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THE  
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER  
CHAPTER 85  
SURAH AL-BURUJ

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By  
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**HOLY QURAN**

**CHAPTER**

**085**

**SURAH AL-BURUJ**

*ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI*

**Introduction and Summary**

This is one of the earlier Makkan Surahs, chronologically cognate with S.91. The subject matter is the persecution of Allah's votaries. Allah watches over His own, and will deal with the enemies of Truth as He dealt with them in the past.

**C.265 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

*Woe to those who prosecute Truth!  
They are being watched by mighty Eyes;  
They will have no answer when the Judgement comes;*

*And a clear Record will witness against them.  
Are they cruel to men because of their Faith?  
The Fire they use will be turned against them.  
For Allah is strong, and will subdue  
The mightiest foes. Be warned, and learn  
From His gracious Message, preserved through all Time!*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَالسَّمَاءِ ...

1. By the Sky, (displaying) ...

**C6051.** Here is an appeal to three Signs in verses 1-3, and the substantive proposition is in verses 4-8, a denunciation of wicked persecutors of the votaries of Allah, persecutors who burnt righteous men for their Faith. The three Signs are:

1. the Glorious Sky, with the broad belt of the Constellations marking the twelve Signs of the Zodiac;
2. the Day of Judgment, when all evil will be punished; and
3. certain Persons that will be witnesses, and certain Persons or things that will be the subjects of the witness.

See the notes following.

... ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ (١)

...the Zodiacal Signs;

**C6052.** See n. 1950 to 15:16.

The Stars of the Zodiac as well as of other Constellations are like the eyes of the Night. It may be that crimes are committed in the darkness of the night. But countless



eyes are watching all the time, and every author of evil will be brought to book.

### وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ (٢)

#### 2. By the promised Day (of Judgment);

**C6053.** The Day of Judgment, when the Sinner will have to give an account of every deed, open or hidden, is not merely a matter of speculation. It is definitely promised in revelation, and will inevitably come to pass. Woe then to the Sinners for their crimes.

### وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ (٣)

#### 3. By one that witnesses, and the subject of the witness --

**C6054.** The literal meaning is clear, but its metaphorical application has been explained in a variety of ways by different Commentators. The words are fairly comprehensive, and should, I think, be understood in connection with Judgment. There the Witnesses may be:

Allah Himself (3:81, and 10:61);

the Prophets (3:81);

the Recording Angels (50:21);

the Sinner's own misused limbs (24:24);

his record of deeds (17:14); or

the Sinner himself (17:14).

The subject of the witness may be the deed or crime, or the Sinner against whom the testimony cries out.

The appeal to these things means that the Sinner cannot possibly escape the consequences of his crime. He should repent, seek Allah's Mercy, and amend his life.

### قَتِيلَ أَصْحَابِ الْأَخْدُودِ (٤)

#### 4. Woe to the makers of the pit (of Fire),

**C6055.** Who were the makers of the pit of fire in which they burn people for their Faith?

The words are perfectly general, and we need not search for particular names, except by way of illustration.

In ancient history, and in Medieval Europe, many lives were sacrificed at the stake because the victims did not conform to the established religion.

In Arab tradition there is the story of Abraham: Nimrud tries to burn him to death, but on account of Abraham's Faith, the fire became "a means of safety for Abraham": 21:69, and n. 2725.

Another case cited is that of Dhu Nuwas, the last Himyarite King of Yemen, by religion a Jew, who persecuted the Christians of Najran and is said to have burnt them to death. He seems to have lived in the latter half of the sixth Christian century, in the generation immediately preceding the Prophet's birth in 570 A.D.

While the words are perfectly general, a reference is suggested to the persecution to which the early Muslims were subjected by the Pagan Quraish. Among other cruelties, they were stripped, and their skins were exposed to the burning rays of the Arabian summer sun. (R).

النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُودِ (٥)

5. Fire supplied (abundantly) with Fuel:

إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ (٦)

6. Behold! **they sat** over against the (fire).

**C6056.** The persecutors sat calmly to gloat over the agonies of their victims in the well-fed fire.

وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ (٧)

7. And they witnessed (all) that they were doing against the Believers.

وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَن يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ (٨)

8. And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah,

Exalted in Power, worthy of all Praise! --

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٩)

9. Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! and Allah is Witness to all things.

**C6057.** It is suggested that the persecutors will richly deserve to be punished in the Fire of Hell. That Punishment will be far more real and lasting than the undeserved cruelty which they inflicted on men for their Faith in the One True God.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ جَهَنَّمَ ...

10. Those who persecute (or draw into temptation) the Believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the Penalty of Hell:

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ (١٠)

they will have the Penalty of the Burning Fire.

**C6058.** The "penalty of the Burning Fire" has been mentioned here in addition to the "Penalty of Hell".

This assumes a special significance in the background of the cruel burning of the Faithful by the "makers of the pit". These criminals would be duly retributed by being subjected to a similar kind of suffering that they had caused their innocent victims. [Eds.]

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي ...

11. For those who believe and do righteous deeds, will be Gardens,

**C6059.** Cf. 5:119, 972 and 22:23.

... مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ (١١)

Beneath which Rivers flow: that is the great Salvation, (the fulfillment of all desires).

**C6060.** Cf. 5:119, n. 833.

إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ (١٢)

12. Truly strong is the Grip (and Power) of thy Lord.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ يُبْدِئُ ...

13. It is He Who creates from the very beginning,

**C6061.** For the various words for "Creation" and the ideas implied in them, see n. 120 to 2:117.

... وَيُعِيدُ (١٣)

and He can restore (life).

وَهُوَ الْعَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ (١٤)

14. And He is the Oft-Forgiving, Full of loving-kindness,

دُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ (١٥)

15. Lord of the Throne of Glory,

فَعَّالٌ ...

16. Doer (without let).

**C6062.** Allah's Will is itself the Word and the Deed. There is no interval between them. He does not change His mind. No circumstances whatever can come between His Will and the execution thereof. Such are His Power and His Glory.

Compare it with that of men, described in the next two verses.

... لِّمَا يُرِيدُ (١٦)

of all that He intends.

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ (١٧)

17. Has the story reached thee, of the Forces --



**C6063.** In contrast to the real, all-embracing, and eternal power of Allah, what are the forces of man at their best?

Two examples are mentioned.

1. Pharaoh was a proud monarch of a powerful kingdom, with resources and organisation, material, moral, and intellectual, as good as any in the world. When he pitted himself against Allah's Prophet, he and his forces were destroyed, See 79;15-26.
2. The Thamud were great builders, and had a high standard of material civilization. But they defied the law of Allah and perished. See 7:73-79, and n. 1043.

فِرْعَوْنَ وَتَمُودَ (١٨)

18. Of Pharaoh and the Thamud?

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ (١٩)

19. And yet the Unbelievers (persist) in rejecting (the Truth)!

**C6064.** In spite of the great examples of the past, by which human might and skill were shown to have availed nothing when the law of Allah was broken, the unbelievers persist (in all ages) in defying that law. But Allah will know how to deal with them.

وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ مُحِيطٌ (٢٠)

20. But Allah doth encompass them from behind!

**C6065.** Allah encompasses every thing. But the wicked will find themselves defeated not only in conditions that they foresee, but from all sorts of unexpected directions, perhaps from behind them, i.e., from the very people or circumstances which in their blindness they despised or thought of as helping them.

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ (٢١)

21. Nay, this is a Glorious Quran,



في لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ (٢٢)

22. (Inscribed) in a Tablet Preserved!

**C6066.** "Inscribed in a Tablet Preserved", i.e. Allah's Message is not ephemeral. It is eternal.

The "Tablet" is "preserved" or guarded from corruption: 15:9: for Allah's Message must endure for ever.

That Message is the "Mother of the book": see n. 347 to 3:7. (R).