

The Kingdom of God

Lesson 3



tasneeminstitute
ENRICHING THE SOUL

Verse 15

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذُلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ

“It is He who has made the earth subservient to you; therefore walk on its paths and eat from Him provision; and to Him shall be the return.”

- In this verse and those that follow it, we revisit a previous theme: that God is the sovereign Lord of all creation. He reminds us that it is He who has made the earth tractable for all sorts of human use, whether it be farming, building, or leisure. Because he has made it such, he invites us to travel freely on it and seek our sustenance with ease.

Verse 15

- God mentions three things about the earth:

جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذُلُولًا

- 1. Subserviant, gentle etc. ذلول
 - Earth rotates on its axis at 1000 mph yet we don't feel it. If its rotation was slower, day and night would be longer. Life would not be sustainable
 - Distance from the sun
 - 23 degree slant of the earth allows for the different seasons
 - Distance of the moon from the earth allows for tide control.

Verse 15

فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا

- 2. Walk on its paths **مناكب** literally means “shoulders”
 - The earth has been made gentle like an animal, hence the symbolism of “walking on its shoulders”
 - Its surface is neither so soft that we get stuck in it nor so hard that it makes our walking difficult .

Verse 15

وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ

- 3. Eat from His provision
 - Provision covers all types of sustenance on the earth: animals, vegetation, and minerals etc
 - Some scholars point out that "walk" is a subtle indication that you must strive to acquire your provision.

Verse 15

وَالْيَه النَّشُورُ

- This part of the verse is a reminder that as we avail ourselves of God's blessing in the land, to remember that we shall be held accountable for our use of these resources on the Day of Judgment.

Verse 16

أَأَمِنْتُمْ مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ

“Do you feel secure that He who is in the heaven will not cause the earth to swallow you, while it shakes.”

- While verse 67:15 appealed to our sense of indebtedness to God for his vast favors, verses 67:16-17 takes on a more threatening tone, effective for those who did not answer the previous call.
- After a mentioning the earth and its blessings, God now issues a stern warning that He can change this “gentle” and “subservient” earth into a “shaking” earth.

Verse 16

مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ

- As for the meaning of this phrase, the commentators have offered various interpretations. The most plausible view is that it refers to God, for the acts that are attributed to “him who is in heaven” are acts most directly attributed to God.
- In particular, it is God who makes the earth swallow people up, and it is God who sends winds of punishment. In fact, another verse threatens the same two punishments, and in that verse the actor of both is God.

Verse 16

أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكِيلًا

“Do you deem yourselves safe from him making the coastland swallow you up, or from him sending upon you a stone-laden wind?” Quran

17:68

- Several traditions also support this conclusion and show that it is not uncommon for God to be referred to as مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ

Verse 17

أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ

Do you deem yourselves safe from him who is in heaven—from him sending upon you a stone-laden wind? [If so] then you shall know how [real] My warning has been.”

- God is so powerful that it is not only the earth that can be used as a tool of punishment; He can even punish you from the heaven.
- A **حاصب** is a wind so intense that it picks up stones and pelts a person with it. It was the punishment God chose to send upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah when they defied the Prophet Lot
- To feel safe from God’s punishment is a grave sin.

Verse 18

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ

“Those before them [also] defied. And how [real] was My punishment!”

- The address of this verse shifts from the second person to the third in a literary device known as **إلتفات**
- The reason for this shift is that those who defy God’s lordship and deem themselves safe from his punishment have made themselves unworthy of God’s direct address. He rather speaks to them indirectly in his address to his Prophet.

Verse 19

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَافَّاتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ مَا يُمَسِّكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَنُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ

“Have they not observed the birds above them: spreading and closing their wings? No one holds them except the Beneficent. Indeed He sees everything.”

- God spoke of the sign of the earth, then moves to the sky. One of the signs of God’s power that is available for all to see is the creation of birds
- Airplane designs were inspired by birds
- Who keeps them suspended in the air against the force of gravity?

Verse 19

مَا يُمَسِّكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَنُ

- This sentence is not meant to deny the role of more proximate natural forces whose interplay creates flight. There is the birds will to fly, the physiological processes that allow it to move its wings, and the forces of thrust, lift, and drag, to name a few.
- While all these proximate causes play a role, the ultimate cause is God, who is the sole independent actor in the cosmos, and thus the root cause of *every* phenomenon.

Verse 19

- We tend to attribute acts whose proximate causes we know, to those causes. On the other hand, we are prone to attribute acts to God whose proximate cause is not easily known.
- We might say, “his untimely death was an act of God,” or “the lightning strike was an act of God.” It is in this vein that this verse attributes the mysterious act of flight to God to remind us that he is the root cause.

Verse 19

إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ

- To say he “sees all things” could possibly mean two things in this context. First, it may be a threat to those who fail to see that God is the cause of flight, for God sees them and will punish them for it.
- Second, it may go hand in hand with his lordship. As Lord of the birds, not a single bird leaves his watchful eye as he carries them safely through the sky.

Verse 20

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَّكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنِ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ

*“Who is it that will be a host for you to help you besides the Beneficent?
The unbelievers are only in delusion.”*

- After talking about the earth and the birds in the sky, God now challenges the unbelievers:
 - Who can help you against God if He decides to punish you?!
- Even when God speaks of punishment, the name الرحمن is invoked to highlight that even His punishment is based on mercy and justice

Verse 21

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ بَلْ لَجُّوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ

“Who is it that will give you sustenance if He should withhold His sustenance? Nay! They persist in defiance and flight [from the truth].”

- What makes people persist in defiance and rejection of truth?
- Story of Imam Hussein on the 10th of Muharram

فَقَدْ مَلَأْتِ بُطُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْحَرَامِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ. وَيَلَّكُم، أَلَا تَنْصِتُونَ؟ أَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ؟

“Your bellies have been filled with the forbidden and your hearts have been sealed. Woe be unto you! Do you not listen? Do you not hear?”