
Messengers 7 – Distinguishing between the true Prophet and the liar

Based on the works of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan (حفظه الله)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

QUESTION: How can we then distinguish between the liar and the truthful person who both claim to be Prophets?

ANSWER:

The person who claims Prophethood will either be telling the Truth or he will be lying in his claim.

Throughout history, the fate of those people who falsely claimed to be Prophets has always been that they are exposed to be people of ignorance, untruthfulness, bad behaviour and self gratification. Many times this has even been recognised during the lifetime of that person, let alone afterwards!

On the other hand, a person who is truly a Prophet shows knowledge, truthfulness in his dealings and all other types of behaviour which all of us instinctively know to be 'good'.

A true Prophet – and there have been many – tells people about certain matters and he commands them to do acts of goodness and stay away from evil things. Whereas a person who falsely claims Prophethood manifests lies and evil in his behaviour.

So how about the people who claim Prophethood by baffling the people with inexplicable actions that they do or predictions that they make which come true?

There are a number of ways that we, as 'non Prophets' can spot the impostors.¹

These include:

The fact that when Prophets make statements about what will happen in the future, they are accurate prophecies. This is in contrast to fortune-tellers, who make vague predictions which on closer analysis are mostly false and do not occur – even though some of their many statements might be true.

The 'superhuman' abilities of some people who falsely claim Prophethood are nearly always actions which a person can learn and become skilled at if he so wishes. In contrast, true

¹ Refer to al irshaad ilaa saheeh il i'tiqaad of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan pp 183

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miracles which were performed by Prophets – such as Jesus (peace be upon him) giving life to the dead, and the Qur’aan which Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) brought – can never be replicated by someone else, no matter how hard they try.

The Qur’aan mentions this fact:

Say: ‘If mankind and the jinn gathered together to try to bring the like of this Qur’aan, they could not bring the like of it, even if they helped one another.

[Soorah al Israa (17) aayah 88]

The obvious, but easy to forget, fact that the Prophets believe in Allaah (or whatever name their language gives to the Creator who deserves all worship). So the impostors and magicians and fortune tellers are liars and tricksters, who do not call people to worship their Creator, but instead call to things which will benefit them personally, whether that be wealth, or power, or other materialistic things.

And the last point we will mention is that the human intellect can spot that the Prophets call to things which are reasonable and sensible, and which conform to what we know to help society and the individual. Whereas fortune-tellers and charlatans instead call to things that corrupt the minds, and behaviour of the people.