

Day of Resurrection: The Bridge (As-Şirāṭ)

Imam Ibn Uthaymeen



In the Name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

The Day of Resurrection: The Tenth Event

The Bridge

The Arabic word صِرَاط (Şirāṭ) is the bridge stretched over Hell over which people will cross to get to Paradise. About it, Allah (عَلَا عَت) says:

اَمْقُصِيْ نَمَادَ رَبِّكَ عَلٰى كَانٍ َّ وَارْدَهَا اِلَّا مِّنْكُمْ وَاِنْ

And there is none of you except that he will pass over it. This is with your Lord a decree which must be accomplished.[Sūrah Maryam, 19:71]

‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas’ūd, Qatādah, and Zayd Ibn Aslam explained this verse to mean the crossing of the bridge. Others, including Ibn ‘Abbās, explained that it describes those who will enter the fire but will be saved from it.

The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

سَلِّمْ سَلِّمْ اللّٰهُمَّ : وَيَقُولُوْنَ الشَّقَاعَةُ وَتَجِلُّ ، جَهَنَّمَ عَلَى الْجَسْرِ يُضْرَبُ ثُمَّ

Then the bridge will be placed over Hell and intercession will be permitted. They (the messengers) will say, “Oh Allah, save (us), save (us).” [113]

Scholars have differed as to the exact nature of this bridge. Some say it is a wide path over which people will cross according to the deeds they did in this life. They say it is wide because the word “bridge,” taken at face value, means just that and because Allah’s messenger (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) described it as being slippery and elusive. They understood that the bridge must be somewhat wide because a very narrow path would not be described with the specific Arabic words (slippery and elusive) that the prophet used. When asked about the bridge, the prophet (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) said:

عُقَيْقَاءُ شَوْكَةً لَهَا مُقْلَطَحَةٌ وَحَسَكَةٌ وَكَلَالِيبُ خَطَاطِيفُ عَلَيْهِ مَرَلَةٌ مَدْحَصَةٌ

It is slippery, elusive with hooks and grapples, and broad spikes and curved thorns.[Recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

And in the ḥadīth narrated by Abū Hurayrah, the prophet (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) said:

بَأَعْمَالِهِمُ النَّاسَ فَتَخْطِفُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا عِظَمِهَا قَدَرٌ يَعْلَمُ لَا أَنَّهَا غَيْرَ السَّعْدَانِ شَوْكٍ مِثْلُ كَلَالِيبٍ وَبِهِ

It has hooks like the thorns of al-Sa’dān (a place in Najd) except that no one but Allah knows the huge size of them. They will seize people according to their deeds.[Recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

Other scholars said no, it is actually a very narrow bridge just as has come in a ḥadīth narrated by Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī (ﻋﻨﻪ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) in which he said:

الشَّعْرَةَ مِنْ وَادَقُ السَّيْفِ مِنْ أَحَدُ الصِّرَاطِ أَنْ بَلَغَنِي

He informed (or: It has reached) me that the bridge is sharper than a sword and thinner than a hair.[116]

Here we come to a question: How is it possible for people to actually pass over a bridge like this? The answer is that the events and things to occur in the hereafter cannot be compared to or measured based solely on what we know of things of this life. Allah is capable of anything, and we do not know exactly how people will cross it. Will they cross in groups or one at a time? Allah knows best.

But regarding this issue—whether the bridge is wide or narrow—it is not incumbent on people to accept one position over the other because both groups of scholars have strong points.

Crossing the Bridge

No one will cross the bridge except the believers. As for the disbelievers, they will be taken straight to the fire. The believers will cross it according to their deeds based on the ḥadīth narrated by Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī (ﺭﺯﻯ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻨﻪ) that the prophet (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) said:

وَمَخْدُوشٌ مُسَلَّمٌ فَتَاجٌ وَالرَّكَابُ الْخَيْلُ وَكَأَجَاوِيدٍ وَكَالطَّيْرِ وَكَالرَّيْحِ وَكَالْبَرْقِ الْعَيْنُ كَطَرْفِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ فَيَمُرُّ جَهَنَّمَ نَارٍ فِي وَكَدُوسٍ مُرْسَلٍ

The believers will cross: some as fast as the blink of an eye, some like lightning, some like the wind, some like a bird, some like horses, and some as fast as camels. Some people will be safe and secure, some will be scratched but delivered, and others will fall into the fire of Hell.[Recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

The speed at which a person crosses is obviously not by his choice. If it were, naturally everyone would want to cross quickly. Rather, the passage across is according to the speed at which he used to accept religious teachings in this life. So whoever was always quick to accept the teachings of the messengers, he will pass quickly over the bridge. Whoever was slow to accept them will pass slowly over the bridge. It is a suitable reward and the reward is according to the deed.

Some people will be seized by hooks that are on the bridge and, again, this will only be according to their deeds. As for the prophet's statement, "others will fall into the fire of Hell," it is understood that the fire into which sinners will fall is the same fire the disbelievers will be in. However, these believing sinners will still not experience the same punishment as disbelievers will. Some scholars have even said that this fire will be cool and safe for them just as the fire was cool and peaceful on Prophet Abraham. [118]

However, what is more apparent is that this is not the case; the fire will likely be hot and painful but not as intense as the heat the disbelievers in Allah will experience. As a side note, the points on the body upon which believers prostrate during prayer will never be touched by the fire just as it has been reported by the prophet in "Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī" and "Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim." [119] The places of prostration are those that touch the ground: the forehead, nose, palms, knees, and the toes.

In a ḥadīth in "Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim," the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said:

يَجِيءُ حَتَّى الْعِبَادِ أَعْمَالُ تَعْجَزَ حَتَّى سَلَّمَ سَلَّمَ رَبِّ : يَقُولُ الصِّرَاطِ عَلَى قَائِمٍ وَنَبِيُّكُمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ بِهِمْ تَجْرِي
أَزْحَفَ إِلَّا السَّيْرَ يَسْتَطِيعُ فَلَا الرَّجُلُ

Their deeds will carry them (over the bridge) while your prophet is standing on the bridge saying, "My Lord, save (them), save (them)." Some servants' deeds will hinder them so much that a man will be unable to pass over except while crawling. [Recorded by Muslim.]

And in "Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī:"

اسْحَبَّ يُسْحَبُ آخِرُهُمْ يَمُرُّ حَتَّى

...until the last of them crosses being dragged.[Recorded by al-Bukhārī]

The first of the prophets to cross the bridge will be Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and the first of all religious nations will be his nation as the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

سَلَّمَ سَلَّمَ اللَّهُمَّ : يَوْمَئِذٍ الرُّسُلُ وَدَعَايَ ، الرُّسُلُ إِلَّا يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمْ يَتَكْ وَلَا ، يُجِيزُهَا مَنْ أَوَّلَ وَأُمَّتِي أَنَا فَأَكُونُ

I and my nation will be the first to be allowed to cross it. On that day, no one will speak except the messengers and the prayer of the messengers that day will be, "Oh Allah, save (us), save (us)!" [Recorded by al-Bukhārī]

Ibn Taymiyyah says, "After they cross, they will stop at a bridge/platform between Paradise and the fire and they will settle any unresolved issues between themselves."

This area is a small bridge or platform, and this settling of disagreements between them is not the major settling of affairs and retribution that occurs between people on the Day of Resurrection. Instead, this particular reconciliation is to resolve any bad feelings, grudges, or anger that may still remain in people's hearts. So in a sense, this is a period

of purification because the major settling of disagreements does not necessarily remove all feelings of resentment within people's hearts.

So this bridge or platform between Paradise and Hell is to purify the hearts so that the believers enter Paradise having no bad feelings for one another as Allah (ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﺳﻼﻡ) says:

مُتَقَابِلِينَ سُرُرٍ عَلَىٰ إِخْوَانًا غِلٍّ مِّنْ صُدُورِهِمْ فِي مَا وَنَزَعْنَا أَمِينِينَ بِسَلَامٍ ادْخُلُوهَا

Enter it with peace, safe and secure. And we will remove whatever is in their breasts of resentment, (so they will become) brothers, on thrones facing each other.[Sūrah al-Hijr, 15:46-47]

About this bridge before Paradise, the prophet (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) dias (م

، الدُّنْيَا فِي بَيْنِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُ مَظَالِمٌ فَيَتَقَاصُّونَ ، وَالنَّارُ الْجَنَّةَ بَيْنَ بَقْطَرَةٍ حُبْسُوا ، النَّارُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ خَلَصَ إِذَا بِمَنْزِلِهِ أَذَلُّ الْجَنَّةِ فِي مَسْكِنِهِ لِأَحَدِهِمْ بِيَدِهِ مُحَمَّدٍ نَفْسُ قَوْلِ الَّذِي، الْجَنَّةُ بِدُخُولِ لَهُمْ أَذِنَ وَهَدَّبُوا نَقُّوا إِذَا حَتَّى الدُّنْيَا فِي كَانَ

When the believers are delivered from the fire, they will be detained at the bridge between Paradise and the fire to settle whatever injustices may have occurred between them in life. When they have all become refined and purified, entrance into Paradise will be granted. And I swear by the one in whose hand is Muhammad's life, each individual will recognize his home in Paradise even more so than he does his home in this life. [Recorded by al-Bukhārī]

Footnotes

[113] Recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The wording of Muslim is above; the wording of al-Bukhārī is:

سَلَّمَ سَلَّمَ اللَّهُمَّ : يَوْمَئِذٍ الرُّسُلِ وَدَعَاءُ ، يُجِيزُ مَنْ أَوَّلَ فَأَكُونُ ، جَهَنَّمَ جِسْرُ يُضْرَبُ

The bridge of Hell will be placed and I will be the first to be permitted. The supplication of the messengers that day will be, "Oh Allah, save (us), save (us)."

[116] Recorded by Imām Aḥmad in a marfū' form meaning some ḥadīth scholars accept it as being "raised" to the status of an actual statement of the prophet himself (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ). Imam Muslim also mentioned it in his authentic collection as a comment to another ḥadīth.

[118] This is when the disbelieving people attempted to burn Abraham for destroying their idols. About this, Allah says in Sūrah al-Anbiyā, 21:68-69:

إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَىٰ أَوْسَلَامَ بَرْدًا كُونِي نَارًا يَا قُلْنَا فَاعِلِينَ كُنْتُمْ إِنْ إِلَهَتَكُمْ وَانصُرُوا حَرْقُوهُ قَالُوا

They said, "Burn him and support your gods if you are to act." We (Allah) said, "Fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham."

[119] The ḥadīth, recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, is:

فَيُخْرِجُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْْبُدُ كَانَ مَنْ يُخْرِجُوا أَنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ اللَّهُ أَمَرَ النَّارَ هَلَاءَ مِنْ أَرَادَ مَنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ أَرَادَ إِذَا السُّجُودِ أَثَرٌ تَأْكُلُ أَنَّ النَّارَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَحَرَّمَ السُّجُودَ بِأَثَرٍ وَيَعْرِفُونَهُمْ

When Allah wants mercy for someone from the people of the fire, he commands the angels to take out whoever used to worship Allah. So they (the angels) will recognize them by the marks of prostration because Allah has forbidden the fire from destroying the marks of prostration.

Posted from the article : [The Resurrection, A Summary of Events to Occur](#) – Shaykh

ibn Uthaymeen *rahimahullaah* | Translated by Abu az-Zubayr Harrison *rahimahullaah*

Related Links:

- <https://abdurrahman.org/finaljourney>