

The word اتقوا is repeated several times. The concept of taqwa is generally taken as self control, but it is very vast. There are people who are practicing taqwa, self control, for themselves, to protect their reputation, and image in the eyes of others. Hud عليه السلام specified that the 'Aad should do taqwa for Allah.

The 'Aad dealt harshly with the people who worked for them, they were جبارين. They wanted their monuments to be ready and on show. The nation of Nuh عليه السلام marketed their idols, the 'Aad marketed their buildings, the Thamud marketed their intelligence and expertise, the nation of Lut عليه السلام marketed immortality, the people of Shu'aib عليه السلام marketed new ways of banking and cheating.

But at the end, your Rabb is العزيز الرحيم. Your attachment to your Rabb gives rise to irresistible actions, full of mercy. Your approach in da'wah should be → (26:216). Your words in da'wah can bring out the best from the good ones, and the reality from the bad ones, so that they are distinct. The ones in the middle have to decide which way they want to take. It will strike the people like the staff of Musa عليه السلام. It is a wake up call. If someone has a tiny bit of truth in the heart, Allah will save him.

The response of the people do 'Aad to the da'wah of Hud عليه السلام was very careless. They felt secure → why are you so scared? Nothing will happen to us. They were truthful in their misbehaviour → whether you admonish us or not, it will not change us. They were upfront with their behaviour. There are people who know the truth but they stay quiet, so that people don't dislike them, so this made Hud عليه السلام distinct. He didn't want to win a popularity contest. He wanted the people to attach to Allah, not himself.

They continued with their disbelief → it is normal, people live and die, they are rich and poor, sick and healthy; this is life, don't make it a big issue. They were not afraid of the admonitions, they didn't take them seriously. This is one way of rejection. Hud عليه السلام was so concerned for them, but the 'Aad showed their heedlessness and foolishness so clearly.

They were unmoved, numb to the reality, by their own physical prowess. The message of their messenger could not engage them. Their minds were very shallow. They were incredulous to the thought of punishment.

قالوا سواء علينا أوعذنا ألم تكن من الوعاظين

They said : It is all the same to us whether you advise or are not of the advisors

إن هذا إلا خلق الأولين

This is not but the custom of the former peoples

وما نحن بمعذبين

And we are not to be punished

26:136-138

فَكَذَبُوهُ فَأَهَانُاهُمْ إِنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةٌ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثُرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
And they denied him, so
We destroyed them.
Indeed in that is a sign, but
most of them were not to
be believers
وَإِنْ رَبُّكَ لَهُ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ
And indeed, your Lord - He
is the Exalted in Might, the
Merciful
26:139-140

Allah saw this as their denial and disbelief. So He says فكذبوه. They didn't say they disbelieved, but their laid back attitude and their tone of dismissal of the message of Hud عليه السلام showed their rejection. There are different shades of disbelief, and they are made clear in the surah. The ones who want the truth will prostrate straight away. Those who want to deny will use different ways.

Their attitude deserved destruction. Their end was brought about by a wind, howling and biting cold.

The savage wind increased with each new day. The windstorm raged for 7 nights and 8 days in succession. It ripped apart their dwellings, whipped away clothing and tore the skin from the body. They were destroyed by this furious violent wind which Allah imposed on them, so that you could see men lying overthrown as if they were hollow trunks of date palms.

The violent gale did not stop until the entire region, once lush and green was reduced to ruins and swallowed by the sands of the desert. This nation of strong and powerful people, described by Allah as → التي لم يخلق منها في الأرض the likes of whom had never been created in the land (89:8), was destroyed by a wind. Their skeletal remains were left. This was their punishment for

وَأَمَّا عَادُ فَأَهْلَكُوا بِرِيحٍ
صَرِصْرَ عَاتِيَةٍ

And as for 'Aad, they were destroyed by a screaming, violent wind سخراها عليهم سبع ليالٍ وثمانية أيام حسوماً فترى القوم فيها صرعي كانوا
أعجازاً خل خاوية

Which Allah imposed upon them for seven nights and eight days in succession, so you would see the people therein fallen as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees

سورة الحاقة
69:6-7

arrogance, being amazed of their own prowess, feeling secure from the punishment of Allah.

All this is one ayah, one sign, to make you abstain from this kind of sin. It was nurturing for the Messenger of Allah, صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, to bring the message in the right way. Allah shows His might to the one who opposes it, and He shows mercy to the one who surrenders to His might.

The Thamud were also people of dunya, but they were distinct in their behaviour. The 'Aad focused on their pillared monuments, while the Thamud were engrossed in their dwellings, which they carved from the rock faces, their gardens and springs. They used the resources they had, and that made them feel secure.

The Thamud were in the southwestern part of modern day Saudi Arabia, near the border of Jordan. They built gigantic castles, hundreds of feet high, carved into the sides of mountains, with huge doors, elaborate engravings and complex designs. They were well-built because they still exist today. The fact that these structures are still around today, after nearly 4000 years is a testament to their quality and design.

The Thamud were much more advanced technologically than the 'Aad. They let their education and knowledge go to their heads. They mistreated the lower classes and worshiped others besides Allah. They were more sophisticated than the 'Aad, they were scientists and craftsmen, an elite society.

The 'Aad had gardens and springs, but they disregarded them, so their messenger reminded them. The Thamud focused on these blessings too much. They used their resources to make nature retreats and resorts. They led a very luxurious life.

Salih عليه السلام is also described as their brother, he was from among them. He identified himself as their messenger, he was the spokesperson for the deen, and it was important that this fact was clear. Trustworthiness is an essential quality in da'wah, and must be presented with evidence. He also made it clear that he didn't want any compensation from the people, no reward, no appreciation. The message comes in one direction only, from the messenger to the people. The reward is expected from upward direction.

كَذَّبُتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

Thamud denied the messengers

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخْوَهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

When their brother Salih said to them : Will you not fear Allah ?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ

Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ

So fear Allah and obey me

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ

أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds

26:141-145