

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN ISLAM

What do Muslims worship?

Islam means 'submission' to the one true God, known in the Arabic language as 'Allah'. To a Muslim this name has enormous significance. 'Allah' is not just a name used to obtain the attention of the Almighty God. 'Allah' is one of the strongest names that Almighty God chose for Himself and there are many reasons why He chose this name.

In the Arabic language, and other languages for that matter, a name has particular meaning. When one chooses a name for a child or a person, one chooses a name that one hopes shows the qualities and attributes of the person or child. The name 'Allah' is the same, but it is a very complex name in which all His attributes that are known or unknown to humans are included.

Due to the limitations and imperfections of the human mind, no one can claim to know

Shahadah

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 13 March 2013 00:30 - Last Updated Thursday, 14 March 2013 23:20

the true meaning of this Holy name. The only thing that every creation should know is that when this Holy name is called, Almighty God will answer the caller's request.

'Allah' is not a new name exclusive to Islam. It is the same name that Adam (peace be upon him) our forefather used to call the Creator. It is the same name that all the Prophets including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them) used to refer to Him. Proof of that is everywhere in the Qur'an, the Holy book of Islam and in the original books of Abraham, Moses and Jesus.

In Islam, one who submits to Allah is termed a 'Muslim'. Thus God, and not any human, is central to the Muslim faith. To understand Islam we must therefore first understand the nature of Allah. People have a natural inclination to question, and most people have turned to God at some point in their lives. We accept that no system, stage or family exists without a head and no beautiful piece of art exists which was not created by someone. It is natural to see that the best creation, the world and all that lives in it, must also have a Lord and a Creator.

Muslims believe that this world has not come into existence because of a series of random coincidences. Instead Muslims believe that universe was created and is sustained by a supreme force, Allah. Life is not an accident, it has meaning and purpose, this amazing world and the power of a human mind and the human spirit cannot be the result of chance.

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Like most religious people, Muslims do not believe that our limited minds can either fully prove God's existence or truly comprehend the nature or power of His Divine Being. However, Muslims believe they are given a unique way of understanding God's nature. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the unique word of Allah in which He defines His character and names His attributes.

In the Name of Allah; the Most Kind, the Most Merciful
Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
The Eternal refuge,
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

These words come from the Holy Qur'an, the Holy book of Islam. They summarise some of the most important characteristics of Allah. In the Qur'an we are taught that Allah is a universal God for all people and times, and has been worshipped by all those who believe in one God only, from the time of Adam and Eve. He communicated with mankind through many prophets and messengers throughout the course of history. The last message was delivered to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the form of Qur'an.

1. The Most Kind, the Most Merciful.

Each chapter of the Qur'an begins with these words; a constant reminder that God in Islam is a Compassionate, Merciful God. In the Qur'an, Allah describes how He is the Loving, the Provider, the Generous and the Benevolent, the Forgiving, the Patient and the Appreciative. This is why Muslims, who wish to please Allah, try to be kind and gentle, humble and submissive to Allah. Muslims must be aware of how we use our health and wealth. As Muslims, we do not believe that the rich, powerful, beautiful or

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popular person is better. It is only person's hidden piety that makes them a better human being.

2. Say: He is God: The One.

Central to the belief of a Muslim is the Oneness of Allah. This is shown in the use of the name Allah as it is a name which cannot be pluralized or gendered. This may seem a very simple concept, yet it is also very complex. In Islam, no partners are ascribed to God, Muslims reject the idea that He has a son or family or is divisible into parts, and nothing shares His power or divinity.

3. The Everlasting Refuge.

Allah's mercy encompasses all who repent to Him. Islam acknowledges our weaknesses and sins and encourages us through our prayer and actions such as charity, to show our obedience to God and hopefully receive His forgiveness, while continually trying to improve ourselves.

Allah says in the Qur'an: Say,

"O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah . Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (Chapter 39: Verse 53)

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Allah is not, however, reliant on our worship to Him, He is independent of it and we cannot “pay back” the gifts he has given us. It is not Allah we harm by our sin, but our own souls.

4. He begets not, nor is he begotten.

Allah is beyond human understanding or explanation. We do not give Him human characteristics or attributes; this would diminish Him. Allah is the only being who was not created; He exists out of time and is in control of creation and the maintenance of the universe. To create, Allah simply says, “Be” and it is; as He did with Adam and Eve and with the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). Muslims do not believe that Jesus was God’s son; God has no need of human children and forgives us without an intercessor. Instead, we are all valued creations of God, but that does not mean we share His attributes.

5. And there is none like unto Him.

Muslims believe the worst sin is to associate partners with Allah. Unless submission to God is absolute it will be flawed. People idealize other people, money, fame and beauty. These all lead people away from God.

Islam means to ‘submit’, to be a Muslim is to be someone who submits to God. It is the acknowledgement that we are not the most powerful or completely in control. Islam is to desire and seek a relationship with one’s Creator, Allah. Acceptance that Allah is above all else means we cannot simply believe we must also act. It is clear in the Qur’an that we are responsible for acting out the laws that Allah has given us.

Although Allah is far removed from all He has created, He is still close to the believer. By

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living according to the Qur'an's perfect system one comes closer to Allah. Allah loves His servants for striving in His path.

Allah is not only the Most Merciful and the Most Kind, He is also the Judge.

'Do you think that We created you for nothing and that you would not be returned to Us.'
Qur'an Chapter 23: Verse 115

Muslims believe that when we die we will be judged fairly according to our faith and actions. Faith without action leads to hypocrisy. It is through actions that our faith develops.

Allah gives us a total way of life to be followed; if we submit to this way of life it will bring us closer to God and improve our character. Muslims therefore submit to God willingly, knowing it is through submission they will become better and more fulfilled people, pleasing their Creator they will attain ultimate happiness since God, the source of true and permanent happiness and contentment, is pleased with them. This is the true goal of life.