

Five Pillars of Islam:

<u>Shahadah</u>	Salaat	Zakat	Sawm	Hajj
Declaration	Prayer	Giving	Fasting	Pilgrimage

The first pillar **Shahadah** makes a distinction between what is God and what is other than God. The first pillar is the declaration of a Muslim which must be made with heart and conviction. It combines right doctrine (orthodoxy) with right practice (orthopraxy). Why the first pillar? All other beliefs follow on.

Ashhadu allaa ilaaha illallaahu, wa ashhadu anna Muhammadur Rasulullah which means I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Mohammed is His servant and Messenger.

God is one and has no associates, partners or offspring. Furthermore, God cannot be compared with anything else.

God is the creator and mover: God brings everything about and makes it happen.

La ilaha illa Allah: there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone.

It is a very serious belief and an unforgivable sin to add to Allah:

Allah forgives not joining other gods with Him but He forgives whom He pleases lesser sins than this. He who joins other gods with Allah has strayed far, far away. *Qur'an 4:16*

Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him Paradise and Hell Fire will be his abode. There will, for the wrongdoers, be no help. *Qur'an 5:72*

One thing prevented then is worship using images, in case these images should be adding to God.

Then, Islam proclaims that to sincerely state that there is no God but Allah and that he is one is, providing no major sins are committed, sufficient to get to heaven. They will be saved on the Day of Judgement.

There is the second part. Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Muhammad did not write the Qur'an himself. Indeed, Muslim tradition claims he was illiterate. The Qur'an from God was delivered to Muhammad by the Angel Gibreel word for word, and Muhammad delivered it word for word to friends and associates, who recorded it. The Qur'an was only put together as a book after his death, through the work of the Caliph Uthman and scholars so that one book was sent out to all parts of the growing Islamic world.

Therefore, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is purely human. He may be special, but he is not and never can be, part of the godhead. However, Muslims are required to obey the Prophet (pbuh) without hesitation and follow his example. The biography of Muhammad (pbuh) is extensive and down the ages scholars have declared what is likely to have come from Muhammad (pbuh) and what has not come from him.

Muslims must respect Muhammad (pbuh). They do this (and others can) by adding certain words or indications of these words after giving his name or referring to his status as a prophet: Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam "Peace be upon him" or pbuh. This is in fact more than respect, but to continually ask Allah to bless Muhammad (pbuh), to give him true peace. Note: this is asked of Allah, never is Allah worshipped through Muhammad.

The need to remind about the unity of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh)...

The word for man in the Qur'an is insan, and this is related in meaning to the word nisyan, or forgetfulness. Life is about remembering, even education is about remembering. Education asks: what have we remembered when we have forgotten? It is as if we are born having forgotten, especially if at conception we met God the Creator. We then remember. Thus it is important that the Shahadah is recited. Participation in religion and its repetitive nature remind the believer of the Shahadah.

The **Shahadah** is...

- First words whispered into the ears of a newly born baby by its father
- Recited many times in the prayer ritual
- Announced five times a day from the minaret of a mosque during the Adhan (call to prayer)
- Said when going to sleep
- Said when waking up
- Those who know death is upon them will try to make these words their last.

The unbeliever is a kafir, which comes from covering, and implies darkness. Such a person is not remembering and is not being reminded. The unbeliever is not incapable of belief but has refused belief, a deliberate act rather than something difficult. It is not Islam - submission. Nature in its order also follows its submission to the One God, but man can know and therefore becomes capable of refusal.

So to say the Shahadah is an act of submission, and ends refusal. For Muslims the Shahadah also proclaims the faith of Isa (Jesus), Musa (Moses) and Ibrahim (Abraham) (peace be upon them) whose messages were corrupted and for whom Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) became the Seal of the Prophets (last prophet). So that God's message is not corrupted, he gave the Book which is perfect and incorruptible.