

The Quran and its Message

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Joseph A Islam www.quransmessage.com

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

END OF PROPHETHOOD - CONTINUATION OF MESSENGERS?

Joseph A Islam

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The terms Nabi (Prophet) and Rasul (Messenger) are often used interchangeably. The Quran distinguishes between the two clearly. However, the reader is advised to conduct their own research with regards this often controversial topic subjecting the Quranic verses to critical thought and self verification.

From a Quranic perspective, **Prophethood has ended**. This is confirmed clearly in the following verse.

033.040

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of God, and the seal of the Prophets (Arabic: Khatama-Nabiyina): and God has full knowledge of all things"

However, by virtue of interpretation and interpolation, many Muslims have accepted that 'messengership' (Arabic: Rasalat) has also ended. It is also significant to note that at no place does the Quran mention the cessation of messengers. Rather, as we will note, the Quranic evidence seems to suggest the contrary.

Regrettably, much negative publicity is surrounded by the claims of messengership by founders of certain sects which has often led to their murder or charging their followers with 'Takfir' (disbelief). What often lies at the heart of the confusion (even amongst those that claim messengership) is usually a misunderstanding of what the word 'Messenger' (Arabic: Rasul) actually entails from a Quran's perspective and how it has been used.

(1) GENERAL DEFINITION OF A MESSENGER

One who is entrusted with a message, a message bearer.

- The King sent a messenger to Prophet Joseph in prison

012:050

"So the king said: "Bring him to me." But when **the messenger (Arabic: rasulu)** came to him, (Joseph) said: "Go back to thy lord, and ask him, 'What is the state of mind of the ladies who cut their hands'? For my Lord is certainly well aware of their snare."

It is to be noted that the message bearer that was sent to prison to summon Prophet Joseph, ^(pbuh) is referred to as a 'Rasul' (messenger).

MESSENGERS - EAT OF THE GOOD THINGS

Please note the plural use of the word 'rasulu' in the following verse. This cannot simply be a reference to the Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh) The mention of eating and drinking clearly indicates that all those that were engaged with spreading the message with the Prophet were being termed as 'messengers'.

023:051

"O Messengers! **(Arabic: rusulu - plural)**. Eat of the good things and do right. Indeed, I am aware of what ye do"

Therefore, the term 'rasul' has a broader meaning seldom appreciated in popular Muslim thought.

(2) MESSENGERS (RASUL) AND PROPHETS (NABI) ARE NOT THE SAME THING

022:052

Never did We send **a messenger or a prophet** before you, but, when he framed a desire, Satan threw some (vanity) into his desire: but God will cancel anything (vain) that Satan throws in, and God will confirm (and establish) His Signs: for God is full of Knowledge and Wisdom:

Muslim thought usually accepts the position that a messenger is entrusted to bring a scripture and a prophet merely reaffirms it. In this way, a messenger would be tasked with greater responsibility. It is then further extrapolated that whereas a messenger can be a prophet, a prophet does not necessarily have to be a messenger (does not bring new law, scripture).

The opposite seems to be true from an examination of all the relevant Quranic narratives. Not only is a messenger not necessarily a prophet, from a Quran's perspective, it appears that a prophet of God is charged with greater tasks and is entrusted with delivering scripture or law. Furthermore, messengers are sent to confirm a message.

The reader is humbly encouraged to follow the arguments to the end of the article where various themes from the Quran will be examined.

(3) PROPHETS ARE GIVEN A BOOK (SCRIPTURE), WISDOM AND JUDGEMENT (AUTHORITY)

Please note the difference between 'hukma' and 'hikma' in Arabic which translates to judgment and wisdom respectively.

006.089

"These were the men to whom We gave the Book (Arabic: Kitaba), and authority (Arabic: Hukma), and Prophethood (Arabic: Nabuwa): if these (their descendants) reject them, Behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new people who reject them not"



Illustration - Joseph Islam

002.213 (part)

"Mankind were one community, and God sent (to them) Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed with them the Scripture (Arabic: Kitaba) in truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed..."

003.079 (part)

"It is not (possible) for any human being to whom God had given the Scripture and authority (Arabic: Hukma) and the Prophethood that he should afterwards have said unto mankind: Be slaves of me instead of God..."

003:081

"And when God made a covenant through the Prophets: Certainly what I have given you of Book and wisdom (Arabic: Hikmah) then a Messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him. He said: Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)? They said: We do affirm. He said: Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you"

It is absolutely clear from the above verses that the Prophets are bearers of scripture (kitab), wisdom (hikmah) and hukma (authority).

(4) PROPHETHOOD HAS ENDED. THERE ARE NO MORE DIVINE SCRIPTURES

033.040

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of God, and the seal of the Prophets (Arabic: Khatama Nabyina): and God has full knowledge of all things"

Please note the word 'Khaatam(a)' which in Arabic signifies a seal, or more accurately, an object used to seal or to put an impression of a signet on a writing or book. This endows it with a covering, an act of securing and implies the reaching of an end. This term's usage is even more significant when understood in the light of Prophet Muhammad's^(pbuh) ministry which was to deliver the final message of God. Here the relationship of a signet or stamp to impress on a book to imply the ending of such a message cannot simply be overlooked.

It is in this capacity as a 'Nabi' (one through whom a scripture is revealed), that this seal has been set. Therefore, by acting as a seal to Prophethood, this also negates the possibility of any new Divine scriptures.

خَتَمَ

خَتَمَهُ (Ş, Mgh, Mşb, K,) aor. ٘, (Mşb, K,) inf. n. خَتْمٌ (Ş, Mgh, Mşb, K) and خَتَامٌ, (Lh, K, TA,) with kesr, (TA,) [in the CK, erroneously, خَتَامٌ,] i. q. طَبَعَهُ [He sealed, stamped, imprinted, or impressed, it]: (Mşb, K:) or he put the خَاتَمٌ [or signet] upon it: (Mgh:) namely, a thing, (Ş, Mgh,) or a writing or book and the like: and خَتَمَ عَلَيْهِ signifies the same [or he put a seal, or the impression of a signet, upon it]. (Mşb.) Accord. to Er-Rághib, خَتَمَ and طَبَعَ signify The impressing a thing with the engraving of the signet and stamp: and the former [as is

writings and doors: and sometimes as meaning the producing an impression, or effect, upon a thing from another thing; in consideration of the impress produced [by the signet]: and sometimes it is used as relating to †the reaching the end [of a thing]: (TA:) or the primary signification of

(5) CONTINUATION OF MESSENGERS (RASULS)

007:035

"O ye Children of Adam! whenever there come to you messengers from among you, rehearsing My verses (Arabic: ayati) to you, those who are righteous and mend (their lives), on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve"

There is nothing in the above verse to suggest the cessation of messengers. This verse is addressed to **all the Children of Adam** ^(pbuh) (including both you and me) and **confirms** the continuation of messengers.

What is also equally significant to note, is that the phrase 'O Children of Adam' (Arabic: Ya Bani Adama) has only been used in the Quran to denote generic guidance to all mankind. This guidance not only applied to previous generations, but also to the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) and more importantly, to all the subsequent generations that would follow after him.

007:026

'O Children of Adam! We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty and clothing that guards (against evil), that is the best. This is of the communications of God that they may be mindful'

007:027

'O Children of Adam! let not the Satan cause you to fall into affliction as he expelled your parents from the garden, pulling off from them both their clothing that he might show them their evil inclinations, he surely sees you, he as well as his host, from where you cannot see them. Surely We have made the Satans to be the guardians of those who do not believe'

007:031

'O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God loves not the wasters'

Directives to the 'Children of Adam' above are reserved for all humankind, past, present and future.

Please also note the following verse:

044.003-5

"Lo! We revealed it on a blessed night - Lo! We are (Arabic: kunna) ever warning. Whereon every wise command is made clear as a command from Our presence - Lo! We are (Arabic: kunna) ever sending"

The Arabic word 'kunna' clearly refers to the fact that warnings 'are' being sent and to the reader implies that they have always been sent in the past (i.e. messengers have always been sent to man). There is no indication from these verses that future warnings have ceased but rather based on the past, the implication remains that such warning will continue. Please note how the Arabic word 'kunna' (verb and subject pronoun) are used in other verses such as 17:49.

(6) GOD'S GUIDANCE WILL CONTINUE FOR ALL CHILDREN OF ADAM ^(pbuh)

002:038

"We said: Go down / forth, all of you, from hence; **but verily there comes to you from Me a guidance**; and whosoever follows My guidance, there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve"

020:123

"He said: Go down hence, both of you, one of you an enemy to the other. **But when there comes to you from Me a guidance, then whosoever follows My guidance, he will not go astray nor come to grief**"

(7) NO NATION IS LEFT WITHOUT A MESSENGER

010:047

"And for **every nation there is a Messenger**. And when their Messenger comes (on the Day of Judgment) it will be judged between them fairly, and they will not be wronged"

There is nothing in the above verse to suggest that the directive is past tense as many commentators attempt to imply with their annotated commentary. Also, it is inconceivable to accept the proposition that no new nation has arisen after the demise of Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh) No doubt, many have come and gone.

If the traditional argument is to be accepted, one is left with an untenable position to reconcile. The traditional Muslim argument posits that messengers are given a Book (contrary to the Quranic verses). If every nation or community is to receive a messenger (as noted in 10:47 and can be referenced in 16:36), are we then to accept (by logical deduction), that each nation would also receive a scripture?

Clearly, this is an unwarranted assertion.

However, if the meaning of 'Prophet' is properly understood in light of the Quran's own narratives (rather than reliance on theology sourced from [Islamic secondary sources](#)), it will be noted that Prophets are given books and that Prophethood has ceased. This leaves open the ability of messengers to still impart true guidance to their people in varying capacities.

(8) FOR EVERY PEOPLE OR NATION THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A GUIDE

013:007

"And those who disbelieve say: Why has not a sign been sent down upon him from his Lord? You are only a warner (**Arabic - Mundhirin**) and (there is) a guide (**Arabic: Hadin**) for every people (**Arabic: Qawmin**)"

This also resonates with the following verse where on the Day of Judgment, God will ask each people / nation about their own messengers. As mentioned earlier, it is inconceivable

to admit that no new nation or people have arisen after the death of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) over 1400 years ago.

039:071

“And those who disbelieve are driven unto hell in troops till, when they reach it and the gates of them are opened, and the warders of them will say to them: **Came there not to you messengers of your own, reciting to you the revelations of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this your Day?** they say: Yes, verily. But the word of doom of disbelievers is fulfilled”

(9) THE ROLE OF A MESSENGER IS TO GIVE GOOD NEWS AND TO WARN (NOT ALWAYS TO DELIVER A SCRIPTURE)

006:048

“We send the messengers **only to give good news and to warn:** so those who believe and mend (their lives), upon them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve”

(10) THE MESSENGERS SPEAK IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE

014.004

“ We sent not a messenger except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them. Now God leaves to stray those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases: and He is Exalted in power, full of Wisdom”

With so many new languages having developed since the departure of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) nearly 1400 years ago, it would be incredulous to assert that new messengers would not have come to warn their own folk in their own languages.

As Arabic is not the lingua franca of the world, nor has it ever been, it would be unjust to expect the diverse human population to extract a clear message from an Arabic Quran. Therefore, messengers would be expected to impart the message of the Quran clearly in the vernacular of their own communities or people. This would have been as true in the early days of Islam when the message of the Quran spread to different nations, as it is today.

Please see related articles [1] and [2] below.

(11) THOSE THAT ASSIST (OR ARE HELPERS) IN IMPARTING THE MESSAGE CAN ALSO BE TERMED 'MESSENGERS'

We already noted in the opening paragraphs of this article the following verse:

023:051

"O Messengers! (Arabic: rusulu - plural). Eat of the good things and do right. Indeed, I am aware of what ye do"

If read in context with its following verse, it is clear that this verse was directed at the Prophet's community. Therefore, those that aided the Prophet in spreading the message were also being referred to as messengers.

023.052

"And indeed this brotherhood / community (**Arabic: ummatukum**) of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord, therefore fear Me"

This understanding is strengthened by other verses of the Quran.

025.035-36

(Before this,) We sent Moses The Book, and appointed his brother Aaron with him as minister (a henchman, an aider) (**Arabic: waziran**) and We command: "Go ye both, to the people who have rejected our Signs:" And those (people) We destroyed with utter destruction"

This can also be noted with respect to Prophet Noah ^(pbuh) who must have had support as there is a reference to a **plurality** of messengers.

026.105

"The people of Noah rejected the **messengers**"

This can be further supported with verse: 25:37

025:037

"And the people of Noah, **when they rejected the messengers**, We drowned them and We made them as a Sign for mankind and We have prepared for (all) wrong-doers a grievous Penalty"

Please also note the plurality in the following verses:

026.123

"The Ad (people) rejected the **messengers**"

026.141

"The Thamud (people) rejected the **messengers**"

026.160

"The people of Lut rejected the **messengers**"

026.176

"The Companions of the Wood rejected the **messengers**"

It is clear that there seems to be more than one 'messenger' working in tandem and as an aid to the 'central figure' delivering the message of God to these communities. This is further

seen in the plurality of messengers in Surah (Chapter) Yasin when two messengers were sent and were then strengthened with a third (36:14)

- It appears from these verses that anyone who assists in delivering the message or acts as a henchman along with the appointed messengers, is also referred to as a 'Messenger'
- Also note that misleaders are not chosen as helpers (18:51)

(12) MESSENGERS WILL BE WITNESSES ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

Both prophets and witnesses are mentioned in the following verse as those being brought forward on the Day of Judgment to testify.

039:069

“And the earth shall beam with the light of its Lord, and the Book shall be laid down, and the prophets and the witnesses (Arabic: Shuhadai) shall be brought up, and judgment shall be given between them with justice, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly”

Please note that the term 'prophets' has been mentioned as a separate category with no specific mention of 'messengers'. Rather, only witnesses. If Prophets only included those who confirmed a message, **then it is questionable why there is no mention of 'messengers' who brought the message in the first instance and would stand witness against their people.**

The counter argument that witnesses include the messengers is also untenable as witnesses can be of many types and it would be difficult to accept inclusion of a greater category (i.e. Messengers) along with and as part of a generic category of 'witnesses'.

Clearly, the traditional position is unsupportable in light of the Quran's verses.

(13) GOD'S DECREE FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

058.021

“God has decreed (Arabic: Kataba I-lahu): "It is I and My messengers (Arabic: Warasuli) who must prevail": For God is One full of strength, able to enforce His Will”

This verse is being revealed to Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) and his direct audience (his community). Note that the term 'Messengers' (Arabic: warasuli) is once again, in the plural form. It is also interesting to note the construct of the verse which applies not only to those contemporaneous to the Prophet, but also addresses the future. There is no indication in the verse of any cessation of future messengers.

(14) GOD SENDS HIS COMMAND TO ANY SLAVE TO WARN THAT THERE IS NO GOD BUT HIM AND TO WARN OF THE MEETING OF THE LAST DAY

016.002

"He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command to whom He will of His bondmen, (saying): Warn mankind that there is no God save Me, so keep your duty to Me"

040.015

"The Exalter of Ranks, the Lord of the Throne. He places the Spirit of His command upon whom He will of His slaves, to warn of the Day of Meeting"

(15) PROPHETS HAVE GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITY

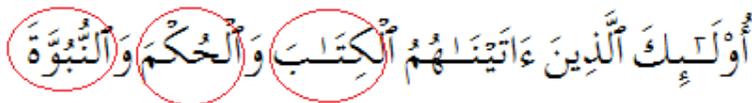
008.067

"It is not fitting for a prophet that he should have prisoners of war until he has thoroughly subdued the land. Ye look for the temporal goods of this world; but God looks to the Hereafter: And God is Exalted in might, Wise"

Please also note that 'prophets' are given 'authority' as is clear from the following verses and has already been mentioned above in the article.

006.089

"These were the men to whom We gave the Book (Arabic: Kitaba), and authority (Arabic: Hukma), and Prophethood (Arabic: Nabuwa): if these (their descendants) reject them, Behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new people who reject them not"



Nabuwa Hukma Kitaba

Illustration - Joseph Islam

003.079 (Part)

"It is not (possible) for any human being to whom God had given the Scripture and authority (Arabic: Hukma) and the Prophethood that he should afterwards have said unto mankind: Be slaves of me instead of God..."

Many Muslims make use of the following verse to assert that messengers have greater responsibilities than Prophets. In fact, all the verse informs one is that no nation will be destroyed where at least a messenger has not been sent. This does not confer greater responsibility on prophets, but rather, it underscores the requirement that at least some sort of guide or warner will to be sent to a folk who are unaware of what wrong they do. Otherwise, their destruction would be unjust.

Furthermore, no nation would be destroyed until its people practiced gross iniquity and wrongdoing. This may or may not require a messenger to be sent.

028.059

"Nor was thy Lord the one to destroy a population until He had sent to its centre a messenger, rehearsing to them Our verses; nor are We going to destroy a population except when its members practice iniquity / wrongdoing"

(16) WHAT COULD NEW MESSENGERS POSSIBLY BRING?

Regardless as to whom or what messengership entails, one matter appears quite certain i.e. the cessation of any further scriptures from God as confirmed by the Quran. The last scripture, the Quran, was the final revelation to mankind which ended with the 'Nubuwa' (Prophethood) of Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh)

Anything moving forward can only be a reversion back to the true teachings of the scriptures of God or to warn mankind of the Last Day. This is also consistent with the advice given in 3:81, where a messenger **will only confirm existing scripture. (Please see related article [3] below)**

006.048

"We send the messengers only to give good news and to warn: so those who believe and mend (their lives), upon them shall be no fear"

039:071

"And those who disbelieve are driven unto hell in troops till, when they reach it and the gates thereof are opened, and the warders thereof say unto them: **Came there not to you messengers of your own, reciting to you the revelations of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this your Day?** they say: Yea, verily. But the word of doom of disbelievers is fulfilled"

007:035

"**O ye Children of Adam!** whenever there come to you messengers from among you, rehearsing My verses (**Arabic: ayati**) to you, those who are righteous and mend (their lives), on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve"

God's true messengers only advocate the worship of one God without any associations or partnerships. They also condemn any forms of idol worship. **(See related article [4] below).** They rehearse the verses of existing scripture and the message contained within them.

God's true messengers never ask for a fee or recompense. Their recompense is only with their Lord. **(Please see related article [5] below)**

God has never demanded his servants to submit without question to anyone apart from Himself. Not even to the prophets or messengers. One must always retain the faculties of critical thought, individual assessment and discernment. The limit of obedience to a Prophet of God is '**ma'rufin**' (up to the point what is considered right and just). **(Please see related article [6] below)**

FINAL THOUGHTS

Given all the evidence cited above, the traditional belief that **both** prophethood and messengership have ceased cannot be supported from a Quranic perspective. No doubt, **prophethood has indeed ceased**. However, the continuation of guidance through various messengers in various capacities is still open. Given the number of nations that have arisen, thrived and departed since the demise of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) over 1400 years ago, one can only imagine the number of possible 'guides' or 'messengers' that have potentially walked on the planet.

Fellow Muslims are content to ask for guidance from God many times during their prayer, yet sadly, may not be ready to accept guidance if it conflicts with their established beliefs.

Is it not for God to guide and send clear proof to anyone through any means that He deems fit, even if this entails sending a messenger of some nature as a guide? Do we really pray for true guidance, or are we only truly ready to accept what we 'want' to based on the traditions of our forefathers? Could we even handle the truth?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXoNE14U_zM&feature=player_embedded

"May our Lord help us to accept clear guidance when it reaches us no matter how or through whom it reaches us. Our Lord, give us the strength and courage to accept the truth whatever that may be" Amen.

Related Articles:

- (1) [Is Arabic a Holy or Superior Language?](#)
- (2) [Why was the Quran revealed in Arabic?](#)
- (3) [Is Verse 3:81 a Reference to any Particular Messenger?](#)
- (4) [Idolatry According to the Quran](#)
- (5) [Follow Those Who Ask of No Fee](#)
- (6) [The Limits of Obeying a Messenger](#)

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 2, Page 702

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[Joseph Islam](#)

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