

Introduction to Islam

By Imam Khalid Chahhou

The word ISLAM has a two-fold meaning: peace, and submission to God. This submission requires a fully conscious and willing effort to submit to the one Almighty God. One must consciously and conscientiously give oneself to the service of Allah. This means to act on what Allah enjoins all of us to do (in the Qur'an) and what His beloved Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged us to do in his Sunnah (his lifestyle and sayings personifying the Qur'an). Once we humble ourselves, rid ourselves of our egoism and submit totally to Allah, and to Him exclusively, in faith and in action, we will surely feel peace in our hearts. Establishing peace in our hearts will bring about peace in our external conduct as well.

Islam is a religion, which guides its followers in every aspect of their lives. It is a **way of life**. Islam is the modern or latest version of the message sent by God through Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Islam was sent to mankind through Prophet Muhammad. Islam is "modern" in the sense that it has come to complement the teachings, which were introduced through Moses and Jesus. Islam is a religion, which seeks to give a meaningful purpose to our life on this earth. It seeks to guide us in fulfilling that purpose by creating harmony between our Creator, all fellow human beings and ourselves.

According to Islam, the final destination of mankind is the life hereafter. At the end of time, all human beings will be resurrected and will be held accountable for their worldly life. The life in hereafter will be an eternal life. However, whether it will be blissful or full of sorrow depends on how we spend our present life. It was to help mankind get prepared for the hereafter that God sent various prophets and messengers to guide them. Muhammad is the last prophet, and Islam is the final and complete version of God's message.

Islam is careful to remind us that it is not a religion to be paid mere lip service; rather it is an all-encompassing way of life that must be practiced continuously for it to be Islam. The Muslim must practice the five pillars of the religion: the declaration of faith in the oneness of Allah and the Prophet-hood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), prayer, fasting the month of Ramadan, alms-tax, and the pilgrimage to Makah; and believe in the six articles of faith: belief in God, the Holy Books, the Prophets, the Angels, the Day of Judgment and God's decree, whether for good or ill.

There are other injunctions and commandments, which concern virtually all facets of one's personal, family and civic life. These include such matters as diet, clothing, personal hygiene, interpersonal relations, business ethics, responsibilities towards parents, spouse and children, marriage, divorce and inheritance, civil and criminal law, fighting in defense of Islam, relations with non-Muslims, and so much more.

The famous statement of the Companion Rabi Ibn Amir, may God be pleased with him, in front of the ruler of Persia, "God has raised us up in order that we may remove whomever He

wills from the worship of creation to the worship of the Lord of creation, from the narrowness of this life to the expanse of the Hereafter, and from the injustice of the religions to the justice of Islam.”

The focal point of Islam is the human being himself. Meaningful change must begin with individuals. “Indeed, God does not change the condition of a people until they change themselves.” In order for change to be possible, our *nufus* (egos) must first be freed of shackles such as selfishness, coarse manners and the “livestock mentality” in which the individual follows the group, no matter where it is headed. The revival of the *nafs* (ego) is the beginning of the revival of the *Umma* (humanity). “...and whoever gives life to it, it is as if he has given life to all people” (*Qur’an*, 5:32).