21660 - What is the meaning of the aayah “It is prescribed for you, when death approaches any of you…”

the question

What is the meaning of the aayah (interpretation of the meaning) “It is prescribed for you, when death approaches any of you…” [al-Baqarah 2:180]?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Abu Bakr ibn al-‘Arabi said:

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning) “It is prescribed for you, when death approaches any of you…” [al-Baqarah 2:180].

Our scholars said: This does not mean the approach of death in the literal sense, because that is the time when repentance will no longer be accepted and he no longer has any involement in this world; we cannot make sense of anything that he says, not even a word, so if the aayah were referring to that, that would be something impossible and unimaginable, but it may be interpreted in two ways:

1 – If the time of death is drawing nigh, the signs of which are: old age or travelling, for there is risk involved in travelling, or one expects something to happen that could lead to death, or one realizes that death is inevitable [because death could come suddenly at any time].

2 – It may mean when one falls sick, because sickness is a cause of death, and when the cause of something happens, the Arabs mention the result when referring to the cause. For example, the poet said (speaking of sickness):

“Tell them to hasten to apologize and to think about something to say that will free you from any blame, for I am death.”