

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 1 – August 22

Chapter 2

- 21 O people, serve your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may guard against evil,¹
- 22 Who made the earth a resting-place for you and the heaven a structure,² and sends down rain from the clouds then brings forth with it fruits for your sustenance; so do not set up rivals to Allah while you know.
- 23 And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your helpers besides Allah if you are truthful.³
- 24 But if you do (it) not — and you can never do (it) — then be on your guard against the fire whose fuel is people and stones;⁴ it is prepared for the disbelievers.
- 25 And give good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that for them are Gardens in which rivers flow.⁵ Whenever they are given a portion of the fruit of these (Gardens), they will say: This is what was given to us before; and they are given the like of it.⁶ And in there for them are pure companions⁷ and in there they will abide.

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- 1 This is the first command in the Quran. It addresses the broadest possible audience, all of humanity, and sets before it the most general possible goal, that of serving God, meaning modelling oneself after the attributes of God. God is described here as the Lord of all human beings and Creator of them all, of the past and present generations. Just this one statement shows the Quran to be a unique book of guidance, unmatched by any other. Hence the challenge in v. 23.
- 2 Attention is thus drawn to the oneness of humanity, as if it were a single family living in one resting-place under one roof. All sections of humanity share the same physical resources, whether beneath or above them.
- 3 A similar challenge is contained in 10:38. See also 11:13. In 17:88 the whole of mankind are declared to be unable to produce a book like the Quran. While the Quran is undoubtedly a unique production of Arabic literature, its chief characteristic, in which no other book can claim equality with it, is the wonderful, unparalleled transformation which it accomplished. Its injunctions swept off the most deep-rooted evils and made an ignorant people the foremost torchbearers of knowledge and science, and masters of the greatest empire of the world. Besides, every word of the Quran gives expression to Divine majesty and glory in a manner which is not approached by any other sacred book.
- 4 The reference in “stones” may be to the leaders, called “helpers” in the previous verse, while “people” would stand for the common people.

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- 5 The description of paradise as given in the Holy Quran is expressly stated to be a parable; see 13:35, 47:15. The righteous are spoken of as having gardens in the next life to show that they have made the seed of faith to grow into extensive gardens, and this is in reference to the vast development of their inner self or of the faculties which God has given them. The rivers represent the good deeds which are necessary to the growth of the seed. The fruits of the life after death are the consequences of the deeds done in this life.
 - 6 Whenever the faithful are made to taste of a portion of the fruits of their good deeds in the life to come, they will find those fruits much resembling the fruits which they tasted spiritually in this life. *The like of it* may signify that the fruits of their deeds will be similar to those deeds.
 - 7 The *pure companions* may be the believing wives of the faithful, as elsewhere we have: “They and their wives are in shades, reclining on raised couches” (36:56). But more probably these are among the blessings of the heavenly life to which men and women are equally entitled. All the blessings of heavenly life are, according to a saying of the Holy Prophet, “*things which no eye has seen and no ear has heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of them*” (Bukhari, 59:8). The words in which these blessings are depicted in the Holy Quran, therefore, should not be taken literally.