

Tafseer Surah Al-Muddaththir (المدثر)

Notes on Nouman Ali Khan's Concise Commentary of the Quran

By Rameez Abid

Introduction

- I. This chapter was the second revelation that came down to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) after the initial one in the cave of Hira
- II. Some said that this is the chapter that made the Prophet (pbuh) a messenger while the initial one just made him a prophet by simply being a recipient of revelation
- III. Purpose of this chapter is to command the Prophet (pbuh) to rise and call the people to Islam and warn those who deny the call [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

Tafseer of the Verses

1. O you covered up 'in your clothes'!

- a. This is in reference to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who was covered up in his clothes due to being shaken up after seeing the Angel Jibraeel a second time

2. Arise and warn 'all'

- a. Some said that the 'arise' is in reference to the Prophet (pbuh) being commanded to stand for prayer and then warn others
- b. Meaning instead of being wrapped in your clothes, get up earnestly and energize to warn the disbelievers of the punishment of Allah and call the people to Islam [Sabuni]

3. Revere your Lord 'alone'

- a. Meaning declare the exclusive greatness of Allah
 - i. 'Exclusive' because there were numerous false gods being worshipped and revered with Allah in Mecca
- b. The word 'Lord' (*Rabb*) is used which entails a master and slave relationship between the Creator and His creation
 - i. Meaning declare that Allah is the greatest Master and we are all just His slaves

4. Purify your garments

- a. Some understand this literally and say it means to purify your clothes from impurities
- b. Others understand it metaphorically and say it means to purify yourself from sins, keep yourself in good company, do not compromise in religion, etc.
 - i. Meaning we should not only purify our outside but also our inside

5. Avoid uncleanness

- a. It's possible that this is in reference to either [Sa'adi]:
 - i. To keep away from worshipping idols
 - ii. To avoid all types of sins whether minor or major

6. Do not do a favour expecting more 'in return'

- a. Meaning do not discontinue that which was mentioned in the previous verses because it seems too much
 - i. He is being told not to worry about the results of his efforts and to just focus on calling people to Islam and the other tasks mentioned in the previous verses
- b. Others said it means that do not give a gift to others so that you can request for something more in return [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

7. And persevere for 'the sake of' your Lord

- a. Meaning stay on task and keep doing the work of calling others to Allah and be patient over whatever harm comes your way

8. 'For' when the Trumpet will be sounded

- a. When the angel blows in the trumpet not only the device itself will make a sound but the angel will also add a sound into it
- b. This is in reference to the second blowing of the trumpet [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

9. That will 'truly' be a difficult Day

- a. It will be a severe day due to the horrors and difficulties that will take place on that day

10. Far from easy for the disbelievers

- a. Meaning the disbelievers will not have it easy on that day. They will not be able to escape from the horrors or the accountability of that day [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

11. And leave to me 'O Prophet' the one I created all by Myself

- a. This is in reference to Waleed ibn Mugheerah
 - i. He was an only child and very wealthy
 - ii. He was intelligent and a brilliant poet. He realized that the Qur'an was indeed the Word of Allah
 - iii. He had influence and power which he feared he would lose by accepting Islam
 - iv. Despite all of the above, he refused to accept the message
 - 1. He also is the one who tried to negotiate a deal with the Prophet (pbuh) of them worshipping Allah for a year and then the Prophet (pbuh) worship their idols for a year. This led to the revelation of Surah al-Kaafiroon
- b. He was brought into this world without wealth nor children and that is how he will return back to his Lord
- c. Allah saying that He Himself will deal with him so just leave him

12. And granted him abundant wealth

- a. Meaning Allah granted him wealth that keeps expanding

13. And children always by his side

- a. One of his sons was the famous companion, the sword of Allah, Khalid ibn Waleed
- b. Meaning his sons stay with him and do not separate from him, thus, he is able to see them on a regular basis
 - i. This is important because children do not necessarily stay by their parents' side due to work, travel, etc.

14. And made life very easy for him

- a. Meaning Allah facilitated many things for him, thus, he has a very easy life. So even if he accepted Islam, it would not affect him much in terms of his wealth

15. Yet he is hungry for more

- a. Meaning despite all that he has been given in this life, he still wants more?!

16. But no! 'For' he has been truly stubborn with Our revelations

- a. It is a heavy 'no' and not a soft one
- b. He stubbornly disbelieved despite knowing the truthfulness of Islam

17. I will make his fate unbearable

- a. Meaning he is going to receive a very heavy punishment that nobody can bear

18. For he contemplated and determined

- a. This could be in reference to one of the following incidents with Waleed ibn Mugheera:
 - i. When he was contemplating whether to accept the message of Islam or not
 - ii. When he was trying to figure out what type of deal to offer to the Prophet (pbuh)
 - iii. When he was thinking about what to say about the Qur'an in order to falsify it

19. May he be condemned! How evil was what he determined!

- a. This is a supplication against Waleed due to the evil decision he made after contemplating
 - i. His decision is mentioned in verses 24-25

20. May he be condemned even more! How evil was what he determined!

- a. Supplication is repeated for emphasis

21. Then he re-contemplated 'in frustration'

- a. Meaning he went back to ponder over it some more as to what he should say about the Qur'an [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. The disbelieving leaders of Mecca were awaiting his verdict about the Qur'an

22. Then frowned and scowled

- a. Meaning he became frustrated when he could not find how to discredit the Qur'an [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. It's because he recognized in his heart that it was indeed the word of Allah

23. Then turned his back 'on the truth' and acted arrogantly

- a. Meaning he recognized the truth but still turned his back on it out of arrogance, thus, refusing to follow the Prophet's (pbuh) call

24. Saying, "This 'Quran' is nothing but magic from the ancients

- a. This was the response he gave to the disbelievers in Mecca after thinking about the Qur'an
 - i. He accused the Qur'an of being magic which the Prophet (pbuh) picked up from somewhere else
- b. By accusing it of 'magic' he's already indirectly indicating that the Qur'an is something that cannot be explained and rationalized

25. This is no more than the word of a man

- a. Mugheera is trying to assure the disbelievers in Mecca that they should not worry because at the end of the day, it's just words of a man not Allah

26. Soon I will burn him in Saqar!

- a. The word *Saqar* is one of the names of Hell
 - i. It implies that his head will be boiling in it and that he will be made to suffer its heat
- b. Some also said that it is one of the levels of Hellfire [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

27. And what will make you realize what Saqar is?

- a. Meaning what will make you realize how terrible Saqar is?!

28. It spares none and leaves nothing

- a. Meaning Saqar is relentless and does not leave alone those who enter it for punishment
 - i. They are guaranteed to be burned and punished by it
- b. Some said Saqar will punish and burn all those who enter it for punishment. Then it will return them to their previous stage before entering and then it will do it all over again. This cycle will continue over and over again [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

29. Scorching the skin

- a. Meaning due to the intensity of the burning in Saqar, it will change the skin turning them dark

30. It is overseen by nineteen 'keepers'

- a. This is in reference to the nineteen angels that are the wardens of Hellfire
- b. Some pagans made fun of the Prophet (pbuh) when they were told that the keepers of Hell are nineteen angels. One of them said mockingly to other pagans, "You take care of two angels and I will vanquish the rest all by myself." In response, Allah sent down the next verse

31. We have appointed only 'stern' angels as wardens of the Fire. And We have made their number only as a test for the disbelievers, so that the People of the Book will be certain, and the believers will increase in faith, and neither the People of the Book nor the believers will have any doubts, and so that those 'hypocrites' with sickness in their hearts and the disbelievers will argue, "What does Allah mean by such a number?" In this way Allah leaves whoever He wills to stray and guides whoever He wills. And none knows the forces of your Lord except He. And this 'description of Hell' is only a reminder to humanity

- a. Meaning these nineteen wardens are powerful angels, thus, no human being can overpower them
- b. The disbelievers are being tested by this number so that they mockingly say what they said which will lead to their punishment being doubled due to it [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. It could also be to test who believes and who disbelieves [Sa'di]
- c. This number of wardens of the Hellfire is mentioned in the Gospel and Torah, thus, mentioning this number will lead to the people of the book being certain that the Qur'an is indeed from Allah because the Prophet (pbuh) did not have access to such details from their books. It will also increase the faith of the believers because the Qur'an is confirming what was mentioned in the previous books. Further, this will lead to no doubt for both of these groups that the Qur'an is indeed true
- d. The disbelievers and the hypocrites argue over this number and ask, "What does Allah intend by this strange number?"
 - i. Then Allah says He leaves whomever He wills to be misled by this number [by engaging in such useless discussions and denying it] and guides whomever He wills by it [by believing in it and increasing their faith because it confirms what was sent down before]

- e. Allah's forces are innumerable and the angels are only one category of them
 - i. This is in response to Abu Jahl who had said that does Muhammad (pbuh) have only nineteen helpers?! [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
- f. Allah is telling us about the Hellfire just as a reminder so that we may recognize the greatness of Allah [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. And also so that by being reminded we do whatever will benefit us and abandon whatever will harm us [Sa'di]

32. But no! By the moon

- a. The strong 'no' is in reference to the denial of the claim of those among the disbelievers who said that they will be able to overcome the nineteen wardens of Hellfire and get themselves aborted from the Fire [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
- b. Then Allah swears by the moon
 - i. Ust. Nouman follows the view that the 'moon' is in reference to some bits of revelation that were still left on earth from the Gospel and Torah during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This is because the moon is only able to give some light but not a lot
 - 1. It's describing the state of the world at that time

33. And the night as it retreats

- a. Ust. Nouman follows the view that the 'night' is in reference to disbelief retreating from earth after the sending down of the Qur'an

34. And the day as it breaks!

- a. Ust. Nouman follows the view that it is in reference to light of the Qur'an spreading with the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

35. Surely it is one of the greatest

- a. This is in reference to the verses of Allah that they are one of the greatest according to Ust. Nouman
- b. Others view that it is in reference to Hellfire that it is one of the greatest catastrophes [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

36. A warning to humankind

- a. Meaning the verses of Allah are a warning to mankind according to Ust. Nouman
- b. Others view that it means that Hellfire is a warning to mankind [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

37. To whichever of you chooses to take the lead or lag behind

- a. Meaning you can embrace the light of the Qur'an or stay behind in disbelief. It's up to each individual's own choice
 - i. People have the free option to either move forward by embracing Islam and doing good deeds or lag behind with disbelief and sins [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

38. Every soul will be detained for what it has done

- a. Meaning every person will be dealt with according to his/her deeds. We will either perish because of our deeds or be released and saved because of them

39. Except the people of the right

- a. Meaning they will not be interrogated in the way described above, rather, Allah will go easy on them

40. Who will be in Gardens, asking one another

- a. Meaning the people of paradise will be asking one another in paradise

41. About the wicked ‘who will then be asked’

- a. The people of paradise will be asking each other about the disbelievers who destroyed themselves by indulging in sins [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. When they do so, Allah will allow them to talk to the people of Hell

42. “What has landed you in Hell?”

- a. Meaning what entered you into Hell?

43. They will reply, “We were not of those who prayed

- a. Meaning we were among those who did not offer prayers to Allah [Sabuni]
 - i. Some explicitly state that this is in reference to the five daily prayers [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

44. Nor did we feed the poor

- a. Meaning we did not used to feed the poor from what Allah gave us

45. We used to indulge ‘in falsehood’ along with others

- a. Meaning we used to hang around with the people of falsehood and follow them around wherever they went [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. They also used to ridicule the Messenger (pbuh) and the religion of Allah with their evil company [Sabuni]

46. And deny the Day of Judgment

- a. Meaning we used to consider it a lie and denied that it would ever take place

47. Until the inevitable came to us”

- a. The ‘inevitable’ here is in reference to death itself. Meaning we continued on that path until death

48. So the pleas of intercessors will be of no benefit to them

- a. This is the consequence of their actions that nobody will be able to help them. They brought this on themselves. No family connections will save them on the Day of Judgement from the punishment
 - i. Even if all those on earth and heavens intercede for them, it will not be accepted because Allah is not please with them [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

49. Now, what is the matter with them that they are turning away from the reminder

- a. Meaning what is making them turn away from the Qur’an which has been sent down to them as a reminder?!

50. As if they were spooked zebras

- a. An example is being drawn of a zebra that runs off due to fear of seeing a lion
- b. The disbelievers used to run away from the Prophet (pbuh) if they saw him approaching

51. Fleeing from a lion?

- a. Meaning the zebras run off due to their extreme fear of the lion
- b. Indirectly, the Prophet (pbuh) is being called a lion

- i. The zebras have an excuse because they consider the lion an enemy but what excuse do the disbelievers have against a man who is trying to warn them? So the comparison is being made to highlight their stupidity [Sabuni]

52. In fact, each one of them wishes to be given a scripture open 'for all to read'

- a. Meaning all these disbelievers wish to be given a revealed scripture like that given to Muhammad (pbuh)
 - i. Meaning there is envy at play here and they feel more deserving of such a station than Muhammad (pbuh)
- b. Some said it means that they will not believe until a scripture is sent down to them from the heavens clearly stating that Muhammad (pbuh) is indeed the messenger of Allah [Sa'di and *al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

53. But no! In fact, they do not fear the Hereafter

- a. Meaning the real reason for their constant denial is that they do not believe nor fear the punishment in the afterlife, thus, they remain on their disbelief [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

54. Enough! Surely this 'Quran' is a reminder

- a. Meaning this Qur'an is only here to be a reminder to the people and warn them. It also suffices as an admonisher [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

55. So let whoever wills be mindful of it

- a. Meaning whoever wants to read the Qur'an and be admonished by it, then let him/her do so for his/her own benefit

56. But they cannot do so unless Allah wills. He 'alone' is worthy to be feared and entitled to forgive

- a. Meaning they cannot be admonished by the verses of Allah unless He wills to guide them. There is consolation and comfort in this for the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) because their continued avoidance and denial used to bother him [Sabuni]
 - i. There is also a lesson in this for us today that all we are required to do is deliver the message and guidance only comes from Allah
- b. The second part of the verse means that Allah alone is deserving of being feared and obeyed and that He alone has the authority to forgive sins