

Section 2: Apostles Sent Before, Referred to

Surah Ya-Sin – Verse 13

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ

13. “And coin for them a similitude of the people of the town, when the messengers came to it.”

The messenger of Allah used to go toward people and they did not wait for people to come toward them.

Following the former discussions about the Qur'an, the Prophecy of the Prophet of Islam (S), the true believers, and the obstinate rejecters, in the verse under discussion, in this regard an example of the situation of the former nations is referred to.

Through this verse and a few verses after it, which totally form eighteen verses of this Surah, the life story of several former prophets who had duty to guide a polytheistic nation and the Qur'an has mentioned *hab-ul-qaryah/* (the people of a town), who opposed them as /as those prophets and belied them and, finally, encountered a painful chastisement, is stated, so that it can be both a warning to the polytheists of Mecca and a solace for the Prophet (S) and the believers of that day.

However, emphasizing on this story which is in the centre of this Surah, which itself is the heart of Qur'an, is for the complete similarity which has with success of the Muslims of that day. It says:

“And coin for them a similitude of the people of the town, when the messengers came to it.”

The Arabic term */qaryah/* originally means the name of a place where people gather (to live); and sometimes the people themselves are called */qaryah/*. Therefore, it has such a vast meaning that it envelops both cities and villages, though in the ordinary Persian language this term is used for only a village.

In Arabic and in the Qur'an this term has frequently been used for the main and important cities, such as: Egypt, Mecca, and the like.

Among the commentators it is popular that this city is meant 'Antakiyyah, which has been one of the cities of Shamat, and it had been one of very famous cities of ancient Room, and at the present time, from the geographical point of view is in the territory of Turkish country.

However, it is understood from the verses of this Surah that the people of this city had been idol worshippers, and these messenger had come to invite them toward Monotheism and struggle against polytheism.

Surah Ya-Sin – Verse 14

إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ مُرْسَلُونَ

14. “When We sent unto them two (of Our apostles) they belied them both, then We strengthened (the two) with a third and they said (unto the people): ‘Verily we are messengers to you (from Allah).’”

This holy verse says:

“When We sent unto them two (of Our apostles) they belied them both, then We strengthened (the two) with a third and they said (unto the people): ‘Verily we are messengers to you (from Allah).’”

Thus, there came to this aberrant people three messengers of Allah.

The ideas are divided among the commentators that who were these messengers. Some of them have said: the names of those two were ‘Sham’un’ and ‘Yuhanna’ and the third of them was Polos, while some others have mentioned other names for them.

Also that they were the messengers of Allah or the angels of Jesus (as), (And if Allah says: **“We sent”** it is for the sake that the messengers of Jesus are His messengers, too.)

Again the ideas are divided among the commentators, though the apparent of the above verses adapts to the first commentary.

Surah Ya-Sin – Verses 15–17

قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ

قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ

وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

15. “They said: ‘You are not but men like unto us, nor has the Beneficent (Allah) sent down anything. You are speaking only lies.’”

16. “They (the messengers) said: ‘Our Lord knows that we have been sent to you.’”

17. “And our duty is only to deliver the clear Message’.”

Now we deal with the reaction of those aberrant people in the face of the invitation of those Divine messengers. The Holy Qur’an implies that they expressed the same pretext that many disobedient unbelievers had formerly stated against the Divine prophets.

The verse says:

“They said: ‘You are not but men like unto us, nor has the Beneficent (Allah) sent down anything. You are speaking only lies’.”

Had it been decided that a messenger came from the side of Allah, he should be a near-stationed angel, not a mortal like us. They considered this very thing as a proof for rejecting the messengers and the denial of the descent of the command of Allah.

They said this while they themselves might also know that all the Divine messengers in the length of history were from the generation of Adam including Abraham (as), whom all knew as a prophet, surely were human beings. Moreover, can anything ever understand the men’s needs, difficulties and pains save a human being?

That why the significant attribute of Allah’s mercifulness is emphasized on, it may be from this point that, by narrating their statement, because: how is it possible for Allah, Whose general Mercy has been spread throughout the world, He does not send some messengers for training people and for inviting human beings to rectitude and development?

However, these prophets were not hopeless from the severe opposition of that misguided people and did not let any weakness and debility come to them.

Their answer to them was as follows:

“They (the messengers) said: ‘Our Lord knows that we have been sent to you.’”

“And our duty is only to deliver the clear Message’.”

Certainly the messengers of Allah did not suffice to mere claiming, and to only oath, but, as it is understood from the Qur’anic sentence /balaq un mubin/ (the clear Message), they showed some miracles and proofs from themselves, else their message, as an expansion of the Clear Message, must be in such a manner that it conveys the reality to all, and this is not possible but by the help of some firm proofs and clear godly miracles.

Some Islamic narrations indicate that, like Jesus (as), by the leave of Allah, they cured some irrecoverable patients.

Surah Ya-Sin – Verses 18–19

قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجِمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

قَالُوا طَائِرُكُم مَّعَكُمُ أَئِن نُّكِّرْتُم بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ

18. “(The pagans told the prophets:) ‘For us, we augur an evil omen from you, if you do not desist, we will certainly stone you, and there shall certainly afflict you a painful chastisement from us’.”

19. “They said: ‘your evil omens are with yourselves, (should you augur a bad omen) if you are admonished? But you are a prodigal people’.”

This verse indicates that not only those blind-hearted people did not submit before that clear logic and those miracles, but also they increased their hardship and went beyond the stage of rejection and reached the stage of threat and vehemence of action, as the Qur’an says:

“(The pagans told the prophets:) ‘For us, we augur an evil omen from you...’”

Perhaps, simultaneous to the time of the advent of these Divine prophets, some difficulties appeared in the life of the people of that area as the result of their sins or as a Divine warning, as some commentators have also cited that the rain ceased to fall for a length of time¹, but not only they did not take a lesson from it, but also they related that event to the invitation of the prophets.

They did not even suffice it, but by the manifest threat they showed their evil and ugly intentions, and

said:

“...if you do not desist, we will certainly stone you, and there shall certainly afflict you a painful chastisement from us’.”

Yes, when the adherents of wrong and the supporters of injustice and corruption have not any acceptable logic, they always rely on some threat, pressure, and hardship.

They are neglectful of the fact that those who pave the path of Allah will never submit because of these threats, but their perseverance will be increased. On the day when they entered this field, they put their souls ahead and became ready for donation.

The second verse indicates that it was here that the Divine messengers, by their expressive and clear logic, answered their meaningless words, as follows:

“They said: ‘your evil omens are with yourselves, (should you augur a bad omen) if you are admonished?...’”

If misery, misfortune, and evil events have encompassed the environment of your society and the Divine blessings have gone out from amongst you, you must seek its cause inside yourselves and in your wrong thoughts, and in your ugly and evil deeds, not in our invitation.

It is you who have made the atmosphere of your lives dark in relation to idolatry, sensuality, tyranny, and voluptuousness, and thus you have ceased the bounties of Allah from you.

A group of commentators have considered the Qur’anic sentence: /’a ’in ʔukkirtum/ as a hinder to an independent matter and said that its concept is this that if the Divine prophets come and admonish you and warn you its recompense is that you threaten them to punishment and think of their existence as omen.

They have brought light, guidance, goodness and blessing for you. Is the response of such a service those threats and ugly words?

At last, the last word of these messengers of Allah to them was this that they said:

“...But you are a prodigal people’.”

That is, the main problem of yours is your prodigality and oppression. If you have denied Monotheism and referred to polytheism, its reason is prodigality and violating the Truth; and if your society has been afflicted an evil fate, its cause is also immoderation in sins and polluting to lusts.

And, finally, if you threaten the benevolent to death for their benevolence, this is also because of your oppression.

Next to the commentary of the rest verses of this story, we will explain about the historical event of these messengers and the place where these events happened.

Surah Ya-Sin – Verses 20-21

وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ

اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

20. “And from the farthest part of the city there came a man running; he said: ‘O’ my people! Follow the messengers;”

21. “Follow those who ask no reward of you, and who are themselves guided.”

Supporting the truth must be accompanied with severity, speed, logic, and sympathy. In order to support the leadership of the truth, breaking the silence and shouting in the swerved environments is admired by Allah.

Another part of the struggles of the messengers, whom are referred to in this story, has been mentioned in this holy verse. It concerns the accurate and bravely support of the believers from them, who, with their small number, stood firmly against the majority of obstinate, polytheistic pagans and defended the Divine prophets with their souls!

The verse says:

“And from the farthest part of the city there came a man running; he said: ‘O’ my people! Follow the messengers;”

This man, whose name has been introduced as ‘Habib Najjar’ by most of the commentators, was one of those who, by their early meetings with the messengers of Allah, recognized the legitimacy of their invitation and the depth of their teachings, and proved that he was a decided and steadfast believer.

As soon as he was informed that in the centre of the city people had quarrelled with these messengers and, perhaps, they intended to kill them, he did not count his silence in that occasion permissible and, as it is understood from the Qur’anic word /yas’a/ (running), he quickly and hastily reached himself to the centre of the city and defended the truth as much as he could.

The application of the Arabic word *Irajull (man)*, in an infinitive form, points to this matter that he was an ordinary person.

He had not so much power and dignity, and he was alone in his own path.

In the meanwhile, the light and the heat of Faith had made him so light and warm that heedless to the sequels of this severe defence from the strugglers of the path of Unity, entered the battle-field, so that the believers of the time of the Prophet of Islam (S), who were not more than a few at the beginning of Islam, would take an example and know that even a single believer has responsibility, too, and silence is not permissible for him.

The application of the Qur'anic phrase *l'aqs al madinah!* (***the farthest part of city***) shows that the invitation of these messengers had reached the far points of the city, too, and had attracted the receptive heart.

Besides this, the far points of the cities are always the place of the oppressed who are more receptive to accept the truth. On the contrary, in the centre of cities there usually live some welfare people who are not easily absorbed to the truth.

The application of the Arabic phrase *lya qauml!* (***O' my people!***) indicates to the sympathy of this simple man unto the citizens and people of that area, and invitation to obeying and following the divine prophets is a sincere invitation which has no benefit in it for him.

Now, we refer to the fact that by which logic and proof did this believing struggler attract the attention of his fellow citizens?

At first he began saying:

“Follow those who ask no reward of you...”

This is the first sign of their veracity, that they have no material benefit in their invitation. They do not demand people any wealth, nor any position and rank, nor even any thank and gratitude, nor any other reward or recompense.

This meaning is the same thing which has repeatedly been emphasized on in the Qur'an concerning the great prophets as the sign of sincerity, no request, and purity of the hearts of prophets.

Only in Surah As-Shu'ara', No. 26, the sentence:

“I do not ask you...”

has been repeated for five times.²

Then the verse concerning these prophets implicitly adds that, as it is understood from the content of their words and invitation, they are some guided persons.

It says:

“...and who are themselves guided.”

This points to this fact that the lack of submission to the invitation of a person is either for the sake that his invitation is in the way of the truth and drives persons to aberration; or it is in the way of the truth but those who bring it earn some benefits under its shade which causes pessimism unto that invitation. But when there is neither that nor this, is there any room for hesitation?

Surah Ya-Sin – Verses 22-24

وَمَا لِي لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

أَتَأْتُهُمْ بَعْثَاتُ رَبِّي فَأَكْفُرُوا بِهَا وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ
أَتَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِنْ يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَنُ بِضُرٍّ لَا تُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئاً وَلَا يُنْقِذُونِ

إِنِّي إِذَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

22. “And why should not I worship Him Who brought me into being, and unto Whom you all shall be returned.”

23. “Shall I take (other) gods besides Him, if the Beneficent (Allah) desires affliction for me, their intercession shall not avail me aught, neither can they deliver me?”

24. “Verily in that case I shall be in manifest error.”

Being attentive toward both Origin and Resurrection is the course of servitude.

The verse says:

“And why should not I worship Him Who brought me into being, and unto Whom you all shall be returned.”

Those who do not serve Allah are condemned in the court of their conscience.

In the second verse it refers to its third reasoning due to idols and it completes the affirmation of the servitude for Allah by negating the servitude from idols.

It says:

“Shall I take (other) gods besides Him, if the Beneficent (Allah) desires affliction for me, their intercession shall not avail me aught, neither can they deliver me?”

Again, here it speaks of himself in order not to have the form of commandment and order, and that others may reckon their own account.

In fact, he has taken the main pretext of the idol worshippers who said they worshipped idols for the sake that they intercede (the idols) in the court of Allah. The Holy Qur’an implies that what kind of intercession may it be? They themselves are in need of your help. What can they do for you when you are in afflictions?

The application of the Qur’anic term ‘Ar-Rahman’ (The Beneficent Allah) here, besides pointing to the vastness of the Mercy of Allah and that all merits and bounties returned toward Him, which itself is a proof upon the ‘Unity of worship’, indicates to this point that the Beneficent Allah does not desire any harm for anyone, unless the man’s wrong action reaches to its utmost degree.

This causes man to be far from the vast scope of Allah’s Mercy and inflicts him in the realm of His Wrath.

Then, in order to emphasize on it and to explain it more, this believing champion said:

“Verily in that case I shall be in manifest error.”

What error can be more manifest than this that a wise man knees before these fatuous idols and puts them in comparison with the Creator of the earth and heaven.

Surah Ya-Sin – Verses 25-27

إِنِّي ءَامَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُونِ

قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ

بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

25. “Verily I have believed in your lord, therefore hear me!”

26. “(Finally he became martyr.) It was said (unto him): ‘Enter Paradise.’ He said: ‘O’ would that

my people had known,”

27. “That my Lord has forgiven me and made me of the honoured ones.”

The best way of invitation is a practical invitation.

To become martyr in the path of supporting the Divine leader and enjoining the right, has a very long background in the history of man.

This verse indicates that this believing champion, the struggler, after expressing these argumentations and effective propaganda, in the presence of a crowd, with a loud voice, said:

“Verily I have believed in your lord...”

“...therefore hear me!”

And do know that I am faithful to the invitation of these messengers. Then utilize my statement, too, because it is in your benefit.

The question is: who is the addressee of this sentence, and also of the sentence which says:

“Verily I have believed in your Lord...”?

The apparent of the previous verses shows that the addressees are the same polytheists and idolaters who were in that land. This meaning has been used in many verses of the Qur’an concerning pagans and at the time of stating the Monotheistic arguments.³

And also the Qur’anic sentence /fasma’un/ (therefore hear me!) does not contrast to what was said, because he has mentioned this sentence to invite them to follow his own statement.

It is similar to what has been mentioned in the story of the believer of ’Al-i-Fir’aun, where, addressing the Pharaohs, he says:

“O’ my people! Follow me, I guide you to the path of guidance.”⁴

This makes it clear the fact that some of the commentators have said the addressees in this sentence are the same messengers who had come from the side of Allah for the invitation of this group, and they have taken the word ‘rabbikum’ and the sentence ‘therefore hear me’ as a ‘frame of reference’ for it, for which there is no kind of evidence available.

But, what did this obstinate group do in respect to this pure believer? The Qur’an says nothing about it, but it is understood from the tone of the later verses that they rebelled against him and killed him.

Yes, the enthusiastic and exiting words of this man which were accompanied with some strong arguments and some interesting points not only did not affect positively on those black hearts and on those mind full of deceit and pride, but also it lit such a fire of enmity and grudge in their hearts that they

sprang and, with utmost callousness and cruelty, attacked this brave man to kill him.

According to a narration, they stoned him and his body was so harshly thrown by stones that he fell down and died, while he constantly was saying:

*“O’ would that my people had known.”*⁵

According to another narration they trampled him under their feet so violently that his soul flew to the heaven.⁶

But the Qur’an has stated this fact in an interesting and secret sentence:

“(Finally he became martyr.) It was said (unto him): ‘Enter Paradise.’...”

This is the meaning which has been used in other verses of the Qur’an about the martyrs in the path of Allah:

“And do not think of those who were killed and in the way of Allah to be dead. Nay, they are alive, being provided sustenance with their Lord.”⁷

It is interesting that this meaning shows that as soon as the martyrdom of this faithful man happened he entered Paradise. The length of the time between these two events was so short that the Qur’an, in its smooth meaning, instead of mentioning his martyrdom, had mentioned his arrival into Paradise; and how nigh is the way of Paradise and the eternal happiness to martyrs!

It is clear that the purpose of Paradise here is the Purgatory Paradise, because it is understood from both the verses of the Qur’an and Islamic narrations that such a Paradise will be of the believers, and in the same manner there will be the Purgatory Hell for the wrong doers, too.

Thus, there will be another kind of Paradise and Hell in the purgatory world which are the samples of Paradise and Hell in Resurrection.

There is a tradition about grave narrated from Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) who said:

*“The grave is either a garden from the gardens of Paradise, or it is a cavity out of the cavities of Hell.”*⁸

However, the pure soul of this man went up to the heavens and hastened toward the nearness of the Divine Mercy, in the bliss of Paradise, where whose only wish was that which the verse continues saying:

“...He said: ‘O’ would that my people had known,”

“That my Lord has forgiven me and made me of the honoured ones.”

He wished that they had had an eye which was not covered with the thick heavy worldly material

curtains and they could see whatever is behind this curtain; that is they might see these plenty of bounties, generosity and honour from the side of Allah and that they might know that, instead of their scorns, what the great favour Allah had done to him.

He wishes they could see and believe. But alas!

A tradition indicates that the Prophet (S) said:

*“Verily this faithful man not only in his life wanted good for his people, but also after his death wished their guidance.”*⁹

It is noteworthy that at first he emphasized on the forgiveness of Allah and then upon His generosity, because, at first, the man’s soul should be purified from the pollution of sins with the spiritual water of forgiveness, and when it became purified, he might approach the rank of nearness and generosity of Allah.

However, this was the end of this man, the true faithful champion, who did not have any shortcoming in fulfilling his duty and supporting the Divine prophets and, at last, he became martyr and succeeded to be admitted to the nearness of Allah’s Mercy.

Now, what was the end of that disobedient cruel nation?

The Qur’an does not say anything about the end of those three prophets who were sent to that nation, but a group of commentators have written that, besides killing that faithful man, that nation killed their own prophets, too.

Surah Ya-Sin – Verses 28-29

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ جُنْدٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُنْزِلِينَ

إِنْ كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَامِدُونَ

28. “And We did not send down upon his people, after him, any host from heaven, nor do We ever send down.”

29. “It was no more than a single (heavenly) Blast that suddenly they were still.”

The angels are the missions of the wrath or affection of Allah, and their coming down or not depends on the command of Allah. However, the Wrath of Allah comes all of a sudden and we should not be

neglectful.

Former holy verses explained how the people of Antioch opposed the Divine prophets.

Now, we may refer to their end. In this respect, the Qur'an says:

“And We did not send down upon his people, after him, any host from heaven, nor do We ever send down.”

It is not so that for destroying this disobedient nation We betake to these things.

We do not need such affairs. Only a single hint is enough that We cause them to be quenched and, by ruining their life, We send them to destruction.

Only a single command is enough that the factors of their lives changes into the factors of their death, and in only a short moment all their lives would be annihilated.

In the second verse, the Qur'an adds:

“It was no more than a single (heavenly) Blast, that suddenly they were still.”

Was this Blast the sound of a thunderbolt which appeared from a piece of cloud and came down to the earth, shook everything and ruined all buildings, and by means of the intense terror, they submitted to death?

Or was it a blast which, as the result of a horrible earthquake, came out from the inside of the earth into the atmosphere and the waves of its burst brought all to the mouth of death?

Whatever it was, it was no more than a Blast happened in a fleeting moment. It was a 'cry' which made all cries silent, and it was a shock which caused all to be motionless. And such is the power of Allah, and this was the fate of a misguided and useless nation.

Surah Ya-Sin – Verse 30

يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

30. “Alas for the servants! Never came there unto them a messenger but they used to mock him!”

Mocking the Divine prophets has been the constant style of pagans throughout the history of man.

This verse with a very attractive and effective tone puts the opposition of all arrogant ones of the history against the invitation of the Divine prophets in a lump under discussion.

It says:

“Alas for the servants! Never came there unto them a messenger but they used to mock him!”

Woe to those who shut the doors of Allah’s Mercy to them themselves!

Alas for those who broke their torches of guidance!

Miserable and deprived of happiness are those who not only did not hearken to the call of the Divine leaders, but also tried to mock them, and then, they killed them by swords, while they had seen the evil fate of those faithless arrogant people before them and they had heard by their ears or studied in history the painful end of theirs that they did not take the least example and paved just the same way they had gone and, consequently, faced with the same fate.

It is clear that this sentence is the word of Allah, since all these verses have been stated from His side, but, of course, the term ‘Alas’ in the sense of inner annoyance concerning the events for which man cannot do anything, is meaningless about Allah; as ‘Wrath’, ‘anger’ and the like, in their real concepts do not exist in respect to Allah either.

But the purpose is that the status of those wretched people was so that whoever became aware of their circumstance he would be sad and stressed that why did they drown in that horrible whirlpool while they had so many means of prosperity.

The application of the Qur’anic word /‘ibad/, (the servants of Allah), points to this fact that it is surprising that the servants of Allah, who are encompassed with the bounties of Allah, have committed such crimes.

Surah Ya-Sin – Verses 31–32

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ

وَإِن كُلُّ لَمَّا جَمِيعٌ لَدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ

31. “Have they not seen how many generations We destroyed before them? Not to them will they return.”

32. “And all of them shall surely be brought before Us.”

The consequence of people’s mocking Divine prophets is annihilation, and when the Wrath of Allah

comes, there is no way for them to return and recompense. We must not lose the opportunities.

That is why the Qur'an in these two holy verses says:

“Have they not seen how many generations We destroyed before them?...”

These are not the first people who lived on the earth. There have been some other arrogant people before them who lived in this world and the painful fate of them which has been recorded in the history and the sorrowful traces which have been remained from them in the ruins of their habituated cities are in front of their eyes.

Is this amount of news not enough for them to take example?

That to whom does the plural pronoun in the Qur'anic sentence saying /'alam yarau/ (have they not seen) return? The commentators have delivered some probabilities:

The first is that it returns to the 'people of the town' about whom the previous verses talked. And also its purpose maybe the people of Mecca for whom these verses were revealed to be warned of.

But, regarding to the previous verse saying:

“Alas for the servants!...”

it shows that its purpose is all human beings, because the Qur'anic word /'ibad/ (servants) in that verse envelops all human being throughout the history, those who, at the time of appointment of the Divine prophets, belied them and mocked them.

However, it is an invitation to all the people of the world that they may carefully study the story of former nations, and observe their remaining effects, and use the sense of taking an example from them to understand them well, and the ruin castles of those arrogant people may have an effect on them.

At the end, the verse adds:

“...Not to them will they return.”

That is, the great calamity is here that they have no possibility to return to the world and recompense their former sins and misfortunes. The bridges behind them have been ruined so violently that it is impossible for them to return in order to recompense these faults.

This commentary is just like the word of Hadrat Ali (as) who has said in one of the sermons of Nahj-ul-Balaqah about taking example from the dead.

He said:

“There is neither a possibility that they transfer from their ugly deeds nor are they able to increase their

goodness."¹⁰

In the next verse the Qur'an says:

"And all of them shall surely be brought before Us."

That is, it is not such that if they were destroyed and could not return to this world, everything is finished. In fact, death is neither the beginning nor the end. Soon all human beings will be mustered in the scene of Hereafter for reckoning and, after that, there will be the painful chastisement of Allah which is waiting for the wrong doers.

In this case, is it not the time they take example from their condition and do not afflict themselves in the same fate as theirs and, in this remaining respite, they go aside from this terrible whirlpool.

Yes, if death were the end of everything, it would be possible to say that it was the beginning of tranquillity, but also it is not so. If we were left to ourselves when we died, death would be the cause of rest for all the living people. But when we pass away, we will be quickened again and after that we wholly will be asked about everything.

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1. Tafsir-i-Qurtabi, following the verse
 2. Verses: 109, 127, 145, 164, and 180
 3. You may refer to Surah Yunus, verses 3, and 32; Surah Hud, verses 3 and 52, Surah An-Nahl, verse 24; Al-Kahf, verse 29
 4. Surah Qafir, No. 40, verse 35
 5. The commentary book by Qurtabi
 6. The commentary books: Majma'ul-Bayan, Tibyan, Abulfutuh-i-Razi and so on.
 7. Surah 'Al-i-'Imran, No. 3, verse 169
 8. Bihar-ul-'Anwar, Vol. 6, P. 218
 9. Tafsir-i-Qurtabi, Vol. 8, P. 5464
 10. Nahj-ul-Balaqah, sermon 188

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