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Core Themes
& Topics of the
Glorious Qur'an

DUNYA AND AKHIRAH

Published By:



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HUMANITARIAN CENTRE
GUIDANCE • UBUNTU • EMPOWERMENT

Dunya and Akhirah

This World and the Hereafter

This world, in Qur'anic terminology, is known as *dunya*, (the temporal world) and the next world is known as *Akhirah* (the eternal hereafter). The two worlds are important concepts and themes in the Qur'an.

The word *dunya*, is derived from the Arabic root meaning 'closer' or 'lower'. It refers to the physical, temporal life on earth, described as fleeting, deceptive, and a place of trial.

Akhirah means 'that which comes after'. It refers to the eternal life following death and the Day of Judgment. It is the ultimate destination where individuals are rewarded with *Jannah* (Paradise) or punished in *Jahannam* (Hell) based on their deeds.

Dunya is not meant to be entirely rejected, but rather used as a gateway to earn success in the *Akhirah*.

Fleeting Nature of Dunya

The term '*dunya*' appears in the Qur'an approximately 115 times and refers both to the temporal world and to the limited span of human life on earth. The Qur'an consistently emphasises the fleeting and impermanent nature of worldly life in comparison to the eternal reality of the Hereafter – *Al-Akhirah*.

While the world is primarily a place of preparation for the Hereafter, the Qur'an does not deny its value altogether. Believers are encouraged to seek goodness in both realms.

Verses to this effect are:

“Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your compensation on the Day of Resurrection. So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained (his desire). And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion.” (Surah Al Imran – Verse 185)

“And the worldly life is not but amusement and diversion; but the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear Allah, so will you not reason?” (Surah Al Anaam 6 – Verse 32)

“Who took their religion as distraction and amusement and whom the worldly life deluded?” So today We will forget them just as they forgot the meeting of this Day of theirs and for having rejected Our verses.” (Surah Al-Araaf 7 – Verse 51)

“Whoever desires the life of this world and its adornments – We fully repay them for their deeds therein, and they therein will not be deprived.” (Surah Hud 11 – Verse 15)

Parable of this World

Whilst both worlds are related, there are stark contrasts between the two.

“Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We shall increase his harvest; and whoever desires the harvest of this world, We give him something thereof, but he will have no share in the Hereafter.” (Surah as-Shura 42 – Verse 20)

Thus, the Qur’an presents closeness to Allah as the ultimate reality, while worldly enjoyment is described as limited and transient.

The Qur’an frequently illustrates the nature of worldly life through vivid parables. One such example likens worldly existence to rain that brings vegetation, which soon withers and becomes scattered straw: “Strike for them the parable of the life of this world: it is like water We send down from the sky; the vegetation of the earth mingles with it, then it becomes dry stubble scattered by the winds” (18:45). The Qur’an cautions that dedicating oneself entirely to such an unstable reality is a loss of one’s true purpose. Life’s meaning is not found in worldly appearances, which are merely signs pointing beyond themselves.

In this regard, the Qur’an declares: “The life of this world is nothing but play and diversion” (18:45), and warns of those who are content with worldly life and heedless of God’s signs: “Surely those who do not hope to encounter Us, and are satisfied with the life of this world and feel secure therein - those, their refuge is the Fire.” (10:7).

The Qur’an also mentions those who deny the afterlife altogether: “There is nothing but our life of this world; we shall not be raised.” (6:29). The verse implies that if such individuals were to witness the reality of the Hereafter, they would realise the grave error of their belief.

Seeking the Balance

While Islam emphasises the importance of the Hereafter, it does not disregard the significance of this worldly life. On the contrary, it acknowledges that the dunya has a role to play in the journey toward the hereafter. It encourages Muslims to engage with the world in a responsible, ethical, and productive manner so long as the pursuit of this world does not distract from one's duties towards Allah or lead to transgression.

The Qur'anic guidance calls for a balance in approach to both worlds,

“Rather, seek the reward of the Hereafter by means of what Allah has granted you, without forgetting your share of this world. And be good (to others) as Allah has been good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for Allah certainly does not like the corruptors.”

(Surah 28 – Verse 77)

The Qur'an does not call for the abandonment of the world, nor does it permit absorption in it. Rather, it establishes a balanced path in which the Dunya serves as a means, not an end, and the Akhirah remains the ultimate objective. This life is a trust from Allah, through which one earns eternal success by obedience, gratitude, and righteous action.

This balance is achieved when worldly pursuits such as work, family, wealth, and social responsibility are guided by the teachings and moral purpose. When the work of this world is aligned with remembrance of Allah, it becomes a path to the Akhirah rather than a distraction from it. The Sunnah exemplifies this

balance, combining deep devotion with active engagement in society, teaching that the best of people are those who benefit others while remaining conscious of their return to Allah Ta'ala.

The Qur'an does not prohibit lawful enjoyment nor material provision, but warns against allowing the heart to become attached to what is temporary. True loss lies not in possessing the world, but in being possessed by it. Success belongs to those who use the world as a bridge, not a dwelling, who act in this world with the awareness that they will stand before Allah Ta'ala in the Akhirah.

Seeking Good of both Worlds

This verse represents a profound dua which we are encouraged to recite and internalise

And of them there are some who say: *"Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire!"*
(Surah Al Baqarah – Verse 201)

This supplication includes all good aspects of this life and seeks refuge from all types of evil. The good of this life concerns every material request of well-being, spacious dwelling, good spouses, sufficient provision, beneficial knowledge, good profession or deeds, comfortable means of transportation and respect, all of which the scholars of Tafseer have mentioned regarding this subject. All of these are but a part of the good that is sought in this life. As for the good of the

Hereafter, the best of this includes acquiring Paradise, which also means acquiring safety from the greatest horror at the gathering place. It also refers to being questioned lightly and the other favours in the Hereafter.

Al-Qasim bin Abdur-Rahman said, "Whoever is gifted with a grateful heart, a remembering tongue and a patient body, will have been endowed with a good deed in this life, a good deed in the Hereafter and saved from the torment of the Fire." (Tafseer ibn Kathir)

Live like a Traveller

"Live in this world as though you were a stranger or a traveller." (Bukhari)

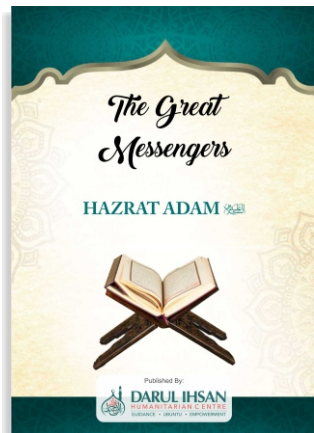
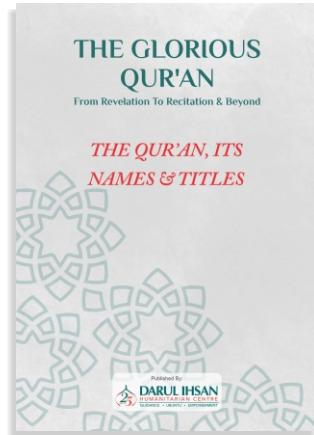
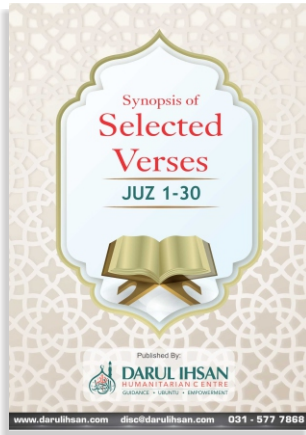
This narration teaches detachment, not from the world itself, but from becoming overly attached to its temporary pleasures and trials. Just as a traveller does not settle permanently in a temporary lodging, a believer should not become consumed by the distractions of dunya.

This hadith highlights the balanced lifestyle that Islam promotes, fulfilling one's responsibilities to Allah, to oneself, and to others. It dispels the false notion that piety means neglecting family or health, or that religiosity requires renouncing all worldly enjoyment. On the contrary, Islam promotes a life of responsibility, moderation, and dignity.

This verse reassures believers that even if they are overlooked or oppressed in this life, their patience and righteousness will not go unnoticed by Allah. Success, in its most enduring and meaningful sense, is reserved for those who live with consciousness, humility, and integrity.

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About Darul Ihsan

Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre provides education, guidance, social, empowerment and welfare services to the community. In providing this service, we adopt a holistic approach, that gives due importance to basic needs as well as human rights and dignity of those that we serve.

Founding Philosophy

Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre is a multi-purpose, humanitarian-services providing organisation. 'Ihsan' means compassion towards mankind and to act with excellence. The Centre was established in the year 2000 with the primary objective of serving humanity and alleviating poverty and hardship locally and abroad. Since its inception, it has developed and established many humanitarian projects and provides a variety of free services to the community.

Key Objectives

One of the key objectives of the Centre is to promote a better understanding of humanity and peace, thereby serving as a bridge-builder between faiths and communities. Through guidance, Ubuntu and empowerment, the organisation hopes to train and develop the youth to become torch bearers of hope, peace and compassion to humanity.

