



Core Curriculum

6 Measuring Good and Bad in Islam

6.13 **Kufr in Islam**

INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to the Muslim Converts Channel! The present lesson is a special one. It is special because it is an overview of a very misunderstood subject, namely that of kufr. Kufr is often translated as disbelief ...as in disbelief in God, His Prophets and His religion.

However, we feel that this translation does not fully convey the Qur’anic implications of what the term means. In this lesson, we will overview the various meanings of the word kafir, or so-called disbeliever and what their implications are.

BODY OF TEXT

And when there came to them a Book from Allah confirming that which was with them - although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved (kafarū) - but [then] when there came to them that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it; so the curse of Allah will be upon the disbelievers. How wretched is that for which they sold themselves - that they would disbelieve in what Allah has revealed through [their] outrage that Allah would send down His favor upon whom He wills from among His servants. So they returned having [earned] wrath upon wrath. And for the disbelievers is a humiliating punishment. (Chapter 2, verse 89-90)

Among Abrahamic religions, particularly with Christianity and Islam, there is a popular approach to salvation. This approach states that in order to enter heaven, you need to have believed in a particular set of religious doctrines. To disbelieve in them means to enter Hell in the next life.

The word *kufr* is used ubiquitously in the Qur'an. Just a moment ago, we mentioned how *kufr* is often translated as disbelief and *kafir* as disbeliever. However, we said that according to the Qur'anic world view, this understanding of *kufr* is highly problematic.

Let's look at the verse that we quoted just now. It said that "there came to them that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it". The word used for disbelieve is *kafarū* which comes from the root word *kufr*.

Kufr literally means to bury or cover something. In its religious sense, it means to cover up the truth. If one is covering up the truth, doesn't mean that you believe in it on some level if you've acknowledged it's the truth? In this sense, *kufr* is much more than just disbelief.

It is only in this way that one can make sense of the verse, for how can you disbelieve in something that you just recognized? To recognize is to believe! But if kufr means to bury the truth, the verse makes a lot of sense, as one sees the truth, but decides to bury it as it is not convenient to his or her goals and plans in life, or way of going about things.

By looking at this verse this way, the more accurate way to translate it would thus be: "there came to them that which they recognized, but they willfully rejected it." In other words, they rejected it whilst knowing its truth.

Here's another verse that can help understanding the concept of kufr in the Qur'an:

And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and became of those who committed kufr" (Chapter 2, verse 34 of the Holy Qur'an)

We all know that Iblis is the Devil. Who can claim that the Devil doesn't believe in God's existence? No one can claim that the Devil doesn't believe that the Prophet Muhammad (s) was a Prophet from God!

The verse says that Iblis committed kufr when he was commanded to perform a certain action, namely prostrating before the Prophet Adam (as). How is it possible for him to stop believing in God's existence because he was commanded to prostrate to Adam? Wasn't he with Allah at the time? Obviously this doesn't make sense.

Kufr here means that Satan rejected the truth, that is, he rejected God by refusing to obey Him out of His own arrogance.

Another verse, which describes the event of Iblis's disobedience confirms that kufr means to reject God's command:

And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate to Adam," and

they prostrated, except for Iblees. He was of the jinn and departed from the command of his Lord. Then will you take him and his descendants as allies other than Me while they are enemies to you? Wretched it is for the wrongdoers as an exchange. (Chapter 18, verse 50 of the Holy Qur'an)

Kufr, however, is not simply a mental state of rejection. Kufr in the Qur'an is always associated with evil or more specifically, evil actions for the state of kufr is that of arrogance, pride and hatred against the truth.

The Qur'anic concept of kufr therefore teaches us that one can believe in God and His religion and His Prophet (s) yet still be Kafir. In other words, you can have it all in your mind, but in action reject it all.

Unfortunately, we are often guilty of sin and transgressing against Allah's commands despite believing in Islam. Our transgressions often stem from our arrogance because we think that we are somehow above the law. Here we must be careful for as the previous verse showed us, arrogance can lead to kufr, that is, a rejection of God Himself and thus land us in a lot of trouble on the Day of Judgment.

As such, we must be very careful in not disobeying God for it brings about a spiritual disposition that may lead to kufr and ruin our souls.

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu 'Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh