238822 - He is asking about the worst of people and the worst in disbelief: is it Pharaoh or Abu Lahab?

the question

I was discussing with my friend about who the worse person was in the sight of allah from bani Adam(AS) I said that firun was the worse person EVER because he claimed to be god and he rejected the 8 or 9 signs of musa and allah left his hody for mankind to reflect and allah will place fir'un, haamman and his people in the worse punishment in the day of judgement. But my friend said that it is Abu lahb the worse person who ever lived because he had a whole chapter in the quran after him. And he beated the best person who ever lived(prophet muhamed AS) and mocked the best person i.e our nabi(AS) which i agree but that doesnt match to the evil of fir'un. So who was worse?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Focusing on such matters and arguing about them is a waste of the Muslim’s time and energy, that he could have spent on things that are more beneficial to him and to the Muslims around him.

The Muslim needs to know the most perfect of people in faith and the best of them in attitude so that he can follow their example and do deeds like theirs, more than he needs to know the worst of people in disbelief.

So long as it is established in the Muslim’s mind that the two people mentioned were disbelievers in Allah and enemies to Him, for Allah warned them in His Book of the most severe punishment, that is sufficient.

But if the Muslim’s aim in finding out about these people is so that he will be more cautious of doing deeds like theirs and so that he can warn people about such deeds, then there is nothing wrong with that.

Secondly:

If we look at these two men and their words and deeds, and what was revealed concerning them of verses in the Holy Qur’an, we will have no doubt that Pharaoh was worse in terms of disbelief and stubbornness than Abu Lahab, because he claimed lordship and divinity, and he called the people to sanctify him and venerate him, and he thought little of his people and they obeyed him; he misled his troops and they supported him; he showed enmity towards the close friends of Allah and tortured the people, slaughtering their sons and letting their womenfolk live. No arrogant tyrant is mentioned in the Qur’an as much as this tyrant is mentioned. Mention is made of his abhorrent words and deeds, and of his wrongdoing, stubbornness and tyranny, and of how he misled his people and led them astray. And mention is made of his terrible fate on the Day of Resurrection. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “The Fire; they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon, and on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): ‘Cause Fir‘aun’s (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!’” [Ghaafir 40:46].

As for Abu Lahab, he disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and took people as enemies or as allies on that basis, and he died in a state of disbelief and loss, but he did not cause as much harm to the believers as Pharaoh did, and he did not go as far in disbelief as Pharaoh did, who claimed lordship and divinity, and said: “ ‘I am your lord, most high’” [an-Naazi ‘aat 79:24] and “ ‘I know not that you have an ilah (a god) other than me’” [al-Qasas 28:38].

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

It is well established among the people of all religions, Muslims, Jews and Christians, that Pharaoh was one of the worst disbelievers in Allah; in fact in the Qur’an, Allah does not tell the story of any disbeliever by name more than the story of Pharaoh, and He does not tell us more detail of the disbelief, transgression and arrogance of any disbeliever more than He tells us about Pharaoh. End quote.

Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (2/125)

And Allah knows best.