Tafsir Ibn Kathir
Alama Imad ud Din Ibn Kathir

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, is a classic Sunni Islam Tafsir (commentary of the Qur'an) by Imad ud Din Ibn Kathir. It is considered to be a summary of the earlier Tafsir al-Tabari. It is popular because it uses Hadith to explain each verse and chapter of the Qur'an…

Al A'la

The Virtues of Surat Al-A`la

This Surah was revealed in Makkah before the migration to Al-Madinah. The proof of this is what Al-Bukhari recorded from Al-Bara' bin `Azib, that he said,

"The first people to come to us (in Al-Madinah) from the Companions of the Prophet were Mus`ab bin `Umayr and Ibn Umm Maktum, who taught us the Qur'an; then `Ammar, Bilal and Sa`d came. Then `Umar bin Al-Khattab came with a group of twenty people, after which the Prophet came. I have not seen the people of Al-Madinah happier with anything more than their happiness with his coming (to Al-Madinah). This was reached to such an extent that I saw the children and little ones saying, `This is the Messenger of Allah who has come.' Thus, he came, but he did not come until after I had already recited (i.e., learned how to recite).

Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High. (87:1) as well as other Surahs similar to it."

It has been confirmed in the Two Sahihs that the Messenger of Allah said to Mu`adh, Why didn't you recite,

- Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High, (Surah 87);
- By the sun and its brightness, (Surah 91);
- By the night when it envelopes. (Surah 92);

Imam Ahmad recorded from An-Nu`man bin Bashir that the Messenger of Allah recited

سُمِّيَ أَسْمَاءَ رَبِّكَ الْأَخُلَّى
مُلُأَ آتَاتُ خَرَبِيضِهِ الْقَابِلَةِ

Al-A`la (Surah 87) and Al-Ghashiyh (Surah 88) in the two `Id prayers. If the `Id prayer fell on Friday, he would recite them in both prayers (`Id and Salat Al-Jumu`ah).

Muslim also recorded this in his Sahih, as well as Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah.
The wording of Muslim and the Sunan compilers says, "He used to recite

سُمِّيَ أَسْمَاءَ رَبِّكَ الْأَخُلَّى
مُلُأَ آتَاتُ خَرَبِيضِهِ الْقَابِلَةِ

Al-A`la (Surah 87) and Al-Ghashiyh (Surah 88) for the two `Ids and Jumu`ah. If they occurred on the same day, he would recite them in both of them."

In his Musnad, Imam Ahmad recorded on the authority of Ubayy bin Ka`b, Abdullah bin `Abbas, `Abdur-Rahman bin Abza, and the Mother of the believers, A`ishah, that the Messenger of Allah used to recite

سُمِّيَ أَسْمَاءَ رَبِّكَ الْأَخُلَّى
قُلْ لَبِّيَانَكُمْ وَلَبِّيَانَ هُوَ أَحَدُ
قُلْ هُوَ وَاحِدُ أَحَدٌ

- Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High. and
- Say: 'O you who disbelieve.' (Surah 109) and
- Say: 'He is Allah, the One.' (Surah 112)

A`ishah added in her version that he would also recite the Mu`awwidhatayn (Al-Falaq and An-Nas).

Al A`la

بِسْمِ اللّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
1. **Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High.**

2. **Who has created, and then proportioned it.**

3. **And Who has measured; and then guided.**

4. **And Who brings out the pasturage,**

5. **And then makes it dark stubble.**

6. **We shall make you recite, so you shall not forget,**

7. **Except what Allah may will**

8. **He knows what is apparent and what is hidden.**

9. **And We shall make easy for you the easy.**

Therefore remind in case the reminder profits.
| 10. | سِيَلَّ مَنْ يَتَخَشَّى  
The reminder will be received by him who fears, |
|---|---|
| 11. | وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الآَشْقَى  
But it will be avoided by the wretched, |
| 12. | اللَّذِي يُحْلِلُ النَّارَ الْكَبِيرَيْنَ  
Who will enter the great Fire. |
| 13. | يُمَّرُّ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَقْتُ  
There he will neither die nor live. |

### The Command to pronounce Tasbih and its Response

Imam Ahmad recorded from Ibn ‘Abbas that whenever the Messenger of Allah would recite

\[ سُبْحَانَ أَسْمَارِبَتْكَ الْكَفَّارَاتِ (1) \]

Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High.

he would say,، حَلَّلْتُ الْبَيْتَ وَلَدَأً (Glory to my Lord, the Most High.)

Ibn Jarir recorded from Ibn Ishaq Al-Hamdani that whenever Ibn ‘Abbas would recite (Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High.) he would say,

"Glory to my Lord, the Most High,"

and whenever he would recite (I swear by the Day of Resurrection.) and then reach the end of it (Is not He able to give life to the dead) (75:1,40) he would say,

"Glory to You, of course."

Qatadah said,

"It has been mentioned to us that whenever the Prophet of Allah used to recite (Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High), he would say,
Glory to my Lord, the Most High.”

The Creation, the Decree, and the Bringing Forth of Vegetation

Allah says,

الَّذِي خَلَقَ قَسْوَى (2)

Who has created, and then proportioned it.
meaning, He created that which has been created, and He fashioned every creation in the best of forms.

Then Allah says,

وَالَّذِي قَدْ قَدْرَ تَقَدَّدْ (3)

And Who has measured; and then guided.

Mujahid said,

"He guided man to distress and happiness, and he guided the cattle to their pastures."

This Ayah is similar to what Allah has said about Musa's statement to Fir'awn,

عَزِبَ اللَّهُ أَوْلَدَهُ مَا خَلَقَ غَيْبًا فَخَلَقَ هَذَا وَخَلَقَهُ مُنْعِدًا (4)

Our Lord is He Who gave to each thing its form and nature, then guided it aright. (20:50)
meaning, He decreed a set measure and guided the creation to it.

This is just as is confirmed in Sahih Muslim on the authority of Abdullah bin `Amr that the Messenger of Allah said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِبَ الْخَلَقَ مَا خَلَقَ فَخَلَقَ هَذَا وَخَلَقَهُ مُنْعِدًا فَخَلَقَهُ مَتَّى وَالْوَلَدَ فَخَلَقَهُ عِنْدَ الْأَلْمَى (4)

Verily, Allah ordained the measure of all creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth, and His Throne was over the water.

Concerning Allah’s statement,

وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْأَمْرَيْ (4)

And Who brings out the pasturage,
meaning, all types of vegetation and crops.
And then makes it dark stubble.

Ibn `Abbas said, "Dried up and altered."

It has been narrated that Mujahid, Qatadah and Ibn Zayd, all made similar statements.

The Prophet does not forget the Revelation

Allah says,

سْتَقْفِّرُواَ...  (٥)

We shall make you to recite,
meaning, `O Muhammad.'

...لاِّمَا أَنَا بِاللَّهِ...  (٦)

so you shall not forget (it),
This is Allah informing and promising him (the Prophet) that He will teach him a recitation that he will not forget.

Except what Allah may will.
Qatadah said,

"The Prophet did not forget anything except what Allah willed."

It has been said that the meaning of Allah's statement, لاِّمَا أَنَا بِاللَّهِ (so you shall not forget,) is,

"do not forget"
and that which would be abrogated, is merely an exception to this.
Meaning, `do not forget what We teach you to recite, except what Allah wills, which He removes and there is no sin on your leaving it off (not retaining it).'

Concerning Allah's statement,

إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهَرَ وَمَا بَاطَنُ...  (٧)

He knows what is apparent and what is hidden.
meaning, He knows what the creatures do openly and what they hide, whether it be statements or deeds. None of that is hidden from Him.
Then Allah says,

وَنَتَّبِيعُكُمُ اللَّهُ (٨)

And We shall make easy for you the easy.

meaning, `We will make good deeds and statements easy for you, and We will legislate such Law for you that is easy, tolerant, straight and just, with no crookedness, difficulty or hardship in it.'

The Command to remind

Allah then says,

قُلِّ يَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ إنَّ فَتْحَ الْجَنَّةِ (٩)

Therefore remind in case the reminder profits.

meaning, remind where reminding is beneficial.

From here we get the etiquette of spreading knowledge, that it should not be wasted upon those who are not suitable or worthy of it.

The Commander of the believers, `Ali said,

"You do not tell people any statement that their intellects do not grasp except that it will be a Fitnah (trial) for some of them."

He also said,

"Tell people that which they know. Would you like for Allah and His Messenger to be rejected"

Allah said:

سَيُلْلَهُ كُرُوهُ ١٠

The reminder will be received by him who fears,

meaning, `he whose heart fears Allah and who knows that he is going to meet Him, will receive admonition from what you convey to him, O Muhammad.'

وَيَتَجَلَّبُهُمَا الْقَبْضَاءُ (١١)

اللَّهُمَّ يُصَلِّي عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ (١٢)

وَمَعْلُومُ لَا يَمْكُرُهُما وَلَا يَخْتَمِهِما (١٣)

But it will be avoided by the wretched,

who will enter the great Fire.

There he will neither die nor live.
meaning, he will not die and thus be allowed to rest, nor will he live a life that is beneficial to him. Instead, his life will be harmful to him, because it will be the cause of his feeling of the pain of torment and various types of punishments what he is being punished with.

Imam Ahmad recorded from Abu Sa`id that the Messenger of Allah said,

أَنَّا أَهْلَ الْقَارَاءَ الْتَّوْبِينَ هُمُ الْأَهْلُّ يَإِفُّ الرَّحْمَةِ وَلَا يُقْتُلُونَ

وَأَنَّا أَنَاسٍ نَرْبُونَ اللَّهُ يَهْوَى الْرَّحْمَةَ وَيَقُلُّونَ فِي الْقَاءِ فِي هَذَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَقَاعُدُ فَيَا خَذِّ الْرَّحْمَةِ الْقِيَمَةَ قَيِّمِهِمُ أَوْ قَالُ:

Concerning the people of the Fire who will be dwellers of it, they will not die nor will they live.

Regarding the people that Allah wants mercy for, He will cause them to die in the Fire. Then He will allow the intercessors to come to them, and a man will take his groups of supporters and plant them (or he said (they will be planted) in the River of Al-Haya (or he said (Al-Hayah, or Al-Hayawan, or Nahr Al-Jannah). Then they will sprout up like the sprouting of the seed on the moist bank of a flowing stream.)

Then the Prophet said,

أَنَّا أَهْلَ الْقَارَاءَ الْتَّوْبِينَ هُمُ الْأَهْلُ يَإِفُّ الرَّحْمَةِ وَلَا يُقْتُلُونَ

Haven't you all seen the tree that is green, then it turns yellow, then it turns green (again)?

Abu Sa`id then said that some of those present said,

"It is as if the Prophet used to live in the desert wilderness (i.e., due to his parables of nature)."

Ahmad also recorded from Abu Sa`id that the Messenger of Allah said,

أَنَّا أَهْلَ الْقَارَاءَ الْتَّوْبِينَ هُمُ الْأَهْلُ يَإِفُّ الرَّحْمَةِ وَلَا يُقْتُلُونَ

Concerning the people of the Fire who will be dwellers of it, they will not die in it nor will they live.

However, there will be a group of people - or as he said -(whom the Fire will burn due to their sins - or he said - (their wrongdoings. So, He
will cause them to die until they become burnt coal. Then the intercession will be allowed and they will be brought group after group, and they will be scattered over the rivers of Paradise. Then it will be said:

"O people of Paradise! Pour down upon them."

Then they will sprout like the growing of the seed that is upon the moist bank of the flowing stream."

Then, a man from among the people present said,

"It is as if the Messenger of Allah used to live in the desert wilderness."

Muslim also recorded this Hadith.

| 14. | قَدْ أَفْلَحْ مَنْ تَرَّقَّيْنَ | Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. |
| 15. | وَذَكَّرَ اسْمَ سَلِيمَهْ فَصِلِّيْنَ | And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Salah. |
| 16. | بَلْ تُؤْثَرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسًا | Rather you prefer the life of this world. |
| 17. | وَالآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى | Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting. |
| 18. | إِنَّ هَذَا الْعَيْنِ الصُّخْفِ الْأُوْلَى | Verily, this is in the former Scriptures |
| 19. | صُخْفُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى | The Scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa. |

**A Statement concerning the People of Success**

Allah says,

قد أفلح من ترقّي (٤)
Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success.

meaning, he purifies himself from despised characteristics and he follows what Allah has revealed to the Messenger.

وَذَّكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى (١٥)

And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Salah.

meaning, he establishes the prayer in its appointed time, seeking the pleasure of Allah, obedience to His command, and implementation of His Law.

We have already reported from the Commander of the believers, `Umar bin `Abdul-`Aziz, that he used to command the people to give the Sadaqat Al-Fitr, and he would recite this Ayah:

وَذَّكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Salah.

Abu Al-Ahwas said,

"If someone comes to any of you begging, and he wants to pray, then he should give charity (Zakah) before he prays. For verily, Allah the Exalted says,

وَذَّكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Salah."

Qatadah said concerning this Ayah,

وَذَّكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Salah (Fasalla).

"He purifies his wealth and pleases his Creator."

This World is Worthless in Comparison to the Hereafter

Then Allah says,

بَلْ تَوَفَّرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدَّنْعِيَةَ (١٦)
Rather you prefer the life of this world.
meaning, `you give it precedence over the matter of the Hereafter, and
you prefer it because of what it contains of usefulness and benefit for you
in livelihood, and your returns (i.e., income, profitable gain).'

Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting.
meaning, the reward of the final abode is better than the worldly life, and
it is more lasting.
For indeed, this worldly life is lowly and temporal, whereas the Hereafter
is noble and eternal. Thus, how can an intelligent person prefer that which
is short-lived over that which is eternal. How can he give importance to
that which will soon pass away from him, while ignoring the importance of
the abode of eternity and infinity.

Imam Ahmad recorded from Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari that the Messenger of Allah
said,

إِنَّ هَذِهِ الْصَّحِيحُ الْأَوَّلُ (١٨)

فَأَلْقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ عَلَّمَتُونَ (١٩)

Verily, this is in the former Scriptures -- the Scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa.
This Ayah is similar to Allah's statement in Surat An-Najm,
Or is he not informed with what is in the Scriptures of Musa. And of Ibrahim who fulfilled (or conveyed) all that (Allah ordered him to do or convey):

that no burdened person (with sins) shall bear the burden (sins) of another.

And that man can have nothing but what he does.

And that his deeds will be seen. Then he will be recompensed with a full and the best recompense.

And that to your Lord is the End (Return of everything).) (53:36-42)

And so forth, until the end of these Ayat.

Abu `Aliyah said, "The story of this Surah is in the earlier Scriptures."

Ibn Jarir preferred the view that the meaning of Allah's statement, ۖۖ (Verily, this) is referring to His previous statement,

Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and offers Salah. Rather you prefer the life of this world. Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting.

Then Allah says,

Verily, this meaning, the content of this discussion,

in the former Scriptures, the Scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa. This view that he (At-Tabari) has chosen is good and strong.
Similar to it has been reported from Qatadah and Ibn Zayd. And Allah knows best.

This is the end of the Tafsir of Surah Al-A`la. All praise and blessings are due to Allah, and He is the Giver of success and protection from error.

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