

Who is *The Prophet* of Deuteronomy 18:15-22?

Some argue that Jesus did not fulfill the prediction made by Moses of The Prophet - the greatest of all God's prophets. It is claimed that Muhammad fulfilled this prediction and is therefore The Prophet. This argument is based on the idea that The Prophet had to be 'like Moses' and some arbitrary characteristics of Moses in which Jesus was quite different to Moses (e.g. Moses had two biological parents, Moses brought a new law, Moses was a leader/ruler/king etc).^{1*} But if one wants to argue about who The Prophet is we have to take the prophecy on its own terms and therefore make the judgement on the basis of its own conditions. This passage provides three conditions. You will also note that in verses 20-22 Moses speaks in such a way as to indicate these conditions are not just for The Prophet but for any prophet ('But the prophet who...', 'when a prophet...').

The three conditions for a true prophet, and for The Prophet:

1. Must be an Israelite (vv.15, 18).
2. Must speak in God's name (vv.19, 20, 22) (the LORD, i.e. YHWH).
3. What he predicts must come true (v.22).

Testing Jesus and Muhammad according to these conditions.

1. Must be an Israelite.

Some Muslims claim that by referring to 'brothers' Moses was identifying the Ishmaelites as the ethnic source of The Prophet.

However, note that Moses says God will raise the prophet up from among 'you' (v.15), that is, the Israelites who were present listening to Moses. This is then qualified by 'your brothers' (vv.15, 18). 'Brothers' is only ever used of fellow Israelites (and occasionally Edomites, e.g. Deut. 2:4, 8) and never of Ishmaelites. But if there were any doubt about who the 'brothers' were we only have to hear the immediate context where Moses specified that prophets would come from among the Israelites who were listening to him. Moses was speaking to the assembly of Israel, there were only Israelites present, no other nationalities were present. So when Moses said 'from among you' he was saying from among Israel. He could not possibly have been referring to Ishmaelites because there were not any present.

Thus Ishmaelites could never have been considered on both counts and the 'among you' of v.15 rules out even Edomites.

2. The name of God.

Whilst there are many descriptions of God in the Bible there is only one *name* that God revealed. Its revelation is recorded in Exodus 3:13-15:

'Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.'

This is the revelation of what theologians call the Tetragrammaton, YHWH, the name of God. There is no record of Muhammad using this name, instead we only have records of him using the

generic 'god' in Arabic (*Allah*). Hence, once again he has failed the second condition for being a true prophet.

3. Predictions must come true.

The third condition required the prophet to make predictions of the future that would subsequently come true. I don't know of any predictions of Muhammad that came true later on. Whether or not he made any true predictions is irrelevant because he failed the first two conditions of being a prophet. Certainly Jesus made several true predictions, for example: his death (Mark 8:31; 10:33, 34), his resurrection (Mark 8:31; 10:33, 34), and the destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 13:1:31).

Summary

So we see in summary that out of Jesus and Muhammad not only is Jesus the only credible candidate for being The Prophet but also by insisting on this passage Muslims are actually insisting that Muhammad is not a true prophet! He was a false prophet and according to the same passage he should have been ignored, 'You need not be afraid of him.' (v.22), and even put to death (v.20). Whilst it is too late to execute him as a false prophet it is not too late to ignore him.

¹ If we wanted to base our decision on arbitrary characteristics it would be easy to prove that Muhammad was in fact quite different to Moses. Moses was put into a basket when he was a baby and cast into the River Nile, he lived in Egypt, he had a brother called Aaron, he was eighty years old when he was appointed by God to lead Israel, and he received the law on mount Horeb with the whole nation of Israel as witnesses. Muhammad fulfills none of these "conditions" of being like Moses, we can therefore conclude that he was not *The Prophet*. Such an argument is obviously ridiculous but is a logical extension of the conditions used to "prove" that Muhammad is *The Prophet*.