

Background and Meaning

Al-Buruj recounts the persecution of believers by the people of the trench, then affirms Allah's knowledge, power, forgiveness and sovereignty. Ibn Kathir explains that the believers were punished by their persecutors only because they believed in Allah. His commentary records several accounts concerning the people involved, so a precise historical identification should not be treated as the surah's central teaching. The parent should focus on the certainty that Allah witnesses injustice, honours faith and possesses the final judgement over both the persecuted and their oppressors.

Tafsir of the Surah

Ayat 1–3: The opening oaths. Ibn Kathir records explanations of the sky's buruj including its great stars and their stations. The promised Day is the Day of Resurrection. He also records differing early interpretations of the witness and what is witnessed, including Friday and the Day of 'Arafah, as well as witnesses to the Resurrection. These opening ayat place the account that follows beneath the signs of the heavens and the certainty of the final gathering.

Ayat 4–9: The people of the trench. Ibn Kathir explains that the persecutors dug trenches, kindled fires and sought to force the believers to abandon their faith. They sat watching what they inflicted upon them. The believers' only supposed offence was faith in Allah, the Mighty and Praiseworthy. He owns the heavens and earth and witnesses everything. The description therefore exposes the injustice of the persecution and reassures the reader that no part of it escaped the Lord's knowledge.

Ayat 10–11: Repentance and the great success. Ibn Kathir explains the warning against those who harmed believing men and women and did not repent. He highlights the striking generosity of Allah's invitation to repentance even after such terrible wrongdoing. Persisting without repentance brings the punishment described in the ayah. By contrast, those who believe and do righteous deeds receive gardens beneath which rivers flow. The surah calls this the great success, showing that the final measure of victory lies in Allah's judgement and reward.

Ayat 12–16: Power joined with forgiveness. Ibn Kathir explains the severity of Allah's grasp through His complete power over those who reject His messengers. The One who begins creation can bring it back. He forgives those who repent and turn humbly to Him, and He is loving. The Lord of the Throne does whatever He wills; no one overturns His decision. These qualities belong together, giving the believer reason for hope in His forgiveness and serious regard for His authority.



Tafsir of the Surah • Continued

Ayat 17–22: Earlier armies and a preserved revelation. The mention of Pharaoh and Thamud recalls powerful opponents who could not escape Allah. Ibn Kathir explains that the present deniers likewise remain in rejection while Allah encompasses them and they cannot defeat His power. The surah closes by affirming the noble Qur'an in a Preserved Tablet. His commentary explains its preservation from alteration, addition and subtraction. Human opposition therefore cannot undo either Allah's authority or the honour of the revelation He has sent.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ

١

Memorised

By the sky with the constellations.

وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ

٢

Memorised

And by the Promised Day.

وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ

٣

Memorised

And by the witness and the witnessed.

قَتَلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَخْدُودِ

٤

Memorised

Destroyed were the People of the Trench.

النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُودِ

٥

Memorised

The fire supplied with fuel.

إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ

٦

Memorised

While they sat around it.



Memorisation · Continued

وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ



Memorised

And were witnessing what they did to the believers.

وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَن يُؤْمِنُوا
بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ



Memorised

They begrudged them only because they believed in Allah the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ



Memorised

To whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. Allah is Witness over everything.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ
عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ



Memorised

Those who tempt the believers, men and women, then do not repent; for them is the punishment of Hell; for them is the punishment of Burning.



إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ

١١

☐ Memorised

Those who believe and do righteous deeds will have Gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the great triumph.

إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ

١٢

☐ Memorised

The onslaught of your Lord is severe.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ يَبْدِئُ وَيَعِيدُ

١٣

☐ Memorised

It is He who begins and repeats.

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْودُودُ

١٤

☐ Memorised

And He is the Forgiving, the Loving.

ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ

١٥

☐ Memorised

Possessor of the Glorious Throne.

فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ

١٦

☐ Memorised

Doer of whatever He wills.



Memorisation · Continued

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ

١٧

Memorised

Has there come to you the story of the legions?

فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ

١٨

Memorised

Of Pharaoh and Thamood?

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ

١٩

Memorised

In fact, those who disbelieve are in denial.

وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ مُحِيطٌ

٢٠

Memorised

And Allah encloses them from beyond.

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ

٢١

Memorised

In fact, it is a Glorious Quran.

فِي لَوْحٍ مَحْفُوظٍ

٢٢

Memorised

In a Preserved Tablet.

Parent tafsir: adapted from Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 85:1-22.

Arabic commentary: quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura85-aya1.html

Translation by Talal Itani, ClearQuran.com · wording unchanged · CC BY-ND 4.0.

Reuse permissions: clearquran.com/download/