



Surah Al Kauthar

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ ۗ إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

Brief Synopsis مختصرة

This surah aims to confirm to the Prophet ﷺ and the whole world the countless blessings that Allah has bestowed upon his beloved Prophet ﷺ. It is in response to those enemies of the Prophet ﷺ who mocked him that he had nothing because he had no offspring and no one to carry on his name.

Although this is the shortest Surah in the Quran it's eloquence, grammatical structure and choice of exaggrative words makes it rich and wide in meaning.

Reason for Revelation

This surah was in response to the Mushrikeen's (polytheist's) taunts and insults of the Prophet ﷺ over the fact that he had no living heirs.

Syeda Khadijah gave birth to 6 children; 2 boys and 4 girls. The boys were named Qasim and Abdullah (also known as Tayyib and Tahir). Prior to the announcement of Prophethood the people had great respect for the Prophet ﷺ and were so profoundly touched by his character that they began calling him Saadiq (the truthful) and Ameen (the trustworthy). But when he began preaching Islam their attitude completely changed. They began to hate everything to do with him and rejoiced at everything that upset him so when his two sons died in infancy the people of Makkah were not sorry for him but instead were happy. (On seeing the spread of Islam) they began consoling each other by saying 'When his lineage ends so will his new deen die for he has no sons to continue his work.'¹

The Quraysh also began to use the term 'Abtar' for the beloved Prophet ﷺ. Abtar was a derogatory term used for the one with no sons. Even Abu Lahab, who was his full uncle, was overjoyed when the Prophet's ﷺ second son passed away and ran to tell the Quraysh the 'good news'. Another person who would also use this term was Aas bin Waail'.²

It was at that time that Allah revealed this surah to His beloved servant and respected prophet in which He, in a very brief but endlessly effective manner, gave the glad tiding that He had (rather than leaving him without heirs) made him the owner of unlimited goodness and bounties.³

¹ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

² Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

³ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

This surah (also) responds to the taunts of the Kuffaar by effectively saying ‘You think that the Dhikr (name) of My beloved will cease and no sign of him will remain. Listen! That is completely wrong! The fountain of my beloved will flow until eternity. The world will always continue to benefit from it.’⁴

It tells us that it is not the Prophet ﷺ who will finish but it is the enemy of the Prophet ﷺ who will finish, his name will be wiped out and his roots cut.’⁵

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

Verily We, who are the Most Powerful, have handed to you; made you owner, of great goodness.

إِنَّا Undoubtedly We

Allah Ta’ala uses the term *undoubtedly* to ensure no one is left in any doubt about the message being given. He also then refers to himself in the plural. This too has a purpose.

The Mufasireen state that the plural tense is either used to denote greater quantity or to stress the singular’s status and greatness. Here the latter purpose is in use. In using the plural tense) In effect Allah is saying ‘We are those who are the creators and owners of the Heaven and Earth therefore no one can stop whatever we want to bestow and nobody can take away what we have bestowed’⁶

أَعْطَيْنَا We have bestowed, personally handed over.

The Ulama have discussed Allah’s choice of word here for He could have used other similar meaning words such as Ietaa (to give). They conclude that the term **أَعْطَيْنَا** is a lot stronger than the alternatives for it denotes giving personally and fully, i.e. not giving to borrow or use but giving complete ownership and control.

Imam Ibn Manzoor in Lisan ul Arab defines **أَعْطَيْنَا** as ‘to hand over with one’s own hand’⁷ whilst Allaama Naishapuri states that it is used because it has the extra notion of ownership whilst Allaama Aloosi in Tafseer Ruh ul Ma’ani states that Athwaa has been joined with the first person pronoun and it signifies giving ownership.⁸ (z)

Allaama Naishapuri states that the whole verse is full of exaggeration ‘The verse begins with ‘inna’ which is used for certainty then the pronoun is one of plural which denotes Greatness and Grandeur, then the word Aatwaa is used instead of Eetaa which has the extra notion of ownership within it. Then the verb is used in the past tense which denotes taakeedh (definitive), that is it has happened, it has been given.’⁹ (z)

⁴ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

⁵ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

⁶ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

⁷ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

⁸ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

⁹ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

الْكَوْثَرُ The Kauthar

Allah has bestowed, handed over, the Kauthar to the Prophet ﷺ. But what is the Kauthar? The Mufasireen have discussed this in great detail. Some of the most famous explanations are:

Countless Goodness

Anything which is great in quantity or rank or worth is called Kauthar by the Arabs.¹⁰ (m)

Allaama Aloosi states that Kauthar is on the scale of Fo'al which is used for exaggeration and its root is Kathr which means so much that it can't be quantified.¹¹

Imam Qurtubi states that the Arabs used Kauthar to denote anything which is great in quantity, value or importance.¹²

The Mufasireen have also noted that the verse ends with al kauthar, which grammatically appears to leave the sentence incomplete; for one would have expected

Imam Qurtubi also points out the significance of what has not been mentioned; normally an attribute is mentioned along with the attributed but here Al kauthar – plentiful – is the attribute but no attributed is mentioned (i.e. plentiful of what?). This apparent omission has been explained as 'Ulama state that if Allah had bestowed one thing in great multitude then that could also have all been mentioned, if there were a few things they could have been mentioned but Allah has bestowed a multitude of items in multitude and all of them cannot be mentioned (consequently nothing has been mentioned).'¹³

Kauthar is also specifically the name of a river and fountain in Jannah:

The fountain of kauthar has been mentioned by 50 companions.¹⁴

In a hadith in Musnad Ahmad the Prophet ﷺ asked the companions 'Do you know what Kauthar is?' They replied 'Allah and His Prophet ﷺ know best' He replied 'It is a river in paradise which has great goodness which Allah Ta'aala has bestowed upon me to which my ummah will come in Qiyaamah'¹⁵ In a hadith it is that it's water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey.¹⁶

Tafseer Mazhari preferred to view Al Kauthar to mean the fountain and stated it was better to view the Laam as Ahdi (specific) and explain it as in the hadith of Anas.¹⁷

¹⁰ Tafseer Mazhari

¹¹ Tafseer Mazhari

¹² Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

¹³ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

¹⁴ Tafseer Mazhari

¹⁵ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

¹⁶ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

¹⁷ Tafseer Mazhari

It is from Syeda Aisha that whoever wants to hear the sound of the water of kauthar falling should put his two fingers into both ears. Ibn Katheer explains that it is a sound similar to it and not of it.¹⁸

Other meanings of Al Kauthar:

The Ulama of Tafseer have mentioned many other meanings of Kauthar¹⁹:

- The fountain on the Day of Judgment from which the Prophet ﷺ will quench the thirst of his Ummah. On each of the corners will be one of the Khulafa ur Raashideen
- His Prophethood, which is different to that of others for it covers the whole of the universe.
- The Quran, no other divine book is as comprehensive and eternal as the Quran
- Deen of Islam
- The multitude of Sahaaba, no other prophet had this many companions
- Elevated Dhikr, no one else's Dhikr is like his
- Imam Jafar saadiq said it is the nur of his heart which led him to Allah
- It is the Maqaam (station) of Mahmood

Ibn Abbaas states: 'We have given you abundant good and included in this is the Quran; it also refers to a river in paradise which was given to Muhammad ﷺ.'²⁰

Imam Qurtubi writes 'Kauthar means Khair e Katheer and all the blessings of this and the next world are included'²¹

Al Kauthar also means the abundant good such as Prophethood, Quran, intercession and the like.²²

Conclusion:

The Mufasireen conclude that all the different items mentioned are valid interpretations of Kauthar but the Al Kauthar mentioned in this verse is best interpreted as abundant goodness

Allaama Haqqi concludes 'It is evident that all of Allah's Zahiri (visible) and Baatini (invisible) blessings are included in Al Kauthar'. The Zahir are the goodness of this and the next world whilst the Baatini are those spiritual sciences which cannot be ascertained through effort, but only through bestowment.²³

¹⁸ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

¹⁹ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²⁰ Tafseer Ibn Abbaas

²¹ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²² Tafseer Jalaalayn

²³ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

It is narrated that Ibn Abbaas believed the Laam on Kauthar is Jinsi (denoting all types of good) and that the fountain of kauthar was part of this Al kauthar.²⁴

Tafseer Ibn Katheer states that Kauthar is taken from ‘Kathrat’ and means lots of khair and in this lots of khair is the fountain of Jannah, just as a great number of mufasireen have claimed (Ibn Katheer then lists some of those stated above).²⁵

Abu Bashir states he said to Saad bin Jubair that the people say that Kauthar is a river in paradise but Abu Saeed commented ‘It is from (one part of) the goodness and Khair that Allah has bestowed upon the Prophetﷺ.’²⁶

An important principle of the Quran:

Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran points out an important principle of the Quran; Whenever the Quran has mentioned the elevated status of the Prophetﷺ the common element has been that Allah Ta’aala has first mentioned himself and then mentioned a rank or quality of the Prophetﷺ e.g. in the verse of Al Isra or the verse of Rahmah for the A’lameen. Even here He has mentioned himself in Inna (Verily we). There are two apparent wisdoms in this:

- So that people on seeing the innumerable perfections of the prophet do not mistakenly consider him god. We are told these perfections (of his) are not personal, but are bestowed by the Lord of the Nourisher of the Heavans and earth
- The second wisdom is that so no shortsighted person should reject the Prophet’sﷺ perfections because Allah Ta’aala Himself has bestowed them, who is the most knowing, wise and powerful. Whoever rejects the Perfections of Prophethood is actually rejecting Allah’s power and wisdom and his attribute of bestowment²⁷

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ So pray and offer sacrifice for your Lord

The Prophetﷺ is recommended to be thankful for these rewards because some people would receive from Allah and thank others and offer sacrifice to others e.g, worship idols and give sacrifices for idols.²⁸ Consequently this act is to show the difference to the polytheists who would offer worship and sacrifice for beings other than Allah.²⁹

The Faa is sababi (causative) i.e. so thank your Lord for all this goodness by praying because in prayer is every type of gratitude. The tongue, the heart, the hand and the feet all thank Allah in prayer. Some have said it means to establish prayer and never miss it (because you have been given such a great bounty).³⁰

²⁴ Tafseer Mazhari

²⁵ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

²⁶ Tafseer Ibn Katheer & Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²⁷ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²⁸ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²⁹ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

³⁰ Tafseer Mazhari

Also offer the sacrifice of camels because camels are known as the greatest wealth. And distribute it amongst the poor and orphans, Do not be like those who push away the poor and orphans.³¹

A number of explanations of this verse have been narrated but Imam Abu Jafar bin Jareer said that the correct statement is the one which says that it means to make all your prayers for Allah and for no one else. Similarly give blood in his path and slaughter only his name and in this way thank him who has given you this honour and gave you that blessing which is like no other blessing and is specific only to you³²

Ikrama, Ataa and Qataada explain it as read the salah and offer the Qurbaani on the day of Eid. Thus according to this tafseer prayer and sacrifice on Adhaa are waajib.³³ (m)

إِنَّ شَانِكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ Your enemy is the one who is the abtar, and not you.

The polytheists insulted the Prophet ﷺ by using the term abtar for him, however Allah turns their insult back onto them and proclaims that actually it is them who are abtar.

In this verse Allah explicitly informs the Prophet ﷺ that the one who has malice for him and the revelation upon him is the one who is disgraced, -- and abtar.³⁴

شَانِكَ has been interpreted as your antagonist, hater³⁵, your insulter and the one who despises you³⁶.

الْأَبْتَرُ (Abtar) has been explained as the one who is severed one. Because they refrain from good acts their line of offspring will be severed.³⁷ That person will be without family, children, wealth or any goodness. He will not be mentioned after his death while you will be mentioned with every good.³⁸

In other words Abtar means that no one will remain after him meaning he will not have a good name after him and Allah, His angels and the humans damnation will be befalling him³⁹

Abtar specifically refers to Aas bin Waail

Most of the mufasireen state that the enemy specifically referred to here is Aas bin Waail. Ibn Katheer states "This verse is for Aas bin Waail, wherever he would hear the mention of

³¹ Tafseer Mazhari

³² Tafseer Ibn Katheer

³³ Tafseer Mazhari

³⁴ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

³⁵ Tafseer Jalaalayn

³⁶ Tafseer Ibn Abbaas

³⁷ Tafseer Jalaalayn

³⁸ Tafseer Ibn Abbaas

³⁹ Tafseer Mazhari

the Prophet ﷺ he would claim ‘Forget him! He is abtar, there is no offspring after him and after his death his name will be erased from this world!’⁴⁰

Tafseer Jalaalayn states ‘This surah was revealed regarding Aas bin Waail who called the Prophet ﷺ abtar when his son al-Qaasim died’⁴¹.

However a potential objection to this claim is that Aas bin Waail actually had offspring and sons so how could he be denoted as Abtar. The Mufasireen have answered this. Tafseer Mazhari explains this ‘One may wonder that Aas bin Waail did leave behind sons and both of them, Umar and Hishaam, became muslims so how was his lineage cut? However this is resolved because both his sons became muslims their relationship with their father ended and they did not ⁴²inherit from him’.

Abtar specifically refers to Abu Lahab

Ibn Katheer narrates that Ataa stated that this verse is for Abu Lahab; when the Prophet’s ﷺ son died this unfortunate said to the mushrikeen ‘Tonight the nasal of Muhammad has been cut’⁴³

Abtar refers to every enemy of the Prophet ﷺ

This was the view of Ibn Abbaas⁴⁴

Confirmation that the Prophet’s Dhikr will continue until the end of time

Some of the Mufasireen highlight that alongwith confirming the Prophet’s ﷺ enemy is Abtar it also confirms that the Prophet ﷺ is not! Indeed he is the opposite.

Some point to the grammatical construction of this sentence with the use of the Dhameer هُوَ in the sentence. Huwa is Dhameer ul Fasl. With Alif Laam on the Khabr and a Dhameer ul Fasl between the Mubtada and khabr it denotes Hasar (confinement); meaning that it is only your enemy who is Abtar AND consequently not you⁴⁵. In English we would read it as ‘Verily you enemy, it is He, who is Abtar.

Ibn Katheer reinforces this point very eloquently; take a look at it and let your eyes and heart rejoice in the reality of the elevated Dhikr of our beloved Prophet ﷺ;

‘Allah Ta’aala will keep his name until the remaining world... His beloved and pure name is in the heart and on the tongue of every muslim... May Allah keep sending unlimited durood and salaam upon him, his family, his wives and his companions. Ameen.’⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

⁴¹ Tafseer Jalaalayn

⁴² Tafseer Mazhari

⁴³ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

⁴⁴ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

⁴⁵ Tafseer Mazhari

⁴⁶ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

‘Your Dhikr will always stay with Allah’s Dhikr and the signs of your fame and respect will stay until Qiyaamah. Akhirah will for you be better than the duniya and the dhikr of the believers of your ummah will be upon the tongue of the angels and believers who will keep saying ‘O Allah, forgive the believing men and women.’⁴⁷

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عليه
وسلم

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⁴⁷ Tafseer Ibn Katheer