102 | Surah al-Takathur

سورة التكاثر

8 Ayat

Parent's tafsir: adapted from Ibn Kathir
Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim · 102:1–8

Background and Meaning

Ibn Kathir identifies al-Takathur as a Makkan surah. He explains its opening as worldly life, its pleasures and its attractions distracting people from seeking the Hereafter. Rivalry in possessions and other forms of increase can continue until death arrives. The surah interrupts that absorption with repeated warnings, the reality of the Fire and the question about blessings. Its subject is therefore the distraction created by competing for more, and the responsibility to recognise and answer for what Allah has given.

Tafsir of the Surah

Ayat 1–2: Rivalry that lasts until the grave. Ibn Kathir explains that preoccupation with worldly increase can carry a person through life until they become one of the inhabitants of the graves. He records explanations involving wealth and children, and people boasting about their numbers. He identifies the reference to visiting graves here with death and burial. The passage describes life's opportunity being consumed by a competition that cannot prevent its end.

Ayat 3–4: The repeated warning. Ibn Kathir records al-Hasan's explanation of a warning followed by another warning. The repeated declaration that people will come to know breaks into the apparent confidence of those absorbed in worldly increase. What had been neglected will no longer remain outside their experience. The certainty of the coming account gives urgency to the warning while worldly life is still continuing.

Ayah 5: Knowledge of certainty. Ibn Kathir explains that true knowledge would prevent this rivalry from distracting a person from seeking the home of the Hereafter. The issue is the effect that knowledge should have upon priorities. A person may hear about the final return while continuing to live as though worldly competition were the lasting concern. The verse calls attention to knowledge that is firm enough to change that absorption.

Ayat 6–7: Seeing the Fire. Ibn Kathir connects these ayat with the earlier warning. The reality that had been neglected will be witnessed. The movement from knowledge of certainty to seeing with certainty emphasises that the account of the Hereafter will become a directly encountered reality. The reader is being addressed before that encounter, while there is still an opportunity to respond to the warning.

Ayah 8: Answering for blessings. Ibn Kathir explains the final question as a question about gratitude for favours such as health, security and provision, and how they were met with worship and thanks. His commentary includes food and drink among these blessings, rather than limiting the meaning to exceptional luxury. He also cites the authentic report about health and free time being blessings many people fail to use well. The surah ends by turning ordinary benefits into a matter of responsibility before Allah.

102 | Surah al-Takathur

سورة التكاثر

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

١ أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ

Memorised

Abundance distracts you.

٢ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ

Memorised

Until you visit the graveyards.

٣ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

Memorised

Indeed, you will know.

٤ ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

Memorised

Certainly, you will know.

٥ كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ ٱلْيَقِينِ

Memorised

If you knew with knowledge of certainty.

٦ لَتَرَوُنَّ ٱلْجَحِيمَ

Memorised

You would see the Inferno.

Memorised

٧ ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ ٱلْيَقِينِ

Then you will see it with the eye of certainty.

٨ ثُمَّ لَتُسْـَٔلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ ٱلنَّعِيمِ

Then, on that Day, you will be questioned about the bliss.

Parent tafsir: adapted from Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 102:1–8.
Arabic commentary: quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura102-aya1.html
Hadith on health and free time: Sahih al-Bukhari 6412, cited by Ibn Kathir.
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