

Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, July 18, 2003

Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah

Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim

Insha Allah, this Qhutbah is some thoughts on *the end of the world and beyond*. Throughout the ages, several authors have written books on the origin of the universe. Similarly, they wonder of the ultimate fate of the universe – will it will constantly inflate and eventually crumble in a huge heap. Most confess that they really don't have an answer and that it is pure conjecture. Just to put it in perspective – astronauts aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour discovered a star-like object at the edge of the universe so distant that its light would take 10 billion light years to reach the earth, one light year being about 9 trillion kms. in distance. These astronomical figures are truly mind boggling.

Masha Allah, we believe in God who created all things [36:81] Is not the One who created the heavens and the earth able to recreate the same? Yes indeed; He is the Creator, the Omniscient. [36:82] All He needs to do to carry out any command is to say to it, "Be," and it is. Similarly, the end will come as graphically depicted in the Quran in [78:18-20] The day the horn is blown, and you come in throngs. The heaven will be opened like gates. The mountains will be removed, as if they were a mirage.

The Quran does not categorically tell us when the universe came into being nor does it tell us when the end will come. [20:15] "The Hour (end of the world) is surely coming; I will keep it *almost* hidden, for each soul must be paid for its works. [15:85] We did not create the heavens and the earth, and everything between them, except for a specific purpose. The end of the world will come, so treat them with benign neglect. We do get this knowledge from an authorized Messenger who informs us the year as 2280 but not the exact date and time.

The Quran informs us in both dramatic as well as plain simple language that there have been countless generations before us and there will be many more yet to come. Everyone who has come and gone will have to face the unavoidable and severe answerability on the Day of Reckoning. Even the greatest scientists do not know what will happen to the whole human race when the earth will come to a quick and sudden end. The Quran here takes over from science this aspect left completely unfathomed by it.

Since the dawn of time in human terms and even before the Quran makes a reference to the humans most relentless yearning to attain immortality and

unrestrained authority. [20:120] But the devil whispered to him, saying, "O Adam, let me show you the tree of eternity and unending kingship." This is why what followed the human's arrival on earth was the incessant and irresponsible attempt to evade death and to possess force or influence to control others. In this process, we have committed acts which truly have [95:5] Then turned him into the lowliest of the lowly. We deserve to be called this undoubtedly. There is no way we can cheat death. [4:78] Wherever you are, death will catch up with you, even if you live in formidable castles....

The Quran seldom makes a comprehensive proclamation without informing exceptions [19:71] Every single one of you must see it; this is an irrevocable decision of your Lord. Many translators of the Quran interpret this verse in different ways - some even say it refers to a bridge over which everyone must traverse and see Hell on their way to Heaven. Dr. Khalifa's footnote in this respect is extremely vital and we understand now that we will be resurrected prior to God's physical arrival which will be our temporary taste of Hell, since the absence of God is Hell. The righteous will not hear any sound of Hell [21:102] They will not hear its hissing. They will enjoy an abode where forever they can get everything they desire. The usual word for *enter* is "*dakhil*" in Arabic and here God uses the word "*waarid*" which Dr. Khalifa translates as "*see*" as in *meaning experience or approach*. From this statement we understand that the degree of total merit and unblemished behavior set by God is so high that we should never take God for granted [7:99] Have they taken GOD's plans for granted? None takes GOD's plans for granted except the losers. [21:28] He knows their future and their past. They do not intercede, except for those already accepted by Him, and they are worried about their own necks. [9:102] There are others who have confessed their sins; they have mixed good deeds with bad deeds. GOD will redeem them, for GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

So short of entering Hell, even the righteous realize God's infinite mercy. On a psychological level, the taste of something you yearn for is always far better - for example a hot cup of tea or a cold drink after a long fast.

God's limitless kindness goes even further. [39:35] GOD remits their sinful works, and rewards them generously for their good works. [64:9] The day will come when He summons you to the Day of Summoning. That is the Day of Mutual Blaming. Anyone who believes in GOD and leads a righteous life, He will remit his sins, and will admit him into gardens with flowing streams. They abide therein forever. This is the greatest triumph. [25:15] Say, "Is this better or the eternal Paradise that is promised for the righteous? It is their well deserved reward; a well deserved destiny." So for righteous humans who manage to enter or just about scrape into Paradise due to God's unfettered mercy finally attain their prized goal mentioned earlier - immortality and unrestrained authority. But, here comes a *surprise* -

[75:22-23] Some faces, on that day, will be happy. Looking at their Lord. And the Most Gracious tells you here [36:58] Greetings of peace from a Most Merciful Lord. [7:43] We will remove all jealousy from their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them, and they will say, "GOD be praised for guiding us. We could not possibly be guided, if it were not that GOD has guided us. The messengers of our Lord did bring the truth." They will be called: "This is your Paradise. You have inherited it, in return for your works." So the entrants of Paradise will be happy just serving the Creator and basking in the shade of the Lord. God be glorified!

This is the true pinnacle of success and the true epitome of happiness. Now comes the bad news – the so called other side of the coin. Here we will see people who wanted their immortality, supremacy and prominence at all costs and who did not spare any effort to achieve their objectives. [7:40] Surely, those who reject our revelations and are too arrogant to uphold them, the gates of the sky will never open for them, nor will they enter Paradise until the camel passes through the needle's eye. We thus requite the guilty. It does not stop here – not only do they not enjoy the fruits of resurrection but [14:17] He will gulp it down, though he cannot stand it, as death comes to him from every direction, but he will never die. Awaiting him is a terrible retribution. [87:13] Wherein he never dies, nor stays alive.

The utmost delight for the fortunate ones who enter Paradise will be that they will enjoy the proximity to their *Maker*. [10:10] Their prayer therein is: "Be You glorified, our god," their greeting therein is, "Peace," and their ultimate prayer is: "Praise be to GOD, Lord of the universe." In contrast, for the damned souls is [3:77] As for those who trade away GOD's covenant, and their obligations, for a cheap price, they receive no share in the Hereafter. GOD will not speak to them, nor look at them, on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. They have incurred a painful retribution. What is even worse is that [83:15] Indeed, they will be isolated, on that day, from their Lord.

These descriptions of heaven and hell, we understand are allegorical and metaphorical. God further states in the Quran that [17:21] Note how we preferred some people above others (in this life). The differences in the Hereafter are far greater and far more significant. So we can only imagine the degree of tremendous contentment and ecstasy that blessed souls will enjoy and in contrast, the chronic torture of the ill fated souls who will for all eternity be deprived of this nearness with the *Source of All Grace and Mercy*.

When our soul finally confronts *The Supreme*, all uncertainties and cynicism we had would have long since vanished and the feeling would be of great delight and fulfillment irrespective of whether we were rich or poor, sick or healthy, mundane or magnificent on earth. Imagine nearness to *The Eternal and the Possessor of*

Infinite Grace! This blessing will only come to the ones who qualify for Heaven. Those who got left behind will undergo permanent denial of this blessedness. Their anguish and pain will be far greater than the torment in the sizzling blaze of the symbolic Fires of Hell.

When the Almighty judges the worldly actions of every soul two factors will presumably take place. Firstly, God sees the soul's underlying capability to do good and resist evil under given external circumstances and secondly, the intention involved because in hindsight it may turn out to be proper or improper for us in the final breakdown. The first factor could be supported with [2:286] GOD never burdens a soul beyond its means: to its credit is what it earns, and against it is what it commits. "Our Lord, do not condemn us if we forget or make mistakes. Our Lord, and protect us from blaspheming against You, like those before us have done. Our Lord, protect us from sinning until it becomes too late for us to repent. Pardon us and forgive us. You are our Lord and Master. Grant us victory over the disbelieving people."

The second factor regarding motive could be supported with [5:89] GOD does not hold you responsible for the mere utterance of oaths; He holds you responsible for your actual intentions.... [17:19] As for those who choose the Hereafter as their priority, and work righteousness, while believing, their efforts will be appreciated.

While on this subject, one might ask why a kind and compassionate God did not devise such a conduct for humans to make the world a utopia – an ideal place free from conflict, cruelty and treachery and only allow harmony and goodwill to prevail. God wants us to have freedom of choice between good and evil and He did not desire us to be *robots*. There would have no Great Feud, no third and final chance, no tests, no religious obligations and no Quran necessary to be the augmented and Final Scripture for all humanity. [32:9] He shaped him and blew into him from His spirit. And He gave you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brains; rarely are you thankful.

To sum it all up – unwavering belief in God alone is the bottom-line. Without this, no merit, no charity, no virtuous act will find acknowledgment on the Last Day. I'll end with a couple of beautiful verses of the Quran [89:27-30] As for you, O content soul. Return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing. Welcome into My servants. Welcome into my Paradise.