

A Comparative Study of the concept of Prophecy in Christianity and Islam

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**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF
PROPHECY IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis are my own thoughts and ideas to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any degree of the university, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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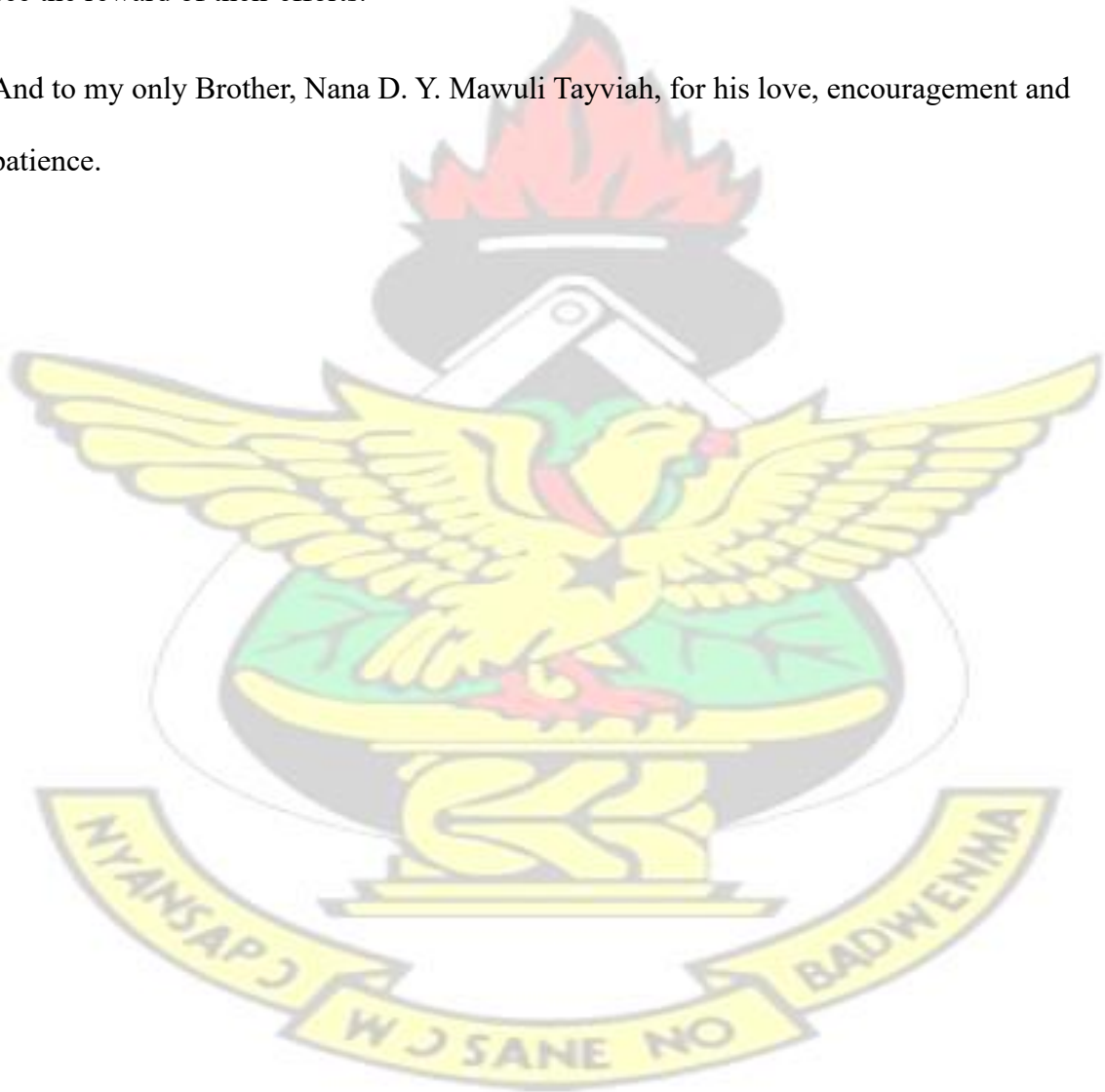
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Dedication

This study is dedicated to God for his wisdom and guidance given to me throughout this work.

I also dedicate this work to Pharm. Harry and Elizabeth Tayviah, my dear parents, for their love, care and support which took me through school. I thank God they are both alive to see the reward of their efforts.

And to my only Brother, Nana D. Y. Mawuli Tayviah, for his love, encouragement and patience.



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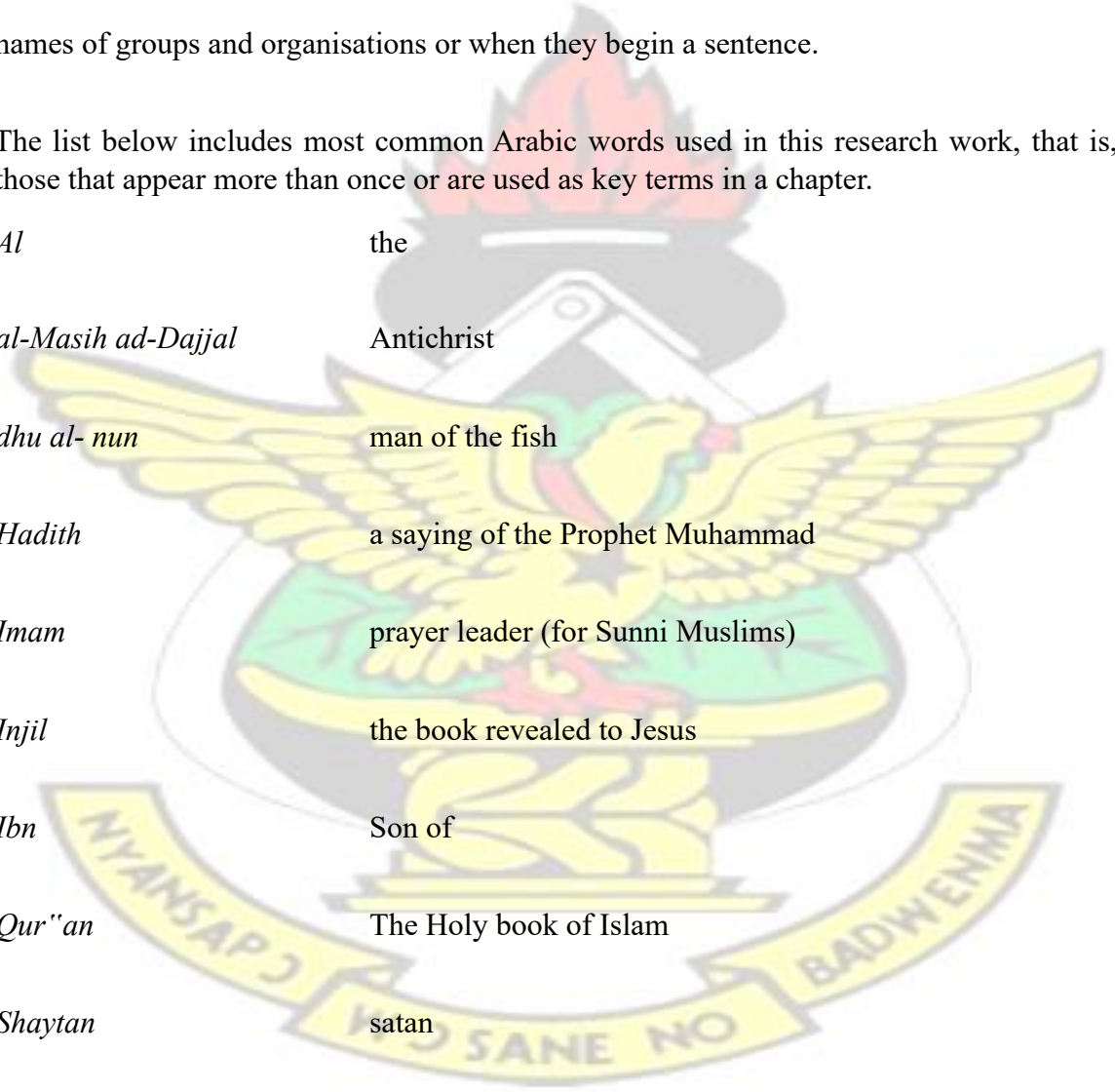
Abstract

There have been many arguments and controversies as regards to the belief of prophecy in Christianity and Islam. The controversy is that Muslims respect the Prophets of Christianity and they expect Christians to respect Muhammad as a Prophet. This is because in Islam Jesus is highly respected as the second to last prophet though he is not seen as a deity, hence is not worshipped. Understanding the concept of prophecy in both religions is important as Christians and Muslims will understand and relate better with each other. Such a study is important in order to make people of both religions understand and tolerate each other more through mutual respect and trust for each other. Christians and Muslims possess many similarities as far as the stories of Prophets are concerned. The Bible and the Qur'an two sacred scriptures consist of warnings, reproaches, encouragement, commandments and teachings; hence many narratives appear to contain the same events and personalities. The study was based on the teachings of the Bible and the Qur'an. This approach ensured that the comparative study was based on facts and not on prejudice, assumption nor misunderstanding. The main conclusions drawn from this study are that Christianity and Islam are two monotheistic religions which historically evolved in the Asian Near East. This implies that they have several similarities but certain doctrines and beliefs make one different from the other. Although the stories of the prophets in both religions appear similar there are certain differences. This thesis argues that in spite of the differences of the concept of prophecy in both Christianity and Islam the adherents of the two religions can coexist because of the glaring numerous similarities in the concept between the two religions.

Terminology and Transliteration

Throughout the research there are a number of Arabic terms that are used and these terms follow the standard Encyclopedia of Islam transliteration system for Arabic. Most transliterated words are in italics at every appearance, except when they are proper nouns, names of groups and organisations or when they begin a sentence.

The list below includes most common Arabic words used in this research work, that is, those that appear more than once or are used as key terms in a chapter.



<i>Al</i>	the
<i>al-Masih ad-Dajjal</i>	Antichrist
<i>dhu al- nun</i>	man of the fish
<i>Hadith</i>	a saying of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>Imam</i>	prayer leader (for Sunni Muslims)
<i>Injil</i>	the book revealed to Jesus
<i>Ibn</i>	Son of
<i>Qur''an</i>	The Holy book of Islam
<i>Shaytan</i>	satan
<i>Sheikh, Shaikh</i>	religious leader
<i>Sunnah</i> Muhammad	mainstream belief in the practice of the prophet

<i>Surah</i>	Chapter of the Qur'an
<i>Suwar</i>	Plural of Surah
<i>Tawhid</i>	Oneness of God
<i>Torah</i>	the books revealed to Moses
<i>ulu al-azm</i>	men of resolution or determination
<i>Umma</i>	community of Muslims
<i>wahy</i>	revelation
<i>Zabur</i>	the book revealed to David



**THE NAMES AND ORDER OF ALL THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW
TESTAMENT**

OLD TESTAMENT		NEW	
TESTAMENT		TESTAMENT	
Name	Abbreviation	Name	Abbreviation
Genesis	Gen.	Matthew	Matt.
Exodus	Ex.	Mark	Mark
Leviticus	Lev.	Luke	Luke
Numbers	Num.	John	John
Deuteronomy	Deut. Josh.	Acts	Acts
Joshua	Judg.	Romans	Rom.
Judges	Ruth I	I Corinthians	I Cor.
Ruth	Sam.	II Corinthians	II Cor.
I Samuel	II Sam.	Galatians	Gal.
II Samuel	I Kings	Ephesians	Eph.
I Kings	II Kings I	Philippians	Phil.
II Kings	Chron.	Colossians	Col.
I Chronicles	II Chron.	I Thessalonians	I Thess.
II Chronicles	Ezra Neh.	II Thessalonians	II Thess.
Ezra	Esther Job	I Timothy	I Tim.
Nehemiah	Ps.	II Timothy	II Tim.
Esther	Prov. Eccl.	Titus	Titus
Job	Song	Philemon	Philem.
Psalms	Isa.	Hebrews	Heb.
Proverbs	Jer.	James	James.
Ecclesiastes	Lam.	I Peter	I Pet.
Song of Solomon	Ezek.	II Peter	II Pet.
Isaiah	Dan. Hos.	I John	I John
Jeremiah	Joel	II John	II John
Lamentations	Amos	III John	III John
Ezekiel	Obad. Jonah	Jude	Jude Rev.
Daniel	Mic.	Revelation	
Hosea	Nah.		
Joel	Hab.		
Amos	Zeph. Hag.		
Obadiah	Zech.		
Jonah	Mal.		
Micah			
Nahum			
Habakkuk			
Zephaniah			
Haggai			
Zechariah			
Malachi			

THE NAMES AND ORDER OF ALL THE CHAPTERS OF THE QUR'AN

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>Al-Fatihah</i> (The Opening) | 31. <i>Luqman</i> (Luqman) |
| 2. <i>Al-Baqarah</i> (The Cow) | 32. <i>As-Sajdah</i> (The Adoration) |
| 3. <i>Al-'Imran</i> (The Family of Amran) | 33. <i>Al-Ahzab</i> (The Allies) |
| 4. <i>An-Nisa'</i> (The Women) | 34. <i>Al-Saba'</i> (The Saba') |
| 5. <i>Al-Ma'idah</i> (The Food) | 35. <i>Al-Fatir</i> (The Originator) |
| 6. <i>Al-An'am</i> (The Cattle) | 36. <i>Ya Sin</i> (Ya Sin) |
| 7. <i>Al-A'raf</i> (The Elevated Places) | 37. <i>As-Saffat</i> (Those Ranging in Ranks) |
| 8. <i>Al-Anfal</i> (Voluntary Gifts) | 38. <i>Sad</i> (Sad) |
| 9. <i>Al-Bara'at</i> / <i>At-Taubah</i> (The Immunity) | 39. <i>Az-Zumar</i> (The Companies) |
| 10. <i>Yunus</i> (Jonah) | 40. <i>Al-Mu'min</i> (The Believer) |
| 11. <i>Hud</i> (Hud) | 41. <i>Ha Mim</i> (Ha Mim) |
| 12. <i>Yusuf</i> (Joseph) | 42. <i>Ash-Shura</i> (Counsel) |
| 13. <i>Ar-Ra'd</i> (The Thunder) | 43. <i>Az-Zukhruf</i> (Gold) |
| 14. <i>Ibrahim</i> (Abraham) | 44. <i>Ad-Dukhan</i> (The Drought) |
| 15. <i>Al-Hijr</i> (The Rock) | 45. <i>Al-Jathiyah</i> (The Kneeling) |
| 16. <i>An-Nahl</i> (The Bee) | 46. <i>Al-Ahqaf</i> (The Sandhills) |
| 17. <i>Bani Isra'il</i> (The Israelites) | 47. <i>Muhammad</i> (Muhammad) |
| 18. <i>Al-Kahf</i> (The Cave) | 48. <i>Al-Fath</i> (The Victory) |
| 19. <i>Maryam</i> (Mary) | 49. <i>Al-Hujurat</i> (The Apartments) |
| 20. <i>Ta Ha</i> (Ta Ha) | 50. <i>Qaf</i> (Qaf) |
| 21. <i>Al-Anbiya'</i> (The Prophets) | 51. <i>Ad-Dhariyat</i> (The Scatterers) |
| 22. <i>Al-Hajj</i> (The Pilgrimage) | 52. <i>At-Tur</i> (The Mountain) |
| 23. <i>Al-Mu'minun</i> (The Believers) | 53. <i>An-Najm</i> (The Star) |
| 24. <i>An-Nur</i> (The Light) | 54. <i>Al-Qamar</i> (The Moon) |
| 25. <i>Al-Furqan</i> (The Discrimination) | 55. <i>Ar-Rahman</i> (The Beneficent) |
| 26. <i>Ash-Shu'ara'</i> (The Poets) | 56. <i>Al-Waqi'ah</i> (The Event) |
| 27. <i>An-Naml</i> (The Naml) | 57. <i>Al-Hadid</i> (Iron) |
| 28. <i>Al-Qasas</i> (The Narrative) | |
| 29. <i>Al-'Ankabut</i> (The Spider) | |
| 30. <i>Ar-Rum</i> (The Romans) | |

58. *Al-Mujadilah* (The Pleading Woman)
59. *Al-Hashr* (The Banishment)
60. *Al-Mumtahanah* (The Woman who is Examined)
61. *As-Saff* (The Ranks)
62. *Al-Jumu'ah* (The Congregation)
63. *Al-Munafiqun* (The Hypocrites)
64. *At-Taghabun* (The Manifestation of Losses)
65. *At-Talaq* (Divorce)
66. *At-Tahrim* (The Prohibition)
67. *Al-Mulk* (The Kingdom)
68. *Al-Qalam* (The Pen)
69. *Al-Haqqah* (The Sure Truth)
70. *Al-Ma'arij* (The Ways of Ascent)
71. *Nuh* (Noah)
72. *Al-Jinn* (The Jinn)
73. *Al-Muzzammil* (The One Covering Himself)
74. *Al-Muddaththir* (The One Wrapping Himself Up)
75. *Al-Qiyamah* (The Resurrection)
76. *Al-Insan* (The Man)
77. *Al-Mursalat* (Those Sent Forth)
78. *An-Naba'* (The Announcement)
79. *An-Nazi'at* (Those Who Yearn)
80. *'Abasa* (He Frowned)
81. *At-Takwir* (The Folding Up)
82. *Al-Infitar* (The Cleaving)
83. *At-Tatfif* (Default in Duty)
84. *Al-Inshiqaq* (The Bursting Asunder)
85. *Al-Buruj* (The Stars)
86. *At-Tariq* (The Comer by Night)
87. *Al-A'la* (The Most High)
88. *Al-Ghashiyah* (The Overwhelming Event)
89. *Al-Fajr* (The Daybreak)
90. *Al-Balad* (The City)
91. *Ash-Shams* (The Sun)
92. *Al-Lail* (The Night)
93. *Ad-Duha* (The Brightness of the Day)
94. *Al-Inshirah* (The Expansion)
95. *At-Tin* (The Fig)
96. *Al-'Alaq* (The Clot)
97. *Al-Qadr* (The Majesty)
98. *Al-Bayyinah* (The Clear Evidence)
99. *Al-Zilzal* (The Shaking)
100. *Al-'Adiyat* (The Assaulters)
101. *Al-Qari'ah* (The Calamity)
102. *At-Takathur* (The Abundance of Wealth)

103. *Al-'Asr* (The Time)
104. *Al-Humazah* (The Slanderer)
105. *Al-Fil* (The Elephant)
106. *Al-Quraish* (The Quraish)
107. *Al-Ma'un* (Acts of Kindness)
108. *Al-Kauthar* (The Abundance of Good)
109. *Al-Kafirun* (The Disbelievers)
110. *An-Nasr* (The Help)
111. *Al-Lahab* (The Flame)
112. *Al-Ikhlās* (The Unity) 113. *Al-Falaq* (The Dawn)
114. *An-Nas* (The Men)



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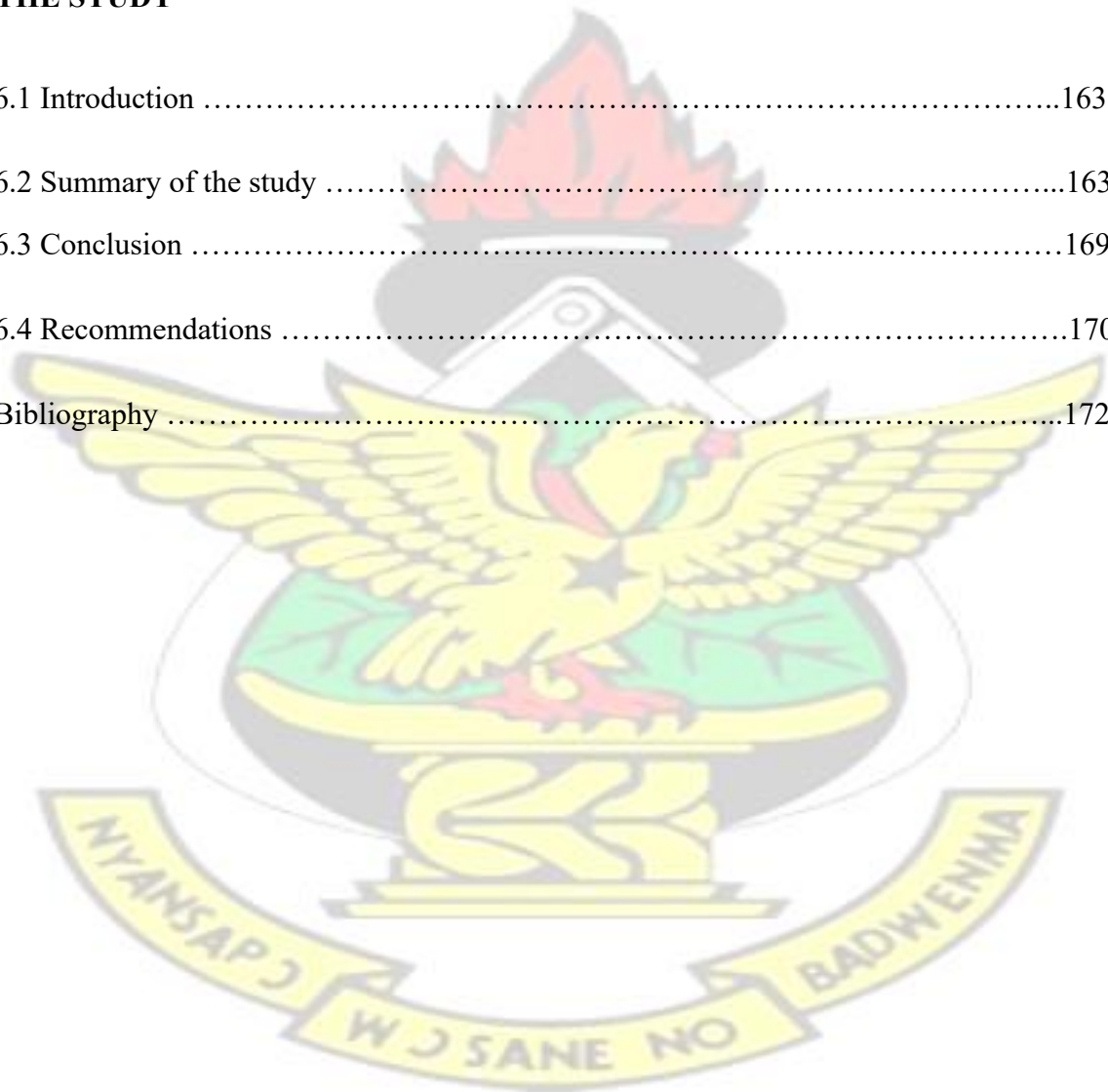
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CHAPTER ONE GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.9 Background to the Study

Prophecy is an experience in which a person receives a message from God and transmits the same to the targeted audience. This message may be for him personally, for another person or be a glimpse of some wider form of information such as the national visions of the Biblical Prophets. Prophecy occurs in three (3) ways: the first is foretelling, that is, saying it long before it happens, second, forthtelling which has to do with saying coming events and finally by inspiration that is the inward stirring and inner conviction a prophet experiences. A prophet is basically a spokesman for God, a person chosen by God to speak to people on God's behalf and convey a message or teaching. Prophecy can be defined as the proclamation of a message revealed by the Holy Spirit, suited to the specific needs of the moment, in the language of those who hear it. In the Bible, there are a number of occasions where prophets were called to deliver personal messages. The reception of a message is termed as ‘revelation’ and the delivery of the message is termed ‘prophecy’. People who prophesied were called prophets, seers, watchmen, men of God, messengers and servants of the Lord (Stuart 1980).

According to I Samuel 9:9 the prophet in early Israel was commonly called a *ro'eh*, that is one who perceives that which does not lie in the realm of natural sight or hearing. Another early designation of similar etymology was a *hozeh* —one who sees supernaturally (II Samuel 24:11). Later the Hebrew seer was more commonly called a *nabhi* —interpreter and mouthpiece of God (I Samuel 9:9).

In Christianity, the New Testament prophets served a somewhat different function from those of the Old Testament ones. In the Old Testament, prophets were often God's only

mouthpiece while in the New Testament, prophets were seen as part of a five-fold ministry leadership team (Ephesians 4:11). In the twenty-first century some Christians still believe in the efficacy of prophecy; but is it possible that prophecies of the twentyfirst century be accepted as valid as those of the Bible? In Christianity, a prophet is the same as a messenger of God and so there is no difference between the two roles stated above.

Belief in all the Prophets and Messengers of God is a fundamental article of faith in Islam. In other words, the belief in Prophets Adam, Jesus, Moses and Muhammad is an obligation for every Muslim. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim and denies that Jesus is a prophet is not considered a Muslim. Muslims believe in all prophets of God without any discrimination among them, as every known nation is believed to have had a messenger from God. These messengers and prophets were believed to have been chosen by God to teach humanity and deliver His Divine message. The Qur'an states in *Surah 2:285* that Allah defined the exact duty of the Prophet (*nabi*) and also the duty of the Messenger (*rasul*) so with this „*Rasul*“ and „*nabi*“ should not be used interchangeably. Every messenger (*rasul*) is a (*nabi*) but not every (*nabi*) is a (*rasul*).

Prophecy in Islam and Christianity has for many centuries been a controversy for Muslims and Christians in the world. Muslims see Jesus as a Prophet but Christians regard him more than a prophet but also the son of God; Muhammad is not regarded as a Prophet in Christianity yet since Muslims respect the Prophets in Christianity they expect Christians to also revere and respect Muhammad and since this is not done it has always generated controversy. Many people also assume that Prophecy in the Bible and the Qur'an are the same and in this research we will find out how objective this assumption is or whether there are dissimilarities and similarities in these descriptions.

There are many people who have the perception that messengers are the same as prophets and vice versa. In Islam, not all messengers are prophets but all prophets are messengers. Furthermore, in Islam all Prophets and Messengers were supported by Miracles to substantiate their true claim of Prophethood. Many people believe all prophets were inspired by the same God and their role was to help their audience to understand the purpose of life and how best to live it so that God will be pleased.

Islam acknowledges the succession of prophets and messengers of God starting from Adam and Noah. Also included in the list of prophets are Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus and Muhammad who is considered to be the last of the prophets and messengers of Allah. Thus, Islam perceives all the prophets and messengers as human beings chosen by God for the specific purpose of passing on His revelations for the benefit of the mankind.

1.10 Statement of Problem

Prophecy is assumed by many Christians and Muslims to be the same in both Christianity and Islam. The concept of Prophecy is common to both Christianity and Islam and it may be found in the canonical scriptures of these two religions. This is as a result of the two religions belonging to the same Arab historical or traditional milieu. However, when one examines the context of the two faiths there are differences and variations and these are supported by scriptures in both religions.

Considering this and the fact that these two religions still relate or live within the same environment or interact with each other, it is easy for the nature of the concept of prophecy to be misunderstood to be the same; thus prophets in Christianity appear to be the same in

Islam. There may also be an assumption that the understanding of prophecy and prophets in one of the religions are the same as the other. It is therefore important to study these differences so that these differences will not over cloud each religion's understanding of the concept of prophecy. Based on the statement of Problem of this research, the following questions rise:

1. What is Prophecy in the Bible and in the Qur'an?
2. How do both religions understand prophecy?
3. What importance and respect do Christians and Muslims accord prophets in their respective religions?
4. What are the differences and similarities in the works of the prophets of two religions under study?
5. How are individual prophets common in both traditions perceived?

Here in this research, we will seek to understand the concept of prophecy in both religions.

1.11 Objectives of the research The research sought to:

1. Understand prophecy in Christianity and Islam.
2. To understand what prophecy was in both religions according to the Bible and Qur'an respectively.
3. To know whether prophecy meant the same in Christianity and Islam.

4. Finally the research further aims to discuss the relevance of contemporary prophets in the general scheme of both religions.

1.12 Relevance of the Research

The researcher sought to do an in depth study on both Christianity and Islam to produce a good work on the topic. This study is meant to help make the concept of prophecy to be understood better. Understanding the concept of prophecy in both religions is important since it helps us to establish the fact that although the concept appears similar, they are not the same.

The study further helped to understand prophecy in Christianity and Islam in this twentyfirst (21st) century. Finally, this study serves as a future guide to those who will want to do further studies on prophecy in comparative religions.

1.13 Methodology

This study is a library research where books were sought for information in relation to the topic. For the purpose of this study, secondary sources which refer to the works of scholars which are books and articles from journals were used. The Bible, the Qur'an, the ahadith and Encyclopedia in Islam and Biblical studies were consulted to make this work authentic. Information from the internet with related articles or books to the topic was accessed however, with caution because not all information on the internet is reliable or authentic.

1.14 Constraints

The researcher faced some challenges in this study. One major challenge was the difficulty of getting literature relating to the topic. Thus, many books on Prophecy in Islam were

written in Arabic and would have to be translated into English before they were used for the study. Hence, the researcher was limited to getting books which were written in English. Another challenge the researcher faced was the difficulty in getting books on comparative study of the concept of prophecy in Christianity and Islam as books which were available were on prophecy written solely in either Christianity and Islam.

1.15 Literature Review

There are many books which have been written on prophecy in Christianity and Islam but from what we have been able to read so far we have not come across a comparative study of prophecy in both Christianity and Islam yet except some literature that compare certain topics in the Bible to that of the Qur'an. However, the books under review have been classified into nine (9) concepts or ideas. These are as follows:

1. The Universality of Prophets
2. The divine selection or choice of Prophets
3. Classes of Prophets or Ranks
4. Prophetic Roles
5. Scripture and Prophecy
6. Gender and Prophecy
7. Prophecy and the community
8. True and False Prophets
9. Means of Prophetic Communication

In his book *History of the Prophet; as narrated in the Holy Quran compared with the Bible*, Ali (1996) argued that there was an essential difference between the histories of the prophets as they are narrated in the Holy Bible and the Qur'an. According to him, the Bible contains a record of genealogies and some personal history while the Holy Qur'an deals with the lifework of a prophet relating to an object of reformation and as to how he succeeded in establishing the truth and uprooting evil. The word *nabi* in its literal significance is applicable to anyone who prophecies about the future in the way it was revealed but in Islam technically it is applicable only to a man who is chosen by God to deliver His message to mankind.

Ali (1996) also makes mention of the fact that God used many people to prophesy to his people and some were not mentioned in the Qur'an and the Bible. However every prophet God sent was aimed at establishing righteousness in the earth. The prophet was not only sent to prophesy but to rebuke warn or judge the people. Ali (1996) agrees with Nasr (2004) that Christianity and Islam revere the Old Testament prophets as we shall discuss later. This research discusses the similarities and differences between prophets of the Bible and the Qur'an. This research further makes the concept of prophecy in both religions easy to understand.

Esau (2007) in his book *Prophethood and the Prophets* analyses the history of the prophets and states that prophethood is a divine gift so it cannot be attained by inheritance, monarchy, conquest or victory rather Allah appoints his messengers and prophets. In the Qur'an Allah grouped the prophets into different ranks some more superior than others (Surah 2:253) meanwhile Muhammad is the greatest of all. Nonetheless all prophets must be revered the same way but then he noted that some were favored than others in Surah

17:55. He further explained that the prophets, who were human married, ate, drank and were prone to the vicissitudes that befall men like sickness, weakness, old age and death. He also examined the roles some prophets played and argued that some prophets played roles of messengers and prophets whilst some played only one role of either being a messenger or a prophet. For the purpose of this research we examined the roles prophets played in both the Bible and the Qur'an into details. Furthermore, this research is an in depth study in discussing whether there was a difference between messengers of God and prophets in Christianity as we have in Islam and if there were false prophets recorded in the Qur'an and the Bible.

In *the Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, Glasse (1989) remarked that prophets were divided into two classes according to their missions. He argued that *rasul* literally meant messenger or envoy which further means those who are sent and examples of people in this category include Adam, Seth, Noah and Jesus. On the other hand, *nabi* literally meant prophet. Here a prophet's mission lay within the framework of an existing religion. According to him, a prophet is also called a *bashir* that is he who brings glad tidings and *nadhir* which means a warner and these names are mentioned according to the messages they bear. The Qu'ran in Surah 10:48 admonishes that there is no people to whom a prophet has not been sent. However the Qur'an mentions four Arab prophets who were specifically sent to the Arabs: Salih, Hud, Shu'ayb, Muhammad. Abraham is equally the patriarch of both Arabs and Jews. Although the author mentioned that the Qur'an states that prophets were not sent to a specific people but identified four prophets who were sent specifically to Arab, he failed to write about why these prophets were specifically sent to Arab and also what kind of

messages they were sent to convey to the people. All these will be discussed in this research.

Scholars like Qureshi (2008), Elwell (1998) and Mckenzie (1965) discussed prophetic roles in their book and this research examined them to have a better understanding on the roles of prophets. Qureshi (2008) in his book *Description of Prophets, the Bible the Quran: a Comparison*, observed that Christianity, Judaism and Islam were born in Arabia and so have many things in common and this forms part of the problematisation this research sought to address. He affirmed in his book that many prophets of the Old Testament were the same as those in Islam but he failed to assess whether they performed the same roles in the two religions. He further discussed that Muslims respect the prophets of the Old Testament, Jesus and Mary the mother of Jesus is highly respected among many women in the Qur'an but Christians on the other hand fail to accept Muhammad as a prophet because they do not regard him as such. He critically described the roles of some prophets in both Christianity and Islam but he failed to tell how different or similar these prophets were especially with regards to their call or performance of their duties in the two religions. This is what this research sought to find out.

Another scholar Elwell (ed) (1984) in his book, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, observed that in the Old Testament there are three terms for the prophet thus *ro"eh*, *nabi*, *hozeh*. The first and the last terms are distinguished by nuances bearing on the habitual or temporary character of the visions. He argued that *nabi* which means 'he who witnesses or testifies' best characterises the prophetic mission because the originality of biblical prophecy derives from the phenomenon of inspiration. According to him, the prophet is not

a magician but he is under a divine constraint and by inspiration God speaks to the *nabi* who has to transmit exactly what he receives and the mode of inspiration is verbal.

He also explained that prophets of the OT are divided into the four Major Prophets, the twelve Minor Prophets and many other prophets in the era of the OT who were regarded as *nabi* without equal. The NT also refers to a prophetic ministry exercised by both men and women. After Pentecost, mention is made of Agabus, Jude and Silas as prophets. Elwell (ed) (1984) also classified the prophecies of the writing prophets of the OT into three main groups thus Prophecies concerning the internal destiny of Israel, the Messianic prophecies and finally eschatological prophecies. According to him, the prophecies of the NT are those that have already been fulfilled for instance the coming of Christ; Prophecies in the process of fulfillment and Prophecies not yet fulfilled.

In the NT the names of early Christian prophets are few yet these prophets were nonetheless powerful persons within the church who spoke the word of the risen Lord with authority. The researcher agrees with Elwell (ed) (1998) but this research further sought to examine prophecies to know whether Christians still refer to OT prophecies or whether those prophecies have been replaced with that of the NT. Also the future of prophecy in both religions was discussed in the research.

In his book *Dictionary of the Bible* McKenzie (1965), also another scholar explained that people worked as professional, court or cult prophets. The professional prophet he argued, lived by prophecy whereas the court prophet lived in the palace of the kings and then the cult prophet worked in the sanctuary or temple. He asserts that prophecy must carry charisma so it cannot be reduced to only ecstasy. The prophets in whichever way they

worked were to disclose the nature and character of God experienced and they stated the implications of the divine nature and character for human thought and action.

However, the conception and formulation of their utterance is their own. This means that when the prophet receives the prophecy and wants to communicate the message to his people he uses the language that His people will understand and if care is not taken the message could be altered. Sometimes the prophet performs a symbolic action which is an extension of the word. At other times the prophets upon receiving the message from God become afraid of how to communicate the message for the fear of being persecuted by the king or the people. Nevertheless they had faith that since they were true prophets of God, they were under His protection and so had the confidence that the presence of God was with them at all times. For the purpose of this study some of the challenges the prophet went through in their era have been discussed in this study. Finally, this research did a comparative study on Christianity and Islam to identify the differences and similarities of the roles prophets played in both religions.

In the area of Gender and Prophecy, Erickson (1998) in his book *Christian Theology* explained that there were several indications in scripture that the gift of prophecy was given to and exercised by women. Isaiah for instance referred to his wife as the —prophetess (Is 8:3). Even though Paul was accused of being rigidly opposed to the involvement of women in the work of the church; He specifies the conditions under which women should prophesy in 1 Corinthians 11:5 and also speaks positively of women in positions of leadership; he allowed women to prophesy and read scripture. In this case,

prophets in the Bible were not only men as women were equally used by God to communicate His message to his people.

Erickson (1998) further discussing the theme of Scripture and Prophecy in his book, He submitted that the OT prophets testified that the speaking and writing of prophecy were as a result of the spirits coming upon them. Therefore the Holy Spirit can come upon anyone no matter the gender of the person. Erickson also argued that the Holy Spirit also entered such unlikely persons as Balaam (Num 24:2) and as a sign that Saul was God's anointed the spirit came mightily on him and he prophesied (I Sam 10:6, 10). In discussing the theme of Prophecy and the community, Erickson (1998) also asserted that prophesying was a spiritual gift so when Paul spoke about prophesying he meant it was of greater value because it edifies or builds up the church even more than speaking in tongues. This research analysed female prophets in only Christianity as there were no female prophets in Islam. Furthermore, the roles these female prophets played were examined in the study while the differences between prophecy in the Old and New Testaments were also analysed in this study.

Nasr (2004) in his book *The Heart of Islam; enduring values for Humanity* remarks that in Islam, revelation and prophecy are both necessary and universal. According to him, the Qur'an states that Humanity was created from a single soul but then diversified into races and tribes hence the diversity of revelation. He argued that throughout the history of prophecy there have been false prophets and religions to which Christ also referred to as well as religions which have deviated from their original form. Nasr (2004) asserted that the Qur'an states clearly that a prophet was a man and not divine but God chose him as a

model for Muslims. Furthermore he states that Islam in relation to the other religions such as Christianity and Judaism have many things in common hence, the Hebrew prophets were also revered in Islam as prophets but was this truly the case in Christianity?

Jim & Caroline Murphy (2002) in their book *Prophets and Prophecy in Today's Church* define a false prophet as one who uses the prophetic gifts for personal gain, self aggrandizement and / or deception. They further describe the false prophet as having a total disregard for truth or scriptural veracity. Hence, Prophets are important personalities in Christianity and Islam so to prophesy falsely can be interpreted as a blasphemous act against God since the false prophet claims he or she has been called by God and perform miracles just as the true prophet. This study discussed the concept of prophecy in both religions and further did a comparative analysis of the concept of prophecy in the two religions so as to bring out the similarities and differences between the Islam and Christianity.

Chapman (1992) observes in his book *The New Jerome Bible Handbook* that most religions if not all have produced the phenomenon of prophecy either continuously or at some stage in their development. Prophecy for him is not understood as only forecasting the future but rather the interpretation of the mind and will of God. According to Chapman (1992) the means of prophetic communication were dreams, visions, ecstatic or mystical experiences and various divinatory practices and a person might prophesy both truth and falsehood depending on whether or not he had been touched by the spirit of God. True or false prophets abound not only in ancient times but in the OT and NT and even

now there are many prophets who are either false or true. This research sought to verify if there were false prophets in Islam and whether Muslims believed that a prophet could be true or false.

Chapman (1992) further discussed that in the Old Testament; prophets were either attached to the sanctuaries as ‘cult’ prophets or served as ‘court’ prophets. According to him, in the days of classical prophecy it was difficult to distinguish between a true or false prophet because prophets could even be touched by the spirit of God and still prophesy falsehood. However —true! prophecy often went unfulfilled. Understanding prophecy in Christianity and Islam will enable one tell a true prophecy from a false prophecy. This research also discussed the call of the prophets, how they received their messages and how they conveyed their message to their people in Christianity and Islam.

1.8 Organisation of the Study.

This study is made up of six chapters. Chapter One is a general introduction which discussed the statement of the problem, aims and objectives and significance of the study, Constraints, the methodology used for the study and finally Literature relating to the topic were reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter Two gave a general overview of the Concept of Prophecy. It discussed some scholarly, Biblical and Qur’anic definitions of Prophecy. The chapter further examined prophethood and the criterion for choosing prophets, the roles the prophets played and the difference between prophets and messengers in both Religions.

In Chapter Three, the concept of prophecy in Christianity was discussed. The Old and New Testament prophets were examined while the differences or similarities between Prophets and Messengers in the Bible were analysed. The roles played by the major and minor prophets of the Bible were critically analysed. The call of the prophets, the themes of their messages and differences between the Major and Minor Prophets were submitted in the chapter. Finally, the future of prophecy was also discussed.

Chapter Four, an in depth study on the concept of Prophecy in Islam. Prophets (*nabi*) and messengers (*rasul*) were discussed and their roles were also examined. In the end, there was a clarification of individuals these who served as both prophets and messengers or those who served only one position. Finally, the call of these prophets and messengers, their messages and how their messages were received were also analysed in that chapter.

The Comparative Study of the concept of Prophecy in Christianity and Islam was discussed in Chapter five. The chapter also examined and analysed the similarities and differences of Prophets and prophecy between Christianity and Islam. True and false prophets as well as Contemporary prophets were discussed in Christianity and Islam.

Chapter Six gives a summary of the study, recommendations, suggestions and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF PROPHECY

2.0 Introduction

Prophecy and Prophethood form an integral part of the world's three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The position occupied by the prophets and their roles are underscored by the fact that through them, mankind have the knowledge about God, the unseen world, mysteries of the universe and the relationship between man and God. (Ismail et al, 2012).

This chapter is a general overview of the Concept of Prophecy based on Biblical, Qur'anic and some scholarly definitions of Prophecy. The chapter also discusses prophethood and the criterion for choosing prophets, the roles prophets played and the difference between prophets and messengers in both Religions. In other words, the discussion of the roles and differences between prophets and messengers in both religions gives a better understanding on the concept of prophecy in Christianity and Islam.

2.1 The Concept of Prophecy

Prophecy is a religious phenomenon in which a message is sent by God to human kind through an intermediary called a prophet. The message may contain a reference to future events, but it is often simply a warning, encouragement, or piece of information. The word —prophecy is a noun while the verb —prophesy which originates from the Greek word *pro*, (before) and *phemi* (to speak) means —to speak before (Smith, 1882). In 2 Samuel 12:7; 1 Corinthians 14:24 and Acts 8:30-35; prophecy serves as God's way of getting through to people in a particular situation. In 1 Corinthians 14:3 and Isaiah 40 prophecy is a sign of God's nearness and concern for His people, that He is there with them to build up, tear down, or console. (Revised Standard Version RSV).

Prophecy signifies the supernatural message of God sent through the Prophet to the recipient of the message. The word 'prophet', which has its origin in Greek *prophetes*, is generally defined as someone who prophesies; that is, someone who predicts the future. By this definition, the word 'prophet' implies the concept of prophecy. In Hebrew, the historic meaning of a *nabi* (prophet) in biblical usage is —interpreter and mouthpiece of God. This is illustrated in Exodus 7:1-2 where during his call, Moses excused himself from speaking to Pharaoh on account of his inability to speak but was answered by Yahweh:

—You shall speak all that I command you; and Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. (RSV)

From the passage under reference, Moses was commanded to —speak and Aaron is to —tell. As commanded, Moses was to utter words or make pronouncements while Aaron on the other hand had to explain Moses' utterances to the understanding of the Israelites. The Greek *prophetes* from *prophanai* (to speak for) translates the Hebrew word for prophet accurately as we have seen above. A Prophet in Greek was the revealer of the future, and the interpreter of divine things, especially of the obscure oracles of the pythoness.

The word *nabi* expresses a function, yet the two most usual synonyms *ro'eh* and *hozeh* emphasize more clearly the special source of the prophetic knowledge, the vision, Divine revelation or inspiration. Both words have almost the same meaning however, *hozeh* is employed, much more frequently in poetical language and almost always in connection with a supernatural vision, whereas *ra'ah*, of which *ro'eh* is the participle, is the word normally used to mean 'to foresee' (Richardson & Bowden, 1983:474).

Stuart (1980) argues that before the first book of Kings was written or compiled *ro'eh* was used and the word *nabi* was later employed. *Hozeh* is found much more frequently from

the days of Amos. There were other terms employed to define a prophet such as messenger of God, man of God, servant of God, man of the spirit or inspired man (Stuart 1980). From the above we understand that the gift of prophecy includes both the idea of foretelling and forth telling, predicting the future and preaching. Sometimes that message was regarding the future, other times it concerned the present, even the past, or simply doctrinal truth but it was always God's message spoken forth. The Hebrew Prophet was not only, as the word commonly implies, a man enlightened by God to foretell events, he was also the interpreter and supernaturally enlightened herald sent by God to communicate His will and wishes to Israel. His mission consisted of preaching as well as in foretelling.

For instance, the Old Testament prophets spoke within the context of their tradition, using the rich oral and written poetry and stories which were the common heritage of the Israelites from which the Old Testament histories and writings were made. In the New Testament, Prophets spoke within the framework of the apostolic tradition of faith as in Romans 12:6. All of these are to say that Prophecy happens or occurs within a context of God's covenant with human beings. However, if prophecy is not within that context and in full accord with the scriptures then it is probably false and not from God.

In Islam, prophecy is seen as a gift bestowed by God on certain prophets, yet this gift can also be bestowed on some people who are not specifically prophets. To this extent, while Islam does not reject the concept of prophecy in totality, it does not overemphasize it as the key aspect of prophethood. In other words, Islam does not see prophecy as a test of prophethood. (Ismail et al, 2012).

2.1.1. Brief history of Prophecy in Christianity

Prophets of the Old Testament and Israel are accepted by Christians as we shall discuss later in chapter four of this work. The first person to be called *nabi'* in the Old Testament is Abraham in Genesis 20:7. The next is Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10) although there were other Prophets such as Aaron, Miriam, Eldad and Medad.

Of the four institutions concerning which Moses enacted laws according to Deuteronomy 18:14-18, one was prophecy in Exodus 4:1, Deut 13:1-5, 18:9-22). The people of Israel were charged to listen to the true Prophets and not to heed the false prophets even if they appeared as miracle-workers. The difference between the true and false prophets is that the former would speak in the name of the one and only true God; foretell things that would be accomplished or be fulfilled eventually. While the latter came in the name of the false gods.

In the time of the Judges, mention is made of an unnamed Prophet (Judges 6:8-10) then Deborah is cited in Judges 4-5, —a mother in Israel, judging the people, and communicating the Divine orders concerning the War of Independence to Barak and the tribes. In the days of Samuel, prophecy became a permanent institution. Samuel's Divine mission was to restore the code of the former prophets and to supervise the beginning of the monarchy. After Samuel the next Prophets, properly so called who are explicitly mentioned are Nathan and Gad. They assisted David with their counsels, and when necessary, confronted him (2 Samuel 12:1).

There were three great Prophets whose works are of considerable length. They are Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel while Amos, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zacharias, Malachi's works are brief. The ministry of Amos, the most ancient perhaps of the prophetic

writers is placed about the years 760-50BC. Hosea's prophetic ministry follows that of Amos and the next prophet is Isaiah who had his ministry from about 740-700BC, and his contemporary Nahum, and Habakkuk prophesied towards the last quarter of the seventh century. Jeremiah worked as a prophet in about 626-586BC whereas Ezekiel ministered between 592-70BC. Zachariah is dated exactly at 520BC Malachi was written in the middle of the fifth century. Chronologically, the prophets may be divided into four groups: (1) Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, active in the 8th century BC; (2) Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah, immediately pre exilic (late 7th to early 6th century); (3) Ezekiel and Second Isaiah, exilic period; (4) Obadiah, Joel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi; the postexilic prophets. The prophetic tradition, however, goes as far back as Samuel and includes such early figures as Elijah and Elisha.

The Old Testament also gives the name *nebi'ah*, to three women who were gifted with prophetic charisma. These women were Miriam (the sister of Moses), Deborah and Huldah, a prophetess who lived in the newer part of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 22:14). It is important to note that just as there were the true prophets ministering in Israel there were false prophets and prophetess as well and the Bible makes mention of Tobiah, Sanballat and Noadiah a false prophetess. (Nehemiah 6:14).

2.1.2 Biblical definitions of Prophecy

The Biblical prophets mainly spoke to and wrote for the people of their time, yet with long future confirmations of their prophecies. They challenged the rulers of their doxy to remain faithful to God's commandments or to repent and turn back to God if they had gone astray. However, because the biblical prophets were transmitting messages on behalf of God,

Christians believe that much of what they wrote for their own time is clearly also relevant for people living in the Christian era. Generally, the message of faith and repentance is timeless and applicable to all ages and cultures.

To understand what biblical prophecy is, we must closely look at the origins, definitions, and uses of some key biblical words for prophets. In the Hebrew Bible, the word —prophet is usually *nabi* which literally means —spokesperson. This word is believed to have been used over 300 times in the Bible while the related feminine noun *nabi'ah* (prophetess) occurred only rarely. Both words are derived from the root verb *naba'* which means 'to prophesy' or 'to speak on behalf of another'. The root meaning of prophet is clearly expressed in several biblical passages as we discussed earlier in this chapter. All three words *nabi*, *ro'eh* and *hozeh* are used for three different people in 1 Chronicles 29:29:

—Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the records of the seer (ro'eh) Samuel, and in the records of the prophet (nabi') Nathan, and in the records of the seer (hozeh) Gad. (Revised Standard Version)

In other texts, *nabi'* and *hozeh* are practically synonymous and are sometimes even used interchangeably.

2.1.3 Scholarly definitions of Prophecy

John Calvin (1960) Commenting on 1 Thessalonians 5:20 wrote —By the term prophesying I do not mean the gift of foretelling the future, but as in 1 Corinthians 14:3 the science of the interpretation of Scripture is given to the prophet as the interpreter of the

divine will. Prophesying here is understood to mean the interpretation of Scripture applied to the present need. Robeck (1980) defines the New Testament prophecy as a spontaneous manifestation of God's grace, received by revelation and spoken by the Spirit through a Christian who has been given a gift of prophecy, in the language of those who hear the prophetic word spoken.

2.2 Prophecy in the Old Testament

The Old Testament prophets as we discussed above received direct revelation from God and were able to foretell the future. Their function was to reveal what God would do in the days or years that lay ahead. Their prophecies also dealt with matters of present concern that is what God willed for His people at that time. Their prophecies further concerned matters of doctrine as in, when God revealed the truth to them so that they would in turn, —prophesy to His people. There were also times when God would give revelation concerning the past, telling them about some event otherwise unknown to them. Nathan's confrontation with David over his sin with Bathsheba for instance well illustrates this fact (II Samuel 12:1-12). In other words, the Old Testament prophets both foretold the future and forth told God-given truth, but both aspects involved direct revelation.

Several important prophets were named in the OT. They are Abraham (Gen 20:7), Aaron Moses' brother (Ex 7:1) and their sister Miriam (Ex 15:20) , Seventy elders in the desert including Eldad and Medad (Num 11:25-29), Moses (Deut18:15-19, 34:10), Deborah (Jdg 4:4), also known as a "judge", Samuel (1 Sam 3:20; 19:20; 2 Chron 35:18, 1 Sam 9:11-19; 1 Chron 9:22; 26:28; 29:29), Saul, just after he was anointed by Samuel (1 Sam 10:5-13; 19:20-24), Gad (1 Sam 22:5), also called King David's "seer" (2 Sam 24:11; 1

Chron 21:9; 29:29; 2 Chron 29:25), Nathan (2 Sam 7:2; 12:25; 1 Kings 1:8-45; 1 Chron 17:1; 29:29; 2 Chron 9:29; 29:25), Ahijah the Shilohnite (1 Kgs 11:29; 14:2-18; 2 Chron 9:29), An unnamed old prophet in Bethel (1 Kgs 13:11-29), Jehu, son of Hanani (1 Kgs 16:7-12), Obadiah and a hundred prophets who hid from Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:4), Elijah (1 Kgs 18:22—19:16; 2 Chron 21:12), Elisha, son of Shaphat and successor of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:16; 2 Kgs 2:3—9:1), Micaiah, (1 Kgs 22:8-23; 2 Chron 18:7-22), Groups of prophets at Bethel (2 Kgs 2:3), at Jericho (2:5-15), and associated with Elisha at Gilgal (2 Kgs 4—6), Jonah (2 Kgs 14:25), Isaiah (2 Kgs 19:2—20:14; 2 Chron 26:22; 32:20, 32), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chron 34:22), Shemaiah (2 Chron 12:5-15), Iddo (2 Chron 13:22, 2 Chron 9:29; 12:15), Azariah (2 Chron 15:8), Hanani the "seer" (2 Chron 16:7-10; 19:2), Eliezer (2 Chron 20:37), Obed (2 Chron 28:9), Asaph and his descendants (2 Chron 29:30; 35:15), Jeduthun, the king's "seer" (2 Chron 35:15), Jeremiah (2 Chron 36:12), Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), Amos (also called a "seer" in Amos 7:12). We must note that Daniel is not a —prophet in the Bible even though he gives many prophecies in his Book (Gerhard von Rad 1968, Robinson 1953)

Although some of the prophets mentioned above will be treated into detail in Chapter Four. It is important to note that the story of many of these prophets are rarely narrated in the Bible. However, the best known stories of the call of some Prophets include:

- The call of Samuel (1 Sam 3:1-21)
- The call of Elisha (1 Kgs 19:16-21)
- The call of Amos (Amos 7:15)
- The call of Isaiah (Isa 6:1-13)
- The call of Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10)

- The call of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1—3:27)

The Old Testament also mentions false prophets who served other gods. Deut 13:1-5; 18:20-22 mentions the explicit criteria for distinguishing between the true and false prophets. Meanwhile, some texts in the Old Testament name certain groups or individuals as false prophets such as the Prophets of Baal or prophets of Asherah (1 Kgs 18:19-40; 2 Kgs 10:19; Jer 2:8) and False prophets opposed to Jeremiah (Jer 5:31; 14:13-15).

2.2.1 Prophecy in the New Testament

According to Douglas (ed.) (1974:806-807), in the New Testament which was originally written in Greek, the word for prophet *prophetes* stems from two words: *pro* and *phemi*. The verb *phemi* simply means —to speak. The preposition *pro* has many different possible meanings depending on the context in which it is used. One of its meanings can be —before which is why many people think prophets are those who speak before something happens, that is predicting something. The word can also mean —for or —on behalf of. This is why most biblical scholars insist that prophets are those who speak on behalf of God. (Richardson & Bowden 1983)

Only a few New Testament personalities are mentioned to have the gift of prophecy. Agabus is one of the people who had the gift of prophecy. In the book of Acts he predicted a famine, and in Acts 21:10-11 he predicted Paul's impending suffering both of which came to pass as prophesied. From this example it is clear that the gift of prophecy involves the ability to foretell and forthtell. In the Book of Acts, Philip's daughters prophesied but no details of their prophecy are given. Acts 13:1 mentions prophets and teachers in the Church at Antioch although no further details are given nor does it say which men were prophets

or which of them were teachers. However, Judas and Silas are designated prophets in Acts 15:32. Furthermore, I Timothy 4:14 tells of Paul's gift of prophecy while Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 clearly associate the New Testament Prophets with receiving revelation directly from God so that in this case revelation is not necessarily concerned with the future but rather doctrine. Thus a prophet in the Bible is primarily a 'spokesperson for God', someone who receives messages from God and conveys same to other people. If a prophet speaks words that are not from God, he or she is considered a false prophet or sometimes called a prophet of another god. For instance, —prophets of Baal in the OT were seen to be false prophets. (I Kings 18:17-40, 2Kings 10:19).

In addition to these references to the ancient Hebrew prophets, the NT also refers to particular individuals as —prophets, including John the Baptist and Jesus either individually or generically. For instance:

- All four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) use 'prophet' to refer to both John the Baptist (Mark 11:32; Matt 21:46; Luke 1:76; 7:26; 20:6; cf. John 1:21) and to Jesus (Mark 6:15; 8:28; Matt 14:5; 16:14; 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16, 39; 9:19; 24:19; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17).
- The infancy narrative in Luke's Gospel also mentions an old prophet named Anna who frequented the Temple of Jerusalem where she encountered Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus (Luke 2:36).
- The Letters of Paul mention prophets right after apostles when listing various categories of early Christian leaders (1 Cor 12:28-29; cf. 14:29-37).
- The Acts of the Apostles names five men as —prophets and teachers of the church

in Antioch. These men are Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (Herod's close friend) and Saul (Paul) (Acts 13:1). The Book of Acts also mentions Christian prophets named Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32) and Agabus (Acts 21:10), and asserts that the four daughters of the evangelist Philip had the gift of prophesying (Acts 21:8).

- The Book of Revelation mentions saints, apostles and prophets together in several passages (Revelation 11:18; 16:6; 18:20-24). The reference to these prophets is most likely not in reference to the OT prophets but mostly to early Christian leaders and this is especially clear in Acts 22:9. In a letter to the church in Thyatira a woman named Jezebel is also denounced as a false prophetess (Rev 2:20).

The gift of *propheteia* (prophecy) and the act of *propheteuo* (prophesying) are very important in the life of the early Christian communities as seen in various NT texts:

- In several letters of Paul, He speaks of prophecy as one of the gifts given to some Christians for the benefit of believers (brethren) (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10; 13:2, 8; 14:6, 22; 1 Thess 5:20; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14).
- Paul also refers to praying and 'prophesying' and other spiritual practices as normal parts of the worship services of these early Christians (1 Cor 11:4-5; 13:9; 14:1-40).

2.3 Prophethood in Christianity

In Hebrew, the word *nabi* is the most generally used for a prophet but in the time of Samuel another word *ro"eh* (seer), began to be used (1 Sam. 9:9) as it occurs seven times in reference to Samuel. Afterwards another word *hozeh*, (seer) was employed (2 Sam. 24:11). In 1 Ch. 29:29 all these three words are used: —Samuel the *ro"eh* (seer), Nathan the *nabi* (prophet), Gad the *hozeh* (seer)¶. On the contrary in Josh. 13:22 Balaam is called a *kosem* (diviner) a word used for a false prophet.

In Num. 12:6, 8 a prophet proclaimed the message given to him as a seer who beholds the sight of God. Thus a prophet was a spokesman for God because he spoke in the name of God and by his authority (Ex. 7:1). He is also the mouthpiece of God (Jer. 1:9; Isa. 51:16) hence the word of the prophet is not the word of man but of God. In other words, Prophets were people through whom God communicated His mind and will to humankind (Deut. 18:18-19). When God raised prophets among men their great task was —to correct moral and religious abuses and to proclaim the great moral and religious truths which are connected with the character of God¶. (Sawyer, 1987).

Although we understand that in the Old Testament, being a prophet is a gift from God, it is important to note that the prophetic order began with Samuel. There were colleges, —schools of the prophets¶ which were instituted for the training of prophets (1 Sam. 19:18-24; 2 Kings 2:3, 15; 4:38). This system continued to the end of the Old Testament period. Such —schools¶ were established at Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal, Gibeah, and Jericho. The —sons¶ or —disciples¶ of the prophets were young men (2 Kings 5:22; 9:1, 4) who lived together at these different —schools¶ (2 Kings 4:38-41). These young men were taught not only the rudiments of secular knowledge but they were brought up to exercise

the office of prophet thus to preach pure morality and the heart-felt worship of God and to act along and coordinately with the priesthood and monarchy in guiding Israel.

In the New Testament the prophetic office was continued. Jesus is often spoken of as a prophet (Luke 13:33; 24:19) though he described himself as greater than a prophet (Matt 11:9). There was also in the Church a distinct order of prophets (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20; 3:5) who received new revelations from God on daily or regular basis. They differed from the —teacher whose office was to impart truths already revealed.

There are sixteen Major Prophets of the Old Testament whose prophecies form part of the Bible. These are divided into four groups:

1. The prophets of the northern kingdom (Israel) who are Hosea, Amos, Joel, Jonah.
2. The prophets of Judah who are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.
3. The prophets of Captivity who are Ezekiel and Daniel.
4. The prophets of the Restoration who are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

2.4 Criterion for Choosing Prophets

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 describes the criterion for choosing Prophets in the Bible. In this verse one can distinguish the true prophet from the false one. Again God warns in the scripture that false prophets must be avoided because of the wrong doctrines they teach.

All of this indicates that it is only God who chooses His Prophets. Similarly, the Qur'an in Surah 16:36 teach that Allah sent prophets with the command of bringing His people to worship Him only and avoid sin. Our understanding here is that in both religions God is the one who appoints His prophets.

2.4.1 Roles of the Prophet

In the Old Testament God commissioned prophets to play prominent roles of declaring the fundamentals of repentance, righteousness, justice and restoration. Aside the above roles some prophets played the following roles:

a. Seers

A —Seer¹ in Hebrew is *roeh* and *chozeh* both basically meaning —one who sees.¹ From this definition a Prophet plays the role of for seeing the present, past and future.

b. Watchmen

Sometimes prophets were called watchmen (Jeremiah 6:17; Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7; Isaiah 21:11). These Prophets serve as watchmen because they sounded warnings to the people of Israel.

c. Intercessors

Prophets also served as intercessors. There were many instances in the Old Testament such as when Moses interceded for the Israelites and when Samuel also interceded for the Israelites especially when they sinned against God. These prophets interceded for their people especially when God wanted to punish them for their sin. Some of these prophets who played intercessory roles are Abraham (Gen. 18, 19:23-29), Moses (Exodus 32:16,32:11-13), Elijah(I Kings 17:19, 18:36), Samuel(I Sam 12:23) and Jesus(John 16:23, I Tim2:5, I John 2:1, I John 2:12).

2.4.2. Roles of a Prophet in Christianity

Some roles that a prophet plays are outlined below:

1. Prayer

An important part of the prophet's task is prayer. Because he is expected to know the mind of God, he is in a position to pray effectively. He is believed to have a clear picture of what God is doing so he knows when prayer is needed most. He must not rest until God has fulfilled his word (Isaiah 62:6).

An important part of the prophet's task is unceasing prayer for the Christian Community. The prophets, because they knew what the mind of the Lord was, were in a position to pray more effectually than other men. They had a clearer picture of what God was doing and so they knew when prayer was needed most. They were also able to pray true 'prophetic prayers' in which the Holy Spirit directed and guided their very manner and words (Isa 62:6) (Yocum, 1976).

Prayer was essential to the prophetic ministry. It came naturally to the prophets and was the life-blood of their ministry. Prayer was their principal means of communication with God and lay at the heart of their personal relationship with God (Hill 1995).

2. Receiving the Word of the Lord

Another key role of the prophet is waiting in the presence of God to receive His word.

The task of the prophets was to know the will of God, so that they could convey it to the nation... (Hill 1995).

3. Encouragement

Encouragement of the audience is an important aspect of the prophetic ministry.

Everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort... he who prophesies edifies the church (1 Cor 14:3, 4)

The words of the prophet builds up and strengthens the church. This will be especially important in times of trial and tribulation. Silas and Judas were two prophets who encouraged the church in Antioch.

Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers (Acts 15:32).

4. Foretelling the Future

Prediction of the future is part of the prophetic ministry. Almost every prophet in the Old Testament appeared first as a foreteller. Through fellowship with God, the prophet has access to the future. He rebukes, reprimands and warns of future judgements so that people will repent. He also speaks of future blessing to give hope for the present.

5. Watchman

Another role some prophets played was to serve as watchmen and several scriptures describe this role. Ezekiel was called to be a watchman (Ezek 33:1-11). A prophet was also called a watchman because he basically functioned in the spiritual realm just as the literal watchmen did in the physical realm. Naturally, watchmen were stationed at specific posts on the walls of the city that gave them the visibility to watch for the king or other members of nobility to announce their coming. They were also to look out for enemies or disorder arising within the camp of Israel. Hence the prophets played this role in such a way that the nation was always aware of anything that will befall them.

6. Healing the Sick

Some prophets played the role of healing the sick. Elijah was a prophet who moved effectively in the gift of healing (2 Kings 4:32-35). Elisha followed in his mentor's footsteps (2 Kings 5:7-10).

7. Appointing and Anointing Leaders

In the Old Testament, God often used a prophet to appoint and anoint a king. Samuel anointed Saul and then David as King. Zadok, a prophet anointed Solomon as his successor (1 Kings 1:38-39). Elijah was told to anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi king, over Israel (1 Kings 19:16) (2 Kings 9:1-10). In a godly nation prophets may have a role in the appointment of political leaders. Prophets also played a role in anointing other prophets for ministry (1 Kings 19:16, 19).

8. Advising Kings and Political Rulers

Prophets had a role in providing advice to kings and rulers. When God wanted to give guidance to a ruler, he often gave it through a prophet. David had the prophets Nathan and Gad in his palace. They advised him about a whole range of matters (2 Sam. 7:1-4, 17) (1 Sam. 22:5). A prophet advised Ahab as he went into battle (1 Kings 20:13-29). Elisha provided guidance to the army of Israel that frustrated its enemies (2 Kings 6:9-12).

9. Historians

Some prophets were historians. Many of the historical books of the Old Testament were written by prophets who recorded the works of God. The events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz (2 Chron. 26:22). The other events of Abijah's reign, what he did and what he said, are written in the annotations of the prophet Iddo (2 Chron. 13:22). As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer, together with the details of his reign and power,

and the circumstances that surrounded him and Israel and the kingdoms of all the other lands (1 Chron 29:29, 30).

2.5 Qur'anic definitions of Prophecy

In the Qur'an, God described exactly the function of the *nabi* (Prophet) and the function of the *rasul* (Messenger) in Surah 3:81. Both functions come in the middle of a very important verse that is dealing with the Messenger of the Covenant.

God took a covenant from the Prophets, saying, I will give you the scripture and wisdom. Afterwards, a Messenger will come to confirm all existing scriptures. You shall believe in him and support him. He said, Do you agree with this, and pledge to fulfill this covenant? They said, We agree. He said, You have thus borne witness, and I bear witness along with you. (Surah 3:81). Like Christianity, Islam can be described as a prophetic religion, since the angel Gabriel revealed the divine message to the prophet Muhammad who in turn communicated it to humankind. The prophet Muhammad is referred to as the *khatam* (the seal) of the prophets who preached Islam among different nations at various times (Surah 33: 40).

Consequently, Islam believes not only in the prophet Muhammad but in all prophets.

Muslims in Surah 2:136 are advised to respect Allah's messengers and not distinguish or elevate one above the other.

—Say: _We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all prophets from their Lord.

We make no difference between one and another of them, and we submit to Allah's (Qur'an 2:136).

The Qur'an also acknowledges that there were many more prophets, sent to all peoples through time, whose stories have not been told (Surah 4:164). The Qur'an was used to teach mankind since it expresses the paths of devotion and the forms of worship and the means by which humankind may attain communication with God.

The Qur'an in Surah 42:51 teaches that divine revelation has three forms:

And it is not vouchsafed to any mortal that Allah should speak to him, except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases (Surah 42:51)

The first mode of revelation is direct revelation or Inspiration which relates with a special sense of the human mind. This kind of revelation comes in the form of knowledge felt by specific sense without the participation of other external or internal senses. For instance, a person may feel sad or depressed for no obvious reason but may later find out that someone close to him or her was suffering from grief or difficulty at that time. The second mode of revelation called 'Behind the Veil' where Allah speaks from behind a veil. This is knowledge which is distinctly felt coming through the five senses from outside. Though one does not visualize the source from which this voice or vision emanates, one can clearly distinctly feel, by means of his inner senses, an external source.

The third mode is the highest form of revelation, exemplified by Gabriel's message to the prophet Muhammad. This message is limited only to prophets of God. The Qur'an teaches that the responsibility of the prophet was to uplift the morals and regenerate the religion of each nation. The Qur'an in Surah 48:8 states —Lo! We have sent thee (O Muhammad) as a witness and a bearer of good tidings and a Warner to all mankind. This means that the duty of Muhammed, as a Prophet, was clearly spelt out in the Qur'an as being a witness, a bearer of good tidings and a warner to mankind.

2.5.1 What the Hadith teaches about Prophets

The Hadith of Salih al-Bukhari (Volume I, p.18) states that Allah sent Prophets and apostles because he wanted them to invite His people to worship Him alone. These Prophets and apostles were also supposed to warn mankind of associating or ascribing partners to Allah.

The following verses of the Holy Qur'an illustrate the above point: Surah 7:59, 7:65, 7:85 and 7:73. In Surah 7:158, the Qur'an teaches us that every prophet was sent to his own nation to guide mankind but Muhammad was a prophet for all. According to the Hadith in Al- Bukhari (No 172: 253) there are three characteristics that a Prophet must exhibit to show that He is from God. When the Prophet Muhammad stated these three characteristics of a Prophet as being:

1. Patience by which you forgive the ignorance of those who are ignorant.
2. Being good-tempered with people
3. Being pious, this restrains you from rebelling against God.

The Qur'an teaches in Surah 33:40 that Muhammad is the seal or the last of the prophets. The Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari (Volume 4: 661) reports that Muhammad is the final prophet. As narrated by Abu Huraira, the Prophet said

—The Israelites used to be ruled and guided by prophets: Whenever a prophet died, another would take over his place. There will be no prophet after me, but there will be Caliphs who will increase in number. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 56, Number 661)

2.6 The Position of Islam on Prophethood

The Arabic word for prophethood is *an-Nubuwwah*. A Prophet on the other hand is known as *an-Nabiyy* with *Ambiya* (prophets) as plural form. The position of Islam is that prophets are as many as there are nations, tribes and races (Ismail et al, 2012). In other words, there is no nation in human history that did not have one or more prophets at a particular period. The reason for this is in the Qur'anic passage which states that —Allah will not call a people or a nation to account until He (Allah) has sent a guide/warner to them (Surah

16:36). Another importance of prophethood to Islam is that it constitutes one of its six articles of faith. Therefore, for an average Muslim to believe in Allah alone is not complete until he/ she also believes in His Angels, His scriptures His Prophets/Messengers, the Day of Judgment and predestination. While the belief in prophets is of paramount importance to Muslims, this belief is also unique in that they are not to discriminate among the prophets as a result of this belief. The wisdom behind this is that since all these prophets came from the same God for the same purpose of leading humanity to God, the belief in all of them is not only essential but also logical. Allah's commandment to the Muslim in this regard is contained in *Sura al- Baqarah*, (Surah 2:136) which states:

Say ye: —We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: we make no difference between one and another of them: and we submit to God.

To believe in all these prophets also indicates that Muslims should also believe in their messages whether written or oral. Surah 4:136 states:

O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him), any who denieth Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray.

Surah 4:150 – 151 indicates that to deny a prophet means that all of them are equally denied.

In Islam, Prophethood is Allah's blessing and favor that He bestows on whom He wills.

However, there are three features of a prophet that may be recognized:

1. A prophet is morally and intellectually the best in his community. This is necessary because a prophet's life serves as a role model for his followers. His personality should attract people to accept his message. After receiving the message, he is infallible. That is, he would not commit any sin. He might make some minor mistakes, which are usually corrected by revelation.

2. He is supported by miracles to prove that he is not an imposter. Those miracles are granted by the power and permission of God. We might illustrate this by quoting the major miracles of the three prophets of the major world religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Moses' contemporaries were excellent in magic, so his major miracle was to defeat the best magicians of Egypt. Jesus' contemporaries were recognized as skilled physicians, therefore, his miracles were to raise the dead and cure incurable diseases. The Arabs, the contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad were known for their eloquence and magnificent poetry. Therefore Prophet Muhammad's major miracle was the Qur'an, the equivalence of which the whole legion of Arab poets and orators could not produce, despite the repeated challenge from the Qur'an itself.
3. Every prophet states clearly that what he receives is from God for the well-being of mankind. A prophet does this to show that he is simply conveying the message that is entrusted to him by the One True God.

The Qur'an in Surah 4:163, 6:84-86, 21:85-88, 7:73, 26: 123-125 and 7:85 mentions the names of 25 prophets and indicates that there have been others who were not mentioned in the Qur'an. These 25 include Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. These five are the greatest among God's messengers. They are called 'the resolute' prophets (Ismail et al,2012; Khan, 2012).

An outstanding aspect of the Islamic belief in prophethood is that Muslims believe and respect all the messengers of God with no exceptions. It is for this reason that Muslims consider the belief in all prophets as an article of faith. It is worthy of note that the Jews reject Jesus and Muhammad, Christians reject Muhammad but Muslims accept them as

messengers of God. The above are Sunni views, however, there are sectarian variants from the Shi'ites and Ahmadis as we shall discuss below.

2.5.1 The Shi'a Doctrine of Prophethood

According to Al- Muzaffar (1993), prophethood is a Divine Duty and a mission from Allah who appoints those He selects from among His good servants. These Prophets are sent to the rest of humanity to guide them to behave in ways that pleases Allah, to purify them from immorality and evil deeds and to teach people wisdom and knowledge and the ways of happiness and goodness until they attain perfection. Following this Shi'ites agree with Sunnis that a Prophet is a human being of good character or exemplary life that is worthy of emulation who serves as an intermediary between God and His people.

2.5.2 The Ahmadiyya Doctrine of Prophethood

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission unlike other Muslim groups does not recognize any difference between a messenger and a prophet. The Ahmadiyya belief regards the terms —*nazir* (warner), *nabi* (prophet), *rasul* (messenger) encountered in the Qur'an to signify divinely appointed individuals. Ahmadis, however, categories prophets into two: lawbearing messengers of God and non-law bearing messengers. The Community, as it calls itself, also recognizes Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) as a Prophet of God, and also sees him as the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi of the latter days.

For the Ahmadi community like other Muslims, all prophets are equal and have the same essential message therefore disbelief in one of the Prophets is practically the same as to disbelief in other Prophets.

—We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. (Surah 2:286)

Sometimes, however, Prophets are ranked higher or lower than others, as shown in the Qur'an:

—These Messengers have we exalted some of them above others; among them there are those whom Allah spoke; and some of them He exalted in degrees of rank... (Surah 2:254)

2.6 Criterion for Choosing Prophets in Islam

The belief in the Prophets and Messengers of Allah forms part of the six articles of Faith in Islam and Muslims identify prophets of Islam as people Allah has chosen to deliver his message and will to mankind (Surah 2:213). Muslims believe that every prophet was supposed to worship God and their respective followers are to believe it as well. In

Muslim belief, each prophet taught the same main belief of worshiping God and avoidance of idolatry and sin. The Qur'an in Surah 10:47 teaches that God sent prophets to every nation.

Muslims believe the prophets were assigned special mission by God to guide humanity. Besides Muhammad, this includes prophets such as Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus). A *hadith* in *Musnad Ibn Hanbal* mentions that there were 124,000 of them in total throughout history. For Islam, all Messengers are Prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad but not all Prophets are Messengers (Surah 2:213, 4:152, 16:36). Islam holds that the first prophet is Adam and the last prophet is Muhammad who is also called *Khatim an-Nabuwwah* (Seal of the prophets).

2.6.1 Roles of a Prophet in Islam

The Qur'an in Surah 2:213 state that prophets were assigned by Allah to lead their people to obey and to constantly submit the will of Allah. They consistently invited the people to

monotheism and true religion (Surah 21:25). A prophet serves as an intermediary between Allah and his people. The prophet is also a servant who Allah sends to guide his people to carry out his will. All of this is to say that the prophet's first and foremost role is to invite people to the worship of Allah alone. This particular role is also the prophet's greatest assignment.

Another role of the prophet is to teach the orders and prohibitions of Allah. Prophets are also supposed to guide mankind and lead them to the straight path (Surah 5:41, 33:45-46). Prophets must be of good example and devout models for mankind (Surah 33:21). Although these prophets are humans and are infallible they must do their best to lead good and exemplary lives worthy of emulation. In Surah 6:130-131 a prophet's role is also to remind man of resurrection and the hereafter. Finally, a Prophet is supposed to teach mankind about the fact that this life is temporary and the life in the hereafter is everlasting (Surah 29:63).

2.7 Difference between Prophets and Messengers in Christianity and Islam.

In Christianity, Prophets are also called —messengers‖ in 1 Chronicles 36:15, 16; Isaiah 44:26; Haggai 1:13 and Malachi 3:1. There are the prophetic messengers:

—And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy‖ (2 Chr. 36:15-16).

In the New Testament, (Matthew 11:7-15, Mark 1:2 and Luke 7:27) John the Baptist is referred to as a messenger. In the passages in Matthew and Luke Jesus specifically names John the Baptist as a prophet and a messenger.

Prophets and Messengers in Islam were sent to convey the message of *Allah to His people*.

All the Prophets and Messengers in Islam were supported by Miracles to substantiate their

claim of Prophethood. For instance, Ibrahim was launched into a fervid fire set ablaze but neither he nor his clothes were burnt. Saleh brought out a camel and its offspring from a solid rock. Moses threw his staff on the ground and it turned into a frightening serpent which swallowed the snakes of the sorcerers of Pharaoh. Muhammad made the moon split into two halves each falling on either side of the mountain (Sahih Bukhari vol. 4, Book 56, No.830-832).

According to Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (1328), a Messenger is someone who receives a new set of laws from Allah and in turn conveys the message to His people whereas a Prophet is someone who was ordered to follow and convey the set of rules revealed to the Messenger before him or at his time. Hence, every Messenger is a Prophet but not every Prophet is a Messenger.

However, Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (1328), argues that the correct view is that the Messenger is one who is sent to a disbelieving people and the Prophet is one who is sent to a believing people with the *shari'ah* (Islamic law and jurisprudence) of the Messenger who came before him, to teach them and judge between them.

Netton (2008) states that Prophets are divided into two classes and these are the messenger (*rasul*) and the prophet (*nabi*). The former bearing a new revelation or religion and the latter's mission involves existing religion. The Qur'an states that there are some categories of prophets who did not only receive a message from heaven but were also chosen to propagate that message for humanity. The prophet with this kind of function is called a *rasul*, however, he is also a *nabi* but in addition to this role he makes

God's message known to humankind and invites them to accept it just as the prophets of the Old Testament did.

The difference between messengers and prophets in Christianity and Islam is that, in Christianity prophets were also referred to as messengers thus there was no difference between a messenger and a prophet in Christianity. In Islam, a prophet was different from a messenger because the two played different roles. This will be discussed into detail in the next chapter.

2.8 Conclusion

The Religious connotation of prophethood indicates that prophets are sent by God to mankind for three main purposes: to guide, to warn and to give glad tidings. These functions separate them from diviners or soothsayers whose major preoccupation is to predict the future. The three Abrahamic religions of the world Judaism, Christianity and Islam believe in prophets. In terms of belief also, while the two earlier religions believe only in their respective prophets, Islam further instruct Muslims to believe in all the prophets of God in the Qur'an without discrimination.

KNUST

CHAPTER THREE

PROPHECY, PROPHETHOOD AND PROPHETS IN CHRISTIANITY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we defined Prophets and Prophecy in Christianity and Islam as well as the roles these prophets played in their respective religions. We discovered that in spite of the many roles the prophets play God sent prophets to mankind for three main purposes: to guide, to warn and to give glad tidings. This chapter deals with Prophets, their messages or themes and their audience in Christianity. We shall discuss prophets in the Old and New Testament of the Bible as well as discuss the challenges these prophets went through in order to convey their messages to their audience. In this chapter female prophets in the Bible will be examined. Finally, the chapter will analyse the Major and Minor Prophets of the Old Testament and prophets of the New Testament into detail. Since the concept of prophecy and the roles of the prophets in Christianity were discussed in Chapter Two, references to some of the lessons in that chapter will be made.

According to Mariottini (2010) the Major and Minor prophets are sometimes called ‘the writing prophets’ because their utterances were recorded by them. There were other oral

prophets like Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-25), Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29; 14:2), Iddo (2 Chronicles 13:22), Elijah (1 Kings 17:1-22, 1 Kings 19:1-13), Elisha (2 Kings 13:125), Oded (2 Chronicles 28:9), Shemaiah (2 Chronicles 11-14), Azariah (2 Chronicles 15:1-3), Hanani (2 Chronicles 16:7), Jahaziel (2 Chronicles 20:14), and Huldah (2 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 34) whose works were not recorded in the prophetic books like the other prophets.

Prophets in Christianity were described as prophets, seers, watchmen, men of God, messengers and servants of the Lord as we discussed earlier in Chapter two. There have been prophets throughout every era of God's relationship with mankind but the books of the prophets address the —classical period of prophecy during the later years of the divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel, throughout the time of exile, and into the years of Israel's return from exile.

3.1.1 How God Communicated with His Prophets and Messengers

The Prophets were endowed with the Divine gift of receiving and communicating messages revealed to them by God. Therefore, Prophecy is the delivery of the message of God and it serves as His way of getting through to people in a particular situation (2 Samuel 12:7; 1 Corinthians 14:24; Acts 8:30-35). As the spokesman of God, the prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen or appointed, often against his will, to convey the word of God to his people, regardless of whether or not they wish to hear it (Ezek 3:11).

The prophet is consecrated to be set apart from his fellow men but must bear the responsibility of being chosen; thus since the prophet is an appointed messenger he must interpret his revelatory experience to the understanding of his constituents. According to

Seputis (2004) a prophecy can come as a dream or a vision or from an earlier passage of Scripture. In other words, God uses the prophet to communicate what is most important for a specific place, time and situation. The prophet presents the message in a literary or oratory form, but He does not create the message itself because that comes from God who spoke through the prophets. (Longman 2012) We shall discuss some of the ways God communicated with his prophets below:

a. Visions and Dreams

In Numbers 12:6-8, God promises to speak to His people through visions and dreams to prophets. It appears that after receiving the message by vision, the prophet delivers the message in the language his audience is familiar with so they can understand the will of God better. For instance, Numbers 12:6 states:

—Then He said, if there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. (Numbers 12:6)

The above scripture seems to authenticate the fact that God used dreams and visions to communicate with his prophets. Another example is Samuel's encounter with God (1 Sam 3:10-14) which is considered a vision even though the Bible does not tell us what actually Samuel saw; however the text makes us to understand that he heard a voice. Also 2 Samuel 7:17 and 1 Chronicles 17:15 says: —According to all these words and according to all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

The above passage shows that God revealed David's secret sin to the prophet Nathan through vision and sent him to rebuke David. Ezekiel also received many of his prophecies through visions (Ezekiel 11:24-25). Some minor prophets such as Obadiah (Obadiah 1:1) and Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:2) also received their messages from God through visions.

b. God Dictates His Word

Another way God communicated with his prophets in the Bible was by dictating His words to them. For instance, the prophets such as Jeremiah were to speak the words that God put into their mouths (Jeremiah 1:9, 2:1) while at other times God dictated words for the prophet to write (Jeremiah 36:1-4, 32). Another example of a prophet who spoke the words of God as dictated to him is Isaiah (Isaiah 51:16) Here we see that both Jeremiah and Isaiah were Prophets who were anointed to speak the words of God as dictated to them. Nonetheless, Prophets were immediate organs of God for the communication of his mind and will to His people (Deuteronomy 18:18):

—I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.†

In this sense we may be right to suggest that the Bible is a prophetic book since it was written by men who received its content from God.

c. Through the Natural Senses as Guided by the Holy Spirit

Seputis (2004) states that John in one of his epistles (1 John 1:1) teaches:

—That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have seen with our *eyes*, which we have looked at and our hands have *touched* this we proclaim concerning the Word of life† (1 John 1:1).

From this passage we understand that John did not get his message or revelation by a vision or dream, but through personal contact with Christ. In other words, what he had seen, heard

and touched is the source of his message while in receiving the message and recording it he is guided by the Holy Spirit.

However, Bowker (1997) posits that all the true prophets showed signs of being possessed by God; they entered trances and spoke ecstatically on some occasions; but the classical prophets became distinct because their authenticity was judged by the content of their message. Nevertheless, the first attempts to distinguish between true and false prophets are seen in Deuteronomy 13 and 18 as we shall discuss later. Furthermore, the forms through which the prophets conveyed their messages to their audiences are either orally or through writing.

3.2 Prophets in the Old Testament

Much has been said about Prophets in the Old Testament but as a reminder the Prophets both foretold the future and forth told God-given truth, but both aspects involved direct revelation (Wigoder 1989). According to Gerhard von Rad (2001) the early prophets of Israel were known as the pre-classical prophets. These prophets were prominently involved in politics and communal affairs; thus they were consulted by the leaders of Israel for advice. These groups of prophets include Samuel, Nathan, Elijah and Elisha. The classical or —literary‖ prophets (so named due to their highly developed poetic style) were men who through inspired and eloquent admonitions, preached to the people of Israel and Judah about the social and political ills of the time. Prophets such as Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea for example, warned of harsh divine punishment should the people not reform their behavior and obey God’s commandments. This section will discuss the Major and Minor prophets of the Old Testament. According to Fairchild

(2012) the Old Testament Prophets appear in Chronological order as follows:

Obadiah (845 B.C.), Joel (830 B.C.), Jonah (780-750 B.C.), Amos (760-750 B.C.), Hosea (760-710 B.C.), Isaiah (740-690 B.C.), Micah (735-700 B.C.), Nahum (650-612 B.C.), Zephaniah (625 B.C.), Habakkuk (612-606 B.C.), Jeremiah (627-585 B.C.), Ezekiel (592-570 B.C.), Haggai (520 B.C.), Zechariah (520-518 B.C.) and Malachi (445-425 B.C.). The Old Testament order is also as follows: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi (Source: Hampton Keathley IV 2009).

3.2.1 Major Prophets

The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The term major may refer to the length of the contents of their work but that does not mean that they were better than the Minor Prophets. Reddit (2008) suggests that although the authorship of the book of Lamentations is traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah most scholars according to him, think that the author of the book of Lamentations is anonymous. Other scholars such as Rui de Menezes (2005) also assert that the Book of Daniel is not part of the books of the Major Prophets because it is an apocalyptic book. Reddit (2008) agrees with Rui de Menezes (2005) that the book of Daniel technically is not a book of prophecy but it is an apocalypse. He states that although Matthew 24:15 refers to —Daniel as the prophet! (Mark 13:14, Lk 21:20) the book of Daniel does not make any reference to Daniel as a prophet. Instead the book portrays Daniel as a master of wisdom and understanding (Dan 1:20) and the revealer of End time secrets to those who are wise (Dan 12:3-4, 10). Gerhard von Rad (1968) further posits that the Daniel is not a prophet but an apocalypse although his book records some prophecies about the end time. Robinson (1953) suggests that the

Bible contains two apocalyptic books namely the book of Daniel in the Old Testament and the book of Revelation in the New Testament. We may be right to say that the book of Daniel is universally accepted as an apocalyptic book and not a prophetic book.

3.2.2 Minor Prophets

The Minor Prophets are twelve in number so they are occasionally called the ‘Book of the Twelve’. This is to say that the terms —minor prophets or —twelve prophets may also refer to the twelve traditional authors of the books of the Minor Prophets. From our studies, we may be right to suggest that a significant feature of the Minor Prophets as they came forth to speak their message to their audiences was that they always began with the statement, —Thus, says the Lord.

Before these prophets were chosen by God to serve him they had various occupations such as shepherding and farming. According to Gaebelein (1970), the Minor Prophets are referred to as such probably because their writings are considerably shorter than the writings of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) yet the contents of their prophecies were as powerful as the Major Prophets. Although the warnings of the Old Testament prophets were often ignored, they nevertheless challenged the attitude and behavior of their audience. The Minor Prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. It is important to note that the Minor Prophets end the writings of the Old Testament and some of the Minor Prophets are as old as the Major Prophets.

3.2.3 Female Prophets

God chose both males and females as prophets who communicated his message to His people. In Christianity, a prophet whether male or female is God's servant called and anointed by Him. God reveals his message to the Prophets and directs them as to when and who to deliver or speak His Word. Hence, this Divine calling and direction constitutes the basis for their spiritual authority. God often gives His prophets words of rebuke and correction to his people. Often, prophets are rejected and persecuted by those in power, because the messages God reveals through them frequently call their authority to account. The responsibility of the Prophets is to speak the word of God but as to whether or not their messages is received, believed and obeyed is left to their audience. According to Elior (1958), women have served as prophets during the Old Testament times; sometimes they served alongside men in their own right. At other times they were called especially because men were weak in leadership.

There are three female prophets mentioned in the Old Testament: Miriam, Deborah and Hulda while Anna, Elizabeth, Mary, the four virgin daughters of Philip are mentioned in the New Testament of the Bible. The Bible also records two women Noadia and Jezebel who are false prophets mentioned in the Old and New Testament of the bible respectively.

a. Miriam

The Old Testament gives an account of some women who served as prophets. One of such women was Miriam who by her faith and courage saved her brother Moses from death when she was just a child. She was appointed as a Prophet and she worked with her brothers Moses and Aaron (Micah 6:4) who were also prophets. Miriam took a tambourine and led

all the women in rhythm and dance in praise to God for granting them victory over Pharaoh's armies (Exodus 15:20-21).

b. Deborah

In Judges 4:4-5, Deborah wife of Lappidoth is described as a prophetess and a judge who led the people of Israel and initiated decisive political steps in the period of the Judges. The Israelites also brought issues to her to solve. Deborah is also described as a military leader because she agreed to accompany Barak to fight against the army of Sisera which eventually, God gave them victory over. Deborah is one of the women remembered and celebrated in the Old Testament because she brought liberty to Israel through her faith, courage and boldness.

c. Hulda

Another woman who served God as a Prophet in the Old Testament is Hulda. She was the wife of Shallum, a grandson of Harhas the keeper of the temple's wardrobe (2 Kings 22:14) She prophesied to king Josiah and Hilkiah the high priest on the fate of the Israelites if they do not stop worshipping pagan gods. (2Kings, 22:14-15, 2 Chronicles 34:22-28). According to Reeve (1915), the prophetess Hulda taught at the college in Jerusalem and brought revival to the nation when she confirmed the Word of God brought to her and prophesied judgment and grace to King Josiah, the high priest and the religious leaders of her day. Reeve (1915) further argues that these men received and acted upon her declaration as it was the word of God. During this same time the prophet Jeremiah was prophesying for five years at the time the Lord used Hulda to deliver His message (Reeve

1915). This means that God deliberately chose Hulda to speak on His behalf despite the fact that He had Jeremiah also prophesying at that same time.

d. Noadiah

Noadiah in Nehemiah 6:14 was a woman who prophesied with other prophets; Tobiah and Sanballat in the period of the return to Zion. Noadiah was a prophet at the same time Nehemiah was prophesying in Jerusalem but she appears to have been a false prophet because Nehemiah says:

—Remember, O my God, all the evil things that Tobiah and Sanballat have done. And remember Noadiah the prophet and all the prophets like her who have tried to intimidate me! (Nehemiah 6:14).

The New Testament also outlines some women who served as Prophet. We shall briefly discuss them below:

a. Anna

Anna was a prophet who served in the temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel. She was an eighty-four years old widow who never left the temple but stayed there day and night, worshipping God amidst fasting and prayer (Luke 2:36-38). She was the first to publicly proclaim Jesus as the coming king who was to deliver Jerusalem (Luke 2:38).

b. Four virgin daughters of Philip

The Book of Acts 21:8 tells us that the evangelist Philip had four virgin and unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

c. Jezebel

Jezebel was a woman who called herself a prophet in the book of Revelations. She was a false prophet who led the people of God astray; she encouraged them to worship idols, eat food offered to the idols and commit sexual immorality (Rev. 2:20). Despite that God called her to repent from immorality (Rev.2:21).

3.3 Prophets in the New Testament

The gift of prophecy is mentioned in several books of the New Testament but only a few prophets are mentioned in the New Testament. Some of these prophets are briefly discussed below:

a. Jesus

Jesus Christ of Nazareth was referred to as one more than a Prophet in Matt 21: 11. Luke 24:19 also refers to Jesus of Nazareth as prophet who did wonderful miracles. Also John 4:19 and John 4:44 are verses that speak about Jesus being a Prophet.

b. Zachariah

Zachariah was the father of John the Baptist and His wife was Elizabeth. He was a Priest who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. In Luke 1:67-80, Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave a Prophecy about the servitude of his son John to the Messiah who was yet to come.

c. Simeon

Simeon was a righteous and devout man who lived in Jerusalem (Luke 2:25). He was a prophet who would not see death until he had seen the Messiah. Eventually, when he saw Jesus, he took him in his hands and blessed him (Luke 2:25-35).

d. Agabus

Agabus was a man from Judea who had the gift of prophecy. In Acts 11:27-28 he predicted a severe famine over the world and in Acts 21:10-11 he predicted impending suffering which was to befall Paul in the hands of the Gentiles; both of which came to pass as prophesied.

The book of Acts 13:1 mentions prophets and teachers in the Church at Antioch, although no details are given, nor does it say which men were prophets or which were teachers. Judas and Silas are designated prophets in Acts 15:32 who encouraged and strengthened the believers. Nonetheless, as the office of Prophet and the gift of prophecy are not exclusive to men women are also called to serve God as prophetesses as we discussed above.

3.4 Difference between the Major and Minor Prophets

The “major prophets” include Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel while the —minor prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi. Rui de Menezes (2005) assert that the division of the Major and Minor Prophets was done by the early church. According to him this division was done based on the size of the books of the prophets. He further argues that the book of Daniel is not considered as a prophetic book by the Jews but the book belongs to the literary genre

of ‘apocalypse’. Another scholar Hampton Keathley IV (1995) also suggests that the only difference between the Major and Minor Prophets is the length of each book within its category. Thus, the Minor Prophets were not less important than the Major Prophets, they were just more concise. Although scholars such as Gerhard von Rad (1968, 2001) and Robinson (1953) were not able to give any difference between the Major and Minor Prophets rather than the size of their books, it is worthy to note that the length of the books does not make a prophet more superior to the other. Both the Major and Minor prophets were servants sent by God.

3.4.1 Difference between the Old and New Testament Prophets

The Old Testament prophets served as cult, court or classical prophets while the New Testament prophet served mostly in the temple. In the New Testament one has to have a gift of prophecy before he or she can be called a Prophet. The Old Testament Prophets were grouped into Oral and writing Prophets or Major and Minor Prophets. Many references are made to the Old Testament Prophets by the New Testament Prophets or the New Testament prophecy confirms that of the Old Testament. This does not mean that the Old Testament Prophets were superior to the New Testament prophets. God equally used both men and women to propagate His word in both the Old and New Testament. The Vine Expository Dictionary (1996) comments that the New Testament Prophets including today's church were given a prophetic portion of the personal ministry of Jesus (Matt 13:54; 21:11,46; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24) as an ascension gift. It is important to note that throughout the New Testament Jesus used the word prophecy in referring to the Old Testament Prophets (Dibois 2000).

3.5 The Lineage, Call, audience and themes of the Messages of the Prophets

In this section we shall discuss the lineage, call and audiences of the three (3) Major and twelve (12) Minor Prophets of the Old Testament. We shall also address the themes of their messages. We will begin with the Major Prophets. However, we must note that the nation of the Israelites was unified under the kingship of Saul, David, and Solomon as described in the books of 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11. With the death of King Solomon, the nation divided along tribal boundaries (1 Kings 12). Eventually, ten tribes in the northern part of the nation aligned to form the Northern Kingdom which is often referred to as ‘_Israel’ while two tribes in the southern part of the nation aligned to form the Southern Kingdom often referred to as ‘_Judah’ in the Bible.

According to Rubel (2005), both kingdoms suffered from external military threats from surrounding Gentile kingdoms including Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia. Around 720 B.C., Israel fell to the Assyrian Empire and was scattered throughout their Empire (2 Kings 17). According to 2 Kings 25, Judah was also taken into captivity by the Babylonians, but they were allowed to return to their lands (Ezra 1).

Most of these prophetic works were written to address the spiritual apostasy of the Jews. Such apostasy often took the form of disregard for the Law of Moses and worship of pagan gods. Most of the prophetic books according to Archer (1974) were addressed to the Southern Kingdom with two of the books (Hosea and Amos) being addressed primarily to the Northern Kingdom. Nevertheless, three of the books (Jonah, Obadiah and Nahum) were addressed to Gentile nations. This shows God held Gentile nations accountable for their actions, although they were not subjects of the Law of Moses. The above descriptions of

the Northern and Southern kingdom are to help understand the period a particular prophet lived as well as his audience.

1. Isaiah

His Lineage

Isaiah was the son of Amoz (Isaiah 1:1). He was married to a prophetess (Isaiah 8:3) and had two sons with symbolic names (Isaiah 7:3; 8:3, 18). Isaiah's calling appears to be recorded in chapter 6 of his book, which occurs in the final year of king Uzziah's reign. He prophesied during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and the kings of Judah (Is. 1:1).

Isaiah's Message and Themes

Isaiah's message was God's plan of salvation for humankind. He prophesied about the Day of the Lord's judgment, the Suffering Servant and Saviour (Isaiah 53; Matt. 1:18-25; Acts 8:32-35; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:22-25).

His other themes include: Holiness (Isaiah 6:1-13) which he personally experienced in his first vision (Isaiah 6:1). Another theme of Isaiah was about social Justice (Isaiah 1: 10-17, 21-26, 3:13-15, 5:1) and the punishment for rejecting God's instruction (Isaiah 5:24).

Isaiah also spoke about God's plan for humankind (Isaiah 5:26-29; 7:18-19) and the fact that all human plans are doomed for futility (Isaiah 7:4-7; 8:9-10). Thus man was to have faith in God for His help and protection because failure to do so is lack of faith (Isaiah 7:9b, 8:17, 28:16-17). Finally Isaiah prophesied against Pride and Judgment because these were

the greatest sin (Isaiah 2:11-12, 17; 3:16; 5:15-16) However punishment for such sin can prepare the way for restoration (1:21-26) thus there was hope in repentance.

Isaiah's Audience

The primary audiences of Isaiah were the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Like Israel, Judah was guilty of numerous sins, including social injustice, exploitation of the poor and seeking strength from political alliance with Egypt against the Assyrians instead of trusting in the Lord. Isaiah also delivered warnings and prophecies to a large number of surrounding nations like Assyria (Is. 10:5-7) and Babylon (Is. 13:1).

2. Jeremiah

His Lineage

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (Jer 1:1). The Hebrew name Jeremiah means ‘exalted of the Eternal’ or ‘Appointed by the Eternal’ (Gerhard von Rad 1962). This may relate to the fact that the prophet was one of a few people whom the Bible reveals to have been sanctified by God before birth for a special purpose (Jeremiah 1:5). Other people the Bible gives a record of being sanctified for special purpose are John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul (Luke 1:13-14; Isaiah 49:1, 5; Galatians 1:15). In other words, like John and Jesus, Jeremiah was chosen even before his conception for his commission. Jeremiah's ministry began in the thirteenth (13th) year of King Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2).

Jeremiah's Message and Themes

Jeremiah's message was to define true religion and to remind the people of Judah of wars which will occur as a result of their disobedience to God. God used the term —marriage to characterise His relationship with the nation of Israel and He also describes their rejection of Him for false gods as spiritual —adultery. Thus, the same God who hates divorce (Mal. 3:16) divorced Israel for her infidelity (Jer. 3:6-10) and such is the seriousness of adultery. Other themes of his message include:

The message of Repentance since the people of God abandoned Him and committed all kinds of sin against Him (Jer. 1:14, 2:13, 5:7). Another theme Jeremiah spoke about was on God being a Creator for all (Jer. 10:1-10, 51:15-19). In other words, God was the creator of all flesh and all living creatures and nothing is impossible without Him (Jer. 32: 27); thus He watches every movement and actions of man (Jer. 32:19).

Jeremiah's Audience

Jeremiah was appointed 'a prophet to the nations' (Jer. 1:5) and to the people of Judah. Jeremiah (46: 1-2) also states that the word of God came to the prophet concerning the nations such as Egypt, Babylon and Judah. It is important to note that the rebellion of the people towards God were reflected in a variety of sins including worshipping Baal and breaking the Sabbath. They also had false prophets like Hananiah (Jer. 28:1) who contradicted Jeremiah, reassuring the people that all was well with God who would protect them from the Babylonians despite the fact that they were sinners. Chapman (1992) holds the view that when Jerusalem was destroyed Jeremiah escaped to Egypt; there he

understood that a true change of heart could only be brought about by God; and that one day Israel and Judah will be reunited.

3. Ezekiel

His Lineage

The Bible does not give a detailed historical background of Ezekiel unlike Jeremiah. The little that is known of Ezekiel is that he was a priest and the son of Buzi who lived among the exiles on the bank of the river Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans (Ezek 1:1-3). Another thing the Bible records about the life of Ezekiel is that He was married but when his wife died God ordered him not to perform any mourning rites for her (Ezek 24:15-24, 3:24; 8:1). Ezekiel's commission was to serve as a 'watchman' for God's people who he warned of impending danger (Ezekiel 3: 33).

Ezekiel's Message and Themes

Ezekiel spoke on several important messages among them is Personal accountability where the Jews were often held responsible and were collectively punished as a society, but ultimate salvation was an individual matter (Ez. 3:16-21; 18:20). Ezekiel also taught about the sovereignty of God (Heb. 10:26-31) and the ultimate triumph of God's people over their enemies. Ezekiel also prophesied about God's intention to restore Israel (Ezek 37:1-4).

Ezekiel's Audience

Ezekiel's message was meant for the 'house of Israel' (Ezek 3:1, 4, 3, 7, 17; 33:7, 10, 11 and 20). His audience was also his fellow Jews in exile, although the book also contains prophecies for a number of other nations like Egypt.

4. Hosea

His Lineage

Hosea was the son of Beeri (Hosea 1:1) and the husband of Gomer (Hosea 1:3). His marriage to Gomer who was a prostitute was a symbolic act that God wanted to use to teach his people. The names of Hosea's sons Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi were also symbolic names. According to 1:1, Hosea ministered during the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah and during the days of Jeroboam II king of Israel.

Hosea's Message and Themes

The book of Hosea was written to demonstrate the steadfast or unfailing love of God for Israel in spite of her continued unfaithfulness. Through Hosea's marital experience (Hosea 1:3), the book shows us the heart of a loving and compassionate God who longs to bless His people with knowledge of Himself. Therefore, the theme of Hosea is a strong testimony against the Northern Kingdom because she had been unfaithful to its covenant relationship with God as demonstrated in its extensive immoral life both publicly and privately. Thus, the prophet Hosea was supposed to get his people to repent and return to their God. God's love for Israel is symbolic to Hosea's own children and His covenant wife.

Hosea's themes can be summarized as follows: The continuous Call for the worship of One true God and the Union of God with his people (Hosea 2:2, 7, 16). Hosea also spoke about the continuous Knowledge of God (Hosea 4: 1, 6:6). All the same, although Hosea's messages were that of warning and judgment he also promises future restoration of Israel's return to God (Hosea 14:2-9).

Hosea's Audience

Although Israel was Hosea's primary audience, his book records prophecies also meant for four Judean kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah but only one Israelite king Jeroboam II, is mentioned in 1:1.

5. Joel

Joel was the son of Pethuel (Joel 1:1). Rui de Menezes (2005) states that the name _Joel' means _Yahweh (Yo) is God ('el)'.

His Message and Themes

Joel used drought and locust plague that struck Judah without warning as an object lesson to warn of a future invasion of Israel in the Day of *Yahweh* (Joel:1,2). However, God will restore the nation if only they repented and returned to God. He will also restore His relationship with Israel and bless her. For the ultimate blessings and restoration to be fulfilled as prophesied by Joel, Israel will have to experience the judgments of the tribulation and the outpouring of the Spirit of God which will cause them to return to Him (Joel 2:12-18).

His Audience

It appears that Joel's audience was the people of Israel and the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

6. Amos

Amos was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit (1:1; 7:14) from Tekoa. Amos was neither a priest nor the son of a prophet yet, God used him to deliver His messages mainly to the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom although other nations were mentioned in his book. Although he was a farmer and rancher he was very familiar with the Word of God.

Amos' Message and Themes

Amos' message was basically about justice, though it ends with words of hope. Amos warned that God, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, would come as a Warrior to judge the nations that had rebelled against His authority. Israel in particular would be punished for her violations of God's covenant. His message was directed to king Jeroboam of Israel (Amos 7:10-11), the priests (Amos 7:16-17) and the upper classes (Amos 4:1-3, 6:1). The themes of Amos are summarized as follows: Social Justice (Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:7, 11) where God was not pleased with the maltreatment of the poor and needy by the rich and powerful. Another theme is on the concept of the Day of Judgment (Amos 5:18-20).

Finally, the book of Amos demonstrates God's hatred of evil because of His holiness and that His justice must act against Israel's sin for He cannot allow her to go unpunished. However, according to Amos even though the nation would be destroyed, God would still

preserve a repentant remnant and one day this remnant would be restored to their covenant blessing and political prominence when God would draw all nations to Himself (Amos 9:13-15).

Amos' Audience

The audiences of Amos were the people of Judah and Israel (Amos 1:1).

7. Obadiah

His Lineage

The Bible does not say much about the lineage of Obadiah but Obadiah 1:1 teaches that God revealed His word to him concerning the land of Edom. A number of men in the Old Testament were named Obadiah and these include an officer in David's army (1 Chron. 12:9), a Levite in the days of Josiah (2 Chron. 34:12), Ahab's servant who hid God's prophets (1 Kings 18:3) and a leader who returned from the Exile with Ezra (Ezra 8:9). Yet nothing is known about the Prophet Obadiah's home town or family.

Obadiah's Message and Themes

The book of Obadiah is the shortest prophetic book of the Old Testament with twenty one (21) verses in a single chapter. However, two themes can be identified in the book of Obadiah as follows: God as the judge over Edom (Obadiah 1:2-14) and all the nations (Obadiah 1:15-16) Obadiah declared that Edom would be judged because of her pride in rejoicing over the misfortunes that had befallen Jerusalem. The conclusion of the Book of Obadiah seems to suggest that God will restore the lost territories to Israel and Judah (Obadiah 1:19-21).

His Audience

The book of Obadiah addressed the people of Edom.

8. Jonah

His Lineage

Jonah was the son of Amittai (Jonah 1:1), a prophet from the town of Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25).

Jonah's Message and Theme

The book of Jonah unlike many of the Minor Prophets is mostly written in a story form.

Within its four chapters is a well known children's Bible story: 'Jonah and the big fish'.

Jonah 1:3-17 teaches that Jonah disobeyed God and went the opposite direction instead of going to Nineveh. He travelled with some sailors and in the course of the journey there arose an awful storm and Jonah was thrown into the sea after which the storm was calm. He was swallowed by a great fish and for three days and three nights he was inside the belly of the fish. Jonah prayed to God while in the belly of the fish (Jonah 2:1) and God made the fish spit up Jonah after that he was sent to Nineveh a second time; this time he obeyed (Jonah 3:1). The people of Nineveh repented and God did not destroy them as he had threatened earlier (Jonah 3:10).

The book of Jonah demonstrates that God is sovereign over nature and all human affairs.

It further teaches that —salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9) and that God is merciful to all who repent. Finally, the book also demonstrates how all prejudices like Jonah's can hinder man from obeying and acting according to the will of God.

Jonah's Audience

Jonah was sent to the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh (Jonah 1:2, 2 Kings 19:36) to rebuke the Assyrians for their wickedness and threaten them with destruction if they did not repent but as stated above the people repented so God had mercy on them.

9. Micah

Micah came from Moreshet-Gath and he prophesied during the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Micah 1:1). The town of Moreshet-Gath (Micah 1:14) was located in Shephelah or the foothills of Judah facing the Mediterranean.

Micah's Message and Themes

Micah shows how the people of Israel had failed to live up to the covenant stipulations God had made with them where there would be blessing for obedience (Deut. 28:1-14) and curse for disobedience which will eventually lead to they being cast from the land of promise (Deut. 28:15-68). In the process, Micah exposed the injustice of Judah and declared the righteousness and justice of God. He rebukes Israel and Judah for sins like oppression, bribery among the judges, prophets, and priests and also for covetousness, cheating, pride and violence.

In other words he prophesied on social justice and his reputation as a prophet of doom was preserved by Jeremiah (Jer 26:18-19). Some of Micah's themes are: the rejection of God by His people (Micah 1:2-16) and the people's doubt of God's security which makes them commit sin (Micah 3:11). Micah just like Isaiah, Amos and Hosea also taught about

social injustice where he rebuked the leaders of Israel and Judah for oppressing the poor and humble especially women and children (Micah 3:1-12).

The theme of judgment is prominent in the message of Micah but he also gave a message of restoration in the form of ‘a new exodus’ (Micah 7:11-20) when God would restore the people of Israel to a place of prominence in the world under the coming Messiah.

Furthermore, Micah referred to the principle of the remnant in each of his three messages (Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18).

Micah’s Audience

Micah spoke primarily to Judah because from the above we learn that he prophesied during the days of Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah who were Judean kings. Micah also spoke to the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and predicted the fall of Samaria (Micah 1:6), a good part of his ministry occurred before the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C (Chapman 1992).

10. Nahum

Nahum lived in Elkosh and the message concerning Nineveh came as a vision to him (Nahum 1:1). Nahum 1:15 suggests that he may have been a prophet of Judah. According to Rui de Menezes (2005), Nahum in Hebrew means ‘one who has been comforted’.

Nahum’s Message and Theme

Nahum speaks of the fall of Thebes in chapter 3:8-10 of his book. In all three chapters

Nahum predicted Nineveh's fall and represents the fall of Nineveh as imminent (Nahum 2:1; 3:14, 19). Notwithstanding, while God chose Jonah to deliver a message of repentance or perish to the Assyrians, Nahum's message was more of impending doom.

Nahum's theme is the fall of Nineveh as the retribution of God against the wicked Assyrians of Nineveh. This means that God's judgment on the Assyrians as predicted by Nahum happened several years after Jonah. Again, the conversion of the people of Nineveh after the preaching of Jonah and God's mercy to them because of their repentance may have been short lived because if God sent Nahum to the same people then it means they went back to their sinful ways.

Nahum's audience

God chose Nahum to deliver His message to the people of Nineveh.

11. Habakkuk

Much is not said about the lineage of Habakkuk; he is only mentioned in Habakkuk 1:1 and 3:1 as a Prophet who received a message from the Lord through vision.

His Message and Themes

Habakkuk dealt with two concerns. The first was God's permission of the increasing evil in Judah to go unpunished (Habakkuk 1:2-4) while the second was how God could use sinful nations like Babylon as His source of judgment (Habakkuk 1:12-2:1). Thus, through

a prayer of confident faith and trust in God Habakkuk pleads with God on behalf of Judah (Habakkuk 3).

His Audience

Since the book of Habakkuk anticipates the imminent Babylonian invasion, then it appears that its message in a form of warning was meant for the people of Judah.

13. Zephaniah

His Lineage

Zephaniah was the son of Cushi (Habakkuk 1:1). From the works of the prophets treated so far, usually only the prophet's father is identified when the author provides information about his lineage. For instance (Isaiah (Isa. 1:1); Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1); Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:3); Hosea (Hos. 1:1) and Joel (Joel 1:1) gave information about who their fathers were. However, the long lineage of Zephaniah to his third (3rd) generation (Gedaliah, Amariah, Hezekiah) seems to suggest the noble birth of the prophet since his great, greatgrandfather was King Hezekiah. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah (Zeph 1:1) of Judah.

Zephaniah's Message and Themes

The message of the prophet Zephaniah may be divided into three themes; the first being retribution or judgment for sin (Zeph 1:2-18), the second being a call for repentance (Zeph 2:1-15) and the third and last being the promise of future redemption or blessing (Zeph 3:

9-20). In other words, the message of Zephaniah was predicted judgments, exhortations to repent, and promised blessings just as many of the Minor Prophets prophesied.

Zephaniah's Audience

Zephaniah delivered his message to the people of Judah during Josiah's reign. Although his message was primarily to Judah, there were some references to Assyria, Moab, and Ammon in the book.

14. Haggai

Haggai referred to himself as —the prophet Haggai in Chapter 1:1, but nothing more is known about his parents or lineage.

Haggai's Message and Themes

The Book of Haggai is the second shortest book with two (2) chapters in the Old Testament after Obadiah which has only a Chapter and 22 verses. Although Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament, He played a role in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple.

One outstanding feature of Haggai's message was the affirmation of the divine authority of his messages as being from God as He consistently introduced his messages with, —This is what the Lord Almighty says,¹ and concluded them with a similar focus —I, the Lord Almighty have spoken¹.

Haggai wrote to encourage and exhort the Jews to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem since they have not prospered because they neglected the rebuilding of the temple (Haggai

1:115). He also taught that God blesses His people when they put Him first so there was the need for them to repent, get to work, and rebuild the temple.

His Audience

God gave a message to Haggai to deliver to Zerrubabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest (Haggai 1:1).

15. Zechariah

Zechariah was the son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo, the priest who led the Levites (Neh 12:4). He was a contemporary of Haggai (Ezra 6:14). God chose Zechariah to deliver a message of encouragement to the Jews in Jerusalem so they can have the temple rebuilt. Just like Haggai, Zechariah was also called by God to encourage the Jews to rebuild the temple.

His Message and Themes

The book of Zechariah was written to encourage the returned remnants to complete their work by rebuilding the temple. The prophet also showed that God would restore Israel to their spiritual inheritance in preparation for the coming Messiah. The message of Zechariah includes a call for repentance in rebuilding the temple along with eight night visions about a hope for the future (Zech 1:7 - 6:15). His message was also a reassurance of the future and the coming of the Messiah. The Book of Zechariah has 14 chapters and it is the longest of the Minor Prophets.

16. Malachi

Malachi is only mentioned in Malachi 1:1 as the author of this prophetic message. The book anticipates the coming of the —messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1), a prophecy of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10). The Book of Malachi is the last of the Minor Prophets and the last book in the Old Testament scriptures.

Malachi's Message and Themes

During the era of Nehemiah, there had been a period of revival (Neh. 10:28-39), but the priests (Mal. 1:6-2:9) and the people (Mal 2:10-16) went back to sin against God. These people were guilty of sins such as negligence of the priests in the performance of their duties (Mal 1:6-2:9, 3:6-12), neglect of the payment of tithes and intermarriages with foreign women (Mal 2:10-12). Although Malachi rebuked the people over their sinful attitude the people acted bewildered over why God should be dissatisfied with them. Thus, Malachi rebuked the people for their neglect of the true worship of God and called them to repentance (Mal 1:6; 3:7). Malachi further reminds the people of the Day of Judgment (Mal.4:1-6).

Archer (1974) summarizes the book as follows:

—The theme of Malachi is that sincerity toward God and a holy manner of life are absolutely essential in the Lord's eyes, if His favor is to be bestowed upon the crops and the nation's economic welfare. Israel must live up to her high calling as a holy nation and wait for the coming of the Messiah, who by a ministry of healing as well as judgment will lead the nation to a realization of all her fondest hopes!

Many of the Minor Prophets just like Malachi spoke on similar themes, such as God's love for His people, their unfaithfulness and their need to repent. Other themes of Malachi also include the second coming of the Messiah and the Day of the Judgment.

Malachi's Audience

Malachi's message was meant for the unfaithful priests and people of Israel (Mal 1:1).

Many of the Old Testament prophets became what may be called —pedagogy; this means that they became examples for their audiences through their actions. Very often the prophets of God had to endure unusual hardship so that their lives and experiences could be an instrument of teaching to those around them (www.bible.org)

An example of Pedagogy in the life of a Prophet is found in Ezekiel 4:1-13 where Ezekiel was instructed to take a brick, lay it on the ground and inscribe the word Jerusalem on it. The reason for this demonstration to the people of Israel was explained in Ezekiel 4:3 as being a sign of how the enemy will attack Jerusalem. Another example is where the prophet Ezekiel was supposed to pack his things and leave at night like a traveler in Ezekiel 12:3-7.

The prophet Hosea is another example of pedagogy. God had Hosea experience the heartbreak of an unfaithful wife as both a picture of Israel's unfaithfulness to Him and a preparation of Hosea for his prophetic ministry (Hosea 1:2-9).

The prophet Isaiah also went about barefoot and naked for three years as a sign of the terrible troubles God will bring upon Egypt and Ethiopia (Isaiah 20:2-4). God also commanded Jeremiah to make a yoke for his neck with leather thongs and then walk around wearing it (Jeremiah 27:2-3).

It is important to note that Lamentations is not a Major Prophet but the author of Lamentations although not specified is traditionally attributed to Jeremiah. The book of Daniel is also considered as an apocalyptic book although the book contains some prophecies (Rui de Menezes 2005).

3.6 Differences and Similarities between Prophets and Messengers in Christianity

There seem not to be any difference between the prophets and messengers of God because prophets and messengers were referred to as the same people. They were servants of God who carried the message of God to his people and they were equally the ‘mouthpiece’ of God. There were times that the Bible referred to the Prophets as messengers because it meant the same thing.

For instance, Prophets are referred to as —messengers in 1 Chronicles 36:15, 16; Isaiah 44:26; Haggai 1:13 and Malachi 3:1. John the Baptist is referred to as a messenger in Matthew 11:7-15; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27. In the passages mentioned above Jesus specifically names John the Baptist as a messenger. Other examples of Prophets who were also referred to as messengers are Haggai (Haggai 1:13), Malachi, (Malachi 3:1) and Isaiah (Isaiah 44: 26)

3.7 Types of Prophets in the Bible

There were different kinds of prophets in the Bible although they were all sent by God. The difference had to do with their work and function at a particular time but not necessarily their ranks. In Christianity there are no prophets that are superior to the other; the Major

Prophets were not called so because they were higher in calling than the Minor Prophets. We shall treat the types of Prophets in the Old Testament below.

3.7.1 Canonical Prophets

The canonical prophets are the same as the authors of the prophetic books in the Bible. They are those prophets who wrote prophetic books of the Old Testament. Many of the canonical prophets for instance, Amos and Micah were interested in issues relating to social justice as they condemned the Israelite and the Judean States for politically oppressing the poor. Other canonical prophets like Isaiah acted as counselors in military affairs. The classical prophets also as they were also referred to condemned the Israelites and Judeans for ungodly religious practices especially those associated with the State cult (Isa 1:10-17; Amos 5:21-24). They announced God's judgment on the people and/or the State (Hampton Keathley IV 2009). One of the main reasons why the canonical or writing prophets arose in Israel was the problem of false prophets. It appears that from almost the beginning of the prophetic movement in Israel until the post-exilic times, many prophets appeared in Israel claiming to speak on behalf of God. These prophets called themselves —prophets but their message contradicted the message of the true prophets of God for instance, the message of Zedekiah contradicted the message of Micaiah (1 Kings 22:11-13) while the message of Hananiah contradicted the message of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 28).

We may suggest the reason why the prophets wrote down their words or oracles in a scroll was to vindicate their ministry and to serve as a reminder to future generations that they were speaking the truth and that their oracles were fulfilled. It was in the fulfillment of the

prophetic word that the people would recognize that a prophet had spoken the truth on behalf of God. As Jeremiah told Hananiah in Jeremiah 28:9:

—As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet! (Jeremiah 28:9).

3.7.2 Court Prophets

The court prophets served in the king's court and were at the king's service. These court prophets were consulted before the king went to battle. The work of the court prophets is seen in 1 Kings 22:6.

—So the king of Israel gathered the prophets, about 400 men, and asked them, 'Should I go against Ramoth-gilead for war or should I refrain?' They replied, 'March up, and the Lord will hand it over to the king! (1 Kings 22:6)

The court prophets were paid from the king's wealth (Hampton Keathley IV 2009).

Examples of court prophets are Nathan (2Sam 12:1-25) and Micaiah (1 Kings 22:14).

3.7.3 Cult Prophets

The cult prophets were attached to various shrines or places of worship in Israel. They did not only function as prophets but they appear to have also served in the priestly capacity by offering sacrifices or performing other religious functions. The cult prophets received their compensation from the temple treasury while Samuel is an example of a cult prophet (1 Samuel 19:20) but he also offered sacrifices unto the Lord (1 Samuel 16:2) (Bruce Vawter 1961).

3.7.4 Ecstatic Prophets

Ecstasy is the state of being in a trance especially a mystic or prophetic trance. The derivation of the word —ecstasy suggests an out of body state (2 Corinthians 12:2-3) or

the state of being out of control. According to Wood (1966), ecstasy in the Old Testament was associated with bands or schools of prophets (1 Samuel 10:5, 1 Samuel 10:9; 1 Samuel 19:20; 2 Kings 9:1). The ecstatic state was often accompanied by music (1 Samuel 10:5; 2 Kings 3:15-16).

These ecstatic prophets lived in groups and had a leader; they wore a hairy mantle and a leather girdle (2 Kings 1:8). They often had scars, from wounds inflicted by themselves or by others when in a frenzy (1 Kings 18:28) (Wood 1966). In 1 Samuel 19:20-14 David had just escaped from the hands of Saul but Saul sent messengers to arrest him. The messengers found Samuel seeming to lead a band of frenzied prophets so the messengers fell into frenzy too. Then Saul himself pursued after he had sent three (3) batches of messengers and they all failed because the spirit of God took control of them. The —spirit of God came upon Saul and he fell into the same state. He took off his clothes and laid naked all day and night (I Sam 19:24). Although David was not a prophet the above example stated about him is just to make readers understand what ecstatic prophets sometimes did in their ecstatic mood. It appears that the music in some way induced the utterances, because Elisha also employed the minstrel in preparing to prophesy (II Kings 3: 15).

Archer (1974) asserts another group of prophets such as Micaiah, Elijah and Elisha in Israel were not associated with the temple or with the court but were independent of religious and political organizations. These types of prophets are known as —peripheral prophets because they operated on their own and were sometimes supported by the community but they did not receive any special benefits either from the temple or from the king. Sometimes these independent prophets became leaders of prophetic communities. For instance, Elijah was the leader of a prophetic community from which

Elisha came (Archer, 1974) .

3.8 Characteristics of Prophets in Christianity

In Christianity, Prophets assumed their prophetic duties with exceptional life experiences coupled with a personality shaped by their physical and mental limitations. Prophets in Christianity possessed the following characteristics as we shall discuss below:

1. The prophet was called by God and this was essential to begin his or her prophetic ministry.
2. The prophet's primary function was to serve as God's mouthpiece because they were divinely gifted to receive and communicate God's message to others (Jer 1:7, 17; Eze 3:4).
3. Prophets maintained a close relationship with God and this earned them a prophetic title "*man of God*". Genesis 20:7 speaks of this unique relationship when God says of Abraham: —he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live! (Gen 20:7).
4. The prophet's ministry was directly related to the Spirit of God. The revelation of prophetic ministry came directly from the Spirit's presence in the life of the prophet hence without the Holy Spirit the prophet's ministry was powerless. Moses expressed the interconnection between the Spirit and prophet when he said:

—I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that He would put his Spirit on them! (Num 11:29).

Peter who also believed that prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit said:

—no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21).

The prophetic phrase —come upon or —came upon is used to describe the Spirit's pronounced presence upon the prophets.

5. God sometimes separated the Biblical prophets from the community as these prophets spent time in the desert places and caves —seeking the face of God and communicating with the God. Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist for instance, were isolated from their people or community where they heard the voice of God without distraction.

In summary, the Old Testament prophets were prepared by maturity, proclaimed God and prepared humanity for the coming of the Messiah. These prophets also through the help of the Spirit exercised supernatural power over death, disease and nature. They anointed leaders and gave political and personal guidance, instruction and correction. The Old Testament prophets proclaimed Divine revelation of current events (forth-tellers) and predicted future happenings (fore-tellers).

3.9 Conclusion

An examination of the prophets of the Bible reveals that God required them to understand their calling as they were God's mouthpiece. A true prophet was called and prepared by God, empowered by God's Spirit to perform his job, speak God's message, confront people with sin, warn of impending judgment and the consequences if God's people refuse to repent and obey. We must remember that the prophets called their people back to a covenant relationship with God. The Prophets also preached about the sovereignty of

God over all creatures and promoted monotheism where only God was to be worshipped. In the messages of the prophets, the people of Israel and Judah were either to repent and obey or risk being punished by God. The prophets also prophesied messages of hope and restoration. We may be right to suggest that some prophets like Jeremiah were consecrated before they were able to deliver the message of God. This means that God calls and prepares whoever he wants to deliver His message.



KNUST

CHAPTER FOUR

PROPHECY, PROPHETS AND PROPHETHOOD IN ISLAM.

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed Prophecy, Prophets And Prophethood in Christianity. We discussed Major and Minor Prophets, female prophets and Prophets of the New Testament into detail. We learnt that God appointed males and females as prophets to deliver his message to mankind. In this Chapter, we shall treat Prophets and Prophethood in Islam in depth. We will also discuss individuals who served as either prophets or messengers and those individuals who served as both a prophet and a messenger in Islam. However, it is important to note that a prophet is chosen by God and according to Nasr (2002), —the classes of prophets (*anbiya*) range from those who bring some news from God (*nabi*) to messengers (*rasul*) who bring major messages. It is for this reason that we will delve into who *nabi* and *rasul* are into detail.

4.2. Prophethood as a Divine gift.

Prophethood in Islam is a divine gift from God which he bestows on whom he pleases. This means that man cannot toil and work and demand being a prophet because it is Allah who

appoints whoever he deems fit for the job. These prophets are humans but because the gift of being a Prophet is bestowed on them they lead exemplary lives that their audiences emulate.

The Qur'an in Surah 3: 74 buttresses the above mentioned point:

—He selected for His mercy whom He wills. Allah is of infinite bounty.

In this case, God is the only one who appoints or selects people to be His prophets and not even the pious or the obedient nature of man can make him a prophet unless God wills. Surah 19:58 further shows that prophethood is a divine blessing so this is to say that being a prophet in Islam is not by —inheritance, conquest or victory (Esau 2007). The Qur'an in Suwar 2:253 and 17:55 respectively state that all prophets are not the same because some are ranked superior to others. However, all prophets in Islam must be obeyed because they are sent from Allah. In Surah 46:35 the Qur'an mentions that some prophets were —men of resolution.

Esau (2007) argues that they were called so because their determination was strong, their trials were severe and their struggle arduous and bitter. According to him, these men patiently endured trials and rejection for many centuries and numerous generations. In other words the —men of resolution lived their lives amidst trials. These —men of resolution or —resolute prophets were Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), (Isa) Jesus and Muhammad. Muhammad apart from being a resolute prophet is the last and seal of the prophets. (Surah 33: 40). In other words, after Muhammad there will be no prophet.

4.2.1. How Allah Communicated with his Prophets and Messengers

The Qur'an in Surah 4: 163 teaches that Allah used *wahy* (revelation) to communicate with his prophets and messengers. If Allah chose humans as His prophets and messengers instead of angels then there is the need to know how He communicated with them.

Revelation according to Surah 5: 111 can also take the form of inspiration as mentioned in Surah 4: 163, Allah inspired *al-hawariyun* (the disciples of Isa (Jesus)) to believe in Him and His messengers.

Another way Allah communicated with His prophets and messengers was through signs or gestures. For instance, in Surah 19:11 the Qur'an calls the gestures of Zakariya (Zacharia) to his people as *wahy* (revelation) because Allah showed the —signs|. Revelation as we saw in the previous chapter two and Surah 42:51 has three forms:

From the above, we can conclude that through revelation God communicates with his prophets and messengers but He did not call everyone to be a prophet. He called selected people through whom he communicated his message to mankind. The selection was based on unique characteristics of those individuals particularly humility, trustworthiness, truthfulness and morality.

4.3. Messengers in Islam.

Al-Khattah (2005) argues that *irsaal* (directing) means that since Messengers receive direction from Allah they are called *rasul*. These messengers are sent with specific message and are enjoined to convey it to their audience. The Qur'an in Surah 4: 136 states that belief

in the messengers is one of the basic principles of the Islamic faith and anyone who does not believe in the messengers and their message has strayed. The

Qur'an further buttresses this in Surah 4:150 -151 that whoever does not believe in the messengers but claims to believe in Allah is a *kaafir* (disbeliever). The Messengers of Allah according to Surah 4: 164 are to be accepted and believed by all Muslims equally but not accept some and reject others. Al-Khattab (2005) further argues that Allah gave man the role of *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth so He would rather choose man who was part of Him and has the potential to receive revelation and relate to mankind rather than angels.

Suwar 14:11 and 20:41 state that the messengers of Allah were not different from other men but it was just the grace Allah bestowed on them which made them His chosen messengers. Since the messengers were human beings they had the same attributes just like other human beings; they ate, drank, got married and had children (Surah 21:7-8, 13:38). We may be right to suggest that Allah sent human beings as messengers so that other human beings can learn from their exemplary behavior and character because of the grace He Allah bestowed on them. In Surah 21: 7, the Qur'an explicitly states that Allah sent messengers from among men.

Al-Khattab (2005) argues that the messengers were men because their role required addressing people, meeting people in secret, confronting people, pressing and leading armies and going through the sufferings of war. According to him, women have to cope with menstruation, pregnancy and caring for children which prevents them from being able to fulfill the role of messenger. From the above, we observe that the prophets and messengers were men so there is no account of any female being a prophet in Islam. On the other hand, it appears the argument of Al-Khattab is a cultural interpretation of Surah

21: 7 because women in pre-Arabia appeared not have a public life and this may have had an influence on religion.

However, al-Khattab (2005) makes mention of some scholars including Abu al-Hasan, al-Ash'ari, Qurtubi and Ibn Hazam who believed that Allah blessed some women with prophethood. These women according to these scholars are Maryam (Mary), Sarah, the mother of Musa, Hajar and Aisha. The proof of these scholars according to al-Khattab (2005) is in Surah 28: 7 which states that Allah revealed or inspired the mother of Musa while Surah 19:17-19 also states that Allah sent an inspiration to Mary. There is no doubt that the above mentioned women lived good lives and showed exemplary roles and character worthy of emulation but it is important to note what Surah 21 : 7 emphatically states:

—And we sent not before you but men to whom we revealed.

This explicitly means that only men were sent as messengers and prophets in Islam. Nonetheless, Allah in Surah 2:253 mentions that messengers are superior to the prophets and there are distinctions among the messengers. However, the Qur'an (Surah 42:13) mentions five men as —Messengers of Strong will namely: Muhammad, Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and Isa. According to Surah 33:40 [—... But he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets] Muhammad is the last of the Prophets. Here our understanding is that if Muhammad is the final Prophet then he is also the final Messenger, because every messenger is a prophet.

4.4. Prophets in Islam

(Their lineage, Call, messages and Audience)

Islam sees prophets as the chosen servants of God. These prophets were humans and the Qur'an makes reference to the fact that humans were greater than angels. In Surah 2:31-33 the Qur'an tells that after God had created the world, He gave Adam the opportunity to know the nature of all things and to summarize them by name; thus Adam gave names to all creatures then after God presented the names to the angels. This shows that Adam was bestowed with knowledge which the angels did not have which is why he was made the master of earth or God's vicegerent on earth. Every prophet came with the same message which was to proclaim and call their people to accepting (*tawhid*) the oneness of Allah (Surah 21: 25). Surah 16:36 and 35: 24 also states that God sent a prophet to every nation.

—There was not any community except a warner lived among them!.

Musnad Ahmad number 212557 relates that Abu Dhar asked the Prophet Muhammad —O Messenger of Allah! What was the total number of prophets? The Prophet answered —124,000 and from amongst them are 315 messengers! Nonetheless, we have only twenty five (25) prophets and messengers mentioned in the Qur'an by name. Regarding the names of the other prophets Surah 4:164 opines what Allah says:

—We have told you the story of some messengers and of others we have not.!

Since a prophet is divinely chosen there are some features of a prophet namely:

1. He is the best in his community morally and intellectually. A prophet's life serves as a role model for his followers. His personality should attract people to accept his message rather than drive them away with his imperfect character. After the Prophet receives the Message he is considered to be infallible and will not commit sins

although he may make some mistakes which God will not hesitate to correct sometimes through rebuke, dreams or revelation.

2. He is supported by miracles to prove that he is a true prophet of God. These miracles are granted by the power and permission of God.
3. Every Prophet clearly states what he has received as not his own words but a message from God.

The Qur'an mentions Adam, Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb, Isma'il (Ishmael), Idris (Enoch) and Dhu'l-Kifl (Ezekiel) in Surah 21:85 as prophets while Muhammad's name is mentioned in Surah 48:29 as a messenger of God. The Qur'an in Surah 6:83–86 mentions eighteen (18) of them namely: Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), Nuh (Noah), Daud (David), Yusuf (Joseph), Sulayman (Solomon), Ayyub (Job), Musa (Moses), Haron (Aaron), Zakariya (Zachariah), Yahya (John), Isa (Jesus), Ilyas (Ezra), Iyasa'a (Elisha), Yunus (Jonah) and Lut (Lot). The above individuals are men (humans) whom Allah sent to convey his message to mankind.

The following individuals served as both prophets and messengers of Allah in Islam.

Idris (Enoch), Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih, Ibrahim (Abraham) Lut (Lot), Isma'il (Ishmael), Shu'ayb (Jethro), Musa (Moses), Hanan (Aaron), Ilyas (Elijah), Yunus (Jonah), Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad. As discussed earlier some Prophets are —men of resolution or determination namely: Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa, and Muhammad. The Qur'an records that some scriptures were revealed to the following Prophets namely: The Tawrāt (Torah) was revealed to Musah, The zabūr (Psalms) was revealed to Dau'd while the Injīl (Gospels) and the Qur'an were revealed to Isa and Muhammad respectively. We shall discuss the work of the prophets, their messages and their audiences into details in the next section. We will

also look at prophets whose people were punished by God because of their disobedience. Wheeler (1965) argues that the stories of the prophets constitute a significant portion of the Qur'an, but the Qur'an does not tell the stories of the large numbers of prophets claimed by some Muslim scholars.

Although the Qur'an mentions the names of some prophets explicitly in some Surah, there are other passages which refer to prophets without the mention of specific names.

An example is Surah 25:38 and Surah 50: 12 which talks about someone who was sent to the —People of the well. From the Qur'anic passage mentioned above, someone was sent to some people but this person's name was not mentioned only his audience was mentioned as —people of the well. Again, Wheeler (1965) argues that Muslim exegetes identify Khidr, Ezekiel, Samuel, Jeremiah and Daniel as men whose names were not mentioned in the Qur'an but the stories in the Qur'an appear to refer to the above mentioned men. The Qur'an also makes mention of some important characters such as Luqman (Surah 31: 1) and Dhu al-Qarnayn (Surah 18) who are not considered prophets but whose stories are included in the stories of the prophets probably because of their good conduct of life. Muslims believe that Adam is the first Prophet whilst Muhammad is the last or seal of the prophets (Surah 33:40).

1. Adam, His audience and Message

The creation of man began with Adam. The Qur'an in Surah 2:30 -32 states that when God created man he made him His vicegerent and Adam was to tell the names of God's creation after which he taught the angels. This verse shows that man is greater than the angels and man serves as the deputy of God on earth. After the Creation of Adam, God ordered the

angels to prostrate to Adam and they all fell prostrate in obedience to the order of God except Iblis. (Surah 38: 73-47)

Although the Qur'an does not categorically state the prophethood of Adam, like it does in regard to the other prophets the Qur'an does mention that:

—Verily, Allah has chosen Adam and Nuh and the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran above the world. (Surah 3: 33).

This means that God chose Adam. There is no proof in the Qur'an about the messengership of Adam. It appears that there was no messenger in the time of Islam until the time of Nuh because if there were the Qur'an would have made mention of it. Adam was not a messenger so he had no audience. The lesson all humankind can learn from his life in the working in Surah 35: 6 is the power of *shaytan* to tempt man to fall.

2. Nuh (Noah)

His Lineage, audience and Message

Nuh was the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah son of Idris (Enoch); Nuh is further traced to Seth the son of Adam (Esau 2007). The Qur'an in Surah 29: 14 states —And verify —We sent Nuh (as our messenger) unto his folk, and he continued with them for a thousand years save fifty years and the flood engulfed them, for they were wrongdoers. (29:14)

From the above Qur'anic passage, it can be observed that Nuh was the first prophet and messenger sent to mankind. He invited the people to monotheism and belief in *tawhid* (Oneness of Allah) and asked them to refrain from idolatry and polytheism. Surah 71:1 says

—Lo! We sent Nuh unto his people (saying): —warn your people before the painful doom come unto them. (71:1)

The story of Nuh can be found in several Suwar (chapters) of the Qur'an namely: al-

A'raf (The Heights Surah 7); Hud (Prophethood Surah 11); al-Mu'minum (the Believers surah 23); al-Qamr (the Moon Surah 54); Nuh (Noah Surah 71); and al-Shu'ara (The Poets Surah 26).

From the Suwar about Nuh, the Qur'an mentions that during the Period of Nuh, He encountered many hardships and rejection. He invited the people to God but they were reluctant. These people worshiped idols thereby associating partners with God. Surah 71:1-3 says that God sent Nuh to warn the people and in Surah 71:5-9 the Qur'an teaches that when Nuh delivered his message he encountered people who were proud and mocked him. (Surah 11:38).

We understand in Surah 2:43 that before Nuh, the people were true believers who did not know anything about idolatry. Although Nuh went through many hardships whilst relating the will of God to mankind he still remained patient. Therefore, Nuh is one of the prophets called *ulu al-azm* (men of resolution). God ordered Muhammad to follow the example of Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and Isa (Jesus) since they were men of resolution and they had much patience although they too faced many hardships and trials during their lifetime (Naqavi 1978).

Surah 71: 1 -3 states that God sent Nuh to his people to warn them to serve and obey Him. This message was not accepted by the people who had hardened their hearts and eventually when Nuh lost hope of their believing the Qur'an in Surah 71:26-27 says that (Nuh) cursed them:

—And Noah said: My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers in the Land. If thou should leave them, they will mislead thy slaves and will beget none but wicked believers.↓

God revealed to Nuh that none of his people will accept the faith except the very few believers who had already accepted (Surah 11:36). So God inspired him to build an ark and directed him to build it after He God had decided to destroy the people with flood. When the completion of the ark was completed, God ordered Nuh to take his family and the other few believers with him and then take a pair (male and female) of every kind of animal into the ark. The Qur'an in Surah 11:41-43 mentions that even a son of Nuh named Kan'aan was not saved because he was a disbeliever who did not obey his father's call to ride in the ark.

Esau (2007) argues that Nuh is called the second father of mankind because all the people on earth are the offspring of those who were saved in the ark with Nuh. Surah 11: 48 buttress this point.

3. Idris (Enoch)

His Lineage, His Audience and Message

Idris is one of the prophets mentioned in the Qur'an after Adam. It describes him as a truthful prophet (Surah 19:56-57). He is Idris the son of Yarid and his lineage is traced to Seth, the son of Adam. His Hebrew name is Enoch and in Arabic it is Ukhnukh. He is one of the forefathers of Nuh (Essau 2007) (Wheeler 2002).

Esau (2007) further argues that Idris studied under Shith (Seth) at a young age and when he was old, God granted him prophethood. Wheeler (2002) also mentions that He was a prophet and a messenger who was the first to write with a pen. Furthermore, He posits that Allah revealed 30 scriptures to Enoch. God in Surah 19:57 says —And we raised him to

high station|| this means that Enoch was rewarded for his service and duty to Allah which enabled his upliftment.

Idris is believed to have lived during the time of Babel. So his audiences were the people of Babel. His moral techniques and instructions were directed at calling the people to the religion of God and to the worship of Him alone. Esau (2007) argues that there were 72 languages spoken by the people at the time of Idris and God taught him all the languages spoken by the people in his time so that he would be able to communicate with every group in their own language.

4. Hud

His Lineage, audience and message

Several Suwar like Hud (Surah 11) *Surah al-Araf* (the Heights), and *surah Shu'ara* (The Poets) all talk about a man named Hud who was sent by God to the Amalekites (Ad).

(Surah 11:50) Hud was the son of _Abd Allah, and his lineage is traced back to Sam the son of Nuh (Noah).

The people of Hud were pagans who worshipped idols instead of God. Hud warned them to stop but they rejected his message (Surah 26: 123 -124). Hud warned them of the punishment of God if they continued in their sin but the people disbelieved him and opposed his mission and in their disbelief decided to kill him (Surah 11:53-55). God punished the people of Ad by withholding the rain from them for three (3) years and when they were distressed they pleaded for help from God. Surah 46: 24-25 says that God sent a cloud which they thought was rain but it was a wind of painful torment which destroyed all the things by commandment of its Lord. However according to the above mentioned

Surah, the guilty folks were rewarded for their belief in God. Surah 51:41-42 describes the —fatal wind as not sparing anything it reached and then turned everything it came into contact with into dust.

5. Salih, his audience and Message

According to Nadawi (1978), Salih was the son of Ubayd, the son of Asif and traces the lineage back to Sam the son of Nuh. He was sent to one of the tribes of Arabia called Thamud. Salih was sent to the people of al-Hijr (Surah 7:74). Surah 27:45 also says

—And we verily sent unto Thamud their brother Salih, saying: Worship Allah, And Lo! They became two parties quarrelling.

From these two passages the understanding is that Thamud and al-Hijr are neighboring towns and the people who live in the two cities are one people. The tribe of Thamud worshipped idols and disbelieved in God so He sent Salih to them. The Qur'an says in Surah 15: 80-99 that the people of al-Hijr were also set aside other gods and worshipped them. Surah 11:61-68 says that Salih called the people to worship God because there was none like him because it was He who created them. He admonished the people of Thamud saying that if they turned to God he will forgive them. From the same passage we learn that some of the people doubted Salih and asked him why they should refrain from worshipping the gods which their fathers served. They demanded to see signs that Salih was actually a prophet from God before they turn from their sinful ways. The people of Thamud and al-Hijr rejected the messenger because they described Salih as being a human being just like them so they wanted a sign to show that what he was saying was truthful (Suwar 26: 154, 15: 80).

6. Ibrahim (Abraham), his audience and Message

Ibrahim was the father of the Prophets, the leader of the righteous and was a saint (Surah 19:41). From Surah 29:27, we understand that prophethood and the scripture were established among his seed and he was rewarded in the world and is countered among the righteous. Surah 16:120 also describes Ibrahim as a man of upright nature. Ibrahim was the son of Terah. Surah 19:41-47 narrates that Terah, Ibrahim's father was a pagan who called his son to worship his gods but Ibrahim refused and asked his father to follow him and he will lead him to the right path. He pleaded with his father not to serve the devil lest he gets punished by God. Terah threatened stoning his son if he did not stop giving him the advice but Ibrahim asked for forgiveness for his father from God. When Terah was hard hearted to the words of Ibrahim, he disowned his father because he was an enemy of God (Surah 9:114).

From the above, we study that Ibrahim was the only saint among his people who were deep rooted in paganism and idolatry. According to Esau (2007), Ibrahim was born in Haran but his father took him to the land of Babylon. Ibrahim called and reminded the people of his clan and family to return to God and worship only Him but they were reluctant and rejected his teaching. Ibrahim destroyed the idols of his people who in turn became angry and planned revenge on him when they realized that it was he who destroyed the idols. Ibrahim was tied up and cast into fire but the fire burnt only the strands he was tied with (Surah 21: 57 -70). Ibrahim married a woman named Sarah but she was barren so he later married Hajar who later became the mother of Ismail but when Ibrahim and his wife Sarah were old, God granted them a son called Ishaq (Surah 14:39).

Ibrahim later emigrated with his wife and father and the rest of his family to the land of Canaan and settle at a place called Hirran. The people of Canaan were pagans and later when there was drought in Syria and Palestine he moved to Egypt with his family.

Ibrahim's message to his people was to worship no other god except God. He asked his people (his father) to desist from worshipping idols. He did not want to leave his people to continue in their sin so he destroyed their idols. His call was for people to worship one God (Monotheism) despite the fact that he was born into a polytheistic and idolatrous community or environment. Naqavi (2004) posits that Ibrahim invited the nomadic Arabs to monotheism then he built the *Ka'bah* and prescribed the rites of Hajj (Pilgrimage) which has remained a ceremony among Muslims till date.

Ibrahim was obedient to God and did not associate anything with God (Surah 16: 123) so God took Ibrahim as a friend (Surah 4:125) He is one of the five great messengers mentioned by name in *surah al – Ahzab* (Surah 33) and *Surah al-Tawbah* (Surah 9). He is also a man of resolute because of the trials he faced during his time and how he patiently sailed through as we saw with Nuh (Noah). He is noted to have scriptures in the Qur'an (Surah 87:18-19) and he fulfilled God's commands (Surah 53:37).

7. Isma'il (Ishmael)

His Lineage, audience and message

—And mention in the Book Isma'il, Verily he was true in his promise and he was a messenger, a prophet Instructed his family in prayer and almighty and was pleasing to his Lord (Surah 19:54-55).

Isma'il was the son of Ibrahim and Hajar (Surah 14:39) He was Ibrahim's first child.

Wheeler (2002) quoting Ibn Kathir mentions that Isma'il was the first to ride a horse which

was initially wild but was tamed in order to be ridden. Isma'il was also the first to speak correct Arabic because he learnt the language from the original Arabs who had settled with them in Mecca, Jurhum, Amalek and Yemen which were all Arab nations.

Isma'il was sent as a prophet to the people of Jurhum, Amalek and Yemen who all lived in the same region. He also lived among them (Wheeler, 2002). When Abraham took Hagar and her son Isma'il away into the desert, God was with them and this led to them living among the Arabs. History shows that before the advent of Islam the Arabs were pagans and idol worshippers. This may be the reason why God sent Isma'il to them although his message to the people was not clear.

According to Wheeler (2002), Isma'il's first wife was an Amalekite but he divorced her because his father was not pleased with his wife so he married another woman from Jurhum and this time around Ibrahim was pleased with her. Our understanding here is that although the people of Amalek and Jurhum were of the same region their lifestyles appeared different. Thus Ibrahim's refusal to allow Isma'il to take a wife from among the people of the region he was sent to as a prophet.

8. Ishaq (Isaac)

His Lineage, audience and Message

Ibrahim and Sarah were the parents of Ishaq. He was Ibrahim's Second son who was born in their old age after the angels gave glad tidings (Surah 11: 11-73). Prophethood thus began from Ibrahim and continued through his sons Isma'il and Ishaq.

—And we gave him tidings of the birth of Ishaq, a prophet of the righteous. And we blessed him and Ishaq Among their offspring are good and bad. (Surah 37:112-113).

Ishaq grew up in the land of Canaan where his father Ibrahim emigrated. It is therefore likely that Ishaq was sent to the Canaanites in the regions of Palestine. He may have continued the work of Ibrahim by warning the people to return to God and stop all forms of paganism and polytheism. The ungodly lifestyle of the people of Canaan may be the reason why Ibrahim advised Ishaq not to marry any woman from that land but marry a woman from his own family. Although the message of Ishaq is not clear it appears that since the Canaanites were ungodly then His message was to call them back to God. Ishaq married Rafqah the daughter of Ibrahim's brother Najur. They had two sons Al-ls (Essau) and Ya'qub (Jacob or Israel) whose descendants are called the Israelites.

9) Ya'qub (Jacob),

His Lineage, audience and Message

Ya'qub was the son of Ishaq and Rafqah. He became the father of twelve (12) sons who formed the twelve (12) tribes of Israel.

The Israelites trace their ancestry to Jacob who later became known as Israel which means the —spirit of Allah (Ismail, L.B. et al 2012). He was born in the land of Canaan but when he grew up to adulthood he ran to his uncle Laban's house in Fadan Aram in Babel because his mother Rafqah advised him to do so for fear that his brother Esau might kill him because Esau had threatened him (Jacob). Whilst with his uncle Laban, Ya'qub asked for his younger daughter Rahil's hand in marriage but his uncle gave him his first daughter Layah to marry after which Rahil was also given to him. Laban also gave each of his daughters a slave girl. Thus, Zulfa and Balha were given to Layah and

Rahil respectively. His sons were born to him from these four women. Layah gave Ya'qub six (6) sons, whilst Rahil, Balha and Zulfa gave him two sons each and as said earlier, these twelve children or sons of Ya'qub became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Ya'qub became a prophet. He was assigned to high and true renown. (Surah 11:71 -73)

Although the Qur'an may not have mentioned the exact people Ya'qub was sent to; it may be that his prophethood started from the lineage of Ibrahim. We may also be right to suggest that since he was born in Canaan he was sent to the Canaanites as a prophet to continue the warnings and glad tidings which his grandfather Ibrahim and his father Ishaq started. Probably he continued when he went to live with his Uncle Laban in Fadan Aram in Babel. From the story of Idris (Enoch) we studied that the people of Babel were pagans. It is possible that at the time of Ya'qub the people of Babel had gone back unto sin that is why Allah sent Ya'qub as a prophet. It may also be that the sinful lifestyle of the people of Babel caused Ya'qub to marry from his uncle's family instead of marrying women from Canaan.

10. Lut (Lot)

His Lineage, audience and Message.

The stories of Lut are found in several chapters of the Qur'an. Some of these chapters are Suwar 7: 80-86, 11:74-83, 15:61 -77, 26:160-175, 27:54-58. Other stories about Lut can be found in Suwar 29:28-35, 37:133-138, 51:31-36 and 54:33-40. Lut was the son of Haran the brother of Abraham so he was Abraham's nephew. Lut moved with Abraham and his wife Sarah to Syria then to Egypt and when they returned to Syria, Abraham settled in Palestine while Lut settled in Jordan.

Lut was a messenger of God (Surah 37:133) He was sent by Allah to the people of Sodom. The people of Sodom according to Surah 26:165 – 166 were sinful folks who committed sexual intercourse with males instead of females. Thus they committed sodomy openly and disbelieved in God. It is important to note that unlike Hud, Salih and Shu‘ayb who were sent to their families, Lut was sent to people he shared no blood ties with.

God sent Lut to the people of Sodom to call them back to Him and reminded them of the punishment that will befall them if they continued in their sinful ways (Suwar 7:80-84, 27:54-58). The people of Sodom rejected the message of Lut (*Surah* 26:160) and even threatened to banish him from amongst them.

—They said: —Lut if you do not stop you will be one of the outcast?! (*Surah* 26:167)

Even though the people of Sodom were evil, there were a few believers amongst them. God sent Gabriel and two other angels Michael and Israfil to Sodom in the form of men.

These angels went to Abraham and when they told him that God had intended to destroy Sodom, Ibrahim interceded for the people of Sodom because Lut was in that land. He asked if the land will be destroyed if there were fourteen believers in it and when the angels said no he was satisfied he had saved the city (*Surah* 29:31-32). When the angels went to Lot in Sodom the men wanted to sleep with them. Lot tried persuading the men to marry women which was a pure and honorable thing but the men rejected his persuasion and still wanted to sleep with the angels. The Qur‘an says that Lut was distressed because he did not know how to protect them so the angels told him they were sent by God with the message that He was going to destroy the land because the people were a sinful folk (*Surah* 29:33-35).

The angels advised Lut and his family to hurry out of the land. Lut left the land at night because the time for the destruction of the land was in the morning (Surah 11:77-81).

However, when the people insisted and attacked Lut's house in order to get to his guests, Allah blinded their eyes and said they should have a taste of His punishment after His warning (Surah 54:37) Meanwhile Lut's wife was not saved from the destruction because she was an unbeliever (*surah* 7:83) The Qur'an in Surah 66:10 notes that the wives of Nuh and Lut betrayed their husbands because of their disbelief.

11. Yusuf (Joseph)

His Lineage, audience and message

Yusuf was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. The Qur'an in Surah 12:22-24 makes reference to the fact that Yusuf was chosen when he reached his prime, a reward God bestowed on him with wisdom and knowledge. Several Suwar like Yusuf, al-An'an and al-Mu'minum narrate stories about Yusuf but the Surah (Yusuf, 12) give details of his story.

In this Surah we learn that Yusuf had a dream and narrated it to his father (Surah 12:4-6) and from this passage we understand that Ya'qub warned his son not to narrate the dream to his brothers because they will conspire against him because the Lord has selected him (Yusuf) and has given him knowledge.

His brothers did not like him because they realized he was the most loved son of Ya'qub amongst them so they hated him and plotted against him (Surah 12: 7-10). They put him in a dry pit and sold him to some merchants. An Egyptian named Potiphar bought Yusuf and sent him home. Potiphar was a chief minister in Egypt. His wife tried to seduce Yusuf but he fled from that temptation (Surah 12:23-29) and was imprisoned because he was

accused of trying to rape his master's wife. While in prison he met two men, one was a cup bearer and the other a baker. These two men had a dream and Yusuf interpreted the dream to them. Eventually the cup bearer went out of prison and got his job back while the baker was killed. The cup bearer forgot to keep to his promise of making the king remember Yusuf and discharge him from prison. The Qur'an states that Satan caused the cupbearer to forget (*Surah 12:42*).

Later the king dreamt (*Surah 12:43-49*) and needed someone to interpret it, immediately the cupbearer remembered Yusuf who was brought before the king to interpret the dream (*Surah 12: 50 -53*). The king then elevated Yusuf and gave him a position in Egypt (*Surah 12:54-57*) Later Yusuf's brothers came to Egypt but they did not recognize their brother but after sometime Yusuf reconciled with his family (*Surah 12:94- 98*).

Yusuf's story makes us understand that he was chosen as a prophet because God rewarded him for his truthfulness (*Surah 12:22-24*). God gave him wisdom and knowledge so it is possible that these qualities made him able to interpret dreams.

Although the Qur'an does not mention that Yusuf was sent to a particular people we may be right to suggest that his prophethood began from his family and continued in Potiphar's household in the prison and to the king of Egypt. His pious lifestyle and his trust in God may have inspired many Egyptians who came in contact with him to also believe in God. Probably the above mentioned is the way God wanted His message to be delivered to his people.

Surah 40: 34 asserts that Yusuf was sent with messages but people doubted him. We may suggest that Yusuf was a messenger as well as a prophet because the Qur'an says in the above *Surah* that Yusuf was sent with messages.

12. Shu'ayb His Lineage, audience and Message

The Qur'an in Surah 7:85 makes mention of Shu'ayb who was sent to Midian (Madyan).

Other surat like al-A'raf, al-Shu'ara and al-Ankabut also make mention of Shu'ayb who God sent to the people of Midian who are also known as —People of the woodl or —the Dwellers of the Woodl (Surah 26:176 – 177). Shu'ayb was the son of Mikil and his mother was the daughter of Lut.

The people who God sent Shu'ayb to were the Midianites who were also Arabs. The tribes of Midian according to Esau (2007) were people who lived by trade and agriculture. They practised the religion they learnt from Ibrahim but soon deviated from it and began to sin. God then sent Shu'ayb to call them back to the worship of God and warn them of the punishment that will befall them if they did not repent from their sinful ways. Thus, Shu'ayb called the people of Midian to worship God alone without associating partners with him.

—And unto Madyan (we sent) their brother, Shu'ayb. He said: O my people! Serve Allah. You have no other God save Himl. (Surah 7:85).

The people mocked saying: —Does your way of prayer command you that we should forsake that which our fathers (used to) worship...l (Surah 11:87). When the people refused to listen to the message of Shu'ayb they asked for a sign that would make them believe his mission.

A few people believed in the message of Shu‘ayb while many others turned away from his message and threatened anyone who followed him (Surah 7:86). In Surah 11:91, we read that but for the family of Shu‘ayb, he would have been killed. The family of Shu‘ayb was perhaps influential and respected or feared by the Midianites that is why his life was spared. People who believed in the message of Shu‘ayb were banished unless they returned to the sins and religion of their people (Surah 7:88).

The Qur‘an in Surah 26:176-191 describes the punishment God gave to the people of Midian which it states was a —day of glooml.

13. Ayyub (Job) His Lineage, audience and Message

Ayyub was mentioned among the prophets of God and in Surah 6: 86 we read

—And from his progeny is Da‘ud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Musa and Harun. And thus we reward those who do goodl (Surah 6: 86).

The Qur‘an does not say much about the lineage of Ayyub but the above Surah makes us aware that his ancestry is traced to Ibrahim. Ayyub in Surah 21:73 -74 called out to the Lord because he was afflicted with misfortunes in his body, family and wealth for many years but though he was afflicted, he remained steadfast in the Lord and Allah described him as —a steadfast and excellent slavell. (Surah 38:41)

The Qur‘an does not say much about the specific people Ayyub was sent to but his life served as an example to other people of his time and even in this present age. The Qur‘an in Surah 38:41-44 says that Ayyub called unto God to remember him because Satan had afflicted and punished him. The Lord answered him and restored everything to him (Surah 21:74).

14. Dhu al – Kifl His Lineage, audience and Message

Although the identity of Dhu al-Kifl is uncertain, Surah 38:48 makes us aware that Dhu al – Kifl was chosen just like Ismai‘il and Ilyasa. The Qur‘an only makes mention of the fact that Dhu al-Kifl is a prophet chosen by God (Surah 21:85-86) but it does not make mention of the people he was sent to and his mission was not clear. Wheeler (2002) records that An Islamic scholar named Suyuti argues that Dhu al – Kifl was sent by Allah to call the people to monotheism and since he lived in Syria it means that he was sent to the Syrians. The Qur‘an however mentions him among the prophets, so then Dhu al-Kifl was a prophet of Allah.

15. Harun (Aaron)

His Lineage, audience and Message

Harun was the brother of Musa (Moses). Harun was sent as a Prophet by God to assist Musa in his mission. Musa’s prayer in Surah 20:29-35 was answered by God when he asked that Harun assist him in conveying his message and God granted him his request in Surah 19:53. Harun was to assist Musa because he was more eloquent in speech than Musa (Surah 28:34). Hence, whenever the mission of Harun was mentioned that of Musa was also mentioned because they worked together. Nonetheless, Musa is greater in rank of the prophets because he is among the men of resolution (*ulu-azim*) as discussed below. Harun, on the other hand is just like the other prophets.

God sent Harun and Moses to Fir‘awn and his chiefs to allow them to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Thus, Harun was sent to the Egyptian kings and later the children of

Israel became his people because Allah gave him message for them. In Surah 7:142, Musa asked Harun to take his place and lead them to do right and not follow the way of mischief makers. However, after Musah left to seek the face of God for forty days, the children of Israel made a calf out of their gold and jewelry and worshipped it. When Musa came back and saw them he got angry with his brother and His people (Surah 7:150). Musah therefore asked God for forgiveness on behalf of his people (Surah 7:151) and Allah forgave them.

16. Musa (Moses) His Lineage, audience and Message

Musa was the son of _Imran and the brother of Harun who God chose to assist him in his mission (Surah 10:29–30). He was born during the reign of Fir‘awn (Pharoah) who oppressed the children of Israel in Egypt. Fir‘awn exploited and maltreated the children of Israel so much that God sent his prophets Musa and Harun to go and save His people from Egypt. Musa was a prophet and a messenger (Surah 19:51). The Qur‘an teaches that Musa was born at a time that Fir‘awn made a decree that the sons or boys of the children of Israel should be killed at birth. He grew up in the house of Fir‘awn because Asiya, the wife of Fir‘awn saw baby Musa at the hiding place and took him as a consolation (Surah 28 : 9) and Allah caused Fir‘awn to love Musa (Surah 20:39). Musa grew up in honour and respect because he grew up in the house of a king. While walking around, he saw two men fighting; one was a member of his own caste and the other his enemy. The man of his caste asked for his help and he did but killed the Egyptian (Surah 28:15). He fled to Midian because people got to know about the murder he committed.

In Midian, Musa married the daughter of Shu'ayb (Jethro) and he remained a shepherd in that land for 10 years. Then one day God appeared to him in order to make him a messenger and send him to Fir'awn (Surah 20:9–14). Then he made excuses and finally asked that Harun his brother be made his assistant (Surah 28:33–35).

God sent Musa to Fir'awn as a messenger. He went on his mission with his brother Harun who assisted him throughout all his missions. Musa called Fir'awn and his people to worship God and the Qur'an narrates this encounter in Surah 26:18-24. As Musa tried to explain the message, Fir'awn got angry and threatened to put him into prison and punish him so Musa asked if the king will believe him if he showed him (Fir'awn) a sign.

Fir'awn and his people thought that Musa had come as a magician so he called his magicians but Musa's miracle proved to be true and powerful. Surah 7:115-119 and 7:121-122 give details of the encounter Musa had with Fir'awn's magicians and it goes on to narrate how they were defeated. God sent nine (9) afflictions to the people of Fir'awn (Surah 7:130-133); even with all these afflictions, Fir'awn still hardened his heart until God punished and drowned them all (Surah 43:55-56). After this the children of Israel were free to leave Egypt. He pursued them in rebellion and transgression but God saved his people by drowning them (Surah 10:90-91).

After the children of Israel were out of Egypt, they sometimes rebelled against Musa and Harun especially when they got hungry or thirsty and when they had to fight to conquer an enemy on the promised land God had given them (Surah 5:24). God punished them and for forty (40) years they wandered in the wilderness (Surah 5:26) until Yushua (Joshua) led them to the promise land.

From the above, it is clear that Musa was sent as a prophet and a messenger to Fir‘awn and his people in Egypt and the children of Israel whom he led constantly to the religion of God. It is possible that he may also have been sent to Midian by God because his character may have been an example to others in that land. His servitude to Jethro his father in-law too may serve as an exemplary life to the people.

Finally, we must note that despite all the miracles and signs Musa showed the people of Egypt, they still remained adamant and the people of Israel were also rebellious sometimes but in all these Musa was patient and stood steadfast and sincere (Surah 19:51). There is no doubt that Musa is named a man of resolution (ulu al-azim) because of all the good qualities he possessed even in the midst of trials.

17. Yunus (Jonah) His Lineage, audience and Message

The Qur‘an does not make any reference to the lineage of Yunus but it mentions that He was sent to warn (Surah 37:139). Although his name is mentioned the Qur‘an sometimes makes reference to him using his attributes as Dhu al- Nun (man of the fish) (Surah 21:87, 68:48).

Yunus was sent by God to the people of Nineveh. The people of Nineveh worshipped idols so Yunus was sent to call them back to God and worship Him alone (Surah 68:48-49). He admonished the people and called them to Allah but the people did not listen to him. Yunus then got angry (Surah 21:87) and threatened them with punishment; the above Surah states that —he went away|. Yunus journey from the people of Nineveh out of anger shows that he did not wait to hear from God to know whether it was the right thing to do (Surah 10:98). He then joined a ship to leave Nineveh and after a while the ship began to sink and then a fish swallowed him. The Qur‘an describes Yunus in Surah 21:87 saying:

—... he cried out in the darkness, there is no god other than you, glory be to you. I have been a wrong doer!.

The fish cast out Yunus onto the land as God had inspired it to do after 3 days. Yunus was cast out sick and wretched (Surah 37:145). Then he travelled back to his people in Nineveh but found them already believing in God which means they had repented maybe even before he left the first time but out of anger he did not notice their repentance. God then granted them comfort for as long as they believed (Surah 37:148).

It is important to note that although Allah sent Yunus to the People of Nineveh, his journey on the ship and the miracle that took place with the fish may be part of his mission. This is so because the people on board will have seen and learnt that no one can get away from God in disobedience and when God wants his will to be done He makes sure it is done.

18. Dau'd (David) His Lineage, audience and Message

Dau'd was the son of Jesse and his lineage traces back to Abraham. He was a prophet and a king. A book was revealed to Him:

—And we gave Da'ud the Zabarl. (Surah 17:55)

The Qur'an relates in Surah 2:246 that the children of Israel wanted Samuel to appoint a king over them so that they could fight their enemies. Dau'd was appointed at the time Israel had to fight their enemies. Dau'd's military ability started when he killed Goliath a giant Philistine warrior (Surah 2:251).

Dau'd was sent to the children of Israel as king because they wanted him to lead them in fighting their enemies. The Qur'an in *Surah 2:251* says after Dau'd had slew Jalut (Goliath)

Allah gave him the kingdom and wisdom and taught him of that which He willed. He was sent as a messenger although he was also a king. Dau'd —possessed strength so that the mountains were subservient to him when he sang praises (Surah 38:17–20). In spite of his kingdom and status as a prophet, he still worshipped God in obedience and piety (Surah 38:17).

However, Dau'd committed adultery with Uriah's wife and his desire to marry her made him put Uriah at the forefront of the battlefield to be killed. The story of Dau'd's repentance of the above sin is narrated in Surah Sad (Surah 38:21-24). All of these are to say that Dau'd was sent to the children of Israel to lead them as a king. His strength, pious life and obedience also are exemplary roles his people could learn from. The Psalms (Zabur) was given to Dau'd (Surah 4:1)

19. Sulayman (Solomon)

His Lineage, audience and Message

Sulayman was the son of Dau'd and just as God blessed Dau'd, Sulayman was also blessed with monarchy and prophethood so we can say he inherited his father. Solomon prayed to God to grant him wealth and enlarge his kingdom (Surah 38:35-39) so the Lord answered him and made him a powerful ruler and bestowed him with wisdom and knowledge. No one was equal to him in status and rank because God did not bestow that blessing to anyone else but only him (Sulayman).

The Qur'an does not clearly state the people to which Sulayman was sent but since He inherited Dau'd then it means he continued by leading the children of Israel. In addition to

all these inheritances, God gave him what he wanted and allowed him to use it any how he wanted (Surah 38:39). In fulfillment of his father's request Sulayman built the *Bayt al-Magdes* (the Holy House of God). God granted Sulayman the favor of understanding the speech of birds (Surah 27:16-17) and sometimes he understood the language of animals; Hoopoe (Surah 27:20), Ants (Surah 27:18). The wind subjected to Sulayman because God made it so. The wind was able to make Sulayman travel to remote and distant places in a short while. His armies were made up of *jinn*, humankind and birds (Surah 27:17-19).

Although God blessed Sulayman with his desires, it is important to note that the Qur'an in Surah 38:34 says that Sulayman went through some trials but in the end he repented. We may argue that the message God gave Sulayman was communicated through his wisdom and good judgment (Surah 21:78-79). In this case the more Sulayman exerted his knowledge in judgment the people around him understood the knowledge of God.

20. Ilyas (Ezra)

His Lineage, audience and Message

The Qur'an does not clearly state the lineage of Ilyas but makes mention of him in Surah al-An'am (9:30) and Surah al-Saffat (37:123, 130) as a prophet who was sent to warn. In Surah 9:30 Ilyas is referred to as the son of God by the Jews.

Although the Qur'an does not give any account of the people Ilyas was sent to, Surah 37:124 -125 make us to understand that he was sent to his folk or to people who worshipped Baal. His message was to call the people back to God, the creator and the Lord of their forefathers because they had forsaken Him. The people denied him and so they were _haled forth to the doom but those who believed were saved' (Surah 37:127 – 129). Nonetheless, Ilyas was rewarded because he was a believing slave (Surah 131 – 132).

21. Zakariya (Zechariah) His Lineage, audience and Message

The Qur'an makes reference to Zakariya in Surah Al-Imran (Surah 3:37-41), al-An'am, Maryam (Surah 19) and Su al-Anbiya (Surah 21). The stories in the above Suwar inform us that Zakariya did not have a son so he cried out to God to give him one (Surah 3:38). He was worried because his wife was barren but God answered his prayer and gave him a son named Yahya (John the Baptist) (Surah 21:89-90).

Zakariya was sent as a prophet to the people of Israel before the birth of Jesus. During those times the people of Israel were sinful and their kings did not hesitate to kill the pious men or prophets because they saw themselves to be lords and did not want to hear about any other Lord. Zakariya was sent to remind the people of their devotion to God.

He constantly called the people to the worship of Allah. Zakariya was the guardian of Maryam (the mother of Jesus) (Surah 3:37). Because He was old, he prayed for a son who will inherit him and serve as a prophet who will continue to warn and guide the children of Israel after his death (Surah 19:1 – 9). Yahya was the son born to Zakariya in his old age. He was trained by his father and He continued with prophethood as we shall see later.

22. Yahya (John the Baptist)

His Lineage, audience and Message

Yahya was the son of Zakariya and Ishya'a. He was born when his parents were very old but he inherited his father and continued with the mission his father started. God describes

Yahya in Surah 19:13-14 as a person with compassion, purity, devout and dutiful, thus he was granted prophethood when he was a young man (Surah 19:12). Yahya was sent as a prophet to the children of Israel to prepare and invite them to the worship of God.

23. Isa (Jesus) His Lineage, audience and Message

Isa was the son of Maryam whose uncle was Zakariya the father of Yahya. Maryam was the daughter of Imran and she was chaste (Surah 66:12). He is a messiah and a messenger (Surah 5:75). Surah 3:33 of the Qur'an narrates the lineage of Jesus. We understand from the Surah that Jesus was not born like any other human being but that God breathed his spirit into Maryam who put faith in the words of God and was obedient (Surah 66:12). Hence she is the mother of the Messiah. She was a virgin and Surah 19:16-21 describes her encounter with angel Jibril as regards to the son she was about giving birth to and Surah 19:22-23 tells the story of the birth of Isa. The same Surah is dedicated to Maryam, the mother of Isa (Jesus).

The beginning or time of Jesus' prophethood was not mentioned in the Qur'an but it explicitly says in Surah 61:6 that

—And when Jesus son of Mary said: O children of Israel! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised one!

Jesus was sent to invite the people to the true religion of God. He preached and explained the laws and orders of God to the people. The people were rebellious and hard hearted. (Surah 3:50-51) In order for the people to believe and keep their duty to God, he performed miracles. Jesus explained the *torah* to the people and he prohibited what was impure (Surah

7:157). He sent disciples to continue spreading the message of God. The Qur'an confirms a divine book called *Injil* which was revealed to Jesus.

Jesus was also the fourth to be called *ulu al-azm* because he was a 'prophet of resolution'. We discovered that during his time he faced many trials and temptations but he was patient and steadfast as he delivered the message to His people. The people even plotted to kill him because they did not want to accept his message but God saved him and he continued to remind them of the duty or worship of God.

24. Muhammad

His Lineage, audience and Message

Muhammad was the son of Abdallah ibn al-Mutalib and his lineage is traced down to Ismai'l the son of Ibrahim. He came from a noble lineage and was born in the year of the elephant. Surah 2:129 and 61:6 all confirm Muhammad as a messenger of Allah. He is one of six prophets whose name was mentioned before they were born. These prophets are John (Surah 19:7), Jesus (Surah 3:45), Isaac and Jacob (Surah 11:71) and Muhammad (Surah 61:6). These prophets' names were mentioned before they started their work as prophets. Muhammad's prophethood was also backed with signs and miracles to show that he was a true servant of Allah.

The prophet Muhammad was sent to all mankind to recite or give the signs of God to his people, teach them the Book and Wisdom and always guide them to worship God alone. (Surah 2:129). He was concerned about the *ummah* (Muslim community) and was full of pity and mercy for them (Surah 9:128). The prophet was always ready to intercede for his people when God wanted to punish them (Surah 8:33). He was always asking for

forgiveness even if mankind went astray (Surah 14:36). Thus Muhammad was not sent to only one nation as we saw with other prophets but he was sent to mankind.

The Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet appointed by Allah to lead the people of the world and to always guide them so that they will not go astray. The history surrounding the birth and life of the Prophet tell us that he grew up in the Arab land. Before Islam the Arabs were pagans and worshipped idols. They were involved all forms of life styles including gambling, theft, and murder. It was in such an environment that God called Muhammad to reform and lead the people to him using the Qur'an, the divine and authentic book.

The people disobeyed and rebelled against the Prophet Muhammad but he still interceded on their behalf so that they would not be punished. He faced many trials in his life even before his call to prophethood. He fought battles in order to maintain a united *ummah*. He is the last of the *ulul-azm* (the prophets of determination or resolute prophets).

The Qur'an presents Muhammad as the last and seal of the prophets and after him there will be no prophet (Surah 33:40). He is also regarded as the greatest prophet and messenger of Allah and disbelief in His prophethood makes one an unbeliever.

4.4.1. Individuals Who Served both As Prophets and Messengers in Islam Although the Prophets communicated their message to the people, they did not listen and so received the punishment of Allah. Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut, Shuai'b and Musa are Prophets whose people received punishment from Allah because they refused to heed the warnings of the prophets.

The under listed were individuals who served as both Prophets and Messengers they are namely:

1. Idris: —And make mention in the Scripture of Idris, Lo! He was a saint, a prophet. (Surah 19:56)
2. Nuh! —Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you. (Surah 26:107)
3. Ibrahim: —And make mention (O Muhammad) in the Scripture of Abraham. Lo! He was a saint, a prophet. (Surah 19:41)... —Their messengers from Allah came unto them with proofs (Surah 9:70)
4. Lut: —Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you. (Surah 26:162)
5. Ismai‘l: —And make mention in the scripture of Ismai‘l. Lo! He was a keeper of his promise and he was a messenger, a prophet. (Surah 19:54)
6. Musah: —And make mention in the scripture of Moses. Lo! He was chosen; and he was a messenger (of Allah) a prophet. (Surah 20:47).
7. Harun: —So go ye unto him and say: Lo! We are two messengers of thy Lord. So let the children of Israel go with us, and torment them not ... (Surah 20:47)
8. Ilyas: —And Lo! Elias was of those sent to warn. (Surah 37:123)
9. Yunus: —And Lo! Jonah verily was of those sent to warn. (Surah 37:139)
10. Isa (Jesus): —He spoke: Lo! I am the slave of God. He hath given me the scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet (Surah 19:30), (Surah 4:171) ... —The Messiah. Jesus son of Mary was only a Messenger of God... (Surah 3:45)
11. Muhammad: ... —he is the messenger of God ... (Surah 21:107)

The above mentioned messengers were also prophets as we discussed in the earlier section. We also identify that all the five (5) men of determination (*ulu-al-azm*) were all messengers although they were prophets.

4.4.2. Specific Roles of Messengers in Islam.

The messengers were sent by God to His people. It is therefore important to know that these messengers were the bearers of the revelation of God. We will discuss some of the roles of Messengers below:

1. The Messengers were to convey the message of God clearly to the people they were sent. Surah 5:67 states:

—O Messenger (Muhammad)! Proclaim the message which has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. This Surah implies that a message from God must be conveyed otherwise it meant that the messengers had not done their duty. However, conveying the message may need lots of courage especially when the message has to do with forbidding the people from doing what they were used to doing. Surah 29:45 and 2:151 both state that the message can be conveyed to the people through recitation of God's word. This recitation can be to explain commands, prohibit sin or explain ideas and knowledge of God especially when the message is not from the Qur'an. The messengers were supposed to convey the message without altering or changing anything to suit the listeners. If the message was condemnation, rebuke or a warning, they were to convey it as such.

—...But if they turn away, your duty is only to convey the message ...! (Surah 3:20)

In this Surah we understand that if the people would not listen to the messengers there is nothing they can do but to convey the message.

2. The messengers were not limited to the role of conveying the message and explaining it but they were also tasked with the role of inviting and calling the people to worship God because He is their God. The messengers were to make sure the people heeded to the call and believed in the words of God. All the messengers in conveying their message pleaded with the people to obey them because they were sent by God.

—And verily, we have sent among every Ummah (nation/community) a messenger (proclaiming)
—worship Allah (alone) and avoid Taghot (all false deities), do not worship Taghot besides Allah!
(Surah 16:36)

Also Surah 21:25 remarks that:

—And we sent no messenger before thee but we inspired him (saying): there is no God save me (Allah) so worship Me.

These Surah teach that the messengers were to call the people to the worship of Allah alone because there was none like him. The following *ayat* (verses) in Surah 26:108, 110, 126, 131, 144, 150, 163 and 179 assert every messenger said to his people. —so fear Allah, keep your duty to Him and obey Me

3. The Qur'an in Surah 18:56 also limits the role of the messengers to two things —glad tidings and warners.

—And we send not the Messengers except as givers of glad tidings and warners...! (Surah 18:56)

The above Surah makes us aware that the messengers were to either bring glad tidings to the people if they believed or warn them of God's punishment if they disbelieved or disobeyed. Surah 4:13 states that —whosoever obeys God and his Messenger will be admitted to the Garden under which rivers flow in Paradise! ... while —whosoever

disobeys God and His messenger and transgresses His limits, He will cast him into the fire, to abide therein, and he shall have a disgraceful torment (Surah 4:14)

4. The messengers of Allah were also tasked with reforming and guiding people they were sent to. Surah 2:257 and 14:5 state that God sent his messengers to bring forth people from darkness to light. As reformers the messengers were to reform their people so that they will stop sinning and walk in the light of Allah.

5. God sent Messengers and revealed the Books so that people will have enough proofs and will not have any excuse on the Day of Judgment (Surah 4:165).

We learn from Surah 20:134 that if God did not send messengers; people would come on the Day of Judgment saying: —Our Lord if you had sent us a messenger, we should certainly have followed your revelations before we were (thus) humiliated and disgraced. In this case God has sent messengers to lead, guide and forewarn the people so on the Day of Judgment He will bring a witness against the people and those who disbelieved or disobeyed the messenger (Muhammad) will never be able to hide a single fact from God (Surah 4:41-42).

It is because of all these duties or roles of messengers that a messenger is required to lead a good, pious and moral life worthy of emulation so that he would not speak virtue and practice vice which will create doubt in the minds of the people they have been sent to.

4.5. Difference between Prophets and Messengers

The Qur'an gives a clear definition of a Prophet and a Messenger. In *Surah* 3:81, Allah described exactly the role of a prophet and a messenger.

—When Allah made (His) covenant with the Prophets, (He said): Behold that which I have given you of the scripture and knowledge. And afterward there will come unto you a messenger, confirming that which ye possess. Ye shall believe in him and ye shall help him.

From the scriptures a *nabi* (prophet) confirms existing scripture and works with it while a *rasul* (messenger) a messenger of God who delivers a new scripture and knowledge. Basically, every Messenger is a Prophet, but not every Prophet is a Messenger.

Another distinction between these two servants of God is that a prophet is required to demonstrate God's law through his actions, character and behavior without necessarily calling people to follow him. A Messenger on the other hand is required to pronounce God's law (revelation) and call his people to submit and follow him. The Prophet Muhammad is distinguished from the rest of the Messengers and Prophets in that he was commissioned by God to be the Prophetic Messenger to all of mankind (Nadwi 1978).

The prophets were sent to their people to teach them and judge them according to a previous law or message (Surah 41:164). The messengers on the other hand were sent with new messages and laws generally to a disbelieving people (Khattab 2005). For instance Musa brought a new law (*torah*), Isa brought a new law the *Injil* while Muhammad brought the Qur'an. God describes some of His messengers as being both messengers and Prophets as we described in section 3.4.1 of this chapter. This indicates that being a messenger is something additional to being a prophet. For instance, Musa was a Prophet and a Messenger.

—And mention in the Book (this Qur'an) Musa (Moses). Verily, he was chosen and he was a Messenger (and) a Prophet (Surah 19:51).

This reaffirms that every messenger is a prophet but not every prophet is a messenger.

4.6. Duties and Mission of the Prophets

Muslims believe that God has provided guidance to humanity through the institution of Prophethood. Muslims are to believe in all prophets and the scriptures given to them because they are the sources of God's guidance to mankind. Some duties of the prophets are under listed below:

1. The prophets were tasked with the duty of bringing good tidings and warning of Allah's punishment to the people who disbelieved.
2. The prophets were supposed to live good and moral lives worthy of emulation (Surah 33:21).

—Those are they whom Allah guided, so follow their guidance! (Surah 6:90).

3. The prophet's role was also to remind man of the life hereafter (Surah 6:130-131). The Prophet made men understand that life on this earth was temporal so their concern should be how their lives will be in the hereafter because that life will be everlasting (Surah 29:63)

Prophets were sent so that mankind will have no excuse on the Day of Judgment and say God did not bring them prophets and messengers to warn them otherwise they would have obeyed, and believed (Surah 20:134) and followed.

4.7. Attributes and Qualities of Prophets

Our studies on Prophethood and messengers so far show that these men were those who were noble, knowledgeable, trustworthy and perfect in character, (Suwar 21:41, 16:2021).

The Prophets and Messengers who God sent were men (humans) and not angels or any extraordinary person —am only a man like you...l (Surah 18:10). Surah 33:72 makes us understand that man is qualified to undertake the trust of God and is responsible for conveying the messages of God. Apart from that prophets ate, drank and walked about just as every human does. (Surah 25:7).

God also chose men as prophets because He did not want anything to prevent mankind from believing His message (Surah 17:94). Men were also chosen as prophets because Allah bestowed on them favor and honor (Surah 19:58). Probably God chose men as prophets so that mankind will learn from them easily, while accepting what they say will not be difficult because the bearer of the message is a human being just like them.

The Prophets being humans faced trials, tribulations and temptations just like any other human being. For instance, Yusuf was imprisoned for many years for a crime he did not commit (Surah 12:4). Some prophets had to run away or migrate from their homes for fear of being killed; Ibrahim, Musa and Muhammad are examples of such persecution and migration (Surah 2:87). Ayyub fell sick and suffered because of the loss of his family and wealth (Surah 21:83-84). When Yunus was cast out of the belly of the fish he was sick... —We cast him, naked and he was sickl (Surah 37:139).

As human beings Prophets also engaged themselves in the same kinds of work that other humans did. Muhammad for instance was engaged in trade and it was through that, he met his first wife Khadijah. Musa worked as a shepherd (Surah 28:27-28) Jacob also worked as a shepherd before he was given a woman (women) to marry. Dau'd was a blacksmith who made coats of mail for battles (Surah 21:80). The prophets also sometimes became annoyed and angry with the people they were sent to especially if they did not listen to them.

Examples of these Prophets are Lut, Yunus and Moses but God warns against annoying the prophet as the children of Israel did to Moses (Surah 33:69).

It is important to note that despite all these attributes as men they were still honorable who always taught about God and guided their people to the Oneness of God. Although the prophets were human beings, God distinguished them with certain qualities that were peculiar to them. These qualities are:

1. Truthfulness

This quality is obligatory for all the prophets because since they conveyed the message of God they must be truthful so that their audience could believe. This is because if the people suspected them to be liars or spreading their own message which they attribute to God they will refuse to obey. From our studies so far, it is clear that even when God gave the people signs for them to believe in the messengers and prophets, the audience still accused them of not being servants of God until He punished them. The truthfulness of the prophet was very crucial for his work and the conveying of his message to the people. The Qur'an in Surah 61:44 – 48 gives a stern warning to anyone who will invent false sayings about God. Idris in Surah 19:56 was named —truthful, a prophetl.

2. Teaching the word of Allah

The prophet was also supposed to teach God's orders and explain His revelations to mankind. In teaching the word, the prophet should not alter any of the messages but deliver it in its original form (Suwar 8:61-62, 5:67) God protects his prophets from rebellious

people especially if they want to kill the messengers of God. We must note that the prophets did not only come to teach the word of God but to give glad tidings and warn. Those who believed were saved whilst those who did not were punished (Surah 28:59, 5:19) However, the prophets also interceded for the people (Surah 14:36) even if they went astray.

3. Knowledge

The Qur'an asserts that some prophets were given wisdom and knowledge so it makes this attribute part of the call. This implies that the prophet must be granted wisdom and knowledge which will help him in his mission. Probably this wisdom and knowledge was also meant to help the prophets in conveying the message and for them to know when to flee if their audience were rebellious. Some prophets who the Qur'an records as having received wisdom and knowledge from God are Ibrahim (Surah 21:51) and Yusuf (Surah 12:22)... —When he Joseph attained his maturity, we gave him wisdom and knowledge. Dawūd was also granted kingship and wisdom (Surah 21:251). Solomon was also given wisdom and knowledge (Surah 21:79). God taught Jesus, the Book, wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel (Surah 3:48). John was given wisdom (Surah 19:12) and Muhammad being the seal of the prophets was given wisdom and knowledge. Based on this God directed him in Surah 62:2 to teach them scripture and wisdom.

4. Morality

The prophets also exhibited qualities such as piety, morality and steadfastness. Their lifestyle was supposed to be exemplary so that the people they have been sent to will obey and listen to them and then follow them. Although prophets were not perfect and were

liable to sin, God gave them the grace to be able to live a sinless life though they may commit mistakes (Surah 6:76–79).

5. Trust worthiness

Since these prophets were people who conveyed the message of God they were supposed to be trustworthy and deliver the message in its originality (Surah 33:39). This quality was part of every prophet since God had to trust them before revealing His message. God also had to ensure that his message was delivered to His people without any alteration.

4.8. Signs of Prophethood

The people whom the prophets were sent to sometimes did not believe them so they had to affirm that they were prophets and messengers sent by God and employ the people to believe or obey them. Sometimes these prophets and messengers were sent with proofs (Surah 57:25) to show their truthfulness. Al-Khattab (2005) argues that —*ayah* in Arabic means sign and the signs are something extraordinary God causes to happen at the hands of his prophets and Messengers as an indication that His servants were telling the truth and they were actually sent by Him. There were different signs that God gave to indicate the truthfulness of his prophets. We shall briefly discuss them below:

1. The prophets had to perform miracles that were impossible for a human being to do and explain by natural and normal means. These signs and miracles provided complete satisfaction to the people and the prophet's call was justified. Salih for instance in Surah 26:155 provided a She-camel as a sign to his people who demanded one. Another example is Ibrahim who was put into fire after he had destroyed his father's idols but he did not burn

(Surah 21:68-70). Also Surah 20:17-21, 65-69 and 7:130-133 are different signs that Allah provided Musa with to proof his prophethood. Jesus and Muhammad also were given signs in Surah 5:110, 5:112-115 and 17:1, 53:12-18 and 54:1-2 respectively.

We are aware that the Qur'an records many signs and miracles of Prophet Muhammad but since our emphasis is not on him alone the said miracles and signs go beyond the scope of this study.

2. Another way that describes the truthfulness of prophethood was that previous nations were told about the coming of certain prophets so when these prophets came the messages of the previous prophets were fulfilled. Musa for instance is believed to have foretold the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (Surah 7:156-157) Other Prophets who were also mentioned in the Qur'an before their birth are John (Surah 19:7), Jesus (Surah 3:45) and Isaac and Jacob (Surah 11:71).

3. The lifestyle of the Prophets was also a sign to the reliability of their prophethood. Although the prophets lived among their people they still lead worthy and moral lives which the people could have learnt. Meanwhile, the prophet used the opportunity of their living amongst the people to teach them, guide them and lead them to the oneness of God (Surah 10:16). As a result of their good lifestyle God provided and protected them always so that they did not demand anything or reward from their audience (Surah 11:29, 25:57). —No reward do I ask of you... (Surah 26:109)

4. Another sign of prophethood is that all the prophets and messengers were called to serve. In other words these prophets were called to reform the people of God and because of that God supported them wherever they went with their mission. He helped them with

signs so that people will know that the message they were conveying was not one which was false. Thus God decreed that:

—Verily those who invent lies against Allah will never prosper! (Surah 16:116).

4.9. Conclusion

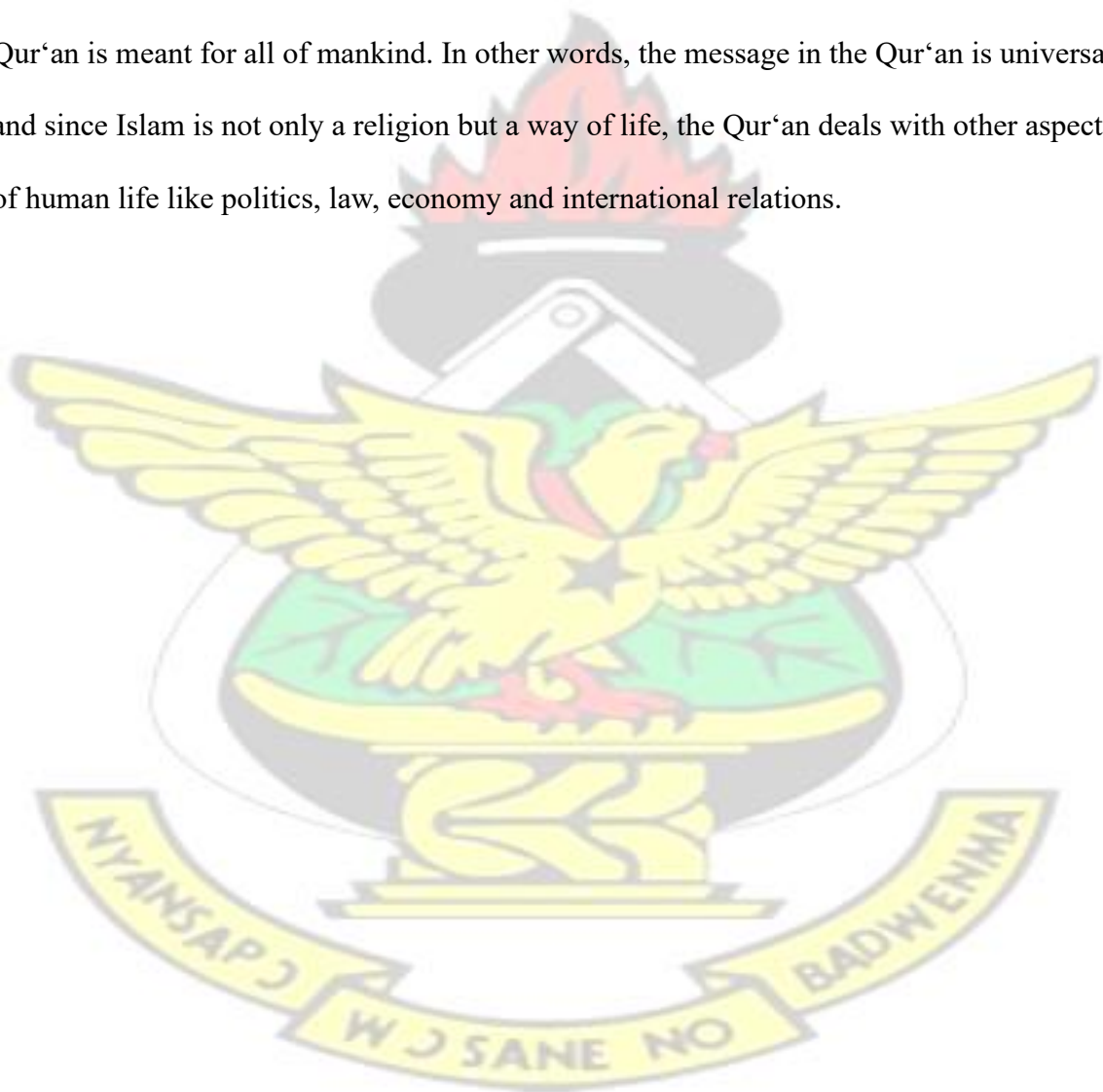
In our studies of Prophets and Prophethood; we realized that God sent some men to the world to deliver his message to mankind. He made mention of some while others he did not (Surah 40:78). Also there is no nation that Allah did not send a prophet to —we have sent to every nation a messenger!. The Surah 29:27 says that:

—And we bestowed on him Ishaq and Ya‘qub, and we established the Prophethood and Scripture among his seed and we gave him his reward in the world, and lo! In the hereafter he verily is among the righteous!.

This means that many of the prophets mentioned in the Qur‘an are either from the lineage of Abraham or his two sons Ismai‘l or Ishaq except for Lut who was a nephew of Ibrahim. It was made clear in the study that the miracles performed by the prophets or messengers originated from Allah to further prove the authenticity of a prophetic mission. Some prophets were elevated more than others (Surah 2:252). These prophets were called *ulul-azm* (the resolute Prophets) in the Holy Qur‘an. They were called so because they had patience, determination and persevered in times of their trials. Lessons that can be learnt from the lifestyles of the prophets and messengers narrated in this chapter are discussed briefly below.

The first lesson from our studies of Prophets is the prophets‘ personality and character. The prophets were men called by God because of their humility, trustworthiness, truthfulness and morality that is why God did not call all men to be His Prophets but chose them based

on some of these qualities mentioned. Although the prophets of Islam were sent by God, they were sometimes rejected by their audience but the prophets remained steadfast and committed to their call by God. These prophets also went through some trials but they still went ahead to deliver God's message to their audience. One must not be reluctant in serving God because like the Prophet Yunus, God will always find a way of making His will done. We must note that since no prophet would come after Muhammad his revelation of the Qur'an is meant for all of mankind. In other words, the message in the Qur'an is universal and since Islam is not only a religion but a way of life, the Qur'an deals with other aspects of human life like politics, law, economy and international relations.



CHAPTER FIVE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PROPHECY IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

5.1 Introduction

Our studies from the four previous chapters so far has helped us to understand the concept of prophecy in both Christianity and Islam. We learnt that the two religions believe in prophets. Prophecy is a religious phenomenon in which a message is sent by God to human kind through an intermediary called a prophet. The prophetic message is often a warning, a reproach, or an encouragement but it may contain a reference to future events. Prophethood in both Christianity and Islam is believed to be a divine gift from God which he bestows on whom he pleases. This means that God is the only person who appoints whoever He deems fit for the role. Although these prophets are humans they are able to lead exemplary lives that their audiences learn from because of God's grace on their lives. In Christianity, a prophet whether male or female is God's servant called and anointed by Him. In this chapter a detailed Comparative Study of the concept of Prophecy in the two religions will be done. The chapter will also bring out the differences and similarities between Prophets and prophecy in Christianity and Islam. We will also discuss how false prophets are perceived in both religions and finally examine contemporary prophets and the future of Prophecy in both religions.

5.2 A Comparative Study of Prophets in Christianity and Islam

According to Evans and Porter (2000), Prophecy is the proclamation of divine revelation, so the prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of God. In chapter two, we saw that although the concept of prophecy appears to be the same, there are certain differences

between prophecy in Christianity and Islam. For instance, in Christianity a prophet can also be called a seer, watchman, a messenger and a servant of God. In Islam, a prophet is different from a messenger; in other words, every messenger is a prophet but not every prophet is a messenger. The titles of the prophet mentioned above in Christianity do not make one different from the other. In Islam, a prophet is different from a messenger although they are all God's appointed unlike in Christianity when the name and duty of prophets and messengers meant the same as all being servants of God.

Prophets are not ranked in Christianity even though many people assume that the Major Prophets were more superior to the Minor Prophets but that is not the case. In Christianity, true prophets were to be obeyed equally irrespective of the gender (male or female) or whether they were the writing (Major and Minor) or oral prophets. In Islam, that was not the case; some prophets were ranked superior to others and these prophets are *ulu al-azm* (men of resolution or determination). They were so called because it is believed that they were able to persevere and withstand the many trials and persecution during their time.

Our study of prophets in Christianity showed that many of the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the New Testament. In other words, the New Testament writers made references to the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets. In Islam, there is no Old Testament and New Testament.

There is no mention of any prophet being the last or seal of the prophets in the Bible which means that in our contemporary world there may still be prophets in Christianity unlike in Islam, there is the belief that there will be no more prophets since Muhammad is the last and seal of the prophets. Our studies on prophecy in chapter three, (3.3.3) shows that in the Bible, women such as Miriam and Deborah were appointed by God to serve as prophets

to deliver His message to mankind but our studies on prophets in Chapter four (4.3) showed God appointed only men as His prophets in Islam.

Although prophets in both religions were basically appointed to deliver God's message as their major role, they also played other similar roles as we discussed in Chapter two. It is worthy of note that in both religions, prophets either delivered messages of glad tidings to the people if they believed in God or warned them of God's impending punishment if they disbelieved or disobeyed God. Prophets in Christianity were classified into canonical, court, cult and ecstatic prophets in the Old Testament as discussed in 3.7 above. This aspect of prophethood is not found in Islam.

Al-Moghamis (2002) posits that a religion should not be judged by the opinions and attitudes of its biased enemies neither should it be judged by the behavior of some of its nominal followers because there are bad people among every religious group, and making a judgment based on those people will be misleading as they may violate the beliefs of their religion. This means that a religion should rather be judged by its teachings and the effects of those teachings on its devout followers.

Since the Bible is the basis and sacred book for the teachings of Christianity, and the Qur'an contains the sacred teachings of Islam this section of the study will be based on the teachings of the Bible and the Qur'an. This approach will ensure that the comparison will be based on facts and not on prejudice, assumption or misunderstanding.

There are many prophets in the Qur'an who have corresponding names in the Bible. In this section, we will find out if the Biblical and Qur'anic understanding of these prophets are the same. Below are the Qur'anic names and their corresponding Biblical names of

the Prophets in sequence:

QURANIC NAME	BIBLICAL NAME
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Adam	Adam
Idris	Enoch
Nuh	Noah
Ibrahim	Abraham
Lut	Lot
Ismail	Ishmael
Ishaq	Isaac
Yaqub	Jacob
Yusuf	Joseph
Ayub	Job
Shu'ayb	Jethro
Musa	Moses
Harun	Aaron
Dhul-Kifl	Ezekiel
Daud	David
Sulayman	Solomon
Ilyas	Elijah
Al-Yasa	Elisha
Yunus	Jonah
Zakariya	Zacharias
Yahya	John the Baptist
Isa	Jesus

We would discuss the differences and similarities of the prophets mentioned above in Christianity and Islam.

5.8.1 Adam-Adam

The Bible and the Qur'an state that Adam was the first man to be created on earth although the creative narratives in the two scriptures differ. In the Bible, Adam is known and believed to be the first man to be created on earth so mankind began from him. We saw in Chapter three that although the Qur'an does not categorically state the prophethood of Adam, it makes mention of the fact that Allah chose Adam, Nuh and the family of Ibrahim and Imran above the world (Surah 3: 33). God chose Adam above the world but there is no proof in the Qur'an about the messengership of Adam. It also appears that in Islam, a prophet does not necessarily need a community because Adam was a prophet without a specific community. The Bible does not mention Adam as being a prophet.

5.3.2 Idris-Enoch

Enoch is described in the Bible as the grandson of Adam (Genesis 5:3-18). In Genesis 5:22-29, Enoch —walked with God. This shows that in the Bible, Enoch is not mentioned as a prophet but as an upright person who walked with God; He didn't die as other human beings would die but God took him. In the Qur'an, Enoch is described as a truthful prophet (Surah 19:56-57). His lineage is traced to Seth, the son of Adam and he is one of the forefathers of Nuh (Essau 2007, Wheeler 2002). It is clear here that Enoch was an upright, truthful and good man.

5.3.3 Nuh-Noah

Noah is described in the Bible and the Qur'an as a righteous man who lived among wicked people. God decided to punish the wicked through a flood, while saving the righteous; hence He commanded Noah to build an Ark and instructed him as to how to go about it.

(Gen. 6:9-16; Surah 11:39) Noah built the Ark so he, his family, seven pairs of birds and —clean animals, and two of each other animal species (a female and a male) boarded the Ark (Gen. 6:19; Surah 11:42). Gen. 7:11-12 and Surah Al-Qamar 54:11–13 state that the earth was flooded killing all the wicked but those who were in the ark were safe (Gen. 8:14 ; Surah 11:44).

Although the story of Noah in the Bible is similar to that of the Qur'an there are some differences of detail such as whether the flood was global or local. In the Bible, the whole world was flooded while in the Qur'an only Noah's people were affected by the flood. Other differences between the Biblical and Qur'anic accounts are as below:

Surah 11:32–37 records a dialogue between Noah and his people who reject his message, but the Bible makes no mention of such a dialogue. In the Qur'an, Noah was a prophet while the Bible describes him as a faithful man of God. The Bible is silent on Noah speaking to an audience but only mentions Noah's act of building an ark as an act of prophecy. In the Qur'an, Noah did not only build the ark but he also delivered a message of repentance but his wife and a son who were among other disbelievers were punished accordingly. Another difference is that in Genesis 6:19 of the Bible, Noah and his family were all saved in the ark but the Qur'an mentions, in Surah 11:43 that Noah's wife and one of his sons rejected his teachings so they were affected by the flood and died in flood while some people who were not family members but were faithful to Noah joined him (Surah 11:42). In this case, the difference is that Noah and his family was saved in the

Bible while His wife and a son were not saved in the Qur'an. Finally, in Surah 11:44, the Qur'an states that the Ark rested on the hills of Al-Joudi (Ararat) while Genesis 8:4 states

that the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. Both the Bible and the Qur'an state that Noah was a good man so God saved him from his people who were sinful and wicked.

5.3.4. Ibrahim -Abraham

In Genesis 12:1, God told Abraham to leave his father's house in Haran to the land He God will show him. He promised to bless Abraham and make a great nation out of him. Abraham was the son of Terah and lived in Haran. At the time that Abraham was leaving his father's house, he left with his wife Sarah and Lot his nephew. Abraham is described as a prophet in Genesis 20:7.

The Qur'an also describes Abraham as the father of the Prophets, the leader of the righteous and a saint (Surah 19:41). Surah 16:120 also describes him as a man of upright nature. Ibrahim was the son of Terah and Surah 19:41-47 narrates that Terah, Ibrahim's father was a pagan who called his son to worship his gods but Ibrahim refused and asked his father to follow him and he will lead him to the right path.

Christians and Muslims describe Abraham as an upright man and the father of many generations. Both accounts state that God commanded Abraham to leave his father's house to a land He (God) will show him. Furthermore, both accounts say that Abraham left his father's house with Sarah and Lot. Whereas the Bible states the name of

Abraham's father as Terah, the Qur'an refers to him as Azar (Surah 6:74).

Both the Bible and the Qur'an record that Abraham hosted some visitors who were on their way to destroy the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible further mentioned that Abraham welcomed them into his tent and provided them with food while the Qur'an does not mention that. The visitors then promised their host that he and his wife Sarah will have

a son in their old age but the Bible additionally states that the baby to be born was to be called Isaac. Sarah laughed at the idea because she thought she was too old to bear children (Genesis 18:12, Surah 11:72).

Genesis 22:2-18 and Surah 37:102–108 show Abraham in his dream received a command from God to sacrifice his son. Abraham agreed to sacrifice his son but before he could do so God gave him a replacement for his sacrifice; thus Abraham was honored for his faithfulness. However, there are several differences between the Biblical and Qur'anic accounts of the above story. The main difference is that in Genesis, the sacrificial son is Isaac whereas in the Qur'an, it is not clear whether it is Isaac or Ishmael? Muslims however, believe that this event occurred before the birth of Isaac. Therefore, in the Qur'an, Abraham told his son Ishmael that he intended to sacrifice him while in Genesis 22:8, Abraham did not tell Isaac his intentions instead he mentioned that —God will provide the sacrificell. The Bible and the Qur'an in Gen 20:7 and Surah 29:27 mention that Abraham was a prophet and he lived an exemplary life. Abraham is believed to be a father of many generations in both Christianity and Islam.

5.3.5 Lut - Lot

Lot is described in the Bible and the Qur'an as the nephew of Abraham (Gen 12:5, Surah 37:133). In Genesis 13:7 Abraham suggested to Lot that there be no strife between them because they were relatives. Abraham asked Lot to choose his land on either the left or right. Lot chose to live in the city of Sodom. According to Genesis 18, Abraham hosted three men who came to visit him and these men told Abraham that God will soon destroy

the city of Sodom because of the wickedness of the people. Abraham interceded for the people of Sodom in Genesis 18: 19-33).

Two angels then continued to the city of Sodom to visit Lot. The men of Sodom upon hearing about the visitors of Lot came to his house and demanded that they have sex with them. Lot offered his two daughters instead of the angels but the men insisted on sleeping with the angels. The angels then blinded the men of Sodom while they told Lot and his family to flee by night and not to look back. The following morning, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with a shower of fiery stones from the sky. Lot's wife looked back to see the burning city and was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26). The story of Lot was told in Chapter three (3.4) of this study but one thing we must note is that in the

Qur'an the people of Sodom were destroyed with —a shower of stones of clay (brimstone) (Surah 29:31-34). The Qur'an in Suwar 29:32 and 15:59 also mentions that Lot's wife was specifically excluded, with the angels saying —she is of those who lag behind thus Lot's wife was an —example for the unbelievers, as she was married to a righteous man but refused to believe in his words; hence, she was condemned to the Hell fire (Surah 66:10). Below are some differences between the stories of Lot in the Bible and the Qur'an.

First, Lot is described as a prophet in the Qur'an just as his uncle Abraham (Surah 37:133) while Lot is not described as a prophet in the Bible (Genesis 19:1-29). However, in the New Testament, Peter describes Lot as a righteous man who was daily tormented by the lawless deeds he saw in Sodom (2 Peter 2:7-8).

Secondly, the Bible records that Lot's wife left with Lot but turned to look back so God made her turn into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26). The Qur'an does not mention that Lot left

the city with his wife rather Lot and his followers were commanded by the angels not to look back nevertheless Lot is informed in Surah 11:123 that his wife will turn and look back so she will be destroyed with the rest of the two cities Surah 11:81.

The Bible also mentions in Genesis 19:30-38 that after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah there was an incestuous event between Lot and his two daughters but the Qur'an does not make mention of any such event.

The Bible and the Qur'an in Gen. 18:24-33 and Surah 11:75 state that Abraham pleaded with God to have mercy on the people of Sodom. Nonetheless, the story in Genesis shows that God agreed to spare Sodom if just ten righteous men can be found there while in Surah 11:76, God ordered Abraham not to ask for mercy on them because God was just not pleased with the people of Sodom so he wanted to punish them without mercy. Finally, both the Bible and the Qur'an describe Lot as a —righteous man (2 Peter 2:4-8, Surah 21:74-75).

5.3.6 Ismail-Ishmael

Christians and Muslims believe that Ishmael was the first son of Abraham. He was the son of Abraham and Hagar the maid of Sarah (Genesis 16:3, Surah 14:39). Christians hold the view that Ishmael was the first son of Abraham and the half- brother of Isaac.

Muslims agree that Ishmael was the son of Abraham but they also believe that he was also a messenger and a prophet (Surah 19:54 -55). Muslims further hold the view that Ishmael was the son Abraham intended to sacrifice while Christians maintain that Isaac was the sacrificial son of Abraham. The son to be sacrificed remains a major point of disagreement between Christians and Muslims.

5.3.7 Ishaq-Isaac

Christianity and Islam assert that Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 24:63, Surah 11: 11-73) and he was also the father of Jacob and Esau. Christians and Muslims also believe that Isaac was born when his parents were very old and naturally beyond childbearing.

However, in Islam, Isaac is further revered by Muslims as prophet and also the father of the Israelites. He is believed to be a righteous servant of God in Christianity and Islam (Gen 24:63, Surah 37: 12). The Bible gives a record of Isaac as being very obedient and trusted his father (Gen 24) and further names him as the husband of Rebecca (Gen 24:67). The Bible does not make mention of Isaac as a prophet. However, Muslims believe that Isaac and Ishmael were prophets who continued the work of their father, Abraham.

5.3.8 Yaqub-Jacob

Jacob who later became known as Israel was the son of Isaac and Rebecca in both Christianity and Islam (Genesis 25:20, 25:26 and Surah 11:71; 12: 6). Both scriptures also agree that Jacob had twelve sons with Leah and Rachel, his two wives and by their female slaves Bilhah and Zilpah. In Christianity Jacob was not revered as a prophet but it is believed that the tribe of Israel started from him. Also, in the Bible, Jacob deceived his father Isaac into blessing him. However, in Islam that part of the story is not in the Qur'an because Muslims revere Jacob as a Prophet and regard him as a person who was guided (Surah 7: 84), inspired (Surah 4: 163) and a good-doer (Surah 21: 72). Both accounts

portray Joseph as the beloved and most trusted son of Jacob and both scriptures also demonstrate the role Jacob played in the life of his son, Joseph (Gen 37:3, Surah 12:11).

5.3.9 Yusuf -Joseph

The Bible and the Qur'an give in depth narratives of Joseph in Genesis 37-45 and in Surah 12: 4-102. Both scriptures also make mention of the fact that He was the son of Jacob and further describe Joseph as having a vision of eleven stars and the sun and the moon all bowing to him which he shares with his family. (Genesis 37:9, Surah 12:4). It is important to note that both scriptures have similar accounts but differ in some instances.

For example, Joseph's master is named Potiphar in the Bible while his master in Islam is only known as the vizier. Also in the Bible, Potiphar does not believe Joseph's denial and causes his imprisonment whereas in the Qur'an, the Vizier reprimanded his wife after he realized that Joseph was not guilty and so permitted him to remain in his house.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic account explains that Joseph insisted that the Vizier's wife vindicates him before Pharaoh which she did and proclaimed the innocence of Joseph but this is not mentioned in the Bible.

Both the Bible and the Qur'an hold the view that Pharaoh had a dream and Joseph revealed the meaning of the dream (Genesis 41:17-19, Surah 12.43). Throughout the Biblical account of the story of Joseph, he is seen as a noble and God-fearing young man who God blesses but the Bible does not mention that he was a prophet. Islam on the other hand believes that Joseph was a prophet chosen by God to deliver his message to His people (Surah 40: 34).

5.3.10 Musa -Moses

The narratives of Moses can be found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy of the Bible especially in Exodus chapter one (1) to Chapter fourteen (14) and thirty-two (32). The Qur'an gives an account of Moses in the following Surah: 2:49-61, 7:103-160, 10:75-93, 17:101-104, 20:9-97, 26:10-66, 27:7-14, 28:3-46, 40:23-30, 43:46-55, 44:17-31 and 79:15-25. The Bible and the Qur'an give similar accounts of the story of Moses. They both agree that Aaron, Moses' elder brother was appointed by God to help him speak. The Bible also mentions Moses as a prophet (Num 12:6, Deut 34:10). The Bible and the Qur'an hold the view that Moses was given the *torah*. (Exodus 20:1-21, Surah 6: 154-155)

Despite much similarity in the narratives of Moses, there are some notable differences between the two scriptures. For instance, in Exodus 2:5 the Bible tells us that Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses while the Qur'an in Surah 28:8-9 states that Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's wife. The Bible also portrayed Moses as being reluctant to speak as a Prophet and requests that his brother Aaron helped him since Aaron was a better speaker than he was but in the Qur'an, it appears Aaron was made God's messenger upon Moses' request. In another instance, the sorcerers in the Qur'anic story of Moses' encounter with Pharaoh repented and submitted to God after Moses performed miracles whereas the Bible makes no mention of the magicians in the house of Pharaoh repenting after the miracles of Moses.

5.3.11 Harun-Aaron

Aaron is described in Christianity and Islam as the brother of Moses (Exodus 6:16-20,

7:7; Qur'an 28:34). In the Bible, he is also known as —Aaron the Priest¹ and —Aaron the Levite² (Exodus 4:14). Both scriptures also hold the view that Aaron was the spokesman of Moses because he was more eloquent (Exodus 7:1, Surah 28:34).

Both scriptures also agree that Aaron was a Prophet (Ex 7:1, Qur'an 19: 53). Furthermore, the Qur'an states that Aaron was a —believing servant³ (Surah 37: 122) and one who was —guided⁴ (Surah 6: 84). It appears the Bible and the Qur'an have similar accounts of the story of Aaron yet there are a few notable differences where the Bible teaches that Aaron assisted the Israelites in their idolatry with the golden calf at Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:2, 24). The Qur'an in Surah 20:9 states that when the people wanted to engage in idolatry, Aaron tried to discourage them. The Bible also mentions that Aaron played a role of a High Priest but the Qur'an does not make mention of this.

5.3.12 Shu'ayb-Jethro

Christians and Muslims believe that Moses married one of the daughters of Jethro. The Bible states that Jethro was a Priest in Midian but the Qur'an states that He was a prophet sent to the people of Midian. Both the Bible and the Qur'an record an account of the story of Jethro and Moses in Exodus 2:11-21 and Surah 28.27-28. According to both stories of the Bible and Qur'an, God spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-4, Surah 28:29).

5.3.13 Ayub-Job

Job was known in the Bible for his patience and steadfastness. The Bible gives an account of him in the Book of Job which is part of the books of the Old Testament. Job is mentioned as a man who endured patiently in James 5:11 of the New Testament of the Bible. In Islam, the story of Job is related to the Biblical account of Job however, in Islam the emphasis is on Job's steadfastness to God without any mention of lengthy discussions with friends unlike what is said in the Bible. The Qur'an further portrays Job as a prophet and a righteous servant of God (Surah 6:84) whereas the Bible makes no mention of that.

5.3.14 Dhul-Kifl-Ezekiel

Although the Bible and the Qur'an do not give a detailed historical background of Ezekiel, the Bible makes mention of the fact that he was married and when his wife died God ordered him not to perform any mourning rites for her. Both scriptures hold the view that he was a prophet (Ezekiel 3: 33, Surah 21:85-86). Unlike the Qur'an which does not make mention of the particular people Ezekiel was sent to, in the Bible, Ezekiel's messages were meant for the house of Israel (Ezek 3:1). In Chapter three (3.5) we saw that Ezekiel's commission was to serve as a watchman for God's people who he warned of impending danger (Ezekiel 3: 33). In Christianity, Ezekiel is believed to be one of the Major Prophets and his prophecies are recorded in the book of Ezekiel which is part of the Old Testaments but he was just a prophet in Islam.

5.3.15 Daud -David

Christians and Muslims share the same view that David was the son of Jesse. David is reckoned in the Bible and the Qur'an as a king. He is further believed to be a prophet in Islam. In both scriptures he was known for his military exploits (Samuel 17:50; Surah 2:251). Both scriptures also hold the view that David committed adultery with Uriah's wife and his desire to marry her made him put Uriah at the forefront of the battlefield to be killed. The story of David's repentance of the above sin is narrated in 2 Samuel 12: 125 and Surah 38:21-24. But the Bible further mentions that David was rebuked by Prophet Nathan and then he admitted to his sin. Finally, both religions hold the view that the Psalms and Zabur in the Bible and the Qur'an were written and revealed to David respectively.

5.3.16 Sulayman-Solomon

Solomon was the son of David who inherited his father's kingdom in the Bible and Qur'an. Both scriptures agree that Solomon prayed to God and God answered him and made him a powerful ruler and bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge (1 Kings 3: 115, Surah 38:35-39). Whereas the Bible holds the view that Solomon was a wealthy king blessed with wisdom and knowledge, Islam further believes that Solomon was a prophet (Surah 4:163).

5.3.17 Ilyas-Elijah

According to Bible in 1 Kings 17:1, Elijah was a Tishbite who was sent by God to Ahab; Surah 37:123 state that Elijah was sent to warn. Furthermore, Christianity and Islam describe Elijah as a righteous prophet who preached against the worship of *baal* (idols). (Surah 37:124-128).

5.3.18 Al-Yasa-Elisha

Christians and Muslims share the same view that Elisha was a prophet. The Qur'an on the other hand does not make mention of the lineage of Elisha. Elisha is also considered a righteous man in the Qur'an (Suwar 38: 48, 6: 85, 86). Although Elisha was a prophet in Islam he was mentioned only twice in the Qur'anic verses above while the Bible tells much about him in 1 Kings Chapter 19.

5.3.19 Yunus-Jonah

Jonah is a prophet mentioned in the Bible and Qur'an. The Bible states that Jonah was the son of Amittai and was sent to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1). The Qur'an on the other hand does not make any reference to the lineage of Yunus but it mentions that he was sent to warn the people of Nineveh (Surah 37:139) and the Qur'an makes reference to Jonah as *dhu al- nun* (man of the fish) (Surah 21:87, 68:48).

The story of Jonah appears similar in both scriptures. For instance, both scriptures tell a story of Jonah and the Big fish (Whale) (Jonah 1:17, Surah 37:142). In the Bible, Jonah has a book which consists of Four Chapters which talk about his background and mission. Jonah is also considered a minor prophet of the Bible. The story of Jonah can be found in Suwar 21: 87-88, 37:139-148, 68:48-50 of the Qur'an. Both scriptures agree that Jonah disobeyed God and as his punishment, he was swallowed by a big fish. He was in the belly of the fish for three nights and after he prayed to God, the fish spat him out ashore. The Qur'an further makes mention of the fact that if Jonah had not prayed, he would have remained inside the belly of the fish until the Day of Judgment.

Jonah 4:6 and Surah 37:145 agree that God caused a tree to grow to comfort Jonah after he lay on the shore in a sickly state after he had been spat up by the Fish but this tree withered after a short time. According to the Qur'an, Jonah repented and went to the city of Nineveh to deliver the message of God and they believed and God granted them prosperity for a long time. (Surah 37:147–148). The Bible also records that Jonah was angry about God's compassion towards the people of Nineveh but the people repented and God did not destroy them as he had threatened earlier (Jonah 3:10).

5.3.20 Zakariya-Zechariah

The story of Zechariah is told in Luke 1:5-80 and Luke 3:1-22 and in Surah 19:2-15. Both scriptures agree that Zechariah and his wife were without children even in their old age but God told him that he would bless them so they can have a child who they will name John. The two accounts appear similar but the Bible further considers Zechariah a priest (Luke 1:5) who doubted God's ability to give them children in their old age and as a result he would be dumb until the birth of their son (Luke 1:20). Muslims on the other hand regard Zechariah only as a prophet.

Also in the Qur'anic narrative, Zechariah was supposed to be mute for three nights although he had no bodily defect. This suggests that God just did not want him to talk to anyone thereby made it impossible for him to communicate to people. In the Qur'an, Zechariah was able to remind his people who were waiting for him to celebrate the praises of the Lord through an inspirational gesture (Surah 19:1-11). The Bible on the other hand records that the people after realizing he could not talk, concluded that he may have seen a vision. The difference here is that the Bible does not make mention of

Zechariah making any gestures to the people to praise God but the Qur'an makes mention of that.

5.3.21 Yahya-John the Baptist

Christians and Muslims maintain that John was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth who born to them in their old age. Both scriptures share the same view that John was a great prophet but the Bible states that John prophesied the ministry of Jesus; the Qur'an further describes him as a person with compassion, purity, devout and dutiful (Surah 19:13-14). The Bible on its part holds the view that John preached and baptized people in the wilderness to prepare the way for the coming of Christ (Luke 3:1-19). Christians believe that he baptized Jesus (Luke 3:21). The Qur'an does not mention John baptizing Jesus but it agrees with the Bible that John was sent as a prophet to the children of Israel to prepare and invite them to the worship of God.

5.3.22 Isa-Jesus

The story of Jesus can be found in several passages of the Bible and the Qur'an especially in the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) as well as other books of the New Testament. He also appears several times in Suwar 3: 35-59, 4: 156-158, 5: 109-120, 19: 16-35, 23: 50, 43: 57-65, 61: 6, 14. Reference is made to him in other passages of the Qur'an. Both books agree that Jesus was the son of God and also the son of Mary; Mary was believed to be chaste (Matt. 1:18, Surah 66:12). The Bible additionally mentions that Jesus was not born like any other human being but God breathed his spirit into Mary who then became pregnant. Hence she is the mother of the Messiah. Surah 3:33 narrates the lineage of Jesus while Matt. 1:1-17 gives a genealogy of Jesus.

In the Qur'an, Jesus is believed to have created a bird out of clay and blown life into it (Surah 3:49); he is also believed to have spoken as an infant in the cradle to defend his mother from the false accusations of fornication (Surah 19:30-34). These two narratives are not found in the Bible although it records many miraculous works about Jesus.

The Qur'an also rejects the divinity of Jesus because the Qur'an forbids associating equal partners with God so accepting the divinity of Jesus will be the same as associating partners with God. However, the Qur'an agrees with the Bible on the birth of Jesus being different from the natural way. Christians believe in the divine nature of Jesus and revere him as such; they consider more than a prophet, to them he is the Christ, the Messiah. Furthermore, Jesus was part of the Trinity, a concept Christians believe in of God being able to manifest in three forms; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Qur'an mentions the Trinity in *al-Ma'ida* (5:73). In Christianity, Jesus was crucified and he died for the sins of humankind but in Islam, Jesus is recognized as a prophet of God as well as the Messiah but they do not believe he died for the sins of mankind.

The Bible and Qur'an share similar narratives about Jesus; for instance, Jesus is believed to be the Messiah and the Christ (Matt 1:16; Surah 3:45). He also had disciples (Matt 10:1-4, Surah 3:52). He is also noted to heal the sick in several passages of the gospels for instance, (Matt 8:14-17; 9:1-8) but the Qur'an specifically mentions in Surah 5:110 that the blind and lepers were healed. Furthermore, the Bible in Matthew 3:16-17 and the Qur'an in Surah 2:87 state that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Finally, both religions believe that Jesus is in Heaven now (Luke 24:51; Surah 4:158) and are expecting the second coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

In Chapter four (4.4) of this work, Salih and Muhammad were mentioned as prophets in Islam. In Christianity these people are not prophets. Although there are corresponding names of the Prophets of Islam in the Bible, they appear to be the same but there are some differences in detail as we discussed above. Prophets are seen in Christianity in the Old and New Testaments and even in contemporary times we record prophecies while the Qur'an names Muhammad as the last of the prophets in Islam.

5.4 Difference between Prophets in Christianity and Islam

Since Christianity and Islam are two monotheistic religions which historically evolved in the Asian Near East, they have several similarities but certain doctrines and beliefs make one different from the other. Some differences of Prophets in Christianity and Islam are discussed below.

Prophecy is mentioned in the Bible throughout the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament prophecy also makes way for contemporary prophets in Christianity but Prophecy ends on Muhammad in the Qur'an since he is considered the seal of the prophets. Although Muslims believe in Jesus as a prophet and revered as such the Bible does not make mention of Muhammad in any part; Christians do not believe in the prophethood of Muhammad. Ahmed Hoosen Deedat (1918-2005), a South African writer and public speaker of Indian descent is known as an acclaimed Muslim scholar. In his books on —*Crucifixion and Cruci-Fiction* and —*What the Bible says about Muhammad*ll, Deedat condemns the Christian doctrine of crucifixion and attacks the fundamental Christian position on crucifixion. Deedat further argued that Deut 18:18 does not refer to Jesus Christ but it is an explicit prophecy about the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Even though he is an

acclaimed Muslim scholar, his work cannot pass for an academic work because his arguments and criticisms are polemic.

Christians believe that God appointed women such as Miriam, Deborah, Hulda and Anna as prophets as we discussed in Chapter four (3.3.3) of this work. The Qur'an on the hand makes no mention of female prophets.

The Bible mentions the classical prophets who have books which talk about their ministry as Major and Minor Prophets. The research stated in Chapter two (2.7) and three (3.4) that there was no superiority between the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. Therefore in Christianity, prophets are not ranked. In Islam, prophets are ranked and some are more superior to others. These prophets as we saw in Chapter four (4.5) are called *ulu'azm* (the resolute prophets).

The research discovered that in the Bible, a prophet can be referred to as a messenger, a servant of God, a watchman or a seer. All these titles do not make him or her different person or make his or her work different from the others because they were all servants of God appointed by Him. In Islam, there is a difference between a Prophet and a Messenger in that, every Messenger is a Prophet, but not every Prophet is a Messenger because according to the Qur'an, a messenger of God delivers a new scripture and knowledge while a *rasul* (messenger) confirms existing scripture and works with it (Surah 3:81).

Many of the prophets in Christianity had their lineages, their call, mission and audiences stated emphatically. Most of the prophets in Islam had their audiences unknown and sometimes their call was also uncertain but for verses that revealed that they were called by God as His chosen prophets.

5.5 Similarities between Prophets in Christianity and Islam

Our study so far has shown that there are many similarities as far the stories of Prophets are concern. The Bible and the Qur'an consist of warnings, reproaches, encouragement, commandments and teachings; hence many narratives appear to contain the same events and personalities.

Both religions agree that prophecy is a divine gift which God bestows on whom He pleases. Thus one cannot be a prophet by inheritance or by conquest but by divine appointment by God. They both agree that there is a criterion for choosing prophets as we saw in Chapter two (2.4 and 2.6) in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and Surah 16:36 of this work.

Prophets in both religions constantly called their people to the worship of God. They taught monotheism; the worship of the One true God. The prophets of both religions also taught their followers to trust God at all times. Thus their prophecies constantly reminded their people about the true worship of God and propagated monotheism in the respective religions.

Prophets in Christianity and Islam were sent to basically warn God's people of impending danger or give them words of encouragement. Aside these basic roles, prophets played the roles of intercessors, foretellers of the future, healers of the sick, performers miracles, advisers to kings and teachers of the commandments of God. We saw in Chapters three and four that scriptures were revealed to some of the prophets as we have today. Notably, adherents of both religions believe that the *torah* was revealed to Moses and the *zabur* (Psalms) was written by David although he was not considered a prophet in Christianity.

Prophets of the two religions taught mankind that this life is temporary and the life hereafter is everlasting. Many of the prophets as we discussed in Chapters three and four reminded their audience about the judgment Day, heaven and hell.

Prophets in Christianity and Islam exhibited certain characteristics which made them different from other men. Some of these characteristics are nobility, knowledge of their respective sacred books, trustworthiness and truthfulness. It is because of these qualities that the prophets were able to do their work well and deliver God's message to His people without altering the message.

Prophets in both religions suffered trials and persecutions during their times but they remained faithful and steadfast to God. These prophets lead exemplary lives worthy of emulation. Prophets in both religions also encountered audiences who refused to listen to their message and were sometimes punished by God. Yet, prophets like Abraham and Jesus interceded on behalf of their people as we studied in Chapters three and four.

Furthermore, both religions teach about false prophets. In chapter two, we discussed the criterion for which a prophet is chosen in Christianity and Islam which makes it easy for one to tell of a false prophet. We will discuss more about false prophets in the two religions later in this chapter.

Finally, both religions agree to the second coming of Jesus and the Day of Judgment. They believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Many of the prophets reminded their audience about the second coming of Christ and the Judgment Day. Hence the Bible and the Qur'an give accounts of different prophecies about the end of the world in several passages.

5.6 False Prophets in the Bible and Qur'an

A false prophet may be one who claims the gift of prophecy or divine inspiration falsely and uses that gift for his or her own benefits. The term can also be used to describe a person who is claims to have some form of charismatic authority within a religious group. Jim & Caroline Murphy (2002) define a false prophet as one who uses the prophetic gifts for personal gain, self aggrandizement and deception. They further describe the false prophet as one having a total disregard for truth or scriptural veracity. Prophets are important personalities in Christianity and Islam so to prophesy falsely can be interpreted as a blasphemous act against God since the false prophet claims he or she has been called by God and perform miracles just like the true prophet.

Deuteronomy Chapters 13:1-5 and 18:20-22 describe a true and false prophet.

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, —Let us follow other gods¹ (gods you have not known) —and let us worship them,² you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

In the above scripture, a prophet who works miracles makes a true prediction but advocates the worship of other gods is sent by God to test the faith of His people; however, this prophet must be put to death.

But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.³ You may say to yourselves, —How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?⁴ ²² If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

The second passage describes a prophet who speaks in God's name without permission or speaks in the name of other gods; false prophets of this kind are identified by their inability to make true predictions. Death is the penalty for such a prophet also.

The Quran also agrees with the criterion of the Bible since it says in Surah 3:79-81 that:

It is not for a human [prophet] that Allah should give him the Scripture and authority and prophethood and then he would say to the people, "Be servants to me rather than Allah," but [instead, he would say], "Be pious scholars of the Lord because of what you have taught of the Scripture and because of what you have studied." Nor could he order you to take the angels and prophets as lords. Would he order you to disbelief after you had been Muslims? And [recall, O People of the Scripture], when Allah took the covenant of the prophets, [saying], "Whatever I give you of the Scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him." [Allah] said, "Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My commitment?" They said, "We have acknowledged it." He said, "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses." (Surah 3:79-81)

And

And we certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], "Worship Allah and avoid Taghut." And among them were those whom Allah guided, and among them were those upon whom error was [deservedly] decreed. So proceed through the earth and observe how the end of the deniers was (Surah 16:36).

The first Qur'anic scripture which is fundamental in Islam teaches that Allah alone must be worshipped since He is the one who revealed his book to man and called men to be His servants so it will be unacceptable for man to falsely acclaim the title of God or call on his fellow men to worship and revere him. The second passage of the Qur'an means that God alone must be worship He is the one who guides; hence the scripture also warn Muslims to be careful of evildoers.

False prophets appear to be genuine and behave like the true prophet. Jesus in Matthew 7:15 command Christians to:

—Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves (Matthew 7:15)

A false prophet is sometimes accompanied by deceptive signs, miracles and wonders and the Bible states in Matthew 7:22 that Jesus will deny any prophet who does not prophesy in His name:

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Surah 33:40 of the Qur'an says that Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets, which means since Muhammad is the last and final prophet, anyone who emerges after him as a new prophet is a false prophet. Thus some personalities such as Musaylimah, al-Ansi, Tulayha ibn Khuwaylid and Sajah have been recorded as being false prophets in Islam. In recent times however, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has been the subject of much controversy as far as his prophethood is concerned. This is because he is considered a false prophet by Mainstream Muslims since he came after Muhammad. Ahmadis are not accepted as Muslims throughout the world and even in Ghana because their beliefs are considered heretical and innovative aside the main beliefs of Islam (Samwini 2006). A Hadith of Sahih Al-Bukhari recalls that 30 *dajjals* who will appear before the end of the world thus:

—The Hour will not be established until two big groups fight each other whereupon there will be a great number of casualties on both sides and they will be following one and the same religious doctrine, until about 30 dajjals appear, and each of them will claim that he is Allah's Apostle...! (Sahih al-Bukhari 9:88:237)

Muhammad is noted to have said in Anas ibn Malik's narration that the last of these dajjals would be the al-Masih ad-Dajjal (Antichrist).

—There is never a prophet who has not warned the Ummah of that one-eyed liar; behold he is oneeyed and your Lord is not one-eyed. Dajjal is blind of one eye: On his forehead are the letters k. f.

r. (Kafir) between the eyes of the Dajjal which Muslims with strong faith would be able to read (Sahih Muslim 41:7007)

5.6.1 False Prophets in Christianity

Although the Bible makes mention of some false prophets, it also warns Christians to beware of these false prophets since they appear as true prophets. According to Deffinbaugh (2012), the fruits of the false prophets are classified into three categories:

1. The doctrine of the False Prophets

False prophets speak from their own delusion and not by divine command (Jeremiah 23:16, 21, 25; Ezekiel 13:2). They also do not proclaim or defend God's word, but deny it (Jeremiah 23:17) and particularly they avoid giving prophecies such as impending judgment (Jeremiah 6:14; 28:17; Ezekiel 13:10). Jeremiah 8:11 further explains that false prophets offer temporary and partial relief to pressing problems by telling people precisely what they want to hear (1 Kings 22:8, 13; 2 Timothy 4:3-4).

2. The effect of their teaching on the lives of men

The teaching of the false prophets leads to a rejection of God's word, a rejection of biblical authority and a division among the saints (Jeremiah 23:2, 14). They attempt to lead men away from the truth of the gospel (Acts 13:8) and deceive Christians with false doctrine (Mark 13:22). In the Epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, Paul speaks of the need for sound or healthy doctrine so that people will avoid listening to doctrines that are not from God (1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1).

3. The fruit of the false prophets as evidenced in their own moral character

The false prophets are easily distinguished by their pride (2 Peter 2:10), their greed

(Jeremiah 8:10; Titus 1:11; 2 Peter 2:3, 14) and immorality (Jeremiah 23:11, 14; 2 Peter 2:14). They are men dominated by the flesh (2 Peter 2:10, 12; 3:3). They prey on the weak and the guilt-ridden (2 Timothy 3:6-7; 2 Peter 2:14, 13). Deffinbaugh (2012) explains that while false prophets profess to know God it appears by their deeds they deny Him (Matthew 7:22-23; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:16). While they delight in authority, they refuse to submit to it (2 Peter 2:10).

Elwell (1996) also examines the Prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 23:9-39, as condemning the pseudo prophets on four grounds:

- (1) They are men of immoral character (Jeremiah 23:14) and they commit adultery and live a deceit
- (2) They seek popular acclaim with their unconditional pledge of immunity from all imminent disasters (Jeremiah 23:17-22)
- (3) They fail to distinguish their own dreams from a word from God (Jeremiah 23: 25-29)
- (4) They are plagiarists who steal from one another words allegedly from the Lord (Jeremiah 23:30-39).

The following people are mentioned in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible as false prophets. They are: Noadiah a woman who prophesied with other male prophets; Tobiah and Sanballat (Nehemiah 6:14), Hananiah son of Azur (Jeremiah 28:1), Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah (Jeremiah 29:21), Elymas also known as BarJesus (Acts 13:6-12), Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24), Jezebel (Revelation 2:20) and the false prophet of the Book of Revelation (16:13, 19:20, 20:10).

a. False prophecy in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament we identified that false prophets as people who prophesied lies (Jer 6:13 ; 27:14 ; Zech 13:3) and deceived their audience with their dreams (Jer 29:8). Many false prophets prophesied by the authority of Baal (Jer 2:8; 23:13) and threatened the lives of the true prophets (Jer 26:7). These prophets also dared to speak in the counsel of God and alleged that they received a word directly from God when in reality, God did not speak through them (Jer 23:18).

It appears that basically, false prophets prophesied peace when the true prophets received message from God to prophesy doom (Jer 6:14 ; 28:2,11 ; Ezek 13:10 ; Micah 3:5).

Another characteristic of false prophets was that their visions were —drawn out of their own hearts (Jer 14:14; 23:16; Ezek 13:2-3; 22:28). In order for people to believe them as people sent from God, false prophets used magic (Eze 13:17-23), soothsaying, divination, witchcraft and sorcery to perform miracles. Elwell (1996) stipulates that false prophets deliver messages of what people want to hear and thereby place —whitewash (over every situation, no matter how adverse it appeared (Ezekiel 13:10-12 Ezekiel 13:14-15 ; 22:28).

b. False Prophecy in the New Testament

Christians are admonished in several passages of the New Testament. Thus Christians must be vigilant and beware of false prophets since they look and behave like true prophets. Matthew 24 talks about Jesus prediction of the future as He warns that these prophets can perform signs and miracles to deceive men.

—At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. . . For false Messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and miracles to deceive men if possible. See, I have warned you! (Matthew 24: 11-24).

Other books of the New Testament also warn Christians about false prophets. For instance, 2 Peter 2:1-3 also talks about the danger of false teachers and false prophets:

—But there were also false prophets in Israel just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly introduce destructive heresies about God and even deny God who brought them. Theirs will be a swift and terrible end. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping! (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Finally Christians are exhorted in 1 John 4:1-3, to test every spirit because that is the way to recognize the spirit of God:

—Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus, that spirit is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world" (1 John 4:13).

The following verses in the book of Revelation (Rev. 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10) warn Christians about a false prophet who is also known as the Beast.

5.7 Prophets in Christianity and Islam in the 21st Century

The prophet Joel prophesied in chapter 2:28-32 that in the years to come God will pour his spirit on men and they will prophesy. This means that in this 21st century there are true prophets of God.

The book of Acts 2:16-21 suggest that when the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit it qualified them to be Prophets. Since Christians believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit today then we may be right to suggest and confirm that there may be true prophets of God in contemporary times.

A prophet of the New Testament had two primary purposes:

1. Prophets of the New Testament were gifted men given to the Church and appointed by God (Eph. 4:11, 1 Cor. 12:28) to help build the Church (Eph. 2:20).
2. Like the apostles, prophets received God's revelation (Eph. 3:5) and delivered the message to members of their church. During the times of the early Church the Bible was not completed so God revealed his message to the prophets for them to teach His people. Also, 1 Cor. 14:36-37 states that Prophets of the New Testament spoke forth and taught the same doctrine as the apostles' and so both teachings had to be consistent.

We can conclude that in Christianity there can still be a prophet in the 21st century but the prophet must match up to the Word of God because if it does not then that prophet is false.

From our studies on prophets in Islam we may be right to say that since Muhammad is the seal and last of the prophets then there can be no prophets in Islam (Surah33: 40) in the 21st Century. Since Allah ordained the ministry of Prophet Muhammad to be final, no post-Muhammad prophets can be accepted in Islam.

5.8 The Future of Prophecy in Christianity and Islam

Prophecy comes from God and many prophecies are recorded in the Bible and the Qur'an. In Christianity, prophecy is practiced in the contemporary church then there is the need to briefly discuss what prophecy will be like in future. Christians only need to heed the warning on false prophets given to them by Jesus. Also, Christians are reminded not to reject prophecies but —test it! (1 Thess 5:21; 1 Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:1).

Finally, we admit that although many Christian and Muslim prophecies are being fulfilled in these times, others are yet to be fulfilled so Christians and Muslims are awaiting the fulfillment of those prophecies. However, in Islam we studied that after Muhammad any other prophet who will rise is false thereby refuting any form of contemporary prophecy in Islam.

5.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many similarities and differences between prophets of the Bible and the Qur'an but the most important thing is that Christians and Muslims believe in Prophets. It appears patriarchs in Christianity are prophets in Islam because the understanding of Islam on the patriarchs depends on the scrolls or the books of the prophets but Christianity only depends on God's call of the prophet.

The two religions also believe in the second coming of Christ although their understanding of eschatology differs. Whereas in Islam Jesus is considered a prophet, in Christianity, Jesus though considered a prophet is more than a prophet because he is also the Christ. Finally, both religions are awaiting the fulfillment of prophecies concerning the Day of Judgment and the second coming of the Messiah.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1 Introduction

Chapter five looked at the differences and similarities of Prophets in Christianity and Islam. It came to light that because the two religions historically evolved in the Near East, there were several similarities but there were also notable differences among prophets of these religions. It was identified that Jesus was known as a Prophet in Islam though he was also referred to as the Christ and the Messiah but in Christianity he is more than a prophet (Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:1) because he is the Christ and the Messiah.

Muhammad is revered as a prophet and the last of the prophets in Islam yet in Christianity, he is not mentioned at all in the Bible and there is nothing like anyone being the seal or the last of the prophets. This chapter seeks to reflect on the major areas and findings from the first to the fifth chapters and finally make some recommendations for further studies.

6.2 Summary of the study

The main purpose of this study has been to understand the concept of prophecy in Christianity and Islam and further identify the differences and similarities between prophets in Christianity and Islam.

Chapter one brought to bare that Prophecy was an experience in which a person received a message from God and transmitted same to a targeted audience. Hence a prophet is basically a spokesman of God, a person chosen by God to speak to people on God's behalf and convey a message or teaching. It was discovered that for many centuries Prophecy in

Christianity and Islam has been a controversy in the world because Muslims regard Jesus as a Prophet but Christians regard Him as the son of God; Muhammad on the other hand is not regarded as a Prophet in Christianity. Therefore because Muslims respect the Prophets in Christianity they expect Christians to respect Muhammad and since this is not done it has always generated controversy. This research sought to find out if prophecy was the same in Christianity as in Islam. It was discovered that although many books have been written on prophecy in Christianity and Islam, there was no book that thoroughly discussed the topic comparatively and this is what this work sought to do. In a nutshell, the first chapter gave background information to the study and stated some problems, described the methodology that was used to collect data for the work and finally some books were reviewed in the chapter.

Chapter two presented an understanding of prophecy in the two religions. An effort was made to treat the concept of prophecy in Christianity and Islam into detail. The research discovered that Prophecy and Prophethood form an integral part of the world's three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Hence the position occupied by prophets in the spread and growth of the two religions and the roles they played cannot be overlooked. The chapter established Prophecy as being a religious phenomenon in which a message was sent by God to human kind through an intermediary called a prophet. The message may contain reference to future events, but it was often simply a message of warning, encouragement, or piece of information. In this sense, prophecy was a divine gift which God bestowed upon men. Chapter two also presented the history of prophecy in Christianity and gave the Biblical, Qur'anic and scholarly definitions of Prophecy in the two religions. It also discussed the roles played by

prophets in the two religions as well as the criterion in choosing a prophet in Christianity and Islam. Finally, the chapter ascertained that from the criterion it was easy to tell a false prophet from a true one.

Chapter three focused on the lineages, the call and audience of the prophets and their prophecy in Christianity. Prophets were the same as messengers in Christianity since as servants of God they were described as seers, watchmen, messengers and men of God. In Christianity, Prophets were endowed with the divine gift of receiving and communicating messages revealed to them by God. We also studied that God communicated his message to His prophets through visions and dreams, by dictating His words to them and through the natural senses as guided by the Holy Spirit. There are many prophets mentioned in the Bible and both Old and New Testaments discuss many of these prophets as either oral or writing prophets.

The research helped us to discover that in Christianity there were major and Minor Prophets. Women were also appointed by God to serve him as prophets unlike in Islam where no woman was identified who was a prophet. No major difference was established between the Major and Minor Prophets other than the size of their books, yet this does not make the prophet more superior to the other because the Major and Minor prophets were servants sent by God and they were to be revered equally by all Christians. The chapter also discussed the differences between prophets in the Old and New Testaments and established the fact that the New Testament prophecy confirms that of the Old Testament. Prophets worked as either canonical, cult, ecstatic or court prophets.

Furthermore, the chapter showed that Prophets in Christianity portrayed the sovereignty of God over all creatures and promoted monotheism where only God was to be worshipped. It also established the fact that prophets through their call were sent to either the people of Israel or Judah and in the messages of the prophets, their audiences were either supposed to repent and obey or risk being punished by God. Nonetheless, the prophets also delivered messages of hope and restoration from God.

Chapter four discussed Prophethood in Islam. We learnt that prophethood is a divine gift from God which he bestowed on whom he pleases. This meant that man could not toil and work and demand to be a prophet because it is Allah who appoints whoever he deemed fit for the role. The Qur'an in Suwar 2:253 and 17:55 respectively state that all prophets are not the same because some are ranked superior to others yet all prophets in Islam were supposed to be obeyed because they were sent from Allah. These men were called *ulu azm* (men of resolution) because these men patiently endured trials and rejection for many centuries and numerous generations. We also learnt that Allah used *wahy* (revelation) to communicate with his prophets and messengers. Muslims believe that there were many prophets sent by Allah but the Qur'an mentions twenty five of them and these were discussed in Chapter four. The lineages, call and audience of these prophets were also discussed.

The chapter identified that some prophets' lineage was unknown while others call and the audience to whom they were sent was not clear but the Qur'an makes mention of those prophets as messengers of Allah. Furthermore, the chapter made certain the fact that there was a difference between a prophet and a messenger in Islam because the former confirms existing scripture and works with it while the latter is a messenger of God who delivers a

new scripture and knowledge. Basically, every Messenger is a Prophet, but not every Prophet is a Messenger.

Finally, it came to bare that God appointed men as prophets because He did not want anything to prevent mankind from believing His message (Surah 17:94). As human beings, Prophets also engaged themselves in the same kinds of work as other humans did. Muhammad for instance engaged in trade before he was called to be a prophet, Musa worked as a shepherd (Surah 28:27-28) and Jacob also worked as a shepherd. The prophets also sometimes became annoyed and angry with the people they were sent to especially if they did not listen to them. Examples of these Prophets are Lut, Yunus and Moses. To prove that the prophets were sent by God, they were able to perform miracles by the permission of Allah.

Chapter five was a comparative analysis of prophecy in Christianity and Islam. It is strongly suggested that to be able to do a good comparative work of this sort, the Bible and the Qur'an which are the sacred books of the two religions should be used to avoid any bias or prejudice. The concept of prophecy in Christianity and Islam was examined and the study showed that the understanding of prophecy in both religions were different. It was argued that something can only be said to be the same as the other if everyone looks at it as being the same without any differences. From the study we showed that prophets had similar narratives in both religions but some notable differences were identified as well.

One important observation made in the study was about Jesus and Muhammad. The research observed that Islam and Christianity recognise Jesus as a prophet in their sacred books yet the significance of Jesus varied in each religion. In Christianity though he was

believed to be a prophet he was also revered as the son of God born of a virgin mother, Mary (Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:35; Philippians 2:6; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 4:15).

In other words, Jesus was part of the Trinity, a concept Christians believe in of God being able to manifest in three forms; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christians further believe that Jesus was crucified and he died for the sins of humankind. However Islam on the other hand recognises Jesus as a prophet of God but they do not believe he died for the sins of mankind.

Another difference we saw was that Christians believe that Jesus was crucified and rose again on the third day (Nicene Creed, Matt 27:31), Islam does not believe that Jesus was crucified (Surah 4:157). Furthermore, Islam rejects the divinity of Jesus Christ (Suwar 4:171, 5:114) but in Christianity, Jesus formed part of the Trinity. Also, God declared Jesus as His Son (Hebrews 5:5); Jesus also claimed to be the son of God (Luke 22:70; John 10:36; 19:7) but in Islam, God has no sons (Surah 4:171). Muhammad is believed to be a prophet and a Messenger of God in Islam. He is also the seal or last of the prophets in Islam so after him Muslims believe that there should be no rise of any contemporary prophet. Christians do not believe in the prophethood of Muhammad as Muslims believe and revere other Christian prophets.

Similarly, both religions agree that Jesus ascended into heaven (Mark 16: 19, Surah 4:157-158) and the two religions are also expecting Jesus to come again. The two religions also believe that there are false prophets who teach false doctrines but it is difficult to tell a false prophet from a true one because they appear the same. In Christianity, since there is the presence of the Holy Spirit among believers there are possibilities of contemporary or future true prophets of God.

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, there are a lot of outstanding similarities between Christianity and Islam but the difference is the doctrines. However, the concept of prophecy appears to be the same in both religions but there are still differences. In both religions a prophet is believed to be the spokesman of God and it is God who chooses who He deems fit to be a prophet. One cannot be a prophet by inheritance, dynasty or monarchy. The accounts of the prophets are also similar in Christianity and Islam but there are certain prophetic messages found in the Bible that are not in the Qur'an and vice versa. The Bible and the

Qur'an are scriptures to determine whether one speaks the truth or not; so when a prophet rises the best one can do is to check whether the person's prophecy conforms to that of the Bible. This therefore posits that when a prophet rises today in Christianity, Christians must test the spirit of the prophet to ascertain whether that prophet has truly been sent by God. Christians and Muslims must beware of false prophets since they resemble true prophets. From our study we understand that prophets cannot rise in Islam since Muhammad is the last or seal of the prophets but in Christianity with the presence of the Holy Spirit there can be prophets in contemporary times.

It can be acknowledged that historically, both religions evolved in the Ancient Near East hence the many similarities between the two. Some other similarities between the two religions are the fact that both are primal religions, the culture and the custom is also similar. The Hebrew and Arabic languages are Semitic languages.

Finally, Prophecy and Prophethood form a vital part of Christianity and Islam. The role of the prophets cannot be underestimated because these prophets through the roles they played guided humankind to God and helped to spread and develop the respective religions. Aside all the roles the Prophets played, they were sent by God to mankind for three main purposes: to guide, to warn and to give glad tidings. Thus the prophets rebuked the people when the people went wrong, interceded on their behalf and also encouraged them to continue practising monotheism which is the belief in one God.

6.4 Recommendations

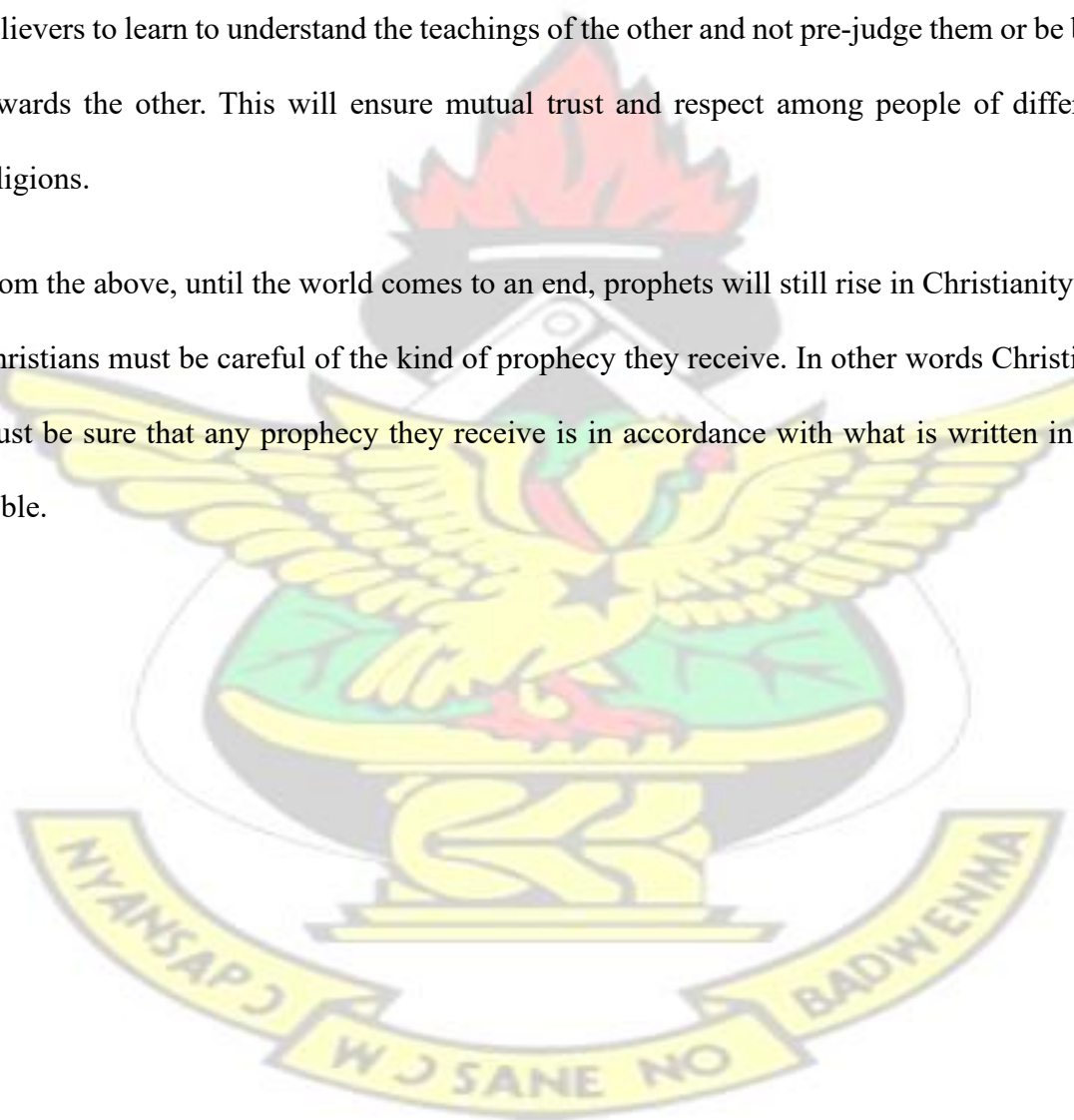
The assumption that Christianity and Islam are two different religions and therefore cannot coexist with one another is not true. This is because although the religions are different there are many notable similarities between the two religions and adherents of the respective religions have tried to live in peace with each other.

Similarly both Christianity and Islam are monotheistic religions that believe that God is perfect and He created the universe. Although both Christianity and Islam are monotheistic and believe in one God, their perceptions of who God is differ. In Islam, there is the belief that God is one and cannot be divided. Christianity on the other hand believes in a single triune God thus; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Both religions believe in prophets that were sent out to propagate God's message because these prophets were inspired by God to also develop books which believers can read. Christians and Muslims alike believe in a set of Holy Scriptures that is the Bible and the Qur'an which contain the Word of God as spoken by the prophets. Therefore, we recommend the following:

Whether Christians and Muslims share similar beliefs or not, adherents of the two religions should learn to respect the other. Despite the differences in worship and theology, all religions share a common teaching which is peace and harmony so adherents of these religions should practice this aspect of their teachings. Many countries and societies are made up of different religious groups because it allows freedom of worship in their constitutions so this aspect of freedom should be made a reality. There is the need for believers to learn to understand the teachings of the other and not pre-judge them or be bias towards the other. This will ensure mutual trust and respect among people of different religions.

From the above, until the world comes to an end, prophets will still rise in Christianity but Christians must be careful of the kind of prophecy they receive. In other words Christians must be sure that any prophecy they receive is in accordance with what is written in the Bible.



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