

Surat 62: Al-Jumu'ah (The Day of the Congregation)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 11:

1. *All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth glorify God, the King, the Holy, the Eminent, the Wise.*
2. *It is He who has sent among the unlettered a messenger from among themselves, to recite to them His verses, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the wisdom, although they were before certainly in clear error.*
3. *And others from among them who have not yet joined them; and He is the Eminent, the Wise.*
4. *That is the bounty of God; which He gives to whom He wills. God is of tremendous bounty.*
5. *The similitude of those who were charged with the Torah, yet they did not apply it, is as the ass carrying books. Wretched is the likeness of people who deny the revelations of God. And God does not guide the wrongdoers.*
6. *Say (Prophet), "You who follow the Jewish faith, if you claim that you are favored by God, to the exclusion of (other) people, then express your desire for death, if you are truthful."*
7. *But they will never express their desire (for death), because of the (deeds) their hands have sent on before them. And God knows well the wrongdoers.*
8. *Say, "The death from which you flee will certainly overtake you. Then you will be sent back to the One who knows the unseen and the seen; and He will tell you all the things that you did."*
9. *Believers, when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of God, and leave off business. That is best for you if you but knew.*
10. *And when the prayer is finished, then you may disperse through the land, and seek of the bounty of God; and celebrate the praises of God often that you may succeed.*
11. *But when they see some bargain or some entertainment, they disperse headlong to it, and leave you standing. Say, "That which God has is better than entertainment and merchandise, and God is the best of Providers." (62: 1-11)*

This Sura was revealed after Surat Al-Saf (Sura 61). The two Suras deal with the same issue. However, this Sura uses a different approach and style in dealing with this issue. The issue which is dealt with in this Sura is the concepts that Islam is the last phase in the divine project and that Muslims are entrusted with the establishment of this religion on earth. The Sura aims at inculcating these concepts in the psyche of Muslims. To prepare the Muslims for such undertaking the Sura tries to instill certain characters that are required to build the Muslim personality. The Sura addresses the natural desires of greed and money making endeavors which may distract Muslims from their principal undertaking. It recounts a specific incident which happened on a Friday, when someone announced the arrival of a long awaited caravan while the Prophet (PBUH) was giving the sermon that preceded the Friday congregational prayer. Many of the Muslims left the Mosque and ran to be among the first to receive the goods that the caravan brought. Only about twelve people remained to listen to the sermon, among them were Abu Bakr (RA) and Umar (RA). Such incident shows the enormity of the effort that was spent

in changing the character of the early Muslims to turn them into the unique models that were worthy of carrying the undertakings that were requested of them.

The Sura starts with the statement that the whole universe glorifies God, *“All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth glorify God, the King, the Holy, the Eminent, the Wise.”* He is the King who owns everything; He is the only provider. He is the Holy; He is high above everything. He is the Eminent; the Wise.

“It is He who has sent among the unlettered a messenger from among themselves, to recite to them His verses, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the wisdom, although they were before certainly in clear error.” God has blessed the Arabs by sending them a messenger from among themselves to purify them. The Messenger (PBUH) taught them how to purify their conscious, their deeds and behavior, their married lives, and their social lives. He also purified their creed and beliefs. He taught them the Book and the wisdom so that they would be able to differentiate between right and wrong. Before that, they were in clear error. This error has been explained by Jaffer ibn Abi Taleb (RA) when he addressed the king of Abyssinia. He said, *“O’ King, before Islam we were ignorant. We used to worship idols, eat dead animals, commit indecencies, break the ties of kin, hurt our neighbors, and the strong would persecute the weak. Then God sent us a Messenger from among ourselves. We knew his family, his truthfulness, his honesty, and we trusted his integrity. He called us to worship God alone; he commanded us to tell the truth, fulfill the trust, join the kin, and to be good to our neighbors. He commanded us to abstain from indecencies, giving false testimony, killing each other, slandering decent women, and cheating orphans out of their possessions. He commanded us to worship God, not to associate partners with Him, and to pray, fast, and pay poor dues.”* God chose the nation residing in the Arabian Peninsula to carry the responsibility of establishing the religion on earth. He knew that they could carry the responsibility so He sent His messenger to recite the words of God to them and to teach them the Book and the wisdom. They will be joined by the rest of Muslims to the end of time, *“And others from among them who have not yet joined them; and He is the Eminent, the Wise.”*

“That is the bounty of God; which He gives to whom He wills. God is of tremendous bounty.” It is a great bounty from God to be chosen to carry that undertaking.

“The similitude of those who were charged with the Torah, yet they did not apply it, is as the ass carrying books. Wretched is the likeness of people who deny the revelations of God. And God does not guide the wrongdoers.” The Children of Israel were given the responsibility of following the Torah and they were entrusted with establishing its doctrine and law but they did not fulfill their trust. Fulfillment of the trust starts with understanding and ends with behaving accordingly. But they neither understood it nor did they work according to it. Their example is like an ass carrying books. The ass will not benefit from the books it is carrying and it will only suffer from carrying its weight.

This example is not restricted to the Jews who did not act according to the Torah; it also applies to any one who did not fulfill the trust that God has entrusted him with. This includes Muslims who were entrusted with the religion of Islam and they neither understood its tenets nor did they act according to its teachings.

The Jews claimed, as they claim now, that they are the chosen people. The Quran asked the Prophet (PBUH) to challenge them, *“Say (Prophet), ‘You who follow the Jewish faith, if you claim that you are favored by God, to the exclusion of (other) people, then express your desire*

for death, if you are truthful. ” In this form of the challenge, the two groups would stand face to face and each group would pray to God to destroy the lying group. The Jews refused to accept the challenge, as was predicted by the Quran, *“But they will never express their desire (for death), because of the (deeds) their hands have sent on before them. And God knows well the wrongdoers.”* And if they were truly certain of being the chosen people, why would they be afraid of death? If they were the chosen people, death would be the door to receive the bounty of God which He promised those who believe in Him. But they should realize that no one can escape death, *“Say, ‘The death from which you flee will certainly overtake you. Then you will be sent back to the One who knows the unseen and the seen; and He will tell you all the things that you did.’”*

The Sura then concludes with commands regarding Friday prayer especially after the incident which was mentioned earlier, *“Believers, when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of God, and leave off business. That is best for you if you but knew. And when the prayer is finished, then you may disperse through the land, and seek of the bounty of God; and celebrate the praises of God often that you may succeed. But when they see some bargain or some entertainment, they disperse headlong to it, and leave you standing. Say, ‘That which God has is better than entertainment and merchandise, and God is the best of Providers.’”* The first verse in this group of verses commands the believers to abandon all regular activities once the call to the prayer is proclaimed. When they hear the call to the prayer, people should hasten to the Mosque. This is better than engaging in business deals or other activities which they hope will bring them profit. There is greater profit that can be gained by connecting with God. Once the prayer has been completed then they can resume their normal activities. These two verses outline the balance that Islam brings to the life of human beings. It is a balance between the spiritual needs and the material needs of the human being. The last verse addresses the incident that occurred when the Muslims left the Prophet (pbuh) while he was giving his sermon and hurried to the caravan seeking worldly gains. The verse emphasizes that God has much better things for them than what they had hoped to gain from the caravan.