

THE MUSLIM'S WORSHIP

"So The Quran mentions worship over a hundred times and Islamic teaching includes the following quote by Mohammad, "Worship is the pillar of religion" (Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam*, 79-80 as quoted by Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 48). Muslim's are taught that worship is important and a necessity, but are given conflicting instructions as to how one ought to worship. There are various views as to when worship is to be conducted and what methods are to be used. However, even among 170 sects that compete in their beliefs regarding the particulars of worship, there are certain core beliefs that are shared throughout the divided religion (Jones, *Shadowland*, 115-116).

In this study session, the worship rituals that are taught by the Islamic religion will be examined. However, additional attention will be given to the deeper Islamic teaching regarding the totality of worship that is defined by the Muslim's manner of life and mindset. Finally, a review will be given between the Islamic teachings regarding worship as they compare to the Biblical teaching of worship for Christians.

Worship Rituals as Taught by Islam

The ritualistic forms of worship that are most commonly accepted and taught by the Islamic world are called the "Five Pillars". Four of these will be examined in detail; however, the first pillar, the *Kalima* or the *shahadas*, will only be mentioned as the study session titled "Salvation According to Islam" (lesson 8) covers it in more detail. *Kalima* is the statement of faith that is considered by many as the confession necessary for conversion. The statement is, "La ilaha ila Allah; Muhammadur-rasul Allah" and means "There is no God but Allah" and "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" (Jones, *Shadowland*, 114-115). Some do not consider these *shahadas*, or testimonials, to be a requirement that is commanded within the authoritative Islamic doctrines. Those that appose this statement as being authoritatively commanded will note that the passages within the Hadith that are used to support the essentiality of the *Kalima* are shown to also support the need to confess Jesus as Allah's apostle (see study session titled "What does Islam Teach about Salvation").

The four remaining pillars include, prayer, fasting, alms and pilgrimage. "Islam is a religion of ceremony, works, and lawkeeping" and a Muslim is able to carry out his religious duties as he ritualistically worships Allah via these pillars (Jones, *Shadowland*, 115). Each ritual form of worship is taught differently among sects and some of these will be discussed.

Depending on the sect, prayer is either to occur five times a day or three times a day while "doubling up on the prayer on two occasions" (Jones, *Shadowland*, 117). Muslim's are called to prayer by the Imam who is a religious leader (Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 48). There are numerous doctrinal beliefs as to the specifics of prayer, some of which include the times prayer is to be conducted, the position of the body during prayer, whether a *turba* (a

small clay tablet) is to be touched with the forehead when bowing in prayer, and who is to be invoked (god, Mohammad, Ali (Mohammad's son-in-law)) when prayer is called (Jones, *Shadowland*, 116-117).

Prior to prayer, the Muslim is to engage in ritual ablution- "a precise and specified cleansing (with running water) of the hands and forearms, mouth and nostrils, face, head, and feet" (Miller, *The Quran Unveiled*, 47). "The prayers may be performed anywhere, but most often take place in mosques (from *masjid* which means 'place of prostration'). On Friday, corporate prayers are conducted in mosques for the entire Islamic community" (Miller, *The Quran Unveiled*, 47).

"Muslims consider a prayer offered by a person in a congregation twenty-five times greater than that of a prayer offered in one's home or in the market" (Jones, *Shadowland*, 118). Due to the heavy importance placed on mosques by the Islamic world and the ever growing number of mosques throughout the world, it is necessary to give some attention to these "places of prostration". Consider the following section quoted from pages 118-119 in *Shadowland* by Burt Jones:

The mosque is the center for religious and social life in any community where it can be found. It is a major institution in Islam that acts as the bond to draw area Muslims to it. Here is a brief description of the inside of a mosque and the importance of mosques to the Muslim community.

The center of the mosque is the prayer room, usually located under the dome. One or more of the outside spiraling columns, called minarets, contain stairways for the prayer leader to ascend to call the people to prayer. In many mosques the calls to prayer are now pure twenty-first century; they are done electronically. Inside the prayer room there is a niche in the wall, just in case a worshiper does not know which way east is. (Worshippers must bow toward Mecca.) There is a raised platform, usually ascended by several steps, upon which the religious leader sits to address the worshippers, especially with the Friday sermon.

Mosques come in all shapes, sizes, and places, but they can be broadly divided into four categories.

The Street Mosque—a small, simple building composed of a prayer room. It may have been endowed by a wealthy donor in memory of a deceased relative or an organization of concerned Muslims. It can be used as a place to meet with apostate or itinerant members of the religious scholar or practitioner class.

The District Mosque—larger than the street mosque and may contain a prayer room, classrooms, a foyer, and an office area. The district mosque attempts to oversee the religious needs of the community. It houses the local economic, political, legal, social, and religious organizations. Formally, only one mosque was located in a district. Presently, a district might

accommodate a plurality of mosques that compete with each other for the participation and attention of the neighborhood.

The Congregational Mosque—sometimes called the Friday mosque. The people of the village or the city gather on Friday at noon to pray behind the religious leader, a post appointed by the Islamic political authority. Because of the convenience of the street mosque, the prestige of the Friday mosque has declined in many places.

The National Mosque—a large structure with significant Islamic history and prestige. It is a place of prayer, a museum, and a shrine. National mosques attract many pilgrims and tourists. Two prominent such mosques are the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Prophet's Mosque in Damascus.

The following verses on prayer instruct the Muslim in this form of worship (all scriptures from the Quran are taken from the Yusuf Ali translation).

Ablution is commanded prior to prayer:

O ye who believe! when ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands, Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete his favour to you, that ye may be grateful. (Surah 5:6)

Multiple prayer times are taught:

O ye who believe! let those whom your right hands possess, and the (children) among you who have not come of age ask your permission (before they come to your presence), on three occasions: before morning prayer; the while ye doff your clothes for the noonday heat; and after the late-night prayer: these are your three times of undress: outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them to move about attending to each other: Thus does Allah make clear the Signs to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. (Surah 24:58)

The next "pillar of Islam is the obligatory fast (*sawm*), which takes place during the holy month of Ramadan" (Miller, *The Quran Unveiled*, 47). "During the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic year, one must not eat during daylight hours" (Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 48). "Consequently, most Muslims eat a meal just before dawn and another soon after sunset. Cessation of sexual intercourse is also required" (Miller, *The Quran Unveiled*, 47).

The following Quranic verses give instructions concerning the obligatory fast.

Ramadan is commanded in the Quran:

Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful. (Surah 2:185)

Abstinence is commanded during the daylight hours:

Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garments. Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah Hath ordained for you, and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread; then complete your fast Till the night appears; but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat in the mosques. Those are Limits (set by) Allah. Approach not nigh thereto. Thus doth Allah make clear His Signs to men: that they may learn self-restraint. (Surah 2:187)

A Muslim can also worship by fasting regularly on his own. Fasting occurs by some Muslim's on a weekly basis (Jones, *Shadowland*, 83). The act of fasting is highly regarded by the Islamic authorities. The following hadith is recorded regarding the good work of fasting: *every good act that a man performs shall receive from 10 to 700 rewards, but the rewards of fasting are beyond reasons* (as quoted on <http://www.answering-islam.org/Index/F/fasting.html>).

The fourth pillar is almsgiving or *zakah/zakat*. "It is rigorously prescribed" and "is supposed to be based on worth, not income" (Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 48). "Zakah is set at two and a half percent of all valuables and property that have been held for one year" (Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 48). It is considered "a major economic means for establishing social justice, prosperity and social security within the Muslim community and government" (Zakiuddin, *A Basic Dictionary of Important Islamic Terms*, 75 as quoted in Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 48). "It signifies the purification of the Muslim's wealth, making it legitimate in the eyes of Allah. The collected taxes are kept in a public treasury and used for public and religious activities, especially assistance for the needy and poor" (Miller, *The Quran Unveiled*, 48).

The following verses in the Quran give instructions concerning the *Zakat*.

Almsgiving is also a work that is usually performed along with prayer when one first becomes a Muslim (Huffard, *Christ or the Qur'an?*, 43):

Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah. and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. (Surah 9:60)

...practice regular charity... (Surah 2:43)

The fifth pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage or the *Hajj*. "The 'great pilgrimage' consists of traveling annually to the spatial center of the Islamic Universe—the Ka'bah in Mecca—during the Islamic lunar month of Dhu'l-hijjah. This pilgrimage is obligatory on all men and women who have the financial means to make the trip at least once during their lifetime" (Miller, *The Quran Unveiled*, 47). "The Hajj, (pilgrimage) is expected to be a very emotional experience as well as one that confirms the believer's relationship to God" (Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 49). "The rites consist of circumambulation around the Ka'bah, specified movements, and prayers, as well as the sacrifice of an animal in Mecca and surrounding holy sites" (Miller, *The Quran Unveiled*, 47-48).

To the Muslim, "the hajj is a transcending reality, beyond verbal or literary description. Everything from the trivial to the majestic is multiplied seemingly a thousand fold from the moment the believer vows his intention to make the journey until he completes his farewell circuit around the Kabah, and becomes known among the believers as Al-Hajji" (The Message International, June 1991, *The Hajj: A Transcending Reality*, 17 as quoted in Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 49). There is also a "Lesser Pilgrimage" that can be made any time during the year to Mecca or "to other holy places—especially Medina and Jerusalem" (Miller, *The Quran Unveiled*, 48).

The following Quranic verses instruct the Muslim to make the *Hajj*.

Allah is owed the essential pilgrimage according to Mohammad:

In it are Signs Manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham; whoever enters it attains security; Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah,- those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures. (Surah 3:97)

And complete the Hajj or 'umra in the service of Allah. But if ye are prevented (From completing it), send an offering for sacrifice, such as ye may find, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice. And if any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp, (Necessitating shaving), (He should) in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice; and when ye are in peaceful conditions (again), if any one wishes to continue the 'umra on to the hajj, He must make an offering, such as he can afford, but if he cannot afford it, He should fast three days during the hajj and seven days on his return, Making ten days in all. This is for those whose household is not in (the precincts of) the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah, and know that Allah Is strict in punishment. (Surah 2:196)

Saying the Kalima, praying, fasting, almsgiving and making the *Hajj* only partially fulfills the Muslim's duty to worship Allah. "Ideally, the worship of [g]od occupies a comprehensive role in the life of the Muslim" (Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 51). The totality of worship as taught by Islam must also be studied.

The 6th Pillar and the “All of Life is Worship” Doctrine

Based on Islamic doctrine, the comprehensive definition of worship "is everything one says or does for the pleasure of Allah" (Wamy Series on Islam, #8 (*Concept of Worship in Islam*) as quoted by Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 51). For a Muslim to truly worship Allah, he must be an activist in all that he does in life (Rieber, *A Resource for the Study of Islam*, 51). It is from this concept of worship that the word "Islam" (submission) and "Jihad" (struggle, fighting, holy war) meet. This will be repeated in the study on “Jihad and the Muslim’s Faithfulness” (lesson 10) and a further investigation on Jihad will then be presented. However, for the purpose of this study on worship, let it be noted that Islamists believe all of life is worship and that Jihad (struggle, fighting, or holy war) is a means by which the Muslim is to worship. It is based on this understanding that Jihad is claimed to be the “6th Pillar” of Islam.

Islamic Teachings Regarding Worship that Differ from Christianity

The following four areas are the major differences between Christianity and Islam regarding worship: the significance of location, teachings on ritualism, defining worship, and jihad. Unlike Islam, Christianity places zero significance on the location where one worships. Jesus stated the following, "...the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21, 23-24). Worship is accepted by God when one has a proper attitude (spirit) and when the worship is conducted according to God's law (in truth). Jesus makes it plain that the location where worship takes place carries no significance.

The teaching of Christ and ritualism are also in direct contradiction to the practices authorized by Islam. Jesus proclaimed,

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matthew 6:5-7).

Ritualistic prayer is not taught by Jesus, but is condemned. Unlike Islam, the place of prayer carries no significance (as mentioned above, a prayer said in a mosque is considered twenty-five times greater than a prayer said at a home).

Islam also defines worship differently than the way it is defined in the Bible. The totality of one's worship, as defined in Islam, is everything done within the Muslim's life. However, the Bible shows that worship is an act carried out with the intention to give reverential homage to God. Consider the following verses:

“And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you” (Genesis 22:5).

“Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship” (Acts 24:11).

“And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship.” (Acts 8:27).

All of worship is a form of service to God, but not all service is a form of worship. As noted by the verses above, Abraham, Paul and the Ethiopian eunuch performed the service of worship, but they were not worshipping God until they did so. The entirety of the Christian's life is to be a sacrifice to God and that sacrifice is his service (cf. Romans 12:1); however, his worship to God is a deliberate act that only makes up a portion of his sacrificial life devoted to serving God.

Review Questions

Question 1) What is the Shahadas and what makes it different from the rest of the pillars?

Question 2) How many times ought prayer to occur? How do sects differ on this?

Question 3) Prior to prayer, what must a Muslim perform?

Question 4) How does prayer and its significance relate to mosques?

Question 5) When is the obligatory fast to be observed? What is required for the fast?

Question 6) How is a Muslim's wealth legitimized in the eyes of Allah?

Question 7) What is the hajj?

Question 8) What is the sixth pillar of Islam?

Question 9) How does the Bible teach differently regarding certain aspects of Islamic worship?

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