

# Ramadan

## Muslim leaders recommended the following for this month:

Renewal of intention for fasting, awake for sahoor, pray Fajr sunnah, pray Fajr, pray Zuhr sunnah x4, pray Zuhr, pray Zuhr sunnah x2, make morning Dhikr, pray Nafl/makeup prayer or tahajud, pray Asr, pray Maghrib, pray Maghrib sunnah, pray Isha, pray Isha sunnah x2, pray Witr, make evening Dhikr, give sadaqah, feed a fasting person, pray taraweeh, read Quran, visit a Muslim brother or sister, attend a circle, protect your tongue from ill speech, fast, pray at the masjid, make Dua, minimize telephone use, cook simply while listening to Quran tapes, limit Iftar parties in favor of giving food to needy, reduce internet and computer use, do charity, reduce sleeping hours.

AA

The celebrations of Ramadan are famous for the joy of bringing family and friends closer together. Serious seekers after Allah trust the rituals of Ramadan will bring them closer to God as well. Some may actually become discouraged at their lack of consistency throughout the year, and wonder if they will ever be good enough to achieve paradise. And some may wonder how, in a world full of religions which claim to be the only way, they can sure they are on the right path? Will they ever be able to do enough good deeds to balance their sins in Allah's sight? Will he be pleased with them and let them into paradise? Consider this:

**To those weary of rituals:** To the tired, humble and weary, the "poor in spirit", Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Injil, Matthew 11:28-30

**To those who enjoy the rituals, and those who sincerely seek Allah:** It is great that you have many good deeds – the world should be full of them! Let's consider the lesson of the first man, *Prophet Adam*. He did many good deeds, and spoke with Allah daily. Yet after he and Eve willingly disobeyed, they were punished and thrown out of paradise. So we see that Allah likes us to do good; but he is perfect, and in his eyes good deeds do not make up for sins, which must be punished. If Allah judged and punished his beloved first person, he will judge and punish us! For example, if someone drives a car perfectly for twenty years he will not receive a reward for it; and it will not make up for having to pay for a ticket if he subsequently goes through a red light.

Well, does this mean that we can have no assurance of our salvation, regardless of how good our deeds? What does Allah expect? Allah is merciful and just, and he never changes. If there is one God, he has one way. He showed the early prophets his way, and we can learn from what he taught them in the Taurat: *Prophet Noah* followed Allah's way and was saved from the flood; but not those around him who sincerely followed other ways. Allah is serious about his way!

In the life of *Prophet Abraham* we see more of Allah's way. Allah asks Abraham for a sacrifice, Abraham's own son! However, Allah sent an animal to die in the son's place. Abraham and his son could have refused the substitute, but they accepted Allah's way of sacrifice.

Then *Prophet Moses* brought Allah's laws, called a "Covenant", to the Jews. No one could keep them perfectly, so Allah included a system of animal sacrifices for their sins; again showing that he accepts substitution. He also told the people that if they broke the Covenant by worshipping idols (*shirk*), they would lose their country and become slaves – which happened!

After this, Allah sent other prophets, like *Prophet Isaiah*. These prophets foretold a "New Covenant" which would be everlasting and for all peoples. The blood to seal this covenant would be from the "Lamb of God", who would also be known as "Mighty God" and "Everlasting Father". *Prophet Yahia* testified that Jesus was this "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

So Allah himself came to earth as Jesus, *Prophet Isa*, to die as the final sacrifice in substitution for sins. Our sins demand a penalty in Allah's sight, and since we are not good enough to pay it ourselves - he paid for us! He is the Creator, and thus the only one capable of fixing the problems of the world and its people. Now, we can humbly confess our sins, and by faith accept His sacrifice in substitution for our sins. We then have a new life which lives to please him, our good deeds done in thanksgiving for our sure salvation, which rests on his merits, not our own.