

7459 - Are the Prophets Equal?

the question

I help teach a group of girls about Islam once a week. This past week, one of the girls asked me the following question to which I was not able to reply and I told her that I would look it up or ask someone. The question was: Are all the prophets considered equal? If so, then why is it that there is a prophet on each level of heaven, with Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him) in the highest (seventh heaven)?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

All people were created by Allah and are His slaves; His is the power and command from eternity to eternity. Allah, in His infinite wisdom, decreed that He should select some of His angels and prefer them over others, such as Jibreel, Mika'eel, Israafeel, Maalik, Radwaan et al., who have a higher status than others. And He, in His wisdom and justice decreed that He should select some of the children of Adam and prefer some of them over others, so that they have a higher status and better position. As Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Allah chooses Messengers from angels and from men. Verily, Allah is All-Hearer, All-Seer” [al-Hajj 22:75]

“Those Messengers! We preferred some of them to others; to some of them Allah spoke (directly); others He raised to degrees (of honour)” [al-Baqarah 2:253]

Allah tells us that He chose and selected these Messengers from among mankind. After

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mentioning some of the Prophets and Messengers, He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And also some of their fathers and their progeny and their brethren, We chose them, and We guided them to the Straight Path” [al-An’aam 6:87].

And Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And Allah has preferred some of you above others in wealth and properties” [al-Nahl 16:71].

In His wisdom, He decreed that Adam (peace be upon him) should be the father of mankind, and His wisdom, mercy and justice decreed that from among Adam’s progeny He should select an elite of Messengers and Prophets – may peace and blessings be upon them and upon our Prophet. Among those whom He chose and preferred over others were the Messengers of strong will [Uloo’l-‘Azm, see al-Ahqaaf 46:35], namely, Muhammad, Ibraaheem, Nooh, Moosa and ‘Eesaa ibn Maryam, may the best of blessings and peace be upon them. And He chose and favoured above them all their leader, the final Messenger, our Prophet Muhammad ibn ‘Abd-Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He is indeed the leader of the sons of Adam, with no boast. He will carry the banner and will be granted the power of intercession [on the Day of Resurrection]. He is the one who will attain al-maqaam al-mahmood (the Praised Position) in Paradise, which will be given to one person only, and that person will be our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Hence Allah took the covenant and pledge from all the Prophets that if Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent during the lifetime of any one of them, they would be obliged to follow him (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), to leave behind what they had brought and follow what our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) brought. As Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when Allah took the Covenant of the Prophets, saying: ‘Take whatever I gave you from the Book and Hikmah (understanding of the Laws of Allah), and afterwards there will come to you a Messenger (Muhammad) confirming what is with you; you must, then, believe in

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him and help him.’ Allah said: ‘Do you agree (to it) and will you take up My Covenant (which I conclude with you)?’ They said: ‘We agree.’ He said: ‘Then bear witness; and I am with you among the witnesses (for this).’ Then whoever turns away after this, they are the Faasiqoon (rebellious: those who turn away from Allah’s obedience)” [Aal-Imraan 3:81-82]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him): “By Allah, if my brother Moosa were alive, he would have no choice but to follow me.”

And when the Messiah ‘Eesaa ibn Maryam (peace be upon him) comes down at the end of time, he will come to rule in accordance with the sharee’ah (religious laws) of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and he will follow him (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

All of the above refers to their status before Allah. With regard to their religion, it is one religion, for they all called people to believe in One God, Allah (Tawheed) and to devote worship sincerely to Him Alone. With regard to laws, each of them had his own law which was for his people alone. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way” [al-Maa’idah 5:48]. But the way (sharee’ah) of our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the most perfect, the best, the most complete and the most beloved to Allah; it abrogates all laws that came before it. Undoubtedly the Prophets differ in status, and they are at varying levels. The best of them, as stated above, are the five Messengers of strong will (Uloo’l-‘Azm), and the best of them all is the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

With regard to the saheeh ahaadeeth (authentic prophetic narrations), “Do not prefer me over Yoonus ibn Mattaa” and “By the One Who chose Moosa over all of creation” – these all indicate the immense humility of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when speaking of his brothers the Messengers. But he is undoubtedly the best of them all, for he led them in prayer in

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Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) on the night of the Israa' (Night Journey). He will be the leader of the sons of Adam on the Day of Resurrection, and he is the only one among all the Messengers who will be granted the power of intercession on that Day. He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the one who said: "From among the sons of Adam, Allah chose Quraysh; from among Quraysh He chose Kinaanah; from among Kinaanah He chose Bani Haashim; and from among Bani Haashim He chose me." He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the Chosen One (al-Mustafaa) from among all of mankind.

And Allah knows best.