

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONSUMMATION OF HUMAN HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

We have already said that Muhammad's main mission was to lead people to God and to prepare them for God's judgment. What is that judgment? What is the final destiny of man and the world? If we take the warnings of the Koran literally we must prepare for great physical occurrences heralding a horrible hell or a beautiful Heaven as the ultimate rewards for evil and good respectively.

However, what is there in history to compare with this type of world-wide catastrophe where no one would be able to avoid the wrath of God? If man's long history of evil could be ended by one stroke of physical judgment, why has God waited? Does He enjoy seeing man suffer?

It is impossible for us to believe that God enjoys man's suffering! There must be some important reason why God's judgment is delayed, and there must be a deeper meaning behind the warnings of physical destruction and chaos. This chapter will try to shed some light on the subject of the final judgment and God's plan for the consummation of human history.

I GOD'S PURPOSE AND HISTORY

On the day when We shall roll up heaven as a
scroll is rolled
for the writings; as We originated the first creation,
so We shall bring it back again — a promise binding on Us;
So We shall do.
For We have written in the Psalms, after the
Remembrance, 'The earth shall be the inheritance
of My righteous servants.'

(XXI 103, 104)

In the first chapter we explained that God created man to be the substantial image of Himself, to share His love and experience joy. In the second chapter we showed how this great hope of God was destroyed by the failure of our original ancestors.¹

God must be determined to restore this world of evil to its proper condition. Man must deny Satan and return to God. All the institutions of society, especially the family, must be wrestled from Satan and brought back to the dominion of God. This whole process begins with one sinless man working on the foundation of those who are sent before him to warn and guide fallen men.

There are three primary reasons why God must be determined to restore what was lost and to see His ideal realized on earth:

1. God is Almighty. If by man's fall God would not be able to accomplish His goal, He would not be Almighty.
2. God created man as His children. God feels man's sorrows and pains, and, as our Father, cannot leave us in a state of evil and misery.
3. God created man's spirit to be eternal. Even though man fell, God cannot work to destroy what He Himself created to live eternally.

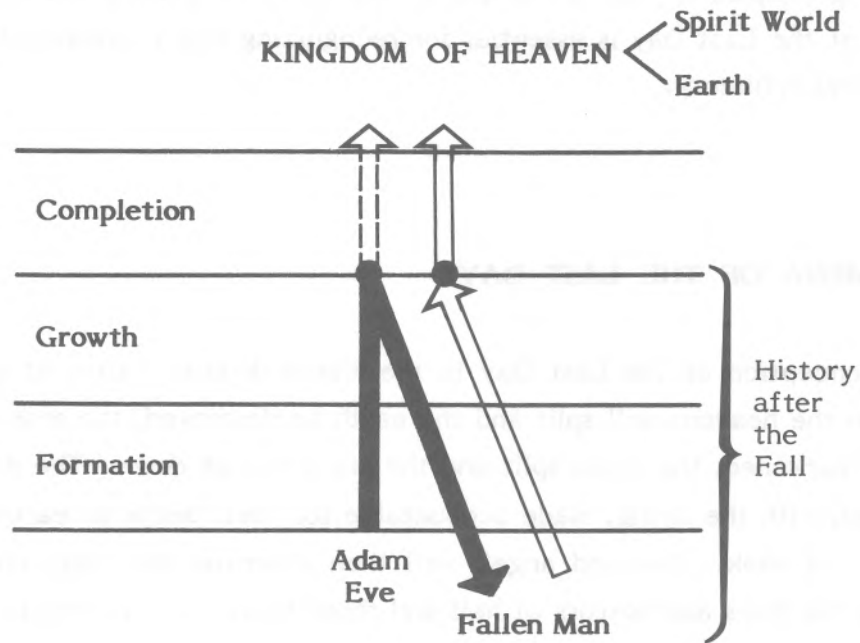
For these reasons God has been working to raise fallen man to his rightful position. The thousands of years of human history are a record of God's endeavor to restore his fallen children. (See diagram opposite.)

There is nothing intrinsically evil or wrong with the earth. It is God's creation and belongs to God. God is interested only in seeing evil removed from it, not in seeing its destruction. Because He is a perfect Creator, He made no mistake in His original creation, but created what is best and most beautiful.

If this is so, how can we explain the Koranic prophecies of a great and terrible day when the dead will be raised up to join the living — as they are brought to judgment before God — and the earth will be destroyed?

The key to understanding the meaning of the Last Day lies in our being able to separate literal meanings from symbolic ones. We know that God wants to end the evil of the world and replace it with good.

¹ See the diagram on page 61.



In this sense, the end of the world can be seen to parallel the end of a man-made institution. For example, when we say the Ottoman Empire came to an end, we are referring to the structure of the empire itself and not to the people who comprised it. God wants to transform man, not to destroy him! The realization of this desire is bound to result in great and dramatic change. Reflecting the diverse nature of this change,² the Koran uses twenty different names for this great "day" in history.

At two previous times in history (the Age of Noah and the Age of Jesus), God worked to bring about the consummation of history. In both instances, human failure frustrated God's desire such that the previous prophecies of an end time could not be fulfilled. Now, again, we are waiting in expectation of the Last Day.

² Some names are used once, others (especially those at the beginning of this list) are used more often. Day of Resurrection (XXXIX 67). Last Day (II 120). The Hour (XXV 12). Day of Doom (LXXXII 15). Day of Decision (LXXVII 13). The Judgment (XXVIII 89). Day of Encounter (XL 17). Day of the Imminent (XL 19). Day of Reckoning (XL 27). Day of Invocation (XL 35). Day of Gathering (XLII 4). Day of the Threat (L 19). Day of Eternity (L 33). Day of Congregation (LXII 9). Day of Mutual Fraud (LXIV 9). The Great Catastrophe (LXXIX 34). Day of Shadow (XXVI 189). Day of Uprising (XXX 55). Day of Victory (XXXII 28). Days of God (XIV 5).

Let us look then at more specific beliefs about the Last Day and try to relate them to the principles already presented in this book. A clear perspective on the phenomena of the Last Day is essential for recognizing God's fundamental purpose in creation and in history.

II PHENOMENA OF THE LAST DAY

The conception of the Last Day in the Koran depicts a time of great commotion when the heavens will split and the earth be destroyed, the seas set boiling and the sun darkened, the moon split and the stars thrown down. The dead will be raised up and, with the living, made accountable for their deeds on earth, recorded accurately in a book. God and angels will then supervise the judgment of those destined for the fires and horrors of hell and those bound for the beautiful gardens of Paradise.

Each of these ideas has to be examined carefully for its real meaning. Again, we must separate the literal from the symbolic in our study of the following subjects.

A. The Earth will be destroyed

... the mountains shall be scattered .. .

(LXXVII 9)

. the mountains shall be set moving...
.. .the seas shall be set boiling ...

(LXXXI 3,6)

No city is there, but We shall destroy it
before the Day of Resurrection .. .

(XVII 60)

These and similar passages give the impression that the earth will actually be completely destroyed. We have already mentioned that the physical earth was created innocent and that God therefore must simply want to restore it, not

destroy it. This implies that the earth to be destroyed is not the literal earth, but a symbol of the evil in the world.

If We had sent down this Koran upon a mountain,
thou wouldst have seen it humbled, split asunder
out of the fear of God.

(LIX 21)

This passage shows us that it is the truth that destroys the symbolic earth. The symbolic earth must then represent all that is evil, low, corrupt and impure in the world.

What then is to happen on the literal earth?

Upon the day the earth shall be changed to other than the earth.

(XIV 48)

... as We originated the first creation,
So We shall bring it back again — a promise binding on Us;
so shall We do.

(XXI 103)

Know that God revives the earth after
it was dead. We have indeed made clear
for you the signs, that haply you will
understand.

(LVII 16)

Here we see that God wants to restore creation to its original state. Only because of man's fall did anything impure enter the world. Once man is restored, the earth and all things will regain their original value. A purified earth must be God's real desire, since that is what He originally created.

The place of God's original creation for Adam and Eve was called the Garden of Eden. This is the garden that must be re-created on the earth. This is the Heaven described so often in the Koran as the place where man's truest desires can be fulfilled:

' . . . admit them to the Gardens of Eden
that Thou hast promised them ...'

(XL 7)

We can conclude then that the symbolic earth (evil) is to be destroyed, but that the literal earth (the world) is to be restored to its original, true state.

B. The Heavens will be Opened

... and We set up the heaven as a roof . . .

(XXI 33)

. . . and He holds back heaven
lest it should fall upon the earth, save by His leave.

(XXII 64)

... and the heavens
shall be rolled up in His right hand.

(XXXIX 68)

... when heaven shall be split.

(LX XVII 8)

.. when heaven shall be stripped off, . . ."

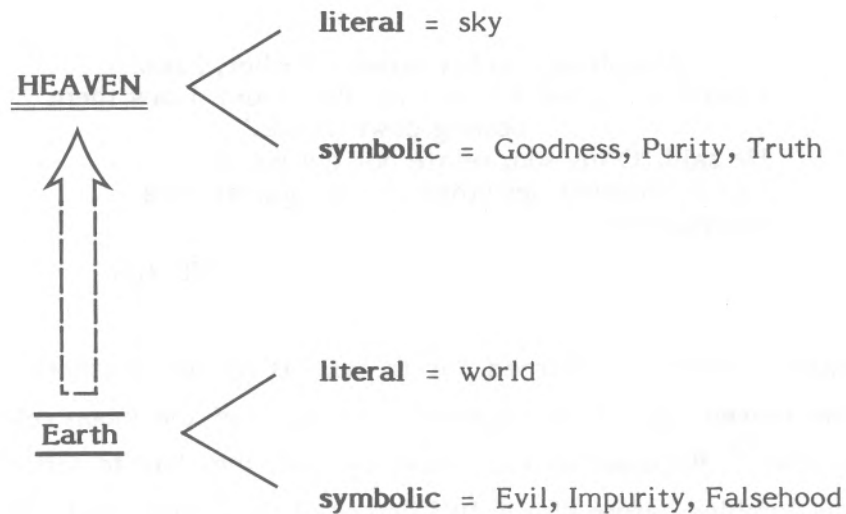
(LXXXI 11)

Taken literally these verses seem to be describing the sky and the phenomena that will take place on the Last Day. Through science we know that the sky is not a physical thing that can fall or split or open up. The blue we see at day is opened when every night we see the universe beyond our atmosphere. Heaven is not literally in the sky.

As the sky is the physical opposite of the physical earth, so is heaven the symbolic opposite of the symbolic earth. As the symbolic earth is destroyed, the symbolic heaven will be manifest in its stead; evil will be replaced by good, impurity by purity, falsehood by truth, profanity by holiness, and beings of no value by beings of the highest value.

And We adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and made them
things to stone Satans; . . .

(L XVII 5)



Truth — here symbolized by lamps — is the only thing that can repel Satan and destroy evil.

As the values represented by Heaven replace those represented by earth, the nature of the world will change and the ideal will become apparent; the Kingdom of Heaven will be established on earth.

C. The Sun and Moon Darkened, and Stars thrown Down

When the sun shall be darkened,...
when the stars shall be thrown down, ...
(LXXXI 1,2)

The Hour has drawn nigh: the moon is split.
(LIV 1)

and the moon is eclipsed, ...
LXXV 8)

When the stars shall be extinguished, ...
LXXVII 7)

Through science, we know that these things cannot all happen in the literal way they are presented here. There is, however, a key to understanding the symbolic meaning of Sun, Moon and Stars. In a dream, Joseph saw the sun, moon and stars bow down to him:

E. The Fire

Surely the pious shall be in bliss
and the libertines shall be in a fiery furnace
roasting therein on the Day of Doom,
nor shall they ever be absent from it.

(LXXXII 13-16)

This warning of the judgment of fire is one of the most often repeated themes in the Koran.

Is it a literal fire?

Two outstanding reasons why the Fire is not literal are:

1. Our physical body would be very quickly consumed by the flames.
2. Our spirit is eternal, and it must be judged. A literal fire has no effect on spirit.

The following verses help give a clearer picture of the nature of the Fire:

Upon the day when the unbelievers are exposed to the Fire:
'Is this not the truth?' They shall say, 'Yes, by our Lord!'
He shall say, 'Then taste the chastisement of your unbelief!'

(XLVI 33)

... a Fire whose fuel is men and stones ...

(LXVI 6)

... the Fire smiting their faces
the while they glower there. 'What, were My signs not recited
to you, and you cried them lies?' They shall say, 'Our Lord,
Our Lord, bring us forth out of it!'

(XXIII 104-109)

... and theirs is an everlasting chastisement,
except such as snatches a fragment,
and he is pursued by a piercing flame.

(XXXVII 9-10)

... as for the unbelievers,
for them garments of fire will be cut ...

(XXII 20)

We have already pointed out that it is the truth of God that judges men, not physical elements. The first passage above shows this truth to be represented as fire. The stones mentioned in the second passage represent the earth which is symbolic of the evil which must be destroyed. (Certainly literal fire cannot be fueled by literal stones!)

The third passage shows man under the judgment of fire, calling on God to relieve him. If the fire were literal he would be in no condition to carry on a conversation of any kind!

The fourth and fifth passages indicate that judgment varies according to the sin of the judged. The judgment of truth varies according to the degree of our evilness. A literal fire is not so discriminating.

The following passage shows that unbelievers of earlier times (here in the age of Noah) have already been committed to a judgment by fire.

And because of their transgressions
they were drowned and admitted
into a Fire.

(LXXI 25)

If the fire were literal, surely we would have some knowledge of it even after a period of over four thousand years!

The "fire" must be a symbol of the Word of God that will be the means of destroying evil in the Last Days.

F. God's Kingdom and King

Surely the godfearing shall dwell amid gardens
and a river
in a sure abode, in the presence of
a King Omnipotent.

(LIV 54,55)

We never chastise, until We send forth
a Messenger.

(XVII 16)

religion and science. Proof of the existence of spirit has encouraged people to confront this aspect of themselves and the universe.⁴

2. Freedom of the Original Mind

Dominated by Satan, fallen man has not been free to use his original mind. As an example of man's desire for true freedom (unlimited opportunity to do good) he has been struggling for freedom in unprecedented ways. Individuals have sought freedom of speech, assembly and religion, while societies and nations have fought for freedom for themselves.

3. Value of Man

In falling, man lost his original value as the image of God. Instead of becoming a reflection of God he became a reflection of Satan. In such a position between good and evil, he can never be fulfilled or happy. A great many people are seeking to regain their original value. The fight for civil rights, human rights, women's rights, and equality for all men, reflects this strong desire to regain our true value.

4. True Standard of Love

Man was created to live with God's love as the center of all his expressions of love. When he fell, man lost that center so that he lost all knowledge of pure love. Without God's love we cannot be fulfilled. Today people are striving more than ever to find true and eternal love.

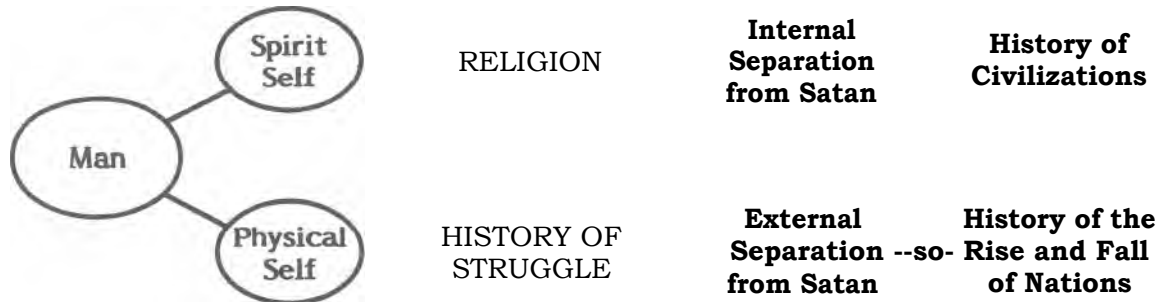
All these phenomena indicate that, from the point of view of the first blessing, we are indeed living at the time of the Last Day.

B. The Second Blessing

Through the fall, man began a process of multiplying evil rather than goodness. Instead of a foundation of goodness, the world was formed on the family dominated by Satan. Thus God's purpose in history has been to separate man from

⁴ Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder, Psychic Discoveries behind the Iron Curtain; Dr. Raymond J. Moody, Life after Life.

Satan. Since man is both physical and spiritual this has been carried out in two related spheres: the development of religion, and the history of struggles between forces representing good and evil.



1. History of Civilizations

The most comprehensive study of a human history has shown that twenty-one⁵ to twenty-six civilizations have come into existence through the course of history. Each civilization has had at its core some form of religious belief. In the world today there are four major cultural spheres. They are: (i) Islamic; (ii) Judeo-Christian; (iii) Hindu; (iv) Far Eastern (Buddhist, Taoist, Confucianist). To make one world family centered on God, these four spheres must be brought together to form one civilization free from any influence of Satan.

Largely due to improved international travel and communications, much better understanding has been developed along with an intense interest in unification. This inclination toward unity is a necessary preliminary to the fulfillment of the universal brotherhood of man.

2. History of Struggle

God wants to separate man from evil. To do this, satanic forces and institutions must be destroyed. Good and evil cannot co-exist, so struggle between them is inevitable. God has necessarily been concerned with the development and success of groups or nations closest to His will.

Conflict between relative good and evil sides began with the struggle between Cain and Abel. This individual striving has been multiplied to the family, social, national, and finally, international scale.

⁵ A. Toynbee, A Study of History

The first two world wide conflicts were clearly between Cain-like (evil) and Abel-like (good) factions. This third conflict is the most serious, and the most universal. It is between the Communist world and the free world.

Abel was not completely blameless when he was killed by Cain, but he was more obedient to God, and therefore represented God's side. In the same way, although the free world has many injustices and evils that must be changed, it is much more open to God's influence than the Communist world.

Communism is a satanic imitation of the ideology of God. It claims to offer a solution to every problem and the promise of an ideal world. Because it denies the existence of God and spiritual values, Communist ideology is not responsible for eternal values or morality. Instead of creating a heaven on earth, it is creating and perfecting a hell on earth.

This is not to say that communists themselves are intrinsically evil people, but rather to say that they are the victims of an evil ideology. As long as this ideology has power in the world, God's ideal for all men cannot be realized.

The free world is weak at this time because it lacks a unifying ideology and vital moral leadership. The Communist world is expanding because it has a unifying ideology that supports a definite purpose and rigid control. When the free world receives the new truth of the third Adam, adopting a strong position for God, it will be able to subjugate the communist world and free its people from the bondage of their own deception.

The religions of the world today have not responded strongly enough to the threat of Communism. It is their responsibility to rouse men to take a noble, righteous, and God-oriented position in all world affairs.

The Islamic world is being courted by Communist nations. Muslims must resist this influence and make a clear stand in favour of God-centered ideology and government.

The Koran foretells the division of the world's people into two fundamentally different groups:

Companions of the Right (O Companions of the Right!)
Companions of the Left (O Companions of the Left!)
And the Outstrippers: the Outstrippers
those are they brought nigh the Throne
in the Gardens of Delight.

(LVI 8-10)

The Companions of the Right are those bound for Heaven.
The Companions of the Left are those bound for hell.

(Verses 25-45, Paraphrased)

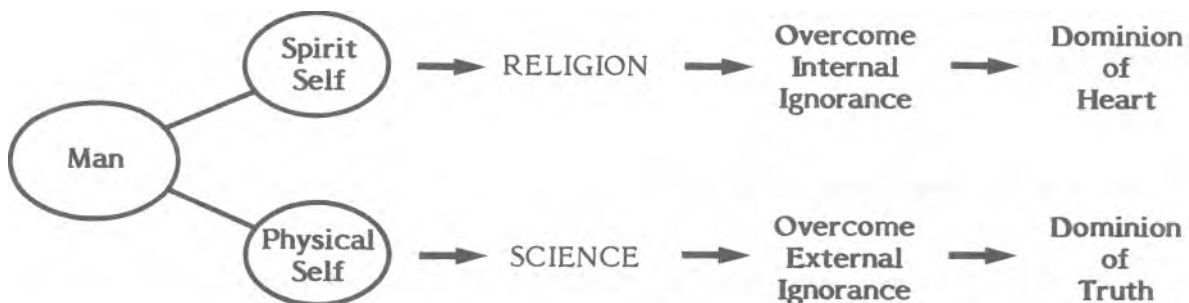
The free world represents the Right and the Communist world represents the Left. Those of the Right side are blessed but the most blessed are those (the outstrippers) who take the initiative in leading the Right to a proper relationship with God. They are the ones who will respond to and follow the third Adam in establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The fact that the development of religion has led us to this present stage of final unification, and that the history of struggle has led us to a final struggle between the forces of good and evil, indicates that, from the point of view of the second blessing, we are indeed in the time of the Last Day.

C. The Third Blessing

Because of the Fall, man failed to fulfill his role as lord over the Creation. He has abused his power as a co-creator instead of building a world of great beauty.

Because man is spiritual and physical, his dominion over the rest of the Creation must be through his spirit and his body. To accomplish this, religious and scientific knowledge have been developed. If man had not fallen, this would have happened very quickly allowing man to build an ideal world in a short time. However, through the Fall, man fell into gross ignorance, making the development of religion and science very slow.



Religion and philosophy seek to find the true way of life. With the help of scientific methodology and information we are better able to eliminate false beliefs and superstitions from religion. We can more easily appreciate now what God has shown to man through different religions. One God-centered religion and civilization is inevitable.

Modern sciences have made substantial contributions to the development of one world. Innovative technology has made the world shrink into one global community indicating, from the point of view of the Third Blessing, that we are indeed in the time of the Last Day. Religion too has developed to the threshold of one universal belief so that now we are forced to overcome the spiritual and cultural barriers that have kept us apart.

The world is ripe for the fulfillment of the Three Blessings. With the coming of the third Adam and the truth he brings, man will have the ideology and leadership he needs to fulfill his purpose on earth. Therefore, we can say that this is the time of the Last Day.

IV. THE LAST DAY, NEW TRUTH, AND OUR ATTITUDE

Say: 'if the sea were ink
for the Words of my Lord,
the sea would be spent before the Words of my Lord are spent
though We brought replenishment the like of it.'

(XVIII 108,109)

When we are children our parents have to communicate with us in very simple ways, because our capacity for understanding is limited. As we grow older, our intellect and intuition develop, and we are able to deepen and expand our knowledge.

A. Reasons for New Truth on the Last Day

As the above passage indicates, God's knowledge and truth have no limit. However, God has only been able to reveal to man what man has been capable of understanding. As man's knowledge and capacity to understand have developed in history, God has been able to reveal more and more of His truth and His heart.

At the time of the Last Day, new understanding of God's truth (which we call new truth) will be necessary for several reasons:

1. To satisfy man's developed intuition and Intellect

As just indicated, man's intellect and intuition are always developing, especially through the development of religion and science. Many people are not satisfied with the dogmatic answers they get from established faiths. All absolute truth is universal; therefore, we must have a better grasp of God's truth in order to satisfy the people of this highly developed age.

2. To Bring unity

Because we are far from God, we are ignorant of His will. In our ignorance we can't see that our belief is only a part of the truth, instead of the whole truth. Conflicts generated by differences in belief can't be solved until a more profound, more comprehensive perspective is adopted enabling different factions to see themselves in the context of the whole. The following passage indicates that we actually heed less than one tenth of what God reveals to us:

Those that were before them also cried lies
yet they reached not a tenth of what We gave
them; they cried lies to My Messengers, and
how was My horror.

(XXXIV 44)

New truth is needed to end the conflicts that exist among different sects and religions, to bring together science and religion, and to provide a unifying ideal - for the free world with which to solve all the problems that now beset the human family and keep it from uniting under one Father, God.

Without new truth we cannot solve the many problems of our life, and without man's acceptance of it, new truth is useless. We must follow the highest standard of truth we can find:

'And follow the fairest that has been
sent down to you from your Lord, ere the
chastisement comes upon you suddenly
while you are unaware.'

(XXXIX 56)

B. Our Attitude and the Last Day

God cannot force man to respond to Him or to do good, for to do so would be to violate man's own portion of responsibility. We cannot be complacent because we believe in God and fulfill our religious obligations. Complacency can be the same as blindness, dulling our senses to anything new from God. We must have the right attitude toward God and His truth if we are to help, not hinder, Him in the Last Day.

Let us now examine the most important elements of the Last Day and our attitude toward them.

1. Unity with the Central Figure

We never chastise, until We send forth
a Messenger.

(XVII 16)

And We gave to Moses the Book, and after him
sent succeeding Messengers; and We gave Jesus
son of Mary the clear signs, and confirmed him
with the Holy Spirit; and whensoever
there come to you a Messenger with that your souls
had not desire for, did you become arrogant,
and some cried lies to, and some slay?

(II 81, 82)

And when you said, ' Moses, we will not believe thee
till we see God openly'; and the thunderbolt took you
while you were beholding.

(II 52)

These passages indicate the importance of unity with God through the messenger He chooses. We are all too eager to condemn someone who speaks of God in a new way, yet we can only receive God's message through the person of His choosing.

In the Last Day this will be the third Adam. It will not be enough for Christians to cling to Jesus, and Muslims to Muhammad. God will use a new man, and all of us will be judged according to our response to him.

The coming of the third Adam is the central event of the Last Day. Through him God will establish His Kingdom on earth and judge mankind.

2. The New Age Opposes the Old

As the second passage from the Koran (II 81,82) indicates, man tends to reject and attack anything new that comes from God. Many people forget that God is limitless and that there is, therefore, no limit to what we can learn from Him.

The New Age will dawn in the midst of the evil world, and will threaten the old order, as Muhammad experienced in Mecca. Our individual responsibility is to search with a keen eye and a humble heart for God's new movement.

3. We Must be Humble

Whosoever fears the All-merciful
in the Unseen, and comes with a
penitent heart:
'Enter in peace! This is the
Day of Eternity.'

(L 32)

But those who believe, and do righteous deeds,
and have humbled themselves unto their Lord—
they shall be the inhabitants of Paradise,
therein dwelling forever.

(XI 25)

These words reflect a very common theme in the Koran: man must be penitent and humble in order to enter God's Kingdom. Without being humble and childlike, we cannot receive the third Adam and the new truth he reveals.

In history, arrogance in man has always been the greatest obstacle to God's work. Just because someone has an "official" belief, doesn't mean that he is pure and genuinely concerned with God and his fellow man. If we are to recognize the new messenger and perfected Adam, we must be honest about our actual limitations and imperfections, and open to God's guidance. We must be willing to do the most difficult thing: surrender our own ideas and concepts and submit ourselves to God's new truth.

4. Everyone Must Decide for Himself

Neither your blood-kindred nor your children
shall profit you upon the Day of Resurrection.

(LX 3)

Each of us has his own responsibility to God. We can't look to anyone else to fulfill it for us. We must become our true selves by fulfilling our own portion of responsibility.

The early believers in Islam had to judge by their sense of good and evil, by listening to their original minds, in order to follow Muhammad. The religious or secular leaders were not reliable advisors, because they were automatically prejudiced against Muhammad. It took courage and faith to follow Muhammad at that time.

So it will be in the Last Day. Each of us will have to listen to his own original mind and pray to know which path to take. Because God loves us, He answers our sincere prayer.

CONCLUSION

We have shown in this chapter that the realization and establishment of God's ideal on earth has been His purpose in history.

All of human experience has been directed to the great time, called the Last Day, when the history of fallen man will end, and a true history of goodness will begin as the Garden of Eden is restored on earth.

The central figure to bring about this transformation is the perfected third Adam. He will bring God's new truth and completely subjugate evil. To him we must be obedient and humble, and we must be willing to accept the truth he brings even at the expense of discarding some of our old ideas.

The many signs of the Last Day foretold in the Koran are mainly symbolic of the radical change that will be brought about through the changing of the world from Satan's to God's dominion.

The next chapter deals with Resurrection more completely and the spiritual phenomena related to it.