

PROPHETS OF ISLAM SERIES



THE BIOGRAPHY OF
NOOH

عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ



SHAIKH MIR ASEDULLAH QUADRI

BIOGRAPHY OF NOOH (عليه السلام)

Written By

SHAIKH MIR ASEDULLAH QUADRI

Sahih Iman Publication

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1. INTRODUCTION

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على
سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

The religion of all prophets sent by Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) to humanity is the same which is Islam.

It is in Quran - وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ [Indeed, this religion of yours (Islam) is (only) one (all the way), and I am your Lord, so fear Me (alone).] (**Al-Mominoon - 52**)

It is in Quran - أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ - [Those were the ones upon whom Allah bestowed favor from among the prophets of the descendants of Adam and of those We carried (in the ship) with Nooh, and of the descendants of Ibrahim and Israel (عليهم السلام), and of those whom We guided and chose. When the verses of the Most Merciful were recited to them, they fell in prostration and weeping.] (**Maryam - 58**)

It is in Quran قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ [Say (O' Prophet ﷺ) We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down on us (Quran), and sent down on Abraham (Ibrahim - عليه السلام) and Ishmael (Isma'eel - عليه السلام) , Isaac (Is-haq - عليه السلام) and Jacob (Ya'qub - عليه السلام) , and the Tribes, and in that which was given to Moses (Musa - عليه السلام) and Jesus (Isa - عليه السلام), and (among) the prophets of their Lord; we make no division between any of them.] (**Al-Baqara - 136**)

The lives of the prophets and their teachings are sources of guidance for the mankind. It is evident from the stories of the Prophets that while they are living and teaching within their nations, Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) provides long respites to their people to understand the message by various means. People are provided with logical explanations to all their doubts and sometimes miracles happened through the Prophets/Apostles so that people see the truthfulness of what they are teaching. Whoever comes to the right path during that time, is saved. Those who are adamant and stage a rebellion, are eventually destroyed. This is what happened to the people of Nooh (عليه السلام).

2. ANCESTORS OF PROPHET NOOH (عليه السلام)

Prophet Nooh (عليه السلام) was from the descendants Seth (Shiith - عليه السلام), the son and successor of Adam (عليه السلام).

There is a mention in the Quran about Prophet Idris (عليه السلام), who was probably born and raised in Babylon. He followed the teachings of Adam and Shiith (عليهم السلام). The period between Shiith and Idris (عليهم السلام) is not known. Probably he was born several generations after Shiith (عليه السلام).

It is in Quran - [And mention in the Book about Idris (عليه السلام). He was indeed an honest and sincere person, a Prophet. And We raised him to a lofty station (high status).] (Maryam - 56-57)

Probably Idris (عليه السلام) was also the ancestor of Nooh (عليه السلام). It is in Ahadith that the period between Adam and Nooh (عليهم السلام) was one thousand years.

It is in Hadith - Ibn Abbas (رضى الله تعالى عنه) narrated that Prophet Mohammed (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said, 'the period between Adam and Nooh (عليهم السلام) was ten centuries.' (Bukhari)

It is in Ahadith (Al-Hakim, Ibn Kathir, al-Hythami, at-Tabaraani, Ibn Hajr, etc.) that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said, the period between Adam and Nooh (عليهم السلام) is 10 Quroon (قُرُون - plural of Qarn).

There are differences of opinions among scholars about the period of a Qarn (قَرْن). Some say that it is 100 years while others say that it is 'a generation'. Those who say Qarn is a generation, they mean that the period of a generation is equal to the life span of the people lived in that generation.

It is in Quran - [Then We produced after them a generation of others.] (Al-Mominoon - 31)

Since people used to live for over a thousand years during those generations, the period between Adam and Nooh (عليهم السلام) could be much longer than 10 centuries.

There is another opinion of scholars based on the following Hadith.

It is in Hadith - Ibn Abbas (رضى الله تعالى عنه) narrated that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said : "The period between Adam and Nuh (عليهم السلام) was 10 Quroon, all of which followed Islam. (Bukhari).

As per above Hadith, the 10 Quroon are related to the generations of Tawheed or the generations of people who followed Islam (the religion of all prophets). This Hadith does not negate that there may have been some generations, in between, who did not follow Islam. With this understanding, the period between Adam and Nuh (عليه السلام) could be still much longer.

After Prophet Adam (عليه السلام), many successive generations followed his teachings. However, the ills among the people gradually developed over a period. During the generation of Nooh (عليه السلام), these ills peaked. Thus Nooh (عليه السلام) was sent to guide and reform them.

3. THE PEOPLE OF NOOH (عليه السلام)

It is believed that the people of Nooh (عليه السلام) inhabited the region presently known as Iraq, and around Mosul, Kurdistan, and areas bordering Armenia. The Quranic descriptions clarify that the people of Nooh (عليه السلام) were not ignorant. Their main problem was polytheism. They had associated certain idols with God. This evil practice gave rise to a lot of corruption among them. There was a religious clergy among them who represented false gods created by themselves. All economic, social, and religious activity was run under them. They had a strong grip over their people. When corruption reached to a peak, Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) sent Nooh (عليه السلام) to set things right for them. However, all his efforts were repulsed by the clergy which kept people under their control. When nothing seemed to work, they were punished.

It is in Quran - [(And we sent many Prophets for people's guidance.) We sent Nooh (عليه السلام) to his nation. He said, 'O my people! Worship Allah, you have no other god but He. Are you not afraid of Him for committing shirk?'] (**Al-Mominoon - 23**)

However, repeated explanations and calls by Nooh's (عليه السلام) did not have the desired effect on the people. The rich among his nation unitedly forced people to oppose Nooh (عليه السلام) and continue their idol worship.

It is in Quran - [قَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ إِنَّهُمْ عَصَوْنِي وَاتَّبَعُوا مَنْ لَمْ يَزِدْهُ مَالَهُ وَوَلَدَهُ إِلَّا خَسَارًا - وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا كُبَّارًا - وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْزُرُنَا إِلَهِتَكُمُ يَا نُوْحُ وَتَذَرُنَا آلِهَتَنَا وَلَا تَنْزُرْنَا إِلَهُكَ] [Nooh (عليه السلام) cried, 'My Lord! They have certainly persisted in disobeying me and followed (instead) those (elite) whose (abundant) wealth and children only increase them in loss. ' And they have made a mighty plot, urging (their followers), 'Do not abandon your idols, especially Wadd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq and Nasr.] (**Nooh - 21 -23**)

It is reported that Wadd, Suwa, Yaghuth, Yauq and Nasr were originally the names of good people in their previous generations and were famous among people. After their deaths, their followers made mud replicas of these people as a mark of remembrance for them. Later generations did not know why these idols were made originally. Since they saw their parents

worshipping them, they also worshiped them. Probably, this is how idol worship developed among the children of Adam (عليه السلام). A time came, they forgot the original teachings of their prophets and immorality seeped into their character and they became cruel. The rich among them started exploiting the poor in the name various rituals of Idol worship.

Ibn Jarir (رضي الله تعالى عنه) narrated that there were righteous people who lived between Adam and Nooh (عليهم السلام). Their followers held them as icons. After their deaths, their friends who used to emulate them said, 'if we make statues of them, it will be more pleasing to us in our worship and will remind us of them.' So, they built statues of them, and after they had died and others came after them, Iblis crept into their minds saying, 'your forefathers used to worship them, and through that worship they got rain.' So, they worshipped them'.

Ibn Abbas (رضي الله تعالى عنه) said, 'following upon the death of those righteous men, Satan inspired their people to erect statues in the places where they used to sit. They did this, but these statues were not worshiped until the coming generations deviated from the right path and started worshipping them.

Ibn Abi Hatim (رضي الله تعالى عنه) related that Wadd was a righteous man who was loved by his people. When he died, they withdrew to his grave in the land of Babylonia and were overwhelmed by sadness. When Iblis saw their sorrow caused by his death, he disguised himself in the form of a man saying, 'I have seen your sorrow because of this man's death; can I make a statue like him which could be put in your meeting place to make you remember him?' They said, 'Yes.' So, he made the statue. They put it in their meeting place in order to be reminded of him. When Iblis saw their interest in remembering him, he said, 'Can I build a statue of him in the home of each one of you so that he would be in everyone's house and you could remember him?' They agreed. Their children saw what they were doing. They also learned about their remembrance of Wadd instead of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). So, the first to be worshipped instead of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) was Wadd.

It is in Hadith - Narrated by Ummul Momineen Aisha (رضي الله تعالى عنها), Um Habiba (رضي الله تعالى عنها) and Um Salama (رضي الله تعالى عنها) mentioned about a Church they had seen in Ethiopia in which there were pictures. They told the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) about it, on which he said, 'if any religious man dies among those people (Christians) they would build a place of worship at his grave (considering him to be divine) and make these pictures in it. They will be the worst creature in the sight of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) on the Day of Resurrection.'" (**Bukhari - Book # 8, Hadith #419**).

Nooh (عليه السلام) was asked to warn his people about a grievous penalty if they do not desist idol worship.

It is in Quran - [(Nooh عليه السلام said) Worship none but Allah. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day.] (Hood - 26)

It is in Quran - [They said, 'O Nooh (عليه السلام), You have argued with us, and have prolonged your arguments; so stop arguing with us and, if you are telling the truth, bring upon us what you have been threatening us with.'] (Hood - 32)

It is in Quran - [And indeed Allah sent Nooh (عليه السلام) to his people and he stayed among them 1,000 years, less 50 years. The flood overtook them as they were wrongdoers.] (Al-Ankaboot - 14)

We can visualize the despair of Prophet Nooh (عليه السلام) as the people opposed him for over 900 years despite all his efforts in public and private to bring them to the path of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). It so happened that every passing generation admonished the succeeding one not to believe Nooh (عليه السلام) and to wage war against him. The father used to teach his child about the conflict that was between himself and Nooh (عليه السلام) and counsel him to reject Nooh's (عليه السلام) call when he reached adulthood. Their natural disposition rejected believing the truth.

Nooh (عليه السلام) observed that the number of believers was not increasing, while that of the disbelievers was increasing all the time. He was sad for his people. Eventually, there came a day when Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) revealed to Nooh (عليه السلام) that no one from his nation would believe him except the ones who have already believed. There is no use to grieve for them.

It is in Quran - [And it was divinely revealed to Nooh (عليه السلام) that 'None of your people will become Muslims, except those who have already accepted faith; therefore do not grieve at what they do.'] (Hood - 36)

Since Nooh (عليه السلام) was distinct for the concern for defense of religion and he realized no one will accept the faith, he prayed for the safety of the believers who were subjected to prolonged persecution in the hands of the disbelievers. He also prayed for the tyrants to be punished for their unabated torture and ridicule of the believers.

It is in Quran - وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا - إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرَهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا - رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِي مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَرِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا [And Nooh (عليه السلام) prayed, 'My Lord, do not leave a single unbeliever on the face of the earth.' For if You spare (any of) them, they will certainly mislead Your servants, and give birth only to (wicked) sinners and staunch disbelievers. 'O My Lord! Forgive me, my parents and every true believer who seeks refuge in my house, and all believing men and believing women. As to the wrongdoers, grant them increase in nothing but destruction.] (Nooh - 26-28)

The prayer was granted and Nooh (عليه السلام) was commanded to build an Ark to save his followers from the ensuing punishment.

It is in Quran - وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ - وَيَصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ [Build an ark under Our direction and as per Our instructions. And do not plead for those who have been wicked, for they shall certainly be drowned. So, he built the ark; and when ring leaders among his people passed by him, they mocked at him. He said to them, 'though you laugh at us (now), we shall laugh at you (later), as you are laughing at us.'] (Hood - 37-38)

The above verse describes that even after the decision was made to perish the unbelievers, Nooh (عليه السلام) was praying for them to come back to the right path and save themselves from the inevitable torment.

As was commanded, Nooh (عليه السلام) chose a place outside the city, far from the sea. He collected wood and tools and began to build the Ark. The unbelievers among his people started making fun of him. 'O Nooh (عليه السلام) does carpentry appeal to you more than your prophethood? Why are you building such a massive Ark far from the sea? Are you going to drag it to the sea or is the wind going to carry it for you?' Nooh (عليه السلام) replied, 'you will come to know about it soon'.

Whenever the chiefs of his people passed by him and see him building the Ark, they used to make a mockery of him. He would say, if you mock at us, so do we mock at you likewise for your mocking. And you will know who it is on whom will come a torment that will overtake him with disgrace and on whom will fall a lasting torment.'

It is in Quran - حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ - [When Our command was issued and the waters gushed forth from the source, We said, take into (the Ark) a pair of every species, and members of your family other than those against whom the sentence has

already been passed, and those who come to believe.’ But only a few believed in him.] (Hood - 40)

Finally, when the command of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) came, the water started gushing from a specific Spring or may be from many springs from the earth followed by heavy rains.

It is in Quran – وَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاءُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ فُضِّلَ [Then We opened the gates of the skies with rain pouring down. And caused the earth to burst with springs, and the waters met for a matter already predestined.] (Al-Qamar - 11-12).

As the flood waters began to rise, the believers who had suffered under rich and powerful idol worshipers found themselves safe in the Ark. They offered their prayers and prostration to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) for His Mercy He bestowed upon them. The unbelievers who rejected guidance were in big trouble. All was being lost for them in front of their eyes. The heavy downpour, the strong winds, the deafening thunder and the blinding lightning created confusion in their minds and fear in their hearts. They ran helter-skelter in search for safety. They climbed the roof-tops and the trees, but nothing could save them as the waters rose higher and higher.

Amongst the unbelievers was Prophet Nooh’s (عليه السلام) wife and a son as they did not join him in the Ark. As the flood waters rose, Nooh (عليه السلام) saw his son desperately trying to save himself from the flood waters, while Prophet Nooh’s (عليه السلام) Ark with all aboard was sailing safely. He called his son to join him.

It is in Quran – وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ – قَالَ سَأُوِي إِلَى جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَجَمَ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا [So the Ark floated with them amid waves like mountains, and Nooh (عليه السلام) cried out to a son of his who was standing apart, ‘embark with us, my son, and do not be with the unbelievers!’ He said, ‘I shall go up on a mountain and it will save me from the water’. Nooh (عليه السلام) said, ‘today there is none who can save from the punishment of Allah, except upon whom He has mercy.’ And a wave came in between them, and he perished with the ones who drowned.] (Hood - 42-43)

There are differences of opinions as to how many believers were in Nooh’s (عليه السلام) Ark. Ibn Abbas (رضي الله تعالى عنه) stated that there were 80 believers. Ka’ab al-Ahbar (رضي الله تعالى عنه) said, there were 72 believers. Others said there were only 10 believers with Nooh (عليه السلام).

When water covered the entire planet Earth and all the disbelievers were drowned, Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) commanded the water to recede.

It is in Quran - وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءَ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ ۖ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ [Then it was said : O earth, swallow back your water; and, O sky, desist (stop raining). And the water subsided, and the decree was accomplished. The ark came to rest on Judi (Mount Ararat), and it was said: ‘Away with the cursed people.’] (**Hood - 44**)

After the Divine command, calm returned to earth, the water receded, and the dry land shone once again in the rays of the sun. The flood had cleansed the earth of the disbelievers and polytheists.

Once they touched down the land, Nooh (عليه السلام) released the birds and animals which were carried in the Ark. The believers disembarked. Nooh (عليه السلام) prostrated on the ground thanking Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) for his favors. The people kindled a fire and sat around it. Lighting of fire was prohibited while they were in the Ark and none of them had eaten a hot meal during the entire period of the flood.

The generations that came later were the descendants of the people rescued by Nooh (عليه السلام) in his Ark.

It is in Quran - ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ [O’ descendants of those We carried (in the Ark) with Nooh (عليه السلام).] (**Al-Isra - 3**)

It is in Quran - أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِن ذُرِّيَّةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ - [Those were the ones upon whom Allah bestowed favor from among the prophets of the descendants of Adam and of those We carried (in the ship) with Nooh, and of the descendants of Ibrahim and Israel (عليهم السلام), and of those whom We guided and chose. When the verses of the Most Merciful were recited to them, they fell in prostration and weeping.] (**Maryam - 58**)

4. THE DEATH OF NOOH (عليه السلام)

It is not known what happened after everyone disembarked from the Ark and how the believers multiplied for how long under Nooh (عليه السلام).

It is in Hadith – Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Al-Aas narrated that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said, ‘when the death of the Apostle of Allah Nooh (عليه السلام) approached, he admonished his sons saying, indeed I would give you far reaching advice, commanding you to do two things, and warning you against doing two things as well. I charge you to believe that there is no god but Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and that if the seven heavens and the seven earths were put on one side of a scale and the words ‘there is no god but Allah’ (لا إله إلا الله) were put on the other, the latter would outweigh the former. I warn you against associating partners with Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and against pride’. **(Bukhari)**
