

Part 11 Surah 10 Yunus Verses 101-109

Say: 'Consider all that there is in the heavens and the earth.' But of what benefit could all signs and warnings be to people who will not believe? (101)

What are they waiting for except a repetition of the days [of calamity] experienced by those who have gone before them? Say: 'Wait, then, if you will. I am also waiting.' (102)

Thereupon, We save Our messengers and those who believe. Thus have We willed it upon Ourselves: We save those who believe. (103)

Say: 'Mankind, if you are still in doubt as to what my faith is, then [know that] I do not worship those whom you worship beside God, but I worship God alone who will cause all of you to die. I have been commanded to be one of those who believe. (104)

And adhere exclusively and sincerely to the true faith, and do not be one of those who associate partners with God. (105)

Do not invoke, instead of God, anything that can neither benefit nor harm you. For if you do, you will surely be among the wrongdoers.' (106)

Should God afflict you with any hardship, none other than He can remove it; and if He wills any good for you, none can withhold His bounty. He bestows it on whomsoever He wills. He is truly Forgiving, truly Merciful. (107)

Say: 'Mankind, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whoever chooses to follow the true guidance, does so for his own good; and whoever chooses to go astray, does so at his own peril. I am not responsible for your conduct.' (108)

Follow whatever is revealed to you, and be patient in adversity, until God shall give His judgement. He is the best of all judges. (109)

Minds Shut to All Evidence

Before we move further we need to reflect briefly on the verse that says: "Say: 'Consider all that there is in the heavens and the earth.' But of what benefit could all signs and warnings be to people who will not believe?" (101)

The community which was the first to be addressed by the Qur'an had very little scientific knowledge of what exists in the heavens and earth. But the fact is that human nature communicates with the universe in which we live in a language that is both rich and subtle at the same time. When human nature is alert and receptive, the universe has much to tell it and it listens carefully!

The Qur'anic approach to the formulation of an Islamic concept in human consciousness makes use of what exists in the heavens and earth. It derives

inspiration from the universe, and directs the human faculties of vision, hearing, perception and understanding to its discourse, without trying to disturb the balance and harmony that exist in the universe. It does not make of the universe a deity directing human life, as narrow-minded materialists claim with their 'scientific socialism'. True science and knowledge have nothing to do with all their nonsense!

Reflection on what exists in the heavens and earth gives the human heart and mind a wealth of feelings, responses and influences, as well as meaningful interaction with the universe. All this helps man to be receptive to everything in the universe that points to God's existence, majesty, power, planning, wisdom and perfect knowledge...

With the passage of time, human knowledge of the universe increases. A human being who sees God's light and follows His guidance benefits greatly from increased knowledge. He is better able to know the universe and interact with it. He joins the universe in glorifying God, for: "There is nothing that exists but celebrates His praises, although you may not understand their praises." (17: 44) Only a person whose heart nurtures its bond with God understands such praises. When human knowledge is devoid of the light of faith, it increases human misery as it leads people further away from God and deprives them of the happiness that comes with faith!

"But of what benefit could all signs and warnings be to people who will not believe?" (101)

What is the benefit of signs and warnings when hearts are hardened, minds are shut, receptive faculties are left idle and the whole human being is isolated from the universe, unable to listen to its glorification of God?

The Qur'anic method of explaining the nature of God shows the universe and life generally as a great exhibition in which the truth of God's existence is seen most vividly through its extensive action. Its presence overwhelms all human faculties. This method does not make of God's existence a topic for debate. Indeed the way the Qur'an looks at the universe and what we see in it fills our hearts with the fact of God's existence so as to leave no room for arguing about it. The Qur'an speaks directly of the results of this existence in the whole universe, and its influence on human conscience and human life in general.

In its method, the Qur'an relies on a basic element in the make up of human beings. After all, it is God who has created man and He knows best what He has created: "It is We who have created man, and We know the promptings of his soul." (50: 16) There is a basic need in human nature to have faith and to believe in a deity. In fact, when human nature is uncorrupted, it experiences a strong inner feeling directing it towards belief in a single God. The purpose of true faith is not to

initiate this need to believe in God. That feeling is basic to human nature. True faith seeks to put man's concept of God on a proper footing, and to make the true God, who is the only deity in the universe, known to man, with all His attributes. It is to know God properly, not to establish His existence, that the true faith works. For it also aims to make man aware of the effects on human life of God's existence, i.e. His Lordship and Sovereignty. Indeed the mere doubt of God's existence, let alone denying it altogether, is indicative of an imbalance in human nature, and a malfunctioning of its faculties of perception. Such malfunctioning is not rectified by argument and logic.

This universe knows God, believes in Him and submits itself to Him. Every living thing in it celebrates God's praises, except for a few humans. Mankind lives in this universe where the echoes of faith in God and submission to Him are heard everywhere, as are God's praises and glorification. Therefore, someone whose nature does not perceive all this is one whose natural qualities of perception are not functioning properly. Argument is not the proper way to address such a heart and mind. The correct way is to try to alert man's faculties of perception, and awaken his nature so that it may resume its proper function.

Drawing man's attention, as well as his heart and mind, to what exists in the heavens and the earth is one of the methods the Qur'an uses to awaken human hearts.

Those unbelievers among the pagan Arabs, and others who adopt a similar attitude, neither responded nor reflected. What were they waiting for, then? God's law will always remain in operation. The destiny of those who deny the truth is well known, and they cannot expect that God's law will not apply to them. God may give them a chance, and may withhold their punishment for a while, but those who persist in denying Him will suffer in the end: "What are they waiting for except a repetition of the days [of calamity] experienced by those who have gone before them? Say: 'Wait, then, if you will. I am also waiting.'" (102) This is a threat that puts an end to all argument while it fills hearts with fear.

This passage is then concluded with the final outcome of every message and every opposition to it, making plain the lessons of the histories reported in the surah: "We save Our messengers and those who believe. Thus have We willed it upon Ourselves: We save those who believe." (103)

This is the promise God has made: the seed of faith will retain its healthy function. It will be safe after every type of persecution to which its advocates are subjected. It will survive every denial and every torture inflicted on its advocates. The stories related in this surah, and elsewhere in the Qur'an confirm this. Hence, the believers should be reassured...

104-109 Clarification of Issues

Say: 'Mankind, if you are still in doubt as to what my faith is, then [know that] I do not worship those whom you worship beside God, but I worship God alone who will cause all of you to die. I have been commanded to be one of those who believe. (104)

And adhere exclusively and sincerely to the true faith, and do not be one of those who associate partners with God. (105)

Do not invoke, instead of God, anything that can neither benefit nor harm you. For if you do, you will surely be among the wrongdoers.' (106)

Should God afflict you with any hardship, none other than He can remove it; and if He wills any good for you, none can withhold His bounty. He bestows it on whomsoever He wills. He is truly Forgiving, truly Merciful. (107)

Say: 'Mankind, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whoever chooses to follow the true guidance, does so for his own good; and whoever chooses to go astray, does so at his own peril. I am not responsible for your conduct.' (108)

Follow whatever is revealed to you, and be patient in adversity, until God shall give His judgement. He is the best of all judges. (109)

Preview

In this its final passage, the surah brings to an end our sojourn of the universe, and reflection on aspects of human constitution, and the realms of feeling and thought. It is as if we are returning home with a wealth of riches, as also looking for relaxation after a long journey.

The surah has dwelt on the central theme of faith with its main issues: the oneness of God, who has no partners and who admits no mediation or mediators; His absolute sovereignty and overpowering will; the laws He has set in operation which no one can amend or change; the truth of revelation which makes the true faith clear to all; the resurrection and the reckoning and reward on the Day of Judgement.

All these issues have been clarified with historical accounts and illustrated with fine examples and analogies. Now they are summed up in a short passage. The Prophet is instructed to declare these principles to mankind, making clear that he will continue along the line he has followed until God has judged between him and those who oppose him. He is indeed the best of all judges.

Perseverance until Final Judgement

"Say: 'Mankind, if you are still in doubt as to what my faith is, then [know that] I do not worship those whom you worship beside God, but I worship God alone who will cause all of you to die. I have been commanded to be one of those who believe.'" (104)

Here the Prophet is told to address all mankind, although the address is meant in the first instance to the Arabs in Makkah who believed in a multiplicity of deities. He tells them that if they are in doubt about the truth of the faith to which he is calling, then their doubts will never turn him away from the truth which he is preaching. He is not going to change his way so as to worship their false gods. Instead, *"I worship God alone who will cause all of you to die"* (104) He is the One who determines everyone's span of life and the time when everyone dies. Emphasizing this aspect here is significant because it reminds them of God's power over them. He is the One to be worshipped, not those false deities which cannot give life or cause death. He is also told to make his own instructions plain to them: *"I have been commanded to be one of those who believe."* (104) He fulfils his orders as they are given to him, without going beyond his limits.

"And adhere exclusively and sincerely to the true faith, and do not be one of those who associate partners with God." (105) Here the style changes into a direct order, which is given in such a way that it sounds as if it is being given now in front of them all. This is far more effective. *"Adhere exclusively and sincerely to the true faith,"* turning to God alone and accepting what He has revealed to you as the complete truth. *"And do not be one of those who associate partners with God."* (105) This re-emphasizes the meaning of sincere and exclusive adherence to the true faith and being one of the believers. The emphasis takes the form of a direct prohibition of associating partners with God which follows a direct order to believe. *"Do not invoke, instead of God, anything that can neither benefit nor harm you. For if you do, you will surely be among the wrongdoers."* (106) Do not appeal to any of those beings whom the unbelievers associate with God, for they cannot bring you any benefit or cause you any harm. If you do appeal to them, you will put yourself among the wrongdoers, because God is fair to all, and He does not show any favouritism to anyone.

"Should God afflict you with any hardship, none other than He can remove it; and if He wills any good for you, none can withhold His bounty. He bestows it on whomsoever He wills. He is truly Forgiving, truly Merciful." (107) God has set certain laws in operation whereby harm and benefit inevitably affect human beings when they expose themselves to their causes. So if harm afflicts you through the operation of God's laws, then no one can remove that harm unless you follow the right course of action. This means that you should cease to expose yourself to the causes of harm if you are

aware of them or appeal to God to make them known to you if you do not know them. Similarly, if you follow His laws which generate benefit for you, no one will be able to stop that benefit. It will always be granted by God to those of His servants who decide to follow the means to achieve it. This is His general will and *modus operandi*. Furthermore, *"He is truly Forgiving, truly Merciful."* (107) He forgives past sins when one sincerely repents. Furthermore, He is merciful to His servants, forgiving them their errors and increasing their reward for their good deeds when they adhere to the true path.

This is the sum of faith, as illustrated in this *surah*. The Prophet is ordered to declare it to mankind, and the order is given to him as though he is standing in front of them. The order is directed at each individual in person. It is a remarkably inspiring and effective method. The Prophet makes his declaration, facing up to material power, numerical strength, ignorant beliefs and a long history of associating partners with God. He makes his declaration, as commanded by God, with force and maximum clarity, when he has only a small number of followers in Makkah where the power is decidedly with the unbelievers. Thus he fulfils his duty towards the truth he is advocating, showing his unshakeable certainty in faith.

This brings us to the final declaration to all people: *"Say: Mankind, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whoever chooses to follow the true guidance, does so for his own good; and whoever chooses to go astray, does so at his own peril. I am not responsible for your conduct."* (108) It is the final, decisive word which makes it clear that everyone chooses his or her way as they please after the truth has been given to all by their Lord. Hence, *"whoever chooses to follow the true guidance, does so for his own good; and whoever chooses to go astray, does so at his own peril."* (108) The Prophet is not required to force people to follow divine guidance. He only conveys to them his message and leaves them to choose freely, making it clear that everyone will bear the results of his or her choice.

The final address to the Prophet tells him to follow what he has been instructed and to persevere until God has made His judgement: *"Follow whatever is revealed to you, and be patient in adversity, until God shall give His judgement. He is the best of all judges."* (109) The conclusion is in perfect harmony with the opening of the *surah* and its contents, following the unique method of the Qur'an.