
Difference between Kufr and Shirk

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question: A Muslim sister N. S. `A from Riyadh says: What is the difference between Kufr (disbelief) and Shirk (associating others with Allaah in His Divinity or worship)? Please, advise. May Allaah reward you!

Shaykh Abdul-Azeez ibn Baaz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)¹:

Kufr is the denial and concealment of the Truth such as those who deny the obligation of Salaah, Zakaah, Sawm, Hajj in case of being financially and physically able, and dutifulness to one's parents, and so on. It is also like those who deny the prohibition of Zina (premarital sexual intercourse and/or adultery), consuming Khamr (intoxicants), and disobeying one's parents.

Shirk is to devote the acts of worship to anything beside Allaah (Exalted be He) such as those who seek the help of the dead, the absent, the Jinn, idols, the stars, and so on or those who offer sacrifices or make vows to them.

A Kaafir (disbeliever) may be called a Mushrik (one who associates others with Allaah in His Divinity or worship) and vice versa. Allaah (Glorified and Exalted be He) SAYS,

“And whoever invokes (or worships), besides Allaah, any other ilaah (god), of whom he has no proof; then his reckoning is only with his Lord. Surely! Al-Kaafiroon (the disbelievers in Allaah and in the Oneness of Allaah, polytheists, pagans, idolaters) will not be successful.”

Allaah (may He be Praised) also says, **“Verily, whosoever sets up partners (in worship) with Allaah, then Allaah has forbidden Paradise to him, and the Fire will be his abode.”**

In Soorah Fatir, Allaah (Glorified and Exalted be He) says, **“Such is Allaah, your Lord; His is the kingdom. And those, whom you invoke or call upon instead of Him, own not even a Qitmeer (the thin membrane over the date-stone). If you invoke (or call upon) them, they hear not your call; and if (in case) they were to hear, they could not grant it (your request) to you. And on the Day of Resurrection, they will disown your worshipping them. And**

¹ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

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none can inform you (O Muhammad (peace be upon him)) **like Him Who is the All-Knower (of everything).**" Here, Allaah (Exalted be He) names their call upon things other than Him as Shirk and in Soorah Al-Mu'minoon, Allaah (Exalted be He) names it Kufr.

In Soorah Al-Tawbah, Allaah (Glorified be He) says, **"They (the disbelievers, the Jews and the Christians) want to extinguish Allaah's Light (with which Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been sent - Islaamic Monotheism) with their mouths, but Allaah will not allow except that His Light should be perfected even though the Kaafiroon (disbelievers) hate (it). It is He Who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad (peace be upon him)) with guidance and the religion of truth (Islaam), to make it superior over all religions even though the Mushrikoon (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allaah) hate (it).**" Here, Allaah (Exalted be He) calls the disbelievers as Kuffaar and Mushriks. This indicates that a Kaafir may be called a Mushrik and vice versa. There are many Ayahs and Hadeeth that stress the same meaning.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, **"Verily, between a man and Shirk and Kufr is the negligence of prayer."**² He (peace be upon him) also said, **"The covenant that distinguishes between us and them (the hypocrites) is Salaah. Anyone who abandons it is a Kaafir."**³ May Allaah grant us success!

(Part No : 9, Page No: 175-176)

² Related by Muslim in his Saheeh (authentic) book of Hadeeth on the authority of Jabir Ibn `Abdullaah, may Allaah be pleased with them

³ Related by Imaam Ahmad, Aboo Dawood, Al-Tirmidhee, Al-Nasa'ee, and Ibn Maajah with a Saheeh chain of transmission on the authority of Buraydah ibn Al-Hasib, may Allaah be pleased with him).