

THE END OF THE WORLD

SIGNS OF THE HOUR
MAJOR AND MINOR

Dr. Muhammad al-'Areefi

DARUSSALAM



The End of the World

The Major and Minor of the Hour with illustrations and maps

By: Dr. Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmaan al-‘Areefi

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Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Why discuss the signs of the Hour?](#)

[Guidelines on dealing with and understanding the Signs of the Hour](#)

[Guidelines on applying the texts on the Signs of the Hour to real-life events](#)

[Meanings of the Signs of the Hour](#)

[Categories of the signs of the Hour](#)

[List of the Minor Signs](#)

[The sending of our Prophet Muhammad \(Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him\)](#)

[The Death of our Prophet Muhammad \(Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him\)](#)

[The Splitting of the Moon](#)

[Disappearance of the Noble Companions \(May Allah be pleased with them\)](#)

[Conquest of Jerusalem](#)

[Widespread Death like Murrain of Sheep](#)

[Prevalence of Turmoil \(fitnah\) of all kinds](#)

[Prevalence of satellite channels](#)

[The Prophet's foretelling of the battle of Siffeen](#)

[The emergence of the Khawaarij](#)

[Claims of Prophethood by charlatans and liars](#)

[Spread of Security and Prosperity](#)

[Appearance of Fire in the Hijaz](#)

[Fighting the Turks](#)

[Appearance of Unjust men who Beat the People with Whips](#)

[A Great Deal of Killing](#)

[Loss of Honesty and its Disappearance from people's Hearts](#)

[Following the Ways of Nations who came before](#)

[The Slave Woman Giving Birth to her Master](#)

[Appearance of women who are clothed yet naked](#)

Barefoot, naked shepherds competing in the construction of lofty buildings

Greeting only those whom one knows

Widespread trade -- women taking part in business with their husbands -- domination by some traders of the market

False testimony

Withholding true testimony

Prevalence of ignorance

Widespread stinginess and miserliness severing ties of Kinship being a bad neighbour

Honest people being regarded as treacherous and Treacherous people being trusted

Death of prominent and noble people and the prevalence of ignoble people

Not caring about the source of wealth and whether it is Halaal or Haraam

Fay' will become limited to some people to the exclusion of others

When the entrusted item is regarded like booty

Obedience to wives and disobedience to mothers

Knowledge will be sought for a reason other than for the sake of Allah

Bringing friends close and keeping fathers away

Raising voices in the mosque

Evildoers becoming leaders of their tribes

The leader of the people will be the vilest of them

Showing respect to a man for fear of his evil

Adultery, silk, alcohol and musical instruments will be regarded as permissible

Wishing for death

The coming of a time when a man will be a believer In the morning and a disbeliever in the evening

Adornment of mosques and competition therein

Adornment of houses

Frequency of storms as the Hour draws nigh

Prevalence of literacy

Earning money by means of speaking and boasting about ones eloquence

Spread of books other than the Qur'an

A time in which there will be many readers but few Fuqaha' and scholars

Seeking knowledge from people who are insignificant

Sudden death

Rulership of the foolish

Time passing more quickly

The foolish will speak

The most fortunate of the people in worldly matters Will be Luka' ibn Luka' (an evil person)

Taking the mosques as thoroughfares

Dowries will become expensive and then cheap – Horses will become expensive and then cheap

Markets becoming closer together

Nations calling one another to get together against the Muslim Ummah

People not wanting to lead the prayer

Fulfilment of the believer's dreams

Prevalence of lying

A lot of earthquakes

Discord among the people

There will be a lot of women and few men

Prevalence and open flaunting of immorality

Taking money for reading Qur'an

Obesity will become widespread among the people

Appearance of people who will give testimony when they are not asked to do so; Appearance of people who will make vows and not fulfil them

The strong devouring the weak

Not ruling in accordance with that which Allah revealed

Large numbers of Romans and small numbers of Arabs

Great abundance of wealth among the people

The earth giving up its treasure

Transformation - Landslides pelting (with stones)

Rain against which houses of brick cannot offer any protection

Tribulation which will utterly destroy the Arabs

Trees speaking Rocks speaking and supporting the Muslims Muslims Fighting the Jews

The Euphrates will uncover a mountain of gold

The coming of a time when a man will be given the choice of being labeled incompetent or committing immorality

Arabia becoming meadows and rivers once more

A time when one prostration will be equivalent to this world and everything in it

The new moon looking bigger than usual

A time when there will be no one left but he will go and live in Al-Shaam (the Levant)

A great battle between the Muslims and the Romans The conquest of Constantinople

No inheritance will be divided the people will not rejoice over booty

People will go back to ancient weapons and mounts

Jerusalem will flourish Madeenah will be in ruins, Devoid of inhabitants and visitors

Madeenah will be cleansed of its evil people as the Bellows eliminates the dross of iron

The appearance of a man from Qahtaan who will be obeyed by the people

Appearance of a man called Al-Jahjaah

Wild animals and inanimate objects will speak - The end of a whip will speak A shoelace will speak - A man's thigh will give news of his family

As for wild animals speaking,

The Hour will not begin until Islam diminishes - The Qur'an will Disappear from the Mus-hafs and from people's hearts

An army that will seek to attack the Ka'bah and will be swallowed up by the earth, from the first to the last of them

Hajj to the sacred House of Allah will be abandoned

Some Arab tribes will go back to worshipping idols

The tribe of Quraysh will die out

Destruction of the Ka'bah at the hands of a man from Abyssinia

The sending of a pleasant wind that will take the souls of the believers

The buildings of Makkah becoming high

The last of this Ummah cursing the first of it

[New means of transportation ... cars](#)

[The appearance of the Mahdi](#)

[From where will he appear?](#)

[When will he appear?](#)

[Commentary on the Hadeeth:](#)

[Hadeeths narrated concerning the Mahdi 1](#)

[A brief look at some of those who claimed to be the Mahdi](#)

[The circumstances in which he will appear:](#)

[A brief discussion of the issue of dreams](#)

[Some of the scholars denied the idea of the Mahdi, including the following:](#)

[Major Signs of the Hour](#)

[Major Sign \(1\)](#)

[Who is the Dajjaal?](#)

[Why is he called Al-Maseeh Al-Dajjaal?](#)

[What claims will the Dajjaal make?](#)

[The story of Ibn Sayyaad](#)

[The reason why the Dajjaal is not mentioned in the Qur'an](#)

[Hadeeths which indicate that the emergence of the Dajjaal is one of the signs of the Hour](#)

[The Dajjaal is the greatest Fitnah that will ever appear on the face of the earth](#)

[Events before the appearance of the Dajjaal](#)

[Something that will precede his appearance](#)

[Physical description of the Dajjaal](#)

[The place where he will emerge](#)

[The story of Al-Jassasah and the Dajjaal](#)

[The facts about the Bermuda Triangle and its connection to the Dajjaal](#)

[Geographical location](#)

[Disappearances in the Bermuda](#)

[The beginning of disappearances in the Bermuda](#)

[Disappearance of aircraft](#)

[Explanation for the mystery of this triangle](#)

[Indications that the appearance of the Dajjaal is imminent](#)

[How will the Dajjaal emerge?](#)

[The cause of his appearance](#)

[He will travel rapidly around the world](#)

[Places to which the Dajjaal will go](#)

[The turmoil \(Fitnah\) of the Dajjaal](#)

[Incorrect beliefs about the Dajjaal](#)

[The followers of the Dajjaal](#)

[The disbelievers and hypocrites](#)

[The ignorance of the Bedouin](#)

[People with faces like hammered shields](#)

[How long the Dajjaal will stay](#)

[How to be safe from the turmoil of the Dajjaal](#)

[Seeking the help of Allah](#)

[Knowing the names and attributes of Allah](#)

[Reciting the opening Verses of Soorat Al-Kahf, which are the first ten Verses](#)

[The reason for this:](#)

[Reciting Soorat Al-Kahf in its entirety](#)

[Fleeing to one of the two holy sanctuaries and seeking refuge there](#)

[Seeking refuge with Allah from the turmoil of the Dajjaal at the end of the prayer](#)

[Further explanation about the Dajjaal so that people may protect themselves from him](#)

[Arming oneself with Islamic knowledge](#)

[Preparing for war against him, as the believers will do at that time](#)

[What the Muslim should do if he meets the Dajjaal](#)

[The death of the Dajjaal](#)

[The toughest people against the Dajjaal](#)

[Those who deny that the Dajjaal will emerge](#)

[Major Sigh \(2\)](#)

[The Descent of Eesa](#)

[The story of Maryam's bearing of 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\)](#)

[The birth of 'Eesa](#)

[Eesa speaks in the cradle](#)

[The ascension of 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\) to heaven](#)

[Where does his title of "Messiah" come from?](#)

[Evidence for the descent of 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\)](#)

[Evidence from the Qur'an](#)

[Evidence from the Sunnah](#)

[Explanation of the meaning of the Hadeeth](#)

[Mutawaatir evidence for the descent of 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\)](#)

[The circumstances in which 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\) will descend](#)

[Physical attributes of 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\)](#)

[The deeds of 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\) and what will happen during his time](#)

[The status of those who will be with 'Eesa ibn Maryam \(May Allah be pleased with her\)](#)

[The reason why 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\) and no one else will descend](#)

[How long will 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\) stay on earth after he descends?](#)

[The Hajj of 'Eesa \(Peace be upon him\)](#)

[Major sign \(3\)](#)

[The emergence of Ya'Jooj and Ma'Jooj](#)

[The story of the building of the barrier restraining Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj](#)

[Who was Dhu'l-Qarnayn?](#)

[Who are Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj?](#)

[What is the religion of Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj? Did the message of the Prophet \(Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him\) reach them?](#)

[Their huge number](#)

[Their physical description](#)

[How will they break through the barrier?](#)

[Dha'eef \(weak\) Hadeeths that have been narrated concerning them \(Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj\)](#)

[Their destruction](#)

[There will be no killing after Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj](#)

[Hajj will continue after Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj](#)

[Has anyone seen the barrier that Dhu'l-Qarnayn built to block Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj? Can anyone see it?](#)

[Does the barrier of Dhu'l-Qarnayn have any connection to the Great Wall of China?](#)

[Why haven't satellites discovered the barrier of Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj?](#)

[Are the Muslims obliged to fight them?](#)

[Major Sign 4,5 and 6](#)

[Three land slides](#)

[Meaning of landslide](#)

[Hadeeths about the landslides](#)

[Hadeeths which speak of a particular landslide](#)

[Hadeeths about other landslides that occurred as punishment for sin](#)

[Major Sign \(7\)](#)

[The smoke](#)

[Differences of scholarly opinion on what is meant by the smoke referred to in the Qur'an](#)

[Hadeeths about the smoke](#)

[Major sign \(8\)](#)

[The Beast](#)

[Verses which speak of the Beast](#)

[Where will it emerge?](#)

[What is the real nature of the Beast?](#)

[What will the Beast do?](#)

[It will brand the people](#)

[Major Sign \(9\)](#)

[The rising of the sun from its place of setting](#)

[Verses about the sun rising from its place of setting](#)

[Hadeeths about the sun rising from its place of setting](#)

[The command to hasten to do good deeds](#)

[Major Sign \(10\)](#)

[Fire which will drive the people to their place of gathering](#)

[Hadeeths about this fire](#)

[How it will gather the people](#)

[Conclusion](#)

Introduction

In The name of Allah, The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and blessings and peace be upon the leader of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, and upon his family and Companions.

In recent times things have become very confusing and we have begun to see in bookstores and on websites speculation about future events, based on verses and Hadeeths which refer to future events having to do with the signs of the Hour.

Every time a calamity befalls Islam and the Muslims, people begin to look for a way out from them. Sometimes you hear about the appearance of the Mahdi, sometimes you hear that the time for the final major battle against the Jews and Christians is close at hand, other times you hear about landslides in the East or in the West, and so forth.

I once visited a country in African and I witnessed a man claiming that he was the Messiah, ‘Eesa ibn Maryam (May Allah be pleased with her), who had come back to earth.

It is essential, indeed, necessary, to explain the signs of the Hour, speak about their true meaning, and understand them [in that light]; thus, the reason for this book which you have in your hands.

I would like to thank all those who read this book before its publication and offered me their comments, foremost among them are Shaykh Dr. Salman ibn Fahd al-Oadah, Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-‘Azeez Aal ‘Abd al-Lateef, Shaykh al-Muhaddith ‘Abd al-‘Azeez al-Turayfi, and others whose help I will never forget. I ask Allah to make this book beneficial, to make it sincerely for His sake, and to cause it to be among the beneficial knowledge that will testify for us on the Day of Resurrection. Aameen.

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Why discuss the signs of the Hour?

Everything that a person tries to find out about and discuss should have some benefits that he will reap from his research and efforts.

Does researching about the signs of the Hour and learning about them offer us any benefit in our lives? Or is it mere information, which a person adds to his cultural credit without it having any real impact on his life?

Since mention of the signs of the Hour are found in the Qur'an and Sunnah (Prophetic tradition), it therefore brings many benefits to one's life, including the following: Fulfilling the obligation of believing in the unseen, which is one of the six pillars of faith. Allah says,



“Who believe in the Ghayb and perform As-Salaah (Iqaamat-as-Salaah)” [Al-Baqarah 2:3].

Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated said that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

“I have been commanded to fight the people until they say laa ilaaha ill-Allah. Whoever says laa ilaaha ill-Allah, his wealth and his life are protected from me except in cases dictated by Islamic law, and his reckoning will be with Allah.”

Belief in the unseen means believing in everything that Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, has related to us or what His Messenger has told us and which has been confirmed to have been authentically narrated from him; whether we witness of these events, we know them to be true.

Included in this are the signs of the Hour. These include the appearance of the Dajjal, the descent of ‘Eesa ibn Maryam (May Allah be pleased with her), the emergence of Ya’jooj and Ma’jooj, the emergence of the Beast, the rising of the sun from the west, and other events mentioned in saheeh (authentic) reports.

2. Knowledge of the signs of the Hour encourages one to obey Allah and prepare for the Day of Resurrection. It is an admonition for the heedless and encouragement for the repentant to not be content with this world. This is what the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did with those who were around him when he realised that one of the signs of the Hour was close at hand. It is recorded in the collections of Bukhari and Muslim that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) awoke one night and said,

“Woe to the Arabs from an evil that has approached. Today a (hole) like this has been opened in the barrier of Ya’jooj and Ma’jooj.” He also said, “Wake up the occupants of these dwellings [i.e., his wives] to pray, for one who is well-dressed in this world may be naked in the Hereafter.”

3. It may offer an explanation of shar‘i (Islamic legislation) rulings and fiqhi (Islamic jurisprudence) issues.

The companions once asked the Prophet concerning the length of days – where one day will be like a year and another day will be like a month – during the time of the Dajjal, “Will it be sufficient to offer only a day’s worth of prayers during those days?” The Prophet replied,

“No, rather estimate the timing.”

From this we can also derive the ruling for the prayer of those Muslims who live in areas where day or night may last for several months.

4. The fact that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was aware of the signs of the Hour – which are matters of the unseen and whose knowledge cannot be acquired by mere speculation – is evidence for the truthfulness of his message, and that he is truly a Messenger from Allah, Glorified and Exalted. Allah is the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He says:

﴿عَلِمَ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا﴾ (٢٦) ﴿إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ﴾
﴿فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا﴾ (٢٧)

“ (He Alone is) the All-Knower of the Ghayb (Unseen), and He reveals to none His Ghayb (Unseen).’
27. Except to a Messenger (from mankind) whom He has chosen (He informs him of the Unseen as much as He likes), and then He makes a band of watching guards (angels) to march before him and behind him” [al-Jinn 72:26-27].

5. Our knowledge of the signs of the Hour allows us to deal with them in the prescribed manner, eliminating any confusion concerning them. For example we are told about the Dajjaal in detail: the description of his eye, his forehead, and the things that he will have with him. [All these are mentioned] so that we do not fall prey to his fitnah (trial); rather [through these signs] we will come to know that he is truly a dajjaal (liar).

6. Being mentally prepared for what may take place, so that we are not taken by surprise [when the events do occur]

7. Offering hope, because one of the signs of the Hour is the victory of Islam and its spread throughout the earth and the diminishing of Christianity and Judaism. This is based on the prophecies which mention Islam prevailing over and being superior to all other religions, even though the mushrikoon (polytheists, disbelievers) hate (it). (9:33)

8. Satisfying the natural curiosity of a person who wants to find out what is hidden from him and learn what may happen in the future based on saheeh reports concerning the unseen matters.

Islam blocks the way for deceivers, such as astrologers, fortune tellers, soothsayers and their like, who claim to have knowledge of future events. Islam relates to us, through revelation, a great about these future events which are signs of the Hour.

9. Belief in the signs of the Hour strengthens and increases faith. When these signs occur, it confirms the truth of the religion that you are following.

There are other benefits [in having knowledge of these things] which would have an impact on our lives.

Guidelines on dealing with and understanding the Signs of the Hour

The scholars, both past and present, have written numerous books concerning the signs leading up to the Hour. Books still appear, along with Television, radio programmes, and Internet websites speaking about the signs of the Hour; some of them speak of the signs of the Hour in a manner indicating their confusion and error on the subject.

I deemed it necessary to list a number of guidelines when dealing with and understanding the signs of the Hour and the legislative texts that mention them.

Limiting to the texts of the Qur'an and saheeh sunnah when quoting evidence

These are the source from which we come to know about matters of the unseen.

﴿قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ﴾

“Say: ‘None in the heavens and the earth knows the Ghayib (Unseen) except Allah, nor can they perceive when they shall be resurrected.’” [al-Naml 27:65]

﴿عَلِمَ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٦١﴾ إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا ﴿٦٢﴾﴾

Except to a Messenger (from mankind) whom He has chosen (He informs him of the Unseen as much as He likes), and then He makes a band of watching guards (angels) to march before him and behind him.” [al-Jinn 72:26-27].

Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, related to His Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), for religious purposes, some matters of the unseen, which included [some of] the signs of the Hour; these signs are from the matter of the unseen future.

As for learning about the signs of the Hour from the Jewish sources, dreams and visions, or interpreting political events as being signs of the Hour without evidence is not correct.

Similarly, any text quoted as evidence must be authentic, whether it is attributed to the infallible Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) or to one of these noble Companions.

The mention of odd, strange, and false ideas pertaining to the signs of the Hour have been used as a means of excitement and generating more readers and an increase in book sales. One of the strangest thing that I read was what one writers wrote:

“In a rare manuscript from the third century AH, found in the Islamic books section of the Turkish library in Istanbul, is a little known report related by Abu Hurayrah, Ibn ‘Abbaas, and ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib. In it is recorded that Abu Hurayrah was initially afraid to speak of it, but when he felt that death was approaching he feared concealing knowledge so he said to the people around him, ‘I know something concerning the wars that will take place at the end of time.’ They said, ‘Relate to us and do not worry; may Allah reward you with good.’ So he said: ‘After one thousand and three hundred years, the decades that follow, count five or six decades, a man named Nasser will rule Egypt, and the Arabs will call him the bravest of the Arabs. Allah will humiliate him in successive wars and he will never prevail. Allah wants for Egypt a victory for His sake and during the dearest of months to Him. The Lord of the House will please Egypt and the Arabs by the use of a dark skinned man (sada) whose father is lighter (anwar) than him, but he will make a peace deal with the thieves of al-Masjid al-Aqsa in the land of sorrows.

In Iraq there will come a tyrant and sufyaani in whose eye there will be slight laziness. His name will come from sidaam (confrontation) and he is confrontational (saddaam) to anyone who opposes him. The entire world will gather to confront him because of a small country that he will invade. There is nothing good in sufyaani except by means of Islam, and he is both good and bad. Woe to the one who betrays al-Mahdi al-Ameen.

In the fourteen hundreds, give or take two or three decades, al-Mahdi al-Ameen will appear and fight against the people, those who have gone astray, those with whom Allah is angry, and the hypocrites will gather in the land of Isra' and Mi'raaj, at Mount Majdoon (Armageddon) and the Queen of the world, the Queen of craftiness, the whore whose name is America, will come out to them, leading the world at that time in misguidance and disbelief. The Jews at that time will be in the highest position of control, occupying all of Jerusalem and the holy city. People from all countries will come by sea and air, except from countries where there is too much snow and countries from where there is too much heat. The Mahdi will realise that the entire world is plotting against him, but he will know that Allah is the best of those who plan and he will know that the entire universe belongs to Allah and to Him is the return of all things. The entire world is like a tree, root and branch, which He controls. Allah will send His worst punishment upon them and will cause the land, the sea, and the sky to burn around them; the sky will send down an evil rain and the people of the earth will curse all the disbelievers of the earth, and Allah will cause disbelief (kufr) to disappear.”

Referring to trustworthy scholars concerning this issue

Anyone who develops any idea concerning this issue should not hasten to tell others before discussing it with the scholars.

﴿ فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ ﴿٧﴾

“So ask the people of the Reminder [Scriptures] if you do not know” [al-Anbiya’ 21:7]

﴿ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴾ ﴿٨٣﴾

“If only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly). Had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah upon you, you would have followed Shaytaan (Satan), save a few of you” [al-Nisa’ 4:83].

This was the way of our righteous forebears; for example, Abu'l-Tufay (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated said,

“I was in Kufah when it was said that the Dajjaal had emerged. We came to Hudhayfah ibn Usayd who was speaking to the people, and I said, ‘The Dajjaal has emerged!’ He said, ‘Sit down.’ So I sat down, and the man in charge of the people came to me and said, ‘The Dajjaal has emerged and the people of Kufah are fighting him.’ He said, ‘Sit down.’ So he sat down. Then a call went out that it was the lie of a tanner. We said, ‘O Abu Surayhah, you made us sit down because you wanted to tell us something.’ He said, ‘If the Dajjaal emerges at your time, your children would throw pebbles at him. But the Dajjaal will emerge at a time when there is hatred among the people, a lack of religious commitment, and division, and he will travel everywhere and the land will be rolled up for him like a sheepskin rug.”

Tell the people what they can understand

A number of those who speak about the signs of the Hour take the matter of narrating Hadeeth to the common folk or those who are new in Islam, who may not comprehend what they hear, lightly.

It is well known that a person should not relate everything that he has knowledge of as not everything that is sound or correct is fit to be spread or publicised, because people may not be able to comprehend it or they may misinterpret or misquote it. ‘Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated,

“Tell the people what they can understand; do you want Allah and His Messenger to be disbelieved?”

According to another report:

“People, do you want Allah and His Messenger to be disbelieved? Relate to the people what they can comprehend and do not relate that which they may find strange.”

Ibn Mas‘ood (May Allah be pleased with him) said,

“You will not tell people something they find difficult to comprehend, but it will become a source of confusion for some.”

Guidelines on applying the texts on the Signs of the Hour to real-life events

In the past and more recently in our time numerous attempts have been made to apply the Hadeeths which speak of the signs of the Hour to real life events in a definitive manner. I thought I should list a number of guidelines on applying the texts on the signs of the Hour to real-life events:

We are not required to apply the Hadeeths about the signs of the Hour to real-life events

Since a person is naturally endowed with his senses, focusing on the present moment, he is impacted by current events in a way that will not impact preceding generation, whose senses and mental focus are not affected by past events. Therefore, the one who is present in the present time tends to exaggerate the events of his he is facing and feels that the minor calamities of today are far exceed the major calamities of the past. A poet once said:

There was a time that made me weep but when time moved on, I wept with nostalgia for that time.

So the one who is alive applies the reports about the early signs of the Hour to his own era and what he sees, even though throughout history there have occurred greater events, since those historical events have a lesser impact on him or he is ignorant of them altogether.

It is understandable for knowledgeable people to discuss the signs of the Hour and try and connect them to some events [affecting their life], as ‘Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) did when he believed Ibn Sayyaad to be the Dajjaal, and the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was present and did not object to it.

But if what results from a certain view is the splitting of the Muslims, or if this understanding results in a legislative consequences and requirements on the basis of the evidence – such as the obligation to fight, turmoil, transgression against honour, or causing division – then that person should be prevented from expressing his view and be rebuked, unless he has clear and independent evidence from revelation.

Some of those who study Hadeeths pertaining to the signs of the Hour show a great deal of interest in examining the past and present, exceeding in their application of the Hadeeths which mention some future events and signs of the Hour to their current events and incidents.

For example, they may read the Hadeeth,

“Soon the people of Iraq will not be sent any qafeez or dirham.”

They say: This sign of the Hour occurred in 1410 AH/1991 CE when an economic boycott was placed on Iraq by America [and its allies].

Even though this interpretation is possible, this manner of connecting Hadeeths to real-life events may be flawed or erroneous, especially when one expresses certainty [of a Hadeeth matching a specific occurred event].

What is even more serious is that some scholars have tried to establish the remaining life of this world. Some have said that it will last another 900 years, while others have said that it will last 1000 years. They have all based their opinion on some Hadeeths. Those who were famous for this were Imam al-Suyooti, al-Sakhaawi, and others.

So believing with certainty that a specific sign occurred in such and such a year is not permissible unless there is corroborating evidence and clear legislative proof.

Similarly, many people interpreted the Hadeeths regarding the Mahdi as referring to a specific people, being certain that so-and-so was the Mahdi, which resulted in turmoil, bloodshed, and rebellion against authority.

Examples of what has been written about that

The author of Asraar al-Saa‘ah mentions that the Dajjaal would become president of Iran prior to the appearance of the Mahdi, then he said that Muhammad Khaatimi was the Dajjaal and called him Ayatollah Gorbachev.

Another writer, in his book al-Maseeh al-Dajjaal, was certain that Saddam Hussein, the former president of Iraq, was the awaited Mahdi.

Ameen Muhammad Jamaal claims in his book Har Majdoon that Saddam Hussein was al-Sufyaani, who is mentioned in some Hadeeths.

The author of Ashraat al-Saa‘ah wa Hujoom al-Gharb claimed that the former King of Jordan, King Hussein, was al-Sufyaani.

These claims are not valid; however, if there are clear and corroborating evidence that this particular sign mentioned in the Hadeeth is completely identical to some specified event, then there would be no doubt about it and there is nothing wrong with interpreting the Hadeeth accordingly, while bearing in mind that it is possible for the Hadeeth to apply to another similar event or one that is even clearer.

For example:

1. Imam Muslim recorded that Asma’ bint Abi Bakr addressed al- Hajjaaj ibn Yoosuf al-Thaqafi, who lead the army that killed her son ‘Abd-Allah ibn al-Zubayr , and said,

“From Thaqeef will come a liar and a great slaughterer.’ As for the liar, we have seen him, and as for the great slaughterer, I do not think that it is anyone other than you.” He [the narrator] said, “He got up and left, and did not answer her.”

Al-Nawawi said: Her statement,

“We have seen him” refers to al-Mukhtaar ibn Abi ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafi, who told many lies; the worst one being his claim that Jibreel (Peace be upon him) would come to him. The scholars have unanimously agreed that the liar referred to here is al-Mukhtaar ibn Abi ‘Ubayd, and the great slaughterer refers to al-Hajjaaj ibn Yoosuf. Allah knows best.

2. Imam Muslim recorded that Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

“The Hour will not begin until a fire emerges from the land of Hijaaz which will illuminate the necks of the camels in Busra .”

This fire did emerge, and it was said that it lasted for three months and the women of Madeenah would spin cloth by its light.

Abu Shaamah, describing this event, said,

“On the night of Wednesday 3 Jumaada al-Aakhirah 654 AH , there was a loud boom in al-Madeenah al-Munawwarah, then an earthquake shook the ground, walls, roofs, beams, and doors, hour after hour, until Friday of the same month. Then a great light appeared in the harrah near Banu Qurayzah and we could see it from our houses inside Madeenah, as if a huge fire flowed in the valley like water

as far as Wadi Shaza, and it threw out sparks (huge) as al-qasr (forts or huge logs of wood) (cf. 77:32).”

Al-Nawawi said:

“During our time a fire appeared in Madeenah in the year 654 AH. It was a great light on the eastern side of Madeenah beyond the harrah, and its appearance is widely known.”

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar said:

“It seems to me that the fire mentioned (in the Hadeeth) is that which appeared on the outskirts of Madeenah, as it was understood by al-Qurtubi and others.”

3. Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

“The Hour will not begin until turmoil appears, a great deal of lying, the closeness of marketplaces, time passing quickly, and there is a great deal of harj.”

It was asked, "What is harj?" He said, "Killing."

Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him), in his commentary on Fath al-Baari, said,

“The proper interpretation of time passing quickly and the markets becoming closer as mentioned in the Hadeeth is what has occurred in our own time, where the closeness of cities and regions to one another has [taken place], and the time that it takes to travel between them has shortened due to the invention of planes and cars. Allah knows best.”

It is not essential that the signs of the Hour occur close to the beginning of the time, but they may occur a long time before the hour

The signs of the Hour are signs which indicate that the hour is approaching, whether these signs appear shortly before the Hour begins or a long time prior to it.

For example, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“I and the Hour have been sent like these two,”

and he held his forefinger and middle finger together. This indicates that his mission and his death were among the signs of the approaching of the Hour. Other signs which have occurred after that are closer to the Hour than these two.

We may divide the signs of the Hour into different categories according to when they occur:

Some have occurred exactly as prophesized by the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) examples are his mission, his death, and the appearance of false prophets.

Some have begun to occur and are becoming more widespread and prominent; examples are the closeness of markets, the spread of literacy, and a great amount of harj (killing).

Some have not yet occurred but will happen, such as the emergence of the Beast and the Dajjaal.

The seriousness of committing mistakes when applying the Hadeeths about the signs of the Hour to real life events.

Speaking without knowledge and guessing at the unseen (cf. 18:22))

If you were to say in a definitive manner that a sign mentioned in a Hadeeth occurred at such and such time, this would need proof from a text or reasoning. If there no proof exists then it is not appropriate for the sincere believer, who was commanded to be careful, to speak about the legislative issues without knowledge.

Doing something that is not prescribed or giving up something that is prescribed

Some people read books that speak off the appearance of the Mahdi and in which the author is certain that the Mahdi is so-and-so. Some readers decide to wait for the Mahdi, organising their affairs on the basis that he is going to emerge. Some of them even buy a horse and a sword in preparation for the great battles that is to come.

Some of them do not get married or build a family for the reason that the emergence of the Dajjaal is imminent, and so on.

It leads to many bad consequences such as disbelieving in Allah and His Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)

If, for example, it is said that what is meant by the Mahdi is so-and-so, and this turns out to be false, then this may lead some people to reject the Hadeeths that mention the Mahdi. The same may also occur with the other signs of the Hour, if one explains them with certainty and connects them to some real-life events [and it proves to be false.]