

Chapter 74, Al-Muddaththir (The One Enveloped in His Cloak)

Description: Instructions for Prophet Muhammad and one's behavior that leads to the Hellfire.

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Introduction

There is much scholarly discussion about this chapter and the one before it, The One Wrapped in Garments. This is a fifty-six verse chapter that begins by addressing Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, directly and goes on to remind the disbelievers of the consequences of their lack of faith. The first seven verses are generally accepted to have been revealed in the very early period of revelation in Mecca, whilst the rest of the chapter was revealed after Prophet Muhammad began to spread the message from God.



Scholars differ as to the exact circumstances surrounding how the revelation of this chapter began. Some say that after Prophet Muhammad received the first revelation in the cave at Hira, he hurried home to his beloved wife Khadijah; he was trembling and overwhelmed and asked her to cover him in his cloak. Other scholars say that after the events in the cave, the revelations did not begin again for some time. One day Prophet Muhammad saw the angel who had visited him in the cave sitting on a throne between heaven and earth. The sight terrified him, and he ran home quickly asking to be covered up securely.

Verses 1 " 7 Wrapped in his cloak

Prophet Muhammad is addressed from on high. Oh you enfolded in your cloak, the time has come for you to arise, stand up and begin to warn the people. Warn them of the consequences if they remain in disbelief. Having given the instruction to warn others, God gives Prophet Muhammad some instructions to observe in his own life. The first of

these is to proclaim God's greatness. God is the greatest, and only He deserves to be glorified.

Prophet Muhammad is then directed to maintain cleanliness and physical purity. In Arabic the expression, to clean one's garments, means maintaining purity of heart and high moral values. Hence it carries this meaning as well. The one who delivers the message needs to be perfectly clean so that he can save those who are tainted while allowing nothing to taint him.

Next, he is directed to stay away from all filth, which refers to polytheism or idolatry, and everything that exposes one to God's punishment. And Prophet Muhammad is told that whatever favor he does it should be for the sake of God and without any selfish motive, that is, not to expect some worldly benefit in return. Finally, he is advised to be patient and steadfast because the task he is being entrusted with is difficult and requires sacrifice.

Verses 8 " 31 The obstinate disbelievers should take heed

God makes reference to an opponent of the Quran, a man He refers to as created alone. He is not named but is generally accepted to be al-Waleed ibn al-Mugherah, who after inclining toward the Quran denied it publicly in order to gain the approval of the Meccan leaders.

He was given abundant resources, wealth, and sons, and a life of comfort and ease. Yet he hoped for more. God says that will not happen because he persistently denied the revelations. Instead of what he desires he will face arduous calamities. Indeed God knew what he thought and deliberated about regarding how he could discredit Prophet Muhammad. He plotted devilishly and ferociously. He behaved arrogantly and turned his back on the truth saying this Quran is just sorcery from long ago and is merely the word of a man.

Because of his behavior God will drive him into Hell, and He asks what will make you understand exactly what Hell is. God explains. It is a place that allows nothing to remain and leaves nothing unburned. It shrivels human flesh, and there are nineteen angels guarding it.

Verses 32 " 56 The disbeliever's foolish attitude

God swears by the moon, the departing night, and the shining dawn that indeed the Hellfire is one of the mightiest scourges and a warning to humankind; and a warning to those who choose to go ahead or to lag behind. Every soul will be responsible for what it has earned. Those who receive their record in their right hand will be in the gardens of Paradise, and they will question the guilty. "What brought you into Hell?" The guilty will answer, "We did not pray or feed the poor. We wasted time in vain talk and denied the Day of Judgment until death overtook us." The guilty will have no intercessors that can help them in any way.

God questions why the disbelievers would turn away from the reminder. They flee

from it like frightened donkeys running from a lion. Each one of them expects a scripture to be sent down to them personally and unrolled before his very eyes! But no! The fact is that they do not fear the Hereafter. This Quran is an admonition and a reminder, so whoever wishes to take heed must do so. It is He alone Who should be feared, and it is He alone Who is able to forgive sins.

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