

HOW EARLY CAN WE HOLD JUMMAH PRAYER?

Several people have asked about the time at which the first jummah prayer is held at ICOI during this time of the year. The prayer sermon starts at 12:30pm and Zuhr on the official calendar is around 12:50 so how is permissible to do this? And now during Ramadan, ICOI is holding three jummahs with one at 12? Is that allowed and why?

Asking this question is good because it is evidence that people are interested in understanding the teachings of Islam, and want to take personal responsibility for their deeds. Although the Quran and the Sunnah are the primary source of guidance, we also rely on the scholars to help apply the teachings in the most practical manner.

The jurists have differed on the earliest time for the Jummah prayer and have come down to two groups of opinions :

1- Abu Hanifa, Malik, and Shafii’:

They said that the time of Zuhr begins after the sun descends from its zenith (Zawal) and it ends when an object’s shadow equals its length at the time of Zawal.

They used two evidences for their opinion:

a. Hadith located in Sahih Muslim, number 860, stating that Salamah ibn al-Akwa’a said: “We used to pray Jummah with the Messenger of Allah SAW when the sun passed its zenith, then we would go back and try to find shade.”

b. Hadith located in Sahih Al-Bukhari, number 904, that Anas Ibn Malik said, “we used to pray Jummah when the sun had passed the meridian.”

2- Ahmad ibn Hanbil and others like Ibn Raahawayh:

They agreed it is permissible to pray before the sun passes the meridian, the time for Jummah starts before the time for Zuhr.

They also have some evidences from the Sunnah and the actions of some Sahabah.

Located in Sahih Muslim, No. 858, that Jaabir ibn ‘Abd-Allah said: We used to pray with the Messenger of Allaah SAAW, then we would go back and let our camels, used for carrying water, rest. Hasan said: I said to Ja’far: At what time was that? He said: When the sun passed its zenith.

In the Book of (Kashaf Al-Qena’a) that covers the Hanifi school, he stated, that Abullah ibn Sydan Al-Sulamy said “I prayed Jummah behind Abu-Bakr and his Salah and his Khutbah used to be before the sun passed the meridian. I prayed Jummah behind Umar Ibn Al-Khatab and his salah and khutbah were when the sun passes the meridian, and Uthman’s salah and khutbah were even after that, however I haven’t seen anyone criticizing the action of the other and I have never heard the sahabha arguing about that.”

It was also reported by Ibn Masoud and Jabir and Sa'eed and Mua'awiyah.

The jurists had different opinions on that, which is absolutely fine, because we should look at these differences as an aid for us. Sufiyan al-Thawri said, "scholars have seen those differences as an aid in practicing the religion". He also said, "if you see a man following a matter in which the scholars have different view points on, then don't forbid him from what he is doing."

Also Ibn Al Qayyim said, "the difference between people is something very normal, they have to have it because of the disparity of their motives, understanding, and determinations. Then he added and said that, "the blameworthy differences are what cause enmity among people."

So the conclusion is to pray Jummah after Zawwal according to the majority of the jurists, and if it becomes necessary due to circumstances such as facility restrictions or parking constraints etc, then it is better to use the opinion of imam Ahmad ibn Hanbil. Also remember that Aisha said that "whenever the Prophet was given the choice between two matters he would pick the easiest as long as its not haram."

WallhuAllam.