

Programme Six; Belief in Messengers II.

6. 1. The rank of the prophets and messengers.

In terms of prophet-hood, there is no difference between any of the prophets and messengers that Allāh sent. We must believe in all of them equally and no single individual is more of a prophet than another. The Qur'ān states:

'We do not make any distinction between anyone from the messengers' (2:285).

At the same time however, we must accept that some prophets hold more superiority than others;

'Those messengers; we gave superiority to some over others. To some of them Allāh spoke (directly)¹ and others He raised several ranks' (2: 253).

All the scholars agree that in terms of this ranking and superiority, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was the greatest of all prophets and messengers.

6.2. Prophet Muhammad's superiority over other messengers.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) himself expressed how Allāh granted him unique features not given to previous prophets and messengers. In a Hadīth recorded by Imam Muslim, he said he had distinction over other prophets through six things:

1. Jāmi Kalām. The ability to eloquently express a comprehensive meaning with few words.
2. Assisted with Ru'b. Even if the Prophet was a month off in distance, his enemies would tremble in fear and awe of him.
3. War spoils. Previous Ummas were not permitted to claim the spoils of war.
4. Clean earth. Followers of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) are permitted to read Salāh anywhere on earth and are permitted to perform Tayammum from it.
5. Universality. Previous prophets were sent for certain people. Our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was sent for entire humanity until the Day of Judgement.
6. Finality. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is the seal of all prophets and messengers.

Other key attributes and distinctions include:

- He is the only prophet to have his name on the *Arsh* (Throne).
- He is the only prophet to have been given an eternal miracle, in the form of the Qur'ān.
- He is the only prophet to be sent to both men and jinns.

¹ This refers to Musa, peace be upon him.

6.3. Is the Prophet ‘just a man like us’?

In several places in the Qur’ān, Allāh affirms that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is a *Bashar* (human), just like all previous prophets and messengers (18:110). The reason for this is twofold:

a. So they can be a role model for their subjects (4: 64). They can only be a successful model to follow if they share some resemblance with those required to follow them. If Allāh were to send an angel instead of a man, then the followers would have legitimate reasons not to follow his example. They could claim that angels are made from divine light and are immune from sins, and therefore using them as a role model is impossible. The Qur’ān touches upon this when it states:

‘And they say: Why has not an angel been sent down to him?...And had We appointed him an angel, We indeed would have made him a man, and We certainly would have caused them confusion in a matter which they were already confused’ (6: 8-9).

Hence, Allāh ensured that all prophets and messengers were men so the disbelievers would have no reason not to follow them.

b. So people do not see him as a deity. Allāh affirmed that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was a human being to prevent followers from perceiving him as God or the Son of God, like the Christians did. Jesus (peace be upon him) preached the oneness of Allāh and that he was the messenger of Allāh, but his followers distorted his message and invented the concept of trinity. Hence, it was imperative to clearly highlight that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was a human being and not a deity.

But there is a very clear difference between when:

i. *The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) *himself* asserts that he is a human, like ‘I am a man like you (18: 110)’.

ii. *When the followers call their prophets a *Bashar*. The reason is that when previous communities wanted to insult their prophets, they would call them humans. For example, Nūh’s people said to him:

‘We do not see you except a man (*Bashar*) like us’ (11:27).

Sālih’s people said to him:

‘You are but a human being (*Bashar*) like us’ (26: 154).

Shu’aib’s people insulted him by saying:

‘You are but a human (*Bashar*) like us and verily we think you are one of the liars’ (26: 186).

In Sūrah Yāsīn, Allāh tells how the people of the village rejected their messengers and ridiculed them:

‘They said: You are only human being ourselves, and the Most-Merciful has revealed nothing...’ (36:15).²

² Similar statements can be found in other places in the Qur’an. See (i) 14:10 (ii) 15:33 (Iblis stated that the reason why he would not prostrate to Adam because he was a *Bashar*), (iii) 21:3 (where the Arabs rejected the message of Muhammad by saying that ‘is he but a human like you?’) (iv) and 23:33.

In short, when the followers call their prophets human, it is a form of insult. When the prophet himself asserts he is human, then there is no harm and it is in fact a form of humility. Yūnus was a prophet of Allāh, the chosen servant of His. The Qur'ān recalls one of his Du'ās:

لا اله الا انت سبحانك اني كنت من الظالمين

'There is no God but you, Glorified are you; truly I have been from the wrong-doers'
(21:87)

Allāh does not love the wrong-doers (3:57), He does not guide such people (3: 86) and He curses them (7: 44). But Yūnus called himself a wrong-doer. The only correct interpretation for this is that when Yūnus calls himself a wrong-doer, then it is a sign of his humility, piety, modesty and humbleness. When someone else calls him a wrong-doer, then this is a sign of insult, ridicule and blasphemy. If some Muslim was to take the exact same phrase and call Yūnus a *Zālim*, then this would render that person a non-Muslim.

The reason why this matter needs clarification is that some Muslims have taken this matter too far and as a result, risk insulting the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). They unfortunately assert that the Prophet is 'just a man', or that the prophet is a 'man like us'. Such statements can earn the wrath of Allāh and as we have seen, these words are exactly what previous communities used to say before they were severely punished by Allāh. To conclude, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) himself clarified that no one can claim to be like him. Imam al-Bukhārī reports in his *Sahīh* that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) once forbade his Companions from keeping continuous fasts³. One of the Companions enquired, 'O Messenger of Allāh! But you keep continuous fasts.' The Prophet replied:

'Who from amongst you is like me? When I go to sleep my Lord gives me food and drink.'⁴

6. 4. Muhammad; the Seal of all Prophets.

All Muslims unanimously agree that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is the last prophet sent from Allāh. There will be no prophet or messenger after him. This issue does not need further clarification and analysis, because the finality of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is proven beyond doubt. Unfortunately, because people have appeared claiming to be a prophet – like Mirza Ghulām Ahmad Qādiānī – it is important to clarify our position beyond doubt.

6.4.1. Who was Mirza Ghulām Ahmad and who are the Qādiānīs?

Mirza Ghulām Ahmad was born between 1835 and 1839 in the Indian village of Qādiān and died in 1908. He founded the Qadiani sect, also known as the Mirzāīs or the Ahmadīs. His sect was founded on the belief that he was a prophet, God forbid. His father served in the court of the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh, who was later overthrown by the British. During his lifetime, the British colonised India and for people like Ghulām Ahmad, it became a reason to become totally dependant on them. Some of the disbelieving comments made by him include:

³ In Arabic, this is called al-Wisāl. It means keeping a fast throughout the day and night for many days.

⁴ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book of Hudud (punishments). Hadith no. 6345.

- ‘He who differentiates between Muhammad and myself and thinks of us as different has not understood or seen me’ (*Khutba Ilhāmiyya*).
- ‘Muhammad could complete the mission of propagating Islam; I have fulfilled this mission’ (*Hāshiyā Tuhfa Ghoulariyya*).
- In the time of Muhammad, Islam was like the crescent of the moon on the first night. However, in my time Islam has become like the full moon on the fourteenth night’ (*Khutba Ilhāmiyya*).
- The number of miracles performed by Muhammad was three thousand in number. But my miracles exceed ten thousand’ (*Barāhīn Ahmadiyya*).
- ‘My book *Barāhīn Ahmadiyya* is the word of Allāh’ (*Izāla al-Awhām*).
- ‘There are grammatical errors in the Qur’ān’ (*Haqīqa al-Wahy*).
- He ascribed the verse ‘And We have not sent you but a mercy for all the worlds’ to himself.⁵
- Not only did Mirza Ghulām Ahmad commit *Kufr* by claiming to be a prophet, he directed insults to Īsa and Maryam (peace be upon them). He reportedly said that Jesus was no way better than Kaushalya’s son Ram.⁶

6.4.2 Evidence from the Holy Qur’ān that Muhammad is the last messenger.

Allāh affirms in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the messenger of Allāh and the Seal (*Khātām*) of the Prophets. And Allāh is aware of everything (33:40).’⁷

Elsewhere, Allāh says:

‘Today I have perfected your *Dīn* for you and have completed my blessings upon you and have chosen Islam as a *Dīn* for you’ (5:3).

If Allāh has ‘completed’ the religion, what purpose is served by sending another prophet or messenger after Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him)?

6.4.3 Evidence from the Ahādīth.

There are countless Ahādīth in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) asserts that he is the final Prophet. Imam al-Bukhārī narrates a Hadīth from Abū Huraira (may Allāh be pleased with him) in which he relates that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said:

‘My position in relation to the prophets who came before me can be explained in the following example. A man erected a building and adorned his edifice with great beauty, but he left an empty niche, in the corner where just one brick was missing, People looked around the building and marvelled at its beauty, but wondered why a brick was missing from that niche. I am like that one missing brick and I am the last in line of the Prophets’.⁸

⁵ All quotes cited in *La Nabīyya Ba’di*. p. 46. Sahibzada Sayyid Muhammad Amin Ali Shah. Bab al-Huda, Faisalabad, Pakistan. 1988.

⁶ pp. 218-9. *Sirat Ahl as-Sunnah*. Published by Sirat al-Muslimun, Manchester. 2002.

⁷ Arab linguists are unanimous in the meaning of the word *Khatam*. Imam Jauhari states that it means to affix, seal or close something. Ibn Manzur states in *Lisan al-Arab* that it means final. Every Mufasssir (commentator of the Quran) has translated *Khatam* to mean final, including Ibn Jarir al-Tabri, Imam Fakruddin Razi, Imam Jalal al-Din Suyuti, Allama Ibn Kathir and Allama Alousi. The commentators have also agreed that anyone who denies the finality of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is not a Muslim.

⁸ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Manaqib, Hadith Number 3271. Imam Muslim and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal have also narrated this same Hadith.

Imam Tirmidhī has recorded a Hadīth in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said:

‘The Chain of Messengers and Prophets has come to an end. There shall be neither Messenger nor Prophet after me.’⁹

There are too many Ahādīth to mention here. In the nine most authentic books of Ahādīth, (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Sahīh Muslim, Jāmi Tirmidhī, Sunan Ibn Māja, Sunan Nasā’ī, Sunan Abū Dāūd, Musnad Ahmad, Muwatta Mālik, Sunan Dārmī*) there are over eighty Ahādīth which all mention that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is the last messenger.

6.4.4 Evidence from Common sense.

- Each prophet preached and delivered the guidance of Islam in a perfect manner but after his passing away, the people modified and altered the scriptures in line with their own desires and false beliefs. This led to the need for another prophet to once again restore and reiterate the true message of Islam. However, with the revelation of the Qur’ān it was announced that there was no possibility of any modification or change in the text. Its each and every word was and will be protected until the Day of Judgement. Thus if the Qur’ān is to remain unaltered there is no need for another Prophet.
- In Islam, the concept of prophet-hood plays a crucial and fundamental role. A person’s Īmān depends upon his views towards prophet-hood. He who believes in each and every prophet is considered a Muslim, and similarly, he who denies any of the Prophets is a Kāfir. If we assume for one moment that there would be a prophet after Muhammad, Allāh would have made it clear to all Muslims. He would have mentioned it clearly in the Qur’ān that there would be a Prophet after Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and there would be some indication in Ahādīth too. So if we are to believe the Qāadianī claim, why is there no mention of him in either the Qur’ān or Sunnah? There is not even a weak Hadīth that supports the Qāadianīs. Instead, we find numerous Ahādīth which all falsify the claim of Mirza Qadianī and any other impostor. Both the Qur’ān and Sunnah are explicitly clear in explaining the finality of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).
- A brief look at the life of Mirza Ghulām Ahmad shows that there are blatant contradictions and discrepancies in his claims. In 1882, he declared himself to be a *Mujaddid* (reviver of faith). Then in 1889, he claimed he was Mahdī, as well as the second coming of Jesus. Finally, he claimed in 1901 that he was a Prophet. Then after his death, the Ahmadīs in Lahore denied that Mirza Ghulām Ahmad had ever claimed prophet-hood and that he was a Muslim saint and not a Prophet. How can Qāadianīs preach their message to others, when they themselves are unclear and confused about their own shallow beliefs?
- To those who show love, respect and adoration for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), any such claim is baseless and futile. Allāh granted the Dear Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) the most lofty of status, in both this world and the hereafter. His name adorns the heavens, the angels continually pray for him, and the believers send salutations upon him. The dear Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is the *magnum opus* of Allāh’s creation. It seems illogical that a vile impostor like Mirza Qāadianī would eclipse such a radiant character such as our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

⁹ *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Kitab al- Ru’ya (Dreams), Hadith Number 2198. Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Imam Ibn Maja and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal have also narrated this same Hadith.

6.4.5 Conclusion.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself – through his God-given knowledge – told us that there would unfortunately be false impostors. Imam al-Bukhārī reports from Abū Huraira:

‘...The Day of Judgement will not happen until lying *Dajjāls* appear, close to thirty in number.’¹⁰

But this aside, it seems that Mirza Ghulām Ahmad was simply an opportunist and a product of his time. He lived at a time when Wahhabism and similar heretical beliefs were gaining popularity in India. He was a contemporary of Rashīd Ahmad Gangūhī (1829-1905), Ashraf Alī Thānwī (1863-1943), Moulāna Muhammad Ilyās, Qāsim Nanotwī (1832-1880), to mention a few names. All had in some form or another insulted and degraded the true status of prophet-hood. Qāsim Nanotwī, for example, explicitly wrote in his book *Tahzīr al-Nās* that if another prophet appears after Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), then it does not change the fact that he is the seal of all prophets.¹¹ Ashraf Alī Thānwī said that ‘there are certain attributes which are common between me and the Holy Prophet.’¹² He also said that ‘the kind of knowledge of the unseen given by Almighty Allah to the Holy Prophet has also been given to animals, lunatics and children.’¹³

Given this climate, Mirza Ghulām Ahmad thought that if the rank of prophet-hood was being projected as so low and ordinary, he too could claim to be one. Because the Wahhābīs and Deobandīs had propagated the Prophet as being a mere-mortal, he saw no reason why he too could not attain such a rank. In short, Muslims at the time began to be-little the status of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to such an extent that an ignorant man like Mirza Ghulām Ahmad could claim to be a prophet.

The best means to preserve the finality of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is to preserve his God-given high rank. This is the precise reason why no real false impostors appeared in the middle ages of Islam; because this was the period when the scholars held the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the highest regard. No one dared to question the finality of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) during the times of the likes of Imam Ghazālī (1058-1111), Qādi Ayādh (1147-1148), Imam Nawawī (1234-1278), Ibn Hajar al-Asqalānī (1372-1448), Imam Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūtī (1445-1505) Imam Sakhāwī (1428-1497) and Imam Qastalānī (1448-1517).

¹⁰ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book of superiorities. Hadith no. 3340.

¹¹ Cited in *al-Aqida al-Hasana (al-Mar’uf bi) Aqa’id al-Islam*. p. 96. Hazrat Shah Wali Allah Muhaddith Delhvi. Edited by Moulana Mufti Muhammad Khalil Khan, Farid Book Stall, Lahore, 1400 A.H.)

¹² Cited in *Sirat Ahl as-Sunnah*. Published by Sirat al-Muslimun, Manchester. 2002. p.313. The original quote is from Ifaazat al-Yaumiyya, Part VII, p. 464.

¹³ *Hifz al-Iman*. p. 7. Cited in *Sirat Ahl as-Sunnah*. Published by Sirat al-Muslimun, Manchester. 2002. p.320.