

Tafseer Surah al-Kawthar (الكوثر)

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

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Introduction

- This surah is about the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) being given spiritual goodness
- There are some contrasts that can be found between this surah and the one before it (Surah al-Ma'un)
 - This surah highlights the opposite qualities of those mentioned in the previous surah
- This is one of the few surahs which exclusively addresses the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from beginning to end

Tafseer of the Verses

1. Indeed, We have granted you, [O Muhammad], *al-Kawthar*

- a. The surah starts with emphasis to ascertain that no doubt is left in the listener's mind as to what the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is given
 - i. This emphasis further highlights that this *al-kawthar* can only be given by Allah alone. Meaning, it is a very powerful and heavy gift given to the Prophet (pbuh)
- b. The Arabic word *a'ataa* (to give)
 - i. It carries the following meanings:
 1. To give what is not expected
 2. To give more than what is expected
 - ii. The past tense is used to emphasize that it is a done deal even though it will take place in the future. It is guaranteed for him
- c. The Arabic word *al-Kawthar* (الكوثر)
 - i. Linguistically, it means the abundant good, the great good, etc.
 1. Arabs used to use this word to emphasize when something was so great that it was beyond their imagination or to indicate a great abundance of something
 - a. It was also used to indicate the following:
 - i. When someone had a lot of followers
 - ii. For a leader that had lots of good to offer
 - iii. A huge dust cloud in the desert during a sandstorm
 - ii. Allah left it ambiguous in this verse because He does not tell us the nature of this great abundance given to the Prophet (pbuh)
 1. There are many opinions regarding the exact nature of this *al-kawthar*. Some of them include:
 - a. He has been given ease after difficulty

- b. He is the only human by whom Allah swears in the Quran
- c. Legions of angels that are ready to defend him
- d. He has been given excellent character and manners
- e. Allah and His angels send *salah* upon him
- f. A river in paradise
- g. A special pond from which the believers will drink on the Day of Judgement before entering paradise
 - i. A huge amount of the ummah is going to drink from it and this might be the reason for the use of the word *al-kawthar* for it
- h. It is referring to the prophethood and the Quran given to him
- i. It means the Quran only
 - i. So the Quran in a way is being defined as wealth itself
- j. It means Islam itself
- k. It means to make the Quran easy
- l. It means the laws of Islam are lighter than those given to the previous people
- m. It means he has been given a large amount of followers
- n. It means the Prophet's (pbuh) threshold for sacrifice is a lot
 - i. His ability to be patient over all the hardships he was given
- o. The Prophet's (pbuh) mention has been elevated to a very high level. Whenever Allah is mentioned, then his name is mentioned with Him as well
 - i. Ex: The *shahadah*, *adhaan*, etc.
- p. It means the intercession that he will be given on the Day of Judgement
- q. It means the miracles he was given
- iii. The opinion about the pond is widely accepted as the most correct one because there are explicit hadiths about it

2. So pray to your Lord and sacrifice [to Him alone]

- a. Meaning to pray (*salah*) before your Master and for His sake. When it is time for *salah*, there is no one else and the focus is Allah alone. This is what the Prophet (pbuh) is being told
 - i. He is being told to take care of his relationship with Allah
 - 1. *Salah* is one the things that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is constantly told to do in all cases. He is told to do *salah* whether things are going bad or good. It is as if he is being told that just focus on *salah* and Allah will take care of the rest
 - ii. *Salah* is a form of gratitude to Allah. We thank Him by regularly performing it
- b. The Arabic word *salah* (prayer)
 - i. Linguistically, it means to soften something and then straighten it out
 - 1. In the context of *salah*, it means to soften and straighten out the hearts

- a. Gratitude is a way to soften ourselves. We should always remind ourselves about all that Allah has given us
- c. The Arabic word *nahr* (sacrifice)
 - i. The upper body slicing of an animal is called *nahr* (sacrifice)
 - 1. In the context of this verse, it could be referring to the days of Hajj because we do the salah of Eid al-Adha and then go to perform sacrifice
 - ii. The word *nahr* is also used to indicate purification and clarity

3. Indeed, your enemy is the one cut off

- a. The Arabic word *shaaniun* (enemy)
 - i. It refers to an enemy that has a deep seated hatred
 - 1. This enemy completely despises you and there is no cure for it
 - ii. Some said it is referring to the Prophet's (pbuh) uncle Abu Lahab while others said it is referring to Abu Jahl
- b. The Arabic word *abtār* (cut off)
 - i. Arabs used to use it to refer to someone who had sons and daughter but all of the sons died out and only the daughters remained
 - 1. Why were they considered cut off? Because of the following reasons:
 - a. Daughters did not get inheritance share
 - b. Daughters did not carry the family name
 - i. So for them it was like their legacy was forgotten
 - ii. There is a difference of opinion whether this surah was revealed in response to some of the Meccans accusing the Prophet (pbuh) of being cut off after the death of his son Qasim, Abdullah, or Ibrahim
 - iii. Allah is telling his Prophet (pbuh) that his enemies are the ones that will be cut off and not him
 - 1. Meaning their influence, money, land, etc. will be cut off
 - a. Some scholars also said that it means their hearts will be cut off from guidance