

Ramadan Daily Quran Studies, by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2025

Produced by:

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Study 28:

Prophet Muhammad



His mortality

- Founders of religions are often elevated by their followers into immortal figures who could not die like other human beings. A unique characteristic of the Quran is that it presents the Prophet Muhammad as physically a human being, having all the physical attributes and needs of a mortal, who would eventually die as other people do.
- The Quran says to the Holy Prophet:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِيْ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْأَلُوْا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا اِلَّا يَأْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوْا خٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾

“And We did not send before you any but men to whom We sent revelation; so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know. Nor did We give them bodies not eating food, nor did they live forever.” — 21:7–8

- This passage shows that every prophet, including the Holy Prophet Muhammad, had a mortal body needing food for its support, and every one of them died.
- By “followers of the Reminder” are meant followers of earlier religious scriptures or scholars of religions and religious history. This term can also be applied to specialists and experts in any field of knowledge.

- Again, the Quran says to the Holy Prophet:

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ أَفَإِنَّ مِثَّ فَهْمِهِمُ الْخُلْدُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾
كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَنَبَلُّوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۗ وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

“And We did not grant living forever to any mortal before you.

If you die, will they live forever? Every soul must taste of death.

And We test you by evil and good by way of trial.

And to Us you are returned.” — 21:34–35

- This passage tells us that death is ordained for every mortal, whether he was good or bad, from the highest to the lowest.

- Neither the Holy Prophet nor his opponents could continue in existence forever. Even if he died, his opponents still would not be successful and would perish.
- The above quotations also mean that Jesus had a body which stood in need of eating food and he too must have met his death. The common belief that he is still alive in heaven is clearly opposed to these verses.
- The inevitability of the death of the Holy Prophet is mentioned in the Quran as follows:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ ۖ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۗ^ط
أَفَأَيْنَ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۗ^ط
وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنُيَضِرَ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

“And Muhammad is but a messenger —
messengers have already passed away before him.

If then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?

And he who turns back upon his heels will do no harm at all to Allah.

And Allah will reward the grateful.” — 3:144

- This verse was revealed shortly after the battle of Uhud. The Holy Prophet received severe wounds in that battle and there was even a rumour that he had been killed.

- This verse states that even if the Holy Prophet were killed, Islam would still remain true in its teachings and its principles, and those who had accepted Islam as being true could not give it up.
- This verse served another important purpose at the death of the Holy Prophet. Some Companions refused to believe that he was dead and they could not accept this fact.
- Hazrat Abu Bakr went in to the Holy Prophet's room and saw that life had departed. So he came out, ascended the pulpit and read this verse to the gathered people.

- It had a magical effect upon his hearers. All of them became convinced that the Holy Prophet had passed away, as all prophets before him had passed away.
- The prophets were mortals, and their span of mortal life was bound to come to an end like that of all other mortals.
- Again, this verse provides a conclusive proof that Jesus was also dead according to the Quran. If Muslims had believed that he was still alive, they would have replied to Hazrat Abu Bakr that a prophet doesn't necessarily die, as Jesus is still alive.

- We now quote the report from Bukhari about that occasion:

Aishah related that Abu Bakr came riding his horse from his home in As-Sunh, and dismounted. He then entered the Mosque and did not speak with anyone till he came to Aishah. He went to the Prophet, who was covered with a striped blanket. Abu Bakr uncovered his face, and then bent down towards him and kissed him and started weeping. He said:

- “My parents be sacrificed for you, O Prophet of Allah! Allah will not combine two deaths on you. You have died the death which was ordained for you.”

Ibn Abbas said that Abu Bakr came out and Umar was addressing the people, and Abu Bakr told him to sit down but Umar refused. Abu Bakr again told him to sit down but Umar again refused.

Then Abu Bakr recited the *Kalima Shahadah* and the people turned their attention to Abu Bakr and they left Umar.

Abu Bakr said:

- “Whoever amongst you worshipped Muhammad, surely Muhammad is dead, but whoever worshipped Allah, Allah is alive and will never die. Allah says: ‘And Muhammad is but a messenger — messengers have already passed away before him ...’.”

By Allah, it was as if the people never knew that Allah had revealed this verse before — until Abu Bakr recited it — so they learnt it from him, and then it was on everyone’s lips.

- (Sahih Bukhari, Book of Funerals, hadith numbers 1241–1242)

END OF STUDY 28