

48995 - The Cistern of al-Kawthar and the River of al-Kawthar

the question

What is al Kawthar? Is it only for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

, blessings and peace be upon the noblest of Allaah's creation and upon his family and companions and those who follow him.

The word kawthar in Arabic refers to great abundance.

In Islamic terminology it has two meanings:

1 - It is a river in Paradise which Allaah has given to His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). This meaning is what is meant in the verse where Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, We have granted you (O Muhammad) Al-Kawthar (a river in Paradise)”

[al-Kawthar 108:1]

This is how the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) interpreted it. It was narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh (607) that Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: Whilst we were with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), he dozed off then he raised his head and he was smiling. We said, “Why are you smiling, O Messenger of Allaah?” He said: “A soorah has been revealed to me.” And he recited (interpretation of the meaning):

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“Verily, We have granted you (O Muhammad) Al-Kawthar (a river in Paradise)...”

[al-Kawthar 108:1]

to the end of the soorah. Then he said: “Do you know what is al-Kawthar?” We said: Allaah and His Messenger know best.” He said: “It is a river that my Lord has promised to me in which there is much goodness. And it is a cistern to which my ummah will come on the Day of Resurrection.”

Al-Tirmidhi (3284) narrated from Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Al-Kawthar is a river in Paradise. Its banks are made of gold and its bed is of pearls and rubies...” al-Tirmidhi said: It is hasan saheeh; it was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 3/135.

2 - It is a great cistern - a tank for holding water - which will be set up in the place of gathering on the Day of Resurrection, to which the ummah of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) will come. The water of this cistern will come from the river of al-Kawthar which is in Paradise, hence it is called the Cistern of al-Kawthar. The evidence for that is the hadeeth narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh (4255) from Abu Dharr, that “into the Cistern will flow two pipes from Paradise.” The apparent meaning of this hadeeth is that the Cistern will be next to Paradise so that the water from the river that is inside Paradise will be able to flow into it, as Ibn Hajar said in al-Fath 11/466. And Allaah knows best.

But is it only for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to the exclusion of other Prophets, or not?

With regard to the river of al-Kawthar from which water will flow into the Cistern, there is no report of any other Prophet having anything like it, apart from our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Allaah states that He has blessed him with it in Soorat al-Kawthar, so it is likely that this is only for our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and not for any other

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Prophet.

With regard to the Cistern of al-Kawthar, it is well known among the scholars that it is only for our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Among those who stated this was al-Qurtubi in al-Mufahhim. But al-Tirmidhi (2367) narrated that Samurah said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Every Prophet will have a cistern and they will be looking to see who has the largest number of followers coming to him, and I hope that I will have the largest number." All the isnads of this hadeeth are weak (da'eef), but some of the scholars ruled that it is acceptable because it has so many isnads, as al-Albaani said in al-Saheehah, 1589. Some of them ruled that it is weak (da'eef). Even if this hadeeth cannot be proven, it is not unlikely that the Cistern will also be only for our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to the exclusion of others. And Allaah knows best.

The characteristics of the river that is in Paradise and the Cistern that will be set up in the place of gathering were narrated in the saheeh Sunnah. The characteristics of the river of al-Kawthar that will be in Paradise include the following:

Al-Bukhaari narrated in his Saheeh from Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whilst I was walking in Paradise, I saw a river whose banks were domes of hollow pearls." I said, "What is this, O Jibreel?" He said: "This is al-Kawthar which your Lord has given to you." The angel struck it with his hand and its mud or its perfume was of the most fragrant (or pure) musk.

In al-Musnad (12084) it was narrated from Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I have been given al-Kawthar, and it is a river that flows on the face of the earth. Its banks are domes of pearls and it is not covered. I struck its dust with my hand and its dust was the most fragrant (or pure) musk, and its pebbles were pearls." Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Saheehah, 2513.

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According to another report narrated in al-Musnad (12827) also from Anas, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was asked about al-Kawthar and he said: "That is a river which Allaah has given to me, in Paradise. It is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey, and in it are birds whose necks are like the necks of camels." 'Umar said: "Those are soft birds." The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Eating them is even softer, O 'Umar." Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb wa'l-Tarheeb, 3740.

With regard to the features of the Cistern that will be in the place of gathering, they include the following:

Al-Bukhaari (6093) and Muslim (4244) narrated that 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Amr said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "My Cistern is (as big as) the distance of a month's (journey). Its length and width are equal and its water is whiter than milk and its scent is better than musk. Its drinking vessels are like the stars of the sky and whoever drinks from it will never thirst again."

In Saheeh Muslim (4261) it is narrated from Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "In it can be seen vessels of gold and silver whose number is as the stars of the sky." According to another report, "More than the number of stars in the sky."

It is also narrated in Saheeh Muslim (4256) from Thawbaan (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was asked about its drink and he said: "It is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey. Two pipes feed into it from Paradise, one of gold and the other of silver."

There is no doubt among the scholars that the ahaadeeth about the Cistern reach the level of being mutawaatir (i.e., narrated by so many people from so many people that it is inconceivable that they could all agree upon a lie). It was narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of

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Allaah be upon him) by more than fifty of his companions. Al-Haafiz ibn Hajar listed the names of the Sahaabah who narrated these ahaadeeth in al-Fath (11/468). And al-Qurtubi said in al-Mufahhim Sharh Saheeh Muslim: "Every Muslim has to understand and believe that Allaah has singled out His Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to be given the Cistern, the name and features of which and its drink are mentioned in the well known saheeh ahaadeeth which, when taken together, constitute definitive knowledge.

With regard to where the Cistern will be located in the land of gathering:

The scholars differed concerning this matter. Some said that it will be after the Siraat (bridge across Hell). Others said that it will be before the Siraat. This is the view of the majority and is more likely to be correct - and Allaah knows best - because some of those who come to it will be taken to Hell, and if it were after the Siraat they would not be able to reach it because they would already have fallen into Hell - we seek refuge with Allaah.

We must also draw attention to a very important and serious matter which is that not everyone who belongs to the ummah of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) will attain the honour of drinking from the Cistern of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). The ahaadeeth clearly state that there are some people among this ummah who will be driven back harshly from the Cistern - we ask Allaah to keep us safe from that. Who are the ones who will drink and who are the ones who will be pushed away?

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has answered this question clearly in such a way that no one has any excuse. Muslim narrated in his Saheeh (367) from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to the graveyard and said: "Peace be upon you, O habitation of believing people. We will join you soon, if Allaah wills. Would that we had seen our brothers." They said, "Are we not your brothers, O Messenger of Allaah?" He said: "You are my companions. Our brothers are those who have not yet come." They

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said: "How will you recognize those among your ummah who have not yet come, O Messenger of Allaah?" He said: "If a man has a horse with a white blaze and white feet among horses that are all black, don't you think that he will recognize his horse?" They said: "Of course, O Messenger of Allaah." He said: "They will come with white foreheads and white hands and feet because of wudoo'. I will have reached the Cistern ahead of them and men will be driven away from my Cistern as stray camels are driven away. (I will say), 'Let them come,' and it will said to me, 'They changed after you were gone,' so I will say, 'Away with them!'"

In al-Bukhaari (6528) and Muslim (4243) it is narrated that Abu Haazim said: I heard Sahl say: I heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say: "I will reach the Cistern ahead of you. Whoever comes to it will drink and whoever drinks from it will never thirst again. Some people will come to me whom I will recognize and they will recognize me, but then a barrier will be placed between me and them." Abu Haazim said: al-Nu'maan ibn Abi 'Ayyaash heard me narrating this hadeeth and said: "Is that how you heard Sahl say it?" I said, "Yes." He said: "I bear witness that I heard Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri add: and he [meaning the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)] said: 'They are from me.'" And it will be said; "You do not know what they did after you were gone." And I will say, "Away with those who changed after I was gone!"

It was narrated by al-Bukhaari (2194) and Muslim (4257) from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, I will drive men away from my Cistern as strange camels are driven away from a cistern."

Al-Qurtubi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: Our scholars (may Allaah have mercy on them) said: Everyone who apostatizes from the religion of Allaah or who introduces innovations with which Allaah is not pleased and did not give permission for is one of those who will be driven away from the Cistern. Those who will be most forcibly driven away will be those who differed from the majority of Muslims and split from them, such as the Khaarijis and Raafidis of all stripes, and the Mu'tazilis and anyone who followed their ways. The same applies to the evildoers and oppressors

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who tried to extinguish the truth and kill its followers and humiliate them, and those who openly committed major sins and took the matter of sin lightly, and all those who followed deviant whims and desires and innovation. Al-Tadhkirah by al-Qurtubi, 306.

So we must strive to follow the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and not go against him in any way, in the hope that Allaah will honour us by allowing us to drink from this blessed Cistern. Otherwise what regret can be greater than the regret of the one who is pushed away from before the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and suffers unbearable thirst but is not allowed to drink that cool water, then his loss is further compounded by the prayer of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that he be driven far away? We seek refuge with Allaah. Imagine this torment - what if you were actually to experience it?

We ask Allaah to bless us and our Muslim brothers will guidance to follow the Sunnah and to avoid bid'ah (innovation) and sin. Ameen. Praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds.

See al-Qiyaamah al-Kubra, 257-262; al-Jannah wa'l-Naar, 166, 167 - both by Shaykh 'Umar al-Ashqar. Fath al-Baari by al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar, 11/466.