



AL-KHIDR

WAS HE A PROPHET, SAINT OR ANGEL?

Al-Khidr (may Allah's mercy and peace be upon him) is an individual who is mentioned in great detail in the Holy Qur'an in Sura al-Kahf. The narration starts when Prophet Musa (may Allah's mercy and peace be upon him) is asked regarding the most knowledgeable of individuals on the face of the Earth and he declares, as best according to his understanding, that it is none other than himself. As a Prophet and being one of the greatest Prophets ever this would be a fair and reasonable statement to make for Prophet Musa, however the statement however factual lacked humbleness and as a result Prophet Musa was trialled to determine his true status. What other way is there to determine an individual's humbleness in knowledge than to declare there is one more knowledgeable than thee, namely al-Khidr. As all Prophets, Prophet Musa immediately sought permission from Allah to learn from one who is more knowledgeable than him.

The question arises who was al-Khidr?

The scholars have expressed views regarding all three positions, prophet, saint and angel. However, consensus seems to fall on that he was a human and not an angel. The argument then takes place between whether he was a prophet or a saint?

Those who argue he was a prophet take the verses of Sura al-Kahf in which al-Khidr makes a statement that, *and I did not do them from my own accord* (Aya 82). The scholars are in general agreement that one cannot derive law from spiritual visions. Therefore to commit the acts that al-Khidr did could not be from spiritual visions but rather revelation. Hence al-Khidr must have been a Prophet.

Those who argue he was a saint state that a prophet is sent to a people – who was al-Khidr sent to? All Prophets have a fixed duration and law – why doesn't al-Khidr die? In fact he is not like any Prophet. Furthermore Prophet Musa is a very high-ranking Prophet – how could he be sent to learn from another, arguably lesser prophet? The argument is established on the view that Prophet Musa possessed the external legal expertise whereas al-Khidr possessed expertise of the spiritual states and the actual reason what led to Prophet Musa declaring in the manner he did when asked, 'Who is the most knowledgeable person?'

However both can be flawed to a certain extent.

Was he a Prophet?

Who was he sent to? Can a Prophet of Prophet Musa's status learn from a lesser prophet? If he was a Prophet and he was sent to a people then why did Prophet Musa object when he carried out acts within his own jurisdiction? Al-Khidr is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an but no mention of his work and call to Islam amongst his people like the other prophets? Is there any record of Prophets destroying their own people or their property outside of war?



Was he a saint?

Can we argue that a saint's rank can surpass a Prophet's so that the former becomes the teacher of the latter? – A unanimous no. Can a saint live for an exceptionally long time or will they be dictated by the laws of physics? Can a saint carry out murder and destruction in the name of religion? Can one act on their spiritual visions? – A unanimous no. Can saints possess knowledge of the Unseen? – a unanimous no.

That leaves the final position was al-Khidr an Angel?

Angels teach Prophets - Prophets have never been taught by fellow men they learn from Allah through revelation which comes in many forms one of which is the companionship of Angels. Jibra'il (may Allah's mercy be upon him) regularly visited the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and would arrive in the form of a man.

Angels don't age – neither did al-Khidr whereas all men including Prophets age unless they are taken up into the Heavens like Prophet 'Isa (may Allah's mercy be upon him).

Angels bring Allah's Punishment upon Earth – in Sura al-Kahf we see al-Khidr destroy a ship and kill a boy however he clearly states he is not acting upon his own will but by a Higher Will – ie by Allah's instructions.

Angels receive direct knowledge from Allah – al-Khidr knew before that the ship was going to be taken if he didn't destroy it. He knew that the young boy would grow up to be a bad person even when he was a small boy. These could only have occurred if Allah had informed him directly.

Al-Khidr (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was an astonishing individual whose remarkable narrative is recorded in the Holy Qur'an – we are also quite certain that the third view, in that he was an Angel, should at least hold an equal position with respect to the other two, if not the more correct view.