

**WHO ARE
'AHLUS SUNNAH
WAL JAMAA'AH'?**



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During the time of the Prophet Muhammad there was only ONE main group of believers at that time and they called themselves ‘Muslims’. There was no reason for the believers at that time to call themselves anything other than Muslims.

As we know, the Prophet Muhammad was receiving continuous revelation from Allah to inform him about occurrences that were going to arise and affect his nation. One of the issues that Allah had conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad, that he in turn conveyed to his followers- is that there will be groups of Muslims that will leave the main body of Muslims and break up into different sects. These sects that emerged and left the main body of Muslims, did not appear until after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. They emerged as distinct groups during the caliphate of Ali ibn Abee Taalib (except possibly for the Qadiriyyah):

The Messenger of Allah said: ***“The Jews split into seventy-one sects, The Christians split into seventy-two sects. I swear by the One whose Hand my soul is; this ummah will split up into seventy-three sects, one of them in the Paradise and seventy-two will be in the Hellfire. It was said: ‘Who is that (saved sect)?’. The Prophet replied: ‘The Jamaa’ah’.*”** In another version: ***“Who are they O Messenger of Allah?”*** He replied: ***“(They are those who are upon) what I am upon and my companions are upon.”***¹

¹ Abu Dawud transmitted it in his Sunan #4596, Tirmidhi in his Jami’ #2641, ibn Majah in his Sunan #3991, and Al Hakim in Al Mustadrak #444 and mentioned it was ‘saheeh’ upon the conditions of Imam Muslim. Ibn Hajr al Asqalaani mentioned it is a ‘hasan’ narration in ‘Takreej al Kashif pg. 63, Ibn Taymiyyah said it was ‘saheeh’ in his Majmoo’ul Fatawaa 3/345, as well as Ash Shaatibee in Al I’tisaam 1/430, as well as Al Iraquee in ‘Takreej al Ih’yaa 3/199, it was transmitted by many different companions with many different routes of transmission.

WE LEARN FROM THIS HADITH THAT:

- a) Prophet Muhammad foretold that this Ummah would split into sects like the Jews and Christians.
- b) There will be one group 'Jama'aah' that will remain upon what the Prophet and his companions upon in regards to beliefs, creed, and 'aqeedah'.
- c) The 'Jama'aah' in one version of the hadith. Another version: "What I am upon, what I am following, and what my companions are upon and followign".
- d) As for those who introduced new beliefs about Allah, Allah's Names, Allah's Attributes, The Quran, the Prophet Muhammad, the companions, the family of the Prophet, the Hellfire and the Paradise, The Meezan, The Siraat, Seeing Allah on the Day of Resurrection, etc...then they took many of their doubts from the Jews, Christians, Greek, Persian, and Roman philosophies and other religious beliefs contrary to Islamic beliefs.
- e) After the emergence of these different groups and sects, those who remained upon the understanding of the main body of Muslims would distinguish themselves from the other newly emerging sects by ascribing to the 'Jamaa'ah' that the Prophet Muhammad referred to in the hadith. Hence, calling themselves 'Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaa'ah'.

What were some causes that led these groups to emerge and leave the main body of Muslims?

1. Ignorance of Quran and Sunnah ('Mutashabih and Muhkam-Analogous texts and Decisive texts)
2. Following one's desires, jealousy of those following the proper creed and beliefs.
3. Giving precedence to people's personal views and opinions, over the revelation. While considering them absolute proofs that no one can differ with.
4. Submitting one's mind, heart, and intellect to ideas foreign to and in opposition to proper Islamic Creed. Such as the articles of creed or faith of other religions, philosophies, politics, movements, freemasonry, etc...These can affect the way one believes, acts, and behaves directly and indirectly, consciously and sub-consciously.

5. All of these causes can be summed up into one main cause: (Ta'teel, Ta'weel, and Tahreef) distortion, incorrect interpretation, and disabling the meanings of revelation from Allah. These three causes are what led the Jews and the Christians astray in regards to their religious texts (Torah and Injeel) and what led the various Islamic sects to emerge and leave the understanding of the main body of Muslims.

What were some of the main issues that these new Islamic sects emerged with and led them astray from the understanding of the main body of Muslims?

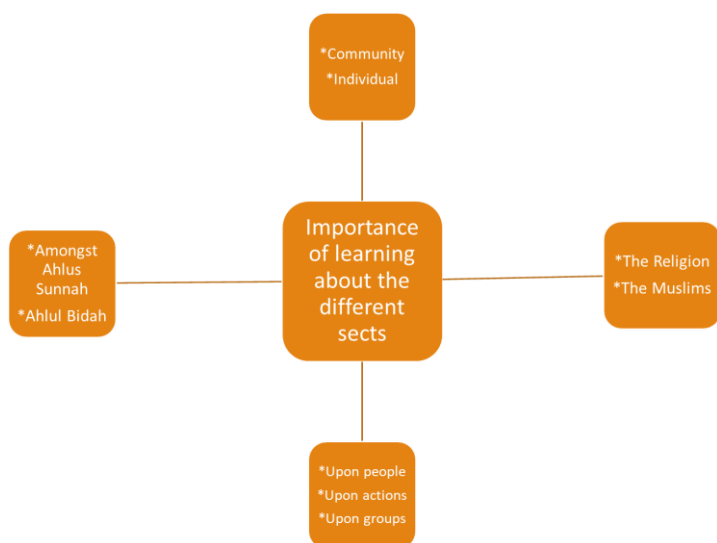
- a) True meaning of Iman (Actions, Statements, Belief in the Heart; being many parts and branches)
- b) True meaning of 'La ilaha illa Allah'
- c) Understanding Allah's Names and Attributes to be figurative/abstract and not literal
- d) The Hereafter
- e) Methodology of deriving evidences from texts (giving precedence to human logic and reason over revelation)
- f) Caliphate and the Companions
- g) Actions of worship
- h) Extremism in regards to loving the Prophet Muhammad
- i) Ahadithul Ahaad (Singular narrations)
- j) Extremism in worship
- k) Al Asmaa Wal Ahkaam (Islamic Terminologies and their related rulings)

Is it important to learn about the different ideologies and Islamic sects that emerged and left the main body of Muslims?

Yes, certainly. To protect ourselves, our families, and our communities. To clarify to others the falsehood regarding their innovated beliefs, sayings, and acts of worship, with proofs and evidences. While explaining and clarifying the extremes that these newly emerging sects fell into, and how the main body of Muslims is against extremism. While inviting people to return to the understanding of the main body of Muslims.

Who is this ‘main body of Muslims’, the ‘Jamaa’ah’, ‘Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaa’ah’? What are their traits, characteristics, with what etiquettes and manners can they be recognized and identified?

The word ‘Ahlu’ means people, family. The word ‘Sunnah’ according to the scholars of Aqeedah means: all Muslims who consider the four caliphs in their rightly order: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali. It also means the opposite of ‘bidah’ innovations. ‘wal Jamaa’ah’ means the main body or congregation of Muslims.



Anyone who affirms the caliphs in previously mentioned order are considered Sunni Muslims. Anyone who denies that order or changes this order of the four caliphs are considered Shia Muslims. Everyone from Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaa’ah is a Sunni Muslim, however not every Sunni Muslim is from Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaa’ah in the specific usage. Many Sunni Muslims (who established the correct order of the four caliphs) strayed away from the main body of Muslims, introduced new ideologies, beliefs, and practices that were foreign to the pure Islam of the main body of Muslims during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Some of these Sunni sects denied the reality of Allah’s Names and Attributes and interpreted them to be only figurative

or abstract. Many Sunni Muslims left the main congregation of Muslims and went on their own with newly invented and innovated beliefs and practices that their leaders invented for them. Such as the Asha'irah, Mu'tazilah, Khawarij, Murji'ah, Jahmiyyah, the different sects of the Soofiyyah, Berwayliyyah, Naqshabundiyyah, Tijaaniyyah, and other Sunni sects as well.

The phrase Ahl as-Sunnah may be used:

1) To describe all sects that oppose the Raafidah Shia, in a general sense. This description is similar in meaning to a 'Sunni Muslim.' (This usage was more popular in the earlier generations).

2) In contrast to the people of bid'ah (innovation). In this case, what is meant is the people of the Sunnah in the True sense; that only includes those who adhere to sound belief, of the "main body of Muslims" and "what the Prophet was upon and his companions" namely the Salafus Salih and Ahlul-Hadith. In this case, the phrase does not include those who have adopted the creed and beliefs that emerged after the Prophet Muhammad such as that of the Qadariyyah, Khawarij, Shia, the Murji'ah, Jahmiyyah, Mu'tazilah, the Ash'aris, the Maturidee, the Soofies or others who mix their theological rhetoric and philosophies (ilm al-kalaam) with innovated principles, new beliefs, intellectual reasoning, because they differ with Ahl as-Sunnah regarding many fundamental principles and issues. They added on to the deen of Islam-beliefs, actions, and statements that are foreign to it. This is the more specific meaning.²

² Refer back to "Explanation of the Lamiyyah Poem of Sheikul Islam ibn Taymiyyah" by Dr. Faruq Post

What are the traits, characteristics, behavior, manners, and etiquette of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaa'ah?

1. They take their Islam (creed, behaviors, legislations) from Quran and Sunnah, not giving anything precedence over them.
2. They always refer the 'Mutashabih' (ambiguous texts) back to the 'Muhkam' (decisive/clear) texts.
3. They attach great importance to memorizing the Quran, its proper recitation, understanding and implementation. While attaching great importance to the Sunnah and distinguishing between the authentic narrations and the weak/fabricated ones.
4. They enter into Islam completely, they don't pick and choose when it suits their own personal desires.
5. They avoid all innovations (beliefs, actions, statements, behaviors, appearances)
6. They follow the guidance of the Prophet and His Companions. They follow the truth (revelation) no matter where or who it comes from. They are not bigoted to anyone or anything except Allah and His Messenger.
7. They adhere to the moderate/middle path between the sects that went overboard and to extremes, and between those who feel short and were negligent. (in beliefs, actions, statements)
8. They strive to unite all Muslims upon the truth, to unify their ranks upon the proper understanding and implementation of the Shahdatain, and seek to eliminate all avenues that lead to differing and splitting.
9. They enjoin the good and forbid the evil
10. They have 'adl' (justice) and 'insaaf' (fairness)
11. They have uniformity in understanding the deen.
12. They possess kindness, gentleness and mercy with all people
13. They are concerned with the affairs of the Muslims, aiding them, fulfilling their rights, preventing harm from them.

Is it important and/or obligatory that one labels oneself with a particular name to distinguish him/herself from other Muslims?

What is important and obligatory as a Muslim is that one treads upon the path of the Prophet and His companions in beliefs, actions, statements, manners, etiquette, and behavior. Generally one should call oneself 'Muslim'. However, If the situation, place, or circumstance calls for a Muslim to distinguish himself from the other incorrect Islamic beliefs,

ideologies, methodologies; then there is no problem with saying “I am Salafi, I am Athari, I am Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaa’ah”, I am from the main body of Muslims, or I’m from the Jamaa’ah.

However, one must keep in mind that names and labels are NOT always proofs and evidences of one’s true reality. As many people label themselves with names that they actually contradict the creed, etiquette, behavior, manners, actions, and statements of what they’re ascribing to.

What is important is what you believe, how you act upon that belief, and what you say; not what you label yourself.

May Allah enable us to adhere to the methodology of the main body of Muslims-the Jamaa’ah, the creed, understanding, and implementation of Islam as understood by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

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**IMACD
PO BOX 4152
HAGERSTOWN MD 21741
WWW.IMACD.ORG
240-347-3774**