Summary of Juz 17

Surat al-Anbiya - The Prophets

Juz 17 begins with Surat al-Anbiya and the central theme is the essence of the basic beliefs of Islam, monotheism, prophethood and the Hereafter. Minds distracted by the world forget the Hereafter yet it is drawing ever near. People are busy criticising the Prophet who wants to save them. Allah warns, beware the past nations did the same and were destroyed.

The Makkans are criticised for being absorbed in the world. Life is not casual, like sport, it is a serious business. Just see how the entire world functions in such an orderly way, under the control of Allah. If there were gods besides Allah, then there would be disorder and chaos. A powerful proof of Tawhid.

The Divine judgement is presented through the instances of historical disobedience and how the deniers of the prophets were destroyed. The next section is about the creation of the universe, and how all living things were created from water. Evidence that Allah will recreate humanity. The beginning of the universe is briefly described: "the heavens and the Earth were joined at one time? We split them apart and made every living thing from water; won't they believe?" (30) Scientists talk about the Big Bang, could this refer to that? The disbelievers mocked the Messenger when he shared this revelation with them, so they are cautioned.

A frequent theme in the Quran is Allah takes care of humanity. This is demonstrated by the constant repetition of His Beautiful Names (the Kind, the Caring, the Loving, the Generous and the Responder). Allah is Al-Hadi, the Guide who sent the prophets.

The Quran presents a historical record of how Allah intervened in human history by sending the prophets and established a clear framework for human salvation. The Quran mentions only twenty-five prophets by name, yet there were more than 124,000 prophets according to one prophetic saying. In Islamic theology five of them command a special status. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, 'Isa, Ibrahim, Musa and Nuh. The prophets Ibrahim عليه السلام, Yusuf, Yunus, Hud and Nuh have full Surahs dedicated to their life and mission. Many others, like David and Sulayman, are mentioned several times, symbolizing Allah's care. The struggles, sufferings and steadfastness of seventeen prophets are mentioned briefly. They pleaded to their Lord for help, but eventually, the Divine wrath destroyed the disbelievers.

The deepest heartfelt prayer of Prophet Yunus from inside the whale was, "There is no god except You; glory be to You, I was wrong. We saved him and rescued him from distress, and that is how We rescue the believers" (87). The conclusion is: "This is your community, a single united community. I am your Lord, so worship Me. Unfortunately, people tore up the unity of their religion; all will be returning to Us" (92–93).

The surah ends with a delightful description of Paradise and the happiness of the believers. The crowning verse of the surah is, "We sent you as Kindness for all people" (107). What a tribute for the blessed Messenger ﷺ! How wonderfully Allah boosted the morale of the beloved Muhammad ﷺ.

Surat al-Hajj - The Pilgrimage

Juz 17 continues with this late Makkan surah (621 CE), focusing on the spiritual progress and the connection with Allah. The opening verses paint a terrifying image of Judgement Day, striking fear into the hearts of believers. Evidence from nature is presented to support its claim for resurrection. The seven stages of human life are highlighted presenting powerful evidence for the divine creative power. Secondly, "You see the dry lifeless Earth, and when We send down water it stirs and swells, producing colourful pairs of plants" (5). Presenting the convincing argument, that life was created by the Mighty Lord and it wasn't an accident of blind chance nor a product of a blind watchmaker. Instead, it is by intelligent design from the Powerful Creator.

The oft-repeated question, "Why are there so many religions?" is tackled. "For every community, We prescribed certain rites they devoutly follow, so do not argue about this with them; invite them to your Lord" (67). Allah will pass His judgement on them. The Quran teaches that diversity in religion is part of the Divine plan.

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam

The Makkans were familiar with several rites, since its establishment some 4,000 years earlier by their forefather, Ibrahim. However, the Quran clarifies the spiritual significance of these rites. Circling the Kaaba and slaughtering animals. They are not just mere rituals, but have a purpose and impact health, mindset and welfare. "Those who respect Allah's symbols show true piety of the hearts" (32). The Quran invites us to go beyond the outward observation of rituals to understanding their inner meaning.

For thirteen years the Muslims were persecuted in Makkah and this continued even after migration to Madinah. They were attacked several times. So, in the second year of Hijra permission was given to the Muslims to take up arms against their oppressors. "Permission to fight is given to those who were attacked and oppressed" (39). The consensus among Muslim scholars about war is that it is permissible in defence only – offensive invasions are not permitted.

The surah then reassures the beloved Prophet ﷺ that soon he will achieve success, so he shouldn't be distressed by the hardships. Examples of past prophets all justify the triumph of truth over falsehood. The Surah concludes by outlining what needs to be done to achieve salvation and how to avoid the terror of Judgement Day as graphically described in the opening of the Surah: "Believers, bow, prostrate and worship your Lord, live righteously so you may be successful. Always make strenuous efforts for the sake of Allah as you ought to make effort (77).