

The Time of the Friday Prayer: A Jurisprudential and Hadith Study

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Abstract

Scholars have differed regarding the prescribed time of the Friday prayer (*Jumu'ah*). The majority of scholars, including the Hanafis, Malikis, Shafi'is, and Zahiris, maintain that its prescribed time is the same as that of the *Dhuhr* prayer, beginning when the sun passes its zenith (*zawāl*) and ending with the commencement of the *ʿAsr* prayer. The Malikis further hold that the time of the Friday prayer extends until sunset, considering it to have a period of necessity (*waqt al-ḍarūrah*), similar to that of the *Dhuhr* prayer.

The Hanbalis, however, maintain that the Friday prayer has two valid times. The first corresponds to the view of the majority, namely, performing the prayer after the sun has passed its zenith. This is regarded by the Hanbalis as the preferred time and is the practice currently observed in their mosques. The second permits the performance of the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith. This opinion was also adopted by the later scholar Mohammed ibn Ali al-Shawkani and the contemporary scholar Mohammed Nasir al-Din al-Albani.

After presenting and critically examining the evidence advanced by both positions, this study concludes that the opinion of the majority—namely, that the Friday prayer should be performed after the sun has passed its zenith—is the stronger view. This conclusion is based on the greater authenticity and strength of the evidence supporting this opinion, both in terms of its transmission and legal reasoning, as well as the relative weakness of the evidence cited by those who permit the performance of the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith.

Keywords: Friday Prayer (*Jumu'ah*), Prayer Time, Islamic Jurisprudence, Hadith Studies, Schools of Islamic Law.

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and may peace and blessings be upon the one sent as a mercy to all mankind.

Friday prayer (*Jumu'ah*) is one of the religious rites prescribed by Allah, the Exalted, for the Muslim community. He has distinguished it with specific rulings and etiquettes, among which is the determination of its prescribed time. The timing of the Friday prayer has occupied a prominent position in Islamic jurisprudence. While the majority of scholars maintain that its time coincides with that of the *Dhuhr* prayer, both in its beginning and end, others argue that it has a distinct prescribed time due to the unique status of Friday, thereby permitting its performance before the sun reaches its zenith. In light of this scholarly disagreement, this study seeks to clarify the prescribed time of the Friday prayer by presenting the opinions of the jurists, examining their evidences, and identifying the preponderant view, by the permission of Allah.

Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The choice of this topic was motivated by several considerations:

1. I observed that some imams call the *adhan* for the Friday prayer before the prescribed time begins. When I pointed out that the *adhan* should only be given after the commencement of the prayer time, one of them replied that Friday is a day of celebration (*Eid*) and possesses unique characteristics.
2. To clarify the beginning and end of the prescribed time of the Friday prayer, particularly because the announcement of the prayer time concerns the entire Muslim community, not only those attending the mosque. Those who remain at home on Friday due to valid excuses, as well as those upon whom the Friday prayer is not obligatory, perform the *Dhuhr* prayer, whose time begins after the sun has passed its zenith by the consensus (*ijmā'*) of Muslim scholars.
3. To regulate the jurisprudence of scholarly disagreement by identifying its evidences and legal foundations, and by distinguishing the preponderant opinion from the weaker one, so that differences of opinion among scholars are not used as a pretext for creating confusion and disorder in mosques.

Research Problem

The Friday prayer occupies a special place in Islam as a symbol of Muslim unity and communal gathering. What is the Friday prayer? What are the limits of its prescribed time? Is its timing agreed upon by scholars, or is it a matter of juristic disagreement? These are the questions that this study seeks to answer, by the permission of Allah.

Research Plan

Based on the foregoing, this study is organized as follows:

Chapter One: The Time of the Friday Prayer: Concept and Limits

- **Section One:** Definition of Time and Friday Prayer in Linguistic and Technical Usage.

- **Section Two:** The Prescribed Time of the Friday Prayer According to the Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence.

Chapter Two: The Evidences of the Juristic Schools Regarding the Time of the Friday Prayer, Their Critical Examination, and the Preponderant Opinion

- **Section One:** The Evidences of the Majority of Jurists Regarding the Time of the Friday Prayer.
- **Section Two:** The Evidences of Those Who Permit the Friday Prayer Before the Sun Reaches Its Zenith.
- **Section Three:** Critical Discussion of the Evidences and Identification of the Preponderant Opinion.

Chapter One

The Time of the Friday Prayer: Concept and Limits

Section One: Definition of Time and Friday Prayer in Linguistic and Technical Usage

Definition of Time

Linguistically, *time* refers to a specified limit or determination, whether relating to time or place.

An example of temporal specification is the saying of Allah, the Exalted:

"Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers at specified times." (Qur'an 4:103)

That is, at fixed and prescribed times.

As for spatial specification, an example is the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) designation of the *Mawāqīt* (fixed stations for entering the state of *ihrām*) for the pilgrimage. He specified **Dhu al-Hulayfah** for the people of Madinah, **Al-Juhfah** for the people of al-Sham, and other designated locations.

Technically, time is defined as **a specified and determined period**.

Definition of Friday Prayer (*Jumu'ah*)

Linguistically, *Jumu'ah* is derived from the Arabic root meaning "to gather" because people assemble on that day. Before Islam, Friday was known as al-*ʿArūbah*, but it was renamed *Jumu'ah* in Islam.

Technically, the Maliki jurist Imam Ibn ʿArafah defined the Friday prayer as:

"It consists of two rak'ahs that either prevent the obligation of the *Dhuhr* prayer, according to one opinion, or replace it, according to another."

Explanation of the Definition

His statement, "*It consists of two rak'ahs*," is a general description that also includes the Fajr prayer, shortened prayers during travel, and other two-unit prayers. His statement, "*that prevent the obligation of the Dhuhr prayer*," excludes those prayers because they do not remove the obligation of *Dhuhr*. His phrase, "*according to one opinion*," refers to the view that the Friday prayer is an independent obligation on its designated day. His statement, "*or replace it, according to another*," refers to the opinion that the Friday prayer is a substitute for the *Dhuhr* prayer. This view was regarded as anomalous (*shādh*) by **al-Mazari**. The feminine pronoun in "*replace it*" refers to the *Dhuhr* prayer, understood in the sense of *ṣalāh* (prayer), which is grammatically feminine in Arabic.

Section Two: The Prescribed Time of the Friday Prayer According to the Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence

The Time of the Friday Prayer According to the Hanafis

According to the Hanafī school, the prescribed time for the Friday prayer begins when the sun passes its zenith (*zawāl*) and ends with the expiration of the *Dhuhr* prayer time.

Alaa al-Din al-Kasani states, while discussing the conditions for the validity of the Friday prayer:

"As for the prescribed time, it is one of the conditions for the Friday prayer, and it is the time of *Dhuhr*. Therefore, it is not permissible to perform it before the sun has passed its zenith. If it is not performed until the time of *ʿAsr* begins, the Friday prayer lapses because it cannot be made up."

The Hanafī jurists consistently affirm this position throughout their classical legal works.

The Time of the Friday Prayer According to the Malikis

Ibn Abd al-Barr stated regarding the beginning of the time for the Friday prayer:

"The time of the Friday prayer is the time of the *Dhuhr* prayer, and it is not permissible to perform it before the sun has passed its zenith."

With respect to the end of its prescribed time, however, the Malikis differ from the other schools of Islamic jurisprudence. They maintain that the time for the Friday prayer extends until sunset, a position based on their view that the times of the *Dhuhr* and *ʿAsr* prayers overlap. It is stated in al-Mudawwanah:

I asked Ibn al-Qasim: "What if an imam does not lead the people in the Friday prayer until the time of *'Asr* has begun?" He replied: "He should lead them in prayer as long as the sun has not set."

The Time of the Friday Prayer According to the Shafi'is

Imam al-Shafi'i clearly defined both the beginning and the end of the prescribed time for the Friday prayer, stating:

"The time of the Friday prayer is from when the sun passes its zenith until the end of the time of *Dhuhr*, before the imam concludes the Friday prayer."

This explicit statement establishes both the beginning and the end of the Friday prayer time, and it represents the position generally adopted by the Shafi'i school.

The Time of the Friday Prayer According to the Hanbalis

The Hanbali school presents two principal opinions regarding the beginning of the prescribed time for the Friday prayer.

The first opinion maintains that its time begins after the sun has passed its zenith. This is regarded as the preferred time because it corresponds to the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) practice on most occasions.

The second opinion permits the Friday prayer to be performed before the sun reaches its zenith. It is stated in al-Mughni:

"If they perform the Friday prayer before the sun has passed its zenith, during the sixth hour, it is valid."

Similarly, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, when asked about the time of the Friday prayer, replied:

"There is no harm if it is performed before the sun reaches its zenith."

A third opinion within the Hanbali school was reported by Ibn Qudamah from al-Qadi and his companions. According to this view, the Friday prayer may be performed during the same time as the *'Eid* prayer. However, Ibn Qudamah considered this opinion weak, stating:

"As for the early part of the day, the correct opinion is that it is not permissible."

The Time of the Friday Prayer According to the Zahiris

As is well known among scholars and researchers in Islamic jurisprudence, the Zahiri school is one of the schools of Ahl al-Sunnah, although comparatively few of its sources have survived. Its legal principles and jurisprudence were most comprehensively articulated by Imam Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi. Regarding the prescribed time of the Friday prayer, he stated:

"The Friday prayer is the *Dhuhr* prayer of Friday. It may only be performed after the sun has passed its zenith, and its ending time is the same as the ending time of the *Dhuhr* prayer on all other days."

Chapter Two

The Evidences of the Juristic Schools Regarding the Time of the Friday Prayer, Their Critical Examination, and the Preponderant Opinion

Section One: The Evidences of the Majority Regarding the Time of the Friday Prayer

The majority of jurists support their view that the prescribed time of the Friday prayer begins after the sun has passed its zenith on the basis of the Sunnah, consensus (*ijmā'*), and rational reasoning.

Evidence from the Sunnah

The majority rely upon the narration of Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him), who reported:

"The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) used to perform the Friday prayer when the sun had passed its zenith."

The phrase "*used to*" indicates continuity and regular practice, demonstrating that the Prophet consistently performed the Friday prayer after the sun had reached its zenith.

Evidence from Consensus (*Ijmā'*)

Abu Bakr Ibn al-Gharbi reported the scholarly consensus on this matter, stating:

"They unanimously agreed that the Friday prayer is to be established after the sun has passed its zenith."

Evidence from Rational Reasoning

The Friday prayer is the *Dhuhr* prayer of Friday, and the prescribed time for *Dhuhr* begins after the sun has passed its zenith by the unanimous agreement of the Islamic schools of jurisprudence.

Section Two: The Evidences of Those Who Permit the Friday Prayer Before the Sun Reaches Its Zenith

Those who permit the performance of the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith rely upon evidence from the Sunnah, the practice of the Companions, and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*).

Evidence from the Sunnah

They cite the narration of Sahl ibn Sa'd (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

"We would neither take our midday nap nor eat our lunch until after the Friday prayer."

Another narration adds:

"During the lifetime of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)."

They argue that, according to Arab custom, the midday nap (*qaylūlah*) and lunch (*ghadā'*) were taken before the sun passed its zenith. Ibn Qutaybah stated:

"It is not called lunch or a midday nap after the sun has passed its zenith."

They also cite the narration of Salamah ibn al-Akwa' (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

"We used to perform the Friday prayer with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) when there was no shade cast by the walls under which one could seek shelter."

They argue that the Prophet's recitation of *Surat al-Jumu'ah* and *Surat al-Munafiqun*, together with the sermon and the prayer, while there was still no shade from the walls, indicates that the prayer was performed before the sun reached its zenith. Had it been performed afterwards, the walls would have cast shade under which people could seek shelter.

Evidence from the Practice of the Companions

Several reports indicate that some Companions either performed or witnessed the Friday prayer before the sun had reached its zenith. Among them are the following:

1. Abd Allah ibn Saydan al-Sulami reported:

"I attended the Friday prayer with Abu Bakr, whose sermon and prayer were before midday. Then I attended it with Umar, whose sermon and prayer continued until midday. Then I attended it with Uthman, whose sermon and prayer continued until the sun had passed its zenith. I never saw anyone criticize or object to this."

This report indicates that Abu Bakr performed the Friday prayer before the sun had reached its zenith.

2. Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him). Abd Allah ibn Salamah reported:

"Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud led us in the Friday prayer during the forenoon and said, 'I feared that the heat would become burdensome for you.'"

3. Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (may Allah be pleased with him). Sa'id ibn Suwayd reported:

"Muawiyah led us in the Friday prayer during the forenoon."

Evidence from Analogical Reasoning (*Qiyās*)

They argue that Friday is a day which Allah has designated as a festival (*ʿEid*) for Muslims. Since it is regarded as a festival, they maintain that the Friday prayer may be performed during the same period as the *ʿEid* prayer, by analogy with the prayers of *ʿEid al-Fitr* and *ʿEid al-Adha*.

Section Three: Critical Examination of the Evidences and the Preponderant Opinion

The majority of jurists critically examined the evidences advanced by those who permit the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith. In contrast, the proponents of this opinion limited themselves to responding to some of the majority's criticisms of their evidences and did not attempt to refute the majority's evidences. This is because they acknowledge that performing the Friday prayer after the sun has passed its zenith is the original and preferable practice, as it was the practice consistently observed by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). The following presents the discussions advanced by both sides.

The Majority's Critique of the Evidences Permitting the Friday Prayer Before the Sun Reaches Its Zenith

First: Critique of the Evidences from the Sunnah

The majority responded to the prophetic traditions cited by those who permit the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith in two ways: a general response and a detailed response.

The General Response

The majority argue that the most these narrations can establish is that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) hastened to perform the Friday prayer at the very beginning of its prescribed time after the sun had passed its zenith, rather than before it.

Imam al-Nawawi, after mentioning the narrations that appear to indicate the performance of the Friday prayer before the sun reached its zenith, stated:

"These narrations clearly indicate the hastening of the Friday prayer."

He then cited the position of the overwhelming majority of the Companions, the Successors, the three Imams, and later scholars that the Friday prayer is not valid unless performed after the sun has passed its zenith.

His reference to "hastening" clearly means performing the prayer immediately after the sun has passed its zenith rather than before it, as indicated by the context of his discussion.

Similarly, Qadi Iyad interpreted these narrations in the same manner, stating:

"The majority understood these narrations—those indicating the performance of the Friday prayer before the sun had passed its zenith—as emphasizing the prompt performance of the Friday prayer."

Likewise, al-Amir al-San'ani remarked:

"The utmost that these narrations indicate is that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) hastened to perform the Friday prayer at the very beginning of the time after the sun had passed its zenith, unlike the *Dhuhr* prayer, which he would delay until the people had gathered."

Detailed Response to the Evidences from the Sunnah

First: The Hadith of Sahl ibn Sa'd

The narration states:

"We would neither take our midday nap nor eat our lunch until after the Friday prayer."

The proponents of the permissibility of performing the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith argue that, according to Arab custom, both the midday nap (*qaylulah*) and lunch (*ghada'*) took place before noon.

The majority reject this argument, maintaining that such an interpretation is not supported. They cite the following verse concerning seeking permission before entering private rooms:

"O you who believe! Let those whom your right hands possess and those among you who have not reached puberty ask your permission on three occasions: before the dawn prayer, when you put aside your garments at midday, and after the night prayer..." (Qur'an 24:58)

The phrase "*at midday*" (*min al-zahirah*) indicates that the midday rest was observed after the sun had passed its zenith, particularly among the Arabs of the Hijaz (Makkah and Madinah), since the Qur'an was revealed in the language of Quraysh. Consequently, Ibn Qutaybah's statement that Arabs knew neither lunch nor the midday nap except before the sun reached its zenith may be understood as referring to Arabs outside the Hijaz rather than those whose dialect was employed in the Qur'an.

Second: The Hadith of Salamah ibn al-Akwa'

The narration states:

"There was no shade cast by the walls under which one could seek shelter."

The majority respond that the narration merely negates the existence of sufficient shade to provide shelter and does not deny the existence of any shade whatsoever.

They further explain that the walls in the Hijaz were relatively short, and short walls require a considerable amount of time before casting enough shade to provide protection from the sun, particularly since the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) habitually performed the Friday prayer at the earliest part of its prescribed time.

Imam al-Nawawi commented:

"Given the shortness of the walls, it is evident that the prayer was performed immediately after the sun had passed its zenith."

Second: Critique of the Evidences from the Practice of the Companions

The majority likewise responded to the reports attributed to the Companions in support of performing the Friday prayer before the sun had reached its zenith through both a general and a detailed response.

The General Response

The majority maintain that all of these reports are weak and that none of them has been authentically established.

Qadi Iyad stated:

"Various reports have been narrated concerning the performance of the Friday prayer before the sun had passed its zenith, but none of them is authentic."

The Detailed Response

1. The Report of Abd Allah ibn Saydan

Hadith scholars considered this report weak because of the weakness of its narrator, Abd Allah ibn Saydan.

Imam al-Bukhari said regarding him:

"His narrations are not corroborated."

Ibn Adi described him as:

"Virtually unknown."

al-Lalaka'i stated:

"He is unknown and there is nothing reliable about him."

Furthermore, despite the weakness of this report, another narration attributed to Abu Bakr and Umar contradicts what Abd Allah ibn Saydan reported concerning them.

Suwayd ibn Ghafalah narrated:

"I performed the Friday prayer with Abu Bakr and Umar when the sun had passed its zenith."

Regarding this report, al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar commented:

"Its chain of transmission is strong."

Similarly, Malik ibn Abi Amir reported:

"I used to observe a carpet belonging to Aqil ibn Abi Talib being placed beside the western wall of the mosque on Fridays. When the shadow of the wall completely covered the carpet, Umar ibn al-Khattab would come out and lead the Friday prayer."

Imam al-Bukhari also included a chapter entitled:

"The Time of the Friday Prayer When the Sun Has Passed Its Zenith,"

and remarked:

"The same has been narrated from Umar, Ali, al-Nu'man ibn Bashir, and Amr ibn Hurayth."

These reports collectively indicate that the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) performed the Friday prayer after the sun had passed its zenith. They are stronger and more authentic, in terms of both transmission and reliability, than the reports attributed to them indicating that the Friday prayer was performed before the sun reached its zenith.

2. Critical Examination of the Report of Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud

The majority of the early hadith scholars considered the report attributed to Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud to be weak because of the weakness of one of its transmitters, Abd Allah ibn Salamah.

Imam al-Bukhari stated regarding him:

"His narrations are not corroborated."

Ibn Hajar described him as:

"Truthful, but his memory deteriorated."

In contrast, the contemporary hadith scholar Mohammed Nasir al-Din al-Albani disagreed with the earlier scholars and graded the report as hasan (sound). He stated:

"This chain of transmission is sound. All of its narrators are trustworthy. Although Abd Allah ibn Salamah became weak due to the deterioration of his memory, in this instance he narrated an event that he personally witnessed, and such events are generally not forgotten by the narrator, even if some weakness exists."

The grading of this report as hasan by Mohammed Nasir al-Din al-Albani represents his own independent scholarly judgement rather than the result of evidence unavailable to the earlier scholars who considered the report weak. Although al-Albani was undoubtedly qualified to exercise independent judgement (*ijtihad*) in hadith authentication and criticism, eyewitness testimony, while generally stronger than second-hand narration, is not invariably free from error. A witness may err just as a narrator who reports from hearing may err. Ultimately, contextual evidence (*qarā'in*) determines which report should be preferred. Where no supporting contextual evidence exists, the opinion of the majority remains the stronger and more persuasive view, by the permission of Allah.

3. Critical Examination of the Report of Muawiyah

Hadith scholars also regarded the report attributed to Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan as weak because of the weakness of its narrator, Sa'id ibn Suwayd.

Imam al-Bukhari stated concerning him:

"His narration is not corroborated,"

referring specifically to this report.

After examining the principal biographical works on hadith narrators, it appears that scholars either explicitly considered him weak or remained silent regarding his reliability. Most of those who discussed him merely cited the judgement of al-Bukhari.

Other reports have also been attributed to certain Companions indicating that they performed the Friday prayer before the sun reached its zenith. However, none of these reports possesses an authentic—or even a weak—chain of transmission that can be critically assessed. Consequently, they have neither been cited nor discussed in this study.

Those who permit the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith nevertheless attempted to defend their position and to respond to the majority's criticism, particularly regarding the prophetic traditions. They argued that if these narrations referred to the Friday prayer being performed after the sun had passed its zenith, while taking into account the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) recitation of Surat al-Jumu'ah and Surat al-Munafiqun, together with the sermon, the walls would necessarily have cast sufficient shade for people to seek shelter beneath them.

This argument, however, is open to criticism. Jabir ibn Samurah described the Prophet's sermon as moderate in length, saying:

"I used to pray with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and both his prayer and his sermon were of moderate length."

That is, they were neither excessively brief nor excessively long.

Imam al-Tirmidhi, who narrated this report, classified it as *hasan sahih*. When this evidence is considered together with the previously established fact that the walls in the Hijaz (Makkah and Madinah) were relatively short, the weakness of this defence becomes apparent.

The Preponderant Opinion

After an extensive examination of the classical works of Islamic jurisprudence and hadith relating to this issue, the opinion that appears to be the strongest is that of the majority of jurists and hadith scholars, namely, that the Friday prayer is valid only after the sun has passed its zenith. This conclusion is based on the following considerations:

1. The strength and clarity of the majority's evidences. Their proofs are compelling both in terms of authenticity and legal implication.
2. The soundness of their evidences. Their proofs remain largely free from successful criticism, and even those who permit the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith acknowledge the validity of performing it after the sun has passed its zenith.
3. The relative weakness of the opposing evidences. Although the prophetic traditions cited in support of performing the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith are generally authentic in terms of transmission, they are inconclusive in their legal implication. Even their proponents acknowledge this uncertainty.

Imam Ahmad stated regarding the hadith of Sahl ibn Sa'd:

"The hadith, 'We would take our midday nap and eat our lunch after the Friday prayer,' appears to suggest that it was performed before the sun reached its zenith."

His use of the expression "*appears to suggest*" demonstrates that he did not regard the narration as an unequivocal proof that the Friday prayer was performed before the sun had passed its zenith.

Similarly, al-Mubarakfuri remarked:

"As for the opinion of those who maintain that the Friday prayer is permissible before the sun reaches its zenith, there is no authentic and explicit hadith supporting that view. And Allah knows best."

Among the scholars, only Mohammed Nasir al-Din al-Albani unequivocally regarded these narrations as explicit evidence. After citing the relevant reports, he stated:

"These are explicit evidences that the Friday prayer was performed before the sun reached its zenith."

As demonstrated earlier, however, the strongest conclusion that can reasonably be drawn from these narrations is that they indicate the prompt performance of the Friday prayer immediately after the sun had passed its zenith, which is precisely how the overwhelming majority of scholars understood them.

4. The preference of leading scholars for the majority opinion. After citing the hadith of Anas ibn Malik—"when the sun had passed its zenith"—Imam al-Tirmidhi commented:

"This is the opinion upon which the majority of scholars have agreed: the time of the Friday prayer begins when the sun has passed its zenith, just like the *Dhuhr* prayer."

Commenting on this statement, al-Mubarakfuri wrote:

"The opinion that should be relied upon is that of the majority, namely, that the Friday prayer is not permissible before the sun has passed its zenith."

Conclusion

Praise be to Allah, by Whose grace righteous deeds are accomplished. Among His many blessings is having granted me the opportunity to examine this important issue in Islamic jurisprudence concerning the prescribed time of the Friday prayer, in view of its significance and central place in the lives of Muslims.

This study has led to the following conclusions:

1. According to the overwhelming majority of scholars, jurists, and hadith specialists, the prescribed time of the Friday prayer is identical to that of the *Dhuhr* prayer and begins after the sun has passed its zenith.
2. Although some scholars theoretically permit the Friday prayer to be performed before the sun reaches its zenith, they nevertheless consider it preferable in practice to perform it after the sun has passed its zenith in order to avoid scholarly disagreement.
3. The evidences from the Sunnah advanced in support of performing the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith are weak in terms of legal implication because they are open to more than one interpretation. As established in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, when a proof admits a reasonable alternative interpretation, its force as decisive evidence is diminished.
4. The reports attributed to the Companions supporting the performance of the Friday prayer before the sun reaches its zenith are considered weak in terms of authenticity by the majority of hadith scholars, and weak reports cannot be relied upon in matters of legal rulings.

Finally, we ask Allah to grant us success and sound judgement in both speech and action. All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon His Prophet, His Messenger, and His servant Mohammed, as well as upon his family and all of his Companions.

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