

Background and Virtue

Al-Bayyinah means "The Clear Proof". Ibn Kathir identifies this surah as revealed in Madinah. He begins his commentary with the report of the Prophet ﷺ reciting it to Ubayy ibn Ka'b. The Prophet ﷺ told Ubayy that Allah had commanded him to recite this surah to him. Ubayy asked whether Allah had mentioned him by name. When the Prophet ﷺ confirmed that He had, Ubayy wept. This report is also recorded in Sahih al-Bukhari. [1, 4]

The explanation that follows prepares the parent to understand the surah before learning it with their child.

Tafsir of the Surah

Ayat 1-3: The clear proof. Ibn Kathir explains that the People of the Book are Jews and Christians. The clear proof is the Messenger, Muhammad ﷺ, reciting the Qur'an. The purified pages contain upright writings: guidance from Allah that is true and just, without error. Ibn Kathir connects these pages with the honoured, exalted records described in Surah 'Abasa (80:13-16), in the hands of noble and obedient scribes. The opening therefore directs attention to the Messenger and the revelation he brings. [1]

Ayah 4: Division after guidance. Ibn Kathir explains that the recipients of earlier scriptures divided after Allah had established clear evidence for them. He connects this with the warning in Al 'Imran (3:105) against division after clear proofs have arrived. Knowing the truth carries responsibility: the verse describes disagreement after guidance had already been made clear. [1]

Ayah 5: The upright religion. The command is to worship Allah alone, with religion sincerely devoted to Him. Ibn Kathir links this to Al-Anbiya' (21:25): every messenger was taught to call people to the worship of Allah alone. He explains hunafa' as turning away from shirk towards tawhid, and points to An-Nahl (16:36), where each nation is called to worship Allah and avoid false objects of worship. The verse also commands establishing salah and giving zakah. Prayer is the foremost act of bodily worship; zakah benefits the poor and needy. This is the upright and just religion. Ibn Kathir also records that scholars, including al-Zuhri and al-Shafi'i, cited this verse as evidence that deeds are included in faith. [2]

Ayat 6-7: Belief and its consequences. Ibn Kathir explains that the disbelievers described here, from among the People of the Book and the idolaters, oppose Allah's revealed Books and His messengers. Their punishment in Hell is enduring. The next verse praises those who believe and do righteous deeds as the best of creation. Ibn Kathir describes their belief as being in their hearts and their righteous actions as being carried out with their bodies. Faith and righteous conduct are brought together in this description. [3]

Ayah 8: Everlasting reward and Allah's pleasure. The believers' reward with their Lord is gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they remain without an ending or interruption. Ibn Kathir explains that Allah's pleasure with them is higher than the lasting delights they receive. They are pleased with Him because of the abundant favours He grants them. The closing words connect this reward with reverence and fear of Allah. Ibn Kathir describes worship offered with the awareness that Allah sees His servant, even though the servant does not see Him. [3]



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ مُنْفَكِينَ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ
الْبَيِّنَةُ

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Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book and the idolaters were not about to change their ways until they were sent clear evidence,

رَسُولٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً

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a messenger from God, reading out pages [blessed with] purity,

فِيهَا كُتِبَ قِيمَةٌ

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containing true scriptures.

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَةُ

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[Yet] those who were given the Scripture became divided only after they were sent [such] clear evidence

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۚ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

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though all they are ordered to do is worship God alone, sincerely devoting their religion to Him as people of true faith, keep up the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, for that is the true religion.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ

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Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book and the idolaters will have the Fire of Hell, there to remain. They are the worst of creation.



إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ



Those who believe and do good deeds are the best of creation.

جَزَاءُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ



Their reward with their Lord is everlasting Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will stay forever. God is well pleased with them and they with Him. All this is for those who stand in awe of their Lord.

Sources and attribution

Parent's tafsir: adapted and paraphrased by Qurbah from Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, commentary on Surah al-Bayyinah (98:1-8).

[1] Ibn Kathir (Abridged), 98:1-5, English text hosted by Quran.com:
<https://quran.com/al-bayyinah/1/tafsirs/en-tafisr-ibn-kathir>

[2] Ibn Kathir, Arabic commentary on 98:5, King Saud University:
<https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura98-aya5.html>

[3] Ibn Kathir (Abridged), 98:6-8, English text hosted by Quran.com:
<https://quran.com/al-bayyinah/6/tafsirs/en-tafisr-ibn-kathir>

[4] Sahih al-Bukhari 3809, the Prophet's recitation to Ubayy ibn Ka'b:
<https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3809>

English translation of the surah: M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, The Qur'an.
The parent's notes are an adaptation, not a verbatim extract from Ibn Kathir.



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