

Explanation of Al-Baqarah Surah Verses: 21-29.

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By: Shaykh Abul-Hasan 'Ali ar-Ramli

{يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ}

"O mankind! Worship your Lord (Allâh), Who created you and those who were before you so that you may become Al-Muttaqûn (the pious)." (Al-Baqarah 2:21)

"O mankind!": This is a call to all people; the disbelievers, the hypocrites and others.

"Worship your Lord (Allâh)": This is an order from Allah [Exalted be He] to all mankind to surrender and submit to Him by obedience which includes the perfected love of Him, glorification, fear and abstaining from worshiping other than Him.

"Who created you and those who were before you": i.e. worship your Lord who created you out of nonbeing and also created those who preceded you.

"so that you may become Al-Muttaqûn": in order to reach the rank of piety and it is indeed a high rank. And Taqwaa (piety) is to build up a barrier between you and the thing that you are afraid of in order to shelter yourself. Yet the Taqwaa of Allah [Exalted be He] is to build up a barrier between you and His torment which is believing in Allah, performing good deeds, being keen on what pleases Him and keeping far away from polytheism, sins and whatever angers Him.

{الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ قَلِيلًا
تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ}

"Who has made the earth a resting place for you, and the sky as a canopy, and sent down water (rain) from the sky and brought forth therewith fruits as a provision for you. Then do not set up rivals unto Allâh (in worship) while you know (that He Alone has the right to be worshipped)." (Al-Baqarah 2:22)

"Who has made the earth a resting place for you": i.e. worship your Lord Who created you and created the earth for you leveled and smoothed just like a bed to make living upon it easy for you.

"...and the sky as a canopy": i.e. and Who has build the sky as a ceiling for the earth.

"...and sent down water (rain) from the sky and brought forth therewith fruits as a provision for you ": The sky here means the highness as the rain falls down from the clouds and the latter are located between the sky and the earth. So Allah [Exalted be He] sent down the rain from the clouds which resulted into varied fruits to be as a provision for you.

"Then do not set up rivals unto Allâh (in worship) while you know": *andaadan*; means opponents. i.e. do not set up gods as opponents to be worshiped at the same time with Allah Who ,only, has the right to be worshiped while you know that He (Allah) is the One who created you, provided you with rizq and created the earth and the skies for you. You also know that there is no creator and provider except Allah [Exalted be He].

In nutshell: Allah [subhaanahu wata'aalaa] has ordered all mankind to worship Him only and not to associate any gods with Him as He only the One who deserves to be worshiped because He is the One that created them, created the skies and the earth for them and facilitated life for them through providing them with life necessities. So, people should show gratitude to their Lord by worshiping him alone without associating deities, idols and saints who neither hurt nor benefit even themselves. Therefore the *tawheed of ruboobiyyah* (believing that Allah alone is the creator, provider and sustainer) necessitates the *tawheed of 'uloohiyyah* (monotheism or worshiping Allah alone).

{وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّنْ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ}

"And if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'ân) to Our slave (Muhammad Peace be upon him), then produce a Sûrah (chapter) of the like thereof and call your witnesses besides Allâh, if you are truthful." (Al-Baqarah 2:23)

"And if you are in doubt" You: i. e. Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians.

"...call your witnesses besides Allâh": i.e. supporters and helpers.

Allah [Exalted be He] in this verse is challenging the disbelievers by saying to them: If you are in doubt of the truthfulness of this Qur'an, which has been descended upon the heart of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), I challenge you (specially the Arabs as they were at a high degree of eloquence in the Arabic language which is the Qur'an's language) to come up with one surah like the surahs of this Qur'an, but it has to be as eloquent and as perfect as the Qur'an. And if you fail to do so, then those who are of less eloquence than you shall be more helpless. By then you certainly know that this Qur'an is from Allah [Exalted be He] as if it were from Muhammad (peace be upon him) then it would be easy for you to produce the like because you are humans just like him.

Allah [subhaanahu wata'aalaa] challenged them all, individuals and groups, knowledgeable and ignorant, in many locations of the Qur'an yet in spite of their being the most eloquent among the nations and in spite of their enmity to the religion of Islam they were unable to win the challenge. That is because the Qur'an is the words of Allah The Creator of everything, how could they be similar to the words of the creatures?!

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy upon him) says: "He who reflects upon the Qur'an shall find visible and invisible miraculous forms of eloquence; structure wise or meaning wise. Allah [Exalted be He] said: "Alif-Lâm-Râ. (This is) a Book, the Verses whereof are perfected (in every sphere of knowledge, etc.), and then explained in detail from One (Allâh), Who is All-Wise and Well-Acquainted (with all things)." (Hud 11:1) So, its words were perfected and their meaning were explained in detail or vice versa (as it is a disputable matter), yet each of its words and meaning is so eloquent that it is inapproachable. The Qur'an has mentioned unseen things to be happened in the past and in the future and they occurred accordingly. It also enjoined good and warned against evil, just like what Allah says: "And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice." (Al-An'am 6:115) i.e. truthful in the mentioned events and just in its rulings, so it contained the justice, the truthfulness and the guidance. It does not contain lies, superstition and rashness as the poetry of the Arabs and others used to be. They used to say about that poetry: the best of it is the more lies it contains. You could see the prolonged poem while the majority of it was about the description of the women, horses and wine or praising a certain man, horse, camel, war, wild animal and the likes which has no benefit except showing that the poet is eloquent. Then you can find averse or two which they are the essence and the rest of the poem is nonsense. Yet the Qur'an, all of it, is perfectly eloquent and this is so obvious for the one who reflects upon it. If you notice the news, summarized or prolonged, in the Qur'an you will find them very enjoyable and when they are repeated they become more enjoyable and the scholars do not feel bored or tired of it. And when it, the Qur'an, goes into warning or threatening then the deaf rocks and mountains

shiver and tremble, so how about the hearts which feel and realize? And if it promises it comes up with what opens the ears and hearts and fills the person with longing for the home of peace (i.e. the hereafter) to reside in the paradise close to the throne of Allah The Most Merciful, as He says, arousing the interest:

"No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do." (As-Sajdah 32:17)

And:

"Trays of gold and cups will be passed round them, (there will be) therein all that the one's inner-selves could desire, all that the eyes could delight in, and you will abide therein forever." (Az-Zukhruf 43:71)

And He says, intimidating:

"Do you then feel secure that He will not cause a side of the land to swallow you up, or that He will not send against you a violent sand-storm?" (Al-Isra 17:68),

"Do you feel secure that He, Who is over the heaven (Allâh), will not cause the earth to sink with you, then behold it shakes (as in an earthquake)? Or do you feel secure that He, Who is over the heaven (Allâh), will not send against you a violent whirlwind? Then you shall know how (terrible) has been My Warning?" (Al-Mulk 67:16-17)

He says, scolding: "So We punished each (of them) for his sins." (Al-'Ankabut 29:40)

And He says, preaching: "Tell Me, if We do let them enjoy for years, And afterwards comes to them that (punishment) which they had been promised!" (Ash-Shu'ara 26:205-206)...etc. And when the verses deal with the rulings, commands and warning, then there are the orders for every good, delightful and useful deeds and warnings against any filthy and evil deeds. Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) and others from among the salaf said:"If you hear Allah [Exalted be He] saying:"O, you who believe!" then listen carefully to what He is saying because it will be either commands for good deeds or warnings against evil deeds. Therefore Allah [Exalted be He] says: "... he (i.e. Muhammad) commands them for Al-Ma'rûf (i.e. Islâmic Monotheism and all that Islâm has ordained); and forbids them from Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism of all kinds, and all that Islâm has forbidden); he allows them as lawful At-Taiyibât [(i.e. all good and lawful) as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons, foods, etc.], and prohibits them as unlawful Al-Khabâ'ith (i.e. all evil and unlawful as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons, foods, etc.), he releases them from their heavy burdens (of Allâh's Covenant), and from the fetters (bindings) that were upon them.." (Al-A'raf 7:157).

When the Qur'an approaches the resurrection day, then there is the description of the agonies and terrors of that day. Then there is the delightful description of the paradise and what Allah has prepared therein, for His true slaves, from all types of comfort and happiness, and what He has prepared, for His enemies, from the great hardship and torture in the hellfire. Therefore it is narrated in the two saheehs (i.e. Al-Bukharee and Muslim) on the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him): that the Messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him) observed: "There has never been a Prophet amongst the prophets who was not bestowed with a sign amongst the signs which were bestowed (on the earlier prophets). Human beings believed in it and verily I have been conferred upon revelation (the Holy Qur'an) which Allah revealed to me. I hope that I will have the greatest following on the Day of Resurrection."

His (the prophet) say: "...and verily I have been conferred upon revelation" means that he was rewarded with the miraculous Qur'an which is impossible to be contradicted by human beings. On the contrary the other revelation books were not miraculous as stated by many scholars, and Allah knows best."

{قَيْنُ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا قَاتِلُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَفُودَهَا النَّاسُ وَالْجِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ}

"But if you do it not, and you can never do it, then fear the Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers." (Al-Baqarah 2:24)

"But if you do it not,": i.e. If you, with the aid of your partners and helpers, have failed to come up with one surah of the like of the Qur'an and you did recognized that it is revealed from Me, but still you kept on rejecting this fact,

"and you can never do it,": You shall never be able to come up with one surah of the like, as it is from Allah [Exalted be He]. So, "fear the Fire (Hell)" by believing in what the prophet (peace be upon him) has brought with and giving up the arrogance after you have realized the truth and your disability as well as the disability of all creatures to challenge the Qur'an, so you have lost the debate and Allah [Exalted be He] is warning you, if you stay upon your arrogance and turning away from the truth, then be aware that you will be the dwellers of the hellfire.

"whose fuel is men and stones,": The fuel is the wood which the fire is kindled with. And "an-nas" (men) means the human beings who are the dwellers of the hellfire, and the stones are the sulfur stones which are the hottest among the stones when they are heated.

"prepared for the disbelievers.": Allah [Exalted be He] has designated the hellfire as a dwelling for the disbelievers, consequently this is a proof that the hellfire has

been created and it does exist now. There are many evidences other than this one and it is the creed of Ahlus-sunnah (people of Sunnah) excluding the Mu'tazilah[1] who contradicted them.

{وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ}

"And give glad tidings to those who believe and do righteous good deeds that for them will be Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise). Every time they will be provided with a fruit therefrom, they will say: "This is what we were provided with before," and they will be given things in resemblance (i.e. in the same form but different in taste) and they shall have therein Azwâjun Mutahharatun (purified mates or wives), (having no menses, stools, urine, etc.) and they will abide therein forever." (Al-Baqarah 2:25)

"And give glad tidings": it is to tell somebody with what reflects or appears upon his face or skin. In most cases it is used for pleasure and it may be used for evil, then it comes coupled with the type of evil which the glad tidings is given to.

"those who believe": those who believed in what the prophet (peace be upon him) has brought with and acted by their limbs.

"and do righteous good deeds": by their limbs, and the righteous deeds includes all what Allah [Exalted be He] has ordained. It was mentioned separately (as it is a main part of eeman according to the salaf creed) to add emphasis upon it. Thus Allah says: "Guard strictly (five obligatory) AsSalawât (the prayers) especially the middle Salât (i.e. the best prayer 'Asr)." (Al-Baqarah 2:238), so it is well-known that the middle Salât is one of the prayers, but it was mentioned separately to add more emphasis upon it. It is also known that nobody deserves the paradise except that who believed by his heart and acted by the limbs.

"that for them will be Gardens": jannaat is the plural of jannah which is the orchard or garden which contains the trees and fruits.

"under which rivers flow": the rivers flow under the trees and fruits and not under their ground.

"Every time they will be provided with a fruit therefrom": i.e. from the gardens which Allah [Exalted be He] has prepared for those who believed and did the righteous deeds.

"they will say: "This is what we were provided with before,": When they saw the fruits of the paradise they found them similar to the fruits of the worldly life.

"they will be given things in resemblance": the fruits of the paradise are similar to the fruits of the worldly life in the shape and name but they differ in the taste.

"and they shall have therein Azwâjun Mutahharatun (purified mates or wives)": In paradise there are wives, for the believers, who are purified (having no menses, stools, urine, etc.).

"and they will abide therein forever.": the believers will reside in paradise forever. They will never depart it, as it is their permanent happiness.

In nutshell: Allah [Exalted be He] ,in this verse, has aroused the interest of His slaves to believe in Him and worship Him only by telling them about what He has prepared for them, just like what He has told them, in the previous verse about what He has prepared for the disbelievers and those polytheists who associated gods with Allah in worship like those who worship the graves of pious people.

{إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَلَّاسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ
وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا
الْفَاسِقِينَ }

"Verily, Allâh is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller) than it. And as for those who believe, they know that it is the Truth from their Lord, but as for those who disbelieve, they say: "What did Allâh intend by this parable?" By it He misleads many, and many He guides thereby. And He misleads thereby only those who are Al-Fâsiqûn (the rebellious, disobedient to Allâh)." (Al-Baqarah 2:26)

"And as for those who believe, they know that it is the Truth from their Lord": Those who trusted Allah and His prophet (peace be upon him) know that the parable that Allah has set forth is His words and from Him and they do understand that it contains the significant signs and proofs.

"but as for those who disbelieve, they say: "What did Allâh intend by this parable?" : Those who rejected the words of Allah [Exalted be He] and His messenger (peace be upon him) said so because they could not figure out the truth due to their turning away from it to the degree that dropped them into confusion.

"By it He misleads many, and many He guides thereby": This explains the wisdom of setting forth the parable, so by it He misleads a lot of people and by it also He guides many people.

"And He misleads thereby only those who are Al-Fâsiqûn": Nobody will be misled, by this parable, except those who are Fâsiqûn; "fisq" in Arabic means something comes out of something. The date when comes out of its shell or peel is called fasiqah and thus the mouse is also called fasiq because it comes out of its hole. In other words it means to repel or to deviate from the right way. The fasiq includes the disbeliever and the sinner as well because both of them deviated from obedience of Allah [Exalted be He], although the fisq of the disbeliever is worse. Finally this verse is talking about the fisq of the disbeliever because Allah has described them, in the next verse, by His say: "Those who break Allâh's Covenant after ratifying it, and sever what Allâh has ordered to be joined and do mischief on earth, it is they who are the losers." So these characteristics are of the disbelievers which contradict the ones of believers.

{الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ}

"Those who break Allâh's Covenant after ratifying it, and sever what Allâh has ordered to be joined (as regards Allâh's Religion of Islâmic Monotheism, and to practice its legal laws on the earth and also as regards keeping good relations with kith and kin), and do mischief on earth, it is they who are the losers." (Al-Baqarah 2:27)

"Those who break Allâh's Covenant after ratifying it": Allah [Exalted be He] has described the Fâsiqûn as they broke the covenant between them and Him after ratification which is the belief in Him and His messengers. This covenant has been taken upon every human being as soon as a messenger of Allah comes with the sign that proves his Prophethood then every human being shall believe in him. Yet these people failed to fulfill their commitment.

"and sever what Allâh has ordered to be joined": They break the relationship with the rahm (kith and kin) which Allah has ordered to keep good relations with them. May Muslims, nowadays, think that joining the rahm can be achieved by only visiting especially visiting them on the day of Eid. Although visiting is a type of joining but joining has more obligations than that. Some scholars defined it as to provide you rahm with everything they need that you can afford and protect them from any harm as much as you can. The other mistake people do is that they think that visiting rahm on the Eid day is Sunnah and others think that it is obligatory. This thought is wrong, as this is not legal and not in accordance neither to the Book nor to the Sunnah, and no one has reported that the prophet (peace be upon him) or any of his companions was keen on visiting rahm on the day of Eid and Allah knows best.

"and do mischief on earth,": through disbelief and committing sins.

"it is they who are the losers.": Ibn Jareer At-tabaree (may Allah have mercy upon him) said: " al-khasiroon (losers) plural of khasir (loser) which means those who have lost their share of Allah's mercy due to their sins. Just like the merchant who decreases the capital of his trade so that it resulted into a loss. Likewise are the disbelievers and the hypocrites, they have lost because Allah [Exalted be He] has deprived them of His mercy in the hereafter, the mercy that He has created for His slaves at a time where a person is in dire need of that mercy"

{كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ}

"How can you disbelieve in Allâh? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection) and then unto Him you will return." (Al-Baqarah 2:28)

"How can you disbelieve in Allâh? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life.": How can you deny the existence of Allah or associate partners with Him while you were nothing and He created you?! This is an inquiry of denial and scolding.

"Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life": Then He will put you to death after He created you from the nonexistence, then He will bring you to life for resurrection.

"and then unto Him you will return": i.e. you will be returned to Him on the day of resurrection to recompense them with what they used to do. Ibn Jareer At-tabaree (may Allah have mercy upon him) said: "This verse is a scolding, from Allah [Exalted be He], for those who said:

"we believe in Allah and in the last day" and He has mentioned that they were unbelievers in spite of their utterance. Yet they say that to deceive Allah [Exalted be He] and the believers, so He scolded them saying: "How can you disbelieve in Allâh? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life." Allah rejected their denial of His capability of bringing them to life after putting them to death, during the day of resurrection, then recompensing them with what they used to do. They have forgotten that they were dead sperms in the back-bones of their fathers, then He perfected their creation and made them alive humans and then He put them to death. By then they must acknowledge that Allah has power over all things and capable of everything."

{هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ}

"He it is Who created for you all that is on earth. Then He Istawâ (rose over) towards the heaven and made them seven heavens and He is the All-Knower of everything." (Al-Baqarah 2:29)

"He it is Who created for you all that is on earth": Allah [Exalted be He] has bestowed upon you of His Bounties as He created all that is on earth for you so that you benefit of it in your life and use it to assist you in worship and obedience.

"Then He Istawâ (aimed) towards the heaven": Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy upon him) said: "i.e. aimed to the sky and Istawâ' here includes the meaning of aiming and coming to or approaching as it was made transitive by the word "towards"."

"and made them seven heavens": He created seven skies one over the other and perfected them.

"and He is the All-Knower of everything.": And from among His knowledge is that He knows how to create the heavens.

This verse relates to the previous one in the inquiry of denial and scolding, i.e. How can you disbelieve in Allâh while you were dead sperms in the back-bones of their fathers, then He perfected your creation and made you alive humans and then He puts you to death then brings you to life after that for resurrection and reckoning? And He is the Bestower who granted you with what He created on earth for you. This verse is also an evidence of the legal rule "Things are originally permissible" because Allah [Exalted be He] has created all that is on earth for us to reflect upon it and benefit of it and He mentioned that as a kind of conferring a favour upon us and this requires that it (i.e. all that is on earth) is permissible. And Allah knows best.

[1]Translator's Note: "Mu'tazilah (Arabic: المعتزلة) is an Islamic school of theology based on reason and rational thought that flourished in the cities of Basra and Baghdad, both in present-day Iraq, during the 8th-10th centuries. The adherents of the Mu'tazili school are best known for their having asserted that, because of the perfect unity and eternal nature of Allah, the Qur'an must therefore have been created, as it could not be co-eternal with God. From this premise, the Mu'tazili

school of Kalam proceeded to posit that the injunctions of God are accessible to rational thought and inquiry: because knowledge is derived from reason, reason is the "final arbiter" in distinguishing right from wrong. It follows, in Mu'tazili reasoning; that "sacred precedent" is not an effective means of determining what is just, as what is obligatory in religion is only obligatory "by virtue of reason."

The movement emerged in the Umayyad Era, and reached its height in the Abassid period. Scholarship on the movement stagnated for centuries owing to an absence of sympathetic accounts of the movement (and an abundance of hostile accounts) until the latter 20th century, when the 11th-century texts of Abd al-Jabbar al-Qadi were unearthed in Yemen. It is still adopted by some Muslim scholars and intellectuals today." Taken from Wikipedia.