

Surah al-Mursalat (77)

سورة المرسلات

'The Envoys'

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-mursalat*, meaning 'the envoys' those despatched on a mission. Like the other Makkan surahs, it deals with the principal matters of faith. As surah *al-Insan* concluded on the topic of resurrection, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, ... We begin the surah by the name of Allah who is the real God – other than Him all gods are false.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. That is, He who bestows upon everything in creation, and guides it to its benefits, and prepares for it a beautiful future. The name 'the Compassionate' (*al-Rahman*) and His similar such names are certainly meant to indicate the results of these attributes, in that it is absurd for them to have the meaning for Him that they have for us.

By the envoys, as a mane, (1)

وَالْمُرْسَلَاتِ عُرْفًا ﴿١﴾

An oath by the angels despatched to the earth; who resemble a horse's mane in their successive uninterrupted waves. The 'mane' is the hair that grows on a horse's neck.

Thereupon, by the gusters, gusting, (2)

فَالْعَصْفَاتِ عَصْفًا ﴿٢﴾

Then an oath by the angels who raise gusts of wind in executing His command, glory be to Him. 'Gusting' is put for *ʿasfan*, and the repetition is to affect emphasis.

And by the spreaders, spreading, (3)

وَالنَّاشِرَاتِ ذُشْرًا ﴿٣﴾

An oath by the angels who unroll the books and spread them; or who unroll the life spans and the sustenance and whatever Allah orders be unrolled and spread. 'Spreading' is put for the verbal noun *nashran*, which is put for emphasis. The use of 'and' (*wa*) is for eloquence.

Then by the dividers, dividing, (4)

فَالْفَارِقَاتِ فَرْقًا ﴿٤﴾

That is: by the angels who separate and make the distinctions between things according to the command of Allah, glory be to Him. The verb's noun is once more used to affect emphasis.

Then by the hurlers, of remembrance, (5)

فَالْمُلْقِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا ﴿٥﴾

The oath is by the angels who hurl the messages, reminders and remembrance from Allah, glory be to Him, into the hearts of the Prophets.

Excusing or warning, (6)

عُذْرًا أَوْ نُذْرًا ﴿٦﴾

They hurl the remembrance that is either the justification of or the warning for the punishments to come if they continue in their disbelief and disobedience. They hurl remembrance that provides sufficient reason and proofs to mankind, such that there remains no excuse for them for their disbelief, and they would have therefore been warned in advance. It is also said that remembrance is sent so that it be 'excuse' for those who believe, and a 'warning' for those disbelief.

Indeed that which ye are promised will occur. (7)

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَاقِعٌ ﴿٧﴾

The oath by these types of angels is to the effect that that which we are promised – the terrors of the resurrection and the Garden and hell – will most certainly happen. Nothing will stop it.

He then explains some signs of the resurrection, in His word:

So when the stars are extinguished, (8)

فَإِذَا النُّجُومُ طُمِسَتْ ﴿٨﴾

The stars will be made to lose their light, till they have no light and are dark.

And when the sky is broken apart, (9)

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ فُرِجَتْ ﴿٩﴾

Splits and cleavages will appear in the sky, due to the collapse of the planetary order.

And when the mountains are pulverised, (10)

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ دُسِفَتْ ﴿١٠﴾

The mountains will be plucked from their places and reduced to a dust, and scattered in the atmosphere.

And when the Messengers are gathered for appointment, (11)

وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أُقْتَتَتْ ﴿١١﴾

That is, when they are gathered at the specific time on the resurrection day to testify about their peoples.

For what day have they been delayed? (12)

لِأَيِّ يَوْمٍ أُخِّلَتْ ﴿١٢﴾

Conditions will be such that it will be asked: what is the day for which the gathering of the Messengers is delayed? Why are they gathered? This is to signify the gravity of that day and the measure of its terrors.

For the day of separation! (13)

لِيَوْمِ الْفَصْلِ ﴿١٣﴾

The day on which man is separated into those of the fire and those of the gardens, the felicitous and the abject.

And what will make thee comprehend what is the day of separation?(14)

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ ﴿١٤﴾

The meaning is that the listener cannot understand the reality of that day and its terrors. The phrase conveys gravity and importance.

Woe that day to the beliers! (15)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

‘Woe’ is given for *wayl*, a word used when a person is in a terrible severity. ‘That day’ means the day of resurrection. ‘The beliers’ means those who say that Allah, His Prophet and the Return are all lies.

The thread then turns to warn the beliers that they face a chastisement in the world, before the hereafter:

Did We not destroy the ancients? (16)

أَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

That is, were not the earlier peoples destroyed, those who called their Prophets liars? ‘Ancients’ is given for *awwalia*.

Then We followed them with the Latters. (17)

ثُمَّ تَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

'The Latters' (*al-akhirin*), means the later peoples – they were also destroyed for having called lies to their Prophets. 'The ancients' means peoples like those of Noah and the 'Ad and the Thamud. The 'Latters' were those such as the people of Lot and the Pharaoh and his people.

Thus do We act with the guilty; (18)

كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

In this manner Allah acts with the guilty; their destruction is like the destruction of those mentioned. 'Those guilty' is put for *al-mujrimin*, those who are guilty of disbelief and disobedience, upon whom the chastisement will be visited. It is a warning for the disbelievers of Makkah.

Woe that day to the beliers. (19)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

Woe, that is, on the day of resurrection, to those who belie Allah, His signs and the other principles of belief.

The flow then turns to explain several of Allah's favours to man that they thank Him, after having warned them that they may fear Him:

Have We not created ye of a base liquid? (20)

أَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُمْ مِنْ مَّاءٍ مَهِينٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

The liquid from which mankind are created is low and base.

Then We put it in a firm housing (21)

فَجَعَلْنَاهُ فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾

What is meant is the womb.

For a known amount. (22)

إِلَىٰ قَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

That is, for a specific period of time; namely, the period of pregnancy.

Then We determined, and what fine determiners; (23)

فَقَدَرْنَا فَنِعْمَ الْقَادِرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

What has gone before is determined by Allah, glory be to Him. And He is the best and most bountiful in His determining that determines all things. The implied question is whether the disbelievers persist in denying His power over the resurrection and returning the bodies alive, after they were dead.

Woe that day to the beliers. (24)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Woe on the day of resurrection to the beliers. The repetition of this phrase is for the purpose of firmly implanting the idea that it delivers, as has been explained in surah *al-Rahman* and elsewhere.

Have We not made the earth a container? (25)

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ كِفَاتًا ﴿٢٥﴾

'container' is coined for *kifat*, meaning to encompass, restrain, or keep something. The earth is a place, which contains and restrains the creatures, and incorporates them.

Those alive and those dead? (26)

أَحْيَاءَ وَأَمْوَاتًا ﴿٢٦﴾

The earth includes and incorporates those alive with buildings and cultivation and their other daily needs, while the dead are accommodated within its interior.

And put therein lofty mountains, and watered ye with sweet water? (27)

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ شَامِخَاتٍ وَأَسْقَيْنَكُم مَّاءً فُرَاتًا ﴿٢٧﴾

The mountains have been put to stabilize the earth's surfaces. Sweet water comes to mankind for us to drink. Are these not evidences of one, knowing and powerful God? Do not these favours motivate you to believe in Allah and confirm His Messenger?

Woe that day to the beliers! (28)

وَيَلُّوْا يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾

On the day of resurrection those who belie what was brought by the Messenger of Allah will be made to suffer chastisement.

And when the resurrection takes place, it will be said to the disbelievers:

'Go on to what ye belied; (29)

أَنْطَلِقُوْا إِلَىٰ مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَكْذِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾

That is, to the fire they used to call a lie, denying its existence.

'Go on to a shadow with three divisions.' (30)

أَنْطَلِقُوْا إِلَىٰ ظِلٍّ ذِي ثَلَاثِ شُعَبٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

It seems that by shadow is meant the fire, and the shadow of its smoke. Its division into three sections is on account of their wandering in the world between disbelief, faith and hypocrisy. It is said that there is a section above them, a section to their right and a section to their left.

No shade, and it enriches not against the flames. (31)

لَا ظَلِيْلٍ وَلَا يَغْنِي مِنَ الْاَلْهَبِ ﴿٣١﴾

The shadow does not shade the guilty from the fire; nor does it profit against the fire's flames. It rises above them, mixing with the air and giving it a hue of red, yellow or blue. That shadow is not like the shadow of a roof that affords protection against heat and flames. It is as if they lived their lives in the world under the shadow of disbelief and disobedience.

Indeed it shoots out sparks that are like palaces, (32)

إِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرَرٍ كَالْقَصْرِ ﴿٣٢﴾

It hurls sparks that are the size of palaces.

As if they are yellow camels. (33)

كَأَنَّهُ جَمَلَاتٌ صُفْرَاءُ ﴿٣٣﴾

The sparks are the colour of yellow camels, their volume having been given as the size of palaces. Their being likened to camels is on account of how they proceed and fly about just as camels go about here and there as they graze. This is true simply of the sparks of the fire, how then will be the fire itself?

Woe that day to the beliers! (34)

وَيَلُّوْا يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾

How those who call such matters false will be treated come the day of resurrection; how harshly they are to be punished and chastised!

This is the day they will speak not, (35)

هٰذَا يَوْمٌ لَا يَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

The guilty ones will be too overcome by fear and dread, and will not speak.

Nor is it permitted for them to seek excuses, (36)

وَلَا يُؤْذَنُ لَهُمْ فَيَعْتَذِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾

They will not be permitted to speak and offer their excuses for their past actions. It seems that this is an account of a stage of the resurrection, while at other stages they will speak and try to excuse themselves – for the resurrection has fifty stages, and each stage is the length of a thousand years, as has been recorded. [e.g. see Mustadrak al-Wasa'el, vol. 12, p 155]

Woe that day to the beliers. (37)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Woe on the day of resurrection to those who call Allah and His Prophet false.

It will be said to them:

This is the day of separation, We gather ye and the ancients. (38)

هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ جَمَعْنَاكُمْ وَالْأُولَىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾

It is the day that a distinction is made between the goodly and the guilty, when each will be appointed to the place he has prepared for himself. It is the day when the disbelievers will be gathered along with the disbelievers of earlier peoples who preceded them.

So if ye have a plot, so plot! (39)

فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُوا ﴿٣٩﴾

The address is to the disbelievers: if they have some plan to escape the chastisement, then they should go ahead and plan how to save themselves. The phrase is mocking them, for they planned and plotted against the believers while in the world.

Woe that day to the beliers! (40)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

That is, on the day of resurrection, for those who belied that day and the rest of the message brought by the Messenger of Allah.

We have seen the position that day of the disbelievers, now we look at the position of the righteous:

Indeed the guardful will be in shade and springs (41)

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي ظِلِّلٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٤١﴾

Those who are guardful against disbelief and disobedience are the shade of the trees and shrubbery of the Garden, and of their palaces. And they will be in a land bordered by springs. Or the meaning is that they will swim and bathe in the springs.

And fruits as they crave, (42)

وَفَوَاكِهَ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

Fruits will be growing all around them. Fruits such that they fancy and like them and are inclined towards them.

It will be said to them:

'Eat, and drink, sweetly, for what ye were doing!' (43)

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

They will be told to eat the fruits, and drink from the springs. The command mode of the grammar is not an order, rather it means that they can eat and drink as they like. Their eating and drinking will be 'sweetly' (*hani'an*), meaning that it will be totally free of ill effect. That will be in return for their acting virtuously in the world.

Indeed thus do we recompense the good doers. (44)

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

'Thus' – meaning in the way mentioned, with blessings and delights – are those who did good with their belief and virtuous deeds recompensed.

Woe that day to the beliers! (45)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

How will they feel when they see those blessings slip from their hands because of their corrupt lives while in the world. How they will regret!

Here the thread turns to address the guilty in the world:

Eat and enjoy a little, indeed ye are guilty; (46)

كُلُوا وَتَمَتُّعُوا قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ مُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

Eat, O disbelievers, and enjoy the world's enjoyments; the worldly life is but short! And indeed ye are 'guilty' (*mujrimun*), Can there be real enjoyment when above ye is such a severe chastisement?

Woe that day to the beliers! (47)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

Woe, on the resurrection day, for those who belie Allah and that which has come from Him.

And when it is said to them, 'Bow!' they bow not; (48)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ارْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

When the beliers are told to bow and be humble for Allah, glory be to Him, they refuse, and are obstinate and haughty. The meaning of 'bow' might be just that, to bow down, or humility in general. It might be that 'to bow' signifies the prayer.

It is narrated that the ayah came down about the treaty with the tribe of Thaqif, when the Messenger of Allah commanded them to perform the prayer. They said: 'We will not bend, for that is dishonourable for us.'

The Messenger of Allah replied, 'There is no goodness in a religion in which there is no bowing and prostrating.' [End of report]

By bending, they meant bending their backs, for they found the raising of their posteriors distasteful.

Woe that day to the beliers! (49)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Woe to those who belie the rules, and do not confirm the bow and the rest of the acts of worship – for they will meet the recompense of that.

In what speech after this will they believe? (50)

فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

By speech it is meant the Qur'an. When they do not believe in the Qur'an, which in every way is the best speech there is, can there be any hope of them in believing in anything else. Nay, it is eternal wretchedness that will envelop them, if they do not believe in this magnificent book.