

14 Worshipping idols and worshipping dead people

To continue our section on the Oneness of God in terms of His Lordship (in Arabic, this is called Tawheed ur Ruboobiyyah):

QUESTION: Why is it that we find people worshipping the idols that they have in their room or in their temples, when it is obvious that a piece of stone cannot do anything for them?

ANSWER:

One of the scholars from several hundred years ago called ibn ul Qayyim explained this phenomenon.

He mentioned in his book Ighaathatul lahfaan (2/220):

"The setting up of an idol was originally in the form of an object of worship which was hidden.

So (the people) made the idol in its image, set it up and shaped it, so that it could be a representation of the hidden deity and take its place (ie the place of the hidden god)."

The idols that people have are supposed to be representations of god or gods that people cannot see or sense – so they make a physical form of their deity in order to have something tangible to direct their worship to. ¹

Muslims do not accept this idea, and idols are strictly forbidden in Islam (as indeed they are in the Bible, although we still see certain branches of Christianity encouraging statues of saints and of Jesus).

Muslims believe that they should direct their worship to Allah alone without needing any tangible representation of Allah to do so. To make a statue and direct any worship towards it constitutes an act of shirk (polytheism) which is the gravest sin in Islam.

QUESTION: Similarly, what excuse do people give for worshipping dead people who are lying in graves, when they cannot help or harm them?

ANSWER: This practice is found in many countries of the world in some way shape or form.

It was also a common practice in the time of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon

¹ Refer to 'aqeedah ut tawheed p30 of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan for more information

him). The Quran mentions the answer that the people give when they are asked why they do this worship of the dead:

“And they worship besides Allah (those things or people) which can neither hurt them nor benefit them – and they say “These are our intercessors with Allah!”

Surah Yunus (the 10th chapter) ayah 18

“We worship them only so that they can bring us closer to Allah!”

Surah Zumar (the 39th chapter) ayah 3

People think that these dead people can ask Allah for things on the living people’s behalf.

Islam completely rejects this idea and says that Muslims should call on Allah directly.

Allah says in the Quran:

Call on Me, I will answer you.

Surah Ghafir (the 40th chapter) ayah 60

Despite this, sadly we see some Muslims calling on dead ‘saints’ and dead relatives if they have a need to be fulfilled eg a serious illness to be cured. This also constitutes an act of *shirk* in Islamic law and as such is a very serious matter.

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NEXT TIME:

Do we find anyone claiming that Allah has children, so that they can worship these ‘children of Allah’?