136549 - The wisdom behind performing prayer in the well-known manner

the question

I have one doubt, for which I cannot find anappropriate answer. Why do we pray in this manner, with the takbeer, prostration and standing? Is it not sufficient for us to sit and recite Qur'an, and call upon Allah in supplication (du'aa') instead of that? Why is it done in this manner and in this way?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

You should understand – may Allah guide you – that the foundation of our religion is the obligation to hear and obey, and not to think that we can suggest alternatives to what Allah has prescribed, just as we trust the word of the doctor and do not object to it; rather we hear and obey, and if he says take this medicine after dinner, we do not say, Why not before dinner?

Or if the doctor says, Take seven drops, we do not say: Why not five drops? Rather we listen to what the doctor says, even if it involves putting up with the bitter taste of the medicine, or the high cost of treatment, and so on, despite the fact that he is a human being and does not possess the power to heal, and he may be right or wrong, and he may get it wrong more often than he gets it right.

What is required of us is that our submission to Islamic teachings should be greater than that, for they are revealed from One Who is most wise, most praiseworthy, all-knowing and all-aware, and "He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned" [al-Anbiya' 21:23].

Faith cannot be sound without complete submission to Allah and His Messenger. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning).

“But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission”

[an-Nisa’ 4:65]

“The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, ‘We hear and we obey.’ And those are the successful”

[an-Noor 24:51]

“The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], ‘We make no distinction between any of His messengers.’ And they say, ‘We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination’”

[al-Baqarah 2:285].

As-Sa‘di said:

This response on the part of the believers includes everything that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) brought, namely the Qur’an and Sunnah, and they listened to him with acceptance and submission. End quote.

Whoever reflects upon these verses will realize that the religion is based on acceptance, humility and submission to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. How can he not submit to Him, may He be glorified, in all things and in all his affairs, both religious and worldly, when he believes in Him as his Lord, Creator, Guide, Provider and Controller?

How can he not submit to His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when he believes in him as his Prophet who was sent by his Lord?

If a person follows this path of questioning, it is not far-fetched to assume that it will ultimately lead him to heresy, because you are saying: Why can’t the prayer be simply reciting Qur’an and offering supplication? Then someone else will come and say: What is the reason for offering

supplication; isn't the Qur'an enough? Then a third person will come along and say: Why pray at all? Isn't it sufficient to say Laa ilaaha illa Allah (there is no god but Allah)? And you could say something similar with regard to zakaah, fasting, Hajj and all the other rulings of Islam, and the ultimate outcome would be rejection of the rulings of Islam, and heresy.

Thirdly:

Prayer has been enjoined in this manner, which is the best and most perfect possible manner, so as to attain true servitude to Allah and humility before Him, and to know the pleasure of conversing with Him. So the individual faces towards the qiblah, and stands with humility before Allah, with his head lowered, then he bows to Allah in humility, then he shows even more humility to Allah by prostrating.

Look at a detailed description of how the prayer is done, from the takbeer to the tasleem [that is, from beginning to end], and reflect upon the actions and words, given by Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) in his book as-Salaah.

We ask Allah, may He be exalted, to guide us and to make prayer a source of comfort for us.

And Allah knows best.