12096 - Preferring some Messengers over others

the question

How can we reconcile between the two aayahs (interpretation of the meaning):
“Those Messengers! We preferred some of them to others [al-Baqarah 2:253]
and :
“We make no distinction between any of them [al-Baqarah 2:136]?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The aayah (interpretation of the meaning):

“Those Messengers! We preferred some of them to others

[al-Baqarah 2:253]

is like the aayah:

“And indeed, We have preferred some of the Prophets above others”

[al-Isra’ 17:55]

There is no doubt that some of the Prophets and Messengers are superior to others; the Messengers are superior to the Prophets, and the “Messengers of strong will” (cf. al-Ahqaaf 46:35) are superior to all the others. The Messengers of strong will are the five whom Allaah has mentioned in two verses of the Qur’aan, the first of which is in Soorat al-Ahzaab:

“And (remember) when We took from the Prophets their covenant, and from you (O Muhammad), and from Nun (Noah), Ibraaheem (Abraham), Moosa (Moses), and ‘Eesa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary)”

[al-Ahzaab 33:7 – interpretation of the meaning] – these are Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), Nooh, Ibraaheem, Moosa and ‘Eesa ibn Maryam.

The second verse is in Soorat al-Shoora:

“He (Allaah) has ordained for you the same religion (Islamic Monotheism) which He ordained for Nooh (Noah), and that which We have revealed to you (O Muhammad), and that which We ordained for Ibraaheem (Abraham), Moosa (Moses) and ‘Eesa (Jesus)”

[al-Shoora 42:13 – interpretation of the meaning].

These five are superior to all others.

With regard to what Allaah says concerning the believers (interpretation of the meaning) –

“Each one believes in Allaah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. (They say,) ‘We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers’”
[al-Baqarah 2:136] –

what this means is: we make no distinction between them in terms of belief, we believe that they are all truly Messengers from Allaah, and that they did not tell lies, so they all spoke the truth. This is the meaning of the phrase “We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers”, i.e., in terms of belief: we believe that they were all truly Messengers from Allaah.

But in terms of the kind of belief that implies following, for those who come after the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), this applies only to the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). He is the one to be followed because his sharee’ah (law) abrogates all other laws. Hence we know that we must believe in all of them and believe that they are truly Messengers from Allaah, but after the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was sent, all previous religions were abrogated by his sharee’ah, and it became obligatory upon all people to follow Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) only. Allaah by His wisdom abrogated all religions apart from the religion of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), hence He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say (O Muhammad): O mankind! Verily, I am sent to you all as the Messenger of Allaah — to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. Laa ilaaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He). It is He Who gives life and causes death. So believe in Allaah and His Messenger (Muhammad), the Prophet who can neither read nor write (i.e. Muhammad), who believes in Allaah and His Words [(this Qur’aan), the Tawraat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel) and also Allaah’s Word: “Be!” — and he was, i.e. ‘Eesa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary)], and follow him so that you may be guided” [al-A’raaf 7:158].

So all religions other than that of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) are abrogated, but we must still believe in the Messengers and that they are true.