

# Tafseer Surah Al-Bayyinah (البينة)

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

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## Introduction

- There is a debate whether this surah was revealed in the Meccan or Medinan period
  - It is most likely a very late Meccan surah because there is a discussion about People of the Book in the surah. It is as if the surah was getting them prepared to deal with the Jews and Christians in Medina
- This surah can be divided into two halves:
  - Describing what *al-bayyinah* (clear evidence) is
  - Describing the separation of mankind into people of hell and heaven
    - The essential separator between them is mentioned in the middle of the surah, which is that the people of heaven worship Allah sincerely, establish prayer, and give zakah
- Ustaadh Nouman Ali Khan believes these verses are speaking specifically about the people of Mecca and the People of the Book that the Messenger (pbuh) encountered in Medina
  - Because the surah speaks about the Messenger himself reciting the verses to his people

## Tafseer of the Verses

1. **Those who disbelieved among the People of the Book and the polytheists were not to be parted until there came to them clear evidence**
  - a. Meaning these two groups would never have separated themselves until the final and conclusive evidence came to them
    - i. Separated themselves from what? There are different opinions about it:
      1. Separated themselves from disbelief
        - a. Meaning they were bound together with their disbelief and would have continued on it if the Quran had not come down as a conclusive evidence
        - b. Some said because there continued to be disbelievers after the Quran came down, this verse means that they continue in their disbelief despite the conclusive evidence, meaning the Quran, has come down to them
        - c. Some said it means that these two groups will not believe until they see some sort of explicit sign from the unseen, such as, an angel reciting the verses to them directly
      2. Separated among themselves

- a. Meaning when the Quran came as conclusive evidence, the people among these two groups started separating themselves into camps of believers and disbelievers. In the past, the people used to stick to their tribal beliefs and would not part from it, however, when the Quran came down that whole structure collapsed in Arabia. People would leave their long held tribal beliefs and even their families to join Islam
- b. The Arabic word *al-bayyinah* (clear evidence)
  - i. When something is clear and not mixed with other things
    - 1. Things do not become clear until they are separated. This is why even clear speech in Arabic is called *bayaan*, which has the same root as *al-bayyinah*, because every word and letter can be separated and is clearly understood

## **2. A Messenger from Allah, reciting purified scriptures**

- a. This is the *al-bayyinah* mentioned in the previous verse being defined
- b. Meaning the Messenger (pbuh) and the Quran both together are clear conclusive evidence
  - i. The character of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is in itself an evidence. It testifies to his integrity, honesty, and credibility. The people of Mecca knew this and this is why they used to refer to him as *al-ameen* (the trustworthy). It was this very Messenger that was reciting to them Allah's book
    - 1. The Prophet (pbuh) could not read or write yet he was speaking in clear and precise details things he could not have known, in addition, the miraculous style and structure of the verses were not part of his regular speech. The people of Mecca knew him for decades and how he spoke, therefore, this should have been enough for them to determine that he was a true messenger and that this was not his own speech

## **3. Within which are correct books**

- a. Meaning the correct messages contained within previous scriptures that had become corrupted are in this Quran. In other verses, the Quran accuses People of the Book of altering their books, therefore, it provides the corrected understanding on the subjects that have become corrupted in the previous books
  - i. The Prophet (pbuh) had been given the essence of the previous scriptures

## **4. Nor did those who were given the Scripture become divided until after there had come to them clear evidence**

- a. The idol worshipers and the People of the Book had their own social pressures
  - i. For the idol worshipers, it was tribal loyalties and sticking by their tribe's beliefs
  - ii. For People of the Book, particularly their scholars, it was their social standings in their religious circles. For them, how could an unlettered Arab be better than them to receive prophethood while they were the highly educated Children of Israel
- b. Meaning the People of the Book were busy fighting and dividing among themselves even though the truth had come to them in the past

- i. They should have been giving guidance to humanity because they still had pieces of truth with them but were too busy fighting among themselves
- c. Some said it means that the People of the Book did not differ over the coming of a prophet to guide them but when he actually came in the form of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), they divided among themselves. Some ended up believing and following him while others rejected him [al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]

**5. And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakah. And that is the correct religion**

- a. This verse is the essence of the surah
- b. Meaning the People of the Book were merely commanded to worship Allah alone sincerely without any ulterior motives or agendas, establish prayer, and give zakah
  - i. These are not difficult things to do. Allah did not ask them for much
  - ii. We can extend this to say that even the idol worshipers of Mecca are included in this verse, because they descended from Prophet Ibrahim
    - 1. Prophet Ibrahim also told his family to do these very same things
- c. The Arabic word *haneef* means when your focus is only what Allah wants
- d. The statement “that is the correct religion” means that the duties mentioned in this verse were in all scriptures and will remain so until the Day of Judgement

**6. Indeed, they who disbelieved among the People of the Book and the polytheists will be in the fire of Hell, abiding eternally therein. Those are the worst of creatures**

- a. Meaning those among the People of the Book and idol worshipers who are still continuing to disbelieve in the face of this last messenger (pbuh), then they are the worst and deserve Allah’s punishment
  - i. Because the evidence has been made clear yet they continue to disbelieve and they also do not acknowledge the corrections of the previous scriptures being made by Allah’s last messenger (pbuh)
- b. This is further proof that this surah was revealed at the end of the Meccan period because the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had been reminding the people for years and they had plenty of time to think about it yet were persistent in their disbelief

**7. Indeed, they who have believed and done righteous deeds - those are the best of creatures**

- a. Meaning those who believed and did the righteous deeds mentioned in the fifth verse above despite all of the challenges, then they are the best of creatures. This can only be done by those who fear no one but Allah

**8. Their reward with Allah will be gardens of perpetual residence beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, Allah being pleased with them and they with Him. That is for whoever has feared his Lord**

- a. This is the reward of those mentioned in the previous verse
  - i. These are those who abide by Allah’s commands and keep away from His prohibitions [al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]