

Sūrah 43: az-Zukhruf

Period of Revelation

It could not be known from any authentic tradition, but a study of its subject matter shows that this Sūrah also was sent down in the same period in which the Sūrah's al-Mumin, as-Sajdah and ash-Shura, were sent down. It appears that the revelation of this series of the Sūrahs began when the disbelievers of Makkah were planning to put an end to the Prophet's life. Day and night they were holding consultations in their assemblies as how to eliminate him, and even an attack on his life also had been made as has been clearly referred to in v. 79-80.

Theme and Topics

In this Sūrah a forceful and severe criticism has been made of the Quraysh and the common Arabs creeds and superstitions of ignorance in which they persisted, and their stubbornness has been exposed in a firm and effective way, so that every member of the society, who was reasonable in some degree, should be made to consider the evils in which the community was involved and its tyrannical treatment of the person who was trying to redeem it.

The discourse starts in a way as if to say: "You, by means of your mischiefs, want that the revelation of this Book should be stopped, but God has never withheld the appointment of His Prophets and the revelation of His Books because of the mischief of the people, but has destroyed the wicked people, who obstructed the way of His guidance. The same He will do again. A little further in v. 41-43 and 79-80 the same thing has been reiterated. Though the people who were plotting against his life are meant, the Prophet has been addressed to the effect: "whether you remain alive or not, We will certainly punish the wicked," and the people themselves have been plainly warned to the effect: "If you have decided to take an action against Our Prophet, We too will take a decisive action."

Then, it has been told what is the reality of the religion that the people are following so devotedly and what are the arguments on whose strength they are resisting Muhammad.

They themselves admit that the Creator of the earth and heavens and of themselves and their deities is only God. They also know and admit that the blessings they are benefiting from, have been bestowed by God; yet they insist on making others associates of God in His Sovereignty. They regard the servants as the children of God, and that too daughters, whom they regard as disgraceful for themselves.

They believe that the angels are Goddesses; they have carved their images as females; they adorn them with female dresses and ornaments, and call them daughters of God: they worship them and invoke them for the fulfillment of their needs. How did they know that the angels were female?

When they are rebuked for these superstitions, they present the pretense of destiny and say: "Had God disapproved of these our practices, we could not have worshipped these images, whereas the means of finding out whether God had approved of something or not, are His Books and not those things which are happening in the world according to His Will. For under His Will not only idol worship but crimes like theft and adultery, robbery, murder, etc. also are being committed. Can this argument be used to justify as right and proper this commission of every crime and evil in the world?"

When it is asked: Have you any other authority, apart from this wrong argument, for this polytheism of yours? They reply, "The same has been the practice since the time of our forefathers." In other words, this in their opinion is a strong enough argument for a creed's being right and true, whereas the Prophet Abraham, descent from whom is the only basis of their pride and distinction, had rejected the religion of his elders and left his home, and he had discarded every such blind imitation of his forefathers, which did not have the

support of any rational argument. Then, if these people had to follow their elders only, for this also they selected their most ignorant elders and abandoned their most illustrious elders like the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael.

When they are asked: “Has ever a Prophet or a Book sent down by God also given this teaching that others beside God too are worthy of worship? They present this practice of the Christians as an argument that they took Jesus son of Mary as son of God and worshipped him; whereas the question was not whether the community of a Prophet had committed shirk or not, but whether a Prophet had himself taught Shirk (polytheism). Jesus son of Mary had never said that he was son of God and that the people should worship him. His own was the same teaching which every other Prophet had given: “My Lord as well as your Lord is God: so worship Him alone.”

They were disinclined to believe in the Prophethood of the Prophet because he was neither a rich man nor a person of high worldly position and rank. They said “Had God willed to appoint a prophet among us, He would have appointed one of the great men of our two cities (Makkah and Tā’if). On that very basis, Pharaoh also had looked down upon the Prophet Moses and said: “If God, the King of the heavens, had to send a messenger to me, the king of the earth, He would have sent him with bracelets of gold and a company of angels in attendance. Wherefrom has this mendicant appeared? I am superior to him, for the kingdom of Egypt belongs to me, and the canals of the River Nile are flowing under my control. What is the status of this man as against me? He has neither wealth nor authority.”

Thus, after criticizing each practice of ignorance of the disbelievers and rejecting it with rational arguments, it has been pointed out: “Neither has God any offspring, nor are there separate gods of the earth and heavens, nor is there any intercessor who may be able to protect from His punishment those who adopt deviation knowingly. God is far above this that He should have children. He alone is the God of the whole Universe: all others are His servants and not associates in His attributes and powers, and only such men can intercede with Him, who are themselves followers of the Truth and they also can intercede only for those who may have adopted obedience of the Truth in the world.”

Sūrah 43: az-Zukhruf¹³²⁶

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,
the Most Merciful

1. Hā, Meem.¹³²⁷
2. By the clear Book,
3. Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qurʾān that you might understand.
4. And indeed it is, in the Mother of the Book¹³²⁸ with Us, exalted and full of wisdom.¹³²⁹
5. Then should We turn the message away, disregarding you, because you are a transgressing people?
6. And how many a prophet We sent among the former peoples,
7. But there would not come to them a prophet except that they used to ridicule him.
8. And We destroyed greater than them¹³³⁰ in [striking] power, and the example of the former peoples has preceded.
9. And if you should ask them, “Who has created the heavens and the earth?” they would surely say, “They were created by the Exalted in Might, the Knowing.”
10. [The one] who has made for you the earth a bed and made for you upon it roads that you might be guided
11. And who sends down rain from the sky in measured amounts, and We revive thereby a dead land - thus will you be brought forth -
12. And who created the species, all of them, and has made for you of ships and animals those which you mount
13. That you may settle yourselves upon their backs and then remember the favor of your Lord when you have settled upon them and say, “Exalted is He who has subjected this to us, and we could not have [otherwise] subdued it.¹³³¹
14. And indeed we, to our Lord, will [surely] return.”
15. But they have attributed to Him from His servants a portion.¹³³² Indeed, man is clearly ungrateful.
16. Or has He taken, out of what He has created, daughters and chosen you for [having] sons?
17. And when one of them is given good tidings of that which he attributes to the Most Merciful in comparison [i.e., a daughter], his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief.
18. So is one brought up in ornaments while being during conflict unequivocal¹³³³ [attributed to God]?

¹³²⁶ *Az-Zukhruf*: Ornament, originally meaning gold but including other types of decoration.

¹³²⁷ See footnote to 2:1.

¹³²⁸ i.e., the Preserved Slate (*al-Lawh al-Mahfūth*).

¹³²⁹ Also, “precise” or “specific.”

¹³³⁰ The disbelievers of the Quraysh, who denied Prophet Muhammad.

¹³³¹ Literally, “made it a companion” or “made it compatible.”

¹³³² By claiming that He has a son or daughters, as it is said that a child is part of his parent. This concept is totally incompatible with God’s unity and exclusiveness.

19. And they have made the angels, who are servants of the Most Merciful, females. Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded, and they will be questioned.
20. And they said, "If the Most Merciful had willed, we would not have worshipped them." They have of that no knowledge. They are not but falsifying.
21. Or have We given them a book before it [i.e., the Qur'ān] to which they are adhering?
22. Rather, they say, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are in their footsteps [rightly] guided."
23. And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following."
24. [Each warner] said, "Even if I brought you better guidance than that [religion] upon which you found your fathers?" They said, "Indeed we, in that with which you were sent, are disbelievers."
25. So we took retribution from them; then see how was the end of the deniers.
26. And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said to his father and his people, "Indeed, I am disassociated from that which you worship
27. Except for He who created me; and indeed, He will guide me."
28. And he made it¹³³⁴ a word remaining among his descendants that they might return [to it].
29. However, I gave enjoyment to these [people of Makkah] and their fathers¹³³⁵ until there came to them the truth and a clear Messenger.¹³³⁶
30. But when the truth came to them, they said, "This is magic, and indeed we are, concerning it, disbelievers."
31. And they said, "Why was this Qur'ān not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?"¹³³⁷
32. Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate.
33. And if it were not that the people would become one community [of disbelievers],¹³³⁸ We would have made for those who disbelieve in the Most Merciful - for their houses - ceilings and stairways of silver upon which to mount
34. And for their houses - doors and couches [of silver] upon which to recline

¹³³³ Not "obvious" or "distinct" in an argument. Or not "seen," i.e., absent from battles. The reference is to a daughter.

¹³³⁴ i.e., his testimony that none is worthy of worship except God.

¹³³⁵ The descendants of Abraham.

¹³³⁶ i.e., one who is obvious with a clear message, meaning Muhammad.

¹³³⁷ Referring to Makkah and at-Tā'if.

¹³³⁸ Who assumed that God's generosity to them was a sign of His approval or who would hasten to disbelief in order to obtain wealth.

35. And gold ornament. But all that is not but the enjoyment of worldly life. And the Hereafter with your Lord is for the righteous.
36. And whoever is blinded from remembrance of the Most Merciful - We appoint for him a devil, and he is to him a companion.
37. And indeed, they [i.e., the devils] avert them from the way [of guidance] while they think that they are [rightly] guided.
38. Until, when he comes to Us [at Judgment], he says [to his companion], "Oh, I wish there was between me and you the distance between the east and west - how wretched a companion."
39. And never will it benefit you that Day, when you have wronged, that you are [all] sharing in the punishment.
40. Then will you make the deaf hear, [O Muhammad], or guide the blind or he who is in clear error?
41. And whether [or not] We take you away [in death], indeed, We will take retribution upon them.
42. Or whether [or not] We show you that which We have promised them, indeed, We are Perfect in Ability.
43. So adhere to that which is revealed to you. Indeed, you are on a straight path.
44. And indeed, it is a remembrance¹³³⁹ for you and your people, and you [all] are going to be questioned.
45. And ask those We sent before you of Our messengers; have We made be-
- sides the Most Merciful deities to be worshipped?
46. And certainly did We send Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his establishment, and he said, "Indeed, I am the messenger of the Lord of the worlds."
47. But when he brought them Our signs, at once they laughed at them.
48. And We showed them not a sign except that it was greater than its sister, and We seized them with affliction that perhaps they might return [to faith].
49. And they said [to Moses], "O magician, invoke for us your Lord by what He has promised you. Indeed, we will be guided."
50. But when We removed from them the affliction, at once they broke their word.
51. And Pharaoh called out among his people; he said, "O my people, does not the kingdom of Egypt belong to me, and these rivers flowing beneath me; then do you not see?"
52. Or am I [not] better than this one [i.e., Moses] who is insignificant and hardly makes himself clear?¹³⁴⁰
53. Then why have there not been placed upon him bracelets of gold or come with him the angels in conjunction?"
54. So he bluffed his people, and they obeyed him. Indeed, they were [them-

¹³³⁹ i.e., an honour. Or "a reminder."

¹³⁴⁰ That was true previous to his appointment as a prophet, at which time God corrected his speech impediment.

- selves] a people defiantly disobedient [of God].
55. And when they angered Us, We took retribution from them and drowned them all.
56. And We made them a precedent and an example for the later peoples.
57. And when the son of Mary was presented as an example,¹³⁴¹ immediately your people laughed aloud.
58. And they said, “Are your gods better, or is he?”¹³⁴² They did not present it [i.e., the comparison] except for [mere] argument. But, [in fact], they are a people prone to dispute.
59. He [i.e., Jesus] was not but a servant upon whom We bestowed favor, and We made him an example for the Children of Israel.
60. And if We willed, We could have made [instead] of you angels succeeding [one another]¹³⁴³ on the earth.
61. And indeed, he [i.e., Jesus] will be [a sign for] knowledge of the Hour, so be not in doubt of it, and follow Me.¹³⁴⁴ This is a straight path.
62. And never let Satan avert you. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.
63. And when Jesus brought clear proofs, he said, “I have come to you with wisdom [i.e., prophethood] and to make clear to you some of that over which you differ, so fear God and obey me.
64. Indeed, God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path.”
65. But the denominations from among them differed [and separated], so woe to those who have wronged from the punishment of a painful Day.
66. Are they waiting except for the Hour to come upon them suddenly while they perceive not?
67. Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous
68. [To whom God will say], “O My servants, no fear will there be concerning you this Day, nor will you grieve,
69. [You] who believed in Our verses and were Muslims.
70. Enter Paradise, you and your kinds,¹³⁴⁵ delighted.”
71. Circulated among them will be plates and vessels of gold. And therein is whatever the souls desire and [what] delights the eyes, and you will abide therein eternally.
72. And that is Paradise which you are made to inherit for what you used to do.
73. For you therein is much fruit¹³⁴⁶ from which you will eat.

¹³⁴¹ Of a creation of God which is being worshipped along with Him.

¹³⁴² Implying that they must all be the same.

¹³⁴³ Or “succeeding [you].”

¹³⁴⁴ i.e., follow the guidance and instruction of God.

¹³⁴⁵ i.e., those like you. Another meaning may be “your spouses,” i.e., the righteous among them.

¹³⁴⁶ Meaning everything delicious.

74. Indeed, the criminals will be in the punishment of Hell, abiding eternally.
75. It will not be allowed to subside for them, and they, therein, are in despair.
76. And We did not wrong them, but it was they who were the wrongdoers.
77. And they will call, “O Mālik,¹³⁴⁷ let your Lord put an end to us!” He will say, “Indeed, you will remain.”
78. We had certainly brought you the truth, but most of you, to the truth, were averse.
79. Or have they devised [some] affair?¹³⁴⁸ But indeed, We are devising [a plan].
80. Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private conversations? Yes, [We do], and Our messengers [i.e., angels] are with them recording.
81. Say, [O Muhammad], “If the Most Merciful had a son, then I would be the first of [his] worshippers.”¹³⁴⁹
82. Exalted is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe.
83. So leave them to converse vainly and amuse themselves until they meet their Day which they are promised.
84. And it is He [i.e., God] who is [the only] deity in the heaven, and on the earth [the only] deity. And He is the Wise, the Knowing.
85. And blessed is He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them and with whom is knowledge of the Hour and to whom you will be returned.
86. And those they invoke besides Him do not possess [power of] intercession; but only those who testify to the truth [can benefit], and they know.¹³⁵⁰
87. And if you asked them¹³⁵¹ who created them, they would surely say, “God.” So how are they deluded?
88. And [God acknowledges] his saying,¹³⁵² “O my Lord, indeed these are a people who do not believe.”
89. So turn aside from them and say, “Peace.”¹³⁵³ But they are going to know.

¹³⁴⁷ Addressing the keeper of Hell.

¹³⁴⁸ Conspiracy against the Prophet. The reference here is to the disbelievers of Makkah.

¹³⁴⁹ Only supposing it were so, which it is not.

¹³⁵⁰ That intercession is granted exclusively by permission of God to those He wills.

¹³⁵¹ Those who associate others with God.

¹³⁵² i.e., the complaint of Prophet Muhammad about his people.

¹³⁵³ Meaning safety or security, i.e., “I will not harm you.” This was before permission was granted for armed struggle.