

BELIEF IN GOD (PART 3 OF 3)

Rating: 4.7

Description: The third and fourth aspects about what belief in God means, namely, belief that He Alone is entitled to worship and coming to know of God through His names and attributes.

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(III) God Alone Is Entitled To Worship

Islam lays much greater emphasis on how belief in God translates into righteous, obedient life and good morals rather than proving His existence through theological intricacies. Hence, the Islamic motto is that the primary message preached by the prophets was surrender to God's will and His worship and not so much the proof of God's existence:

"And We never sent any Messenger before you (O Muhammad) without having revealed to Him: none has the right to be worshipped but I, therefore you shall worship Me (Alone)." (Quran 21:25)

God has the exclusive right to be worshipped inwardly and outwardly, by one's heart and limbs. Not only can no one be worshipped *apart* from Him, absolutely no one else can be worshipped along *with* Him. He has no partners or associates in worship. Worship, in its comprehensive sense and in all its aspects, is for Him alone.

"There is no true god worthy of worship but He, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate." (Quran 2:163)

God's right to be worshipped can not be over emphasized. It is the essential meaning of Islam's testimony of faith: *La ilah illa Allah*. A person becomes Muslim by testifying to the divine right to worship. It is the crux of Islamic belief in God, even all of Islam. It was the central message of all prophets and messengers sent by God - the message of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, and Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him. For instance, Moses declared:

"Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord." (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Jesus repeated the same message 1500 years later when he said:

***"The first of all the commandments is, 'Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord.'"
(Mark 12:29)***

And reminded Satan:

"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only." (Matthew 4:10)

Finally, the call of Muhammad some 600 years after Jesus reverberated across the hills of Mecca:

"And your God is One God: there is no god but He..." (Quran 2:163)

They all declared clearly:

"...Worship God! You have no other god but Him..." (Quran 7:59, 7:65, 7:73, 7:85; 11:50, 11:61, 11:84; 23:23)

What Is Worship?

Worship in Islam consists of every act, belief, statement, or sentiment of the heart which God approves and loves; everything that brings a person closer to His Creator. It includes 'external' worship like the daily ritual prayers, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage as well as 'internal' worship such as faith in the six articles of faith, reverence, adoration, love, gratitude, and reliance. God is entitled to worship by the body, soul, and heart, and this worship remains incomplete unless it is done out of four essential elements: reverential fear of God, divine love and adoration, hope in divine reward, and extreme humility.

One of the greatest acts of worship is prayer, invoking the Divine Being for aid. Islam specifies that prayer should only be directed to God. He is deemed in total control of every man's destiny and able to grant his needs and remove distress. God, in Islam, reserves the right of prayer for Himself:

"And do not invoke, along with God, anything that can neither benefit you nor harm you, for behold, if you do it, you will surely be among the evildoers!" (Quran 10:106)

Giving anyone else - prophets, angels, Jesus, Mary, idols, or nature- a portion of one's worship, which is essentially due only to God, such as prayer, is called *Shirk* and is the most enormous of sins in Islam. *Shirk* is the only unforgivable sin if not repented from, and it denies the very purpose of creation.

(IV) God Is Known By His Most Beautiful Names and Attributes

God is known in Islam by His beautiful Names and Attributes as they appear in revealed Islamic texts without the corruption or denial of their obvious meanings, picturing them, or thinking of them in human terms.

"And the Most Beautiful Names belong to God, so call on Him by them..." (Quran 7:180)

Therefore, it is inappropriate to use First Cause, Author, Substance, Pure Ego, Absolute, Pure Idea, Logical Concept, Unknown, Unconscious, Ego, Idea, or Big Guy as divine Names. They simply lack beauty and that's not how God has described Himself. Instead, Names of God indicate His majestic beauty and perfection. God does not forget, sleep, or get tired. He is not unjust, and has no son, mother, father, brother, associate, or helper. He was not born, and does not give birth. He stands in need of none as He is perfect. He does not become human to "understand" our suffering. God is The Almighty (Al-Qawee), The One Incomparable (Al-'Ahad), The Acceptor of Repentance (At-Tawwaab), The Compassionate (Ar-Raheem), The Ever-Living (Al-Hayy), The All-Sustaining (Al-Qayyum), The All-Knowing (Al-'Aleem), The All-Hearing (As-Samee'), The All-Seeing (*al-Baseer*), The Pardoner (*al-'Afuw*), The Helper (*al-Naseer*), The Healer of the Sick (*al-Shaafee*).

The two most frequently invoked Names are "The Compassionate" and "The Merciful." All but one of the chapters of Muslim scripture begin with the phrase, "In the Name of God, the Most-Merciful, the Most Gracious." The phrase is used, one might say, by Muslims more commonly than the names *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit* are heard in Christian invocations. Muslims begin in the Name of God and remind themselves of God's Compassion and Mercy every time they eat, drink, write a letter, or perform anything of importance.

Forgiveness is an important dimension of human relationship with God. Human beings are realized to be weak and prone to sin, but God in His tender mercy is willing to forgive. The Prophet Muhammad said:

"God's mercy outweighs His wrath." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

Along with the divine names "The Compassionate" and "The Merciful," the names "The Forgiver" (Al-Ghafur), "The Oft-Forgiving" (Al-Ghaf-faar), "The Acceptor of Repentance" (At-Tawwaab) and "The Pardoner" (Al-'Afuw) are among the most used in Muslim prayer.

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