

MODULE 2

Class Title: *Dajal* of this World, part 1 – Story of the Sleepers of the Cave (1st part of a 3 lesson series)

Aims of the Lesson: To narrate story of the ashab e Kahf from Surah Al Kahf & draw parallels with today's youth

Categories: Scripture, popular culture

Lesson format: Power point presentation with narration

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli*

(Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slide 1:

Today, I want to talk about Surah Al Kahf. Do you guys know why we want to talk about it and that too, particularly on a Friday? It is because the Prophet (pbuh) told us that reading Surah Al Kahf on a Friday has got particular blessings.

- If anyone recites surah al-Kahf on Friday, a light will shine brightly for him till the next Friday. {Baihiqi}
- Whoever learns the first and last 10 verses of Surah al Kahf, he will be immune from the fitnah (corruption) of the Dajjal. {Ahmad, Muslim, Nisai}
- Whoever reads the first and last 10 verses of Surah al Kahf, will have a light shining from his feet to his head and whoever reads the entire surah, will have a light shining from the earth to the Heavens. {Ahmad }

Slide 2:

Have you heard about the Sleepers of the Cave? Has anybody heard of Surah Al Kahf? Raise your hands. *Alhamdulillah* all of you have heard about it.

Surah Al Kahf was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) after the Jews told the *mushriks* (infidels) to ask the Prophet three things:

1. Who were the Sleepers of the cave and what was their story?
2. Who was Dhul Qarnain?
3. What he (Muhammad) knows about the *Ruh*?

The Prophet (pbuh) told them that he would tell them in the morning, hoping that he would get revelation from Allah (swt), however he did not. After fifteen days the *mushriks* returned, thinking they triumphed over the Prophet. He (pbuh) began to feel sad but the next day the angel Gabriel (as) came with Surah Al Kahf, which contained the answers of their (the *mushriks*) questions. (Ibn Ishaq, Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

This Surah has four stories. First is the story of the sleepers of the cave, then the story of the two friends and their garden, the third is the story of Dhul Qarnain and finally a story of Musa (as) and Khizr (as).

It is an amazing Surah. Have all of you actually read the Surah? Is there anybody who hasn't read it? There is no need to be embarrassed if you haven't read it. I am only asking so I can evaluate how much information to give to you. Lets go through the story and see how it unfolds.

Slides 3- 4:

Basically the story of the sleepers of the cave is told in the Qur'an in Surah Al Kahf. And the reason they are called the sleepers of the cave is because "kahf" means "cave" in Arabic. It is the eighteenth Surah of the Qur'an with 110 verses and it is in juz (para), 15 and 16.

Slides 5- 9:

Allah (swt) says;

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا

'Do you think that the companions of the cave and the inscriptions were a wonder among our signs? (verse 9)

إِذْ أَوْىءُ الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا آتِنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا

When the young men fled for refuge from their disbelieving folks to the cave, they said; 'Our Rabb bestow on us Mercy from Yourself and guide us in our affairs in the right way.' (verse 10)

فَضْرَبْنَا عَلَى آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا

So We covered up their sense of hearing causing them to go to sleep in the cave for a number of years. (verse 11)

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاَهُمْ هُدًى

We narrate to you O Muhammad (pbuh) their story with truth. Truly they were young men who had faith in their Lord and We increased them in Guidance. (verse 13)

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ
قُلْنَا إِذَا شَطَطًا

And We made their hearts firm and strong. When they stood up and said; ‘Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and earth. Never shall we call upon any God other than Him. If we did we would have uttered anonymity and disbelief.’ (verse 14)

Right now, most of you think I am talking absolute Latin. Well, the words of the Qur’an are Arabic and that is not our language but I thought it would be a good idea to just go through some of the verses before we get into the story in English.

Slide 10:

The Qur’an is not a history or geography book. It doesn’t give us complete details of the story.

It is the story of some believing young men who were living in a disbelieving country. They decided to leave their homes and run away for the sake of their religion after a confrontation between them and their people. Allah (swt) rewarded them with the mercy of the cave and care of the sun. They woke up to find their village were believers. Allah (swt) made them an example for future generations.

Now we find this story of the sleepers in various different traditions all over the world.

Teacher: Have you heard about Rip Van Winkle?

Students: We have.

Teacher: “He is a person who went off to sleep and then he wakes up after a couple of hundred years?”

Slide 11:

The oldest evidence of this story is found in Syriac written by a Christian priest of Syria, who was born few years after the incident took place. The legend was written in about 474 CE.

Teacher: What is the year today?

Students: 2010

Teacher: So we are talking about 474 CE, Christian era.

The abridged story is told by the historian Gibbon in his famous book, ‘The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire.’ If any of you are interested in history, this is a cool book.

Slide 12:

Now these people who are called the sleepers of the cave or *Ashab e Kahf*, lived in a city called Ephesus which is located in present day Turkey. (There is some difference of opinion about the exact location of the city where these young men lived).

Slide 13:

It was part of the Roman Empire. You all know that in those days the Roman Empire was huge. Are you aware of that? The city was built around the 7th century BC. It was a very old, pre historic city. It was the centre of idol worship. This is where, if you see on this map over here, it's located:

Slide 14:

This is where they found the city ruins

Teacher: when we think of pre historic cities or golden cities, what comes to mind?

Students: wooden houses, caves, undeveloped places

We are talking about the Roman Empire which was the largest and most powerful Empire in the world and the city of Ephesus was a sophisticated modern city by the standards of those days. We are not talking about the age of cavemen or the ice age at all. We are talking about a developed civilization as you can see on this map here:

Slide 15:

You can see an ancient harbour, a prison, a theatre.

Look at the different pictures of this city's ruins which have been found in excavation. It was known for its beautiful architecture.

Has anyone of you ever seen the ruins of old cities? Has anybody ever been to Mohenjo-Daro (ancient city ruins in Pakistan)? It is said that Mohenjo-Daro had the most developed drainage system even by today's standards so they were very advanced in terms of their civic amenities, architecture and their culture.

Ephesus was like that too and Roman cities in particular were regarded as centres of culture and civilization. The ruins of Ephesus are located in the south of Turkey. The highlight of the city was the temple of the moon goddess Diana. This is the temple.

Slide 16:

This is the model of the temple. They found ruins of it but this is what it looked like. As you can see, it is a beautiful structure.

Slide 17:

This is the interior of a house. Just look at it, it has got paintings on the wall. So the houses of the rich guys were lavishly decorated and were very luxurious.

Slide 18:

This is the library. The Romans were lettered people. They were very much into learning, teaching and acquiring knowledge.

Slide 19:

These are the various different idols. Perhaps there were several different places of worship as you can see over here. These are the real ruin pictures.

Slide 20:

Now in 250 CE, Christian era, the true and pure message of 'Isa (as) started to reach the Roman Empire. They used to worship idols and the message of 'Isa (as) was *tauheed*. Anyone who believed in and followed the message and teachings of 'Isa (as) was the "Muslim" of that time.

Some young men gave up idol worship and became Muslims. Even though we are all born Muslims *Alhamdulillah* but when we learn about Islam, it is often a revelation because there are a lot of things that we don't do, a lot of things that we have pre conceived notions about and there are several things that we have misconceptions about. So we try to clear all that on the basis of knowledge.

These guys heard the teaching of 'Isa (as) and said to themselves - Hey! this idol business sounds a bit dodgy so now we are going to start worshipping one God, Allah. The Qur'an does not give us an exact number of how many young men they were. By other sources, it is said perhaps they were seven in number, however, that is also not a confirmed number but one thing is clear that they all belonged to families like you guys belong to.

Teacher: Where do you all live? Most of you?

Students: Defence, Clifton (upper middle class areas of Karachi).

Teacher: "Do you think you all belong to influential and rich families?"

Student: Not really

Teacher: Does your mother go to sweep somebody else's house or wash somebody else's dishes? No. Do you have people who do that for your mom?"

Students: Yes

Teacher: So, yes, you do belong to rich and influential families. Trust me on that one

Teacher: Do you all come here by car? Did somebody walk?

Students: No

Teacher: So have we established that we, *Alhamdulillah*, belong to pretty established and influential families? Like these chaps *Ashab e Kahf*.

Slide 21:

Now what happened was that the Roman emperor of the time was Decius. His time was 249 to 251 CE. Now, he was a real sucker, this chap you know. He said that this is not good- this Muslim business, he said, naa haann, I don't like this at all. I am not going to let this message happen.

Generally people in the position of power feel threatened by the message of *tauheed* because it means that instead of worshipping anyone else or listening to anybody else, these people with true faith put their trust in one entity, just one *ilah* and that is Allah (swt).

So Decius decided that anyone following 'Isa (as)'s teachings will be severely punished.

Slide 22:

Do you think that the persecution of Muslims today is problematic? Do you realize how Muslims were persecuted in those days? Have you seen the movie gladiator? If the authorities found somebody denouncing paganism, they would make them gladiators because gladiators were usually slaves who were made to perform in the arenas. Do you know what happened in the arenas? They had these sporting events where they would kill each other in all sorts of gory and garish ways for the entertainment of Romans.

Slide 23:

They were quite literally thrown to the lions because that was another form of entertainment. All kinds of wild animals including lions were made to fight there so naturally their chance of survival was nil.

Slide 24:

Another form of punishment was crucifying.

Teacher: Does anyone know the meaning of crucifying?

Student: You are tied to a cross in a way that your hands and your feet are nailed.

They bled to death because obviously if somebody is going to nail you, you are not going to die immediately. It is an extreme form of punishment. Then some of them were sawed into two pieces.

I want you to visualize absolutely horrible images in your head. This is actually what happened. Somebody would take a saw and cut them into two pieces and these are only a few forms of punishments and I am sure there must be more which are even more awful.

Slide 25:

Obviously for a normal person in the face of such severe consequences, it became very difficult to remain steadfast on their religion. It also became impossible to hide ones faith. On orders from the Emperor, the head of Ephesus would keep an eye on who is coming to worship in the temple of Diana and who is not and this was their way of finding out if somebody doesn't come, obviously that means he is a Muslim.

Slide 26:

Now these young men went to the temple and refused to worship the goddess and **declared** their faith in Allah.

Imagine you have gone for Hajj with your parents and you stand up and tell your mom; 'I am not going to do *tawaaf*.' Just imagine!

Teacher: So what would be your mum's reaction? Any ideas?

Student: Angry, shocked.

Teacher: Try to put yourself in a position the young men were in, when they declared in front of their parents and other loved ones that they will not bow in front of those idols anymore! Imagine the reaction of people around them. Shock and horror!

Slide 27:

The news of the refusal was scandalous and soon reached the Emperor .He called these men and questioned them about their new religion. The young men admitted that they had left idol worship. This is what they said;

Slide 28:

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَن نَّدْعُو مِن دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذَا شَطَطًا

“Our Lord is the Lord of the Heavens and Earth. Never shall we call upon any God other than Him” (Surah Al Kahf 18: Verse 14)

Slide 29:

Since these guys belonged to rich and influential families, the Emperor said: Teenagers are like that, they go a little crazy. Maybe they just heard this new thing and they want to experiment with it. Let's just give them a little bit of time and maybe

they will come around. So he gave them three days to reconsider their decision or to face severe consequences.

Slide 30:

Now what option did they have? In their position it was getting absolutely impossible to practice their faith so they ran away and found a cave which was outside the city and they took refuge there. It is said that a dog followed them too. However, it is unclear whether all of these boys were from the same family or not. Perhaps they were friends but we don't know for sure.

Slide 31:

Now what happened was that Allah (swt) put them to sleep with the dog guarding the entrance.

Teacher: Can you imagine if you had to run away from home where would you go?

Student: To a friend's house

Teacher: No but the friend is running away with you. Another friend is also running away with you!

Student replies: hotel

Teacher: Wow – we are removed from reality indeed.

Slide 32:

It was not as if nobody noticed they had run away. A major hunt was undertaken. Their family as well as local police or whatever they had at that time, tried to hunt for them. But no trace was found! And what Allah (swt) did was that when the sunrays used to shine on the cave, they would not fall on them so that their deep slumber remained undisturbed.

So basically they were not found. Their names and how they had run away was written on tablets because in those days paper was not that common so they used to write on stone slabs. And they were preserved in the state treasury.

Slide 33:

Then 300 years later they returned and by then it was the reign of another Roman emperor. Now 300 years had passed and the Roman Empire had become Christian by that time. That was the miracle of Allah (swt), that they slept for 300 years. Allah (swt) put them to sleep and even made them turn their sides while they were sleeping. Can you imagine how cool that is!

Slide 34:

After they woke up, they suddenly started feeling hungry so they told one of their friends to go to the city and buy some food. They had an old coin from the period of Decius. They didn't realize that they had been sleeping for so long.

Does it happen to you sometimes that your mom says, ok, it's been ten hours now, get up and you are like "I just went to sleep"!

They had no idea what had happened so whatever money they had, which was obviously 300 years old, they sent one of their companions to get some food. He went into town and the merchant was very surprised to see such an old coin. Can you imagine yourself taking a 100 year old coin and showing it to somebody?

Student: Did they also grow old?

Teacher: That's a very good question but we are not sure whether they looked old. In the story of Rip Van Winkle, we see the picture of Rip Van Winkle, as an old haggard man but Allah (swt) talks about young men in the story so perhaps Allah (swt) had preserved their youth. He can do that. Can't He?

So yes Allah (swt) made them sleep for 300 years and they got up as if they awoke from a night's sleep. Now when the young man went to the market for food in his 300 years old clothes and old coins, people found it very strange. Why? Because fashion changes after 300 years!

People talk about something which is out of the usual, out of the ordinary, don't we? So the matter was reported to city officials, that a young man who has got really old coins and he looks like he jumped out of the stone ages is here. They had that tablet preserved remember? So they figured out that these are the same young men who had run away at the time of Decius.

Slide 35:

The young men were absolutely over the moon to hear that Emperor Decius had died. 300 years had passed, so probably the entire generation was dead by that time including their families.

They narrated their whole story and were very well received by people of that time. Why? Because people had given up their ancient pagan religion and had become Christian. The emperor of that time visited them in their cave as they didn't move back to the city. Soon the young men died a natural death.

Slides 36- 37:

Then a monument was built close to the entrance of the cave.

It exists today. A church was later constructed and the place became famous. The area became burial ground for prominent Christians because they turned it into a holy

place .These are some pictures of the cave and the entrance to it and this is where they were buried actually after they died.

Slides 38- 39:

The Qur'an does not tell us any more details but is that the end of the story? Allah (swt) does not tell us a story in the Qur'an just for the sake of entertainment and Allah (swt) does not go into great details.

If you read the story of the sleepers of the cave in Surah Al Kahf, when the men woke up, the people of those times were arguing, how many were they? How many years did they sleep? Was it 100 years, 125 years or what? They were arguing about petty things.

It is besides the point how many years passed but we are naturally curious about these things. I would have said, 'Ah! What were their names?' and somebody would have said, what did they look like? Were they cute? What were they wearing? One might wonder these things but Allah (swt) is not telling us this story for our entertainment but to look at what we can get from it? Like I said these were young people.

Teacher: How old are you?

Student: 14

Teacher: They were young boys and the difference between you and them is merely of gender.

Slide 40:

Teacher: Where do you live? In the city of lights - Karachi.

I am serious, this is the picture of Karachi. Can you see, here is Habib Bank Plaza at night. Isn't it lovely? It is an aerial view of I.I Chundrigar road. Can you see that? You all know that Karachi is called the city of lights?

Our poor Karachi has gone through so much turmoil that I don't know whether we should call it the city of lights anymore? It is the most happening place in Pakistan. Do you guys agree? Don't you die of boredom elsewhere?

It's a great city with comforts and ease? For us sitting in this room, Karachi **is** a city with comforts and ease. Yes, there is a lot of problems for the majority of Karachiites, but all of us in this room are *Alhamdulillah* protected from a lot of those issues because of our social standing.

Teacher: Do you have a generator in your house?

Student: Yes

Teacher: Are we sitting in an air conditioned room?

Student: Yes

Teacher: We are not discussing the general population of Pakistan. Talk about yourself. I am talking about myself. I come here in an air-conditioned car. I get off here and the air conditioner is on. When the electricity goes generator turns on. Does that happen? Do any of you here have to sleep without electricity for 12 hours with mosquitoes biting? So yes, for us Karachi is a city of comforts and ease. Don't ever forget that. And we must be extremely thankful to Allah (swt) for that.

Prominent position? Yes or no?

Teacher : Which school do you go to?

Students: Saint Josephs, Froebels, Karachi Grammar School, CJM (elite schools of Karachi)

How many people go to such top schools in entire Pakistan?

Students: 15%, 50%??

Teacher: No not even 5%. There are less than 2% people who actually have access to good education.

We are talking about serious elite business here. You guys should understand and recognize where you are coming from. The higher up you are in the social order, the greater is your responsibility. Don't forget that. So yes you **have** a prominent position and a secure life.

I completely understand that level of insecurity where bomb blasts happen in our city and country and if we happen to be there. I am talking about day to day security. I have this person who works in my house from morning till evening and her 15 year old son is alone in her house. Do you have a roof over your head? Does your dad, mom or your driver take you to places you want to go?

Your life is secure to an extent that your parents, guardians and the people around you try to make it as secure as possible. There are many people in our country who don't even have a toilet to go to. On the contrary, you have the security that you go to school and come back in a car. Security, that when you will come back from school and you are hungry, you will have food on the table.

Social acceptance? Do people like you? Yes, I am sure they do.

Many friends? Do you guys have many friends? Is anybody over here a poor little desperate girl with no friends? *Alhamdulillah* I am sure you all have tons of friends and I am sure your parents are sick of them! So, *Alhamdulillah* all of us sitting in this room have a great life.

Slide 41:

Ashab e Kahf in Ephesus lived in a great city of comfort and ease, enjoyed a

prominent position, secure life, social acceptance and had plenty of friends. Exact same situation as YOURS.

Slide 42:

What do you think they did in those days for entertainment? Just sit there and break stones?

Slide 43:

They went to the coliseums and watched amazing spectacles. They had grand parties, parties that you guys could only dream of. They had amphitheatres, with all kinds of performances and heaven knows what else. So yeah - they had plenty of amusement and distraction.

Slides 44- 45:

Your parties, their parties.

Slides 46- 47:

Your concerts, their concerts.

Slides 48- 53:

Everything that is available to you today was available to them with bells on. So don't think that they were living in this remote, pathetic little place with nothing to do. They were living in a very happening place, a very hip hop town, so their concerts, their theatre, festivals and fashion was quite like ours today. Don't think that Sana Safinaz (famous fashion designer duo of Pakistan) were invented today. Romans were really into dressing up and liked being cool.

When you read the story of these guys, don't think that they were very different from you. Their position was pretty close to what yours is right now.

Slide 54:

Then faith entered their hearts and they recognized the fraud, the deception behind all the parties, glitz & glamour, fashion shows and concerts, *basants* (spring festival) and the *melas* (carnivals). They understood how seriously damaging it was for their faith because remember what they said:

‘... Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and earth. Never shall we call upon any God other than Him. If we did we would have uttered anonymity and disbelief.’ (Surah Al Kahf 18: Verse 14)

And that's like saying ‘*La illaha illallah, Muhamadur Rasool Allah*. (Allah is our Lord and Muhammad (pbuh) is His Prophet and Messenger)

Slide 55:

They recognized the deception of a faithless glamorous existence and chose a lacklustre life to protect their faith. The dark cave is very symbolic of the life that they chose and the glamour that they gave up.

Slide 56:

What would you do if you were in that situation? What are you willing to sacrifice for your faith? Next time you have an invitation to a party where you know there will be music and dancing and where you know you are going to have a lot of fun. All of your friends are going to a *basant* party. What are you going to do? All of your friends are invited to this concert. What are you going to do if your faith is on the line?

Are you willing to choose the life in which the people are going to say, “Oh my God, she started covering her head, what a geek. I do not want to have anything to do with her, anymore.” Are you willing to deal with that? Are you willing to deal with the fact that perhaps if you start to say that I am going to pray five times a day, no matter what happens and your friends are going to say ‘oh please don’t be so old fashioned, don’t be such a grandmother’. You are gonna say, I am not going to wear that, I am going to wear proper clothes and your friends are going to be ‘O dear! brainwashed at Perceptions!’ What are you going to do? You are not going to be invited to any birthday parties anymore. What are **you** willing to sacrifice for ‘*La illaha illallah, Muhamadur Rasool Allah.*’?

Lessons from Ashab e Kahf:

Slide 57:

Faith is a powerful thing. It is faith that gives us the insight to recognize the deception behind the glamour of this life and the courage to reject it.

It takes a lot of courage to be able to deal with not being accepted, to be told that “O my God! You have started looking like a *masi!* (maid) Huh! What is the matter with you?” And not be invited anywhere anymore. And people looking at you and saying even if by facial expression only ‘Oh poor thing! Her mother is forcing her, I think.’

Slide 58:

Faith gives us the wisdom to make the **right choice** and the patience to be steadfast on it.

Slide 59:

The moral of the story in a nutshell; If need be, choose a lackluster life to protect your faith, go ahead, it is a wise choice.

Inshaallah in the next few classes we will be looking at the reality behind the glitz and glamour of this world and see how phony it is.

Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*