

# The difference between a Prophet and Messenger

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## Definitions

### Nabi – Prophet

<http://ejtaal.net/aa#bwq=nbA>

Some meanings of the word:

- One who informs or shares/declares/announces (important) news or information that people are not aware of.
- There is also a meaning of elevation in this word, and may imply one who is spiritually elevated.
  - Elevation in that the relationship with Allah is higher than other people.
- To go from one place to another. News comes from one place to another.

**Author comment:** I tend to think that a prophet is one who is elevated in status by Allah. This elevation is likely the prerequisite for receiving revelation. That it also has the implication of sharing important news follows nicely and also makes sense.

### Rasuul – Messenger

<http://ejtaal.net/aa#bwq=rsl>

Some meanings of the word:

- One who is set forth or sent.
  - It is also given the meaning of a messenger in dictionaries.
- The root has a meaning of ease or releasing tension. A camel walking easily would be described by this word. Can refer to lank hair.

**Author comment:** The meaning of ease associated with this word is interesting based upon the understanding I will discuss later. Namely, messengers have an easier task than prophets because they come with clear signs that prophets do not come with. The meaning of one who is sent also fits nicely.

## Mursaleen/Mursaloon – Those who are sent

This word means, generically, 'those who are sent'. It can refer to prophets and messengers (7:77, 2:252, 26:21, 26:105 etc.) and to angels (51:31) and human (not divinely ordained) messengers (27:35). Of note is that the plural of Rasool (messenger) is rusul. The plural of nabi (prophet) is anbyaa'.

**Author comment:** Note that the English translation typically translates mursaleen/mursaloon as messengers, just as rusul is translated. Therefore this term cannot be used as the source of understanding on messengers or prophets as both are included in it as well as other groups.

## Overall comparison summary

Below is a tabular summary of the document that is missing some smaller details that you can find in the text below.

Prophets	Messengers
Prophethood is a state/condition/relationship with Allah (3:79)	A messenger is a prophet + something extra (7:158)
Prophets come with revelation, warning and good news (2:213)	Messengers come with <b>clear proofs</b> , revelation, warning and good news (4:165)
Adversity comes with Prophets (7:94)	Worldly destruction follows the denial of Messengers (eventually) (13:32)
More than one Prophet can be sent to a people (5:20)	More than one Messenger may come to a community (2:87)
Prophets were denied and killed (2:91)	Messengers were denied and killed (2:87, 11:59)
Prophets do not necessarily come with new revelation (5:44)	Messenger do not necessarily come with new revelation (2:87)
	Messengers are to be obeyed by the permission of Allah (4:46)
	Messengers and their followers will be saved (10:103)

## About Prophets

### Prophets come with revelation, warning and good news

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then **Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed.** And none differed over the Scripture except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves. And Allah guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path.

Qur'an (2:213)

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

Say, [O believers], "We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him."

Qur'an (2:136, see also 3:84)

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to Allah] judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah, and they were witnesses thereto. So do not fear the people but fear Me, and do not exchange My verses for a small price. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers.

Qur'an (5:44)

## Prophethood as a state or condition

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ

It is not for a human [prophet] that Allah should give him **the Scripture and authority and Prophethood** and then he would say to the people, "Be servants to me rather than Allah," but [instead, he would say], "Be pious scholars of the Lord because of what you have taught of the Scripture and because of what you have studied."

Qur'an (3:79 see also 6:84-90 and 45:16)

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا

[Jesus] said, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet.

Qur'an (19:30)

Prophethood implies a direct relationship with Allah. The root word implies elevation and the bringing of (important) news. Being given Prophethood is separate from being given wisdom and a book as you may have the book of Allah, but not be given it through Prophethood (that is, through a direct route from Allah).

Luqman given wisdom, but he was not a prophet/messenger (as far as I know). More generally, a person may come with a revealed book to a town to spread the message (e.g. now possible to go with the Qur'an) without being a prophet.

## Adversity comes with Prophets

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّعُونَ

And We sent to no city a prophet except that We seized its people with poverty and hardship that they might humble themselves.

Qur'an (7:94)

## Prophets were killed and more than one Prophet can be sent to a people

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا تَوَمَّنْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And when it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah has revealed," they say, "We believe [only] in what was revealed to us." And they disbelieve in what came after it, while it is the truth confirming that which is with them. Say, "Then why did you kill the prophets of Allah before, if you are [indeed] believers?"

Qur'an (2:91, see also, 2:61, 3:21, 3:112)

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ أذكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا وَآتَاكُمْ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

And [mention, O Muhammad], when Moses said to his people, "O my people, remember the favour of Allah upon you when He appointed among you prophets and made you possessors and gave you that which He had not given anyone among the worlds.

Qur'an (5:20)

This ayah makes clear that more than one prophet may come to the same people, more than one prophet can be denied by the same people and more than one prophet can be killed by the same people.

## Prophets/Messengers do not necessarily come with new revelation

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاحْشَوْنِي وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to Allah] judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah, and they were witnesses thereto. So do not fear the people but fear Me, and do not exchange My verses for a small price. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers.

Qur'an (5:44)

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِمْ بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى  
وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous.

Qur'an (5:46)

Moses was given the Torah, the Torah is the only book mentioned for the Jews at the time of Jesus, with Jesus coming with the Injil to replace and supplement it and knowing the Torah. This means that even though the Jews had multiple messengers (2:87) and prophets (5:44), they all came with or to re-establish the same revelation.

This implies that prophets/messengers do not necessarily come with a new revelation.

## **The use of the word Nabi/Prophet in the Qur'an in relation to Muhammad**

Muhammad is referred to directly as a prophet and indirectly as a prophet in the Qur'an. He is also directly and indirectly referred to as a messenger in the Qur'an. It is interesting to consider why this is.

Directly:

- 8:64, 8:65, 8:70, 9:73, 33:1, 33:28, 33:45, 33:50-52, 55:59, 60:12, 65:1, 66:1, 66:9

Indirectly:

- 8:65, 8:67, 9:113, 33:6, 33:7, 33:13, 33:30, 33:32, 33:38, 33:40, 33:53, 33:56, 49:2, 66:3, 66:8

I believe that a key differentiator between prophets and messengers are clear/miraculous signs to prove the mission. So I think (pending further analysis) that prophet is used for Muhammad (even though he is clearly referred to as a messenger) at time that:

- Focus on the role of the messenger with special focus on believers, that is, those who have already accepted the miraculous nature of the Qur'an and/or submitted to the truth.
- The places where he is referred to as a Prophet are not linked to the miraculous nature of the Qur'an.

Perhaps people that believe in prophets are a level above those that believe in messengers. The believers in prophets have acknowledged and accepted the truth on its own terms. Those that need a messenger (with a clear sign) to believe are intrinsically inferior.

## About Messengers

### A messenger is a Prophet + something else

Say, [O Muhammad], "O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [from Him] to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death." So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

Qur'an (7:158)

Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Qur'an (33:40)

Muhammad is not but a messenger. [Other] messengers have passed on before him. So if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]? And he who turns back on his heels will never harm Allah at all; but Allah will reward the grateful.

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَن يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَن يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

Qur'an (3:144)

3:144 makes clear that Muhammad is nothing other than a messenger, and given that:

- He is also a prophet
- A prophet and messenger are not the same thing

- It is a waste of time and words to use different words for the exact same thing
- We can see differentiation in how the two categories are described in the Qur'an.

We can conclude that being a prophet must be a subset of being a messenger.

## Only role of the Messengers

وَإِنْ تَكْذِبُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أُمَمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

And if you [people] deny [the message] - already nations before you have denied. **And there is not upon the Messenger except [the duty of] clear notification.**

29:18

## Messengers come with clear proofs, revelation, warning and good news

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ

Then if they deny you, [O Muhammad] - so were messengers denied before you, who brought **clear proofs and written ordinances and the enlightening Scripture.**

Qur'an (3:184. See 10:13)

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

[We sent] messengers as **bringers of good tidings and warners** so that mankind will have no argument against Allah after the messengers. And ever is Allah Exalted in Might and Wise.

Qur'an (4:165)

## Messengers are to be obeyed by the permission of Allah

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ

وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَّهُوا اللَّهَ تَوَابًا رَّحِيمًا

And We did not send any messenger except to be obeyed by permission of Allah. And if, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you, [O Muhammad], and

asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Accepting of repentance and Merciful.

Qur'an (4:64)

## More than one Messenger may come to a community

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ

And We did certainly give Moses the Torah and followed up after him with messengers. And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear proofs and supported him with the Pure Spirit. But is it [not] that every time a messenger came to you, [O Children of Israel], with what your souls did not desire, you were arrogant? And a party [of messengers] you denied and another party you killed.

Qur'an (2:87)

وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ جَادُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ

And that was 'Aad, who rejected the signs of their Lord and disobeyed His messengers and followed the order of every obstinate tyrant.

Qur'an (11:59)

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ لَمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ أَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ آيَةً وَأَعَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

And the people of Noah - when they denied the messengers, We drowned them, and We made them for mankind a sign. And We have prepared for the wrongdoers a painful punishment.

Qur'an (25:37)

Messengers were both denied and killed as were prophets, by the Jews and others. Multiple messengers may go to a community. This means that denying or rejecting a (one) messenger does not by itself actually mean that a people will be destroyed immediately. But it will happen.

## Prophets/Messengers do not necessarily come with new revelation

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا النُّورَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ

بِمَا اسْتُخْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي  
ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to Allah] judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah, and they were witnesses thereto. So do not fear the people but fear Me, and do not exchange My verses for a small price. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers.

Qur'an (5:44)

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِمْ بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى  
وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous.

Qur'an (5:46)

Moses was given the Torah, the Torah is the only book mentioned for the Jews at the time of Jesus, with Jesus coming with the Injil to replace and supplement it and knowing the Torah. This means that even though the Jews had multiple messengers (2:87) and prophets (5:44), they all came with or to re-establish the same revelation.

This implies that prophets/messengers do not necessarily come with a new revelation.

## Messengers have been denied and killed

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ  
بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَىٰ أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ

And We did certainly give Moses the Torah and followed up after him with messengers. And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear proofs and supported him with the Pure Spirit. But is it [not] that every time a messenger came to you, [O Children of Israel], with what your souls did not desire, you were arrogant? And a party [of messengers] you denied and another party you killed.

Qur'an (2:87, see also: 11:59, 15:80 and 25:37)

## Worldly destruction follows the denial of Messengers

وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَأُوا بِرُسُلِكَ مِمَّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَمَلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ

And already were [other] messengers ridiculed before you, and I extended the time of those who disbelieved; then I seized them, and how [terrible] was My penalty.

Qur'an (13:32)

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

Whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] his soul. And whoever errs only errs against it. And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. And never would We punish until We sent a messenger.

Qur'an (17:15)

وَإِن كَانُوا لَيَسْتَفْرِزُونَكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ لِيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذَا لَا يَلْبَثُونَ خِلافَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٦﴾ سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا

And indeed, they were about to drive you from the land to evict you therefrom. And then [when they do], they will not remain [there] after you, except for a little. (76) [That is Our] established way for those We had sent before you of Our messengers; and you will not find in Our way any alteration.

Qur'an (17:76-77)

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكذِّبِينَ

And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], "Worship Allah and avoid Taghut." And among them were those whom Allah guided, and among them were those upon whom error was [deservedly] decreed. So proceed through the earth and observe how was the end of the deniers.

(16:36)

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

And for every nation is a messenger. So when their messenger comes, it will be judged between them in justice, and they will not be wronged

Qur'an (10:47)

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَىٰ

إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ

And never would your Lord have destroyed the cities until He had sent to their mother a messenger reciting to them Our verses. And We would not destroy the cities except while their people were wrongdoers.

Qur'an (28:59)

## Peoples/Towns not destroyed while there are believers among them

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى حَتَّى يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَى إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ

And never would your Lord have destroyed the cities until He had sent to their mother a messenger reciting to them Our verses. **And We would not destroy the cities except while their people were wrongdoers.**

Qur'an (28:59)

هُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيِ مَعْكُوفًا أَنْ يَبْلُغَ مَجَلَّهُ وَلَوْ أَرْجَأَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وِنِسَاءً مُؤْمِنَاتٍ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوهُنَّ أَنْ تَطْلُوهُنَّ فَتُصِيبَكُمْ مِنْهُنَّ مَعْرَةٌ بَغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ لِيَدْخُلَ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

They are the ones who disbelieved and obstructed you from al-Masjid al-Haram while the offering was prevented from reaching its place of sacrifice. **And if not for believing men and believing women whom you did not know - that you might trample them and there would befall you because of them dishonor without [your] knowledge - [you would have been permitted to enter Makkah].** [This was so] that Allah might admit to His mercy whom He willed. If they had been apart [from them], We would have punished those who disbelieved among them with painful punishment

Qur'an (48:25)

## Messengers and their followers with be saved

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كَذَلِكَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنَجِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Then We will **save** our messengers and those who have believed. Thus, it is an obligation upon Us that We save the believers

Qur'an (10:103)

إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْأَشْهَادُ

Indeed, We will **support** Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand

Qur'an (40:51)

Allah says that messengers and those who believe with them will be saved (10:103), and/or aided/helped (40:51), specifically it says the messengers and the believers, and this would always include more than the messenger as the messenger believes by definition:

- The word **نَجَّى** has root meaning of elevating, raising to safety (raising to a high place that cannot be touched by flooding) and separating, escaping, to delivery or rescue
- Messengers were clearly killed by previous generations, so perhaps this implies that it perhaps speaks of messengers that had followers, and not just messengers that were totally denied.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَصَرُّوا بِاللَّهِ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.

Qur'an (47:7)

Taken fully, these ayaat may mean that if the messenger also has followers/believers, then they will be saved. The contrary in the Qur'an would be that the messengers that were killed were totally rejected and that those communities that rejected were themselves not saved from the earthly punishment of Allah.

## **The use of the word Rasul/Messenger in the Qur'an in relation to Muhammad**

I believe that a key differentiator between prophets and messengers are clear/miraculous signs to prove the mission. So I think (pending further analysis) that prophet is used for Muhammad (even though he is clearly referred to as a messenger) at time that:

- Focus on the role of the messenger with special focus on believers, that is, those who have already accepted the miraculous nature of the Qur'an and/or submitted to the truth.
- The places where he is referred to as a Prophet are not linked to the miraculous nature of the Qur'an.

Muhammad is a Messenger and Prophet of Allah. Therefore it can be assumed that the

default should be for him to be referred to as a/the Messenger. For this reason I will list all direct references to Muhammad as a Messenger and I will not mention the many indirect references to Muhammad as a Messenger.

Direct:

- 5:41, 5:67

Perhaps people that believe in prophets are a level above those that believe in messengers. The believers in prophets have acknowledged and accepted the truth on its own terms. Those that need a messenger (with a clear sign) to believe are intrinsically inferior.

## Summary

See my overview at the start.

The roles of prophets and messengers were essentially the same, however with slightly different tool-sets and differing dunya consequences.

There will be no more messengers or prophets after Muhammad.