

Prophet Saleh



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God said in Quran that Prophets and Messengers were sent to every nation on earth and that they all spread the same message – to worship One God, alone, without partners, sons, or daughters. The majority of Prophets mentioned in the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad are recognisable, and considered prophets in both the Jewish and Christian faiths. Prophet Saleh however, is one of only four Arab prophets and his story is not universally known.

“And, indeed We have sent Messengers before you (O Muhammad); of some of them We have related to you their story and of some We have not related to you their story, and it was not given to any Messenger that he should bring a sign except by the Leave of God.” (Quran 40:78)

Ad and *Thamud* were two great civilisations destroyed by God due to their excessive wickedness. After the destruction of *Ad*, *Thamud* succeeded them in power and grandeur. The people led wealthy excessive lives, built grand buildings, both on the plains, and carved into the hills. Unfortunately with their extravagant lifestyles came idol worship and wickedness. Prophet Saleh was sent to warn the people of *Thamud*, that God was not pleased with their behaviour, and would rain down destruction upon them, if they did not mend their evil ways.

Saleh was a pious, righteous man who held a position of leadership in the community, but his call to worship God alone infuriated many people. Some understood the wisdom of his words, but the majority of the people disbelieved and harmed Saleh with both words and actions.

"O Saleh! You have been among us as a figure of good hope and we wished for you to be our chief, till this, new thing, which you have brought that we leave our gods, and worship your God alone! Do you now forbid us the worship of what

our fathers have worshipped? But we are really in grave doubt as to that which you invite us to monotheism.” (Quran 11:62)

The people of Thamud gathered at their meeting place, in the shadows of a great mountain. They demanded that Saleh prove that the One God he spoke of was truly mighty and strong. They asked him to perform a miracle – to cause a unique and incomparable she camel to emerge from the nearby mountains. Saleh addressed his people asking, if the camel appeared would they then believe in his message. They answered a resounding yes, and together the people prayed with Saleh for the miracle to occur.

By the grace of God, an enormous, ten month pregnant she camel emerged from the rocks at the bottom of the mountain. Some of the people understood the magnitude of this miracle but the majority continued to disbelieve. They saw a great and dazzling sight yet remained arrogant and stubborn.

“We sent the she camel to Thamud as a clear sign, but they did her wrong.” (Quran 17:59)

Quran commentator and Islamic scholar Ibn Kathir informs us that there are a number of accounts of the she camel and her miraculous nature. It is said that the camel appeared from a rock that split open, and some people pointed out that the camel was so huge it was able to drink all the water in the town’s wells in one day. Other people said the camel was able to produce enough milk every day to feed the entire population. The camel lived among the people of Thamud and sadly, the disbelievers who had harassed Saleh turned their anger and resentment towards the camel.

Although many people believed in God, listened to Prophet Saleh, and understood the miracle of the she camel, many others stubbornly refused to listen. People began to complain that the camel drank too much water, or that she frightened the other livestock. Prophet Saleh began to fear for the camel. He warned his people of a great torment that would befall them if they harmed the she camel.

“O my people! This she camel of God is a sign to you, leave her to feed on God's earth, and touch her not with evil lest a near torment will seize you.” (Quran 11:64)

A group of men encouraged their womenfolk, plotted to kill the she camel and took the first opportunity to shoot her with an arrow and pierce her with a sword. The she camel fell to the ground and died. The murderers cheered and congratulated each other and the disbelievers laughed and mocked Saleh. Prophet Saleh warned the people that a great torment would be upon them within three days, but he continued to hope that they would see the error of their ways and seek

God's forgiveness. Prophet Saleh said. **"O my people! I have indeed conveyed to you the Message of my Lord, and have given you good advice but you like not good advisers."** (Quran 7:79) However, the people of Thamud jeered at Saleh's words and planned to destroy him and his family as callously as they had killed the she camel.

"And there were in the city nine men (from the sons of their chiefs), who made mischief in the land, and would not reform. They said: 'Swear to another by God that we shall make a secret night attack on him and his household, and afterwards we will surely say to his near relatives, "We witnessed not the destruction of his household, and verily! We are telling the truth.'" (Quran 27: 48 & 49)

God saved Prophet Saleh and all his followers; they packed some meagre belongings, and with heavy hearts, moved to another place. After three days, Prophet Saleh's warning came to pass. The sky was filled with lightening and thunder and the earth shook violently. God destroyed the city of Thamud and her people died in a torment of fear and disbelief.

Ibn Kathir said that Saleh's people fell down dead, one and all, all at the same time. Their arrogance and disbelief could not save them, nor could their idols. Their large and extravagant buildings afforded them no protection at all. God continues to send clear guidance to humankind but the disbelievers persist in their arrogance and denial. God is the most Merciful and the most Forgiving: He loves to forgive. However, God's warnings should not to be ignored. God's punishment, as the people of Thamud experienced, can be swift and severe.