

Conversations in Paradise and Hell

(part 1 of 3): Talking to Angels



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We begin with a new series of articles about the conversations that take place in Paradise and Hell. It is hoped, that by reminding ourselves of what has been described to us of Paradise/the Heavenly Gardens and Hell, we will be able to experience and imagine the events that will take place when we come face to face with our abode in the Hereafter.

Why does God give us insight into these conversations? The Quran is filled with not just descriptions of the Heavenly Gardens and Hell, but conversations, dialogues, discourses and intellectual discussions. When similar scenarios are repeated over and over it is an indication that God is saying, “pay attention!” It is therefore incumbent upon us to do just that - pay careful attention, with either hope for the blissful abode known as the Heavenly Gardens or seek to protect ourselves from the fires of Hell. Information is repeated over and over in order to make us think long and hard.

In the following articles we will look at several different categories of conversations. The conversations of the angels with the people of the Heavenly Gardens and with the people of the Hellfire, the conversations that take place between the people of the Heavenly Gardens and Hell with their family members, and the conversations God has with the people of both the Heavenly Gardens and Hell. In addition to this we will look at what the people of both the Heavenly Gardens and Hell say between themselves, to each other and their internal dialogues. Let us begin with the conversations between the angels and the people of the Hereafter.

Conversing with Angels

Angels dwell amongst human beings from our beginning until the very end. They are responsible for breathing the souls into the foetuses, they record our good and bad deeds and they extract the souls from our bodies at the point of death. As we enter our eternal abode, our afterlife, they are with us and we will be able to converse with them.

The People of the Heavenly Gardens

The eternal abode of those who have lived their lives with patience in the face of adversity, and strived to be righteous through times of difficulty and ease, is the eternal, Heavenly Gardens known as *Jannah*. When the people who will spend eternity in the Heavenly Gardens enter into their new home the angels will greet them. These are the gatekeepers of the Heavenly Gardens and they will say, “enter here in peace, because of your patience!” The Heavenly Gardens is a place of eternal serenity and total satisfaction.

And those who kept their duty to their Lord will be led to the Heavenly Gardens in groups, till, when they reach it, and its gates will be opened (before their arrival for their reception) and its keepers will say: Salamun ‘Alaikum (peace be upon you)! You have done well, so enter here to abide therein.” (Quran 39:73)

All sense of injury or pain will be removed from their hearts. They will reply to the angels by praising God, and the conversation continues.

“...All the praises and thanks be to God, Who has guided us to this, and never could we have found guidance, were it not that God had guided us! Indeed, the Messengers of our Lord did come with the truth.” And it will be cried out to them: “This is the the Heavenly Gardens which you have inherited for what you used to do.” (Quran 7:43)

The people of the Hell fire

The conversations that will take place between the people of the Hellfire and the angels will be entirely different. The dwellers of the Hellfire will be having an entirely different experience. Instead of waiting eagerly to be entered into their eternal abode the people destined for Hell will have to be herded and dragged by the angels in charge of the fire. As the bereft people are cast into it the angels will say, “Didn’t a warner come to you?”

It almost bursts up with fury. Every time a group is cast therein, its keeper will ask: “Did no warner come to you?”

They will say: “Yes, indeed a warner did come to us, but we belied him and said: ‘Allah never sent down anything (of revelation); you are only in great error.’“ And they will say: “Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing Fire!” (Quran 67:8-10)

This however was not the first time these dwellers of the fire carried on a conversation with the angels. When the angel of death and his assistants gather to remove the souls of such people they ask pointedly, where are those you worshipped besides God? Because at this stage of a person’s life his idols are conspicuously absent.

...when Our Messengers (the angel of death and his assistants) come to them to take their souls, they (the angels) will say: “Where are those whom you used to invoke and worship besides God,” they will reply, “They have vanished and deserted us.” And they will bear witness against themselves, that they were disbelievers. (Quran 7:37)

After some period of time the dwellers of the Hellfire begin to lose all hope. They have been calling out to God but receive no response, so they begin to beg the angels, the gatekeepers. Call on your Lord they say, ask Him to lighten our punishment. The angels respond with words that increase their disappointment.

And those in the Fire will say to the keepers (angels) of Hell: “Call upon your Lord to lighten for us the torment for a day!” They will say: “Did there not come to you, your Messengers with (clear) evidence (and signs)?” They will say: “Yes.” They will reply: “Then call (as you like)! ... (Quran 40:49-50)

(part 2 of 3): Dialogues and Discussions



Conversations between the people of Paradise and the people of Hell

The dialogue that takes place between the people of Paradise and the people whose abode is the Hellfire is mentioned in several places in the

Quran. When we read and ponder over these verses it is incumbent upon us to reflect and try to learn something from the despair of those who face the horrors of hell. We should taste their fear and learn from their mistakes. Reading about them in the Quran allows us to experience something of their pain but it also allows us to see how easily we can avoid this destination.

In Paradise they will ask one another about the guilty (polytheists, criminals, and disbelievers), (and they will ask them), “What has caused you to enter Hell?” They will say: “We were not of those who used to offer the prayer, nor did we feed the poor; and we used to talk falsehood (all that which God hated) with vain talkers and we used to belie the Day of Recompense, until there came to us (the death) that is certain.” (Quran 74:40-47)

The dwellers of Paradise will call out to the dwellers of Hell: “We have found that what our Lord promised us is true. Have you found that what your Lord promised you is true?” They will say: “Yes, we have!”... (Quran 7:44)

The dwellers of Hell will call out to the dwellers of Paradise: “Throw down some water to us, or some of what Allah has provided you with.” They will say: “God has forbidden them to the disbelievers.” (Quran 7: 50)

It is clear that the suffering of those in Hell is increased by them being able to see and hear the blessings bestowed upon the dwellers of Paradise.

Conversations the dwellers of Paradise have between themselves

The Words of God, in the Quran, tell us that the dwellers of Paradise will ask each other about their past lives.

“And they will approach one another, inquiring of each other. They will say, “Aforetime we were afraid with our families [of the punishment of God], but God has been gracious to us, and has saved us from the torment of the Fire.” (Quran 52:25-27)

The majority of verses describing the conversations amongst the people of Paradise confirm that they will continue their righteous behaviour by praising and thanking God for the blessings He has bestowed upon them. Although they had believed the promise of God to be true and thus behaved accordingly, the supreme magnificence of Paradise overwhelms them with gratitude.

And they will say: “All the praises and thanks be to God Who has removed from us (all) grief. Verily, our Lord is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate (good deeds and to recompense). Who, out of His Grace, has lodged us in a home that will last forever, where toil will touch us not nor weariness will touch us.” (Quran 35:34-35)

And they will say: “All the praises and thanks be to God Who has fulfilled His Promise to us and has made us inherit (this) land. We can dwell in Paradise where we will; how excellent is the reward of those who labour!” (Quran 39:74)

Conversations the People of the Hellfire have amongst themselves

When the people destined to spend eternity in the Hellfire have been herded into the fire, they will be shocked that the people or idols they had trusted and followed are not able to help them. The leaders, who are called the arrogant in the Quran, admit to their weaker followers that they were themselves astray. Thus anyone who followed them, followed them into a life bereft of mercy.

And they will turn on one another accusingly. They will say: “You came to us from a position of power [i.e. ordered us with polytheism, and stopped us from the truth].” They will reply: “No! It was you who would not believe - we had no authority over you - and you were already exceeding all limits. Our Lord’s sentence on us is just and we must all taste the punishment. We led you astray as we ourselves were astray.” (Quran 37:27-32)

And they all shall appear before Allah (on the Day of Resurrection); then the weak will say to those who were arrogant, “Verily, we were following you; can you avail us anything against God’s Torment?” They will say: “Had God guided us, we would have guided you. It makes no difference to us (now) whether we rage, or bear (these torments) with patience; there is no place of refuge for us.” (Quran 14:21)

And when the matter is decided, that is the matter of who is destined for Paradise and who is destined for Hell, the Hellfire’s most infamous, notorious occupant, Satan himself will reveal a great truth. It is a truth and scenario that God revealed to us in the Quran, but one that many people did not take seriously. That he, Satan, was a liar. Satan’s promises were never going to be fulfilled, his promises were empty and he himself believed in God.

**And Satan will say when the matter has been decided:
“Verily, God promised you a promise of truth. And I too
promised you, but I betrayed you. I had no authority over
you except to call you, and you responded to my call. So do
not blame me but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor
can you help me. I deny your former act in associating me
(Satan) as a partner with God (by obeying me in the life of the
world). Verily, there is a painful torment for the wrong-
doers.” (Quran 14:22)**

(part 3 of 3): And I shall never hereafter be angry with you



Internal dialogues

When the matter has been decided, and the people of the Hellfire have been lead away, and the people of Paradise have entered the garden, each group of people will talk amongst themselves. Their lives in the world are not forgotten and for both groups there is an eternity in which to look back and

analyse why - why am I suffering, or why am I entitled to this luxury? The matter has been decided, the short time that was spent in the life of this world is over and life everlasting has begun.

He (God) will say: “What number of years did you stay on earth. They will say: “We stayed a day or part of a day. Ask of those who keep account.” He (God) will say: “You stayed not but a little, if you had only known! (Quran 23:113)

We know that the dwellers of both Paradise and Hell will turn to each other questioning, however what will they say to themselves, how will they feel, bereft, alone and forsaken? God tells us that they will sigh, in fear, in frustration. It is hard for us to imagine but we do know that they appear to give up hope.

“As for those who are wretched, they will be in the Fire, sighing in a high and low tone.” (Quran 11:106)

“...and has prepared for them a flaming Fire (Hell). Wherein they will abide forever, and they will find neither a protector,

nor a helper. On the Day when their faces will be turned over in the Fire, they will say: “Oh, would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger “. (Quran 33:64-66)

When the people of the Hellfire ponder about why those whom they followed in this world are not able to help them in their suffering, in it is a lesson for us to learn. In the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad we are able to read and see with our mind’s eye just what our own situation could potentially be.

What a contrast and a delight it will be for those who are entered into Paradise. They will have the extreme pleasure of seeing God, this is something that will be denied to the people of the Hellfire. **“Surely they will be veiled from seeing their lord that day”**. (Quran 83:15)

The People of Paradise and the Dwellers of the Hellfire Conversing with Family Members

There are not many verses of Quran or traditions from Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, that show us conversations taking place between people in their eternal abodes with their family members. There is however evidence to show that they will indeed remember their lives in this world and think about their family members.

“And they will approach one another, inquiring of each other. They will say, “Aforetime we were afraid with our families [of the punishment of God], but God has been gracious to us, and has saved us from the torment of the Fire. Verily, we used to invoke Him (Alone) before. Verily, He is the Most Kind, the Most Merciful.” (Quran 52:25-28)

Conversations between God and the Dwellers of the Hellfire

The conversations that we find between God and the people of the Hellfire are not numerous. We more easily find verses from Quran where they, the dwellers of the Hellfire converse amongst themselves or with the angels who guard the gates of Hell. However there is one conversation that is striking and it should be clear in our minds, so that we protect ourselves from ever hearing these awful words. The dwellers of Hell will say:

“Our Lord! Bring us out of this. If ever we return (to evil), then we would indeed be wrongdoers.”

He (God) will say: “Remain you in it, in a state of humiliation! And do not speak to Me!” (Quran 23:107-108)

Conversations between God and the People of Paradise

In the traditions of Prophet Muhammad we find a very touching and delightful conversation between God, and the last person to exit from the torment of Hellfire by the mercy of God. The man is invited to enter Paradise and so he will go to it and think that Paradise is full. The man returns to God and says “My Lord, I found Paradise full,” and God will reply, “Go and enter Paradise for there you have something ten times better than the world and everything in it”. Prophet Muhammad said, “That is the one who is lowest in status of the people of Paradise”.^[1]

Another man will be asked by God if he has everything he wants and he will reply to his Lord saying “Yes, but I like to grow things.” So he will go and plant his seeds, and within the blinking of an eye they will grow, ripen, be harvested and piled up like mountains.^[2]

We will finish our three part series with a very beautiful saying in the hope that each and every one who reads or hears this beautiful conversation will, at the end of their lives and the beginning of their Hereafter, be a part of this conversation.

God will say to the people of Paradise: “O People of Paradise! They will respond: “Here we are, Our Lord, and all the good is in Your Hands.” God will say: “Are you satisfied? They will answer: “Why shouldn’t we be satisfied when You have bestowed on us what You have not bestowed on any of Your other creation.” He will say “Shall I not bestow upon you something even better than that? They will say: “O Our Lord! What could be better than that? God will say: “I bestow upon you My pleasure and I shall never hereafter be angry with you.”^[3]

Footnotes:

^[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

^[2] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

^[3] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*