

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Prophet Muhammad

(Peace be upon him & his progeny)

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Introduction: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him & his progeny) is the Prophet of Islam and the last prophet that God sent to mankind. He is considered the “Seal of the Prophets,” which means the bringer of the final revelations from God, and God will not send another prophet after him.

The Qur’an, the divinely revealed scripture that is the actual word of God in the Arabic language, describes him in many honorable terms, such as, “The best example to follow,” “Mercy to the worlds,” and “On a sublime morality.” In the following pages, an attempt will be made to review how he conducted himself to earn those praises bestowed on him by the Lord of the universe.

Brief life history of Prophet Muhammad. He was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, then called Hijaz, in 570 A.D. Shortly after, he became an orphan, and was raised by his uncle, Abu Talib. He had no formal education and there is no documentation that he was taught to read or write before he declared his prophet hood. The Arabs of that region were very backward, illiterate, immoral, and cruel. They were polytheists and idol-worshippers.

As a young man, Muhammad kept aloof from others and did not participate in pagan rituals and popular cultural activities. He frequently went to a cave known as Hira in order to meditate and seek nearness to God. At the age of forty, he received the first revelations from God, through Angel Gabriel. From that point on, he declared that there was only one God and that he was the Prophet of God.

The pagan establishment vehemently opposed him. They offered him authority, honor, gold and silver, and any earthly pleasures that he desired, in order to stop preaching about one God and preaching against idol worship. Prophet Muhammad outright refused these offers, stating that if they put the sun in his right hand and moon in his left hand, he would not renounce his mission to preach about the one God. His followers were tortured and some of them were brutally killed. He and his followers were banished from his home city, isolated, and faced hardship and hunger. He finally emigrated to Medina, where he was welcomed, and there he established himself.

He subsequently fought several defensive wars waged against him by the pagans of Mecca, who were determined to kill him and root out the new religion. He successfully defended himself and his religion with a small rag tag force of his followers against a well trained and well equipped much larger force, on several occasions. Near the end of his life, he finally returned to Mecca, his hometown, with 10,000 followers, and secured it without a fight. To the astonishment of the surrendered Meccans, he declared general amnesty. No retribution was exacted, even from those who had committed serious crimes.

Thus, in a short period of 23 years, Muhammad had established Islam in the greater part of Arabia and brought law and order and decency to a people known for their lawlessness, ignorance, and immorality. The world has yet to produce another example of a man with Muhammad’s accomplishments. He was a

prophet, a reformer, a political leader, a general, an administrator, a judge, a revolutionary, and a moralist, all in one. Besides, he was humble, forgiving, and demonstrated the highest degree of truthfulness. He practiced what he preached. He was, and still is, loved and adored by millions. People were ready to lay down their lives readily for him. He brought respect, dignity, and legal status to women. He broke the barriers of tribalism, race, color, culture, ancestry, power, and wealth. He declared that all humankind was equal, and that the nearest to God and noblest in His sight was the one with the greatest piety. He brought a revolution, which continues to influence the destiny of humanity. The message that he brought in the form of scripture, the Qur'an, is a living document, which continues to influence men, bring them wisdom, guidance, and draw them closer to the one true God.

Muhammad as a youth. He refused to associate with people of his age in vain and immoral cultural practices of his time. As a young adult, he was dignified, soft-spoken, and considerate. He was so honest and trustworthy that he gained the respect of his peers and the society, and earned the title of "al-Amin," meaning "the trusted."

Muhammad the Prophet: He was focused, consistent, extremely patient, kind, and forgiving. He withstood the hatred and insults of his people and never retaliated in kind. During his banishment, he and his followers were socially and economically boycotted, and they underwent hunger, deprivation, and isolation. He kept the morale of his followers high and bore the hardships equally with the rest of his people, with full trust in the Divine Will.

Muhammad the Statesman. He conducted the affairs of state with a great amount of diplomacy and wisdom. He sent emissaries to Roman and Persian monarchs, and other governments near and far. He received ambassadors and delegations from other countries. They went away impressed and, in many instances, embraced his teachings.

Muhammad the Commander in Chief. He fought wars, planned strategies, and actively participated in armed conflicts to defend himself and the new faith. A single defeat in any of the wars would have resulted in his death and an end to his mission.

Muhammad as Judge: He judged impartially, with due consideration to all the parties involved. His decisions were based upon justice, compassion, and strictly upon divine laws. He did not permit nepotism, favoritism, or partisanship to interfere with justice. The rich, the poor, the lowly, the mighty, the privileged, and the downtrodden felt safe and secure under his administration.

Muhammad the Lawgiver. Under his administration, criminal and civil laws were established based upon the Qur'anic injunctions. These laws were comprehensive, addressing all situations. Many of the laws were based upon established Abrahamic and Mosaic religious laws.

Muhammad as a teacher. His knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an was unmatched. He taught morals, ethics, mannerism, and civility to the uncultured Arabs of his time. He had remarkable tact and never belittled even the most ignorant and uncultured inquirer.

Muhammad the family man. He was kind and respectful to his wives and promoted respect and kindness to parents. Arabs at that time used to bury alive their newborn girls out of shame. He forbade that practice, and taught that the education and raising of daughters was a virtuous act. He dealt with his wives with kindness and compassion, and was frequently seen participating in house chores.

Muhammad the ruler of Arabia. From an orphan, to pauper, then persecuted, then a refugee, then head of state, and finally the ruler of nearly all Arabia, he did not change his demeanor. He continued to be humble and unpretentious. He was readily accessible. Bedouin Arabs used to call upon him, and even sometimes rebuked him based on their poor understanding of Islam. He showed the utmost amount of patience in dealing with them.

Muhammad's mission accomplished. In his lifetime, the religion of Islam as taught by him was completed and perfected. Islam became the religion of most of Arabia. This accomplishment is unparalleled in the history of mankind. No prophet before him could claim success like that of Muhammad. During their lifetime, their own people essentially rejected the two great prophets, Moses and Jesus.

Great discoveries. Based on the teachings of Muhammad, the Arab Muslims made great strides in various fields of human knowledge. At the time when Europe was in the dark ages, universities and schools in Baghdad, Iraq were busy in research and discoveries in nearly all field of human knowledge, including astronomy, physics, mathematics, and medicine. Students from all over the world came to study there.

The Scripture Qur'an. Muhammad's legacy is not confined to the religion that he brought, which is practiced by one-fifth of the world population, but includes the book, Qur'an. It is a book that is unique in many ways. It was revealed over 23 years, yet has no contradictions in it. It is preserved, unaltered, over 1400 years, through being memorized by the faithful, word for word. It is a living book, in terms of language and contents. It continues to inspire people of all religions and all walks of life. Its poetic contents and rhythmic recitation are pleasing to the ear of even unaccustomed and non-Arabic speaking listeners. The scientific knowledge contained in the Qur'an is not outdated, even by today's standards.

Muslims' regard for Muhammad. The scripture Qur'an enjoins total obedience to Prophet Muhammad. A believer is commanded to show him the utmost respect. Whenever his mere name is mentioned, the believer sends peace upon him, and invokes God's blessing upon him. The Qur'an clearly states that the Prophet has greater right on the believers than they have on their own lives. With this knowledge, non-Muslims may understand why Muslims are sensitive about any adverse comments about the Prophet.

The following quotes from the Qur'an show the status of Prophet Muhammad in the eyes of God, as a reminder to the believers.

"And most surely you (Prophet) conform to sublime morality." Chapter 68, verse 4

"Surely God and His angels bless the Prophet; O' you who believe! Call for (divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation." Chapter 33, verse 56

"The Prophet has greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves," Chapter 33: verse 6

"Say: Obey God and the Apostle," Chapter 3: verse 32.

What non-Muslims say about Muhammad.

"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad?"

“This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls ...”

“His forbearance in victory, his ambition, which was entirely devoted to one idea, and in no manner striving for an empire ...; his endless prayers, his mystic conversation with god, his death and his triumph after death,”

“Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas (e.g. unity of God and immateriality of God, etc.), of a cult without images, the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?”

Lamartine, *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris 1854, Vol. II, pp. 276-77.

“It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder, the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved after the revolutions of twelve centuries...”

Edward Gibbon and Simon Ockley, “History of the Saracen Empire” London 1870, P. 54.

“He was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without Pope’s pretensions, Caesar without the legions of Caesar: without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue; if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its support.”

Bosworth Smith, “Mohammad and Mohammadanism,” London 1874, P. 92

“It is impossible for anyone who studied the life and character of the great prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived to feel anything but reverence for that mighty prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme.”

Annie Besant, “The life and teachings of Muhammad,” Madras 1932, P. 4

“His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of men who believed in him and looked up to him as their leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement – all argue his fundamental integrity.”

W. Montgomery, “Muhammad in Mecca,” Oxford, 1953, P. 52

“My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world’s most influential persons may surprise some readers, and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level.”

Michael H. Hart, “The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History,” New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc. 1978, P. 33.

Conclusion. Muhammad (peace be upon him & his progeny) has earned the admiration and respect of historians, philosophers, leaders, and students of religion, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Today, his teachings continue to influence people in all walks of life, and in every corner of the earth, fourteen hundred years after he left this world.

(The End)

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