

Risalah



This is the view of a Sunni Muslim

My belief about the Prophets is that they come as a mercy from Allah to guide humanity. Prophethood (nabuwwah) is an essential part of Islam because without the prophets the guidance would be too vague for everyone to pick up on. Allah has sent guidance through our hearts as well, but our hearts are often encrusted with pride and external influence so we can't generally rely on the heart as we can't always hear its call. The external world is also full of signs but because of our own deficiencies we can't always see them. So, the prophets are a clear guidance telling us in black and white and in no uncertain terms what right and wrong actually are and what the consequences of choosing the right and refraining from wrong are. The guidance couldn't be clearer so when we make a mistake, we must acknowledge that it is ours and turn away from it so we can continue on our journey to Allah.

Risalah actually refers to the messengers. Not all prophets were messengers and were given a revelation, so were quite hidden and guided in more subtle ways.

As Muslims we are taught about the stories of all the Prophets from a young age. Children learn best through stories and examples and so the lives of the Prophets offer an example of the way to live and gives hints at how you should respond to certain situations. For example, the story of Yunus (AS) and the whale teaches us that if you forget your reliance upon Allah that you will be tested, BUT that you can repent and if in sincerity you call out to Allah in your distress, He will relieve you.

The story of Adam (AS) teaches us that Adam and Eve our blessed Mother and Father. They have been through the trials that we will face. They were human and made of clay and so susceptible to going astray with the whispering of the devil, as are we. Our duty is to listen to the boundaries set by Allah and to know that we are dependant upon him and submit to him. The curse of the shaytaan (devil) was that his pride was so great that he could not submit to the will of Allah and bow to Adam. We need to stay away from pride because pride will lead us down the path of the devil and make us forget the boundaries clearly laid out to us by Allah. When Allah asked Adam and Eve why they had eaten from the tree He had told them not to they said 'we made a mistake'. They repented. They understood they were wrong. Allah forgave them for their 'slip' because it is in their nature, in our nature, to make mistakes but we must have the humility to always know our place and to recognise when we have done something wrong.

The prophets all lead difficult lives and their stories come to us to remind us of how to behave and to set an example. They prophets were not perfect because they too were made from clay.

The Prophet Muhammad is the final messenger and the one in whom all the messages from before and in the right order and expression exist. The light of Muhammad was made before the light of everything else in existence and it is from his beautiful light that the rest of creation was made. In this sense it means that all creation has some of the radiance of the prophet in it, even if only a little bit and it is something that those whose spiritual station is elevated will be able to witness. The reality of Muhammad is the perfection of human existence; we can't achieve a better level of humanity than existed within him and so as Muslims, we will strive to do our best to develop our characters and actions as best we can in line with our understanding of that reality. This is my personal view, but some Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was just a man and do not accept the theory about his light. They are more likely to believe that the 'Muhammadan reality' is best achieved through listening to the hadith and complying with them as uniformly as possible.

All Muslims will try to send blessings upon the prophet known as Darood or salawat. This can be as simple as 'peace be upon him' or quite a lot longer. Different Darood are said to have different power and different relevance for different situations, but all are a mercy and their utterance softens the heart of the believer and showers blessings upon them, leaving them more open to receiving the message of Allah more clearly.

Task: Read the account of risalah

All: What is risalah?

Most: Explain how Muslims may use the examples of the prophets.

Some: How do different Muslims view the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)?