

Fast 29: Prophets and Messengers — Prophet Muhammad as a mortal

- Besides the general principle taught repeatedly in the Quran that all prophets were mortal human beings, with the same physical needs as every human, this is made even clearer in the specific case of the Holy Prophet Muhammad:

“Say: If people and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though they helped one another. And certainly We have made clear for people in this Quran every kind of description, but most people consent only to denying.” (17:88–89)

قُلْ لَّيِّنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا
بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ
بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ
فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ فَأَبَىٰ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ
إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿٨٩﴾

First, we are told here that the Quran is such a comprehensive book for mankind that it cannot be equalled by any human production, even if all humans, great and small, Arab and non-Arab, combined together to create something like it. Then the Quran tells us that the reason why people deny accepting it is that they want the Holy Prophet to fulfil their following demands:

“And they say: We will by no means believe in you, till you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us, or you have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which you cause rivers to flow forth abundantly, or you cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces, as you think, or bring Allah and the angels face to face (with us), or you have a house of gold, or you ascend into heaven. And we will not believe in your ascending till you bring down to us a book we can read. Say: Glory be to my Lord! **Am I anything but a mortal messenger?**” (17:90–93)

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
يَنْبُوعًا ﴿٩٠﴾ أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَعِنَبٍ
فَتَفْجُرَ الْأَنْهَارُ خِلَالَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ﴿٩١﴾ أَوْ تُسْقِطَ
السَّمَاءَ كَمَا زَعَمَتِ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا أَو تَأْتِي بِلِلِّهِ
وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ قَبِيلًا ﴿٩٢﴾ أَوْ يَكُونَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ
زُخْرَفٍ أَوْ تَرْقَىٰ فِي السَّمَاءِ ۗ وَلَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِرُقِيِّكَ
حَتَّىٰ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا نَقْرُوهُ ۗ قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ
هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ﴿٩٣﴾

They demand that he provide them with worldly comforts and satisfy their bodily needs and desires in abundance, or that he show them that he possesses some supernatural powers to control nature, or bring God right in front of them, or possess riches, or demonstrate to them physically that he can bring them a heavenly scripture. The Holy Prophet is told to reply that God is far above delegating such powers to be

exercised by any human being as he wishes — “glory be to my Lord”, meaning that He is above making someone His partner in this way. Then comes the crowning line to sum it all up: “Am I anything but a mortal messenger?”

They are not prepared to look at the guidance provided by the Quran, because of course that would mean thinking and pondering over it, acquiring knowledge of deep and subtle matters, conducting a self-examination of their own faults and bringing about a reform in their lives. What they want is to have everything brought to them on a plate, and shown and demonstrated. They don’t want to know the ways by walking in which, and striving hard, man can find God. God has revealed those to them in the Quran. They just want God to come straight to them. That simply cannot happen. It is just like God has created things in nature for our physical benefit, for example sources of energy, but man has had to find them by hard work.

- The Holy Prophet is again described as a mortal in the following verses:

“Say: I am only a mortal like you — it is revealed to me that your God is one God. So whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and make no one a partner (with God) in the service of his Lord.” (18:110)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمْ
إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ
عَمَلًا صَابِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١١٠﴾

“Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is one God, so keep in the straight path to Him, and ask His protection.” (41:6)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمْ
إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا إِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا ۗ

The Holy Prophet is not only called “a mortal” but “a mortal **like you**”. This doubly stresses that he is a mortal human being. He has come with a message, for other mortals like him, that their God is only one. The way of meeting Him is to do good deeds, and in all acts of worship to turn only to Him, without adding anyone else. Sometimes Muslim parents say to their children, in desperation to persuade them to pray or follow some other practice of Islam: Do it to make us happy, do it for our sake. But making parents happy should not be the **reason**, but only the **consequence**. In “the service of his Lord”, no one should be made partner, and you should not try to please someone else by your prayers.

In the second verse, after saying “your God is one God” like the first verse, the actions required of man are put in different words, although they are the same. Keeping in “the straight path to Him” (2nd verse) is the same as doing good deeds to meet the Lord (1st verse), and asking His protection (2nd verse) is the same as serving his Lord without partner (1st verse).