34618 - One of the signs of the Hour is that time will pass more quickly

the question

Is it one of the signs of the hour that days will pass quickly and will become short?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Perhaps the questioner is referring to the hadeeth narrated by al-Bukhaari (1036) from Abu Hurayrah who said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The Hour will not begin until knowledge is taken away, earthquakes increase, time passes quickly, tribulations appear, and there is a lot of haraj, which is killing, killing, and until there will be a lot of wealth among you and it will become abundant.”

And Ahmad narrated (10560) that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The Hour will not begin until time passes quickly, so a year will be like a month, and a month will be like a week, and a week will be like a day, and a day will be like an hour, and an hour will be like the burning of a braid of palm leaves.”

Ibn Katheer said: Its isnaad is (saheeh) according to the conditions of Muslim. And it was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami’, 7422.

These two ahaadeeth indicate that one of the signs of the Hour is that time will pass more quickly.

The scholars differed concerning the meaning of the phrase taqaarub al-zamaan (time passing more quickly). There are many views, the strongest of which is:

That the phrase taqaarub al-zamaan (time passing quickly) may be interpreted literally or metaphorically.

The metaphorical meaning is that barakah (blessing) will disappear from time, which is something

that started a long time ago.

This was the view favoured by al-Qaadi ‘Iyaad, al-Nawawi and al-Haafiz ibn Hajar (may Allaah have mercy on them).

Al-Nawawi said: what is meant by its becoming short is that there will be no barakah in it, and that the benefit that a person gets from one day, for example, will be the equivalent of the benefit that he used to get in a single hour.

Al-Haafiz said: The fact of the matter is that what it means is that barakah will disappear from everything, even from time. That is one of the signs that the Hour is at hand.

The metaphorical meaning also includes ease and speed of travel between distant places, so that it may be regarded as time passing more quickly. Distances that took months to cross in the past do not take more than a number of hours nowadays.

Shaykh Ibn Baaz said, in his commentary on Fath al-Baari, 2/522: the time passing quickly mentioned in the hadeeth may be interpreted in the sense of what has happened nowadays, where the distances between cities and regions have grown shorter and it takes less time to travel between them, because of the invention of planes, cars, broadcasting, etc. And Allaah knows best.

With regard to the literal meaning, that days will become shorter in a real sense, so that the hours of night and day pass quickly, this has not happened yet, but it is not something impossible. This is supported by the fact that the days of the Dajjaal will become longer so that a day will be like a year or a month or a week in length. Just as days may become longer, they may also become shorter. That will be because of the world system going out of control and the approach of the end of the world.

In al-Fath, al-Haafiz quoted Ibn Abi Jamrah as saying:

It may be that what is meant by time passing quickly is that time will literally become shorter, based on what is said in the hadeeth: “The Hour will not begin until a year is like a month.” Based

on this, then the shortening of time may be understood in a literal sense, or it may be metaphorical. In the real sense it has not started yet, but it may be one of the things that will happen when the Hour is at hand. With regard to the metaphorical sense, it appeared some time ago. This is known to the religious scholars and also to those who are smart and involved in worldly affairs, for they find that none of them can do as much work as they used to do before, and they complain about that and do not know the reason for it. Perhaps that is because of the weakness of faith and the emergence of things that go against Islam in many ways. The worst of that lack of barakah is mostly manifested in provision, because the sources of provision are either completely haraam or are dubious, as is obvious to everyone, to such an extent that many people do not care where their provision comes from; wherever they can get they take it and they do not care. In fact the barakah in time, provision and agriculture can only be obtained by means of strength of faith, following Allaah's commands and heeding His prohibitions. The proof of that is the words of Allaah (interpretation of the meaning):

"And if the people of the towns had believed and had the Taqwa (piety), certainly, We should have opened for them blessings from the heaven and the earth"

[al-A'raaf 7:96]

Al-Suyooti said something similar in al-Haawi li'l-Fataawi (1/44), where he said concerning the meaning of this hadeeth:

It was said that this is in fact literal, and that the hours of day and night will grow shorter when the onset of the Hour is at hand. And it was said that it is metaphorical, and that what is meant is that days will pass quickly and the barakah will be removed from all things, even from time…. And there are other opinions as well. And Allaah knows best.

There is no contradiction between these three views, that it means the removal of blessing, ease of transportation and time passing more quickly in a literal sense. There is no reason why the hadeeth should not be interpreted as meaning all of them. And Allaah knows best.

There are other opinions concerning the meaning of "time passing quickly," but they are not as

strong as the opinions quoted above. For example there is the view of al-Khattaabi, which is that life will become enjoyable. Al-Haafiz said: It means – and Allaah knows best – that this will happen at the time of the Mahdi, when security and justice prevail throughout the earth, and life will become enjoyable at that time, and people will feel that time is shorter; because people feel that times of ease are short even when they are long, and they feel that times of hardship last long, even if they are short. Then al-Haafiz said: Rather al-Khattaabi interpreted it in this manner because that this shortness of time had not yet happened in his era. But what the hadeeth refers to is happening in our time, for we see that days are passing quickly in a way that did not happen during previous times, even though there is no easy life. In fact the meaning is metaphorical and refers to the removal of barakah.

Another opinion was that of Ibn Battaal, which is that what is meant is that people will become similar to one another in their lack of religious commitment, so that there will not be anyone among them who enjoins what is good and forbids what is evil, because of the prevalence of evil and its people.

This interpretation goes against the apparent meaning of the hadeeth and is refuted by what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said in another hadeeth: “The Hour will not begin until time passes more quickly so that a year will be like a month…” It is obvious that what is meant is that time itself will pass more quickly, not that people will start to resemble one another in their lack of religious commitment.

And Allaah knows best.

See Fath al-Baari, 13/21, commentary on hadeeth no. 7061.

Ittihaaf al-Jamaa’ah by al-Tuwayjri, 1/497

Al-Sunan al-Waaridah fi’l-Fitan wa Ghawaa’iliha wa’l-Saa’ah wa Ashraatiha by Abu ‘Amr ‘Uthmaan al-Daani, ed. By Dr. Rida’-Allaah al-Mubaarakfoori

Ashraat al-Saa’ah by al-Waabil, p. 120.