

**QHUTBAH, INSHA ALLAH, FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2003**

*Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah*

*Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim*

Insha Allah, the Qhutbah today is on life, death and the Hereafter. Do we want to choose citizenship in this world or the Next? Are we accountable to our Maker? Can we enjoy ourselves now and yet prepare for the next life? When we say enjoy ourselves does it necessarily mean getting lost in this material world or do we advocate complete renunciation of this world?

These thoughts are mentioned in the Holy Quran many times with varying nuances and different degrees of emphasis. [6:32] The life of this world is no more than illusion and vanity, while the abode of the Hereafter is far better for the righteous. Do you not understand?! [18:46] Money and children are the joys of this life, but the righteous works provide an eternal recompense from your Lord, and a far better hope. [13:26] GOD is the One who increases the provision for whomever He wills, or withholds it. They have become preoccupied with this life; and this life, compared to the Hereafter, is nil. [40:39] “O my people, this first life is a temporary illusion, while the Hereafter is the eternal abode.”

[67:2] The One who created death and life for the purpose of distinguishing those among you who would do better. He is the Almighty, the Forgiving. Death is not necessarily a punishment. [21:35] Every person will taste death, after we put you to the test through adversity and prosperity, then to us you ultimately return. Here, we should understand that it is not the assertion regarding the inevitability of death but that it is the soul that is affected by death. The human body is a temporary and perishable abode of the soul and is either buried, burned to ashes or fed to birds of prey.

Our worldly life is nothing but a test and that all of us go through a predestined trial by facing various unhappy circumstances like disease, deprivation and persecution or placed in happy positions of power and success. Often, the virtuous do not seem to prosper and the villainous do not seem to suffer for their respective good and evil actions in this world. The Quran does not leave any place for fatalism – poor humanity struggling in vain with ruthless destiny. There is a good reason for everything.

This present physical world has reward and punishment too but the future world requires theosophical observation and thought. The emphasis is more on the next world rather than on the present one. This subject has always been a matter of mute or loud criticism especially in this present age of materialism.

[45:24] They said, "We only live this life; we live and die and only time causes our death!" They have no sure knowledge about this; they only conjecture. On the Day of Judgment, the disbelievers will say [40:11] They will say, "Our Lord, you have put us to death twice, and You gave us two lives; now we have confessed our sins. Is there any way out?" [23:100] "I will then work righteousness in everything I left." Not true. This is a false claim that he makes. A barrier (*barzakh*) will separate his soul from this world until resurrection. Just as the human will undergo a change on death in this world leaving behind a soul-less husk, the soul will undergo an inexplicable and incomprehensible transformation during its stay behind the *barzakh* (a kind of oblivion) with the notable difference that the soul will dwell therein in a state of consciousness and not forgetfulness.

The Quran portrays two kinds of reception that await the human soul [56:83-96] When the time comes and it (your soul) reaches your throat - you will then look around. We are closer to it than you are, but you do not see. If it is true that you do not owe any accounting - why do you not restore (your soul), if you are truthful? If he is one of those close to Me - then joy, flowers, and gardens of bliss. And if he is one of the right - peace is the lot of those on the right. But if he is one of the disbelievers, the strayers - then an abode of inferno - and burning in Hell. This is the absolute truth. You shall glorify the name of your Lord, the Great.

If viewed in its proper perspective, death loses the horror attached to it. It signifies only a transition from the transient life of the present world (*dunya*) to the everlasting life of the next world (*akhirah*).

It is not death, but the eternal torment of the soul – what flesh and bone would experience if thrown in scalding water or raging fire – that a true believer dreads most. We should prepare ourselves to receive death not with stoic resignation but with utmost dignity. A firm believer is not afraid of death but will be more conscious of how he will be received initially in the grave.

God knows our nature better than we know ourselves. Hence He revealed the verse [2:201] Others would say, "Our Lord, grant us righteousness in this world, and righteousness in the Hereafter, and spare us the retribution of Hell." [2:202] Each of these will receive the share they have earned. GOD is most efficient in reckoning.

True believers would pray for the best in both the worlds. We can, God willing, set a shining example of how to live happily in this world and yet not soil our souls with crimes of excesses.

Why do we not bother about the Day of Judgment? It cannot be lack of knowledge, for anyone who reads the Quran even once would be struck forcefully by its theme. The only other possibility is that even those who read the Quran regularly either do not understand it; neither ponders nor reflects over it. They hence cannot absorb its

message into their hearts and minds. Thus their belief in the Hereafter is just vague and shaky.

We all are aware of [2:62] Surely, those who believe, those who are Jewish, the Christians, and the converts; anyone who (1) believes in GOD, and (2) believes in the Last Day, and (3) leads a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord. They have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve. Belief in One God is the most widely adhered bit among the thinking and educated. This is largely because the more we understand about the working of the laws of nature, the more we are convinced that this world could only be created and run by the One True God.

Belief in the Last Day is in some ways the most difficult to cultivate for the simple reason that the existence of the Hereafter and the occurrence of events on that Day are totally outside the experience and perception of humans. We can only have a belief in the Hereafter if we unquestioningly have an absolute belief in God. Only then can we believe that the Quran is the unaltered Word of God. We directly derive the understanding from it about the Day of Judgment. This is vital because there is neither reason nor rationale to support the belief in the Hereafter except the words and logic of the Quran. [23:115] "Did you think that we created you in vain; that you were not to be returned to us?"

Let us think for a moment that if there was a total commitment without any mental reservation to this most important ingredient of Faith. How could then any of us, in our right senses, perform the type of moral lawlessness which we see all around us? If we really and truly believed in the Hereafter how could we indulge in injustice, inequality, extortion, corruption, fraud, nepotism, deception, discrimination, dishonesty, prejudice, intolerance, treachery, and deceit? These are being committed today without even batting an eyelid. The only plausible explanation is that in spite of our claims to be "Muslims", we do not entirely believe in the Hereafter and the accountability of the Day of Judgment. For many of us, the life of this world is the be-all and end-all of human existence. It is this erroneous belief which enables many of us to scramble for wealth, power and position and get so deeply involved in its pursuit.

The concept of reward and punishment is not peculiar to Islam and is an essential article of faith in all Abrahamic religions which include Judaism and Christianity. The Jews accept the concept of the Last Day when the material world will end and divine judgment on all acts performed by every individual will be pronounced. However, they believe that they themselves, being the "chosen people" will not suffer eternal punishment as other evil doers will. [3:24] This is because they said, "The hellfire will not touch us, except for a few days." They were thus deceived in their religion by their fabrications. [2:94] Say, "If the abode of the Hereafter is reserved for you at GOD, to the exclusion of all other people, then you should long for death, if you are truthful."

The Quran rejects gross discrimination between humans in the matter of reward and punishment in the Hereafter. [2:8-9] Then there are those who say, "We believe in GOD and the Last Day," while they are not believers. In trying to deceive GOD and those who believe, they only deceive themselves without perceiving.

The Gospel as we have it, attributes to Jesus Christ, the power of resurrecting the dead on the Day of Judgment whereas we believe that it is God alone who will resurrect all those who have died since the beginning of time and will dispense universal justice.

There is a conversation between Jesus Christ and Martha, the sister of Lazarus who had died four days before. John 11: 22-27 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die, Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Such attribution to Jesus would negate God's omnipotence which He does not share with anyone. Also, this fake Gospel we have also discriminates between human beings in the matter of Divine justice, as the Jews do. Those who believe in Christ are considered to be the entrants of Paradise as a matter of right. John 14: 1-3. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there may ye be also.

The Quran, Masha Allah, being the direct and un-doctored word of God treats all mankind on the same footing on the Day of Judgment, the only difference arising from their belief or unbelief in His Existence, from their good or bad deeds in this earthly life and in a unwavering belief in the Day of Judgment. [16:97] Anyone who works righteousness, male or female, while believing, we will surely grant them a happy life in this world, and we will surely pay them their full recompense (on the Day of Judgment) for their righteous works.