

Core Curriculum

2 Foundations of Islam - Theology

2.2 **The Usūl al-Dīn: The Fundamental Beliefs of Islam**

INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Thank you for tuning back in to the Muslim Converts Channel. In our previous lesson, we overviewed the basic Muslim creed through which one enters and converts to Islam. The creed which one utters before conversion is called the shahāda. The shahāda is a testimony, that is, a testimony to a fact and not just a thought that one can do away with!

Stating the shahāda is the door through which one enters Islam. Accepting the contents of the shahāda naturally means that we must accept that which is taught to us by Allah (swt) through His revealed Book (the Qur’an) and His Messenger Muhammad (s).

The shahāda contains within itself the foundations of Muslim beliefs called the usūl al-dīn or “principles of the Muslim religion”. All Muslims must believe in these principles for their faith to be complete.

These principles or foundations are the following: Tawḥīd, ‘Adāla, Nubuwwa, Imāma and Ma‘ād. In this lesson, we will briefly introduce these principles. In the following lectures, we will discuss them one by one in more detail, inshā’ Allāh.

These five foundational principles form the core beliefs of Islam. The *uṣūl al-dīn* guides the worldview of a believer and provides him or her with the proper grounding in how to think about God and the world. The rest of Islam's beliefs, and even practices, are based on these five principles. Failure to believe in any one of them will lead to a faulty understanding of Islam.

BODY OF TEXT

O You who have attained faith, hold fast unto your [correct] belief in Allah, His Messenger and the Book [the Qur'an] which he has bestowed upon His Messenger as well as the Scripture He sent down to those before [him.] Those who deny Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, has indeed gone astray. (Chapter 4 of the Qur'an, verse 136)

The *uṣūl al-dīn*, or principles of the Islamic faith, are a group of five basic tenants which a Muslim must hold for their Islam to be complete. It is the basic covenant that a Muslim holds with God. The *uṣūl al-dīn* are *Tawḥīd*, *'Adāla*, *Nubuwwa*, *Imāma* and *Ma'ād*. Here we will give a brief outline as to their significance and insha'Allah, we will expand on them more fully in the lectures to come.

Tawḥīd: *Tawḥīd* refers to the "oneness" of God in Islam. *Tawḥīd* is the most important foundation of Islam. Without *Tawḥīd*, none of Islam or the Qur'an would make sense. It is therefore the vital life source that animates the whole of Islam.

The term has a multilayered meaning. Its first layer of meaning is that there is only one God or deity. This deity is the one who brought all of existence into being.

The other meaning is that only He is worthy of worship and only He maintains, sustains and administers the world of creation. As the One and Only God, He has no other divine partners in any of His actions.

'Adāla: *'Adāla* means Divine Justice. In Islam, we do not believe that

concepts of good and bad are arbitrary. We believe that things have intrinsic moral worth, either good or evil. As a corollary* of tawhīd, we believe that goodness and justice are part and parcel of tawhīd. In other words, Allah is a good and just God. Whenever He commands something, He always acts in, and commands goodness.

All His actions, therefore, have purpose and they are aimed for the greater good. God, according to Islam, never does any wrong, nor does He do anything without purpose. He seeks the Good in everything and never breaks His promises. In this sense, ‘adāla is a system of balance.

God makes it obligatory upon Himself and to humankind. Transgressing this balance leads to corruption. ‘Adāla will be fully manifest on the Day of Judgment where everyone is measured against this vital balance.

Nubuwwa: Nubuwwa means Prophethood. As the Creator of mankind, part of Allah’s divine justice is that He guides humankind towards salvation. This means that the goal and purpose of the creation of humankind is to reach closeness to Allah.

As a result of His justice, God sent Prophets to teach humankind on how to purify and save their souls and ultimately reach closeness to Allah. The last and most important of these Prophets was the Prophet Muhammad (s). Prophets who receive Holy Scriptures are called Messengers. The Prophet Muhammad (s) was also a Messenger since he delivered the Holy Qur’an.

Imāmah: Imāmah means divine leadership. Since the Prophet Muhammad (s) was the last Prophet and Islam was the last religion to be revealed by Allah, Allah appointed leaders to guide humanity. These divinely guided leaders were tasked to preserve and protect the authentic message of Islam. These divinely guided leaders are called Imāms.

The Imāms are able to fully protect the message of Islam as they receive divine knowledge from Allah and are infallible and perfect in knowledge.

The 12 Imāms are from the Holy Household of the Prophet Muhammad (s). The Holy Household of the Prophet (s) are a group of pure individuals from his family who are selected by God to guide humankind.

Ma'ād: Ma'ād (also called Qiyāmah) means resurrection, as in the resurrection of all of humankind that will take place on the Day of Judgment. As a Just and Good God, Allah is concerned about the spiritual health of humankind.

He has therefore set a system of reward and punishment in order perfect people's spiritual state and outward behavior. Those who are successful in this endeavor will enter Heaven, whereas those who are not may enter the Hellfire.

Ma'ād is the result of God's justice to humankind where He rewards the good with good just as He promised, and He lets those who chose evil witness the bad consequences of their choices.

These five principles are foundations of a complete Islam. As principles, they are "hardcoded" in Islam and are not up for interpretation. Their details and implications, however, are subject to interpretation.

Before we end this lesson, it is important to state that there is an even smaller set of principles which one must believe in order to be a Muslim even if one's Islam is "incomplete." These are called the *ḍarūrīyāt al-dīn* or "necessary foundations in order to be considered a Muslim." The *ḍarūrīyāt al-dīn* are four: Tawhīd, Nubuwwa, Ma'ād and items which all Muslims agree upon (e.g. obligatory of prayers).

Without belief in these core concepts and one cannot be a Muslim. However, one can still be a Muslim if, for example, a person was to reject Imāmah without being aware of its truth as it is not part of the *ḍarūrīyāt al-dīn*.

For this reason, the *uṣūl al-dīn* as such are all necessary for a complete Islam that is in accordance with Allah's will upon mankind, but they are

not all necessary in order to be a Muslim.

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh