293930 - Why was `Isa (peace be upon him) the only prophet to be taken up to heaven?

the question

A Canadian Christian woman is asking one of the brothers, and would like an answer: Was there anything about `Isa (peace be upon him) that made him stand out from the other messengers, so that Allah took him up to Him?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I.

One of the well-established principles that is held by everyone who believes in the Lord of the Worlds is that Allah, may He be Exalted, is wise and does not create anything for no purpose, and He does not decree anything in vain. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah, may He be Glorified, is wise and does not do anything in vain and for no purpose, and there is a wise reason behind everything that He does. In fact, His actions stem from great wisdom, and He does things through causes that He ordains. His words and the words of His Messenger indicate that, and this is mentioned in so many texts that it would be too difficult to list them all…

End quote from *Shifa' al-`Alil*, p. 190.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

He, may He be Exalted, is the Creator, Lord and Sovereign of all things; there is great wisdom in what He creates, immense blessings, and mercy that is for all of humanity and mercy that is specific to individuals. He is not to be questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned,

not only because He has the power and is in control, but because of the perfect nature of His knowledge, power, mercy and wisdom.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 8/79.

When a person begins to notice indications that this religion is true, what he must do after that is focus on studying the basics of this religion, which means focusing his efforts on understanding what he is enjoined to do and striving to do that. This is the primary purpose of his existence in this world. As for issues of the type asked about, he should delegate knowledge of that to Allah, may He be Exalted.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me} [Adh-Dhariyat 51:56].

Ibn Abil-`Izz al-Hanafi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

You should understand that in principle, servitude to Allah and belief in Allah, His Books and His Messengers, is based on submitting and surrendering, and not questioning the details of the wisdom behind the commands, prohibitions and laws. Hence Allah, may He be Glorified, never told us about any prophet's nation that believed in its prophet and believed in what he conveyed to them, then asked him to tell them in detail of the wisdom behind what he enjoined them to do, forbade them to do and conveyed to them from their Lord, because if they had done that, they would not be regarded as believing in their prophet. Rather they followed, surrendered and submitted, and whatever aspects of divine wisdom they came to know, all well and good, and whatever was hidden from them, their submission did not depend on their knowing it, and they never regarded that as something that they should be concerned about, for they held their messenger in too high esteem to ask him about that.

End quote from *Sharh at-Tahawiyyah*, p. 261.

II.

Allah, may He be Exalted, is the Creator and Sovereign of all. He created time, and honoured some

times over others; He created place, and honoured some places over others; He created people, and favoured some people over others. This is a sign of His perfect might, the nature of which no one can understand, and of His perfect sovereignty, which no creature can comprehend. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{They have not given due recognition to Allah. Verily, Allah is indeed Strong, Almighty.

Allah chooses messengers from among the angels and from among humankind. Verily, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

He knows what was before them and what will be after them, and it is to Allah that all things will return} [Al-Hajj 22:74-75].

This is a sign of His perfect will, absolute power and the greatness of His Lordship and authority, may He be Glorified. And Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Difficult for those who associate others with Allāh is that to which you invite them. Allāh chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him]} [Ash-Shura 42:13]

{And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses; not for them was the choice. Exalted is Allāh and high above what they associate with Him} [Al-Qasas 28:68].

We have discussed this in detail previously, in the answer to question no. 298140.

Among these blessings that He bestowed exclusively on some of His creation is what He gave to some of His prophets and messengers of virtues and qualities that He did not bestow on other prophets.

In order for us to understand these issues, Allah, may He be Exalted, has instructed us to reflect on His perfect knowledge of His creation and His wisdom in how He deals with them, as He, may He be Glorified, says:

{And your Lord knows best all who are in the heavens and on earth. Indeed, We have exalted some of the Prophets above others, and to Dawud We gave the Zabur [Psalms]} [Al-Isra’ 17:55].

Shaykh `Abd ar-Rahman as-Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

{And your Lord knows best all who are in the heavens and on earth} of all types of creatures, so He gives each of them what he deserves, according to His wisdom, and He favours some of them over others in terms of both physical and intangible qualities, just as He favoured some of the Prophets, who all have in common the fact that they received revelation, over others in terms of virtues and characteristics that had to do with what Allah blessed them with of physical characteristics, pleasant manners and attitudes, righteous deeds, number of followers, and revelation of books to some of them that contained rulings and beliefs, as He sent down to Dawud the Zabur (Psalms), which is the well-known book.

End quote from *Tafsir as-Sa`di*, p. 460.

The fact that `Isa (peace be upon him) was taken up to heaven and is alive there, and he will come back down to earth at the end of time, is proven in the texts of the Holy Quran and the authentic, sound Sunnah, and by the consensus of the scholars.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{[Mention] when Allah said, "O `Isa, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify [i.e., free] you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you [in submission to Allah alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is your return, and I will judge between you concerning that in which you used to differ.

And as for those who disbelieved, I will punish them with a severe punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and they will have no helpers."

But as for those who believed and did righteous deeds, He will give them in full their rewards, and Allah does not like the wrongdoers} [Al `Imran 55-57].

Imam Abu Muhammad ibn `Atiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The ummah is unanimously agreed on what is narrated in the mass-transmitted hadith, that `Isa (peace be upon him) is alive in heaven, and that he will come down at the end of time and kill the pigs, break the

cross, kill the Dajjal, establish widespread justice, cause this ummah – the ummah of Muhammad – to prevail, do Hajj and `umrah, and remain on earth for twenty-four – or, it was said, forty – years, then Allah, may He be Exalted, will cause him to die.

End quote from *Tafsir Ibn `Atiyyah*, 1/444.

And Allah, may He be Exalted, says regarding the Jews and their rebellion against the Lord, and their killing the prophets of Allah – instead of venerating them, respecting them and believing in them:

{[We punished them] because of their breaking of their covenant, their rejection of the revelations of Allah, their slaying of the Prophets unjustifiably and their saying: Our hearts are impenetrably wrapped [against whatever you say] – Nay, Allah has sealed up their hearts for their disbelief; little is it they believe –

[And We punished them] because of their disbelief and their uttering a terrible slander against Maryam.

And because of their saying: We killed the Messiah 'Eesâ son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah. But they did not kill him or crucify him; rather [another man] was made to resemble him to them [and that man was crucified]. Those who differ concerning this matter are in doubt concerning it, with no [certain] knowledge, but only conjecture to follow. But they certainly did not kill him.

Rather Allah took him up to Himself; and Allah is Almighty, Most Wise } [An-Nisa' 4:155-158].

Al-Qasimi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The fact that 'Allah took him up to Himself' is a refutation and denial that he was killed, and is an affirmation that he was taken up. In other words, what is certain is that Allah took him up to Himself, and Allah is Almighty, Most Wise. That is, it is not far-fetched to say that Allah took him up, because He is Almighty and nothing can prevent Him from doing what He wants to do, and He is Most Wise and His wisdom dictated that He should take him up. Hence it was inevitable that He would take him up, for the purpose of keeping him in order to strengthen and support the religion

of Muhammad (blessing and peace of Allah upon him) when the religion becomes very weak at the time of the Dajjal, then he [`Isa] will kill him [the Dajjal].

End quote from *Mahasin at-Ta'wil*, 3/392.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The verse affirms that Allah took him up alive and saved him from being killed, and that they will believe in him before he dies. Similarly, Allah says: {and [I will] purify [i.e., free] you from those who disbelieve} [Al `Imran 3:55]. If he had died, there would be no difference between him and others.

End quote from *Al-Jawab as-Sahih*, 4/38.

III.

The Muslims believe in `Isa (peace be upon him), and they believe that he is a prophet of Allah and one of the Messengers of strong will, one of the best of the prophets and messengers of Allah. But the fact that `Isa (peace be upon him) was taken up to heaven alive, as the Muslims believe, is not the greatest of his virtues. Rather he has other virtues that are superior to that. Hence when Allah, may He be Exalted, mentioned how some prophets are favoured over others, He did not mention the taking up of `Isa (peace be upon him) to Allah as one of the qualities that make him superior or that he was honoured above our Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Rather Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Those Messengers: We favoured some above others. There are some to whom Allah spoke directly; others He raised in rank; to 'Eesâ the son of Maryam We gave clear signs and supported him with the Pure Spirit. If Allah had so willed, those who came after them would not have fought one another after clear signs had come to them, but they disagreed among themselves, some believing and others disbelieving. If Allah had so willed, they would not have fought one another; but Allah does whatever He wills}[Al-Baqarah 2:253].

Similar to that is what Allah, may He be Exalted, mentioned in the Quran, reminding `Isa of His favours to him and his mother, and the blessings that He bestowed on him, because when Allah

referred to the sign of taking His prophet `Isa (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) up to heaven and blessing him with that, He did not mention that in the context of saying that some prophets are superior to others. Rather He mentioned it in the context of reminding him of the great blessings He had bestowed upon him, and His protecting him from the Children of Israel humiliating him, and protecting him from their schemes and plots against him. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Then Allah will say: O `Isa son of Maryam, remember the blessings which I bestowed upon you and your mother. For I supported you with the Pure Spirit, so that you spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity. I taught you the scripture and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. You made out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathed into it, and it became a bird by My leave. You healed those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave, and you brought the dead back to life, by My leave. I restrained the Children of Israel from [harming] you when you brought them the clear signs and the disbelievers among them said: This is obviously nothing but magic!

And [remember] when I inspired the disciples to believe in Me and in My Messenger; they said: We believe. Bear witness that we submit to Allah [as Muslims]}

[Al-Ma’idah 5:110-111].

Al-`Allamah Ibn `Ashur (mam him) said:

This is one of the greatest blessings: the blessing of protecting `Isa from humiliation, as Allah restrained the Children of Israel from harming him for several years, when he was living among them and calling them to faith despite their resentment and the small number of his supporters. Allah prevented them from harming him so that he could deliver the message. Then when they realised what was happening and decided to kill him, Allah protected him from them and took him up to Him so that they could not harm him, and they perished in their rage.

End quote from *At-Tahrir wat-Tanwir*, 7/102.

Allah granted His Prophet `Isa (peace be upon him) some unique favours and blessings that were

superior to merely being taken up to heaven, as the verses of the Quran and the hadiths of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) explain. However, that does not mean that he was the best of the prophets and messengers; rather there is one who is superior to him, and undoubtedly of higher status before Allah, according to the consensus of the Muslims, namely the Messenger of Allah Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Hence on the Day of Resurrection, when Allah gathers together all creatures and people will be in a state of great distress, looking for someone to intercede for them with their Lord because of his virtue and high status before the Lord of the Worlds, they will come to Adam, then after him they will come to other prophets, until comes the turn of `Isa (peace be upon him). They will mention his virtues and ask him to intercede for them with the Lord of the Worlds, but he will be reluctant to take on this great role, and will tell them to go to the one who will be granted the station of praise and honour (al-maqam al-mahmud), the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

"… So they will go to `Isa and will say: 'O `Isa, you are the Messenger of Allah, and a Word from Him that He bestowed upon Maryam and a Spirit created by Him, and you spoke to the people from the cradle. Intercede for us with your Lord. Do you not see the state we are in?'

`Isa will say: 'My Lord is angry today in a way in which He has never been angry before and will never be angry again,' but he will not mention any sin; 'Myself, myself, myself. Go to someone else. Go to Muhammad.'

So they will go to Muhammad and will say: 'O Muhammad, you are the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the Prophets; Allah forgave your past and future sins. Intercede for us with your Lord. Do you not see the state we are in?'

So I will go and stand beneath the Throne, where I will fall down prostrating to my Lord, may He be Glorified and Exalted. Then Allah will inspire me with words of praise which He has never granted to anyone before me.

Then it will be said: 'O Muhammad, raise your head. Ask, it will be given to you; intercede, and

your intercession will be accepted.’

I will raise my head and say: ‘My ummah, O Lord; my ummah, O Lord; my ummah, O Lord.’

It will be said: ‘O Muhammad, admit to Paradise those of your ummah who will not be brought to account, through the right-hand gate of Paradise.’ They will share all other gates with the people apart from that gate.”

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 4712; and Muslim, 193.

The Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Issuing Fatwas were asked:

As Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is the best of the prophets, why was he not taken up to heaven instead of `Isa, if `Isa was truly taken up? And why did Allah single out `Isa for taking him up to heaven, to the exclusion of the other prophets? Please explain the reasons, with evidence.

They replied: Allah, may He be Exalted, encompasses all things with His mercy and knowledge, and He encompasses all things with His power and control, may He be Glorified. He has great wisdom, His will is always done, and His power controls all things. He chose whomever He willed of people to be prophets and messengers, bringers of glad tidings and warners, and He raised some of them above others in status. To each of them He gave favours and blessings that were unique to him, by His grace and mercy. Thus He singled out Ibrahim and Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon them) to be His close friends; and singled out each prophet for whatever He willed of signs and miracles that were appropriate to his time and would thus establish proof against each prophet’s people on the basis of wisdom and justice; when Allah decrees [a thing], none can reverse His decree, and He is the Almighty, the Most Wise, the Most Kind , the Aware. It is not necessarily the case that every blessing on its own makes the one who is granted it superior to others.

The fact that `Isa was taken up to heaven alive happened by Allah’s will and wisdom, not because he was superior to his fellow messengers such as Ibrahim, Muhammad, Musa and Nuh (blessings

and peace of Allah be upon them), for they were given blessings and signs which indicate that they are superior to him.

To sum up, this matter rests with Allah, as He decides concerning it however He wills, and He is not to be questioned about what He does, for He has perfect knowledge and wisdom. Moreover, asking this question will not have any impact on a person’s deeds or strengthen his belief; rather one who asks such a question may become confused or develop doubts.

The believer should not question matters that come under the heading of that which Allah alone decides about; rather he should strive hard regarding issues that concern people in general, whether they have to do with beliefs or deeds. This is the way of the prophets and messengers, and it is the way of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the guided early generations (salaf) of this ummah.

Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Issuing Fatwa.

`Abdullah ibn Qa`ud, `Abdullah ibn Ghadyan, `Abd ar-Razzaq `Afifi, `Abd al-`Aziz ibn `Abdillah ibn Baz.

End quote from *Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Da’imah*, 3/225.

And Allah knows best.