Summary of Juz 3

Surat al-Baqara continued

The opening verse of this Juz points to the spiritual hierarchy, prophets are honoured according to their ranks. This supported the Israelites idea of 'being favoured people'. However, Allah sets the rule of meritocracy, and that is based on faith, efforts and Divine grace. The 'Verse of the Throne' is a glorious portrayal of Allah's majesty, power and control of the universe, its message is that all humans can attain Allah's friendship and nearness through virtuous deeds.

Freedom of religion is a recurrent theme of the Quran
"There is no compulsion in religion. Guidance is clearly distinct from error. Whoever rejects false gods and believes solely in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold, which will never break. Allah is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing" (256).

The theme of Allah's friendship of the believers continues and examples are given of how He cared for His friends:

- Ibrahim defeats the tyrant Emperor Namrood.
- Uzair is shown Allah's power over life and death.
- Ibrahim witnesses the resurrection of dead birds.

The attitudes and behaviours of the friends of Allah are characterised by generosity. They are willing to spend in the way of Allah what they have. Parables are told to show their virtue in glowing terms:

- Parable of a single grain teaches that giving one pound will earn seven hundred pounds.
- The parable of the soil-covered rock teaches the message to not be shallow and mean when giving, but to give freely without seeking favours in return.
- Whether you give openly or secretly, do it to please Allah.
- Recognise the genuinely needy, find a worthy cause to support.

Allah declares war on people who take usury, charging extortionate rates of interest on loans. Usury contradicts human nature, which is to be compassionate as opposed to taking advantage of the poor and exploiting them.

- All commercial deals should be recorded and written in the presence of witnesses.
- The place of securities and trust in business deals. Witnesses are required to protect those liable.

After so many legal orders the reader is reminded that this comes from Allah, who has knowledge of all things visible and invisible, so bear him in mind all the time, you are being watched! The Surat ends by giving details of the beliefs of faithful, just as it opened by describing their qualities. Finally, it closes with a prayer of reassurance and seeking Divine kindness.

Surat Aal-e-Imran – The Family of Imran

The third Juz continues with Surat Ale Imran, revealed after the battle of Uhud, in the Shawwal of 3 AH (Anno Hegirae, "in the year of the Hijra"). It tells the story of 'The family of Imran,' the father of Maryam, the mother of Prophet Isa.

The Quran is the absolute standard for goodness, the Surat opens by proclaiming that Allah's revelation has been continuous from the beginning of time and that it includes the Torah of the Jewish Scriptures, the scrolls revealed to many other prophets and the Gospels of the Christians. The Quran is a continuation of that chain and the final revelation. So, the People of the Book are invited to embrace this final testament.

Searching for the hidden meanings of the Quran could mislead. So, the Quran warns against focusing on ambiguous and metaphorical passages and making arbitrary interpretations that go against the spirit of the divine message, thus sowing the seeds of conflict, even though, "Only Allah knows their exact meaning" (7). This kind of 'stretching' the meanings of divine scripture was the root of sectarianism rampant among the Jews and Christians. The Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus and the declaration that Jesus is the 'son of God' is an example of this arbitrary interpretation of the Gospel.

Worldly wealth and power aren't a guarantee of success

The defeat of the Makkans in the Battle of Badr had confirmed this reality. The worldly wealth and luxuries are fleeting and temporary whilst the fruits of righteous life will be everlasting in paradise. This is a result of submission to Allah, a deep commitment to serving the Lord. This is true religion, the guidance and way forward. So, those who are disobedient will be punished. But the committed servants of the Lord solemnly pray: "Allah, Master of all power, You give power to anyone You will and you take it away from anyone You will."

How do we demonstrate this commitment to Allah? "Say, if you really love Allah and have committed to Him then follow me, He will love you and forgive your sins" (31)

After explaining the nature of Islam, submission and commitment an example is given of a family who did this, the family of Imran.

The story of Maryam

The story of Maryam's childhood is beautifully told through the miracles that occurred around her. When Prophet Zakariyya her carer saw them, he prayed. Allah blessed him with a son, Yahya. This is followed by an account of Maryam's virgin conception and the birth of Isa. Maryam is praised as the one 'chosen above all the women of her time'.

Maryam grows up in the holy sanctuary. She will be the mother of a great prophet, Isa. When Jibreel tells her that she will conceive 'the spirit of Allah' she's scared. But she's reassured of Allah's blessings. Isa grew up and preached Tawhid, some followed him while others rejected him. Isa calls his disciples, and they confirm they are Muslims.

Since the Christians claimed that his miraculous birth and the miracles were proofs that he is God, the Quran explained the special nature of Isa and challenged their erroneous doctrine of Trinity. It asserted that "Isa is like Adam; [Allah] created him from dust then said to him 'Be!' and he was" (59).

Even though Judaism, Christianity and Islam differ in their respective beliefs they are still told to sit and talk. This plea encourages peaceful coexistence: “people of the book, let’s agree on a common statement that exists between us: we worship no one except Allah” (64). To prove the commonality of the three faiths the Quran stated: “Ibrahim was neither a Jew nor a Christian since the Torah and the Gospels were revealed much later. The three faiths are invited to follow him. This is a Quranic approach to reconciliation.

The next two passages invite both Jews and Christians to stop misleading people by clever arguments and tricks, they are no substitute for Divine guidance. They are warned against changing Allah’s words or their meanings. The Quran gives an acid test about belief in Allah, how can the prophet who was sent by Allah, ever demand that he should be worshipped? This is absurd. To prove the unity of all prophets and their singular message of Tawhid, the Quran presents an account of the conference of the prophets, when they were asked “if another messenger comes to you confirming what you have, then you must believe in him and lend him your support… they all agreed” (81).

Islam means submission to Allah, which is the only true religion. It was established by Ibrahim, preached by Musa and Isa. It is the same message Muhammed is inviting you to. Faith determines our eternal salvation, faith must be clearly understood, in words and terms that are plainly clear without any ambiguity, so the Quran cautions “lookout for words and actions that lead to apostasy” (86-91).