

**Original Title:** شرح العقيدة الواسطية  
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**Source:** [http://www.ibnothaimeen.com/all/books/cat\\_index\\_295.shtml](http://www.ibnothaimeen.com/all/books/cat_index_295.shtml)

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## In the Company of Allaah: Confirming that Allaah is with His Creation<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The topics of this translation were taken from Shaykh Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen's explanation of the famous book "Al-'Aqeedah Al-Waasitiyyah" by Ibn Taymiyyah. [Translator's Note]

Confirming that Allaah is with His Creation

## The First Verse

Ibn Taymiyyah writes in “Al-‘Aqeedah Al-Waasitiyyah”:

Allaah’s statement:

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا

يَلْبُغُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۖ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا

كُنْتُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ۝﴾

**It is He Who created the heavens and earth in six days, then He rose over the throne. He knows what goes into the earth and what comes out of it, what descends from the sky and what ascends therein. And He is with you wherever you are. And Allaah sees what you do.**

[Soorah Al-Hadeed, 57:4]

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*Ibn Al-‘Uthaymeen explains:*

The author (Ibn Taymiyyah) begins by mentioning the evidence of المَعِيَّة – the “Ma’iyyah” or “withness”, meaning the concept of Allaah (تَعَالَى) being with His creation. And it makes sense that he’d mention it immediately after writing about the concept of Allaah being high above creation because it may seem to someone there’s a contradiction between Allaah being above everything and His being with His worshippers. So, it’s very appropriate to cite the verses of Allaah being with His creation right after those of His being high above. And regarding Allaah being with His creation, there are several topics...

## Topic 1

# The Categories of Allaah Being with His Creation

The concept of Allaah being with His creation is of two types: a general type and a specialized type. And the specialized type is further broken down into two categories: specific to particular characteristics and specific to particular individuals.

### *The General Type*

As for the general type of Allaah being with His creation, it includes everyone from the believer to the disbeliever, the righteous and the wicked. A proof and example for this type is the verse of Allaah (تَعَالَى):

﴿ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ﴾

**And He is with you wherever you are.**

[Soorah Al-Hadeed, 57:4]

### *The Specialized Type*

As for the specialized type that's specific to particular characteristics, an example is Allaah's statement:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ ﴾

**Certainly, Allaah is with those conscientious and fearful (of Him) and those who are good-doers.**

[Soorah An-Nahl, 16:128]

And as for the specialized type that's specific to particular individuals, an example is His statement about His prophet:

﴿ فَقَدَ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ

لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تُحْزَنَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا ﴾

**Allaah surely helped him (Prophet Muhammad) when those who disbelieved had driven him out as one of two (he and his companion, Abu Bakr) and when they were both in the cave and he said to his companion, “Don’t grieve, Allaah is certainly with us.”**

[Soorah At-Tawbah, 9:40]

And He said to Moosaa and Haaroon (Prophet Moses and his brother, Aaron):

﴿ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى ﴾

**I am certainly with you both; I hear and see.**

[Soorah TaaHaa, 20:46]

And this category (specific to particular individuals) is even more specialized than specific to certain characteristics.

So, the concept of Allaah being with His creatures is of varying levels: a general type, specific to certain people, and specific to certain characteristics. The most special and exclusive type is that which is specific to certain people, then certain characteristics, and then the general type.

The general type includes Allaah encompassing the creation with His knowledge, capability with them, His hearing and seeing, His control over them, and other meanings of lordship. And in addition to those things, the specific type with both its categories also includes Allaah’s support and assistance.

## Topic 2

# Is It Actual or Metaphorical?

Is the concept of Allaah being with His creation actual or metaphorical, meaning only the knowledge of Allaah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), His hearing and seeing, capability, control, and other aspects of His lordship?

Most of the *Salaf* (the righteous predecessors, respectable scholars) used to say that Allaah being with the creation means by His knowledge, hearing, sight, power and similar qualities. So, they understood His statement, ﴿**And He is with you**﴾ to mean He knows everything about you, hears your statements, sees your actions, He's in control over you, judging between you, etc. In other words, they explained it in terms of the qualities it necessitates or includes.

However, the famous scholar of Islaam, Ibn Taymiyyah, in this book and others, chose to accept this concept (of Allaah being with His creation) upon its actual, real meaning in that He's actually with us in a real way. But this concept of His being "with" creation is in no way like a person's being "with" another person in that it's possible for them to be together, occupying the same place. This is because even though the idea of Allaah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) being with His creation is confirmed, He's still high above the creation (also confirmed); He is with us, yet still high on His throne above everything. And under no circumstances is He with us occupying the same places as we are.

Based on this, it must be understood also in accordance with the concept of Allaah being above. The author (Ibn Taymiyyah) has even devoted a separate section dealing with this – that there's not contradiction in combining between Allaah being with his creation and high above it – the explanation of which will come soon if Allaah wills. There's no contradiction between the two because there's nothing like Allaah in all of his qualities and characteristics. He's high above in His nearness, and He's close in his highness.

Ibn Taymiyyah illustrated an example of this with the moon; he said people often say, "We continued to travel while the moon was with us (all night long)." All the while, the moon is in the sky and it's one of the smallest (universal) creations of Allaah. So, why couldn't the Creator (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) be with His creatures when they are nothing compared to Him and still be above the heavens?

And in what he says is a refutation of the people who deny that Allaah can be named with actual names or described with real characteristics – it's a refutation of what they accuse the people of the Sunnah of doing. They say, "You people say you forbid baseless changing of the meanings of Allaah's characteristics, yet you do this very thing with regards to Allaah being with His creation! You say it's figurative and really means His knowledge, hearing, sight, power, control, and other things."

So, we say that Allaah's being with His creation is real in an actual way, but it's not understood as some people who twist and change the meanings understand it in that He's with people everywhere, in all places. And as for some of the Salaf explaining it to mean knowledge and other qualities, this is an explanation in terms of what it necessitates and includes.

### Topic 3

## Is It a Personal Characteristic or One of Action?

Is the concept of Allaah being with His creation a personal characteristic or one of His attributes of action?<sup>2</sup> There are some specific details relating to this.

As for the general type of Allaah being with the creation, it's a permanent, personal attribute because He always has and always will encompass the creation by His knowledge, power, control and other qualities of lordship.

And as for the specialized type, it's an attribute of action because it happens only in accordance with His will and decision. Any attribute or characteristic connected with a particular reason or cause, it's one of Allaah's attributes of action. For example, we've already talked about His being pleased or satisfied with someone as one of His action attributes because it's connected to a certain reason; if that reason or trait is there (in a person), Allaah's pleased with him. Similarly is the concept of Allaah being with people; if a person conscientiously fears Allaah or has other associated traits, Allaah's with him.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen is referring here to the two types of confirmed attributes of Allaah: *Thaatiyyah* ذَاتِيَّةٌ "personal" characteristics and *Fi'liyyah* فِعْلِيَّةٌ or "action" characteristics. Personal attributes are Allaah's permanent characteristics that He's always been described with and always will be such as His hearing and sight.

Action attributes are those that are in accordance with Allaah's will: if He wants, He does them otherwise He doesn't. Examples of this type are His rising over the throne or His approaching towards the creation on the Day of Judgment. (Taken from Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen's notes on "Luma'h Al-'Itiqaad") [T.N.]

#### Topic 4

### So, Is the Concept Actual or Not?

We've mentioned that some of the Salaf explained it only in terms of what it includes, and it's as if people consider this to be the only legitimate explanation. But some of them also said it's taken to be a real, actual concept but understood in a manner that befits Allaah, specific to Him alone. And the latter is the explicit position of Ibn Taymiyyah in this book and others. However, it should be preserved from any incorrect assumptions such as assuming Allaah is with us on earth or similar false ideas, because this is incorrect and ridiculous.

## Topic 5

# Does It Contradict Allaah Being above His Creation?

Does the fact that Allaah is with his creation in any way contradict Him being above it? There's no contradiction, and this is based on three different perspectives.

1. Allaah Himself combines between the two in how He describes Himself. If they were contradictory, He wouldn't have described Himself with both.
2. There's no real contradiction or incompatibility between something being above and yet with something else initially. It's possible for something to be high above yet still with you. An example is the common phrase of the Arabs, "The moon was with us as we traveled" or "The sun was with us as we traveled" or "The North Star remained with us as we traveled." They say this while the moon, sun, and the star are all in the sky. So, if it's possible to combine between something being high and still being with the creation, then such a combination with regards to the Creator is even more so.

If a person such as a commander was stationed on a high mountain and says to his soldiers, "Advance to a certain place far beyond the battlefield, I'm with you," there's no contradiction. He says this while he's watching them from behind binoculars far away, yet he's still considered "with" them because he sees them as if they're right in front of him. So, this concept is completely possible with respect to the creation, so why couldn't it be possible with respect to the Creator?

3. Even if the two were impossible and contradictory with regards to the creation, it doesn't necessarily mean it's impossible for the Creator because Allaah is greater and exalted. The Creator's characteristics and qualities are not to be measured in accordance with those of the creation due to the huge distinction between the Creator and creation.

The Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) used to say when traveling:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ الصَّاحِبُ فِي السَّفَرِ وَالْخَلِيفَةُ فِي الْأَهْلِ

“Oh Allaah, You’re the companion during the journey and the protector among the family (left behind).”<sup>3</sup>

He combined between Allaah being a companion with him and at the same time a protector among his family while this would be impossible with respect to the creation. It’s impossible for a person to accompany you on a journey and at the same time remain behind with your family to protect and look after them.

It’s also reported in an authentic Hadeeth<sup>4</sup> that when someone recites Soorah Al-Faatihah during prayer, saying:

﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

**All praise and thanks are for Allaah.**

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:1]

Allaah responds saying:

حَمِدَنِي عَبْدِي

“My servant has praised Me.”

How many countless people recite this in their prayers at a time? And how many people recite this particular verse while others recite:

﴿ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴾

**You alone we worship, and from Your alone we seek help.**

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:4]

To each and every one of them, Allaah responds. Whoever recites, ﴿All praise and thanks are for Allaah﴾ He replies, “My servant has praised Me,” and when another recites, ﴿You alone we

<sup>3</sup> Recorded by Muslim (no. 1342), At-Tirmitheh (no. 3438), An-Nasaaee (no. 5501), Abu Daawood (no. 2598), and others.

<sup>4</sup> Recorded by Muslim (no. 395).

**worship, and from Your alone we seek help** ﴿﴾ He replies, “This is (a mutual agreement) between Myself and My worshipper.”

Therefore, it’s very possible for Allaah to actually be with us in a real manner (that befits Him) while at the same time actually high on His throne above the sky in a real manner. No one should assume the two are contradictory except someone who considers Allaah to be just like His creation and His concept of being with someone just like the creation is with others of creation.

We’ve clarified the possibility of combining between the texts confirming Allaah is high above and the texts of Him being with creation. So, either it’s clear or if not, a worshipper should still at least say, “I believe in Allaah and His messenger, and I believe as truth what Allaah says of Himself and what His messenger says of Him.” He shouldn’t be of the position: “How’s that possible? That’s unreasonable, makes no sense.”

If someone asks, “How’s this possible?” We reply by telling him his asking about “how” in itself is a religious innovation. The companions (of Allaah’s messenger) didn’t ask about it and yet they were better than you. Their responsibility for knowing was greater than yours. They were more trustworthy and more sincere. You should instead believe and trust (the texts) and shouldn’t focus solely on how and why but should submit with complete, sincere submission.

#### *A Note about the Verse*

When we consider the verse (initially mentioned by Ibn Taymiyyah):

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي

الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۚ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا

تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿﴾

**It is He Who created the heavens and earth in six days, then He rose over the throne. He knows what goes into the earth and what comes out of it, what descends from the sky and what ascends therein. And He is with you wherever you are. And Allaah sees what you do.**

[Soorah Al-Hadeed, 57:4]

We see that every pronoun refers to Allaah. **«He created the heavens and earth in six days, then He rose over the throne. He knows what goes into the earth.»** Similarly, **«He is with you.»** We should accept this great verse based on its apparent meaning. And we should know for certain that this concept of Allaah being with us doesn't mean He's with us on earth. Rather, He's with us while being high above on the throne – this is the understanding of His “withness”. If we believe and accept this, we should try to remain in a constant state of awe, respect, and fear of Allaah. For this, it's been reported in a Hadeeth, “The best form of belief is to know that Allaah is with you wherever you are.”<sup>5</sup>

As for people who believe in Allaah's incarnation or His being “within” creation, they say that Allaah is physically and personally with us, occupying the same places as we do. (Based on this deviant idea,) if you're in the mosque, He's with you in the mosque. Those people in the market, Allaah is with them in the market! And those people in the restrooms, Allaah's with them in the restroom! They don't even have the decency to exalt Him above being in foul places of filth and places of amusement and obscenity.

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<sup>5</sup> Recorded by Abu Na'eem (vol. 6, 124) and Al-Haythumee in “Al-Mujamma” (vol. 1, 60). However, Al-Albaanee said it's a weak narration in “Al-Silsilah Adh-Dha'eefah” (no. 1002). [T.N.]

## Topic 6

# The Error of Those Who Say Allaah is Physically with Us in the Same Places

These people say that such an understanding is based on the apparent meaning of the verse, ﴿He is with you﴾ because every pronoun used (“He created,” “He rose over,” “He knows, “He is with you”) refers back to Allaah. So, if He’s in fact with us, the only way to understand this is that He’s physically in unison with us, among us in the same place!

They’re refuted in several ways:

1. The verse’s apparent meaning is not like you say. If it were, then in that case there would in fact be a contradiction in the verse in that Allaah is high above on the throne and at the same time physically and personally with every human being in every place! And it’s not possible for the speech of Allaah (تَعَالَى) to contain any contradiction.
2. Your statement, “The only way to understand this is that He’s physically in unison with us, among us in the same place,” is completely wrong. The word, الْمَعِيَّة – “Ma’iyyah” or “withness” in the Arabic language is simply a general, unconditional noun meaning companionship or accompaniment. It’s more comprehensive in meaning than you claim. It could indicate something in unison with something else – mixed with it, occupying the same place, and it could also generally mean two or more separate things in companionship or accompaniment even though their locations may differ. These are just three meanings:

An example of it meaning two things mixed or in unison: Saying, for example, “Pour me milk with water” – meaning, mixed with water.

An example of it meaning two separate things occupying the same place: Saying, for example, “I saw so-and-so with so-and-so, both walking together.”

An example of it meaning neither mixed in unison nor sharing the same place: Saying, “So-and-so is with his soldiers.” Even though he may physically be in a control room, he’s guiding them. In this way, there’s no mixing or sharing the same place.

It's even said, "That man's wife is still with him," even though she may physically be somewhere in the East and he in the West.

In short, the word, *المَعِيَّة* – "Ma'iyah" or "withness", as Ibn Taymiyyah says and as is known from the Arabic language, is a general word that indicates companionship or accompaniment. It's then understood within the context of what it's associated with. So, for example, when the verse says:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ ﴾

**Certainly, Allaah is with those conscientious and fearful and those who are good-doers.**

[Soorah An-Nahl, 16:128]

Then it doesn't mean He has merged with them or shares the same place as them. Instead, it's a sense of being with them that befits only Allaah and indicates His support and assistance to them.

3. We also say in refutation of those who allege that Allaah is physically incarnate within creation: You actually describe Allaah like this? It's one of the most wrong and extremely belittling descriptions you could give Allaah (*عَزَّ وَجَلَّ*). Allaah (*عَزَّ وَجَلَّ*) states this about Himself only as a way of praising (Himself and those He's with) that even though He's high on His throne, He's still with the creation even though they're lower than He is. So, by saying He's really on earth, this is belittling and dispraising Him.

By saying that Allaah is personally with you everywhere even when you go to the restroom, this is the greatest form of dispraise. You wouldn't even say to a king of this world, "You're always in the bathroom," so how could you say it about Allaah (*عَزَّ وَجَلَّ*)? Isn't this one of the greatest forms or criticism and dispraise?

4. This statement of yours means only one of two things, both completely wrong: either Allaah is one but made up of separate parts with a part in every place; or Allaah is numerous, a separate god in every place.

5. This statement of yours suggests that Allaah is incarnate within all creation; every place and everything of creation – Allaah (تَعَالَى) is embodied within it. This leads to the belief of incarnation.

So, you see this statement is incorrect and its meanings amount to disbelief. For this, it's our position that whoever knowingly believes and says that Allaah is with us on earth, he's not a believer. He should be asked to repent, the truth should be explained and clarified to him, or otherwise the authorities would have the right to carry out capital punishment against him.<sup>6</sup>

Again the verse (Ibn Taymiyyah first mentioned) is:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۗ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ﴾

**It is He Who created the heavens and earth in six days, then He rose over the throne. He knows what goes into the earth and what comes out of it, what descends from the sky and what ascends therein. And He is with you wherever you are. And Allaah sees what you do.**

[Soorah Al-Hadeed, 57:4]

And the evidence is, ﴿**He is with you wherever you are.**﴾ It's the general type of Allaah being with creation because it indicates that He encompasses them with knowledge, power, control, hearing, sight, and all other qualities of lordship.

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<sup>6</sup> Of course, this allowance is a decision made and carried out only by the authorities and governments, not individuals. And all it's detailed conditions must be fulfilled. [T.N.]

Confirming that Allaah is with His Creation

## The Second Verse

﴿ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَىٰ ﴾

﴿ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيَّنَ مَا كَانُوا ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴾

﴿ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَىٰ ﴾

There is no secret counsel of three, but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor of less than that or more, but He is with them wherever they may be. Then on the Day of Resurrection, He will inform them of what they did. Certainly Allaah knows everything.

[Soorah Al-Mujaadilah, 58:7]

*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

﴿secret counsel﴾ here means any people conversing privately.

As for His statement, ﴿but He is their fourth﴾ He didn't say, "He is their third," because He's not one of them. And since He's not one of them, the following number is used. If they were considered the same, then the same number could be used. For example, look at His statement (تَعَالَى) about the Christians:

﴿ لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ ﴾

They have surely disbelieved – those who say Allaah is the third of three (the trinity).

[Soorah Al-Maaidah, 5:73]

They didn't say He is the third of two because He's one and the same as the other two, according to them. To them, each of the three is a god and since they're all the same as they claim, they said about Him, **«the third of three»**.

As for His statement, **«nor of five but he is their sixth»** He explicitly mentioned some odd numbers: three, five, but didn't mention even numbers. But they're also included in His general statement, **«nor of less than that»** meaning two, **«or more»** meaning sixth or more.

So, there's no two people talking quietly anywhere on earth except that Allaah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is with them.

This is also of the general type because it includes everyone: the believer, nonbeliever, righteous, and the wicked. It shows that He encompasses them in knowledge, power, hearing, sight, control, planning of affairs, and other qualities.

As for, **«Then on the Day of Resurrection, He will inform them of what they did»** it means that this type of being with them also includes recording what they do. When the Day of Resurrection comes, He will inform them of their actions. He'll tell them all about what they did and take them to account for it. The words **«inform them»** here suggests a reckoning. In other words, He'll make them account for what they did. If they were good believers (yet their actions bad), He will tell them:

سَتَرْتُهَا عَلَيْكَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَأَنَا أَعْفُوهَا الْيَوْمَ

I concealed them for you during the worldly life, and today I forgive them.<sup>7</sup>

Allaah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) statement, **«Certainly Allaah knows everything»** means He knows everything in existence and everything not existent, everything possible, inevitable, and impossible. Anything and everything – Allaah knows about it. And we've already talked in detail<sup>8</sup> about Allaah's characteristic of knowledge and that it encompasses everything: the inevitable, the impossible, everything minute and enormous, everything apparent and hidden.

<sup>7</sup> Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 2441) and Muslim (no. 2768).

<sup>8</sup> In a previous part of Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen's explanation of "Al-'Aqeedah Al-Waasitiyyah". [T.N.]

Confirming that Allaah is with His Creation

## The Third Verse

﴿لَا تَحْزَنَ إِنَّا اللَّهُ مَعَنَا﴾

“Don’t grieve, Allaah is certainly with us.”

[Soorah At-Tawbah, 9:40]

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

Here, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is speaking to Abu Bakr. Before to this, Allaah says:

﴿إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ

يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنَ إِنَّا اللَّهُ مَعَنَا﴾

**Even if you do not help him (Prophet Muhammad), Allaah surely helped him when those who disbelieved had driven him out as one of two (he and Abu Bakr) and when they were both in the cave and he said to his companion, “Don’t grieve, Allaah is certainly with us.”**

[Soorah At-Tawbah, 9:40]

First, Allaah helped them when he was expelled and driven out from his home: ﴿**when those who disbelieved had driven him out.**﴾

Second, He helped them when they stayed in the cave: ﴿**and when they were both in the cave.**﴾

Third, He helped them during their distress when the idol-worshippers stood right at the opening of their cave (searching for them): ﴿**and when he said to his companion, “Don’t grieve.”**﴾

These are three situations that Allaah (تَعَالَى) made it clear He helped his Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

The third time was when the idol-worshippers (who were pursuing them) stopped and stood right above them. Abu Bakr said, “Oh messenger of Allaah, if anyone of them just looked down at his feet, he’d see us!”<sup>9</sup> In other words, we’re in serious danger, just like the companions of Moosaa said to him when they reached the sea (while pursued by the Pharaoh):

﴿ إِنَّا لَمُدْرِكُونَ ﴾

“We’re surely defeated!”

[Soorah Ash-Shu’araa, 26:61]

Moosa responded by saying:

﴿ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴾

“No. My Lord is with me, He’ll guide me.”

[Soorah Ash-Shu’araa, 26:62]

And here, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said to Abu Bakr, ﴿Don’t grieve.﴾ He calmed and reassured him, making him feel safe and confirmed it with the statement, ﴿Allaah is certainly with us.﴾<sup>10</sup>

As for the meaning of ﴿Don’t grieve﴾ it means don’t worry about what happened or what’s going to happen; it includes (along with the present) the past and future.

And the word “grief” in Arabic indicates an inner pain of extreme concern or worry.

﴿Allaah is certainly with us.﴾ This is the specialize type of Allaah being with His creation, specific to particular individuals: the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and Abu Bakr. And along with the meanings of the general type, it also indicates Allaah’s support and assistance.

<sup>9</sup> Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 3653) and Muslim (no. 2381).

<sup>10</sup> In the Hadeeth of Al-Bukhaaree (no. 3653) and Muslim (no. 2381), the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said:

مَا ظَنُّكَ يَا أَبَا بَكْرٍ بَاتْنَيْنِ اللَّهُ تَالِثُهُمَا

“What do you think, Abu Bakr, of two, the third of whom is Allaah?”

For this, the Quraysh tribe stood right over the cave, yet still didn't see them. Allaah didn't allow them to see them.

As for what some people say that a spider came and made a web in front of the cave and a pigeon made a nest over it so that when the idol-worshippers saw a web and nest in front of the cave entrance, they realized no one could've come that way (or they would have broken the web, knocked down the nest), so they left – this story isn't true. Rather, the protection and support was divine, and the amazing sign is that the cave entrance was in fact wide open and clear; there were no natural obstructions. And still, they didn't see them inside – this is the miraculous part! As for a pigeon and spider coming along, this is way off and even conflicts with Abu Bakr's statement, "If anyone of them just looked down at his feet, he'd see us!"

The point is that some historians, may Allaah forgive them, come with all kinds of strange, irrational stories not accepted by the intellect and not support by any authentic narrations.

Confirming that Allaah is with His Creation

## The Fourth Verse

﴿إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى﴾

**I am certainly with you both; I hear and see.**

[Soorah At-TaaHaa, 20:46]

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

Here, Allaah is speaking to Prophet Moosaa (Moses) and Haaron (Aaron) when He instructed them to go to the Pharaoh, saying:

﴿أَذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٤٤﴾﴾ قَالَ رَبَّنَا

﴿إِنَّا خَافُ أَنْ يَفْرُطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنْ يَطْغَىٰ ﴿٤٥﴾﴾ قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَىٰ ﴿٤٦﴾﴾

**Go, both of you, to the Pharaoh. Indeed he has transgressed. And speak to him with gentle words, perhaps he may be reminded or fear (Allaah). They said, “Our Lord, surely we fear he will hasten (punishment) against us or transgress (even more).” (Allaah) said, “Both of you, do not be afraid. I am certainly with you both; I hear and see.”**

[Soorah TaaHaa, 20:43-46]

His statement, ﴿I hear and see﴾ shows that this specialized type of Allaah being with them includes his qualities of hearing and sight. And these qualities are special in that they also indicate Allaah’s support, assistance, and protection from the Pharaoh, about whom they said, ﴿Surely we fear he will hasten (punishment) against us or transgress.﴾

Confirming that Allaah is with His Creation

## The Fifth Verse

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ﴾

**Certainly, Allaah is with the righteous and those who are good-doers.**

[Soorah An-Nahl, 16:128]

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

This verse comes after Allaah says:

﴿وَأَصْبِرْ ۖ وَإِن عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ ۗ وَلَئِن صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَأَصْبِرْ

﴿وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۗ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ﴾

**And if you seek retribution, then seek it only in accordance with what you were afflicted. But if you endure patiently, it is better for the patient ones. So, be patient; your patience is only from Allaah. And do not grieve over them or be distressed with what they plot.**

[Soorah An-Nahl, 16:126-127]

Seeking retribution against a criminal must only be done in accordance with what the victim was afflicted with and this is a part of righteousness. Otherwise, anything more would be transgression and oppression. But forgiving is better, and because of this Allaah says, **﴿Certainly, Allaah is with the righteous and those who are good-doers.﴾**

And this type of Allaah being with His creation is the specialized type specific to particular characteristics: anyone who is righteous and does good, Allaah's with them.

This encourages within us, pertaining to moral conduct, the desire to do good and be conscientious and fearful of Allaah because everyone would like Allaah to be with them.

Confirming that Allaah is with His Creation

## The Sixth Verse

﴿وَأَصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾

**Be patient. Allaah is surely with the patient ones.**

[Soorah Al-Anfaal, 8:46]

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

We've mentioned before that "patience" means to prevent oneself from believing, doing, or saying something (disliked). One could be patience with doing acts of obedience to Allaah, patience with leaving sins, and patience in that one doesn't become displeased or angry with what Allaah decrees. So, patience can be with the tongue, heart, or limbs.

The best types of patience are to remain patient in obeying Allaah and then patience in not disobeying Him. This is because both these types are choices a person makes: if he wants, he does what he's asked otherwise he doesn't; and he either decides to leave a sin or not. The next and lowest level is patience with what Allaah decrees; it's going to happen whether you like it or not. So, you could either bear it with a dignified patience or just accept it and deal with it as animals do.

Patience is a noble quality that can't actually be realized except by something to be patient upon. Even for someone who has the earth spread out for him at will and people waiting on him, still he's bound to encounter some kind of physical or mental stress.

For this, Allaah combined the qualities of gratitude and patience in His Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

As for his gratitude (for the blessings Allaah gives), he used to stand in pray so much that his feet would become swollen, and when asked why, he replied:

أَفَلَا أَكُونُ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا؟

“Shouldn’t I be a thankful worshipper?”<sup>11</sup>

And as for his patience, he remained steadfast and patient with everything he was afflicted with. He was harmed by his own people and others like the Jews and by the hypocrites outwardly professing Islaam. Still, in face of all the harm he suffered, he remained patient.

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<sup>11</sup> Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 1130) and Muslim (no. 2819). The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said this as a reply when asked, “You do all this when Allaah has already forgiven your past and future sins?” [T.N.]

Confirming that Allaah is with His Creation

## The Seventh Verse

﴿ كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴾

**How often has a small group overcome a mighty host by Allaah's permission?**

**And Allaah is with the patient ones.**

[Soorah Al-Baqarah, 2:249]

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

﴿**How often**﴾ here is used more to inform rather than ask. In other words, a small group has overcome and defeated a larger, stronger group many times, or many smaller groups have overcome many larger ones, but not by their own strength and power. Instead, they only did so ﴿**by Allaah's permission**﴾ – by His decision and control.

An example was when Taaloot (King Saul) and his few people defeated their enemies (Goliath) when they were many.

Another example was when the Muslims of the Battle of Badr defeated the Quraysh Tribe when they were many.

The people of Badr went out not intending or expecting to fight but instead to intercept Abu Sufyaan's caravan (because Quraysh had expelled the Muslims, taken their homes and wealth). When Abu Sufyaan found out about this, he sent an announcement back to Mecca saying, "Save your caravan. Muhammad and his companions have come to take it." That caravan was transporting a lot of Quraysh's goods and materials. So, all of Quraysh came out: their nobles and leaders, their supporters, their horsemen, and the strong, arrogant among them. They marched out displaying their strength, superiority, their pride and confidence so much so that Abu Jahl said, "We won't return until we march to Badr and do three things: slaughter and eat our sheep (to celebrate victory) and drink wine, have our musicians play for us, and let all Arabs hear of what we did. Then they will forever be afraid of us!"

Thanks to Allaah, they only sang over his death – his and those with him.

That day, they (Quraysh) were between nine hundred and one thousand people. Every day they'd slaughter nine or ten camels just to feed their people. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his companions numbered only three hundred fourteen men. They had with them seventy camels and only two horses that the people would alternate riding. Despite that, they still defeated the major people of Quraysh, so many of their men that their bodies became bloated and began stinking because of the sun's heat. They were then thrown into one of the dirty wells of Badr.

So, as for the verse, **﴿How often has a small group overcome a mighty host by Allaah's permission? And Allaah is with the patient ones﴾** – the small groups referred to here were patient; they practiced all types of patience: patience in obeying Allaah, patience in not disobeying Him, and they remained patient and steadfast in face of what afflicted them of having to fight, fatigue, and the distress and hardship that comes with the pains of having to fight. But **﴿Allaah is with the patient ones.﴾**

That's the end of the verses proving that Allaah is with His creation. But the author (Ibn Taymiyyah) has also written a specific chapter going into more details about it.

## The Advantages of Allaah Being with Us

What are the virtues by which creation benefits when Allaah is with them?

First, knowing this strengthens our faith that Allaah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) encompasses everything. Even while He's high above, He's still with His creation. Nothing at all of their circumstances ever escapes Him.

Second, if we know this with certainty and believe firmly in it, a complete sense of companionship with Allaah and concern for Him is produced within us in that we'd strive to obey Him and avoid sinning against Him. He won't find us absent when He commands us and He won't find us present doing things He forbids us from. And this is one of the greatest advantages for whoever believes in this الْمَعِيَّة "Ma'iyyah" or "withness" – Allaah being with His creation.

## Combining between Allaah Being with Creation & Above Creation on His Throne

It's part of believing in Allaah to believe in everything Allaah informs of in His book, what's been reported from His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), and what the Salaf of this nation agreed upon in that Allaah (سُبْحَانَهُ) is above His heavens on His throne, high above His creation...

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

We've talked before that believing in Allaah and having faith in Him includes accepting and believing in all His names and characteristics. And from this is to believe in Allaah's attributes of being high above creation on His throne, as well as believing He is with His creation. In this section, the author (Ibn Taymiyyah) explains how to combine between these two beliefs: that Allaah is above His creation and also with them.

Here, he mentions three evidences confirming Allaah's highness: the Book (Quraan), the Sunnah (guidance of Prophet Muhammad), and the consensus (of the Salaf). And we've even mentioned before a fourth and fifth proof: the intellect and the natural, innate disposition that every person is created upon.

**"in that Allaah (سُبْحَانَهُ) is above His heavens on His throne, high above His creation" –**

We've mentioned before that the "highness" of Allaah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is of two types: a type of highness and exaltedness in characteristics and a personal highness. And the personal highness, just like the exaltedness in characteristics, is confirmed by the Book, Sunnah, consensus, the intellect, and by people's natural inclination.

As for the Book (the Quraan), it's full of verses, sometimes explicitly stating Allaah is above creation, sometimes mentioning His highness, sometimes that He's above the heavens, sometimes by stating that things descend from Him or rise up to Him, and similar contexts.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen doesn't mention the exact verses in detail here (as is his usual style) because there's already an entire chapter devoted to this issue in another part of his explanation of the book ("Al-'Aqeedah Al-Waasitiyyah"). [T.N.]

As for the Sunnah, many Hadeeth have come confirming Allaah is high above by way of the Prophet's explicit statements, his actions, and his acceptance (of others confirming this belief). These evidences were previously mentioned (in other places of Ibn Taymiyyah's book, "Al-'Aqeedah Al-Waasitiyyah").

As for the consensus among respectable scholars, the Salaf were in unanimous agreement that Allaah is high above creation. This is known because nothing has been reported from any of them that would indicate anything else that contradicts the Book and Sunnah. In other words, they've read the Quraan and reported the narrations (Hadeeth) knowing full well their meanings, yet since nothing has ever come from any of them opposing the texts' apparent meanings, it's known that these scholars didn't believe anything else but the apparent meanings; they were in unanimous agreement on this position. And this is really an excellent principle in determining the scholars' unanimous position on any issue (i.e. the lack of any reports that they believed anything but the texts' apparent meanings), so hold on to this principle and it'll help you with many issues.

As for the intellect, it confirms Allaah's highness from two perspectives: First, highness and exaltedness are characteristics of perfection and Allaah's attributes are all perfect. So, this particular characteristic is also confirmed for Him.

Second, if He weren't high above creation then it could be understood that He's either below or within it. But these could be considered deficient characteristics because that would mean some things are higher than Him or similar to Him. So, again the attributes of highness and exaltedness are confirmed for Him.

Finally, the natural inclination of people is that no one really denies that Allaah's high above creation except someone whose own disposition and natural beliefs have become distorted. For example, anyone who prays, "Oh God!" – his heart is naturally directed up towards the sky, not to the right or left. This is because it's understood that Allaah (تَعَالَى) is above the skies.

...and He (سُبْحَانَهُ) is also with them wherever they are; He knows what they're doing.

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

This is also included in believing in Allaah – accepting and believing that He’s with His creation. We mentioned that this concept is of two types: a general “withness” and a specialized type that’s further broken down into: specific to particular individuals and specific to particular qualities people may possess.

Just to review, the general type is the type that includes everyone: the believers, unbelievers, the righteous and the sinners. An example of this type is the verse:

﴿ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ﴾

**And He is with you wherever you are.**

[Soorah Al-Hadeed, 57:4]

And an example of the specialized type that’s specific to particular qualities:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ ﴾

**Certainly, Allaah is with those conscientious and fearful (of Him) and those who are good-doers.**

[Soorah An-Nahl, 16:128]

And some examples of the specialized type that’s specific to particular individuals are His statement to Moosaa and Haaron (Moses and Aaron):

﴿ قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى ﴾

(Allaah) **said, “Both of you, do not be afraid. I am certainly with you both; I hear and see.”**

[Soorah TaaHaa, 20:46]

And His statement about what His Messenger, Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا ﴾

**Allaah is certainly with us.”**

[Soorah At-Tawbah, 9:40]

We've also said that this concept of Allaah being with His creation is real and actual, and that the general type includes Allaah's characteristics of knowledge, hearing, sight, power, control, etc. And the specialized type includes all those as well as His support and assistance.

He (Allaah) combined between them when He says:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا

يَلْبُغُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۖ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا

كُنْتُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ﴾

**It is He Who created the heavens and earth in six days, then He rose over the throne. He knows what goes into the earth and what comes out of it, what descends from the sky and what ascends therein. And He is with you wherever you are. And Allaah sees what you do.**

[Soorah Al-Hadeed, 57:4]

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

When Ibn Taymiyyah says, “**He combines between them,**” he's referring to the attributes of Allaah being high above and His being with creation. ﴿**then He rose over the throne**﴾ in the verse proves His highness, and ﴿**And He is with you wherever you are**﴾ proves He's with the creation. Allaah Himself combines between the two in a single verse, and there's no contradiction between them as we've said and we'll clarify further.

We can understand the combination between them both from three different perspectives:

1. Allaah Himself mentions that He's established on the throne, then said in the same verse, **﴿And He is with you wherever you are﴾** So, if Allaah describes Himself with both characteristics, we should know with certainty there's no contradiction between the two. If one contradicted the other, then it'd be impossible to combine between both descriptions – if one existed, the other would have to end. If there was a contradiction, that would also mean that the first part of the verse opposes the latter part, or vice versa.
2. The idea of something being above and still with something is possible even for created beings as the author will soon mention about the familiar (Arabic) phrase, "We didn't stop travelling even when the moon was with us."
3. Even if the two concepts did contradict one another with respect to created beings, that doesn't necessarily mean it's the same case for the Creator, because nothing is similar or comparable to Allaah.

And the meaning of **﴿And He is with you﴾** is not that He's merged within creation.

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

The author clarifies this, because this would be a description of deficiency. And we've already mentioned that if this were the case, that would mean only two things: either that the Creator is numerous (many gods), or that He's made up of separate parts. It would also mean that something actually contains and encompasses Him. Rather He encompasses everything.

Even the (Arabic) language doesn't necessarily mean that.

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

Meaning: If the language itself (the word "with" in Arabic) doesn't necessarily mean that (that Allaah is merged within creation), then it's not the one and only specified meaning. This is one proof used to refute the people who believe in incarnation like the Jahmiyyah (a famous misguided sect) and others – those who say Allaah is personally embodied within creation.

The author here didn't say, "Even the language doesn't mean that" because the word "with" in Arabic very well could mean merged or mixed, like saying, "Water with milk," to mean water mixed with milk.

And it goes against what this nation's Salaf were unanimously agreed on as well as against the natural inclination Allaah created people with.

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

People are born with the natural disposition that the Creator is separate from creation. No one naturally says, "Oh God," except that he considers Allaah (تَعَالَى) someone separate from His creation. A person doesn't have this inborn natural inclination to consider Allaah united within His creatures. So, claiming He's merged within creation is opposed by Islaamic legislation, the intellect, and people's natural inclination.

Rather, the moon is one of Allaah's signs and one of the smallest of His (universal) creations. It's placed in the sky, yet it's still considered to be with a traveler as well as a non-traveler wherever they are.

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

This is an example put forth by the author to show that the word "with" could correctly be used to describe something that's actually considered to be with people despite the great distance between them. The moon in the sky, one of the smallest of universal creations, is with the traveler and others wherever they are.

If this is the case with created things – even one of the smallest of (astral) creations – and we can say it's with us while still in the sky without meaning we merge together with it and with no contradiction, then why can't we accept the verses of Allaah being with creation upon their apparent meanings? Why can't we say He's actually with us even though He's above the sky, high above everything?

And like we've said, even if this were impossible regarding created beings, it doesn't mean it's impossible for the Creator. The Lord (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is actually high above the heavens, and He's actually

This is exactly what Ibn Taymiyyah confirms in his books, and he says there's no need to twist and change the verse. Instead, it's taken and understood on its apparent meaning, yet with our belief that Allaah (تَعَالَى) is high above the heavens on His throne. So, He's actually with us just as He's actually high on His throne. We say the same thing about His descent – He actually descends to the worldly sky (the lowest heaven) even though He's still high above. No people of the Sunnah have ever denied this; all of them have said that Allaah really descends, believing full well that He's still high above. The Creator's characteristics are not like those of creation.

I came across a statement in which the famous (contemporary) scholar, Muhammad Ibn Ibraaheem, explains this exact meaning – that the concept of Allaah being with His creation is real even though it doesn't mean He's merged within them or that He's on earth. He said this while answering a question about why some of the Salaf said, "Allaah's with them in knowledge":

"When this statement comes, it's an explanation of what the 'Ma'iyyah' or 'withness' necessitates, not what the word actually means. And those who take it or restrict it to just this, they only did so debating with the innovators who say, 'Allaah is personally merged within us.' So, some of the Salaf responded with what the word ('with') includes according to the context – the perfection of His knowledge. They didn't mean that the word 'with' itself means 'knows everything.' Rather, it includes the added quality of knowledge, so it increases in meaning, but the actual meaning is He is with the creation. So, explaining the concept with what it includes and necessitates (of qualities) doesn't mean that explanation is wrong – each has its own place...

For this, the famous scholar of Islaam (Ibn Taymiyyah) in his short yet beneficial book of *'Aqeedah* (belief) clarifies that when Allaah says He's with creation, He is really with them in an actual way. And when scholars explain it in terms of what it includes, then that's because the situation called for that. They did so to refute people who believe in incarnation like the Jahmiyyah who deny that Allaah is high above (anything). The Quraan could be explained by other verses, by apparent meanings, and by what it includes and necessitates of other meanings. As for the scholars from whom it's reported they explained the concept in terms of what it includes, it's not that they denied a real meaning of the 'Ma'iyyah' or 'withness', but instead, it was as clear to them as the sun."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from "Majmoo' Fatwaawaa wa Rasaail" of Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Ibraaheem (vol. 1, 212).

**Question:** Is it correct to say that Allaah is “personally” with us?

**Answer:** This particular wording should be avoided because it may suggest an incorrect meaning that the people of incarnation (saying, “Allaah is embodied within everything.”) may then use as evidence to support them. There’s really no need to add “personally” because anything (name, description, action) that Allaah associates with Himself, it’s already understood to personally refer to Him. For example, look at the verse:

﴿ وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ ﴾

**And your Lord will come...**

[Soorah Al-Fajr, 89:22]

Do we really need to say: He will “personally” come? And when the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) says:

يَنْزِلُ رَبُّنَا تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا

“Our Lord, blessed and most high, descends every night to the worldly sky...”<sup>14</sup>

Must we now say He “personally” descends? We don’t need to say that unless perhaps if we’re debating with those who claim that it’s Allaah’s “decision” that comes or His “decision” that descends. In that case, maybe it could be said to refute their twisted, distorted interpretations.

And He (سُبْحَانَهُ) is above the throne, watching over creation, in control of them, well-informed about them, and other qualities of His lordship.

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

**“And He (سُبْحَانَهُ) is above the throne”** – Meaning: Even though He’s with creation, He’s still above His throne.

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<sup>14</sup> Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 1145) and Muslim (no. 758).

**“watching over creation”** – Meaning: Guarding them and recording everything they do: their statements, actions, when they move and when they’re still.

**“in control of them”** – Meaning: Judging and ruling His servants. Any decision belongs to Him alone and all matters refer back to Him. And when He wants anything to happen, He only says, “Be!” and it is.

**“and other qualities of His lordship”** – Meaning: Anything that’s included in lordship like owning, control, arranging affairs, etc. Many meanings fall under lordship. Allaah is the owner, controller, arranger of all affairs and even these three things themselves include many other qualities.

And all of these statements Allaah mentions in that He’s above the throne and with us – they are actual characteristics in a real manner. There’s no need to twist and distort them with misinterpretations. Yet they are preserved from any false assumptions like assuming that the apparent meaning of ﴿in the sky﴾ (for example) is that the sky contains or overshadows Him. This is completely wrong according to the consensus of the people of knowledge and faith.

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

These statements reaffirm what was already mentioned because of the importance of the issue. So, he (Ibn Taymiyyah) repeats his clarification that what Allaah says of His being above the throne, it’s understood to be real in an actual manner. Similarly, what He says of being with us is also actual and real. There’s no reason to distort or misinterpret these characteristics. In other words, we don’t need to say that the description of Allaah being above creation is really just a figurative concept of His exaltedness as some people who twist and change meanings say. No, it is a personal characteristic of Allaah being high as well as a concept of His exaltedness. Likewise, there’s no need to interpret His characteristic of being with creation to mean anything other than its apparent meaning. We say it’s a real description in a real manner. And anyone who interprets it to mean anything but its apparent meaning is distorting the meaning. However, reports that explain the description in terms of what qualities it includes and necessitates were only reported from the Salaf because of particular circumstances that called for that. They don’t mean there’s no real and actual meaning of the description – whatever the truth includes and necessitates is also considered truth.

The author then defends (his position, the description of Allaah being with creation) by saying, **“Yet they are preserved from any false assumptions...”**

False assumptions here are any baseless theories or beliefs not supported by any correct evidence. The statement of Allaah (تَعَالَى) and His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) must be preserved from any of this.

**“like assuming that the apparent meaning of ﴿in the sky﴾ is that the sky contains or overshadows Him”** – “contains” here means encompasses or supports like a floor supports people on it, and “overshadows” means to be over and above like a roof is over people. If anyone supposes this, it’s a false assumption. The texts confirming this description to Allaah should be preserved from such baseless beliefs.

The author says, **“This is completely wrong according to the consensus of the people of knowledge and faith.”** Someone may think that the author should have said (right before this) that assuming the meaning of ﴿And He is with you﴾ to mean merged within creation is also a false assumption (like he gave an example of “in the sky”). But the author has already stated this exact thing before when he says, **“And the meaning of ﴿And He is with you﴾ is not that He’s merged within creation.”**

...because just the *Kursee* of Allaah encompasses and extends over the whole heavens and earth. And it’s He who steadies the heavens and earth so they aren’t removed from their places, and He keeps the sky from crushing the earth, except by His permission.

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*Ibn Al-Uthaymeen explains:*

The **“*Kursee*”**, as is reported from Ibn ‘Abbaas, is the place of the two feet.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Recorded by ‘Abdullaah Ibn Imaam Ahamd in “As-Sunnah” (586), Ibn Abee Shaybah in “Al-A’rsh” (61), Ibn Khuzaymah in “At-Tawheed” (248), and by Al-Haakim in “Al-Mustadrak” (vol. 2, 282) and he said it’s authentic according to the conditions of Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim even though they didn’t record it; Ath-Thahabee agreed with him. It’s also recorded by Ad-Daaruqutnee in “As-Sifaat” (36) with a chain that stops at Ibn ‘Abbaase. Al-Hathumee supported it in “Majma’ Az-Zawaaid” (vol. 6, 323) by At-Tabaree and said the narrators in the chain are trustworthy. Al-Albaanee said in “Mukhtasar Al-U’luww” (45), “Its chain is authentic and its narrators – all of them are trustworthy.”

His *Kurse* extends over the entire seven heavens and seven earths, so how could someone assume the same heaven contains or overshadows Him? If His *Kurse* alone encompasses the heavens and earth, no one should ever assume they surround Him – this is the false assumption.

**“And it’s He who steadies the heavens and earth so they aren’t removed from their places.”** And if He didn’t keep them steady, they would stagger in chaos and float away. But Allaah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) with His capability and power keeps the heavens and earth stable. He (تَعَالَى) says:

﴿وَلَيْنَ زَالَتَا إِنِّ أَمْسَكُهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِهِۦ﴾

**And if they were to move away from their places, there is no one that could grasp and stable them after Him.**

[Soorah Faatir, 35:41]

No one other than Allaah could ever grasp and steady them.

If even one star were to move from its place, no one would be able to stop and stabilize it, so what if the entire heavens and earth were to move? The only one who could stabilize them is Allaah, their Creator (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) who needs only to say, “Be” to a thing and it happens. The entire heavens and earth are in His hand.

The author says, **“and He keeps the sky from crushing the earth, except by His permission.”** The atmosphere surrounds the earth, and by Allaah, without Him maintaining it, it would crush the earth due to its enormous volume and pressure. He (تَعَالَى) says:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَّحْفُوظًا﴾

**And We have made the heaven as a protected (and protecting) ceiling.**

[Soorah Al-Anbiyaa, 21:32]

And:

﴿وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ﴾

**And the heaven We constructed with strength, and We are (its) expander.**

[Soorah Ath-Thaariyaat, 51:47]

So, if Allaah didn't preserve it, it would crush and destroy the earth. And the One who preserves the heavens and earth and prevents them from moving, and who prevents the sky from crushing the earth except by His permission – could anyone actually imagine the sky contains, supports, or overshadows Him? No one could actually imagine this.

﴿ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ تَقُومَ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ بِأَمْرِهِ ﴾

**And of His signs is that the heaven and earth remain by His command**

[Soorah Ar-Room, 30:25]

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

﴿**And of His signs**﴾ - Meaning: signs that indicate His perfection in every way.

﴿**that the heaven and earth remain by His command**﴾ - Meaning: His command here refers to His legislative command and His universal command. His command is based on wisdom, mercy, justice, and kindness. He also says:

﴿ وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ﴾

**But if the truth were to follow their inclinations, the heavens and earth and everything in them would have been ruined.**

[Soorah Al-Muminoon, 23:71]

Evil desires and inclinations could corrupt the heavens and earth and they oppose Allaah's legislative commands.

So, the heavens and earth remain only by Allaah's legislative and universal command. And if the truth were to follow and be based solely on the desires of the creation, the heavens and earth and everything in them would become corrupted. For this reason, regarding the verse:

﴿وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا﴾

**And do not cause corruption on earth after it's well-being is established.**

[Soorah Al-A'raaf, 7:56]

About this verse, scholars say it means: Don't cause corruption on it by sinning.

## Our Lord's Descent

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

يُنزِلُ رَبُّنَا تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا حِينَ يَبْقَى ثُلُثُ اللَّيْلِ الْآخِرِ  
يَقُولُ مَنْ يَدْعُونِي فَأَسْتَجِيبَ لَهُ مَنْ يَسْأَلُنِي فَأُعْطِيَهُ مَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُنِي فَأَغْفِرَ لَهُ

“Our Lord, the blessed and most high, descends every night to the sky of this world when the last third of the night remains. He asks, ‘Who is calling on Me so I can answer him? Who is asking Me for anything so I can give him? Who is asking for My forgiveness so I can forgive him?’”<sup>16</sup>

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*Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen explains:*

This Hadeeth is proof confirming the descent of Allaah to the lowest heaven – the sky of this world.

Some people of knowledge said this Hadeeth is one in which it has come in many different chains of narration. And the scholars have always agreed that it's one of those famous Hadeeth often mentioned by the scholars of the Sunnah.

He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) says, “**Our Lord descends every night to the sky of this world.**” His descent is real and actual because just as we've mentioned before: anything mentioned with a pronoun that refers back to Allaah, it's attributed to Him in a real, actual manner.

So, we should believe in it and accept it as truth, saying just as the Hadeeth says, “Our Lord descends to the sky of this world,” – the lowest heaven and closest to the earth. There are seven heavens, and He (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) only descends at this time during the night to be near His worshippers

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<sup>16</sup> Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 1145) and Muslim (no. 758).

As for **“every night,”** it’s general to include every single night of the year.

**“when the last third of the night remains”** In Islaamic legislation, the night begins at sunset – this is unanimously agreed upon. The difference (among scholars) however comes with regards to when the night ends: does it end with the appearance of first light or the actual rising of the sun? And apparently, the night according to Islaamic legislation ends with the appearance of first light, and the common, “astral” night ends with sunrise.

Allaah says, **“Who is calling on Me...”** This is a question yet really intended as an encouragement and motivation. It’s like His statement (in the Quraan):

﴿ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تَجْرِقٍ تُنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ ﴾

**Shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment?**

[Soorah As-Saff, 61:10]

**“calling on me,”** saying, “Oh Lord...”

**“so I can answer him”** – This is the result of doing the first part (calling on Allaah).

**“Who is asking Me for anything,”** like saying, “I ask You for Paradise,” or similar things.

**“Who is asking for My forgiveness,”** saying, “Oh Allaah, forgive me,” or “I seek Your forgiveness, Allaah.”

**“so I can forgive him”** – Forgiveness means to conceal one’s sins and overlook them.

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<sup>17</sup> The Hadeeth about this is recorded by Muslim (no. 1348); the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ أَنْ يُعْتِقَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ عَبْدًا مِنَ النَّارِ مِنْ يَوْمِ عَرَفَةَ وَإِنَّهُ لَيَدْنُو ثُمَّ يُبَاهِي بِهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ فَيَقُولُ مَا أَرَادَ هَؤُلَاءِ

“There’s no day on which Allaah frees more servants from the Fire than the Day of ‘Arafah. And He comes near (them) and praises and boasts about them to the angels, saying, ‘What do these want?’ (or ‘Anything they want!’)” [T.N.]

With this, it should be clear to every person who reads this Hadeeth that what's meant by "descends" here is that Allaah Himself descends. And we don't even need to say He descends "personally" because as long as the verb is associated with Him, then He Himself does it. Still, some scholars said, "He personally descends." They resorted to saying that, compelled to because there are those people who twist the meaning of Hadeeth, saying that what really descends is the decision and decree of Allaah. Others say it's Allaah's mercy that descends, and even others say it's one of His angels that descends.

All of these are incorrect. For one thing, Allaah's decision and decree are constantly descending, and not only during the last third of night. Allaah (تَعَالَى) says:

﴿ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ ﴾

**He arranges each matter from the heaven to the earth, then it will ascend to Him.**

[Soorah As-Sajdah, 32:5]

And He says:

﴿ وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ ﴾

**And to Him the matter will return, all of it.**

[Soorah Hood, 11:123]

As for their statement that it's only the mercy of Allaah that descends to the worldly sky when the last third of night remains – how Allaah is above such deficiencies! Mercy doesn't descend except at that time?! Allaah (تَعَالَى) says:

﴿ وَمَا بِكُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ﴾

**And whatever you have of blessing – it is from Allaah.**

[Soorah An-Nahl, 16:53]

Every blessing and favor is from Allaah, and they're the results of His mercy; they can be seen at all times.

Then we ask: what good does it do us if mercy descends only down to the sky (and no further)?

As for those who say it's an angel that descends, we say: does it make sense that an angel would say, "Who is calling on me so I can answer him? Who is asking me for anything..."?!

So, it's clear that these statements are distorted meanings, they are incorrect and proven so by the Hadeeth itself.

And by Allaah, they don't know more about Allaah than Allaah's Messenger. They aren't more sincere in advising the servants of Allaah than His Messenger. And they aren't more precise and eloquent in speech than the Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

Some people also ask: how can you say Allaah descends? If so, then what about His being high above everything? What about His being over the throne? If He descends, this would involve movement and relocation. And if He descends, this would be something that happens and anything that happens must have a cause.

To this we say: this is baseless and pointless arguing. There's no reason not to say that Allaah's descent is real.

Do you know what Allaah deserves (of characteristics and descriptions) more than the companions of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)?

The companions never made any of these false assumptions and conjectures. Instead they said: we listen, we believe, we accept, and we trust it as truth. And now, you people – you opponents – now you come and argue for the sake of falsehood, saying, "How? How?"

We say He descends, and we don't delve into asking, "What about His throne? Does He leave it or not?"

As for His being above, we say He descends and yet He's still above His creation because "descent" here doesn't mean that the lowest heaven He descends down to surrounds Him and the other heavens are above Him. Rather, He's not contained within anything of His creation.

So, He actually descends in a real manner while He's actually high above in a real manner, and nothing is similar to Him.

Rising of the throne is an action, not a permanent, personal characteristic. And we shouldn't, as far as I'm concerned, begin asking whether He leaves the throne or not. Instead, we should keep silent about it as the companions (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ) did.

However, the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah (the People who follow the Sunnah) take one of three positions regarding the issue: some say He leaves the throne, others say He doesn't leave it, and others say we should remain silent and not delve into the issue.

Ibn Taymiyyah says in "Ar-Risaalah Al-'Arshiyah" (The Throne Study) that Allaah doesn't leave the throne (during His descent) because the evidence confirming He's on the throne is strong and explicit just as this Hadeeth here is also a strong, explicit proof of His descent. And the actions and characteristics of Allaah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) are not to be measured by those of creation. So, we should leave the texts of His being on the throne confirmed as they are just as we leave the text of His descent confirmed as it is. We say He is established on His throne and He descends to the sky of this world; Allaah alone knows the "how" of it. Our minds are too deficient and incomplete to know everything about Allaah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).

The second position is that Allaah leaves the throne during His descent and the third position is to remain silent – in other words, not to say whether He does or doesn't leave His throne.

Some recent people bring up a point of confusion since that the earth is round and revolves around the sun. They ask how Allaah can descend during the last third of the night when the last third is constant: when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia leaves this time, Europe and surrounding countries enter it. So, is Allaah constantly and forever descending?

In reply, we say: First of all, believe and accept that Allaah descends during this specific time. If you do believe in it, then there's nothing else required from you. Don't go into asking, "How? How?" Instead, accept that when the last third of night remains in Saudi then Allaah descends, and when it remains in America, Allaah also descends. And His descent finishes when the light of morning appears in any place, respective to it.

In short, our position is that we believe and accept everything that's come to us from Allaah's Messenger, Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in that Allaah comes down to the sky of this world, the

### *Beneficial Points We Learn from This Hadeeth*

1. Confirming that Allaah is high above from the words, “Our Lord descends”
2. Confirming that Allaah does actions by His choice and will – known as “action” characteristics (see footnote no. 2) from the statement, “**Our Lord descends... when the last third of the night remains**”
3. Confirming that Allaah speaks by the word, “**He asks**”
4. Confirming Allaah’s kindness and generosity from His questions, “**Who is calling on Me...Who is asking Me for anything...Who is asking for My forgiveness...**”

### *The Advantages of This Hadeeth*

People should take advantage of this part of the night and asking for whatever they need from Allaah, call upon Him, and ask His forgiveness as He asks, “**Who is calling on Me...Who is asking Me for anything...Who is asking for My forgiveness...**” And the word “**Who**” here is in the form of a question but is really intended to motivate rather than ask. So, we should take advantage of this chance because nothing that’s past of your life is in your favor except the times you spent in obedience to Allaah. And perhaps more days may pass you by, but when death comes it will be as if you were only born that minute. At that time, everything that has past won’t mean a thing.