Quenching the Thirst for
Sacred Knowledge

In the name of Allah, The Most Merciful The Most Compassionate

Beliefs of a Muslim

Semester One: Divinity

عقيدة المسلم:الـهيات

Lesson One:

- Introduction
- Background
- Difference Between Islam & Iman
- Defining a Responsible Believer
- Basic Tenants of Faith

Definition: Principles by which religious doctrine/tenants are established through decisive evidences (al-Sheikh Ibrahim al-Ya'qoubi)

Subject: The Divine Being of Allah, The Prophets and the traditions which are necessary to believe in.

Establisher: This discipline was established by Allah The Most High. However it is attributed to Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and Abu al-Hasan al-'Ashari because they initially wrote books on this science and classified it.

Introduction

Importance: Aqida is the noblest of all of the sciences and is their superior; all other sciences & disciplines are based upon correct aqida.

Names/Titles: The study of aqida has been named varyingly. The most common names are, ‘Ilm al-Kalam (Theology) and ‘Ilm al-Tawhid (Knowledge of Divine Unity)

Sources & Benefits: Derived from al-Qur’an, al-Sunnah and the intelect (al-‘aql). The benefits are, the fulfilment of an obligatory duty thus success in both worlds.

Background

Fitna began during the rein of Sayyiduna Uthman's caliphate which resulted in his martyrdom

A group known as the khawarij arose, forming their own theology without referring to the Sahaba

This led to a further group coming into existence, namely the Mu'tazila

The Mu'tazila rose to power which led to the widespread of their beliefs

Disputes led to violence, most notably the trial (*mihna*) of Imam Ahmad

The need arose to defend the correct and pure theology of Islam

This duty was fulfilled by the two great Imams of theology: Imam Abu al-Hasan al-'Ashari and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi

The Ashari and Maturidi schools of Ahl al Sunna are thus named after them

In the following part of the famous '*Hadith Jibril*' the Messenger of Allah ﷺ defines Faith (الايمان):

> ...He (Jibril عليه السلام) said: "Inform me of Islam (اسلام)." The Noble Messenger ﷺ replied: "Islam is that you testify there is no god except Allah and (Sayyiduna) Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establish the prayer, pay zakat, fast in the month of Ramadan and that you perform the Hajj if you are able to do so. He (Jibril عليه السلام) said"You have spoken the truth...."
>
> He (Jibril عليه السلام) then said: "Inform me of Faith (الايمان)." He (the Noble Messenger, Upon Him be Peace and Salutations) said: "(Iman is) that you believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Prophets, the Last Day and that you believe in destiny."
>
> (Narrated by Muslim)

Establishing the mentioned pillars and believing in the aforementioned tenants of faith is compulsory for every **responsible believer.**

Islam The declaration of faith by the tongue, i.e. verbal testimony of faith via the two *Declarations of Faith. Islam* is making apparent your *faith* through the pillars:

- Testimony
- Salah
- Fasting
- Zakah
- Hajj

Denying anyone of these pillars is disbelief.

Iman The heart's confirmation and ratification of the Prophet ﷺ and everything he came with along with submission, obedience, acceptance and certitude.

Get Thinking: The disbelievers confirmed the truthfulness of the Prophet ﷺ and his message however they did not submit to it nor accept it. Therefore they remained disbelievers:

يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ

(They) know him as they know their own sons

(Surah al-Baqara V.146)

Any individual who fulfils the following four conditions is a '*responsible believer'* (مكلّف) and therefore has religious obligations (تكليف) such as praying, fasting, believing in Allah etc.'

Basic Tenants of Faith

Lesson Two:

- Rational Categories
- Classification of Divine Attributes
- Existence of Allah & The Kalam Theory
- Destroying the Theory of Randomness

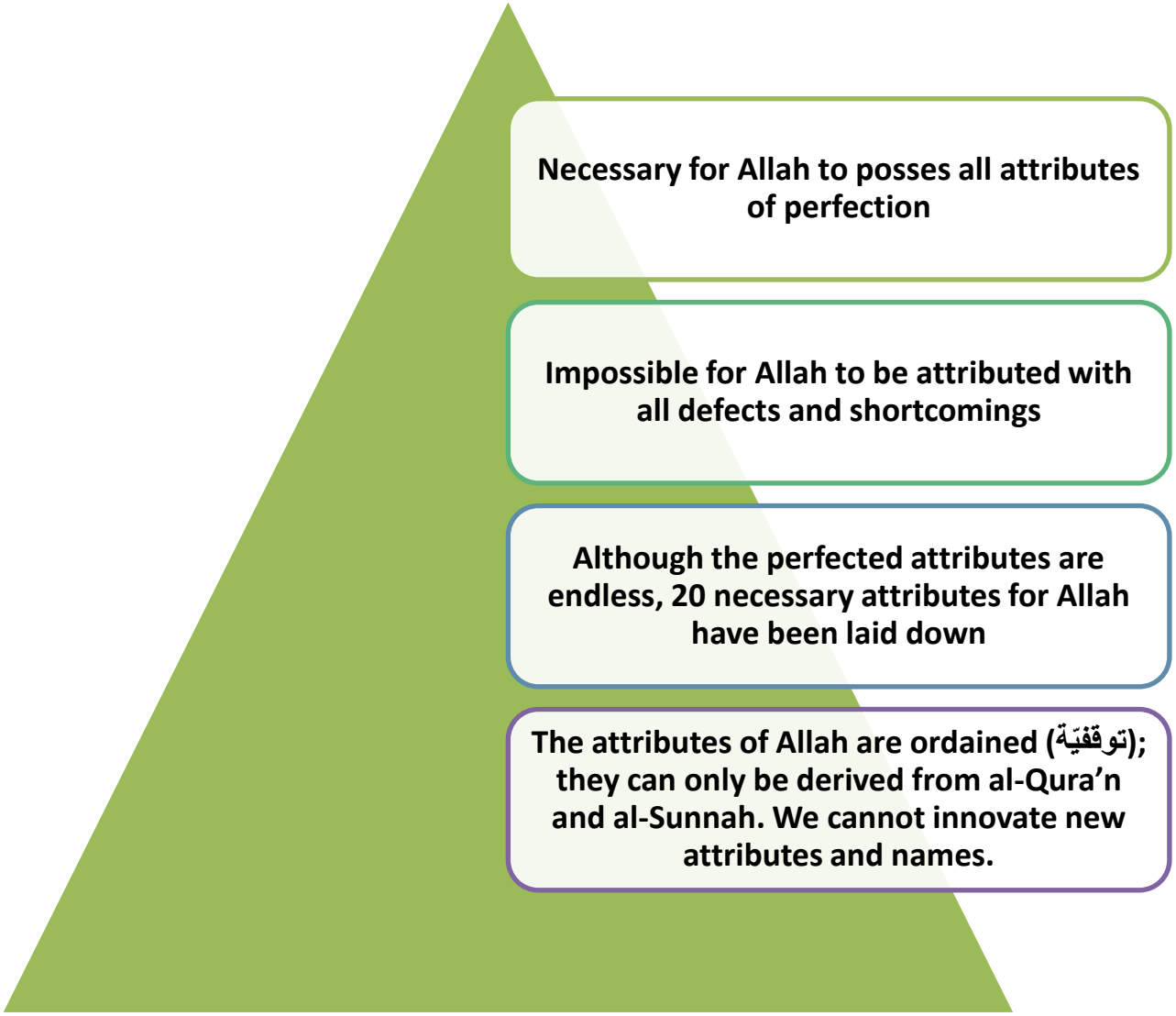
Rational Categories

There are <u>three</u> rational categories (الحكم العقلي). They simply refer to the classification of matters by our intellects:

Necessary (الوجوب)	Impossible (المستحيل)	Possible (الجائز)
• Anything which has to exist and cannot accept non-existence falls into this category, e.g. The Existence of Allah	• Anything which cannot exist is classified as 'impossible,' such as the existence of another god or deity.	• All those matters which can exist and equally not exist are termed 'possible' such as the existence of this world.

Get Thinking: *Imagine the movement of a ball. For the ball to be either moving or stationary is necessary. For it to be simultaneously moving and stationary is impossible, however, for the ball to be in anyone of two states is possible.*

Belief in Allah & His Attributes



One of the basic tenants that has been mentioned earlier is belief in Allah. This means you must believe in Allah with His Divine Attributes. All imperfections are *impossible* for Him and every perfection is *necessary* for Him.

The existence of Allah is *necessary* (واجب الوجود). A proof of His existence is this world; it exists therefore there must be a Supreme Being who bought it into existence; Allah The Most Glorious.

Proving Existence of Allah from the Kalam Theory of al-Imam al-Ghazzali:

a. Everything that changes has a creator

b. The world changes

c. The world has a creator

d. That Creator is Allah The Most High

Some claim that the world came into existence **randomly**, out of chance...

Proof that the world did not come into existence by itself

It is impossible for complexity to exist by itself

Randomly throwing letters of the alphabet together does not produce a poem or a story

There needs to be an outside force - to drive the creation of a poem or story

Lesson Three:

- Negative Attribute – *al-Sifat al-Salbiyya*
- Pre-eternalness & Eternalness
- Dissimilarity to Creation
- No Imagination Can Conceive Him...
- Allah is Independent
- The Oneness of Allah

Negative Attributes – *al-Sifat al-Salbiyya*

- Pre-Eternalness
- Eternalness
- Dissimilarity to Creation
- Self Subsistence
- Unity

Negative Attributes: Pre-Eternalness (al-Qidam)

Allah is Pre-eternal (القديم); He has always existed and was never preceded by non-existence. Everyone and everything other than Allah is contingent(حادث); everything but Allah has a beginning.

Key Points:

- ***Pre-eternal*** **and** ***contingent*** **are opposites**
- **Allah & His Attributes are Qadim and everything else is haadith**
- **All attributes of Allah are Qadim**
- **This attribute is not explicitly mentioned in al-Qur'an al-Karim but is derived from the Glorious name of Allah, The First (الاوّل):**

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

He is the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden. And He is, of all things, Knowing. **(Surah al-Hadid, V.3)**

Negative Attributes: Pre-eternalness cont...

The Noble Messenger of Allah ﷺ has stated:

كَانَ اللهُ وَ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْءٌ غَيْرُهُ

Allah was and there was nothing with Him

(Narrated by al-Bukhari)

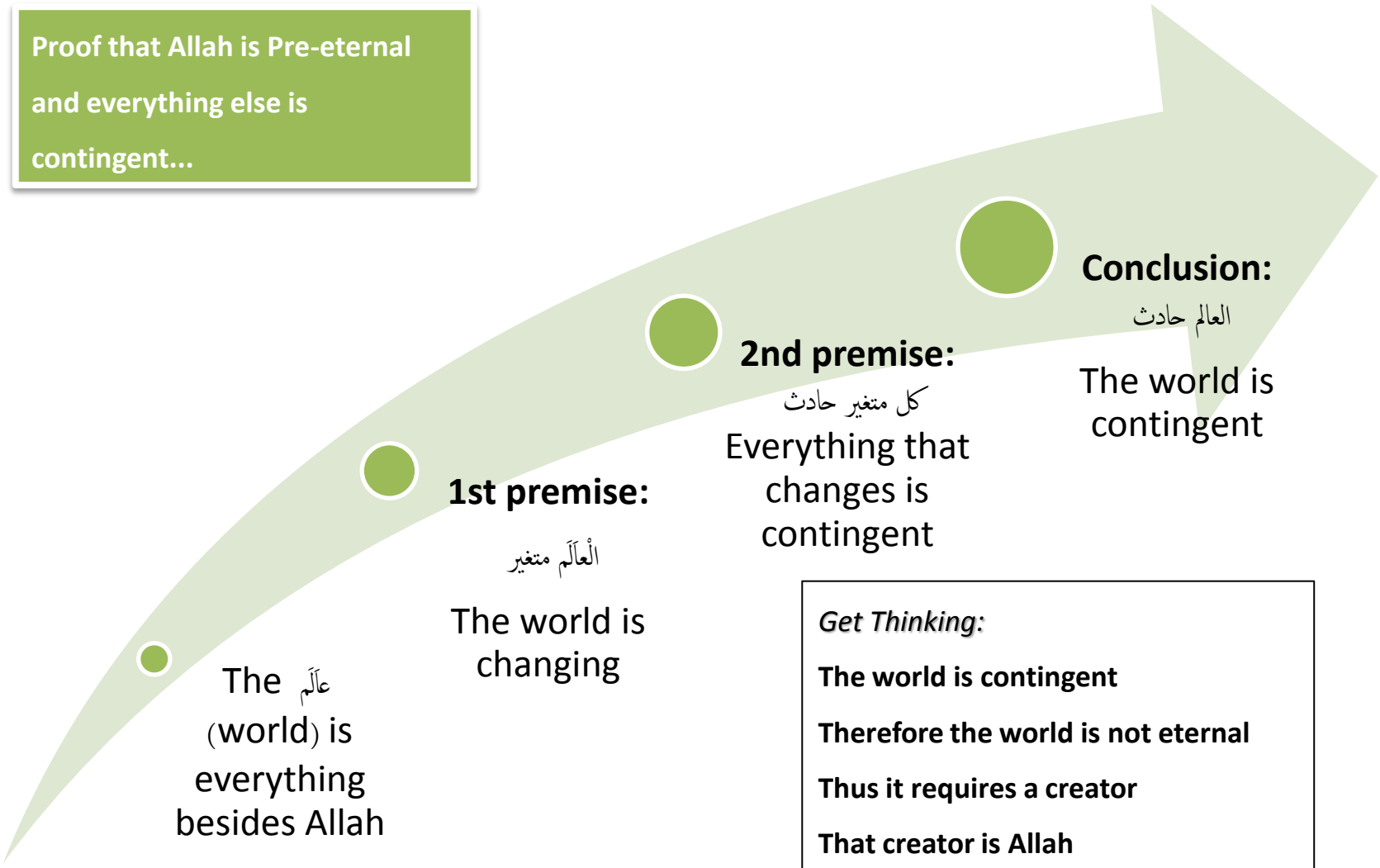
Allah is without a beginning whilst everything else has a beginning

He does not acquire or gain His attributes. If He acquired new attributes, He would be contingent

He was the Lord in Pre Eternity, as He is now

Negative Attributes: Pre-eternalness cont...

Proof that Allah is Pre-eternal and everything else is contingent...



Get Thinking:

The world is contingent

Therefore the world is not eternal

Thus it requires a creator

That creator is Allah

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ

Everything shall perish save Him

(Surah al-Qasas, V.88)

Key Points:

- Eternalness (البقاء) and transiency (الفناء) are opposites.

- Allah & His Attributes are eternal. He does not have an end; a point where He ceases to exist.

- Eternalness is an attribute of Allah the Most High. Everything other than Him is transient and will perish.

So what are the intellectual proofs for the Pre-eternalness and eternalness of Allah...

Negative Attributes: Dissimilarity to Creation (al-Mukhalafa lil Hawadis)

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

There is nothing whatsoever like Him, yet He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing

(Surah al-Shura V.11)

- Allah, The Most Gracious, has no similarity to His creation (المخالفة للحوادث) in any aspect; His Divine Essence, Attributes and Actions. Since everything is His creation we can also say, Allah is not similar or like anything and is unique.

- The following statement is famous amongst the scholars:

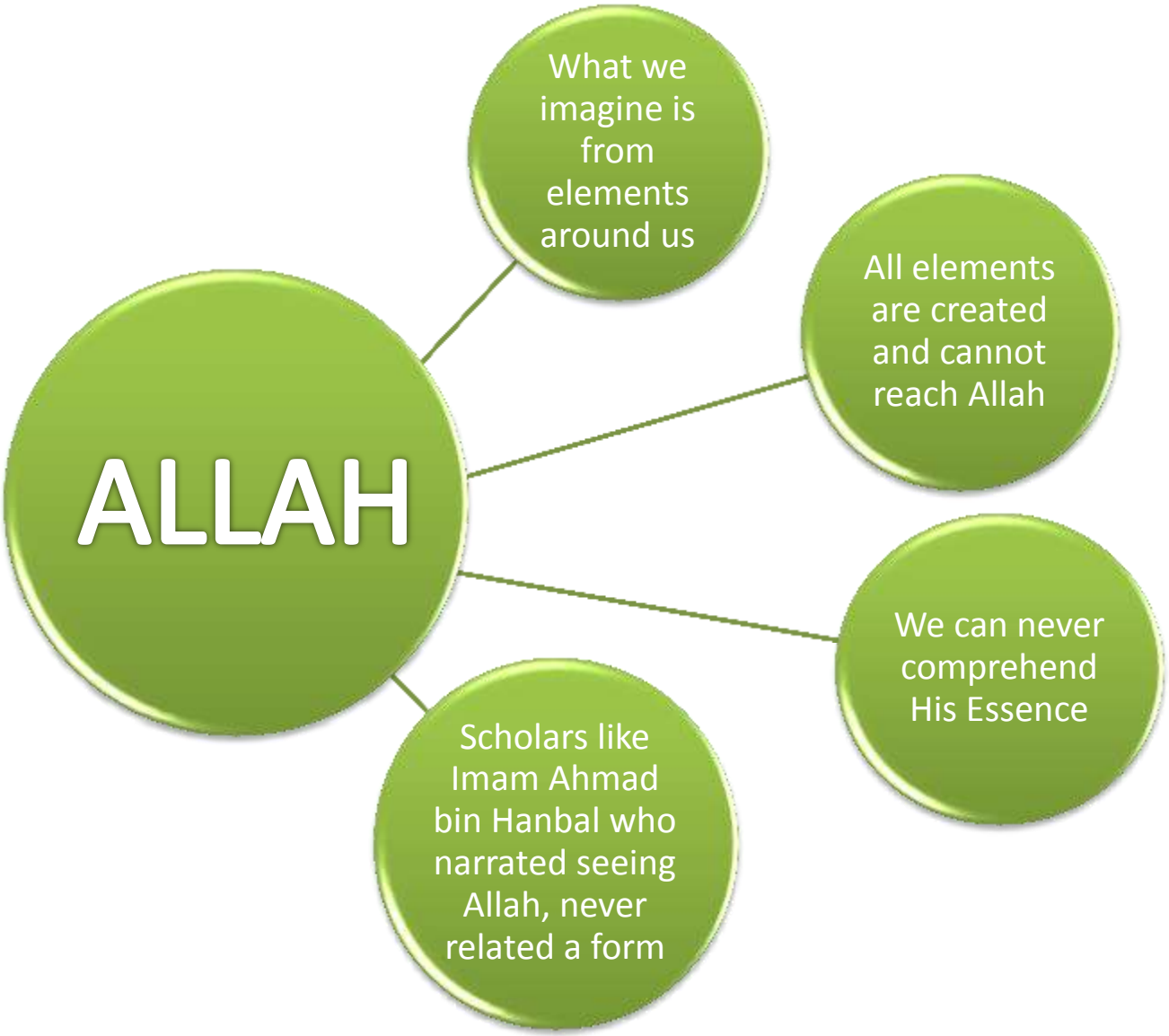
Whatever occurs in your mind, Allah is other than that

- This attribute emphasises the Oneness of Allah. If something was similar to Him, He would no longer be One.

Negative Attributes: Dissimilarity to Creation cont...

Reflecting on the Essence of Allah is forbidden.
We should reflect on the favours/signs of Allah, but not on the Essence of Allah.
Take on the attributes of Allah, i.e. be merciful, forgiving, just, etc.
In Sufi terminology, this ‘taking on’ of the Divine attributes is called Tahalli: taking on good character.
Sayiduna Abu Bakr said: ‘Comprehension is when you realize you are incapable of comprehending Allah.’

No Imagination can conceive Him & no understanding can comprehend Him



يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيد

O mankind, you are those in need of Allah ,

while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy

(Surah al-Fatir V.15)

• Almighty Allah is Self-Sustained and independent (الغني) from being in need of anything; time, place, a creator etc.

•He is absolutely independent of His creation.

•However all creation is in need of Him and dependant upon Him for their existence and continuity.

•If Allah was in need of time, space or anything else, He would be contingent like them since ‘neediness’ is a trait of contingent beings.

•We are in need of Him whilst He is not in need of us.

Negative Attributes: Self-Subsistence cont...

- Allah does not do anything out of a need, but there is wisdom in what He does

- He does not benefit from us or our worship

- The way to know Him is through worship

- In a *hadith qudsi,* Allah says:

> O My servants! Were the first of you, and the last of you, and the human of you and the jinn of you, are to be as pious as the most pious heart of any one man of you, that would not increase My Kingdom in anything.

- He created us without need and He provides for creation without difficulty.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

Say: He is Allah the One

(Surah al-Ikhlas V.1)

Allah, The Glorious is One (الواحد). Not like a number, He does not accept divisibility, but One in His:

Being	Attributes	Actions
• Allah is the only God • No other God can possibly exist	• Nothing shares the Divine Attributes of Allah. He is alone in His Knowledge, Power etc	• Allah is alone in His Divine Actions; Only He provides, gives life & death etc.

Negative Attributes: Unity cont...

•Deity (الٰه) means he who is worthy of being worshipped.

•If there was a Deity along with Allah, the universe would be in chaos. Allah, The Majestic, informs us:

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا

If there had been gods in the heavens other than Allah, there would be dissension amongst them.

(Surah al-Ambiya V.22)

Get thinking: If there were two gods; god A and god B. God A decides to bring a person into existence whilst god B does not. We now have 2 possibilities:

(a) Both gods execute their will: this implies the unity of opposites which is impossible.

(b) One of the gods executes his will which means the other is not god since he could not execute his will.

Lesson Four:

- Intelligible Attributes – *al-Sifat al-Ma'ani*
- Only Allah Has Power
- The Glorious Will of Allah
- He Punishes & Rewards Whom He Wants...
- All-Encompassing Knowledge of Allah
- He is Living
- Hearing, Sight & Speech
- Intelligible in Action – *al-Sifat al-Ma'nawiyya*

Intelligible Attributes – *al-Sifat al-Ma'ani*

- Power
- Will
- Knowledge
- Life
- Hearing
- Seeing
- Speech

وَٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

And Allah has Power over all things

(Surah Ali-'Imran V.29)

Nothing is difficult for Him therefore Allah has power (القدرة) over everything:

Proof by Wisdom (دليل الحكمة):

The design of the creation of the heavens and the earth, and what they contain indicates towards the Divine Power of Almighty Allah. The perfect balance of the cosmos – the anecdote of Imam Abu Hanifa

Proof by Nature (دليل الفطرة):

The natural disposition of humans that believes in and inclines to God. – the anecdote of Imam Ja'far al Sadiq

Key Point...Understand it well

The Power of Allah relates to possible things;

Things that *can exist* and *not* exist, equally. Power does not encompass impossibilities.

Commentary on above point:

The term impossible refers to those matters which can never exist. Possessing power over them infers their existence is possible and therefore those matters no longer remain impossible.

Example 1: The existence of another God is impossible. To believe that there is power over creating another God means that it is possible for another to exist. And this would be explicit rejection of the Oneness of Allah.

To believe the Power of Allah does not encompass impossibilities does not necessitate the 'incapability' of Allah nor us being more powerful than Him.

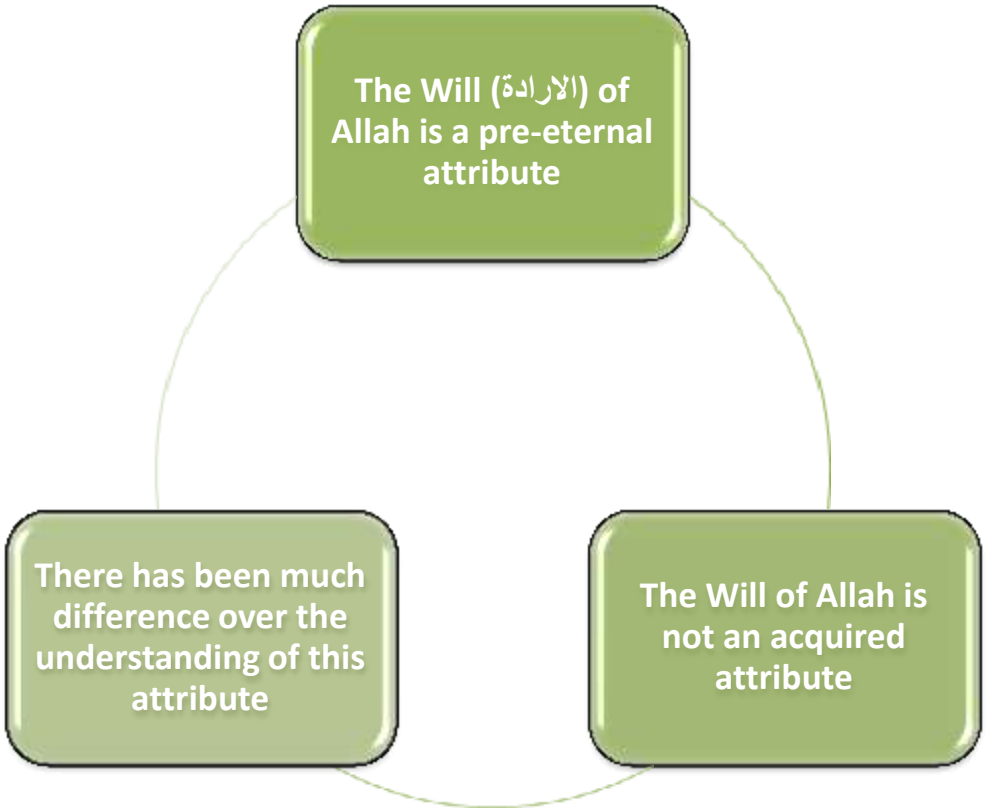
Example 2: The existence of Allah is necessary. To believe He has power over not existing means that His non-existence is a possibility. Thus His existence would no longer be necessary.

Negative Attributes: Will (al-Irada)

فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ

Effecter of what He intends.

(Surah al-Buruj V.16)



The Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'ah affirm:

- **Whatever Allah wills takes place**
- **Whatever has taken place is the Will of Allah**
- **Whatever Allah has not willed can not be**

فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ

Then He will forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills

(Surah al-Baqara V.284)

•When Allah promises a rewards (الوعد), He will grant it without any compulsion; the reward is from the eternal Mercy of Allah.

•However if He warns of a punishment (الوعيد) for committing a sin, He may 'oppose' this warning out of His Mercy and Generosity and forgive the sin.

•His Mercy is dominant over His Wrath.

•As for disbelievers, there is no forgiveness for them.

وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

And Allah is Knowing of all things

(Surah al-Baqara V.282)

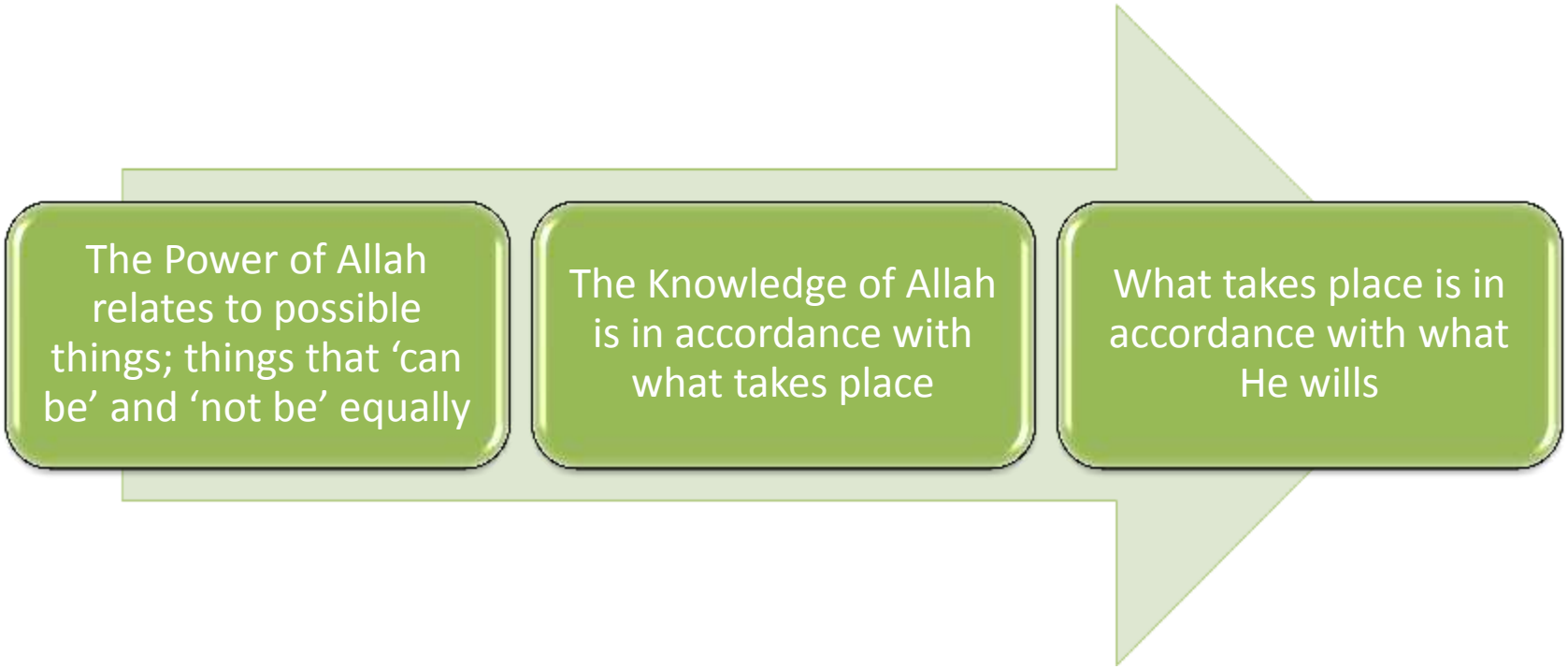
•The knowledge (العلم) of Allah encompasses everything; every necessary, impossible and possible matters, even things which do not exist. It is unlike our limited and deficient knowledge.

•He knows everything in general and detail without ever being ignorant of anything. The knowledge of Allah is free from increase & decrease.

•Allah has always been Omniscient (العليم) – He has pre-eternally known everything.

•The deviant sect, the Mu'tazila (المعتزلة), believed that Allah only acquires knowledge of a matter when it actually occurs.

The relationship between Power, Knowledge and Will



***Get Thinking**: Allah is powerful over giving a boy or a girl. Both are equal in their possibility but Allah granted a boy. What gave preference to a boy over a girl? Answer: The Will of Allah*

Analysis of previous example:

- The Power (قدرة)of Allah could grant a boy or a girl - both are possible
- The Knowledge (علم)of Allah encompassed that a boy will be born- thus in accordance with what actually took place
- A boy was born– in accordance with the Divine Will (إرادة) of Allah

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

Allah - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer

(Surah al-Baqara V.255)

- The living of Allah is incomprehensible.

- He is the-Living (الحيّ) and will never die since death is a sign of contingency and He is Pre-eternal and Eternal.

- If God could die how would he create the universe? In addition he would not be able to sustain life if himself he could not remain alive.

Get Thinking: If god died on the cross, who was maintaining the universe whilst he was dead?

Intelligible Attributes: Life

The Creator cannot be dead

A dead being has no power, will, or knowledge

According to an opinion, حي قيوم is the greatest name of Allah

Qayyum is difficult to translate: Self-Sufficient

Allah sustains the world

No slumber nor sleep can overtake Allah

وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

And He is the Hearing, the Knowing

(Surah al-Baqara V.137)

•Hearing (السمع) is a Pre-eternal attribute of Allah, the Majestic.

•His Divine Hearing is unlike our contingent and created hearing.

•He hears without the instruments of created hearing;
- •Ears
- •Ear drum
- •Sound waves
- •Vibration of air particles etc.

•He hears everything; not only sound but things which our hearing cannot even perceive

وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

And He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing

(Surah al-Shura V.11)

- Seeing (البصر) is a pre-eternal attribute of Allah.
- His Divine Sight is unlike our contingent and created sight.
- He sees without the instruments of created seeing;
  - Eyes (cornea, optical nerve etc)
  - Light reflection,
  - From a distance and direction.
- He sees everything, even things which our sights cannot perceive.

وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا

And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech

(Surah al-Nisa V.164)

•Speech (الكلام) is a pre-eternal attribute of Allah.

•His Divine Speech is unlike our contingent and created speech.

•He speech is free from sound, letters, voice and organs of speech (voice box, tongue etc).

• Through His Speech He orders and prohibits. He also addresses whom He wills.

•The Qur'an is Speech of Allah (كلام الله) revealed in the Arabic language to the Best of Creation.

The conclusions, i.e. the results of establishing the seven Intelligible Attributes for Allah are that He is:

1. Omnipotent (All-Powerful) - اَلْقَادِرُ
2. All-Willing - اَلْمُرِيْدُ
3. Omniscient (All-Knowing) - اَلْعلِيْمُ
4. The Living - اَلْحَيُّ
5. All-Hearing - اَلسَّمِيْعُ
6. All-Seeing - اَلْبَصِيْرُ
7. The Speaker - اَلْمُتَكَلِّمُ

Attributes

Personal Nafsiyya	Negative Salbiyya	Intelligible M'ani	Intelligible in Action Ma'nawiyya
• Existence	• Pre-Eternalness • Eternalness • Dissimilarity to Creation • Self Subsistence • Unity	• Power • Will • Knowledge • Life • Hearing • Seeing • Speech	• Omnipotent • All Willing • Omniscient • The Alive • All Hearing • All Seeing • Speaking

Lesson Five:

- Ambiguous Attributes: *al-Muthashabihat*
- Types of Qur'anic Verses
- Dealing With Ambiguous Verses
- al-Tafwid & al-Ta'wil
- Classification of Hadith pertaining to Divine Attributes

Ambiguous Attributes: al-Muthashābihāt

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ

It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] precise - they are the foundation of the Book - and others unspecific

(Surah al-Ali 'Imran V.7)

- Allah has informed us that some of the Qura'nic verses are clear (المحكمات).
- Other verses are ambiguous (المتشابهات), i.e. There meaning is not so clear.
- As a rule we have to understand the ambiguous verses in light of the clear verses.
- The apparent meaning of the ambiguous verses implies contingency and similarity to creation.
- It is obligatory to affirm that Allah is dissimilar to creation

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

There is nothing whatsoever like Him, yet He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing

(Surah al-Shura V.11)

- Nothing is like unto Him, and He is All Hearing, All Seeing
- Everything is in need of Him. He is in need of nothing
- Nothing is like Him; not in being, attributes or actions
- This verse serves as a principle in the religion

Keep this verse and these points present in your mind whilst studying the next group of attributes...

The ambiguous verses include:

الرَّحْمَـٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ

(Surah al-TaHa V.5)

يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

(Surah al-Fath V.10)

فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ

(Surah al-Baqara V.115)

Principle of Ahl al Sunna

- Affirm everything for Allah that He has affirmed for Himself or has been authentically reported from the Messenger of Allah (upon him be peace and salutations) without negation or change, increase or decrease
- Affirm dissimilarity between the Creator and creation
- Assign the true meaning of the ambiguous verses to Allah

The scholars differ in whether these verses should be interpreted or not. The difference lies between the early and late scholars.

The Early Scholars (السلف الصالحين)

- The pious predecessors who inherited this religion from the Messenger of Allah (upon him be peace and salutations).
- They are the first three generations.
- Position: Tafwid (التفويض): To assign the meaning to Allah.

The Later Scholars (الخلف)

- Those pious scholars who came after the Salaf and inherited their knowledge.
- Position: Ta’wil (التأويل): To interpret the ambiguous verses.

Tafwid explained...

Tafwid - التفويض

- To affirm the ambiguous attributes and assign the meaning to Allah without any explanation, neither in Arabic or any other language.
- The recitation of the ayah *is* the explanation (Imam Muhammad & Sufyan ibn Uyayna)
- This position is the middle way between denying the attributes (التعتيل) and anthropomorphism (التجسيم)

Ta'wil explained...

Ta'wil - التأويل

- To affirm the ambiguous attributes whilst interpreting them
- Not affirming the literal meaning
- In order to do *'ta'wil'* of a verse, the literal meaning must be in opposition to a principle of the religion
- The interpretation must be in accordance with the principles and usage of the Arabic Language

Ambiguous Attributes: Wisdoms from the Salaf

Imam Ahmad was asked how is *Istiwa*? He replied:

'As Allah has attributed to Himself. We do not ask how'

Imam Ahmad:

'*Istiwa* is not unknown, the *modality* is not understood, belief in it is necessary, and questions about it are an innovation'

Imam Ahmad:

'We believe and we affirm without *modality* and meaning'

Imam Rabe'a - teacher of Imam Malik:

'The *modality* is unknown, the *Istiwa* is incomprehensible, belief in it is necessary'

Ambiguous Attributes: Why do Ta'wil?

•The need for interpreting ambiguous verses arose to safeguard the Iman of the Muslims

•The Qur'an includes such attributes which if taken literally, would result in apparent contradictions.

•Examples of interpretation include:

Attribute	Literal Meaning	Interpretation
al-'Ayn (العين)	Eye	Care
al-Yad (اليد)	Hand	Power
Fi al-Sama (في السماء)	In the sky	Lord of the Sky
al-Istiwa (الاستوى)	To rise	Sovereignty

Ambiguous Attributes:

- *Get Thinking:*

  - Why claim that Allah has two eyes when He has used the words *'ayn'* (lit. Eye) and *'a'ayun'* (lit. Plural of eyes) for Himself?

  - Why claim that Allah has two hands when He has used the word *'yad'* (lit. Hand), *'yadain'* (lit. Two hands) and *'aydi'* (lit. Plural for hands) for Himself?

  - Allah says *'He is with you wherever you are'*. Why is this verse not taken literally? Why is this given ta'wil?

  - Believing that Allah is on the Throne leads to affirming contingency (*hadath*) for Him, Glorified be He. Where was Allah before He created the Throne? Movement, being restricted by place and time are all attributes of contingent beings (creation). Is it not obligatory to remove these similarities?

  - Is it not correct that all ambiguous verses are to be interpreted in accordance with the clear verses? Is it not that all clear verses are clear in their meaning whilst the ambiguous verses are not?

  - In simple, all attributes are affirmed. Qadhi Abu Bakr explains...

Qadi Abu Bakr al-Maliki: Hadith with regards to the attributes of Allah are in three categories:

Attributes that give the meaning of complete perfection

- E.g. 'Oneness'
- Position: To affirm them as they are

Attributes that infer deficiency

- E.g. 'O my servant, I fell ill, why did you not visit me'
- Position: Not attributed to Allah

Attributes of perfection but infer similarity to creation

- E.g. 'The *Yad* of Allah is over their hands'
- Position: To be understood in a manner that is worthy for Allah