

QUESTION: Why does Islam pay so much attention to having the correct belief (aqeedah), in particular the belief that only Allah should be worshipped? Why should 13 years have been spent teaching this issue?

ANSWER: At first glance this may look like a long time to talk about something that seems straightforward. Surely even a child can understand the idea that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah?

However, as we shall see over the next few emails, this is a topic that needs some discussion, since many people have made mistakes and errors in this issue.

Sometimes the people making the mistakes do not even realise that they are making the mistakes!

Islam teaches that a person cannot afford to make any errors in this topic.

We have mentioned previously that the opposite of tawheed (singling out Allah alone for worship) is called 'shirk' in Arabic.

Allah says in the Quran:

And indeed it has been revealed to you - as it was to those before you - that if you commit shirk (joining others in worship with Allah), then surely all your (good) deeds will be nullified, and you will certainly be amongst the losers.

Surah Az Zumar (the 39th surah) ayah 65

So this is the most important aspect of Islam to correct, since all other actions depend on it.

The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) spent these 13 years explaining to his Companions the belief of tawheed (as well as all the different forms of shirk), to the exclusion of nearly everything else in Islam.

He also continued to teach about tawheed and shirk even after he moved to Medina, for the last 10 years of his life.

Some forms of shirk were obvious to the Companions – for example, bowing down in front of idols.

Other forms were more subtle – for example, wearing good luck charms or doing your prayers to show off to people around you. People then, and indeed in present times as well, may not have realised that these actions also count as shirk.

It is for this reason that we will delve further into the topic of tawheed over the next few emails, as we begin to talk more about Islamic beliefs.

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NEXT TIME: It was mentioned that some people have misunderstandings and misconceptions in their beliefs. How might these have crept into people's beliefs?