



# Module 11

## Miscellaneous Matters

# 'Ibada/Worship



## **‘IBADA/WORSHIP**

**Worshipping Allah alone is the purpose of existence and foundation of the call of every Prophet and Messenger:**

- ‘And I did not create jinn and mankind except to worship Me.’ (5:56)
- ‘And We did not send any Messenger before you except that We inspired him that: “There is no god except Me, so worship Me [alone].’ (21:25)
- ‘We have sent to every nation a Messenger proclaiming, “Worship Allah and shun false gods.”’ (16:36)

## SHIRK–ASSOCIATION OF PARTNERS

**Just as the greatest action one can do is ‘ibada, the worst action one can do is shirk.**

- ‘Then do not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship) while you know (that He Alone has the right to be worshipped).’ (2:22)
- ‘And they set up rivals to Allah, to mislead from His path! Say: “Enjoy (your brief life)! But certainly, your destination is the Fire!”’ (14:30)
- ‘Verily Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allah has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin.’ (4:48)

## 'IBADA/WORSHIP

- Only Allah deserves to be worshipped.
- Worshipping other than Allah, shirk, is the greatest sin and it not forgiven if someone dies upon it.
- To safeguard our iman **we must know what 'ibada is and what shirk is.**
- We must also know what they are so we **don't accuse others** of shirk out of ignorance and due to an incorrect understanding of 'ibada.

## ‘IBADA/WORSHIP

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “Verily, I fear about a man from among you who will read the Quran so much that his face will become enlightened and he will come to personify Islam, and this will continue until Allah desires [otherwise]. Then these things will be taken away from him; he will disregard them by putting [righteousness] behind his back and he will attack his neighbor with the sword accusing him of shirk.” The Prophet was asked, “Which of the two will be deserving of such an accusation, the attacker or the attacked?” He replied, “The attacker.” (Ibn Hibban)

## ‘IBADA/WORSHIP

‘Ibada has been defined in various ways.

1. “Every act by which one obeys Allah and draws near to Him.”
2. “Everything Allah loves and is pleased with from statements and actions, inwardly and outwardly.”
3. “The epitome of humility and submission.”

These are all true, but what is the definition of ‘ibada that enables us to distinguish between ‘ibada and what resembles ‘ibada?

## ISSUES WITH DEFINITIONS

A] There are many actions that Allah loves and is pleased with—such as feeding hungry people, removing trash from the road, etc., but if they are done for \*other than Allah\* they are not shirk or worship of others besides Allah. If you feed your neighbor (Allah loves us feeding others) and your intention is not to draw near to Allah, but to draw near to your neighbor (for them to like you), you have not worshipped your neighbor.



## ISSUES WITH DEFINITIONS

B] If an idol-worshipper makes sajda to an idol we can all say that he is worshipping that idol, but if the idol worshipper feeds someone to make his neighbor happy, we don't say he worshipped other than Allah. There is a clear difference between the two acts.

## ISSUES WITH DEFINITIONS

C] There are certain actions that the Shariah informs us that Allah loves and is pleased with, yet they can also be done for other than Allah and will not become shirk. One example is sajda. Allah loves and is pleased with sajda, and we draw near to Allah with the act of sajda, but the angels prostrated to Adam and were **not** considered Mushriks. (Same for the family of Yusuf)

**The definitions are sound as general definitions of ‘worship of Allah,’ but do not provide us a specific definition that helps us understand the difference between ‘ibada and what resembles ‘ibada.**

## THE EXAMPLE OF LOVE

Is love an act of worship? It can be. The definition for 'ibada needs to give us the ability to explain the difference between love that is 'ibada and love that is shirk.

1] Allah is pleased with our love for Him, so how do we distinguish between love that is worship and love which is not worship?

2] Love can often take the form extreme submissiveness and humility, so why isn't that kind of love considered worship. (Imagine a man is in love with a woman so deeply that when she rejects him he goes crazy. Is this shirk in love? Has he worshipped her?)

## THE COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION

التذلل الكامل المبني على اعتقاد الربوبية

**“Complete submission based on belief that [the object of worship] has qualities of Lordship.”**

## THE COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION

In the Arabic language the word ‘ibada has the meaning of التذلل.

All of the meanings in the classical Arabic lexicons revolve around terms like خضوع and التذلل.

However, the terms التذلل and خضوع cannot be the “technical definition” (ta’rif) for worship. That is because Allah commands us to have التذلل and خضوع toward some of those who have rights over us, like the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and our parents—so if التذلل and خضوع constituted worship on their own, it would mean that Allah is ordering us to commit shirk. That is not possible, as Allah says: *إن الله لا يأمر بالفحشاء* ‘Allah does not enjoin what is immoral.’

## THE COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION

This definition includes two things:

A] التذلل الكامل (complete submission)

B] المبنى على اعتقاد الربوبية (based on belief in of Lordship)

The linguistic meaning of worship is not enough, because:

- A child may kiss his father's feet—this is التذلل but not worship.
- The brothers of Yusuf made sajda to him—this is التذلل but not worship.
- The angels prostrated to Adam—this is التذلل but not worship.

This means we need a condition that keeps these things out of the definition. It is:

المبنى على إعتقاد الربوبية.

## APPLICATIONS—SAJDA

- 1] Sajda is ‘ibada when it is accompanied by the belief in the *rububiyya* (Lordship) of the one to whom a person prostrates—when a Muslim makes sajda to Allah in prayer, it is with this belief and state, and it is therefore ‘ibada.
- 2] When the brothers of Yusuf made sajda, it was a greeting and they did not have the belief of *rububiyya* toward their brother.
- 3] When the Angels made sajda to Adam, it was a show of respect and they did not have the belief of *rububiyya* toward Adam.

## APPLICATIONS—LOVE

1] Love that is accompanied with submission and belief in the *rububiyya* of the one loved is ‘ibada. When one loves Allah it is with this belief and state, and is therefore worship. If someone loved someone else—a person or an object—with the belief in their *rububiyya*, it would be shirk.

2] When a man loves his wife intensely, no matter how deeply he loves her he does not believe in her *rububiyya*, so his love is not an act of worship.



## CONCLUSION

- The intention of worship must be present (*niyya al-ta'abbud*)
- If we go back to the example of sajda, we see that it may be done as an act of 'ibada, or it may not be done as an act of 'ibada (such as the sajda of the brothers of Yusuf). This means that if these actions are done toward other than Allah **they are not automatically** acts of shirk.
- Sajda as an action looks the same in both cases. What makes one worship and the other not? Intention.

## CONCLUSION

- The Angels did not intend worship when they prostrated to Adam. The brothers of Yusuf did not intend worship when they prostrated to Yusuf.
- Therefore, if an action might—on its appearance—be ‘ibada or not ‘ibada, the **intention** of the person must be known before we can give a judgment on the act they are doing.
- If we do not consider the intention of the person doing the act, then every sajda to other than Allah is shirk akbar, including the sajda of the brothers of Yusuf. That is obviously false.

## THE QURAN'S CALL TO TAWHID

- The Quran clarifies that the Prophets (prayers and peace be upon them all) affirmed for their people that Allah alone possesses the qualities of *Rububiyya* and the actions that are implications of *Rububiyya*—absolute power, disposal of affair, provision, creation, harm and benefit, and so on.
- Then the Prophets explained that it is idolatry—*shirk*—to direct worship to anything or person who does not have these perfect qualities of Lordship. They informed their people that such *shirk* is a great wrong and constitutes ‘placing things in their wrong places.’
- The Prophets affirmed with clear proofs for their idol-worshipping people that their objects of worship cannot be described with any of the qualities of *Rububiyya*, and therefore cannot—must not—be worshipped.
- But because the idol-worshippers believed that their idols had these qualities, they worshipped them.

## DID THE PAGANS BELIEVE IN ALLAH'S LORDSHIP?

### Some extremist movements claim:

A-The Mushrikun of Quraysh affirmed Allah's *Rububiyya* fully; they affirmed His perfections.

B-The past nations did not ascribe independent benefit and harm to their idols or any of the unique qualities of *Rububiyya*; they simply took them as intermediaries to get close to Allah.

C-The Prophets **did not** dispute with their people over *Rububiyya*; instead they disputed with them only about 'Ibada.

## REPLY

A] The Quran explains that the idol-worshippers of Quraysh submitted to their idols with the belief that they were gods and with some of the unique qualities of *Rububiyya*.

B] The Quran also explains how the idol-worshippers of Quraysh had a false and incomplete belief in Allah's *Rububiyya*.

Point A is to show that 'ibada is tied with belief in *Rububiyya*.

Point B disproves the false claim that the Mushrikun of Quraysh had no issues in *Rububiyya* and that the only thing the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) called them to was *Tawhid al-'Ibada*.

## REPLY

- 1] There are many verses in the Quran which demonstrate that the idol-worshippers of Quraysh submitted to their idols with the belief that they were gods and with some of the unique qualities of *Rububiyya*
- 2] The dispute between the Prophets and their people was about *Rububiyya*.
- 3] The Quraysh believed that the power of their idols would keep them out of reach of Allah's power.
- 4] Fir'awn's denial of Allah was not a denial of His right to be worshipped alone, but a denial of His *Rububiyya*.
- 5] The idol-worshippers of Quraysh fought the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) over his preaching of *Rububiyya*
- 6] The idol-worshippers of Quraysh ascribed daughters to Allah, and would insult Allah, and give a greater share of their animal sacrifices to their idols.
- 7] The Quraysh believed that their idols could harm or benefit them independent of Allah.

## REPLY

8] The Quraysh believed that Allah could not hear them unless they raised their voice. The Quran mentions that they affirmed their belief in Allah, but they also believed that He was unable to manage all of creation, and so they needed to take smaller gods that would manage different things in creation. Their prayers and sacrifices, etc. to these idols were forms of worship and with the belief that they have qualities of *Rububiyya*.

9] Despite believing in Allah's existence, Quraysh denied many of Allah's perfections and attributes of *Rububiyya*—so their affirmation of Allah's *Rububiyya* was incomplete, while at the same time they ascribed the qualities of *Rububiyya* to their idols.

10] They denied that Allah has encompassing knowledge, hearing, and sight.

## REPLY

- 11] From their ignorance, Quraysh asked the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) to describe the lineage of Allah! (nasab) Ascribing children to Allah is a violation of Rububiyya.
- 12] Quraysh and other idol-worshippers denied the resurrection, life after death, etc., denying Allah's power to give life to the dead. That is a violation of Rububiyya.
- 13] They ascribed independent power to time itself and not Allah.
- 14] They worshipped idols with the belief that they idols would give them victory and provision—this proves once again that they worshipped their idols believing that they have the power to cause independent harm and benefit besides Allah.



## REPLY

All of these points—drawn directly from the Quran and Sunna and explained by the Imams—disprove the three false arguments put forward by Khawarij extremists who claim:

A] The Mushrikun affirmed Allah’s *Rububiyya* fully; they affirmed His perfections.

B] The past nations—from Quraysh and those before them—did not ascribe independent benefit and harm to their idols or any of the unique qualities of *Rububiyya*; they simply took them as intermediaries to get close to Allah.

C] The Prophets did not dispute with their people over *Rububiyya*; instead they disputed with them only about ‘Ibada.

**The correct understanding is that *Tawhid al-‘ibada* and *Tawhid al-rububiyya* are inseparable from one another. That means that the Prophets addressed both issues because there cannot be one without the other.**