

Exegesis of the Noble Qur'an

Surah al-Kafiroon – Chapter 109

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Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : **Outline**

- General details about this chapter.
- History of revelation.
- Benefits of recitation.
- The chapter at a glance.
- Who or what is a “Kaafir”?
- Verse by verse exegesis of Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn.

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : General Details

- Revealed in **Mecca**.
- Contains **six verses**.
- In this chapter, the Prophet ﷺ was given a response to convey to the polytheists of the Quraysh of Mecca to their requests of “religious compromise.”
- This chapter also shows us the trustworthiness of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that Allah told him to “Say” and he preserved the word “Say” at the beginning by relating “قُلْ”

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: **History of Revelation**

- Revealed in regards to specific people: Waleed ibne Mughayrah, Aas ibne Waa'il, Haarith ibne Qays and Umayyah ibne Khalaf.
- Wanted to strike a deal with the Prophet ﷺ that they would worship "his God" one year and he would worship "their Gods" one year and that they would take "the best" from both ideologies.
- This chapter came down and the Prophet ﷺ read it to the leaders of the Quraysh that there can never be compromise in terms of ideology!

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : Benefits of Recitation

- The Prophet ﷺ has said: *“One who recites Surah al-Kafiroon it is as if he has read ¼ of the Qur'an, and the mischievous Devils will be distanced from that person, and he will be purified from idol worship and will remain safe from the great calamities of the Day of Judgement.”*

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : Amulets, Talisman, etc.

...يَا مُعَمَّرُ إِنَّ الْعَيْنَ حَقٌّ فَاكْتُبْ فِي رُقْعَةٍ الْحَمْدَ وَ قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ وَ الْمُعَوِّذَتَيْنِ وَ آيَةَ
الْكُرْسِيِّ وَ اجْعَلْهَا فِي غِلَافِ الْقَارُورَةِ... بحار الأنوار (ط - بيروت)، ج60، ص: 26

“...O’ Mu’ammarr! Indeed the (evil of) eyes is real, so write down in a swath (ruq’ah) [the verses] of Al-Hamd, Qul Hua Allahu Ahad (Surah Al-Tawheed) and Al-Mu’awwidhatayn (Al-Falaq & Al-Naas) and Ayat al-Kursi and keep it in the cover of a bottle/vial...”

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : The Disbelievers

In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
1. Say, "O disbelievers.	قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ
2. I do not worship what you worship.	لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ
3. Nor do you worship what I worship.	وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ
4. Nor do I serve what you serve.	وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ
5. Nor do you serve what I serve.	وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ
6. You have your way, and I have my way."	لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : Who or What is a “Kafir”?



To Cover/Hide [Farmer]



To be Irreligious – Deny
God [This DOES NOT
include Jews/Christians]



Ungrateful for God's
Bounties



To expiate / to do
penance or atone

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : First Meaning of “Kafir”

○ To cover, hide

كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ...

“...It is like a rainfall that produces plants, and delights the **farmers**...” (57:20)

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : Second Meaning of “Kafir”

- To be irreligious, be an infidel, not to believe (in God) – This does not apply to Jews or Christians who are 'People of the Book':

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ **كَفَرُوا** مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أُولَئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ

“Those who **disbelieve** among the People of the Scripture [Jews and Christians], and the Polytheists, will be in the Fire of Hell, where they will abide forever. These are the worst of creatures.” (98:6)

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : Third Meaning of “Kafir”

○ To be ungrateful

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

“And when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you [in blessing], but if you are **ungrateful**, My punishment is indeed severe.’” (14:7)

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn : Fourth Meaning of “Kafir”

- To expiate, to do penance, atone, make amends.

...وَالْجُرُوحَ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهِ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَهُ ...

“...and an equal wound for a wound; but whoever forgoes it in charity, **it will serve as atonement** for him...”

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: Commentary of Verse 1

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ

1. Say, “O disbelievers.

- This was directed to a specific group of the disbelievers who wanted the Prophet to enter into agreement with them in terms of worship.
- Our disavowal and rejection of false ideologies is not something we can or should “keep in” – we need to let others know of our beliefs and what Islam teaches.

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: Commentary of Verse 2

لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ

2. I do not worship what you worship. [in the future]

- Our faith is clear and logical – and when invited towards illogical beliefs, we should not be scared to make known our stance.
- We can not unite with others by giving up our belief system.

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: Commentary of Verse 3

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ

3. Nor do you worship what I worship. [currently]

- The Qur'an constantly gives us "knowledge of the unseen".
- Had even one of the polytheists who brought this "invitation" to the Prophet accepted Islam, this would have rendered the Qur'an a "lie".

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: Commentary of Verse 4

وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ

4. Nor do I serve what you serve.

- The world must realize that as Muslims we have our own set of beliefs and that we can't / won't leave these teachings.

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: Commentary of Verse 5

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ

5. Nor do you serve what I serve.

- There is never “bargaining” in religion – those who are belligerent against Islam should not presume that the Muslims will ever sell their soul.

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: Commentary of Verse 6

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

6. You have your way, and I have my way.”

- People are free to choose their way of life and what religion they want to follow – no compulsion in beliefs.
- A point must come in which truth is clear from falsehood and that the paths are known to all.

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: Commentary of Verse 6

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

○ Does this verse mean the Prophet is “condoning” idol worship?

- 1. It may mean the Prophet is mocking them and ridiculing them in a subtle way, such as, “keep on doing your actions – no matter how foolish they are...”
- 2. It may mean, “For you is your retribution in the next world and I will have my retribution in the next world.”
 - Here the word “Deen” does not mean “religion” rather it means “retribution” (مالك يوم الدين)

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: Commentary of Verse 6

○ Why the “repetition” in this chapter??

- 1. Point of emphasis to stress the argument to the disbelievers that the Prophet and his followers will never follow the ways of the polytheists.
 - As they continuously encouraged the Prophet and the Muslims to come to a compromise, the Qur'an replies to their continuous requests with a 'repetitive' reply.
- One hadith states that a disbeliever was debating with a companion of the 6th Imam and he did not know the answer and so went to Medina.
 - The Sixth Imam told him, *“The disbelievers told the Prophet that the Muslims should worship their gods one year; and then they will worship one God alone; and then the following year, the Muslims should again worship their gods and then year after that, the pagans will once again worship Allah” – for this reason, this theme was repeated four times in this chapter.*

Sūrah Al-Kāfirūn: **Commentary of Verse 6**

○ **Why the “repetition” in this chapter??**

- Another interpretation is that the first refers to the PAST and the second refers to the FUTURE.
- Another interpretation is that the first refers WHAT will be worshipped and the second refers to HOW it will be worshipped.

