

# 1. What is Islam?

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Islam means submission to God. It is an Arabic word, derived from ‘*Aslama*’, which means submission. The name ‘Islam’ is conferred to the divine religion in this verse of the Quran: “Today I have completed your religion for you and completed My blessing upon you. I have chosen for you Islam as your religion.” (*Al Ma’idah*, 5:3)

The Quran tells us that the submission to God should be total and complete: “Believers, surrender yourself totally to God...” (*Al Baqarah*, 2:208) A believer is required to submit himself or herself to God with total devotion and in all sincerity. This submission implies complete obedience to God in all matters.

Islam is the name chosen by God for His approved religion for human beings. All the messengers sent by God (from Adam to the Prophet Muhammad, the last messenger of God), brought the same religion: the religion of total submission and surrender to God. The Quran states: “God has ordained for you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and

It is such a miracle of creation that the gravitational pull of the sun does not pull in the earth and destroy it, nor does the earth pull in the moon and collide with it. It is also a miracle that neither of the three float away.

Idolatry has been described in the Quran as “A terrible wrong” or *zulm* (*Luqman*, 31:13). *Zulm* means the placing of something in the wrong situation. That is, idolatry (associating something with God) is totally alien to the universe. In this world, believing in idolatry and practising idolatry are completely out of place.

Only one God is the Creator of this world. He alone is its Lord and Sustainer. He is possessed with all power. That being so, believing in something other than God, or associating anything with the godhead, amounts to according the status of an actual reality to a self-concocted supposition.



# 5. The Creation Plan of God

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A philosopher has written that it appears that man is a strange creature in this vast universe. It seems that neither man is made for this world, nor this world is made for man. Both seem mismatched.

Man is born with unlimited potential, yet in the present world, he finds only a very limited use for it. Man wants to live eternally, but very soon, without his leave, death arrives and puts an end to his life. He houses a life of dreams in his mind, but these dreams are never realized.

Why are man and the present world so mismatched? To find the answer of this question, we have to understand the Creation Plan of God.

The reality is that God, the Creator of man, has created man according to His plan. To become acquainted with this plan it is necessary for a man to receive guidance from the Creator. Only then can a man understand the Creation Plan.

God sent many messengers and holy books to convey this Creation Plan. The Creation Plan is that man must spend a period of trial in this present, imperfect world and subsequent to this, according to his deeds, he will earn the right to inhabit the perfect and eternal world called paradise.

To be eligible for paradise there are two conditions: one is to acknowledge the truth of one God and the other to live a



## 4. The Beautiful Names of God

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“God has the Most Excellent Names. Call on Him by His Names.....” (*Al-A'raf*, 7:180)

It is commonly believed that God has ninety nine names. Actually these names are not names in the literal sense but the attributes of God. The above verse can be read to mean that it is Allah who possesses all the excellent qualities and attributes.

Islamic scholars have included more names apart from these ninety nine. God's attributes are infinite, so his names are also infinite. But these ninety nine names are so deep in their meaning that all the infinite attributes of God can be considered contained within these ninety nine.

When a believer calls out to God he feels the need for appropriate words to address God and God the Most Gracious has given these words. These words from God are more satisfying than anything a human mind could produce. These names enable us to relate to God at a conceptual level and enable us to have a mental picture of God. This conceptual model of God is something that a believer can invoke to establish a direct link with God.

“He taught Adam all the names.....” (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:31). It is man's ability to give names that is the biggest quality that he possesses. God taught man His own Names and enabled man to truly appreciate Him. When a believer reflects on the names of God, he is overcome by the feeling of his helplessness and the supreme power of God. He falls in prostration and beseeches God for His mercy.

The Beautiful Names or *al-Asma al Husna* are not a magical incantation which mindlessly repeated shall yield some extraordinary rewards. The benefit of these names is that they are helpful in framing a mental picture, repetition is only

During the life of the Prophet there were no regular compilations of hadith for they were not generally recorded in writing. However, they were orally transmitted, with great accuracy of detail, thanks to the Arab's exceptionally retentive memories. Later they were compiled into books by various collectors of Hadith.

The *sunnah* is the key to understanding to the rise of Islam. The observance of *sunnah* is identical with Islamic existence and progress. The *sunnah* is the iron framework of the House of Islam, if this framework is removed it is not surprising that the house collapses. The prevalent belief that the *sunnah* of the Prophet is relatively unimportant is incorrect. The personality of the Prophet in all its facets – as a leader, as a family man, a worshipper, a *dai* (a person who invites others to Islam) etc. is inherently linked to the religion of Islam. Either by negating the importance of the *sunnah* or by being picky and choosy about which *sunnah* to follow we run the risk of being misguided.

Allah has categorically declared in the Quran, “Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it.” (*Al-Hashr*, 59:7).

The compilers of *hadith* especially Imam Bukhari and Muslim have applied the most rigorous measures to the reliability of each *hadith*. An unbroken chain of narrators is traced for each *hadith* and the lives of each transmitter is analysed from all angles to validate their trustworthiness.

