12761 - Who Are Ahl Al-Hadith?

the question

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Summary of answer

-Ahl Al-Hadith refers to a group of Muslims who strictly adhere to the Quran and Sunnah, following the beliefs and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions.
-Regarded as the victorious and saved group in Islam, they reject innovations and rely on authentic sources for guidance.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Meaning and Significance of Ahl Al-Hadith

The phrase Ahl Al-Hadith (people of Hadith) refers to a group who venerate the Sunnah and seek to propagate it. They adhere to the `Aqidah (beliefs) of the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). In seeking to understand their religion, they refer to the Quran and Sunnah and the interpretation of the best generations, unlike others who adhere to beliefs other than the `Aqidah of the righteous Salaf and refer to human reasoning, tastes and what they see in dreams.

Ahl Al-Hadith as the Victorious Group

This group is the saved group, the victorious party, which many Imams have stated is the group referred to in the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “A group of my

Ummah will continue to prevail, following the truth. They will not be harmed by those who humiliate them until the decree of Allah comes to pass when they are like that.” (Narrated by Muslim, 1920)

Characteristics of Ahl Al-Hadith

The Imams, in the past and more recently, have said a great deal describing this group. We may choose from among them the following:

- Al-Hakim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal did well when he commented on this report by saying that the victorious group who will prevail until the Hour begins is “As-hab Al-Hadith” (the people of Hadith).

Who is more deserving of this description than people who follow the way of the righteous and follow in the footsteps of the Salaf who came before us, and exposed the falsehood of the people of Bid`ah (innovation) by basing their arguments on the Sunnahs of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)? (Ma`rifat `Ulum Al-Hadith, by Al-Hakim Al-Nisaburi, p. 2-3)

- Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:
- Allah has made these people – Ahl Al-Hadith – the pillars of Shari`ah, and He has destroyed through them all abhorrent innovations.
- They are the trustees of Allah among His creation, the intermediaries between the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his Ummah.
- They are the ones who are striving hard to protect his religion; their light is shining, their virtues are well known, the signs of their sincerity are obvious, their way is prevailing, and their evidence is supreme.
- Every group has its own focal point which is based on whims and desires, apart from the people of Hadith, whose reference point is the Quran, whose evidence is the Sunnah and whose leader is the Messenger to whom they belong; they do not pay any attention to whims and desires, and they do not care about personal opinions.

- They are content with what is narrated from the Messenger, and they are the ones who are entrusted with it and they take care of it.
- They are the guardians and keepers of the faith, the vessels and bearers of knowledge. If there is a difference of opinion concerning a Hadith, people refer to them, and what they rule is what is accepted and listened to.
- Among them are prominent jurists, great Imams, ascetics who are well-known among their tribes, men who are known for their virtue, skilled reciters of Quran and good speakers.
- They are the majority and their way is the right way. Every innovator pretends to be following their path, and cannot dare to claim any other way.
- Whoever opposes them, Allah will destroy him, and whoever goes against them, Allah will humiliate him.
- They are not harmed by those who forsake them, and those who stay away from them will not prosper.
- The one who cares for his religion needs their help, the one who looks down on them is a loser, and Allah is able to support them."(End quote from Sharaf Ashab Al-Hadith, p. 15)

- Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Hence it is clear that the people who most deserve to be called the victorious group are “Ahl Al-Hadith wal-Sunnah”, who have no leader to follow blindly apart from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

They are the most knowledgeable of people concerning his words and deeds, the most able to distinguish between what is sound and what is not [of Hadith].

Their Imams have deep knowledge of that, they are the ones who understand its meanings and are the most sincere in following it. They accept it and believe in it, and act upon it.

They show love to those who adopt it and they show enmity to those who oppose it.

They are the ones who measure any idea against that which is proven in the Quran and Sunnah, so they never adopt any idea and make it one of the basic principles of their religion unless it is

proven in that which the Messenger brought. Rather they make that which the Messenger brought, the Quran and Sunnah, the foundation and basis of their beliefs.

With regard to the issues concerning which people dispute, such as the attributes of Allah, the divine decree, the threat of Hell, the names of Allah and the principle of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, etc., they refer that to Allah and His Messenger.

They examine the general ideas concerning which the different groups dispute, and whatever of these ideas is in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah, they approve of it, and whatever goes against the Quran and Sunnah, they reject it.

They do not follow conjecture or whims and desires. For following conjecture is ignorance and following whims and desires without any guidance from Allah is wrongdoing." (End quote from Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 3/347, 348)

We should note that Ahl Al-Hadith includes everyone who follows the Hadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and gives it precedence over all else, whether he is a scholar or an ordinary Muslim.

Who Qualifies as Ahl al-Hadith?

Shaykh Al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

We do not mean by Ahl Al-Hadith only those who study it, write it down or narrate it, rather we mean anyone who takes care to memorize it, understand it and follow it, both inwardly and outwardly. The same may be said of “Ahl Al-Quran” (the people of the Quran).

The basic quality of these people is their love of the Quran and Hadith, referring to them and their meanings, and acting upon what they learn." (End quote from Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 4/95)

The Imams have said a great deal on this matter. You can learn more by referring to the sources quoted above, as well as volume 4 of Majmu` Fatawa Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah.

See these answers for more clarification: (206, 10554, 163503, 10777, 159436, 159, 10055, 205836, 121948, 10714, 155478)

And Allah knows best.