

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 29

SURAH AL-'ANKABUT

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

029

SURAH AL-'ANKABUT

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Introduction and Summary

This Surah is the last of the series began with Surah 17, in which the growth of the spiritual man as an individual is considered, especially illustrated by the way in which the great Prophets were prepared for their work and received their mission, and the nature of Revelation in relation to the environments in which it was promulgated. (See Introduction to Surah 17). It also closes the sub-series beginning with Surah 26, which is concerned with the spiritual Light, and the reactions to it at certain periods of spiritual history (See Introduction to Surah 26).

The last Surah closed with a reference to the doctrine of the Ma'ad, or final Return of Man to Allah. This theme is further developed here, and as it is continued in the connecting link between the present series and those three Surahs.

In particular, emphasis is laid here on the necessity of linking actual conduct with the reception of Allah's revelation, and reference is again made to the stories of Noah, Abraham, and Lut among the Prophets, and the stories of Madyan, 'Ad, Thamud, and Pharaoh among the rejecters of Allah's Message. This world's life is contrasted with the real Life of the Hereafter.

Chronologically the main Surah belongs to the late Middle Makkan period, but the chronology has no significance except as showing how clearly the vision of the Future was revealed long before the Hijrah, to the struggling Brotherhood of Islam.

Summary- Belief is tested by trial in life and practical conduct; though Noah lived 950 years, his people refused Faith, and Abraham's generation threatened to burn Abraham (29:1-27), and C. 177).

Lut's people not only rejected Allah's Message but publicly defied him in sin; the 'Ad and the Thamud had intelligence but misused it, and Qurun, Pharaoh, and Haman perished for their overweening arrogance; they found their worldly power as frail as spider's web (29:28-44, and C. 178).

The Quran as a revelation stands on its own merits and is a Sign: it teaches the distinction between Right and Wrong, and shows the importance and excellence of the Hereafter (29:45-69, and C. 179).

C.177 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(29:1-27)

*Faith must be tested in conflicts
Of practical life, but Good can never
Be submerged. On the contrary, Allah
Will wash off all stains from those*

*Who strive, and admit them to the Fellowship
Of the Righteous. Not so are the hypocrites
And those who reject Faith. Their hearts
Are diseased, and they will not accept
The right though a Noah preached it to them
For a thousand years, or an Abraham
Reasoned with them on Allah's most wonderful
providence. But the true will ever search out
The Truth, and Truth will always prevail.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

الم (١)

1. Alif Lam Mim.

C3422. For these Abbreviated Letters see n. 25 to 2:1.

We are asked to contrast, in our present life the real inner life against the outer life, and learn from the past about the struggles of the soul which upholds Allah's Truth, against the environment of evil, which resists it, and to turn our thoughts to the Ma'ad, or man's future destiny in the Hereafter.

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا...

2. Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe,"

C3423. Mere lip profession of Faith is not enough. It must be tried and tested in the real turmoil of life.

The test will be applied in all kinds of circumstances, in individual life and in relation to the environment around us, to see whether we can strive constantly and put Allah above Self.

Much pain, sorrow, and self-sacrifice may be necessary, not because they are good in themselves, but because

they will purify us, like fire applied to a goldsmith's crucible to burn out the dross.

...وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ (٢)

and that they will not be tested?

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

3. We did test those before them,

...فَلْيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلْيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٣)

and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.

C3424. The word "**know**" is used here more in the sense of testing than of acquiring knowledge.

Allah is All-Knowing: He needs no test to increase His own knowledge, but the test is to burn out the dross within ourselves, as explained in the last note.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَن يَسْبِقُونَا...

4. Do those who practice evil think that they will get the better of us?

...سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (٤)

Evil is their judgment!

C3425. If the enemies of Truth imagine that they will "be first" by destroying Truth before it takes root, they are sadly at fault, for their own persecution may help to plant Allah's Truth more firmly in men's hearts.

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ ...

5. For those whose hopes are in the meeting with Allah (in the Hereafter, let them strive);

C3426. The men of Faith look forward to Allah. Their quest is Allah, and the object of their hopes is the meeting with Allah. They should strive with might and main to serve Him in this life, for this life is short, and the Term appointed for their probation will soon be over.

... فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ...

for the Term (appointed) by Allah is surely coming:

C3427. The **Term (ajal)** may signify:

- the time appointed for death, which ends the probation of this life;
- the time appointed for this life, so that we can prepare for the Hereafter; the limit will soon expire.

In either case the ultimate meaning is the same.

We must strive now and not postpone anything for the future. And we must realize and remember that every prayer we make to Allah is heard by Him, and that every unspoken wish or motive of our heart, good or bad, is known to Him, and goes to swell our spiritual account.

...وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٥)

and He hears and knows (all things).

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ...

6. And if any strive (with might and main), they do so for their own souls:

C3428. All our striving ensures to our own spiritual benefit. When we speak of serving Allah, it is not that we confer any benefit on Him. For He has no needs, and is independent of all His Creation.

In conforming to His Will, we are seeking our own good, as in yielding to evil we are doing harm to ourselves.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦)

for Allah is free of all needs from all creation.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ...

7. Those who believe and work righteous deeds, from them shall We blot out all evil (that may be) in them,

C3429. In striving to purify our Faith and our Life, we are enabled to avoid the consequences of our misdeeds for Allah will forgive any evil in our past, and help to the

attainment of a Future based on the best of what we have done rather than on the poor average of our own merits.

The atonement or expiation is by Allah's Mercy, not by our merits or the merits or sacrifice of anyone else. (R).

...وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٧)

and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِالْوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا...

8. We have enjoined on man kindness to parents:

...وَأَن جَاهِدَاكَ لِنُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا...

but if they (either of them) strive (to force) thee to join with Me (in worship) anything of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not.

C3430. That is, no certainty in virtue of the spiritual light. In matters of faith and worship, even parents have no right to force their children. They cannot and must not hold up before them any worship but that of the One True God.

...إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٨)

Ye have (all) to return to Me, and I will tell you (the truth) of all that ye did.

C3431. Children and parents must all remember that they have all to go before Allah's tribunal, and answer, each for his own deeds.

In cases where one set of people have lawful authority over another set of people (as in the case of parents and children), and the two differ in important matters like that of Faith, the latter are justified in rejecting authority: the apparent conflict will be solved when the whole truth is revealed to all eyes in the final Judgment.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ (٩)

9. And those who believe and work righteous deeds, them shall We admit to the company of the Righteous.

C3432. The picking up again of the words which began verse 7 above shows that the same subject is now pursued from another aspect.

The striving in righteous deeds will restore fallen man to the society of the Righteous.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ...

10. Then there are among men such as say, "We believe in Allah;"

...فَإِذَا أُوْذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ...

but when they suffer affliction in (the cause of) Allah, they treat men's oppression as if it were the Wrath of Allah!

...وَلَئِن جَاء نَصْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ...

and if help comes (to thee) from thy Lord, they are sure to say, "We have (always) been with you!"

C3433. Cf. 9:56, and other passages where the cunning of the Hypocrites is exposed.

The man who turns away from Faith in adversity and only claims the friendship of the Faithful when there is something to be gained by it, is worthy of a double condemnation:

- first because he rejected Faith and Truth, and
- secondly because he falsely pretended to be of those whom he feared or hated in his heart.

But nothing in all creation is concealed from Allah.

...أَوَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٠)

Does not Allah know best all that is in the hearts of all Creation?

وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ (١١)

11. And Allah most certainly knows those who believe, and as certainly those who are Hypocrites.

C3434. Cf. 29:3 above.

The general opposition between Truth and Falsehood is now brought down to the specific case of the Hypocrites,

who are against the Faith militant but swear friendship with it when it seems to be gaining ground.

The argument is rounded off with the next two verses.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطَايَاكُمْ...

12. And the Unbelievers say to those who believe:

"Follow our path, and we will bear (the consequences) of your faults."

C3435. Besides the hypocrite there is another type of man who openly scoffs at Faith. 'Take life as we take it,' he says; 'we shall bear your sins.'

As if they could!

Each soul bears its own burdens, and no one else can bear them.

The principle also applies to the type of man who preaches vicarious atonement, for, if followed to its logical conclusion, it means both injustice and irresponsibility, and puts quite a different complexion on the nature of sin.

... وَمَا هُمْ بِحَامِلِينَ مِنْ خَطَايَاهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ...

Never in the least will they bear their faults:

...إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١٢)

in fact they are liars!

وَلِيَحْمِلْنَ أَثْقَالَهُمْ وَأَثْقَالًا مَّعَ أَثْقَالِهِمْ...

13. They will bear their own burdens, and (other) burdens along with their own,

C3436. Besides the burden of their own infidelity, they will bear the burden of deluding others with falsehood.

...وَلْيُسْأَلْنَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (١٣)

and on the Day of Judgement they will be called to account for their falsehoods.

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ...

14. We (once) sent Noah to his people,

...فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا...

and he tarried among them a thousand years less fifty:

C3437. The story of Noah and his Flood is not told here. It is told in other places; e.g., see 11:25-48 or 26:105-122.

It is only referred to here to point out that Noah's period lasted a long time, 950 years. (Cf. Gen. 9:28-29, where his whole age is declared to have been 950 years, of which 350 years were after the Flood).

In spite of this long period, his contemporaries failed to listen, and they were destroyed.

But the story of the Ark remains an everlasting Sign and Warning to mankind—a Sign of deliverance to the righteous and of destruction to the wicked.

...فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (١٤)

but the Deluge overwhelmed them while they (persisted in) sin.

فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ...

15. But We saved him and the Companions of the Ark,

...وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ (١٥)

and We made the (Ark) a Sign for all Peoples!

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ...

16. And (We also saved) Abraham: Behold, he said to his people,
"Serve Allah and fear Him:

C3438. The story of Abraham has been told in various phases in different passages. The ones most germane to the present passage are:

21:51-72 (his being cast into the fire and being saved from it); and

19:41-49 (his voluntary exile from the home of his fathers).

Here the story is not told but is referred to in order to stress the following points;

- Abraham's people only responded to his preaching by threatening to burn him ([29:16-18](#), [24](#));
- evil consorts with evil but will have a rude awakening ([29:25](#));
- the good adhere to the good, and are blessed ([29:26-27](#)).

Note that the passage [29:19-23](#) is a parenthetical comment, though some Commentators treat a portion of it as part of Abraham's speech.

...ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٦)

that will be best for you -- if ye understand!

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا...

17. "For ye do worship idols besides Allah, and ye invent falsehood.

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا...

The things that ye worship besides Allah have no power to give you sustenance:

...فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ...

then seek ye sustenance from Allah, serve Him, and be grateful to Him:

C3439. Sustenance: in the symbolic as well as the literal sense. Seek from Allah all that is necessary for your upkeep and development, and for preparing you for your future Destiny.

Lay all your hopes in Him and in no one else. Dedicate yourselves to His worship. He will give you all that is necessary for your growth and well being, and you

should show your gratitude to Him by conforming your will entirely to His.

إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (١٧)...

to Him will be your return.

وَإِنْ تُكَذِّبُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أُمَمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ...

18. "And if ye reject (the Message), so did generations before you:

وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (١٨)

and the duty of the messenger is only to preach publicly (and clearly)."

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ...

19. See they not how Allah originates creation, then repeats it:

C3440. The originating of creation is the creation of primeval matter.

The repetition of the process of creation goes on constantly, for at every moment new processes are being called into being by the creative power of Allah, and according to His Laws.

And the final creation as far as man is concerned will be in the Ma'ad, when the whole world as man sees it will be entirely newly created on a different plane.

As far as Allah is concerned, there is nothing final, no first and last, for He is infinite. He was before our First and will be after our Last.

إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (١٩)...

truly that is easy for Allah.

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ...

20. Say:

"Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation:

C3441. Travel through the earth: again, literally as well as symbolically.

If we actually go through this wide earth, we shall see the wonderful things in His Creation;

- the Grand Canyon and the Niagaras in America,
- beautiful harbors like that at Sydney in Australia,
- mountains like Fujiyama, the Himalayas, and Elburz in Asia,
- the Nile with its wonderful cataracts in Africa, the Fiords of Norway, the Geysers of Iceland,
- the city of the midnight sun in Tromsø,
- and innumerable wonders everywhere.

But wonders upon wonders are disclosed in the constitution of matter itself, the atom, and the forces of energy, as also in the instincts of animals, and the minds and capacities of man. And there is no limit to these things.

Worlds upon worlds are created and transformed every moment, within and presumably beyond man's vision. From what we know we can judge of the unknown.

... ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنْشِئُ النَّسْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ...

so will Allah produce a later creation:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٠)

for Allah has power over all things.

يُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَن يَشَاءُ...

21. "He punishes whom He pleases, and He grants mercy to whom He pleases,

... وَإِلَيْهِ تُقْلَبُونَ (٢١)

and towards Him are ye turned.

C3442. I think **ilahi tuqlabun** is better translated "towards Him are ye turned" than "towards Him will be your return", as it implies not only the return of man to Allah in the Hereafter ([turja'un in verse 17 above](#)) but

also the fact explained in verse 22 that man's needs are always to be obtained from Allah:

man cannot frustrate Allah's designs, and can have no help or protection except from Allah: man has always to face Allah, whether man obeys Allah or tries to ignore Allah.

Man will never be able to defeat Allah's Plan. According to His wise Will and Plan, He will grant His grace or withhold it from man.

وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ...

22. "Not on earth nor in heaven will ye be able (fleeing) to frustrate (His plan),

وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (٢٢)

nor have ye, besides Allah, any protector or helper."

Section 3

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَائِهِ أُولَئِكَ يَئِسُوا مِن رَّحْمَتِي...

23. Those who reject the Signs of Allah and the Meeting, with Him (in the Hereafter), it is they who shall despair of My mercy:

...وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢٣)

it is they who will (suffer) a most grievous Penalty.

C3443. The emphasis is on **"they"** (ulaika).

It is only the people who ignore or reject Allah's Signs and reject a Hereafter, that will find themselves in despair and suffering.

Allah's Mercy is open to all, but if any reject His Mercy, they must suffer.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ...

24. So naught was the answer of (Abraham's) people except that they said: "

Slay him or burn him."

...فَأَنْجَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ النَّارِ...

But Allah did save him from the Fire:

C3444. See 21:66-70.

Abraham was cast into the fire, but he was unhurt, by the grace of Allah. So righteous people suffer no harm from the plots of the wicked. But they must leave the environment of evil even if they have to forsake their ancestral home, as Abraham did.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٤)

verily in this are Signs for people who believe.

وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

25. And He said:

"For you, ye have taken (for worship) idols besides Allah, out of mutual love and regard between yourselves in this life;

C3445. In sin and wickedness there is as much log-rolling as in politics.

Evil men humor each other and support each other; they call each other's vice by high-sounding names. They call it mutual regard or friendship or love; at the lowest, they call it toleration.

Perhaps they flourish in this life by such arts. But they deceive themselves, and they deceive each other.

What will be their relations in the Hereafter?

They will disown each other when each has to answer on the principle of personal responsibility. Each will accuse the others of misleading him, and they will curse each other. But there will then be no help, and they must suffer in the Fire.

...ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا...

but on the Day of Judgement ye shall disown each other and curse each other:

...وَمَا أَوْلَاكُمْ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّاصِرِينَ (٢٥)

and your abode will be the Fire, and ye shall have none to help.

فَأَمَّنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي...

26. But Lut had faith in Him: he said:

C3446. Lut was a nephew of Abraham. He adhered to Abraham's teaching and faith and accepted voluntary exile with him, for Abraham left the home of his fathers in Chaldaea and migrated to Syria and Palestine, where Allah gave him increase and prosperity, and a numerous family, who upheld the flag of Unity and the Light of Allah.

"I will leave home for the sake of my Lord:

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٦)

for He is Exalted in Might, and Wise."

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ...

27. And We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood and Revelation,

C3447. Isaac was Abraham's son and Jacob his grandson, and among his progeny was included Isma'il the eldest son of Abraham.

Each of these became a fountain-head of Prophecy and Revelation, Isaac and Jacob through Moses, and Isma'il through the holy Prophet Muhammad.

Jacob got the name of "Israel" at Bethel: Gen. 32:28; 35:10, and his progeny got the title of "The Children of Israel".

...وَأَتَيْنَاهُ أَجْرَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا...

and We granted him his reward in this life;

...وَأَنَّ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لِمَنِ الصَّالِحِينَ (٢٧)

and he was in the Hereafter (of the company) of the Righteous.

C3448. Cf. 29:9, and 4:69, n. 586.

C.178 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(29:28-44)

*Worldly power cannot through sin
Defy the right, as was proved in the ministry
Of Lut; nor can Intelligence misused
Stand in the place of Allah's Light; nor
Can boastful insolence do aught
But dig its own grave. The strength
And skill, the beauty and power, of this world's
Life are no more than a Spider's Web,
Flimsy before the force of the eternal
Verities that flow from Allah Supreme!*

وَلَوْ طَأَّ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ...

28. And (remember) Lut; behold, he said to his people:

...إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٨)

"Ye do commit lewdness, such as no people in Creation (ever) committed before you.

C3449. Cf. 7:80.

A discreet reference is made to their unspeakable crimes, which were against the laws of all nature.

أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ ...

29. "Do ye indeed approach men, and cut off the highway? --

C3450. They infested highways and committed their horrible crimes not only secretly, but openly and publicly, even in their assemblies.

Some Commentators understand "**cutting off the highway**" to refer to highway robberies: this is possible, and it is also possible that the crimes in their assemblies may have been injustice, rowdiness, etc. But the context

seems to refer to their own special horrible crime, and the point here seems to be that they were not ashamed of it and that they practiced it publicly. Degradation could go no further.

... وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمْ الْمُنْكَرَ...

And practice wickedness (even) in your councils?"

...فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا...

But his people gave no answer but this: they said:

...اٰتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ (٢٩)

"Bring us the Wrath of Allah if thou tellest the truth."

C3451. This is another instance of their effrontery, in addition to that mentioned in 7:82: the two supplement each other.

Here the point emphasised is that they did not believe in Allah or His Punishment, and dared Allah's Prophet Lut to bring about the Punishment if he could. And it did come and destroy them.

قَالَ رَبِّ اٰنصُرْنِيْ عَلٰى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ (٣٠)

30. He said: "O my Lord! Help Thou me against people who do mischief!"

Section 4

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا اِبْرٰهِيْمَ بِالْبُشْرٰى ...

31. When Our Messengers came to Abraham with the good news,

C3452. See 11:69-76.

The angels, who were coming on the mission to destroy the people who were polluting the earth with their crimes, called on their way on Abraham to give the good news of the birth of a son to him in his old age.

When they told him their destination, he feared for his nephew who he knew was there. They reassured him and then came on to Lut.

... قَالُوا إِنَّا مُهْلِكُوا أَهْلَ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ...

they said: "We are indeed going to destroy the people of this township:

C3453. By translating "**township**" I imply the two neighbouring populations of Sodom and Gomorrah, who had already gone too far in their crime, their shamelessness, and their defiance, to profit by any mercy from Allah.

...إِنَّ أَهْلَهَا كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ (٣١)

for truly they are (addicted to) crime."

قَالَ إِنَّ فِيهَا لُوطًا...

32. He said: "But there is Lut there."

...قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِيهَا...

They said:

"Well do we know who is there:

...لِنُنَجِّيَهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ (٣٢)

we will certainly save him and his following, except his wife: she is of those who lag behind!"

C3454. She was not loyal to her husband.

Tradition says that she belonged to the wicked people, and was not prepared to leave them. She had no faith in the mission either of her husband or of the angels who had come as his guests.

وَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذُرْعًا...

33. And when Our Messengers came to Lut, he was grieved on their account, and felt himself powerless (to protect) them:

C3455. This part of the story may be read in greater detail in 11:77-83.

...وَقَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ...

but they said

"Fear thou not, nor grieve:

...إِنَّا مُنْجُونَكَ وَأَهْلَكَ إِنَّا أَمْرَاتُكَ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْعَابِرِينَ (٣٣)

we are (here) to save thee and thy following, except thy wife:
she is of those who lag behind."

إِنَّا مُنْزَلُونَ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ...

34. "For we are going to bring down on the people of this township a Punishment from heaven,

C3456. The Punishment was a rain of brimstone, which completely overwhelmed the Cities, with possibly an earthquake and a volcanic eruption (see 11:82).

...بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ (٣٤)

because they have been wickedly rebellious."

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعُولُونَ (٣٥)

35. And We have left thereof an evident Sign, for any people who (care to) understand.

C3457. The whole tract on the east side of the Dead Sea (where the Cities were situated) is covered with sulphureous salts and is deadly to animal and plant life.

The Dead Sea itself is called in Arabic the Bahr Lut (the sea of Lut). It is a scene of utter desolation, that should stand as a Symbol of the Destruction that awaits Sin.

وَالِى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ ...

36. To the Madyan (people) (We sent) their brother Shu'aib. Then he said:

"O my people!

...اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٣٦)

serve Allah, and fear the Last Day:
nor commit evil on the earth, with intent to do mischief."

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ...

37. But they rejected him: then the mighty Blast seized them,

C3458. The story of Shu'aib and the Madyan people is only referred to here. It is told in 11:84-95.

Their besetting sin was fraud and commercial immorality. Their punishment was a mighty Blast, such as accompanies volcanic eruptions.

The point of the reference here is that they went about doing mischief on the earth, and never thought of the Ma'ad or the Hereafter, the particular theme of this Surah.

The same point is made by the brief references in the following two verses to the 'Ad and the Thamud, and to Qarun, Pharaoh, and Haman, though the besetting sin in each case was different.

The Midianites were a commercial people and trafficked from land to land; their frauds are well described as spreading "mischief on the earth".

...فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٣٧)

and they lay prostrate in their homes by the morning.

...وَعَادًا وَثَمُودَ ...

38. Remember also the 'Ad and the Thamud (people):

C3459. For the 'Ad people see 7:65-72, and n. 1040, and for the Thamud, 7:73-79, and n. 1043.

The remains of their buildings show:

- that they were gifted with great intelligence and skill;
- that they were proud of their material civilization; and
- their destruction argues how the greatest material civilization and resources cannot save a People who disobey Allah's moral law.

...وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَّسَاكِنِهِمْ ...

clearly will appear to you from (the traces) of their buildings (their fate):

...وَرَيَيْنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ...

the Evil One made their deeds alluring to them, and kept them back from the Path,

C3460. They were so arrogant and self-satisfied, that they missed the higher purpose of life, and strayed clean away from the Path of Allah.

Though their intelligence should have kept them straight, Evil made them crooked and led them and kept them astray.

...وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ (٣٨)

though they were gifted with Intelligence and Skill.

وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ...

39. (Remember also) Qarun, Pharaoh, and Haman:

C3461. For Qarun see 28:76-82;

Pharaoh is mentioned frequently in the Quran, but he is mentioned in association with Haman in 28:6;

for their blasphemous arrogance and defiance of Allah see 28:38.

They thought such a lot of themselves, but they came to an evil end.

...وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

there came to them Moses with Clear Signs, but they behaved with insolence on the earth;

...وَمَا كَانُوا سَابِقِينَ (٣٩)

yet they could not overreach (Us).

فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنْبِهِ...

40. Each one of them We seized for his crime:

...فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا...

of them, against some We sent a violent tornado (with showers of stones);

C3462. For **hasib** (violent tornado with showers of stones), see 17:68; this punishment as inflicted on the Cities of the Plain, of which Lut preached (54:34).

Some Commentators think that this also applied to the 'Ad, but their punishment is described as by a violent and unseasonable cold wind (41:16; 54:19 and 69:6), such as blows in sand-storms in the Ahqaf, the region of shifting sands which was in their territory.

...وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ...

some were caught by a (mighty) Blast;

C3463. For **saihat** (Blast) see 11:67 and n. 1561, as also n. 1047 to 7:78 and n. 1996 to 15:73.

This word is used in describing;

- the fate of the Thamud (11:67);
- Madyan (11:94);
- the population to which Lut preached (15:73);
- and the Rocky Tract (Hijr, 15:83), part of the territory of the Thamud;
- also in the Parable of the City to which came three Prophets, who found a single-believer (36:29).

...وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ...

some We caused the earth to swallow up;

C3464. This was the fate of Qarun: see 28:81.

Cf. also 16:45 and n. 2071.

...وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَعْرَفْنَا...

and some We drowned (in the waters):

C3465. This was the fate of the hosts of Pharaoh and Haman (28:40) as well as the wicked generation of Noah (26:120).

...وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٤٠)

it was not Allah Who injured (or oppressed) them:

they injured (and oppressed) their own souls.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ...

41. The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of the Spider,

...اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا...

who builds (to itself) a house;

...وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ...

but truly the flimsiest of houses

C3466. The **Spider's house** is one of the wonderful Signs of Allah's creation. It is made up of fine silk threads spun out of silk glands in the spider's body.

There are many kinds of spiders and many kinds of spider's houses. Two main types of houses may be mentioned.

- There is the tubular nest or web, a silk-lined house or burrow with one or two trap-doors. This may be called his residential or family mansion.
- Then there is what is ordinarily called a spider's web, consisting of a central point with radiating threads running in all directions and acting as tie-beams to the quasi-circular concentric threads that form the body of the web. This is his hunting box.

The whole structure exemplifies economy in time, material, and strength. If an insect is caught in the net, the vibration set up in the radiating threads is at once communicated to the spider, who can come and kill his prey.

In case the prey is powerful, the spider is furnished with poison glands with which to kill his prey.

The spider sits either in the centre of the web or hides on the under-side of a leaf or in some crevice, but he always has a single thread connecting him with his web, to keep him in telephonic communication.

The female spider is much bigger than the male, and in Arabic the generic gender of '**Ankabut**' is feminine.

... لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ ...

is the Spider's house,

C3467. Most of the facts in the last note can be read into the Parable. For their thickness the spider's threads are very strong from the point of view of relativity, but in our actual world they are flimsy, especially the threads of the gossamer spider floating in the air.

So is the house and strength of the man who relies on material resources however fine or beautiful relatively; before the eternal Reality they are as nothing.

The spider's most cunning architecture cannot stand against a wave of a man's hand. His poison glands are like the hidden poison in our beautiful worldly plans which may take various shapes but have seeds of death in them.

... لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤١)

if they but knew.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ...

42. Verily Allah doth know of (everything) whatever that they call upon besides Him:

C3468. The last verse told us that men, out of spiritual ignorance, build their hopes on flimsy unsubstantial things (like the spider's web) which are broken by a thousand chance attacks of wind and weather or the actions of animals or men.

If they cannot fully grasp their own good, they should seek His Light. To Him everything is known,

- men's frailty,
- their false hopes,
- their questionable motives,

the false gods whom they enthrone in their midst, the mischief done by the neglect of Truth, and the way out for those who have entangled themselves in the snares of evil.

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٤٢)

and He is Exalted (in power), Wise.

He is All-Wise and is able to carry out all He wills, and they should turn to Him.

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ...

43. And such are the Parables We set for mankind,

...وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ (٤٣)

but only those understand them who have Knowledge.

C3469. Parables seem simple things, but their profound meaning and application can only be understood by those who seek knowledge and by Allah's grace attain it.

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ...

44. Allah created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions):

C3470. Cf. 6:73 and n. 896.

In all Allah's Creation, not only is there evidence of intelligent Purpose, fitting all parts together with wisdom, but also of supreme Goodness and cherishing Care, by which all needs are satisfied and all the highest and truest cravings fulfilled. These are like beckoning signals to lead on those who pray and search in Faith.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٤٤)

verily in that is a Sign for those who believe.

C.179 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(29:45-69)

*Proclaim the Message of Allah, and pray
To Him for purity and guidance.
Allah's Revelation carries its own
Proofs and is recognized by men
Of wisdom. Its rejecters but lose
Their own chances of profiting
By the Truth, and attaining the Paths
That lead to Allah's own gracious Presence!*

Section 5

اَثَلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ...

45. Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish Regular Prayer:

C3471. The **tilawat** of the Quran implies:

- rehearsing or reciting it, and publishing it abroad to the world;
- reading it to ourselves;
- studying it to understand it as it should be studied and understood (2:121);
- meditating on it so as to accord our knowledge and life and desires with it.

When this is done, it merges into real Prayer, and Prayer purges us of anything (act, plan, thought, motive, words) of which we should be ashamed or which would work injustice to others. Such Prayer passes into our inmost life and being, for then we realize the Presence of Allah, and that is true **ziker** (or remembrance), for remembrance is the bringing to mind of things as present to us which might otherwise be absent to us.

And that is the greatest thing in life. It is subjective to us: it fills our consciousness with Allah. For Allah is in any case always present and knows all.

...إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ...

for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds;

...وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ...

and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt.

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ (٤٥)

And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do.

...وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ...

46. And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation),

C3472. Mere disputations are futile. In order to achieve our purpose as true standard-bearers for Allah, we shall have to find true common grounds of belief, as stated in the latter part of this verse, and also to show by our urbanity, kindness, sincerity, truth, and genuine anxiety, for the good of others, that we are not cranks or merely seeking selfish or questionable aims.

...إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ...

unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury):

C3473. Of course those who are deliberately trying to wrong or injure others will have to be treated firmly, as we are guardians of each other. With them there is little question of finding common ground or exercising patience, until the injury is prevented or stopped.

...وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمْ...

but say, "We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you;

...وَالِهْنَا وَالْهَكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (٤٦)

Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)."

C3474. That is, the religion of all true and sincere men of Faith is, or should be, one; and that is the ideal of Islam.

وَكَذَلِكَ ...

47. And thus

C3475. It is in this spirit that all true Revelation comes from Allah. Allah is One, and His Message cannot come in one place or at one time to contradict His Message in another place or at another time in spirit, though there may be local variations according to the needs or understanding of men at any given time or place.

... أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ فَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ...

(it is) that We have sent down the Book to thee. So the People of the Book believe therein,

C3476. The sincere Jews and Christians found in the holy Prophet a fulfillment of their own religion. For the names of some Jews who recognized and embraced Islam, see n. 3227 to 26:197.

Among the Christians, too, the Faith slowly won ground. Embassies were sent by the holy Prophet in the 6th and 7th years of the Hijrah to all the principal countries round Arabia, viz., the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Constantinople), the capital of the Persian Empire (Madain), the Sasanian capital known to the West by the Greek name of Ctesiphon, (about thirty miles south of modern Baghdad), Syria, Abyssinia, and Egypt. All these (except Persia) were Christian countries.

In the same connection an embassy was also sent to Yamama in Arabia itself (east of the Hijaz) where the Banu Hamfa tribe was Christian, like the Harith tribe of Najran who voluntarily sent an embassy to Madinah.

All these countries except Abyssinia eventually became Muslim, and Abyssinia itself has a considerable Muslim population now and sent some Muslim converts to Madinah in the time of the Prophet himself.

As a generalization it is true that the Jewish and the Christian peoples as they existed in the seventh century of the Christian era have been mainly absorbed by Islam, as well as the lands in which they predominated.

Remnants of them built up new nuclei. The Roman Catholic Church conquered new lands among the northern (Germanic) Pagans and the Byzantine Church among the eastern (Slavonic) Pagans, and the Protestantism of the 16th century gave a fresh stimulus to the main ideas for which Islam stands, viz., the abolition of priest craft, the right of private judgment, the simplification of ritual, and the insistence upon the simple, practical, everyday duties of life.

...وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ...

as also do some of these (pagan Arabs):

C3477. The Pagan Arabs also gradually came in until they were all absorbed in Islam.

...وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ (٤٧)

and none but Unbelievers reject Our Signs.

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ...

48. And thou wast not (able) to recite a Book, before this (Book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hand:

C3478. The holy Prophet was not a learned man. Before the Quran was revealed to him, he never claimed to proclaim a Message from Allah. He was not in the habit of preaching eloquent truths as from a Book, before he received his Revelation, nor was he able to write or transcribe with his own hand.

If he had had these worldly gifts, there would have been some plausibility in the charge of the talkers of vanities that he spoke not from inspiration but from other people's books, or that he composed the beautiful verses of the Quran himself and committed them to memory in order to recite them to people.

The circumstances in which the Quran came bear their own testimony to its truth as from Allah.

إِذَا لَارْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ (٤٨)...

in that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted.

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ...

49. Nay, here are Signs self-evident in the hearts of those endowed with knowledge:

C3479. "Knowledge" ('ilm) means both power of judgment in discerning the value of truth and acquaintance with previous revelations.

It implies both literal and spiritual insight.

To men so endowed, Allah's revelations and Signs are self-evident. They commend themselves to their hearts, minds, and understandings, which are typified in Arabic by the word **sadr**, "**breast**".

وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ (٤٩)...

and none but the unjust reject Our Signs.

C3480. Cf. the last clause of verse 47 above. There the argument was that the rejection of the Quran was a mark of Unbelief.

Now the argument is carried a stage farther. Such rejection is also a mark of injustice, a deliberate perversity in going against obvious Signs, which should convince all honest men.

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ...

50. Yet they say: "Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?"

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٥٠)

Say:

"The Signs are indeed with Allah: and I am indeed a clear Warner."

C3481. See last note.

In the Quran, as said in verse 49, are Signs which should carry conviction to all honest hearts. And yet the Unbelievers ask for Signs! They mean some special kinds

of Signs or Miracles, such as their own foolish minds dictate.

Everything is possible for Allah, but Allah is not going to humor the follies of men or listen to their disingenuous demands. He has sent a Messenger to explain His Signs clearly, and to warn them of the consequences of rejection.

Is it not enough?

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ...

51. And is it not enough for them that We have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them?

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَذِكْرَىٰ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥١)

Verily, in it is Mercy and Reminder to those who believe.

C3482. The perspicuous Quran, explained in detail by Allah's Messenger, in conjunction with Allah's Signs in nature and in the hearts of men, should be enough for all. It is mere fractious opposition to demand vaguely something more.

Cf. also 6:124, and n. 946.

Section 6

فَلَنْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ شَهِيدًا...

52. Say:

"Enough is Allah for a Witness between me and you:

...يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

He knows what is in the heavens and on earth.

C3483. The test of a Revelation is whether it comes from Allah or not. This is made clear by the life and teachings of the Messenger who brings it.

No fraud or falsehood can for a moment stand before Allah. All the most hidden things in heaven and earth are open before Him.

...وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٥٢)

And it is those who believe in vanities and reject Allah, that will perish (in the end)."

C3484. If Truth is rejected, Truth does not suffer. It is the rejecters who suffer and perish in the end.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ...

53. They ask thee to hasten on the Punishment (for them):

C3485. Cf. 22:47 and n. 2826.

The rejecters of Faith throw out a challenge out of bravado: "Let us see if you can hasten the punishment on us!"

This is a vain taunt. Allah's Plan will take its course, and can neither be delayed nor hastened. It is out of His Mercy that He gives respite to sinners, in order that they may have a chance of repentance. If they do not repent, the Punishment must certainly come to them -and on a sudden, before they perceive that it is coming! And then it will be too late for repentance.

...وَلَوْلَا أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَجَاءَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ...

had it not been for a term (of respite) appointed, the Punishment would certainly have come to them:

...وَلَيَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٥٣)

and it will certainly reach them, -- of a sudden, while they perceive not!

يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ...

54. They ask thee to hasten on the Punishment

C3486. The challenge of the wicked for Punishment was answered in the last verse by reference to Allah's merciful Respite, to give chances of repentance.

It is answered in this verse by an assurance that if no repentance is forthcoming, the Punishment will be

certain and of an all-pervasive kind. Hell will surround them on all sides, and above them and below them.

وَأِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ (٥٤)

but, of a surety, Hell will encompass the rejecters of Faith! --

يَوْمَ يَغْشَاهُمْ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ...

55. On the Day that the Punishment shall cover them from above them and from below them,

C3487. Cf. a similar phrase in 6:65.

وَيَقُولُ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٥٥)

and (a Voice) shall say: "Taste ye (the fruits) of your deeds!"

C3488. This is not merely a reproach, but a justification of the Punishment. "It is you who brought it on yourselves by your evil deeds: blame none but yourselves. Allah's Mercy gave you many chances: His Justice has now overtaken you!"

يَا عِبَادِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُون (٥٦)

56. O My servants who believe! truly, spacious is My Earth: therefore serve ye Me -- (and Me alone)!

C3489. There is no excuse for any one to plead that he could not do good or was forced to evil by his circumstances and surroundings, or by the fact that he lived in evil times.

We must shun evil and seek good, and Allah's Creation is wide enough to enable us to do that, provided we have the will, the patience, and the constancy to do it.

It may be that we have to change our village or city or country; or that we have to change our neighbors or associates; or to change our habits or our hours, our position in life or our human relationships, or our callings. Our integrity before Allah is more important than any of these things, and we must be prepared for exile (or Hijrah) in all these senses. For the means with

which Allah provides us for His service are ample, and it is our own fault if we fail.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ...

57. Every soul shall have a taste of death:

C3490. Cf. 3:185, n. 491, and 21:35 and n. 2697.

Death is the separation of the soul from the body when the latter perishes. We should not be afraid of death, for it only brings us back to Allah.

The various kinds of Hijrah or exile, physical and spiritual, mentioned in the last note, are also modes of death in a sense:

what is there to fear in them?

...ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ (٥٧)

in the end to Us shall ye be brought back.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا...

58. But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness -- to them shall We give a Home in Heaven, -- lofty mansions

C3491. The goodly homes mentioned in 16:41 referred to this life, but it was stated there that the reward of the Hereafter would be greater.

Here the simile of the Home is referred to Heaven:

- it will be beautiful;
- it will be picturesque, with the sight and sound of softly-murmuring streams;
- it will be lofty or sublime; and
- it will be eternal.

... تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ...

beneath which flow rivers, -- to dwell therein for aye; --

... نِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (٥٨)

an excellent reward for those who do (good)! --

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٥٩)

59. Those who persevere in patience, and put their trust in their Lord and Cherisher.

وَكَايِنٍ مِّن دَابَّةٍ لَّا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا ...

60. How many are the creatures that carry not their own sustenance?

C3492. If we look at the animal creation, we see that many creatures seem almost helpless to find their own food or sustain their full life, being surrounded by many enemies. Yet in the Plan of Allah they find full sustenance and protection. So does man. Man's needs-as well as helplessness-are by many degrees greater. Yet Allah provides for him as for all His creatures.

Allah listens to the wish and cry of all His creatures and He knows their needs and how to provide for them all. Man should not therefore hesitate to suffer exile or persecution in Allah's Cause.

... اللَّهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ...

It is Allah Who feeds (both) them and you:

... وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦٠)

for He hears and knows (all things).

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ ...

61. If indeed thou ask them

C3493. Cf. 23:84-89.

"Them" in both passages refers to the sort of inconsistent men who acknowledge the power of Allah, but are deluded by false notions into disobedience of Allah's Law and disregard of Allah's Message.

... مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ...

who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon (to His Law);

C3494. Cf. 13:2, and 23:85.

The perfect order and law in Allah's universe should be Signs to man's intelligence to get his own will into tune with Allah's Will; for only so can he hope to attain his full development.

...لَيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ...

they will certainly reply, "Allah."

...فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٦١)

How are they then deluded away (from the truth)?

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ...

62. Allah enlarges the sustenance (which He gives) to whichever of His servants He pleases; and He (similarly) grants by (strict) measure, (as He pleases):

C3495. Cf. 13:26.

Unequal gifts are not a sign of chaos in Allah's universe. Allah provides for all according to their real needs and their most suitable requirements, according to His perfect knowledge and understanding of His creatures.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٦٢)

for Allah has full knowledge of all things.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً...

63. And if indeed thou ask them who it is that sends down rain from the sky,

C3496. In 29:61 above, the point was that there is a certain type of man that realizes the power of Allah, but yet goes after false ideas and false worship.

Here the point is that there is another type of man to whom the goodness of Allah is made clear by rain and the gifts of nature and who realizes the daily, seasonal, and secular changes which evidence Allah's goodness in giving us life (physical and Spiritual) and reviving us after we seem to die,-and who yet fails to draw the right conclusion from it and to make his own life true and beautiful, so that when his period of probation in this

transitory life is ended, he can enter into his eternal heritage.

Having come so far, such men fail at the crucial stage. At that stage they ought to have praised and glorified Allah and accepted His Grace and Light, but they show their want of true understanding by failing to profit by Allah's gifts.

...فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا...

and gives life therewith to the earth after its death,

...لَيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ...

they will certainly reply, "Allah!"

...قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ...

Say, "Praise be to Allah!"

...بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٦٣)

But most of them understand not.

Section 7

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ...

64. What is the life of this world but amusement and play?

C3497. Cf. 6:32.

Amusement and play have no lasting significance except as preparing us for the serious work of life. So this life is but an interlude, a preparation for the real Life, which is in the Hereafter.

This world's vanities are therefore to be taken for what they are worth; but they are not to be allowed to deflect our minds from the requirements of the inner life that really matters.

...وَأِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ ...

But verily the Home in the Hereafter, that is life indeed,

...لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٦٤)

if they but knew.

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ...

65. Now, if they embark on a boat, they call on Allah, making their devotion sincerely (and exclusively) to Him;

C3498. Cf. 7:29, where I have slightly varied the English phrase according to the context.

It was shown in the last verse that the life of this world is fleeting, and that the true life-that which matters-is the Life in the Hereafter.

In contrast with this inner reality is now shown the shortsighted folly of man. Where he faces the physical dangers of the sea, which are but an incident in the phenomenal world, he actually and sincerely seeks the help of Allah; but when he is safely back on land, he forgets the Realities, plunges into the pleasures and vanities of fleeting phenomena, and his devotion, which should be given exclusively to Allah, is shared by idols and vanities of his own imagination. (R).

...فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٥)

but when He had delivered them safely to (dry) land, Behold, they give a share (of their worship to others)!

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوا...

66. Disdaining ungratefully Our gifts and giving themselves up to (worldly) enjoyment!

C3499. Such folly results in the virtual rejection (even though it may not be express) of Allah and His Grace. It plunges man into the pleasures and vanities that merely delude and are bound to pass away.

This delusion, however, will come to an end when the true Reality of the Hereafter will shine forth in all its splendor.

...فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٦٦)

But soon will they know.

أولم يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا آمِنًا وَيُتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ...

67. Do they not then see that We have made a Sanctuary secure, and that men are being snatched away from all around them?

C3500. If they want evidences of their folly in the phenomenal world itself, they will see sacred Sanctuaries where Allah's Truth abides safely in the midst of the Deluge of broken hopes, disappointed ambitions and unfulfilled plans in the world around.

The immediate reference was to the Sanctuary of Makkah and the gradual progress of Islam in the districts surrounding the Quraysh in the midst of the trying Makkan period.

But the general application holds good for all times and places.

...أَفِيَالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ (٦٧)

Then, do they believe in that which is vain, and reject the Grace of Allah?

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ...

68. And who does more wrong than he who invents a lie against Allah or rejects the Truth when it reaches Him?

C3501. Cf. 6:21.

Even from a worldly point of view those who reject Allah's Truth are at a disadvantage. But those who deliberately invent lies and set up false gods for worship, what punishment can we imagine for them except a permanent deprivation of Allah's grace, and a home in Hell? (R).

...أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ (٦٨)

Is there not a home in Hell for those who reject Faith?

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا ...

69. And those who strive in Our (Cause),

C3502. "Strive in Our Cause." All that man can do is to strive in Allah's Cause. As soon as he strives with

might and main, with constancy and determination, the Light and Mercy of Allah come to meet him.

- They cure his defects and shortcomings.
- They provide him with the means by which he can raise himself above himself.
- They point out the Way, and all the Paths leading up to it.

See next note.

... فَيُنَّا لَنَهْدِيَهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ...

We will certainly guide them to Our Paths:

C3503. The Way of Allah (*sirat-ul-Mustaqim*) is a Straight Way. But men have strayed from it in all directions. And there are numerous Paths by which they can get back to the Right Way, the way in which the purity of their own nature, and the Will and Mercy of Allah require them to Walk.

All these numerous Paths become open to them if once they give their hearts in keeping to Allah and work in right Endeavour (*Jihad*) with all their mind and soul and resources. Thus will they get out of the Spider's web of this frail world and attain to eternal Bliss in the fulfillment of their true Destiny.

... وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٦٩)

for verily Allah is with those who do right.