

## 1. An Exclusive “Merit”?

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) says:

وكان إذا سافر عن المدينة استخلف من يستخلفه يصلي بالمسلمين كما استخلف ابن أم مكتوم تارة وعليها تارة في الصلاة واستخلف غيرهما تارة

فأما في حال غيبته ومرضه فلم يستخلف إلا أبا بكر لا عليا ولا غيره واستخلافه للصديق في الصلاة متواتر ثابت في الصحاح والسنن والمسند من غير وجه

Whenever he (the Prophet) left Madinah on a journey, he would appoint a *khalifah* (to govern the city on his behalf). Whoever he appointed as a *khalifah* would lead the Muslims in *salat*, as he once made Ibn Umm Maktum a *khalifah*, and also ‘Ali once, to lead the *salat*. He equally appointed others apart from them both as *khalifahs* at other times.

However, during his absence or illness, he never appointed anyone as *khalifah* except Abu Bakr – neither ‘Ali nor anyone else. **And his appointment of al-Siddiq as *khalifah* to lead *salat* is *mutawatir***, and authentically narrated in the *Sahih* books, and the *Sunan* books, and the *Musnad* books through many routes. [1](#)

Basically, our Shaykh confesses to the following points:

1. Abu Bakr was NOT the first or the only to lead Muslims in *salat* in the mosque of the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi*, in Madinah.
2. Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali, *‘alaihi al-salam*, and Ibn Umm Maktum, *ra‘iyallahu ‘anhu*, were among those Sahabah, *ra‘iyallahu ‘anhum*, who also led the Muslims in *salat* in that mosque *on the order* of the Messenger of Allah.

But, our Shaykh then proceeds to make some garbled remarks:

- i. Abu Bakr was the only one ever deputized to lead *salat* in the mosque of the Prophet during his *absence* from Madinah.
- ii. He was also the only one ever commanded to lead the *salat* in that mosque during the Messenger's illness.

Somehow, Ibn Taymiyyah thinks that these were “*exclusive* merits” of his first *khalifah*, Abu Bakr. But, when the Messenger of Allah appointed Imam ‘Ali, Ibn Umm Maktum and others as *khalifahs* over his Madinah, was he then not also “absent” from the city?! The Shaykh himself answers:

وكان إذا سافر عن المدينة استخلف من يستخلفه يصلي بالمسلمين

Whenever he (the Prophet) LEFT MADINAH on a journey, he would appoint a *khalifah* (to govern the city on his behalf). Whoever he appointed as a *khalifah* would lead the Muslims in *Salat*

With this admission, one wonders: on what basis then was Abu Bakr the only one ever appointed *khalifah* to lead *salat* in Madinah *during the Prophet's absence*? How on earth did that submission of Ibn Taymiyyah even ever make any sense to him at all?! Why do these people suddenly lose their simple logic whenever discussions involving Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib come up?

As for our Shaykh's insistence on the “uniqueness” of Abu Bakr's *khilafah* in *salat* during the Prophet's illness, then, there are two issues. One, as we will demonstrate in this book, there is NO reliable proof of it – to begin with! All that our Sunni brothers can muster together are nothing but a set of severely contradictory *riwayat* which only muddle up the entire picture. Such kinds of irreconcilable reports are never accepted as valid testimonies. Two, even if it is agreed, for the sake of argument, that Abu Bakr ever led the *salat* on the order of the Prophet, then there is very little “merit” in it for him, if any at all. He then would have been a *khalifah* in *salat* only, which was the weakest form of *khilafah*. He would have had no authority whatsoever to give commands to the Muslim soldiers, or to administer the Muslim society, or to pass judgments in disputes. Basically, he had no administrative, military or judicial authority in his alleged *khilafah*. By contrast, when Amir al-Muminin was made the *khalifah* of Madinah by the Messenger during the Battle of Tabuk, the former had full authority to lead Muslims in *salat* in the Prophet's mosque, command the Muslim armed forces stationed with him in the city, administer the affairs of its inhabitants and give judgments in any disputes that arose among them! How can anyone rationally consider the largely empty *khilafah* of Abu Bakr as superior to that of ‘Ali? How do these people reason?

The issue of Abu Bakr's alleged appointment as prayer-leader is usually raised by our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah in debates over *khilafah*. Their logic always is – since the Prophet deputized Abu Bakr to lead the *salat* in his mosque, then he was automatically declaring the latter, implicitly, as his *khalifah* after his death. However, even Ibn Taymiyyah is unable to completely ignore the fallacy of this

mainstream Sunni premise:

ليس كل من يصلح للاستخلاف في الحياة على بعض الأمة يصلح إن يستخلف بعد الموت فإن النبي صلى الله عليه  
و سلم استخلف في حياته غير واحد و منهم من لا يصلح للخلافة بعد موته

Not all who are qualified to be appointed *khalifahs* during the lifetime (of the Muslim ruler) over part of the *Ummah* are equally qualified to be appointed as *khalifahs* after the death (of the ruler). **The Prophet, peace be upon him, appointed during his lifetime many people as *khalifahs*, and among them were those who were not qualified for the *khilafah* after his death.**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 8, p. 558

<sup>2</sup>. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 7, p. 339

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