

2 - aqeedah and shareeah

QUESTION: What are the important beliefs that make a person Muslim?¹

ANSWER:

The fundamental belief that lies at the heart of Islam is - the belief that there is only one god that is worthy of worship. The one true god who deserves to be worshipped is called Allah.

This belief in Arabic is called 'tawheed' – which literally means making something one.

This of course refers to Allah being one, and His not being many different gods.

We will discuss this in more detail in the next few emails, since it is such a crucial issue.

Muslims also have a number of other beliefs – for example, they believe in Prophets, Angels, the various Books revealed to certain Prophets, that there is going to be a Day of Judgement after we die, and the fact that Allah has pre-decreed what is going to happen.

These beliefs are referred to as 'aqeedah' - an Arabic word which means 'the beliefs which a person holds as his religion'.

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QUESTION: What is the shareeah?

ANSWER: This word refers to two aspects of Islam.

1) The shareeah BELIEFS refer to what Muslims believe – in particular to those things we have mentioned above – such as belief in Allah, and the Day of Judgement, etc. These are called the usool (which means 'fundamentals') of Islam.

2) The shareeah ACTIONS refer to how Muslims act. So this includes how Muslims pray, how they conduct business, how the Islamic courts and economic system work, how Muslims fast, how Muslims marry or divorce, etc. These are called the furoo' (which means 'branches') of Islam.

Muslims believe that the shareeah, whether beliefs or actions, are dictated by Allah. Muslims do not 'make things up as they go along'.

The shareeah lays down certain basic ideas and principles which can be used by people who have studied Islam to make rulings about modern issues – such as the internet, IVF, surrogacy, etc – issues which were not present at the time that Islam was revealed.

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NEXT TIME:

What is the importance of this belief in 'tawheed', the oneness of God?

¹ Refer to 'aqeedah ut tawheed p8 of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan for more information