

CONDITION OF THE UMMAH

PART 9

WHAT IS GOING ON?

WHERE IS THE TRUTH?

September 26th 2001

Life is full of unexpected twists and turns. This volatile nature of life is the test in itself. People's realities are manifested by the way they behave when faced with the difficulties and joys of life. What makes one person more dignified or more foolish than the other is how he behaves when unanticipated events occur. What makes Muslims different from others is the advantage they have of knowing what exactly is going on—whether personally or socially; and how to behave in these situations.

So how do Muslims know what is going on?

They know through the book of Allah SWT, Al-Qur'an. Allah SWT did not leave any details out of the Qur'an. He SWT says:

Nothing have we omitted from the book... (Al-An'am 6:38)

Qur'an holds the answer for every situation and occasion, whether joyful or sad. If we want to know exactly what is going on around us, all we have to do is turn to it.

STRUCTURE OF THE QUR'AN

Qur'an was revealed over the period of twenty-three years—first thirteen years in Makkah and the last ten years in Medina. Two-thirds of the Qur'an was revealed in Makkah which mainly focused on two topics—building faith and establishing brotherhood. Whereas, one-third of the Qur'an was revealed in Medina and consisted of the verses which contain the rules and regulations of Islam.

All the chapters (*surah*) starting with the names of the messengers and prophets were revealed approximately between the ninth and the eleventh year in Makkah. They were sent to calm Rasul Allah SAW and to inform him that what is happening to him is nothing new, because it has happened to the people before him.

HOW TO READ THE CHAPTERS

These *surahs* or chapters have messages in the beginning and messages at the end. Usually the messages at the beginning address all mankind, and the messages at the end of the *surah* specifically address the believers.

There are many profound messages in the Qur'an and if we systematically go through them, we will understand exactly what is going on.

From this point on you will be reading the words of Allah SWT with minor explanations. The more humbled you are towards Allah SWT, the more He SWT will allow you to comprehend and will clarify your understanding.

Allah SWT says:

[The time of] their account has approached for the people, while they are in heedlessness turning away.

No mention comes to them anew from their Lord except that they listen to it while they are at play

With their hearts distracted. And those who do wrong conceal their private conversation, [saying], "Is this [Prophet] except a human being like you? So would you approach magic while you are aware [of it]?"

The Prophet said, "My Lord knows whatever is said throughout the heaven and earth, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing." (Al-Anbiya 21: 1—4)

Allah SWT makes it clear that there are people who are not only heedless and astray, but they deny the truth when it is presented to them! He SWT refers to their activities in life as 'play'; a term He SWT repeats over and over again in the Qur'an.

This is how Allah SWT started the *surah*, now let's look at how He ends the *surah*, this time addressing the believers:

Indeed, in this [Qur'an] is notification for a worshipping people.

And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds. (Al-Anbiya 21: 106—107)

Think about these verses very carefully. Allah SWT calls Rasul Allah SAW 'mercy to the worlds'. So when anyone gets closer to the teachings of Rasul Allah SAW and embodies them, he in fact gets closer to the mercy of Allah SWT; and the foremost teachings of Rasul Allah SAW are the way he dealt with people—his *adab* and *akhlaq*.

Say, "It is only revealed to me that your god is but one God; so will you be Muslims [in submission to Him]?"

But if they turn away, then say, "I have announced to [all of] you equally. And I know not whether near or far is that which you are promised.

Indeed, He knows what is declared of speech, and He knows what you conceal.

And I know not; perhaps it is a trial for you and enjoyment for a time."

[The Prophet] has said, "My Lord, judge [between us] in truth. And our Lord is the Most Merciful, the one whose help is sought against that which you describe." (Al-Anbiya 21:108—112)

Allah SWT starts *Surah Al-Hajj* with a reminder of the Day of Judgment:

O mankind, fear your Lord. Indeed, the convulsion of the [final] Hour is a terrible thing.

On the Day you see it every nursing mother will be distracted from that [child] she was nursing, and every pregnant woman will abort her pregnancy, and you will see the people [appearing] intoxicated while they are not intoxicated; but the punishment of Allah is severe.

And of the people is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge and follows every rebellious devil.

It has been decreed for every devil that whoever turns to him - he will misguide him and will lead him to the punishment of the Blaze.

O People, if you should be in doubt about the Resurrection, then [consider that] indeed, We created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed - that We may show you. And We settle in the wombs whom We will for a specified term, then We bring you out as a child, and then [We develop you] that you may reach your [time of] maturity. And among you is he who is taken in [early] death, and among you is he who is returned to the most decrepit [old] age so that he knows, after [once having] knowledge, nothing. And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows [something] of every beautiful kind. (Al Hajj 22:1—5)

In these verses Allah SWT has summarized the human life in its entirety from birth to death. He has given us a glimpse of different stages of life but the key reminder is of the reality of this existence, which is death. We will all die one day and will leave behind everything from this life. The message in here is clear—this life is insignificant in the eyes of Allah SWT and our time here is limited, therefore we should work diligently and relentlessly to earn Allah SWT's pleasure instead of wasting our short time here.

There are among men some who serve Allah, as it were on the verge: if good befalls them, they are therewith well content; but if a trial comes to them, they turn on their faces: they lose both this world and the Hereafter: that is loss for all to see!

They call on such deities besides Allah as can neither hurt nor profit them: that is straying far indeed (from the Way)!

(Perhaps) they call on one whose hurt is nearer than his profit: evil indeed is the patron, and evil is the companion (or help)!

Verily Allah will admit those who believe and work righteous deeds, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow: for Allah carries out that He plans.

If any think that Allah will not help him (His Messenger, in this world and the Hereafter), let him stretch out a rope to the ceiling and cut (himself) off: then let him see whether his plan will remove that which enrages (him)! (Al Hajj 22:11—15)

When the journey of our *iman* and its reality in our hearts is weak, our perspective of life becomes muddled. As long as life goes according to our liking, we remain content and happy but once accidents, disasters, diseases, loss of loved ones, or any other calamity strikes, we are unable to accept it, we lose our faith and become ungrateful. It is exactly as Allah SWT has said that *'they lose both this world and the hereafter (22:11).'* They lose this world by being miserable and they lose the hereafter by being in the state of *kufir* and *shirk*.

In this state of ingratitude and faithlessness they turn to everyone else for assistance except to the only one who is capable of helping them—Allah SWT.

That [has been commanded], and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord. And permitted to you are the grazing livestock, except what is recited to you. So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement,

Inclining [only] to Allah , not associating [anything] with Him. And he who associates with Allah - it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place.

That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts. (Al Hajj 22:30—32)

Again, the message of these verses is the same:

- value and cherish your faith, and
- do not seek support from anyone except Allah SWT.

If we do turn to others for support, we will be exhausted in vain and will not gain anything. It is because Allah has already ordained that anyone who turns to another besides Him SWT for support will never succeed. Whereas those who value their faith, Allah SWT has promised to be for them, to elevate them, to support them in this life, and be pleased with them in the hereafter.

Note: All these verses have a common idea—warning against having any partners with Allah SWT or *shirk*. Many so called Muslims believe they are free from *shirk* but in reality it is the opposite. They are so deeply indulged in it that they are not even aware of it. This heedlessness is caused by lack of understanding, shallowness of faith, and overwhelming belief and reliance on materialistic means.

To those whose hearts when Allah is mentioned, are filled with fear, who show patient perseverance over their afflictions, keep up regular prayer, and spend (in charity) out of what We have bestowed upon them. (Al-Hajj 22:35)

Verily Allah will defend (from ill) those who believe: verily, Allah loves not any that is a traitor to faith, or show ingratitude.

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged;-and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid;-

(They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right,-(for no cause) except that they say, “our Lord is Allah...Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly aid those who aid his (cause);-for verily Allah is full of Strength, Exalted in Might, (able to enforce His Will).

(They are) those who, if We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong; with Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs. (Al Hajj 22:38—41)

Allah SWT has promised to grant victory to those who fulfill the conditions mentioned in the verses.

Note: Since Allah SWT never breaks His promise, if we are not supported by Him SWT and do not see His promises being fulfilled, meaning there is something wrong with us and our faith.

Now Allah SWT consoles His beloved Prophet SAW saying:

If they treat your (mission) as false, so did the peoples before them (with their prophets),-the People of Noah, and 'Ad and Thamud;

Those of Abraham and Lut;

And the Companions of the Madyan People; and Moses was rejected (in the same way). But I granted respite to the Unbelievers, and (only) after that did I punish them: but how (terrible) was my rejection (of them)!

How many populations have We destroyed, which were given to wrong-doing? They tumbled down on their roofs. And how many wells are lying idle and neglected, and castles lofty and well-built?

Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts. (Al Hajj 22:42—46)

Read the following verses very carefully and a lot of what is going on in this world will begin to make sense:

And for those who reject Faith and deny our Signs, there will be a humiliating Punishment.

Those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, and are then slain or die,-On them will Allah bestow verily a goodly Provision: Truly Allah is He Who bestows the best provision.

Verily He will admit them to a place with which they shall be well pleased: for Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.

That (is so). And if one has retaliated to no greater extent than the injury he received, and is again set upon inordinately, Allah will help him: for Allah is One that blots out (sins) and forgives (again and again).

That is because Allah merges night into day, and He merges day into night, and verily it is Allah Who hears and sees (all things.)

That is because Allah-He is the Reality; and those besides Him whom they invoke,-they are but vain Falsehood: verily Allah is He, Most High, Most Great.

See you not that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and forthwith the earth becomes clothed with green? For Allah is He Who understands the finest mysteries, and is well-acquainted (with them).

To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: for verily Allah,-He is free of all wants, Worthy of all Praise. (Al Hajj 22:57—64)

Allah SWT ends the *surah* with a reminder of previous nations such as Nuh, 'Aad and Thamud and how He destroyed them. They were arrogant people who built magnificent buildings and thought that they were powerful and in control. Allah SWT destroyed them while they were in this state of disbelief; and He SWT will do the same to anyone who follows their footsteps.

As a Muslim, what is the message for me?

The message is that everything in this life is temporary and nothing will last forever. Whatever goes up must come down. The question is, do we have the quality and are we prepared for the time Allah SWT will bring down the oppressor?

LIVING THE QUR'AN

Qur'an mentions only three kinds of people—believers, disbelievers and hypocrites; there is no fourth. We all belong to one of these categories. If we read Qur'an with vision and *iman*, we would not need an explanation. We will know who we are.

Believers have defined characteristics and they remain busy carrying out certain actions. Disbelievers also have clear characteristics and behavior patterns which they adhere to. However those who claim belief but their actions are not of the believers, they are in the worst category; they are the hypocrites who will face the most severe form of punishment *wana'oodho billah*.

HONESTLY, WHO ARE WE?

Let's analyze our situation...

Allah SWT makes every soul responsible for his actions by saying:

And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord –

It is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip [others] therein.

And We charge no soul except [with that within] its capacity, and with Us is a record which speaks with truth; and they will not be wronged.

But their hearts are covered with confusion over this, and they have [evil] deeds besides disbelief which they are doing...(Al Muminoon 23:60—63)

Allah SWT is referring to those whose actions do not match the state of their hearts. These are the hypocrites! Today, we claim to be people of *akhirah* but all our actions are for *duniya*...how can we explain this?

Allah SWT says:

And We had gripped them with suffering [as a warning], but they did not yield to their Lord, nor did they humbly supplicate, [and will continue thus]

So if we do not do '*tadarr'u*' (cry and supplicate to Allah SWT), He will

Until when We have opened before them a door of severe punishment, immediately they will be therein in despair. (Al Muminoon 23:76—77)

Just look at the following *ayah* and ask yourself, isn't that our condition today?

Say, "In whose hand is the realm of all things - and He protects while none can protect against Him - if you should know?"

They will say, "[All belongs] to Allah ." Say, "Then how are you deluded?" (Al Muminoon 23:88—89)

Today we are doing exactly the opposite of what believers do. We are afraid of everything and everyone more than Allah SWT. This is *shirk*! Anytime we have love, fear, reliance, or gratitude for someone more than for Allah SWT is *shirk*. So not only do we carry hypocrisy, we also have deep rooted *shirk* in our hearts.

That is why the most important action now is to build our *iman*, *yaqeen* and the truthfulness of Islam in us. This is the only way we will be saved from the wrath of Allah SWT!

WHERE ARE WE GOING WRONG—MESSAGES FROM ALLAH SWT

We have certainly sent down distinct verses. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path. (An-Nur 24:46)

Never think that the disbelievers are causing failure [to Allah] upon the earth. Their refuge will be the Fire - and how wretched the destination. (An-Nur 24:57)

And We did not send before you, [O Muhammad], any of the messengers except that they ate food and walked in the markets. And We have made some of you [people] as trial for others - will you have patience? And ever is your Lord, Seeing. (Al Furqan 24:20)

And the Day the wrongdoer will bite on his hands [in regret] he will say, "Oh, I wish I had taken with the Messenger a way. (Al Furqan 24:27)

And thus have We made for every prophet an enemy from among the criminals. But sufficient is your Lord as a guide and a helper. (Al Furqan 24:31)

Have you seen the one who takes as his god his own desire? Then would you be responsible for him? (Al Furqan 24:43)

The following *ayahs* lay out a complete sequence of how Allah SWT gives *da'wah* to people. They also carry the warning of punishment which inflicts them when they reject the *da'wah*.

When their brother Hud said to them, "Will you not fear Allah ?

Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger.

So fear Allah and obey me.

And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds.

Do you construct on every elevation a sign, amusing yourselves,

And take for yourselves palaces and fortresses that you might abide eternally?

And when you strike, you strike as tyrants.

So fear Allah and obey me.

And fear He who provided you with that which you know,

*Provided you with grazing livestock and children
 And gardens and springs.
 Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day."
 They said, "It is all the same to us whether you advise or are not of the advisors.
 This is not but the custom of the former peoples,
 And we are not to be punished."
 And they denied him, so We destroyed them. Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were
 not to be believers.
 And indeed, your Lord - He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful. (Ash Shu'ara 26:126—140)*

Again Allah SWT reminds us of His *sunnah*:
 Allah SWT sends the message →
 people hear →
 they disregard it →
 Allah SWT sends His signs¹ and then provides some relief from it →
 people stay asleep and then the severe torture comes, from which there is no reprieve!
*Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger.
 So fear Allah and obey me.
 And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds.
 Will you be left in what is here, secure [from death],
 Within gardens and springs
 And fields of crops and palm trees with softened fruit?
 And you carve out of the mountains, homes, with skill.
 So fear Allah and obey me.
 And do not obey the order of the transgressors,
 Who cause corruption in the land and do not amend."
 They said, "You are only of those affected by magic. (Ash Shu'ara 26:143—153)*

Very clear messages from Allah SWT if we follow His *sunan* (practices):
*And even if We had revealed it to one among the foreigners
 And he had recited it to them [perfectly], they would [still] not have been believers in it.
 Thus have We inserted disbelief into the hearts of the criminals.
 They will not believe in it until they see the painful punishment.*

¹ The signs of Allah SWT include calamities, hardships, diseases, oppression, aggression, war, natural disasters and other forms of difficulties.

And it will come to them suddenly while they perceive [it] not.

And they will say, "May we be reprieved?"

So for Our punishment are they impatient?

Then have you considered if We gave them enjoyment for years

And then there came to them that which they were promised?

They would not be availed by the enjoyment with which they were provided.

And We did not destroy any city except that it had warners

As a reminder; and never have We been unjust. (Ash Shu'ara 26:198—209)

TIME FOR ACTION

What do you think is going on with us?

Are we heeding to the message and changing our condition?

Isn't it dangerous that our habits, customs, attitudes, lifestyle are not changing even now after we see the upheaval around us?

We are in such deep heedlessness that we are not prepared to carry out any actions. We might be willing to hear, listen, and talk but not do. This defeats the purpose because it's solely our actions which can bring the change and improve our condition.

Allah SWT has a purpose and reason for everything, even tragedies. He causes tragedies in order to break our routines and to force us to think, reflect and question. Calamities force people to remember their mortality and turn to God. Shaytaan on the other hand enslaves people through routines. Once people fall in the cycle of routine they keep going until they die. This is the opposite of what Allah SWT wants. He SWT does not want from us. He SWT does not want us to have routine of *duniya*, instead He wants us to engage in the routine of *akhirah*. Majority of Muslims are stuck in their routine of *duniya* to the point they are not even aware of it, let alone think about breaking free from it. Unfortunately many knowledgeable people have also succumbed to this heedlessness and slavery to routine.

I am anxious for Muslims, not from their enemies but from Allah SWT. If we remain heedless, situation will get tougher. Imagine if we lose our jobs, our wealth, our families, are homeless, and on top of that we have no *iman* and *yaqeen*, what will sustain us then? How will we cope with the difficulties? How will we survive? We cannot afford to be selfish and negligent any longer. It is time to take action!

We can start out by taking the following steps:

- Do a lot of dhikr (remembrance of Allah)
- Have the zeal to do something for Allah SWT. Cry and ask Allah SWT to accept you.
- Beg Allah SWT to save you from being heedless.
- Beg Allah SWT for *baseerah* (vision).
- Ask Allah SWT to not let you be caught up in routine and to protect you from being enslaved to *duniya*.
- Beg Allah SWT for sincerity.

- Sacrifice from your income and spend regularly for *da'wah*.

These actions have to be performed with sincerity. At this point, Allah SWT will test us to see how truthful we are.

But if our time, routine, and habits remain the same, then how can we really expect Allah SWT to open for us? If we keep listening and talking but there is no real change in our hearts, it shows that we are not making enough effort! It has to be sincere effort and it has to start within us.

Don't feel disheartened or upset about negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. Have the zeal of spreading the message in your heart and Allah SWT will open for you. Allah SWT will unite good people to you if you are sincerely looking for them.

A Japanese professor recently wrote an article encouraging people to educate themselves about Muslims since he believes there are many similarities between Islamic teachings and Japanese culture. So the efforts are being made by non-Muslims to learn about Islam. But are we ready so when they meet us they can see the teachings of Islam in us? Do we have the manners, etiquettes and the zeal to show them the accurate teachings of Islam?

If we really have the quality, Allah SWT will use us! This is why all our focus has to be on building our quality. Don't worry about anyone else. When we die, we will be asked about ourselves first. If we fail with ourselves, how can we succeed with others?

FREEDOM

The key to building quality is freedom of the soul from all attachments. This is a struggle that everyone has to undertake and it differs from person to person. Everyone's attachments are different; some are attached to their spouses, others to their children, wealth, status, job, property etc. Whatever the attachment, it has to be released.

What if I am so weak I can't remove it from my heart?

First, get physically away from your attachment, even if it is for few hours each day. Go to a secluded place, a *masjid*, a parking lot...whatever it takes to be alone and away from distractions. Remember Allah SWT and beg Him to remove the attachment from your heart. If you are attached to your savings, spend from it. If it is your car, sell it and get something else. If it is spouse and children, just ask Allah SWT to help you remove the attachment from your heart.

If you are sincere, the second step will happen. Allah SWT will put in your heart what to do. Just so you know, this 'to do' will not be easy, it will be against your desire. If you do it, you will pass and Allah SWT will help you. If you fail, Allah SWT will let you go and you can cry and pray as much as you want and nothing will happen.

TRUE ROLE MODELS

You really want to wake up and taste the sweetness of this faith?

You really want to see a dramatic change in your life for better?

You really want to enjoy life as it is meant to be?

Remove everything from your heart and start all over again. Do you know who does it beautifully? The New Muslims! They divorce and detach themselves from family, culture, customs, habits, lifestyle...everything for the sake of Allah SWT. They let it all go and become free from all the worldly attachments. This not only shows the courage and strength but shows how pure and sincere their dedication is towards Allah SWT. They not only transform their lives, but they also ache for others to experience the same! They are a true inspiration who should be taken as role models by all of us.

It is time for us to connect our hearts to Allah SWT and be sincere to Him. All the verses we read earlier as well as the signs around us are warning of a major catastrophe. All the odds are stacked against us. Our only option is to learn what Islam is and sincerely embrace it.

At this point you might be complaining that the message is redundant and doesn't talk about anything new. But this is how Qur'an Makki is—two-thirds of the Qur'an asks us to leave *duniya* and work for the *akhirah*. Once we are in this state we will be busy developing ourselves, being a role model for others and spreading the message of Islam. At this time we can hope to receive the support of Allah SWT both in times of ease and difficulty. And during calamities Allah SWT will *InshaAllah* rescue us and give us the ultimate gift which is to let us die as Muslims.