

In a faraway country, the people of a small town prayed to God to send them a prophet who could show them the path to God and answer life's difficult questions. One day, two prophets appeared. Each stayed in a different part of the town. Both claimed they were sent by God and called people to worship the one true God who created heaven and earth. Both prophets traced their roots to Adam and Abraham and taught about heaven, hell, Satan, the resurrection of dead, the day of judgment, prayers, fasting, and helping the poor. The people were excited and rejoiced that God had answered their prayers and sent them, not one, but two prophets. The town's people made daily visits to the two prophets to find God's way and favor. Soon, they noticed the prophets had two different books, yet each claimed that his book was a direct revelation from God. Over time, the following teachings were discovered.

## The Nature of God

Both prophets taught that God is all knowing, all powerful, and all present. However, the first prophet said that God is just, loves believers only, and shows them His mercy. He does not reveal Himself, although he reveals His will in a book.

The second prophet said that God is love toward all mankind, regardless of race, color, or even the wrongdoing done by a person against Him. He is full of compassion and mercy. Guided by his holiness, God did not only reveal His will but revealed Himself in a person and a book.

## Forgiveness of Sin

Both prophets claimed that man's sins are offensive to God and that man must seek forgiveness. Both prophets have different methods regarding forgiveness. The first prophet said forgiveness of sins might be attained by first believing in God and his last messenger and then doing good works. Yet, at the Day of Judgment, God will decide to whom He will be merciful.

The second prophet said that good works cannot erase bad moralistic choices. God provides a way for salvation from sin in this life that assures forgiveness of sins and attain the promise of eternal life. Guilt and shame are replaced with peace and joy.

## Lying to Others

One day, a man was caught telling lies to his neighbor. They brought him to the first prophet and asked what they should do to him. He said that a believer should always tell the truth; however, lying is permitted on a few occasions, such as smoothing over differences to save lives, reconciling a husband and wife by persuading the wife to avoid strife, or renouncing religion as long it is not a genuine heart-felt rejection.

The second prophet said that lying is sin and that God views it as an act of deception to present false information. All lies are abhorred by God, no matter what the circumstance and situation. Therefore, one must put off falsehood by speaking truthfully, for nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest nor is anything done in secret that will not become known.

## Committing Adultery

The next day, the men of the town brought a woman, caught in adultery, who was divorced and pregnant with a child. They asked the first prophet what to do with the woman. The prophet told them that the sin of adultery is a terrible

sin against God and society. Such sin must be removed from the land. They should let the woman give birth to the child, and afterward, they should kill her by stoning. The people thanked the prophet for his answer and decided among themselves that if the second prophet gave the same answer, they would stone the woman.

The second prophet heard their accusations against the woman and gave them a simple answer. He told them that anyone among them who was without sin should be the first to cast a stone at the woman. Slowly, one by one, starting with the oldest, the men left that place. Only the prophet was left. The woman was kneeling in front of Him. He told her that he would not condemn her and commanded her to go and sin no more.

## Seeking Revenge

A few days later, a different man came running to the first prophet. The man was greatly upset about his new neighbor who partied, drank every night, and made lots of noise. In addition, the neighbor would frequently curse and throw stones at his children. The man was running out of patience. What should he do? The prophet said that the people who drink and party are not believers. Such people are not of God and must be confronted harshly. "You should return the violence equally to whatever harm they do to you, eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth," said the prophet. The man thanked the prophet and left.

On his way home, he decided to stop by and see the second prophet. When the man asked the same question, this time he received a different answer. The prophet told him that the power of love conquers all hate and revenge. Do not return evil with evil but respond by acts of kindness. Instead of cursing him back, pray that God will bless him. Who knows? God may turn his heart around. At all time, forgive your enemies and avoid bitterness, which brings misery and anger to your life. The man thanked the prophet for his words and went back to his home.



## Roles in the Family

Both prophets taught about the importance of strong family ties and protecting families from harm. But the first prophet taught that men are superior to women in both position and inheritance. Men may marry up to four wives and divorce a wife at anytime merely by reciting the word "divorced" three times loudly. After divorcing his wife, if a man changes his mind and wants his wife back, she must marry another man and divorce him before she is allowed to come back to her first husband. A woman must obey her husband without hesitation, and if she refuses, her husband should convince her in words. If that fails, he can banish her from his bed, and if all else fails, he may beat her.

The second prophet said that, although men and women carry separate roles, they each are equal before God. From the beginning of time, God created one woman for one man. A man should leave everything behind and cling to his wife, and the two would become one flesh. A man must sacrificially love his wife as he loves himself to the point that he would die for her. Also, a woman must respect her husband and follow his leadership. God hates divorce because it breaks the marriage covenant. Historically, divorce was only allowed because of man's hardened heart and for adultery

## Heaven and Hell

Both prophets believed in heaven as reward for believers and hell as punishment for the wicked. However, the concept and description of heaven differed between the two prophets' teachings. The first prophet described heaven in physical terms, as a place where every wish is immediately fulfilled, from food to sex. Those who dwell in heaven are

said to wear costly apparel, partake in exquisite banquets, and recline on beds arranged in ranks. In this heaven, you'll find rivers of water, milk, and wine. Men will be marrying fair, virgin women with wide eyes and will sleep with these women as he wishes.

The second prophet said heaven is a pure place, where there is perfect holiness and the absence of sin. Believers will be gathered around the throne of God giving praises and honors to God for His redemption and the gift of eternal life. They neither marry nor are given in marriage. They will be like the angels of God in heaven, where there will be no more death, sorrow, sickness, tears, pain, disappointment, or heartache. Moreover, human bodies will be transformed into glorified bodies that will never die because they will no longer be subject to sin.

**T**here are two prophets who trace their roots to Adam and Abraham and call on people to worship God who created heaven and earth. Both value prayers, fasting, and helping the poor; however, there is a gulf of differences between them in doctrine and practice, such as the nature of God, forgiveness of sins, heaven and hell, and human relationships. Here are two questions for you:

1. Which of the two prophets represents God and would you agree with?
2. Whose teachings and practices will you follow?

Your eternal destiny depends on your decision. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6.

### Questions?

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# The Tale of Two Prophets

