

CHAPTER 84, AL-INSHIQAQ (THE SPLITTING APART)

Rating:

Description: The obedience of the universe is contrasted with the disobedience of the unbelievers. The connection between behaviour in this world and life in the hereafter is described in short but in-depth detail.

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Introduction

This short twenty-five verse chapter is about the Resurrection and the Hereafter. It was revealed in Mecca soon after the revelations began and before the persecution of the Muslims was commonplace. The message of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, was beginning to interest a lot of people and many were questioning the idea that the Resurrection would ever take place. The



chapter begins with a powerful opening takes its title from the first verse in reference to the ripping apart of the heavens, one of the events on the Day of Judgement. This is followed by an address to humankind, a description of significant scenes of life in this world, and then closes with the consequences of those who deny the message and those who accept it.

Verses 1 – 5 Scenes from the Day of Resurrection

When the sky is split apart; having heard God's commands it immediately and willingly obeys. And when the earth has been stretched flat and levelled out it casts out everything and is empty. It has listened to and responded to its Lord; immediately and willingly obeying His commands.

The splitting of the sky has been discussed in other chapters, but the sky's complete submission to God is a new element. The earth carries its load from one generation to the next from one century to the next, but on that fateful day it will cast out everything. Following the sky's example and obeying God with full submission. After this powerful opening with the emphasis on submission, God addresses humankind.

Verses 6 – 15 God speaks to humankind

Oh humankind. You are striving throughout your life, hastening towards your death when you will meet your Lord. Laboring hard in a variety of ways is the lot of all people. However, on the Day of Resurrection humankind will be divided into two distinct groups. One will suffer great hardship, and the other will enjoy blessings that will allow him or her to forget the hard labors of life in this world. Those that are given their record of deeds in their right hand will have an easy reckoning and will return to their people rejoicing. They were true to their faith and led a life of righteousness; God is pleased with them and rewards them well. As for those who are given their record of deeds in their left hand receive it with reluctance behind their backs, knowing that what lies ahead makes their laboring in this world appear easy. They will cry out for death and will be made to enter the blazing Fire. Indeed, some people led their lives without care, thinking they would never return to God for accountability. God was watching and seeing all their misdeeds.

Verses 16 – 19 Scenes from the life of this world

God then swears by the glow of the sunset, by the night and what it conceals and by the full moon that you (humankind) will gradually move from stage to stage.

All around us there is a continuous and gradual change taking place; stillness is unknown in the universe. Likewise, each person moves through stages, from birth until death and then resurrection followed by reward or punishment. Therefore, the disbelievers are wrong in thinking that life ceases with death. These verses also remind us of how little control we have over events, and it is truly God who is the All-Powerful and the only one deserving of our submission and worship.

Verses 20 – 25 An expression of wonder

What is the matter with people? Why do they not believe? And when the Quran is recited to them why don't they prostrate before God? God expresses wonder at those who persist in their denial of the truth even though they are surrounded by constant reminders and signs. There is so much evidence in the universe and in the depths of each person's own soul yet they do not believe. Everything around the disbelievers is amazing but still they do not kneel in prayer when they hear the words of the Quran. It is designed to open their hearts and induce submission to the Creator, but they continue to refuse. Thus, the Quran goes on to describe a painful punishment, for those who chose to hide from the truth, denying and lying at every opportunity. God knows perfectly well what their motives are and thus He addresses Prophet Muhammad in the final verses telling him to give them (the disbelievers) tidings of a woeful doom. This, however, is not the end for the believers. They are protected from such punishment by their belief and their good and righteous deeds; rather for them, is a never-ending reward. And on that uplifting note, the chapter ends.

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