prayer, charity, abstinence from vanity and from indulgence in appetites, and strict probity, must lead to final success, even though people mock and accuse the righteous and false motives, as did the contemporaries of Noah, of Moses, and of Jesus (23:1-50, and C. 154).

The prophets of Allah and the righteous form one Brotherhood, but those who make schisms and refuse to believe have ample evidence pointing to Truth and the goodness and greatness of Allah (23:51-92, and C. 155).

Evil must be replied by goodness and faith in Allah; for the future life is sure, and those who disbelieve will wish for another chance when it is too late (23:93-118, and C. 154).

C.154 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(23:1-50)

*Faith leads to humility, avoidance
Of vanity in word and deed, charity,
Continenence, faithful observance
Of trusts and covenants, and devout
Approach to Allah-surest steps
To Bliss. Man carries in himself
Proofs of Allah's Providence, the same
Story is told if he looks at nature
Around him; and the long line of Teachers
Sent by Allah shows Allah's special care
Of humanity. What though they were
Rejected and scorned, maligned and persecuted?
Allah's Truth won through, as it always will.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١)

1. The Believers must (eventually) win through --

C2865. Aflaha:

- win through,
- prosper,
- succeed,
- achieve their aims or obtain salvation from sorrow and all evil.

This verse connects on with verses 10 and 11 below. The success or victory may come in this world, but is certain and lasting in the world to come.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ (٢)

2. Those who humble themselves in their prayers;

C2866. Humility in prayer as regards:

- their estimate of their own worth in Allah's presence,
- as regards their estimate of their own powers or strength unless they are helped by Allah, and
- as regards the petitions they offer to Allah.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ (٣)

3. Who avoid vain talk;

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ (٤)

4. Who are active in deeds of charity;

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ (٥)

5. Who abstain from sex,

C2867. The Muslim must guard himself against every kind of sex abuse or sex perversion.

The new psychology associated with the name of Freud traces many of our hidden motives to sex, and it is common knowledge that our refinement or degradation may be measured by the hidden workings of our sex instincts. But even the natural and lawful exercise of sex is restricted to the marriage bond, under which the rights of both parties are duly regulated and maintained.

إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ...

6. Except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess --

C2868. This is further explained and amplified in 4:25. It will be seen there that the status of a captive when raised to freedom by marriage is the same as that of a free woman as regards her rights, but more lenient as regards the punishment to be inflicted if she falls from virtue.

...فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ (٦)

for (in their case) they are free from blame,

فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ (٧)

7. But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors --

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ (٨)

8. Those who faithfully observe their trust and their covenants;

C2869. Trusts may be express or implied.

- Express trusts are those where property is entrusted or duties are assigned by some one to some other whom he trusts, to carry out either immediately or in specified contingencies, such as death.
- Implied trusts arise out of power, or position, or opportunity; e.g., a king holds his kingdom on trust from Allah for his subjects.

The subject of covenants, express and implied, has been discussed in n. 682 to 5:1.

Covenants create obligations, and express and implied trusts and covenants taken together cover the whole field of obligations.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (٩)

9. And who (strictly) guard their prayers --

C2870. In verse 2 we were directed to the spirit of humility and earnestness in our prayers.

Here we are told how necessary the habit of regular prayer is to our spiritual well-being and development, as it brings us closer to Allah, and thus sums up the light of the seven jewels of our Faith, viz.,:

- humility,
- avoidance of vanity,
- charity,
- sex purity,
- fidelity to trusts,
- and to covenants,
- and an earnest desire to get closer to Allah.

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ (١٠)

10. Those will be the heirs,

C2871. Cf. 21:105, where it is said that the righteous will inherit the earth.

In the first verse of this Surah, the final success or victory is referred to.

Truth will prevail even on this earth, but it may not be for any individual men of righteousness to see it: it may be in the time of their heirs and successors.

But in the life to come, there is no doubt that every man will see the fruit of his life here, and the righteous will inherit heaven. in the sense that they will attain it after their death here.

الَّذِينَ يَرْتُونَ الْفَرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (١١)

11. Who will inherit Paradise: they will dwell therein (forever).

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ (١٢)

12. Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay);

C2872. In this beautiful passage, Allah's creative work, as far as man is concerned, is recapitulated, in order to show man's real position in this life, and the certainty of the future: to which he was referred for his reward in verses 10-11 above.

For the various stages of creation, see n. 120 to 2:117.

Here we are not concerned with the earliest stage, the creation of primeval matter out of nothing. It is also a process of creation when inorganic matter becomes living matter. Thus inorganic constituents of the earth are absorbed into living matter by way of food and living matter reproduces itself by means of sperm. This is deposited in the ovum and fertilises it and rests for a time in security in the mother's womb.

The first change in the fertilised ovum is the conversion into a sort of clot of thickly congealed blood; the zygote cells grow by segmentation; then the mass gradually assumes shape in its growth as a foetus. From the lump develop bones and flesh and organs and a nervous system.

So far man's growth is like that of an animal, but a further process takes place which makes the infant animal into the infant man. This is the breathing from Allah's spirit into him (15:29). It may be a continuous process parallel to that of physical growth.

The child is born; it grows; it decays and dies; but after death another chapter opens for the individual, and it is to remind us of this most momentous chapter that the previous stages are recapitulated.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ (١٣)

13. Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed;

C2873. The growth in the foetal stage is silent and unseen. The foetus is protected in the mother's womb like a king in a castle; it is firmly fixed, and gets the protection of the mother's body, on which it depends for its own growth until birth.

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً...

14. Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood;

...فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً...

then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump;

...فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا...

then We made out of that lump bones

...فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا...

and clothed the bones with flesh;

...ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ...

then We developed out of it another creature:

C2874. From a mere animal, we now consider man as man.

Is it not a Sign of wonder in itself that from dry dust (*turab*, 22:5) or inorganic matter should be made protoplasm (moist clay or organic matter); from it should grow a new animal life; and out of it should grow human life, with all its capacities and responsibilities?

Man carries within himself Signs of Allah's wisdom and power, and he can see them every day in the universe around him.

...فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ (١٤)

so blessed be Allah, the Best to create!

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ (١٥)

15. After that, at length, ye will die.

C2875. Our physical death in this mortal life seems to make a break. But if it were the end of all, our life becomes meaningless. Our own instinct tells us that it cannot be so, and Allah assures us that there will be a resurrection for judgment.

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ (١٦)

16. Again, on the Day of Judgment, will ye be raised up.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَائِقَ...

17. And We have made, above you, seven tracts;

C2876. Taraiq: literally tracts, roads, orbits or paths.

Here it means: seven heavens.

The assurance given in the next clause, that Allah cares for us and all His Creation, calls out attention to Allah's goodness, which is further illustrated in the subsequent verses.

...وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غَافِلِينَ (١٧)

and We are never unmindful of (Our) Creation.

C2877. Allah's care for His Creation is ceaseless. A few examples of His care for our physical well-being are given in [verses 18-22](#), and for our spiritual well-being, in [Sections 2 to 5](#).

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَسْكَنَّاهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

18. And We send down water from the sky according to (due) measure, and We cause it to soak in the soil;

C2878. Normally the rain comes well distributed; it soaks into the soil; the moisture is retained for a long time in all high grounds; it soaks and penetrates through many layers of soil and forms the architecture of physical geography; the retentive powers of higher soil enable

rivers to flow perennially even where, as in India, the rainfall is seasonal and confined to a few months in the year.

Another form in which water comes down from the sky according to due measure is in snow and hail: these also have their place in the economy of air and soil. Were it not for snow and glaciers in the higher mountain regions, some of the rivers would fail in their abundant flow.

As wonderful as the supply of water and moisture is its drainage. It returns to the sea and air in all sorts of ways, and the formation of mist and clouds repeats the cycle. Were it not for the drainage and the clearance of the waters, we should have floods and water logging, as happens when the normal processes of nature are temporarily obstructed.

The same thing happens when the rain comes down in other than due measure. These abnormal conditions also have their value. But how grateful should man be for Allah's gifts in the ceaseless processes of nature on such an enormous scale!

...وَأِنَّا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍ بِهِ لِقَادِرُونَ (١٨)

and We certainly are able to drain it off (with ease).

فَأَنْشَأْنَا لَكُمْ بِهِ جَنَّاتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ...

19. With it We grow for you gardens of date-palms and vines:

...لَكُمْ فِيهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (١٩)

in them have ye abundant fruits:

and of them ye eat (and have enjoyment) --

C2879. Cf. 7:19 and n. 776 to 5:66.

وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ...

20. Also a tree springing out of Mount Sinai,

C2880. For Arabia the best olives grow round about Mount Sinai. The fig, the olive, Mount Sinai, and the sacred city of Makkah are mentioned together in

association in 95:1-3, where we shall consider its meaning.

Olive oil is an ingredient in medicinal ointments. If used for food, the olive has a delicious flavour, Cf. also 24:35, where the olive is called a Blessed Tree, and n. 3000.

...تَنْبُتُ بِالذَّهْنِ وَصَبْغٌ لِلْكَالِينِ (٢٠)...

which produces oil, and relish for those who use it for food.

وَأِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً...

21. And in cattle (too) ye have an instructive example:

C2881. 'Ibrat. the root meaning of the verb is "to interpret, or expound, or instruct", as in 12:43;

the noun means, an interpretation, or example or Sign that instructs, as here and in 16:66, or gives warning, as in 3:13.

- From cattle we get milk and meat; also from their skins we make leather for shoes, boots, straps, saddlery, and numerous other uses;
- from camel's hair and sheep's wool we weave cloth, hangings, carpets, etc.;
- from the horns of cattle we make cups and articles of ornament or use; and camels, horses, donkeys, mules, etc., are used for riding, carrying loads, or drawing vehicles.

...نُسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا...

from within their bodies We produce (milk) for you to drink;

...وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٢١)

there are, in them, (besides), numerous (other) benefits for you; and of their (meat) ye eat;

وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ (٢٢)

22. And on them, as well as in ships, ye ride.

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ...

23. (Further, We sent a long line of prophets for your instruction.)

C2882. The material gifts having been mentioned, which we receive from a wise and kindly Providence, our attention is now directed to Allah's Providence in spiritual matters. He sent Teachers to instruct and guide us, and though they were mocked, rejected, and accused of falsehood and selfishness, they were protected by Allah, and Allah's Truth at length prevailed.

We sent Noah to his people: he said,

C2883. "People" here is almost equivalent to "contemporaries".

...يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

"O my people! worship Allah! Ye have no other god but Him:

C2884. Cf. 7:59.

To fear Allah is to lead righteous lives and eschew evil.

...أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (٢٣)

will ye not fear (Him)?"

فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ...

24. The chiefs of the Unbelievers among his people said:

...مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلَكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ...

"He is no more than a man like yourselves: his wish is to assert his superiority over you:

...وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً...

if Allah had wished (to send messengers), He could have sent down angels:

C2885. They attribute altogether wrong motives to him (such as would have actuated them themselves), in saying that he was trying to establish his own personal superiority over them by his preaching.

Then they accuse him of falsehood in claiming to bring a message of Allah. "If", they say, "Allah had wished to send us messengers, He would have sent angels, not a man like ourselves and from among ourselves. Our ancestors did not worship One God: why should we?"

...مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأُولِينَ (٢٤)

never did we hear such a thing (as he says), among our ancestors of old."

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ ...

25. (And some said:) "He is only a man possessed:

C2886. I construe this to be a speech of another group among them.

They thought he was mad, and best left alone. His madness would run out, or he would come to an evil end.

... فَتَرَبَّصُوا بِهِ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ (٢٥)

wait (and have patience) with him for a time."

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونَ (٢٦)

26. (Noah) said:

"O my Lord! help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood!"

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلَكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا ...

27. So We inspired him (with this message):

"Construct the Ark within Our sight and under Our guidance:

C2887. Cf. this whole passage with 11:35-48, and notes thereon.

...فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ ...

then when comes Our command, and the fountains of the earth gush forth,

C2888. See [n. 1533 to 11:40](#), where the word Tannur is explained.

... فَاسْأَلْكَ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ...

take thou on board pairs of every species, male and female,

C2889. See. n. 1534 to 11:40.

... وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ...

and thy family -- except those of them against whom the Word has already gone forth:

C2890. See n. 1535 to 11:40.

... وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ (٢٧)

and address Me not in favor of the wrongdoers; for they shall be drowned (in the Flood).

فَإِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ أَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَعَكَ عَلَى الْفُلِكِ قُلْ...

28. And when thou hast embarked on the Ark -- thou and those with thee -- say:

C2891. For **istawa** see 1386 to 10:3.

Here the meaning is:

- mounted on board,
- ascended,
- embarked.

... الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّانَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٨)

"Praise be to Allah, Who has saved us from the people who do wrong."

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَنْزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُبَارَكًا ...

29. And say:

"O my Lord! enable me to disembark with Thy blessing:

C2892. This second prayer was inspired when the Flood subsided, and the time came for disembarkation.

... وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ (٢٩)

for Thou art the Best to enable (us) to disembark."

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ وَإِن كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِينَ (٣٠)

30. Verily in this there are Signs (for men to understand);
(thus) do We try (men).

C2893. Noah's contemporaries had all sorts of chances and warnings. But they refused to believe and perished. But Allah's Truth survived, and it went to the next and succeeding generations. Will not mankind understand?

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ (٣١)

31. Then We raised after them another generation;

فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ...

32. And We sent to them a Messenger from among themselves,
(saying),

C2894. If this refers to any particular prophet, it must be Hud whose mission was to the 'Ad people, or to Salih, whose mission was to the Thamud people. That is the sequence after Noah in S. 11:50-60 and 61-68.

But I think that as the name is not mentioned, we are to understand in general the type of the post -Flood prophets until we come later on to Moses and Jesus. The object here is not to recount the stories, but to show that the resistance of the wicked made no difference to the triumph of Allah's holy Truth.

...أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

"Worship Allah! ye have no other god but Him.

...أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (٣٢)

Will ye not fear (Him)?"

Section 3

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِإِيعَادِ الْآخِرَةِ...

33. And the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved and denied the Meeting in the Hereafter,

...وَأَثَرَفْنَا لَهُمُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

and on whom We had bestowed the good things of this life, said:

...مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ...

"He is no more than a man like yourselves;

...يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ (٣٣)

he eats of that of which ye eat, and drinks of what ye drink.

وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِثْلَكُمْ إِذَا لَخَاسِرُونَ (٣٤)

34. "If ye obey a man like yourselves, behold, it is certain ye will be lost.

C2895. The type of the narrow Sybarite, who enjoys the good things of this life, denies a future life, and is jealous of any one who presumes to widen his horizon, is here described in a few masterly strokes. He is bored by any mention of the serious things beyond his ken.

What good is it, he says, to talk about the future?

Enjoy the present. The gain is all in the present: the loss is all in the future.

أَبَعِدْكُمْ أَنْكُمْ إِذَا مِئْمٌ وَكُنْتُمْ ثُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنْتُمْ مُخْرَجُونَ (٣٥)

35. "Does he promise that when ye die and become dust and bones, ye shall be brought forth (again)?"

هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ (٣٦)

36. "Far, very far is that which ye are promised!

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا...

37. "There is nothing but our life in this world! We shall die and we live!

C2896. They seem to say;

"There is no future life: that we shall die is certain; that we have this life is certain: some die, some are born, some live: and so the cycle continues: but how can dead men be raised to life?"

...وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ (٣٧)

But we shall never be raised up again!

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا...

38. "He is only a man who invents a lie against Allah,

...وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣٨)

but we are not the ones to believe in him!"

C2897. "He is only a fool, and invents things, and attributes them to Allah's inspiration! We are too wise to believe such things!"

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونَ (٣٩)

39. (The prophet) said: "O my Lord! help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood."

C2898. See [above](#), 23:26.

Every prophet is maligned and persecuted: it is always the same story with them, told in different ways.

قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لِيُصِيبَنَّهُ نَادِمِينَ (٤٠)

40. (Allah) said: "In but a little while, they are sure to be sorry!"

C2899. When the Punishment comes, they will be sorry for themselves, but it will be too late then.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ ...

41. Then the Blast overtook them with justice,

C2900. See 11:66, and notes 1563 and 1561.

... فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ غُرَاءَ ...

and We made them as rubbish of dead leaves (floating on the stream of Time)!

C2901. Ghutha: rubbish of dead leaves, or scum floating on a torrent.

...فَبَعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤١)

So away with the people who do wrong!

ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُونًا آخَرِينَ (٤٢)

42. Then We raised after them other generations.

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ (٤٣)

43. No people can hasten their term, nor can they delay (it).

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرًا...

44. Then sent We Our Messengers in succession:

...كُلَّ مَا جَاءَ أُمَّةً رَسُولُهَا كَذَّبُوهُ...

every time there came to a people their Messenger, they accused him of falsehood:

...فَاتَّبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ بَعْضًا وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ...

so We made them follow each other (in punishment): We made them as a tale (that is told):

C2902. Their habitations and their organisation have been wiped out. What remains is merely a vague story of their existence, a tale that is told. Where their name remains, which is not always the case, it is only a by-word, suggesting all that is unstable and ephemeral, -"to point a moral and adorn a tale".

...فَبَعْدًا لِقَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٤٤)

so away with a people that will not believe!

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَأَخَاهُ هَارُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٤٥)

45. Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron, with Our Signs and authority manifest,

C2903. Moses and Aaron had a twofold mission:

1. to Pharaoh and his Court, which failed because of Egyptian arrogance;
2. to the Israelites, for whom the Law was received on Mount Sinai, but they repeatedly rebelled against Allah.

In both cases there were miracles ("**Clear Signs**") and other proofs which showed that they came at Allah's command and were inspired by His authority.

إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَأِيهِ...

46. To Pharaoh and his Chiefs:

...فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا عَالِينَ (٤٦)

but these behaved insolently: they were arrogant people.

فَقَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عَابِدُونَ (٤٧)

47. They said:

"Shall we believe in two men like ourselves?

And their people are subject to us!"

C2904. Racial arrogance made the Egyptians say, 'These men belong to a race which we hold in subjection as our slaves: how can we accept them as messengers of Allah?'

فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ (٤٨)

48. So they accused them of falsehood, and they became of those who were destroyed.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ (٤٩)

49. And We gave Moses the Book, in order that they might receive guidance.

C2905. Here the reference is to the second part of the mission of Moses, that to the Israelites, which the Israelites rendered ineffective by their want of faith.

See [n. 2903 above](#).

وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً...

50. And We made the son of Mary and his mother as a Sign:

C2906. The virgin birth of Jesus was a miracle both for him and his mother. She was falsely accused of unchastity, but the child Jesus triumphantly vindicated

her by his own miracles (19:27-33), and showed by his life the meanness of the calumny against his mother.

...وَأَوَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ (٥٠)

We gave them both shelter on high ground, affording rest and security and furnished with springs.

C2907. There is no need to look far for the place where mother and child were given secure shelter. It is described in 19:22-26.

It was the place to which she withdrew to be delivered when the time drew near. There was a fruitful palm-tree, evidently on high ground, for beneath it flowed a spring. She retired there in seclusion, and she and her child rested there until it was time for her to go to her people with her child.

C.155 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(23:51-92)

*The Brotherhood of Truth is one in all ages;
It is narrow men who create sects.
Let them not think that the goods
Of this world can shield them from evil
Or its consequences. Allah's Truth and His Messenger
Can be known to all: for He in His Mercy
Has given us faculties and Judgement, if we
Would but use them. The Message is not
New: all Creation proclaims it: High
Above all is the Lord of Glory Supreme!*

Section 4

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُّوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا...

51. O ye Messengers! enjoy (all) things good and pure, and work righteousness:

C2908. Literally, "eat". See n. 776 to 5:66.

The prophets of Allah do not pose as ascetics, but receive gratefully all Allah's gifts, and show their gratitude by their righteous lives. (R).

إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ (٥١)...

for I am well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً...

52. And verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood,

C2909. Cf. 21:92-93.

All prophets form one Brotherhood: their message is one, and their religion and teaching are one; they serve the One True God, Who loves and cherishes them; and they owe their duty to Him and Him alone.

وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ (٥٢)...

and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore fear Me (and no other).

فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا...

53. But people have cut off their affair (of unity), between them, into sects:

كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ (٥٣)...

each party rejoices in that which is with itself.

C2910. The people who began to trade on the names of the prophets cut off that unity and made sects; and each sect rejoices in its own narrow doctrine, instead of taking the universal teaching of Unity from Allah. But this sectarian confusion is of man's making. It will last for a time, but the rays of Truth and Unity will finally dissipate it.

فَدَرَّهُمْ فِي غَمْرَتِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ (٥٤)

54. But leave them in their confused ignorance for a time.

أَيَحْسُبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَنِينَ (٥٥)

55. Do they think that because We have granted them abundance of wealth and sons,

نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ...

56. We would hasten them on in every good?

...بَلْ لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ (٥٦)

Nay, they do not understand.

C2911. Worldly wealth, power, and influence may be but trials. Let not their possessors think that they are in themselves things that will necessarily bring them happiness.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُتَّقُونَ (٥٧)

57. Verily those who live in awe for fear of their Lord;

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٨)

58. Those who believe in the Signs of their Lord;

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ (٥٩)

59. Those who join not (in worship) partners with their Lord;

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ (٦٠)

60. And those who dispense their charity with their hearts full of fear, because they will return to their Lord --

C2912. Their hearts are full of reverence for Allah and fear lest their charity or their hearts be not good enough for acceptance before their Lord; for they have the certainty of a future life, in which they will stand before the Judgment Seat. They fear for their own worthiness, but they hope in Faith.

أُولَئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ (٦١)

61. It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them.

وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا...

62. On no soul do We place a burden greater than it can bear:

C2913. Cf. 2:286 and n. 339 .

...وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ...

before Us is a record which clearly shows the truth:

C2914. The record speaks clearly, and shows exactly what each soul has done and thought, and what is due to it in justice.

The worst will receive full justice. The best will receive far more than their due: 28:84.

...وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٦٢)

they will never be wronged.

بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا...

63. But their hearts are in confused ignorance of this;

C2915. This is said of the Unbelievers who rejected Faith and rejoiced in the vanities of this world. In spite of the proclamation of Truth, they are doubtful of the future Life and Judgment.

...وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عَامِلُونَ (٦٣)

and there are, besides that, deeds of theirs, which they will (continue) to do --

C2916. In addition to their rejection of Faith, they have against them positive deeds of wrong-doing, from which, on account of their contempt of the Light from Allah, they will not desist until they are sharply pulled up for punishment: and then repentance will be too late!

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِم بِالْعَذَابِ إِذَا هُمْ يَجْأُرُونَ (٦٤)

64. Until, when We seize in Punishment those of them who received the good things of this world, behold, they will groan in supplication!

لَا تَجَارُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّكُمْ مِنَّا لَأَنْتَصِرُونَ (٦٥)

65. It will be said:

"Groan not in supplication this day; for ye shall certainly not be helped by Us.

قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَاتِي تُثَلَّى عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ تَنْكَبُونَ (٦٦)

66. "My Signs used to be rehearsed to you, but ye used to turn back on your heels --

مُسْتَكَبِرِينَ بِهٖ سَامِرًا تَهْجُرُونَ (٦٧)

67. "In arrogance: talking nonsense about the (Qur'án), like one telling fables by night."

C2917. Samir: one who remains awake by night, one who passes the night in talk or in the recital of stories of romances, a favourite amusement of the Days of Ignorance.

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٦٨)

68. Do they not ponder over the Word (of Allah), or has anything (new) come to them that did not come to their fathers of old?

C2918. If they ponder over the matter, they will find that Allah's Message to humanity is as old as Adam. It is good for all ages. It never grows old, and it is never new.

أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ (٦٩)

69. Or do they not recognize their Messenger, that they deny him?

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ...

70. Or do they say, "He is possessed"?

...بَلْ جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَأَكْثَرُهُم لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ (٧٠)

Nay, he has brought them the Truth, but most of them hate the Truth.

وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ...

71. If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption!

C2919. Allah is All-Wise and All-Good, and His architecture of the universe is on a perfect Plan. If these poor, low, selfish, ignorant creatures were to plan it according to their hearts' desires, it would be a dreadful world, full of confusion and corruption.

...بَلْ أَلَيْنَاهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ (٧١)

Nay, We have sent them their admonition, but they turn away from their admonition.

أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا ...

72. Or is it that thou askest them for some recompense?

C2920. This is the last of the questions, beginning with [23:68 above](#), showing the absurdity of the position taken up by the Unbelievers.

1. The Message of Allah is as old as humanity: why do they fight shy of it?
2. They have known their Prophet to be true and righteous: why do they deny him?
3. Is it madness to bring the bitter Truth before them?
4. Does the Prophet ask any worldly reward from them? If not, why do they reject his unselfish efforts for their own good?

... فَخَرَّاجٌ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ ...

But the recompense of thy Lord is best:

... وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ (٧٢)

He is the Best of those who give sustenance.

وَإِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٧٣)

73. But verily thou callest them to the Straight Way;

وَأِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَّاكِبُونَ (٧٤)

74. And verily those who believe not in the Hereafter are deviating from that Way.

وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِنْ ضُرٍّ...

75. If We had mercy on them and removed the distress which is on them,

C2921. The reference is to a very severe famine felt in Makkah, which was attributed by the Unbelievers to the presence of the holy Prophet among them and his preaching against their gods.

As this is a Makkan Surah, the famine referred to must be that described by Ibn Kathir as having occurred in the 8th year of the Mission, say about four years before the Hijrah.

There was also a post-Hijrah famine, which is referred to by, Bukhari, but that was a later event.

...لَلْجُوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (٧٥)

they would obstinately persist in their transgression, wandering in distraction to and fro.

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ ...

76. We inflicted Punishment on them,

C2922. Some Commentators understand the battle of Badr to be meant here; if so, this particular verse would be of the Madinah period.

But it is better to understand it as referring to the same "distress" as in the preceding verse, or to punishments in general, which obstinate sinners refuse to take as warnings given to them to mend their ways and turn in repentance to Allah.

...فَمَا اسْتَسْكَأُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ (٧٦)

but they humbled not themselves to their Lord, nor do they submissively entreat (Him)! --

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ (٧٧)

77. Until We open on them a gate leading to a severe Punishment: then

Lo! they will be plunged in despair therein!

C2923. Cf. 6:44.

If the little trials in the present life will not open their eyes, will great trials do so?

Unfortunately they only cause in the wicked a feeling of despair.

In the final Punishment after the Judgment, it will be too late for them to repent, and despair will be their only lot.

Section 5

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ...

78. It is He Who has created for you (the faculties of) hearing, sight, feeling and understanding:

C2924. As elsewhere, "heart" is to be understood as the seat both of feeling and intelligence.

'All the means by which knowledge can be gathered, judgment formed, and goodness cultivated, are provided for you by Allah. If you were grateful, you would use those in His service, which is expressed in your service to your fellow men. But instead you ignore these gifts, question Allah's Providence, and blaspheme against Him!'

...قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٨)

little thanks it is ye give!

وَهُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٧٩)

79. And He has multiplied you through the earth, and to Him shall ye be gathered back.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ...

80. It is He Who gives life and death, and to Him (is due) the alternation of Night and Day:

C2925. The alternation of Night and Day stands here as a symbol for all the beneficent processes of Nature provided by Allah for the comfort and growth of man's outer and inner life.

...أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٨٠)

will ye not then understand?

بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ (٨١)

81. On the contrary they say things similar to what the ancients said.

C2926. And they are the more culpable, as they have received a later and completer revelation. Why should they now stand on the primitive ideas of their ancestors?

قَالُوا أُنذِرْنَا مِنَّا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أُنِينَا لِمَبْعُوثُونَ (٨٢)

82. They say:

"What! when we die and become dust and bones, could we really be raised up again?"

لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِن قَبْلُ...

83. "Such things have been promised to us and to our fathers before!"

...إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٨٣)

They are nothing but tales of the ancients!"

قُلْ لِمَنَ الْأَرْضُ وَمَن فِيهَا إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨٤)

84. Say: "To whom belong the earth and all beings therein?
(Say) if ye know!"

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ...

85. They will say, "To Allah!"

...قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٨٥)

Say: "Yet will ye not receive admonition?"

C2927. If their argument is that such things about a future life cannot be known or proved, they are referred to the things which are actually before them. The tangible things of the earth;

- can they postulate their order or government except by a Power or Force or Energy outside them?

- They will admit that there is such a Power or Force or Energy. We call it Allah.
- Go a step further.

We see a sublime Universe in the heavens above, stretching far, far beyond our ken. They will admit its existence and its grandeur.

We ask them to entertain a feeling of reverence for the Power behind it, and to understand their own littleness and their dependence upon that Power.

قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ (٨٦)

86. Say: "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, and the Lord of the Throne (of Glory) Supreme?"

C2928. Cf. 9:129.

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ...

87. They will say, "(They belong) to Allah."

...قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (٨٧)

- Say: "Will ye not then be filled with awe?"

C2929. See [n. 2927](#) above.

'If this great and glorious Universe inspires you with awe, surely the Power behind is more worthy of your awe, especially if you compare your dependence and its dependence upon Him.'

قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

88. Say: "Who is it in whose hands is the governance of all things --

...وَهُوَ يُحْيِيهِمْ وَلَئِنِ جَارٌ عَلَيْهِ...

who protects (all), but is not protected (of any)?

...إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨٨)

(Say) if ye know."

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ...

89. They will say, "(It belongs) to Allah."

قُلْ فَأَنَّى تُسْحَرُونَ (٨٩)

Say: "Then how are ye deluded?"

C2930. 'The order and unity of purpose in the Universe argue unity of design and goodness in its Maker.

Is it not then sheer madness for you to run after fancies and fail to understand and obey His Will?

It is delusion in you to seek other than Allah.'

بَلْ أَتَيْنَاهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (٩٠)

90. We have sent them the Truth: but they indeed practice Falsehood!

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ...

91. No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him:

...إِذَا لَذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

(if there were many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others!

C2931. Cf. 17:42.

The multiplicity of gods is intellectually indefensible, considering the unity of Design and Purpose in His wonderful Universe.

...سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ (٩١)

Glory to Allah (He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him!

عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٩٢)

92. He knows what is hidden and what is open:
too high is He for the partners they attribute to Him!

C2932. To suppose that Allah has a son or family or partners or companions is to have a low idea of Allah, Who is high above all such relationships.

He is the One True God, and there can be none to compare with Him.

C.156 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(23:93-118)

*Let us eschew evil, but not
Pay back evil in its own coin
However great the temptation: no chance
Will there be to retrieve our conduct,
Once death cuts us off. Then we shall only
Have to wait for Judgement: none can pass
That Barrier: our deeds will be weighed,
And happy those whose good weighs more
In the scale than ill. Only Faith and Goodness
Will prevail in the end: so glory to the Lord
Of the Throne exalted, of Mercy and Honour!*

Section 6

قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيئِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ (٩٣)

93. Say:

"O my Lord! if Thou wilt show me (in my lifetime) that which they are warned against --

C2933. In the first instance, this applied to the holy Prophet. His subsequent Hijrah from Makkah and the eventual overthrow of the Makkan oligarchy amply prove the fulfilment of the prophecy.

But in general meaning it applies to all. We are taught that evil will be visited with a terrible punishment, not

only in a future life, but in this very life when its cup is full and the time comes for punishment in Allah's Plan. If it has to come while we are still on the scene of this life, we are asked to pray that we may not be found in the company of those who draw such punishment on themselves. In other words we must eschew the society of evil ones.

رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٩٤)

94. "Then, O my Lord! put me not amongst the people who do wrong!"

وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُرِيكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لِقَادِرُونَ (٩٥)

95. And We are certainly able to show thee (in fulfillment) that against which they are warned.

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ...

96. Repel evil with that which is best:

C2934. Whether people speak evil of you, in your presence or behind your back, or they do evil to you in either of those ways, all is known to Allah. It is not for you to punish.

Your best course is not to do evil in your turn, but to do what will best repel the evil. Two evils do not make a good.

Cf. 41:34, n. 4504.

...نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ (٩٦)

We are well-acquainted with the things they say.

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ (٩٧)

97. And say:

"O my Lord! I seek refuge with Thee from the suggestions of the Evil Ones;

C2935. But in any case, shun evil for yourself, and you cannot do this without seeking the help and protection of Allah.

Not only must you shun all promptings of evil, but you must shun its proximity. It may be that in retaliating on evil, or even in your curiosity to discover what evil is, you may fall into evil yourself. You should avoid going near it or anything which brings it near to you. And in this matter you should seek Allah's help.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونُ (٩٨)

98. "And I seek refuge with Thee, O my Lord! lest they should come near me."

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ ...

99. (In Falsehood will they be) until, when death comes to one of them, he says:

C2936. This verse I think connects on with 23:90 above.

Though Allah proclaims His Truth everywhere, the wicked cling to Falsehood until they face the reality of Death.

... رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ (٩٩)

"O my Lord! send me back (to life) --

C2937. The verb for "**send me back**" is in the plural in Arabic, which is construed either

- as an emphatic form, as if the singular were repeated, or
- as a plural of respect, though such a plural is not ordinarily used in addressing Allah, or
- as a plural addressed to the angels, after the address to Allah in "O my Lord!"

لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ ...

100. "In order that I may work righteousness in the things I neglected." --

C2938. The unrighteous will ask for another chance. But it will be too late then. The time for repentance will then have passed.

... كَلِمًا ...

"By no means!

... إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا ...

it is but a word he says,

C2939. Their request will mean nothing. It will be treated merely as an empty word of excuse.

They had plenty of chances in this life. Not only did they reject them, but they did not even believe in Allah or ask for His assistance.

... وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (١٠٠)

before them is a Partition till the Day they are raised up.

C2940. Barzakh:

- a partition,
- a bar or barrier;
- the place or state in which people will be after death and before Judgment.

Cf. 25:53 and 55:20.

Behind them is the barrier of death, and in front of them is the **Barzakh**, partition, a quiescent state until the judgment comes.

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ (١٠١)

101. Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that day, nor will one ask after another!

C2941. The old relationships of the world will then be dissolved. Each soul will stand on its merits.

فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (١٠٢)

102. Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy -- they will attain salvation:

C2942. Good and evil deeds will be weighed against each other.

If the good deeds prevail, the soul will attain **falāh**, i.e., prosperity, well-being, bliss, or salvation;

if the contrary, there will be the misery and anguish of Hell.

وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ...

103. But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls;

C2943. The loss or perdition will not mean that they will die and feel no more: 14:17.

The punishment will mean nothing, if there was no sensibility, but total annihilation.

... فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ (١٠٣)

in Hell will they abide.

تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالْحُورِ (١٠٤)

104. The Fire will burn their faces, and they will therein grin, with their lips displaced.

C2944. That is to say, their faces will be disfigured with anguish, and their lips will quiver and fall out of place, exposing their teeth.

أَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكْذِبُونَ (١٠٥)

105. "Were not My Signs rehearsed to you, and ye did but treat them as falsehoods?"

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ (١٠٦)

106. They will say:

"Our Lord! our misfortune overwhelmed us and we became a people astray!

C2945. 'The evil in us conquered us; it was our misfortune that we surrendered to evil, and went astray.'

They forget that it was by their own deliberate choice that they surrendered to evil, and they are reminded in verses 109-110 of the ridicule with which they covered godly men in their life on earth.

رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ (١٠٧)

107. "Our Lord! bring us out of this:

if ever we return (to evil), then shall we be wrongdoers indeed!"

قَالَ اخْسَوْوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُون (١٠٨)

108. He will say: "Be ye driven into it (with ignominy)! and speak ye not to Me!

C2946. After their flouting of Allah's Signs and their mockery of godly men on earth, they have forfeited their right to plead for mercy before Allah's Throne.

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ...

109. "A part of My servants there was, who used to pray,

...رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا...

'Our Lord! we believe; then do Thou forgive us, and have mercy upon us:

...وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (١٠٩)

for Thou art the best of those Who show mercy!"

فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا...

110. "But ye treated them with ridicule,

...حَتَّىٰ أَنْسَوَكُمُ ذِكْرِي وَكُنْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُونَ (١١٠)

so much so that (ridicule of) them made **you** forget My Message while ye were laughing at them!

C2947. Literally, 'they made you forget My Message'.

The ungodly were so occupied in the backbiting and ridicule of the godly that the godly themselves became the unconscious cause of the ungodly forgetting the

warnings declared by Allah against those who do not treat His Signs seriously.

Thus evil often brings about its own ruin through the instrumentality of those whom it would make its victims.

إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ (١١١)

111. "I have rewarded them this day for their patience and constancy: they are indeed the ones that have achieved Bliss..."

قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ (١١٢)

112. He will say: "What number of years did ye stay on earth?"

C2948. The Hafs reading is "Qala", "He will say". This follows the Kufa Qiraah.

The Basra Qiraat reads "Qul", "Say" (in the imperative).

The point is only one of grammatical construction.

See n. 2666 to 21:4. (R).

قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ...

113. They will say: "We stayed a day or part of a day:"

C2949. The question and answer about Time imply two things.

1. The attention of the ungodly is drawn to the extremely short time of the life in this world, compared to the eternity which they face: they are made to see this, and to realise how mistaken they were in their comparative valuation of things spiritual and things material.
2. Time, as we know it now, will have faded away and appear as almost nothing. It is just a matter relative to this life of temporary probation.

Cf. the experience of the Companions of the Cave: 18:19.

...فَاسْأَلِ الْعَادِّينَ (١١٣)

but ask those who keep account."

قَالَ إِن لَّبِئْتُمْ إِنَّا قَلِيلًا لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١١٤)

114. He will say: "Ye stayed not but a little -- if ye had only known!

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ (١١٥)

115. "Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?"

C2950. Allah's Creation is not without a high serious purpose. It is not vain, or for mere play or sport.

As far as man is concerned, the highest issues for him hang on his behaviour in this life. "Life is real, life is earnest, And the grave is not its goal", as Longfellow truly says. We must therefore earnestly search out Allah's Truth, encouraged by the fact that Allah's Truth is also, out of His unbounded mercy, searching us out and trying to reach us.

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ...

116. Therefore exalted be Allah, the King, the Reality;

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ (١١٦)

there is no god but He, the Lord of the Throne of Honor!

وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّمَا حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ...

117. If anyone invokes, besides Allah, any other god, he has no authority therefor; and his reckoning will be only with his Lord!

C2951. Not with any one else whatever, as Allah is the Eternal Reality. If men, out of the figments of their imagination, fancy other gods, they will be rudely undeceived.

And Allah is Lord, i.e., our Cherisher as well as our Creator. In spite of all our shortcomings and our rebellions, He will forgive us if we go to Him not on our merits but on His grace. (R).

إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ (١١٧)

And verily the Unbelievers will fail to win through!

C2952. See the same word used in describing the contrast with the Believers, in the first verse of this Surah. Righteousness must win and all opposition to it must fail. Thus the circle of the argument is completed.

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ...

118. So say:

"O my Lord! grant thou forgiveness and mercy!

...وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (١١٨)

for Thou art the Best of those who show mercy!"