

Information About the Future of the Prophet and the Prophethood

Wilson: So far we have discussed two types of Qur'anic statements prophesying unexpected futures: one dealing with the fate of the Qur'an itself, and another dealing with the future of Islam. Does the Qur'an offer any prediction about the future of the Prophet himself?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an contains a very clear information that deals with the safety of the Prophet Muhammad:

“O Messenger, deliver that which had been revealed to thee from thy Lord; and if thou do not, thou hast not delivered His message. And God will protect thee from all men. Surely God guides not the disbelieving people. ” 5:70

The verse assures the Prophet Muhammad a full protection against all human beings. No human power, according to the prophecy, can destroy the life of Muhammad. Should the Prophet die in the battlefield or be assassinated, the statement would be untrue and the prophethood disproved.

With the conditions under which the Prophet lived, the prophecy was contrary to human expectancy. From the time Islam was publicly proclaimed, the Prophet was faced with a public hostility. He was singled out as the sole enemy of the Meccans. His life became surrounded with dangers. He lived constantly under threat and for many years without any physical protection. When his defender, Abu Talib, died, he could not even find a temporary protection in the holy sanctuaries in order to deliver his message to the pilgrims.

The important leaders took a solemn pledge to hunt him down and kill him. When he escaped, a great reward was announced for his capture, dead or alive. Before departure to Madina, Muhammad's life was certain to be taken, and Islam was expected to be wiped out while it was still only a spark.

After arriving in Madina, the battles began and the Muslims were thrown into open and violent conflict, in which they were always greatly outnumbered. The Meccans managed to set the desert tribes against the

Muslims. Moreover, the rulers of the Non-Arab nations were vehemently exasperated by the very strong language Muhammad used in inviting them to embrace Islam. An example of these invitations is his message to Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor:

“In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. From Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, the Apostle of God, to Heraclius, the great of the Romans. Surely I send you the invitation of Islam. Be Muslim, and thou will be safe. God will reward thee twice. If thou turn away, thou will be burdened with the sins of thy subjects. People of the Scripture, come to an equitable word between us and you: That we shall worship none but God, and that we shall associate naught with Him, and that we shall not take each other for lords besides the Almighty God. But if they turn away, then say: Bear witness, we are Muslims.”¹

Despite the dangers with which the Prophet was surrounded, he lived an ordinary life. He had no bodyguards and fought in battle, sometimes in the front lines. He walked the streets after dark and dwelt in an unguarded home. There was abundant opportunity for assassination, and numerous attempts were made. A few of these attempts will be mentioned, and they are selected from many occurrences:

One day he was sleeping alone at the foot of a tree, at some distance from his camp. He was awakened by a noise and lo ! he beheld Durthur, an enemy warrior, standing over him with drawn sword. “O Muhammad,” cried he, “Who is there to save thee?” “God,” replied the Prophet. For some unknown reason, Durthur let his sword fall, which was instantly seized by the Prophet. Brandishing the weapon, he exclaimed in turn, “Who is there now to save thee, O Durthur?” “Alas! No one,” replied the soldier. “Then learn from me to be merciful. ” So saying, he returned his sword to him. The heart of the soldier was overcome. He acknowledged Muhammad as a true prophet and embraced the faith.²

On another occasion, Muhammad went accompanied by some of his followers to visit a non-Muslim tribe. A meal was prepared outside, in front of the mansion of the chief of the tribe. The Prophet knew that he had been treacherously decoyed hither and was to be slain as he sat down to eat. It is said that he was to be crushed by a millstone flung from the terraced roof of the house. Without intimating his knowledge of the treason, he left the company abruptly and hastened back to Madina.³

More than once, Muhammad was abandoned in battle when his warriors left him almost alone against thousands of pagans. At such times, he was the target of the enemy forces and was extremely vulnerable.

Had Muhammad been trying to perpetuate a lie, he might have chosen a prophecy more likely to prove true than that he would be protected against harm in such situations. Muhammad was sure of God's protection, and the prophecy was fulfilled.

Wilson: Does the Qur'an offer any information about the future of the prophethood in general?

Chirri: The declaration which states the finality of the Prophet Muhammad is a clear information about

the future of prophethood:

“Muhammad is not a father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the 'Khatam' of the prophets, and God is Ever-Knower of all things.” 33:40

The word Khatam, as advanced, means the seal which closes a container or the seal whose imprint confirms the authenticity of certain contents of a written document or a message. Sealing for closure or for confirmation comes at the end of what it closes or confirms.

The Prophet Muhammad said to his cousin Ali:

“Thy position from me compares to the position of Aaron from Moses, but there will be no prophet after me.”

To declare that Muhammad is the final of the prophets is, actually, an information about the very far future of the prophethood. It informs that the world shall not witness a prophet after the death of Muhammad, and that God will not send any messenger to mankind, subsequent to him. Thus the long history of the prophethood will come to a close by the death of Muhammad.

This is a prophecy in an entirely unexpected direction. We should expect God to continue sending His prophets to mankind. He sent many prophets before Muhammad, and we normally expect Him to continue doing so after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The human generations, before Muhammad, were not more entitled to heavenly messages than the generations subsequent to him. As a matter of fact, Materialism in the modern age is much greater than it was before Muhammad; therefore, a spiritual revelation would be much more needed than ever before.

The complexity of the causes in this area is entirely beyond the human knowledge. No human being is able to know how God determines to send a prophet to mankind. The knowledge of this is exclusive only to God.

Wilson: An impressive prophecy usually deals with some specific event that may take place at a certain time. The information which the verse contains does not deal with a specific event that will take place at a particular time. It does not tell us of something that will happen. It is a negative information, telling us that no prophet will come after Muhammad.

Chirri: To give a positive information is much easier than to give a negative one. Let us illustrate that by an example of information that deals with the past rather than the future: It is much easier to say that Mr. Smith drove a car than to say that Mr. Johnson never drove a car. To be truthful in the positive one, one needs to see Mr. Smith once driving a car. To say truthfully that Mr. Johnson never drove a car, one needs to know all the past of Mr. Johnson.

Let us deal with a future information. We may predict that there will be, within fifty years, a genius scientist from among the people of Detroit. This is much easier than to say that there will be no genius

scientist in Detroit within fifty years. Such information requires an extensive knowledge about the millions who will live in Detroit within that period. Such knowledge is actually beyond our reach.

Suppose that we make a wider prediction. Let us state that the United States of America or the whole world will not have any genius scientist for fifty years. Such a prediction would obviously be absurd. If we predict that the whole world will not have such a scientist forever, the absurdity of our prediction would be self-evident.

Such is the declaration of the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad. It deals not only with a limited future of a particular nation; it deals with the unlimited future of the whole world. The whole world, it actually says, will not witness another prophet after Muhammad, until the end of the world. Muhammad himself was humanly unable to foresee such a future. The prediction was not his. It is a revelation of the only One Who knows the future of mankind.

This prophecy has been fulfilled. The world, for the last thirteen centuries, did not witness one single prophet.

Wilson: Many individuals after Muhammad claimed prophethood. Some of them lived in this century and some of them are still living. Does not their claim affect the truthfulness of the prophecy?

Chirri: The claim of prophethood does not amount to anything and will not affect the truthfulness of this prophecy, unless such a claim has been proven. It is a fact that hundreds of individuals proclaimed their prophethood, and some of them had lived at the time of the Prophet Muhammad himself. It is also a fact that none of those individuals could prove their prophethood. Most of them have been disproved, and their claims died with them. The disproval of their claims is, by itself, another evidence on the truth and the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Wilson: The absence of prophethood in the last thirteen centuries is not a conclusive evidence of the end of prophethood. This vacuum in the past does not mean that mankind will not receive more prophets in the future. Should any messenger come in the future, his advent will disprove the declaration.

Chirri: The finality of the prophethood of Muhammad was not evident at the time of the Prophet himself because the advent of other prophets was highly probable. And so it seemed within the first few centuries, subsequent to his death. By the lapse of a thousand years from the death of the Prophet, the advent of more prophets became less probable. Separation between two prophets before the time of Muhammad never reached a thousand or even seven hundred years. There was only about four hundred years between Abraham and Moses. Hundreds of prophets came successively between Moses and Jesus. The separation between Jesus and Muhammad did not reach six hundred years.

The need for prophets is always standing. The absence of the prophethood within a thousand years, in spite of the need of the human race for guidance, is very unusual. It suggests a certain relation between this long vacuum and the finality of the Prophet Muhammad. The relation between the finality of the

Prophet Muhammad and the absence of the prophets for such a long period is very obvious. By the lapse of more than thirteen centuries, the truthfulness of the prophecy has become more evident. The older this prophecy becomes, the clearer its truth will be. The truth of the declaration has passed the stage of any reasonable doubt. The probability of the advent of future prophets now has become negligible.

Wilson: I may agree with you that though the advent of more prophets is possible, it is less probable than before; and it seems that it is unlikely to happen in the future. But I would like to know the reason for the conclusion of the prophethood by the death of Muhammad. Mankind still needs spiritual guidance and, actually, with the rise of Materialism in the modern ages, mankind needs such guidance more than ever before.

Chirri: I do not know the exact reason for the conclusion of the prophethood. It may be the universality of the prophethood of Muhammad. All the previous prophets were sent to particular communities or nations. All the Israelite prophets were sent to the Hebrews. None of them were sent to the whole human race. Even the great Jesus, according to the Gospel, said:

“I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Only Muhammad came as a universal prophet who was sent to no particular nation or region but to all mankind. From the Holy Qur'an:

“Say: O mankind, surely I am the Messenger of God to you all, of Him, Whose is the kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth.” 7: 158

By reaching the degree of universality, the prophethood has reached its highest stage. It may end at that stage. The message is directed to the whole human race. Mankind no longer lacks the spiritual guidance. The guidance has become available to all nations and to every individual. What mankind needs is not a new guidance, but the acceptance of the available guidance.

[1.](#) Life of the Prophet Muhammad, Muhammad Hussein Haikal, 3rd ed., p. 371.

[2.](#) Life of Muhammad by Washington Irving, chapter 18.

[3.](#) Life of Muhammad by Washington Irving, chapter 21.

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