

BISMILLAAHIRRAHMAANIRRAHEEM

**CORRECTNESS WITH REGARDS TO THE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF
ALLAAH**

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BASED ON IBN TAYMIYYAH'S AT-TADMURIYYAH

PART ONE

In this lecture the Names and Attributes of Allaah are discussed. This is a huge and vast topic with many different aspects to it, so what is covered is the groundwork in relation to this. After that one of the specific groups of innovation is addressed - the Ash'ariyyah, who have deviations in this regard. Their errors are pointed out and it is shown how they are in opposition to the Messengers, and in opposition to the Sunnah with respect to what they claim regarding Allaah ta'alaah.

The issue of Allaah's Names and Attributes is vital and fundamental to the outward actions.

Aboo Iyaad started off by giving us an example to show that knowledge is directly related to the actions of the heart.

Example:

Question: If a trustworthy person enters the room warning you that there is a fire. How would you feel?

Answer: You would FEAR for the safety of yourself and others. You would HOPE that you would be able to escape.

So when information enters your hearts, then that information implies actions in your heart.

Question: If a untrustworthy person came to you with the same message, would that have the same affect on you?

Answer: No.

Question: If a person who couldn't express himself came with the same message, but you couldn't understand it, would you react in the same way?

Answer: No, because you haven't really understood the message.

The point being, if the condition is met that the person who is informing us is truthful and trustworthy, and knowledge enters our hearts, then it will definitely produce the effect in our hearts. It would lead to these emotions.

Question: Once we have these emotions, what would be the first thing that you would do?

Answer: You would stand, gather your family and make an exit through the door.

So you see that knowledge leads directly to action, because it affects the heart and creates emotions. Those emotions in turn lead to outward actions.

Aboo Iyaad went onto explain that we should think of Allaah's Names and Attributes in the same way. That when we know Allaah ta'alaah, by way of the Qur'aan; and when we learn of Allaah's Attributes by way of the Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wasallam), then no doubt, this information nurtures and creates emotions in our hearts.

So when we know that Allaah ta'alaah created us and He provided for us, He is ar-Razzaaq and al-Khaaliq; we feel gratitude.

Ar-Rahmaan, ar-Raheem, al-Ghaffaar. He is the One who is filled with Mercy, He is Merciful, He is the One that forgives, the One that turns to His servants; that develops hope in our hearts. We hope to receive Allaah's Mercy.

When we know that Allaah is severe in His punishment and we know how Allaah has behaved with nations of the past, we learn that Allaah becomes angry; then that develops fear in our hearts. That fear in turn leads us to perform certain actions.

So now you can see that the knowledge of Allaah's Names and His Attributes leads directly to outward actions. It leads directly to us performing Ibaadah in the way that Allaah wanted it to be performed; with love, fear and hope.

Scenarios:

- Now if somebody came along and claimed that Allaah doesn't have any Names or Attributes. So now, we can't say that Allaah has mercy, we can't say that Allaah loves, we can't say Allaah is pleased, we can't say that Allaah becomes angry.

What affect will it have on Ibaadah? What affect will it have on Shar'iah? What affect will it have on my worship and your worship, and the worship of the Muslims in general? Will it be the same as before?

What is happening is the foundation of eemaan and the actions of the heart are being removed in this instance.

- If someone came along and claimed, that when we say that Allaah is Merciful, it doesn't really mean He's Merciful; it just means something else.
- Or when we say that Allaah is the One who becomes angry, it doesn't really mean He becomes angry, it means something else.

So they change the meanings to such a degree that the words don't have any meanings anymore.

What affect will this have on our ibaadah? Will our ibaadah be the same if we had a belief that said that Allaah doesn't have any mercy? If we start changing and twisting the meanings, so in essence the words don't mean anything. Won't this erode and destroy the foundation of the worship?

Yes.

Aboo Iyaad explained that the reality is that we have within the Muslim Ummaah those who are upon innovation and some of them are upon kufr. We have amongst the Muslims today and for many centuries, certain beliefs and ideologies which came from influences outside of Islaam. From Greek philosophy, Christianity and other than that which affected the aqeedah of the Muslims directly. As a result of this there appeared many different groups who rejected Allaah's Names and rejected Allaah's Attributes. In light of this the aqeedah of the Muslims was eroded and deviation came in. As we know if the aqeedah of the Muslims is incorrect then everything else that follows from their ibaadah and what they feel in their hearts, we know that also will not be correct.

Aboo Iyaad went onto advise that for this reason another area of rectification and correction, as we Muslims and Salafies should be paying our utmost attention to, is learning the Aqeedah and the manhaj of the Salaf as it relates to how to believe in Allaah's Names and Attributes; how to understand Allaah's Names and Attributes and how to understand the methodology of the Salaf when it comes to believing in Allaah's Names and Attributes. When we learn and understand this, we take it from the Salaf and from the Scholars of the Salaf past and present, then we are playing an immense and huge role in correcting the affairs of the Muslimeen and in rectifying the society.

So this lecture is taken from one of the works of Shaykh ul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahullaah) called At-Tadmuriyyah.

Shaykh ul-Islaam has written a number of books which have become the standard books that we learn, understand and teach. Amongst them is Aqeedatul-Waasitiyyah, Aqeedat ul-Hamawiyyah and this book At-Tadmuriyyah. Half of this book discusses Allaah's Names and Attributes, the other half covers the issue of Qadaar and Qadr. This lecture covers the initial part, explaining the methodology of the Salaf in regards to understanding the Names and Attributes of Allaah.

The Shaykh began with the foundational principle with respect to how we believe in Allaah's Names.

FIRST PRINCIPLE:

The foundation with respect to Allaah's Names and Attributes is that Allaah is to be described with whatever He Himself has described Himself with; and whatever the Messenger have described Him with. We affirm all of that without likening any of that to the creation. We remove any imperfections from Allaah without negating these Attributes from Him.

Do you know of any who is similar to Him? (of course none is similar or co-equal or comparable to Him, and He has none as partner with Him). [There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer].

[Soorah Maryam (19):65]

The methodology that we follow is that we do not speak about Allaah, we do not ascribe anything to Him of Names or Attributes, unless Allaah, Himself, has spoke of it in the Qur'aan; or any of His Messengers, or the Messenger has mentioned it in the Sunnah. Without that we are not allowed to affirm any Name or Attribute for Him.

There is nothing like Him

This means that Allaah's Attribute can never resemble or be like the attributes like we have.

and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer

On one hand Allaah negated any likeness in the first part of the verse; at the same time Allaah affirmed that He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. So this means that Allaah affirmed for Himself Names and Attributes.

This verse in both if its parts destroys and refutes two categories of people:

The first category of people are those who claim that Allaah's Attributes are like our attributes. So when Allaah is Merciful, when Allaah becomes angry or Allaah's knowledge, they claim that these Attributes are like ours. This is baatil - falsehood, Allaah refuted that in the first part of the verse.

The second category of people are refuted in the second part of the verse. They claim Allaah does not have any Names or Attributes. Here Allaah affirms that He Hears and Sees.

The Shaykh explained that this precise methodology that is explained in this verse, is the methodology which is sound, which is obligatory and which is built upon knowledge and wisdom. It is that which is correct in speech and in belief.

The Shaykh says that this methodology, that we only describe Allaah by what He has described Himself with, and by whatever the Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wasallam) has described Him with. Then he has two evidences, one from the text and one intellectual proof.

Proof from the text:

And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allaah, so call on Him by them, and leave the company of those who belie or deny (or utter impious speech against) His Names. They will be requited for what they used to do.

[Soorah Al-A'raaf (7):180]

Allaah has affirmed Names for Himself.

There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.

[Soorah Ash-Shura (42):11]

So put not forward similitudes for Allaah (as there is nothing similar to Him, nor He resembles anything). Truly, Allaah knows and you know not.

[Soorah An-Nahl (16):74]

This verse negates any likeness. The previous two verses affirm for Allaah Names.

And follow not that of which you have no knowledge. Verily, the hearing, and the sight, and the heart of each of those ones will be questioned (by Allaah).

[Soorah Al-Israa (17):36]

These verses are a proof to show how we speak about Allaah and that we don't speak about that which we have no knowledge.

Proof from the intellect:

As for the proof which is intellectual, as we know Allaah's Names and Attributes are only known by way of revelation. It is not possible for anyone to arrive at this knowledge on his own. Therefore, this proves because we can't speak about Allaah in this manner, we have to be informed by Allaah about Allaah. This intellectually proves that it is impossible for the intellects to come to know of that knowledge of Allaah's Names and Attributes by itself. Therefore it is obligatory to stop at whatever Allaah informed us of in the Qur'aan and whatever the Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wasallam) informed us in the Sunnah. So intellectual proof establishes that point.

Now we've covered the first point regarding, what is the general methodology of a Muslim.

We find when we look at the other groups, we find that this is not the methodology that they follow. We find that either they place their intellect over the Qur'aan and over the Sunnah. So they make their intellect the judge over the Qur'aan or the Sunnah. We need to understand that we describe Allaah with whatever He described Himself with and whatever the Messenger described Himself with, without negating any of that and without making any likenesses with the creation.

SECOND PRINCIPLE:

When it comes to speaking about Allaah, we have to combine negation and affirmation. Only when we bring these two things together will we be actualising Tawheed and establishing true Tawheed that is intended.

So we have to bring these two things together with respect to Allaah's Names and Attributes to truly establish Tawheed that is desired.

The Shaykh says, if we only affirm the Names of Allaah, then we wouldn't be establishing Tawheed. Likewise if we negated things from Allaah, we wouldn't really be establishing Tawheed.

Example:

If I was to say Zayd is not a brave person, he doesn't have courage. What we have done here is that we have negated the attribute of courage from Zayd.

Likewise if we were to say that Zayd is brave and courageous, then although we have established that he's courageous it doesn't mean at the same time that nobody else is courageous. So far we haven't singled out Zayd with the attribute of courage.

However, if we were to say, there is no one who is brave or courageous except for Zayd, then we have established courage for Zayd and at the same time we have negated it from everyone else. Here we have singled him out with the attribute of courage.

The Shaykh has given this example to explain that we have to both affirm and negate when it comes to Allaah's Attributes to truly establish the Tawheed, to truly make Him unique in His Names and Attributes. Just one without the other is not sufficient as we will see.

The Shaykh continues and says that now we have understood the second principle, that we must affirm and negate from Allaah ta'ala.

So for example, we affirm that Allaah Hears and Sees, but we negate that His Hearing and Seeing is like that of the creation. We negate any resemblance, any likeness to that of His creation. Allaah's Hearing and Seeing is perfect, all encompassing, all inclusive and that of the creation is not like that. So we affirm from Allaah and at the same time we negate from Allaah, only then have we fulfilled the actual Tawheed that is intended.

THIRD PRINCIPLE:

Whenever Allaah mentions an Attribute about Himself, then in the majority of cases, Allaah will always mention it specifically or in detail. Whenever Allaah negates deficiencies then they are done generally in a general sense.

So we find that everytime we come across an Attribute that Allaah has mentioned, it indicates more and more the perfection of Allaah ta'ala. We find that the Attributes are many, more than there are Names. So this is for affirmation, when Allaah affirms things for Himself. As for the attributes that are negated from Allaah, those things which Allaah negates, which are deficiencies. For example, being incapable, becoming tired or being oppressive, resembling the creation; then we find that Allaah, in the Qur'aan, always negates in a general sense.

So look at the difference, whenever Allaah affirms anything for Himself, He mentions it specifically. Allaah is Merciful, Allaah becomes Angry, Allaah has Knowledge. Whenever Allaah negates deficiencies then they are done generally in a general sense.

This is because from the point of view of language to negate bad qualities from someone doesn't imply praise. If you speak about someone just negating the qualities from him that doesn't apply praise of that person.

For example:

If you were to praise a king and you said to a king, "You are noble, you are brave and very strong in your judgement. You are someone who subdues your enemies." So these are attributes of praise. This is something that would cause this king to be loved and respected. Why? Because the way you have spoken about him mentioning specific attributes and affirming specific characteristics for him.

If you were to now say, "You are a king and there are no other kings on this earth who are like you in this time." Now you have spoken about him making a general negation, saying there is no other king like you. You didn't go to specifics, you made a general negation - there is nothing like you. This praise now is an even better praise.

Now if you were to say about the king, "You are a king that is not stingy, you're not greedy, you're not a coward, you're not in poverty." So you start negating qualities from him, does this imply praise? It doesn't imply praise, it really means you are kind of mocking him.

This is why when we look in the Qur'aan, we find that whenever Allaah speaks about Himself and affirms Names for Himself, He mentions them specifically. Look how we find in the Qur'aan many Names and Attributes.

Allaah is ar-Rahmaan, ar-Raheem, al-Malik, al-Quddoos, al-Mu'min, al-Muhaymin, al-Azeez. Allaah speaks about His Attributes, He's Pleased, He is Angry, He Loves, He has Mercy, He Hears, He Sees, He Wills. All are mentioned specifically.

Whenever Allaah negates deficiencies from Himself, then He does it in a general sense. Allaah has never said, "Allaah is not deaf. Allaah is not blind. Allaah is not unjust. Allaah is not one without knowledge." We don't find this in the Qur'aan. Rather, Allaah affirms Names and Attributes.

The reason why this is important to understand is that when we come to look at the way of the people of innovation, you will find that they will oppose these principles. You will find that they oppose it in their methodology with which they describe Allaah. They oppose the methodology that is in the Qur'aan and in the Sunnah.

So it is important to understand that in the Qur'aan Allaah affirms His Names and Attributes in a specific sense. Whenever Allaah negates deficiencies within Himself, He does it in a general sense.

Exceptions to the rule:

The next issue is that there are some exceptions to this previous rule. For example, if there is a specific issue or a specific claim made against Allaah, then Allaah will negate it specifically. For example, we know that the Christians ascribe a son to Allaah, because there is a specific claim against Allaah, then Allaah has negated a son specifically.

O people of the Scripture (Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allaah aught but the truth. The Messiah Essaa, son of Maryam, was (no more than) a Messenger of Allaah and His Word, ("Be!" - and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam and a spirit (Ruh) created by Him; so believe in Allaah and His Messengers. Say not: "Three (trinity)!" Cease! (it is) better for you. For Allaah is (the only) One Ilaah (God), glory is to Him (Far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allaah is All-Sufficient as a Disposer of affairs.

[Soorah An-Nisaa (4):171]

Here, Allaah has specifically negated a son, because there is a specific allegation against Allaah that He has a son. This is an exception.

Likewise there maybe some other instances where because there might be a thought or a possibility that someone might think that Allaah has a deficiency, then Allaah will also negate that as well. For example, Allaah says in the Qur'aan

And indeed We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in six Days and nothing of fatigue touched Us.

[Soorah Qaaf (50):38]

So Allaah has negated that He becomes weary or tired. He negates it in a specific sense, just incase there might be a possibility that people might think this. Meaning, how could Allaah create the heavens and earth? So Allaah negated that specifically.

So in general Allaah always negates imperfections and negative qualities in a general sense. However, there might be specific instances in which there is a need to negate those deficiencies in a specific sense, because there is a need to do so. As someone might ascribed a son to Him, or He is oppressive, or they might say like the Jews say, "Allaah's Hands are tied."

The Jews say: "Allaah's Hand is tied up (i.e. He does not give and spend of His Bounty)." Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched.

[Soorah Al-Maa'idah (5):64]-

So Allaah negates that. In general the way Allaah is described is that He negates the negative qualities in a general sense. This is because as we have mentioned, if we were to start describing Allaah and saying, Allaah is not blind, Allaah is not deaf, He is one without knowledge, Allaah is not unjust. This doesn't imply praise of Him, as opposed to saying Allaah is al-Aalim - All-Knowing, as-Samee' - All-Hearing, al-Baseer - All-Seeing, ar-Rahmaan - the One who is filled with Mercy. This implies praise and perfection.

Then the Shaykh goes onto give some proofs bring some passages from the Qur'aan:

He is Allaah, beside Whom Laa ilaaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He) the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

He is Allaah, beside Whom Laa ilaaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the King, the Holy, the One Free from all defects, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures, the All-Mighty, the Compeller, the Supreme. Glory be to Allaah! (High is He) above all that they associate as partners with Him.

He is Allaah, the Creator, the Inventor of all things, the Bestower of forms. To Him belong the Best Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

[Soorah Al-Hashr (59):22-24]

In this Soorah we find fifteen Names that Allaah has mentioned straight after each other.

Likewise in Soorah Al-Hajj, where in seven verses, at the end of every verse Allaah mentions two Names. So we have another fourteen Names. So we find that Allaah mentions His Names specifically.

Truly, Allaah is All-Strong, All-Mighty.

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):40]

And Allaah is All-Knower, All-Wise

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):52]

Allaah indeed is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):59]

Verily, Allaah indeed is Oft-Pardoning, Oft-Forgiving.

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):60]

And verily, Allaah is All-Hearer, All-Seer

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):61]

And verily, Allaah He is the Most High, the Most Great.

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):62]

Verily, Allaah is the Most Kind and Courteous, Well-Acquainted with all things.

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):63]

And verily, Allaah He is Rich (Free of all needs), Worthy of all praise.

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):64]

Verily, Allaah is, for mankind, full of kindness, Most Merciful.

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):65]

Verily, Allaah is All-Strong, All-Mighty.

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):74]

Verily, Allaah is All-Hearer, All-Seer

[Soorah Al-Hajj (22):75]

As for proof that Allaah negates in a general sense, then we see that Allaah says:

So put not forward similitudes for Allaah (as there is nothing similar to Him, nor He resembles anything).

Truly, Allaah knows and you know not.

[Soorah An-Nahl (16):74]

We find that Allaah says:

Do you know of any who is similar to Him? [There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer].

[Soorah Maryam (19):65]

No there isn't, that's the meaning of the verse.

Likewise:

And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.

[Soorah Al-Ikhlâs (112):4]

Look at how in all these verses that Allaah negated in a general sense. Allaah negated that there is an equal or that there is a likeness, or there is a namesake.

This methodology needs to be understood very clearly.

FOURTH PRINCIPLE:

The fourth principle, just because the Names and the Attributes might be the same, doesn't mean the realities behind them are the same.

This means that as Allaah has Knowledge and we have knowledge, because the two names are the same it doesn't mean the realities are the same. We know that Allaah is as-Samee' and al-Baseer. We know that mankind is samee' and baseer, the same name. Does that mean that the realities behind them are the same? The answer is, "No."

That is the principle, that just because the names are the same doesn't mean that the realities behind them are the same.

This principle is established in both the revelation, in the Qur'aan; it is established by intellectual proofs; and it is established by way of external observation.

The Shaykh gives proofs for each of these three:

Proof from the Qur'aan:

Ibn Taymiyyah has covered this in about 25 pages, the Shaykh has summarised here for ease of understanding. Ibn Taymiyyah gives about 20 -30 examples from the Qur'aan, in which Allaah ta'alaah affirms for Himself a Name and in the Qur'aan we find that He has also given that name to mankind or to something from the creation.

For example Allaah says that He is as-Samee' and al-Baseer. At the same time Allaah says that mankind is sameer and baseer

Does it mean that Allaah's Hearing and Seeing is like mankind? It doesn't.

Then Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah gives many examples.

Allaah in the Qur'aan refers to the Messenger as raooif and raheem. The Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wasallam) was given these two names. Allaah Himself is ar-Raooif and ar-Raheem. Does that mean that the realities behind them are the same? No.

Likewise Allaah mentions regarding Ishaah and Ismaeel, two sons of Ibraheem. One of them is referred to as aleem, the other one is referred to as haleem. We know that both these two names belong to Allaah ta'alaah. Does it mean the realities behind them are the same? No. Shaykh al-Islaam gives many examples of this in the Qur'aan.

Then he goes onto give examples of Attributes. In the Qur'aan we find that Allaah has described Himself with knowledge. Yet He says about mankind:

O you who believe! When believing women come to you as emigrants, examine them; Allaah knows best as to their Faith, then if you ascertain that they are true believers send them not back to the disbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the disbelievers nor are the disbelievers lawful (husbands) for them.

[Soorah Al-Mumtahanah (60):10]

Here, Allaah has affirmed knowledge for Himself and affirmed knowledge for mankind. Is Allaah's knowledge like the knowledge of mankind? No. There is no likeness or resemblance.

Likewise there are other examples, where Allaah has attributed mercy for Himself and we know that mankind has mercy. There are many examples like this.

So the point being, in the Qur'aan we find this in abundance. Allaah affirms a Name for Himself, yet mankind has the same name. Allaah affirms an Attribute for Himself, yet mankind has the same attribute.

So this proves that there is no likeness. Just because two names or attributes are the same, it doesn't imply or mean that the realities behind them are the same. Rather, Allaah's Names and Attributes befit Him in a way that befits His Majesty. Likewise the creatures attributes are befitting and suited to them. There is no resemblance or likeness at all.

Proof from the intellect:

Then the Shaykh goes onto mention the intellectual proof, that the meanings and characteristics depend on who they belong to.

For example:

If we were to say that the night is long. Here we have described length to the night, but this is different to when we say that the man is long. Both lengths are different, so each thing has its own context.

So ascribing an attribute to one one thing can carry a different meaning and a different reality to when we ascribe the same attribute to something else.

So the Shaykh explained that this is an intellectual proof that attributes can carry different realities depending on what we describe with those attributes.

Proof from physical observation:

The third proof which is what we see with physical observation.

For example:

We see an elephant which has a certain body, a certain strength; at the same time we see a fly which has its own body and its own strength. But the strength of that fly is different to the strength of the elephant.

So even the same attribute has different realities depending on what we are looking at.

Another example:

We say the river is treacherous or the mountain is treacherous, meaning it is very dangerous. At the same time we could use the same attribute, but is the reality the same when we describe a man as being treacherous? No, it's not the same.

This proves and shows that just because the attributes are the same, it doesn't mean the reality behind them is the same.

These are the three proofs; proofs from the Qur'aan, proofs from the intellect and proofs from what we can outwardly observe.

So these are the four principles, there are many other principles, these are just four insha'Allaah:

SUMMARISED:

First Principle: that the principle when it comes to speaking about Allaah is that we only describe Him with whatever He Himself described Himself with and whatever the Messenger described Himself with. We affirm that without likening any of that to the creation and without negating anything from that. So we keep the middle balanced path.

Second Principle: in order to really establish Tawheed as it is intended then we have to combine between affirming for Allaah and negating for Allaah. We have to affirm Names for Allaah and Attributes for Allaah, at the same time we negate that there is any likeness, any equal or resemblance. We negate all of that.

Third Principle: is when we look at the methodology of the Qur'aan we find generally that Allaah always affirms Names and Attributes for Himself in a specific sense. Whenever Allaah negates from Himself it is generally done in general. There may be specific instances where He will negate something because there is a need for that.

Fourth Principle: just because the Name or Attribute is shared between Allaah and the creation as far as the Name or Attribute goes, it doesn't mean that the reality behind it is the same. Rather, the reality of Allaah's Names and Attributes, we don't know the realities, but they befit Allaah and the attribute befits the nature of mankind.

So now after establishing these principles, Aboo Iyaad addresses one of the specific groups of innovation. They are the Ash'ariyyah.

Continued in **PART 2**, insha'Allaah...