
Knowing our Creator by His Names and Attributes¹



In the Name of Allah, The Most Merciful, The Giver of Mercy

Left on their own, people can conclude that a Creator exists, but cannot come to a completely correct understanding of what Attributes this Creator possesses. They will tend to either conjure up an image of the Creator which resembles a created being, or will reduce the Creator to being an imaginary, being-less force.

Islaam teaches that both of these extremes are incorrect and that mankind can only describe Allaah in the way that He has described Himself. For example, Allaah has said in the *Qur'aan*:

﴿ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴾

“There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearer, All-Seer.” [42:11]

Allaah affirms that there is nothing in the whole universe which is like Him, yet in the same verse, He also affirms that He can see the most discrete actions as He is the All-Seer. Similarly, He can hear the faintest whispers, as He is the All-Hearer. Other names and attributes are mentioned in the *Qur'aan* which both the Creator and the created are described with. However, they differ in mode and manner. Therefore, we do not compare Allaah's Attributes to those of His created beings, nor do we ask how (*kayfiyyah*) His Attributes are, as we have not been informed about that.

¹ Excerpted from 'The Wahhabi Myth' 2004 TROID Publications. Originally entitled, 'Appendix I: Knowing Allaah by His Names and Attributes' For further reference see www.thewahhabimyth.com or order via <http://www.troid.org/store/product.php?productid=16136&cat=0&page=1>

We do not see as Allaah sees, nor do we hear as He hears, nor do we know as He knows, nor is His Face like the face of any of His created beings. We can sometimes be merciful to one another, but our mercy and His all-encompassing Mercy are not comparable. He is alive and so are we. However, His life is neither preceded by non-existence, nor succeeded by death, unlike us.²

Hence, it is neither permissible to reject what Allaah has affirmed for Himself in His revelation, nor is it permissible to liken Him to any created thing, as He has also affirmed that there is nothing like unto Him. This is the balanced and rational understanding of the *Salaf* (early generations of Muslim) and those who followed them in understanding Allaah's Names and Attributes.

Allaah teaches mankind in the *Qur'aan* that He is above the heavens and separate from His creation, not dwelling within it such that He can be found within animals, walls, chairs, hearts, internal organs and the like. Creation neither surrounds Him nor is it above Him in any way, because He is above all things, Most High, in a manner befitting His majesty.

﴿ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ ﴾

² Mankind cannot bear the intensity of seeing Allaah in this life. Allaah said:

﴿ وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرَ إِلَيْكَ ۗ قَالَ لَن تَرِنِي وَلَكِنِ أَنظُرَ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرِنِي ۗ فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

“When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, he said: ‘O my Lord! Show (Yourself) to me, that I may look upon You.’ Allaah said: ‘You cannot see Me, but look upon the mountain; if it stands still in its place, then you shall see Me.’ So when his Lord manifested His Glory on the mountain, He made it as dust, and Moses fell down unconscious. When he recovered his senses he said: ‘Glory be to You, I turn to You in repentance and I am the first of the Believers.’”
[7:143]

However, in the Hereafter, those who believed and did righteous deeds will be given the ultimate reward of seeing their Lord:

Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said in a *hadeeth*: “When the people of Paradise enter Paradise, Allaah, the Blessed and Most High, will say: “Do you wish for anything extra that I may give you?” They will say, “Have You not brightened our faces? Have You not entered us into Paradise and saved us from the Fire?” So He will remove the screen (of light), and they will not have been given anything more beloved to them as gazing at their Lord, the Mighty and Majestic.” (Reported by Muslim (no. 448))

“And He is the Supreme, *above* His servants.” [5:18]

And:

﴿ تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ ﴾

“The angels and the Spirit (Gabriel) *ascend to Him* in a day the measure whereof is fifty thousand years.” [70:4]

Concerning the angels, Allaah says:

﴿ يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴾

“They fear their Lord *above them*, and they do what they are commanded.” [16:50]

In short, we are informed that He is Most High and Glorified from any kind of imperfection in all of His Names and Attributes.

The wisdom of the *Salafee* (pure and orthodox) understanding of Allaah’s Names and Attributes can be observed when considering the beliefs of the people who fell into the two previously mentioned extremes. The one who likens Him to His creation forms a picture of a created being in his mind, and this can only be done by likening Him to something which he has witnessed in his lifetime. Hence, he ends up worshipping an idol. Likewise, the one who attempts to flee from this by reducing the greatness of the Creator to the realm of philosophical conjecture ends up worshipping nothingness. The one who affirms all of Allaah’s authentic Names and Attributes without likening them in nature to any created thing frees himself from the extremes of these two poles.



Islam - The Religion of All Prophets