

Difference between *Nabi* and *Rasul*

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Popular understanding is: "Every *Rasul* is *Nabi*. But every *Nabi* is not *Rasul*. *Rasul* is the *Nabi* who was given a holy book from God."

Let us check the validity of this definition in the light of Quran.

Nabi is an Arabic word derived from the root word *nūn bā hamza* (ن ب ح) which means "news or piece of information or tidings". One who delivers the news / tidings is referred as **NABI**. Quran has used this word for those human beings whom we refer to as prophet in English. Prophet or *Nabi* would give **glad tidings** of good result and paradise for those who believed the message of God and he would **warn** people against bad consequences of rejecting the message of God.

Rasul is one who delivers the message. Meaning wise both seems to be exactly same but they are not. Let's not go into the etymology of these terms. Let us see some basic differences:

Quran has used word *RASUL* for different kinds of creatures. It is not specific to human beings or Prophets.

1. *RASUL* used for angel:

Say, "If there were settled, on earth, angels walking about in peace and quiet, We should certainly have sent them down from the heavens an angel for a messenger (*Rasul*). Quran 17:95.

Allah says that angel would have been *RASUL* if angels were living on the earth.

Quran 11:77 And when Our messengers (*Rasul*), [angels], came to Lot,

Quran 11:81 - (The angels) said, "O Lot, indeed we are messengers (*Rasul*) of your Lord;

Quran 11:69 And certainly did Our messengers (*Rasul*) come to Abraham with good tidings;

Quran 15:57 - [Abraham] said, "Then what is your business [here], O messengers (*Rasul*)?"

Quran 15:61 - And when the messengers (*Rasul*) came to the family of Lot,

Quran 29:31 - messenger sent to Abraham is referred as *Rasul*.

Quran 29:33 - messenger sent to Prophet Lot is referred as *Rasul*.

Quran 7:37 refers to angel of death as *Rasul*.

2. *RASUL* used for Al-Rooh:

ROOH, who visited *Hazrat Maryam* is referred to as *Rasul*. Quran 19:17, 19

3. *RASUL* used for normal human being:

And the king said, "Bring him to me." But when the messenger (***Rasul*** word is used here) came to him, [Joseph] said, "Return to your master" Quran 12:50

The word *Rasul* is used here for a person who belonged to the kingdom of Egypt.

4. RASUL used for Sahabi (Companion of Prophet Muhammad):

When Prophet was sending Hazrat MU'AZ BIN JABAL as Governor of Yemen then Prophet referred Hazrat Mu'az as "**RASUL ka RASUL**" = "Messenger (of prophet) of the messenger (messenger of Allah)". Source: Sunan At-Tirmidhi 1327

5. RASUL used for Jinn (invisible creature of God):

"O you assembly of **jinn** and mankind! "Did not there come to you **messengers (Rasul)** from amongst you, reciting unto you My Verses and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?"
Quran 6:130

Allah chooses messengers from the angels and from the people. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing. Quran 22:75

Quran 33:40 tells that Prophet Muhammad is **RASUL** and that he is the seal of **NABI**. Prophet Muhammad is referred as the **last NABI**. He is not referred as the last **RASUL**.

Nabi were those people whom we call as Prophet. *Risalat* continues. But the door of revelation ceased with Prophet Muhammad. The revelation of God used to come to human beings who were **Nabi**.

Allah says in Quran 28:59 that Allah does not destroy a population until he sends **RASUL** among them. Obviously, this *Risalat* continues in the form of human beings acting as *Rasul*/ warner / guide. But for sure, **NABUWWAT** or Prophethood has ended so there is no concept of receiving revelation from Allah after Prophet Muhammad.

Myth: *Rasul* is a **Nabi** who got new holy book from God. There were 313 *Rasul* and 100,000+ **Nabi**".

Reality 1: This hypothesis contradicts with Quran. Quran 19:54 says that Prophet Ishmael was a *Rasul*. But we know that he did not bring any new holy book. He was the son of Prophet Abraham and he would have continued teaching *Sohaf-e-Ibraheem* i.e. the book given to his father.

And mention in the Book (the Qur'an) Isma'il (Ishmael). Verily he was true to what he promised, and he was a Messenger (Rasul), (and) a Prophet (Nabi). Quran 19:54

Please note that word **RASUL** is used for Prophet Ishmael even though he was not given any separate book.

Reality 2: Quran says the opposite. As we have seen that every **Nabi** was a *Rasul*. Quran 3:81 says that every **Nabi** was given a portion of the book and wisdom (*Kitaab* and *Hikmah*). Details of "*AlKitaab*" is beyond the scope of this article. The idea is that teachings from *Al-Kitab* (Need not to be present today in a holy book format) was given to every **Nabi** but the widespread misconception is that only *Rasuls* were given a holy book. Holy book / revelation is not a factor for differentiating between **Nabi** and *Rasul*.

Reality 3: Quran says in 19:30 that Jesus was given the book and he was a *Nabi*.

[Jesus] said, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture (*Kitab*) and made me a prophet (*Nabi*). Quran 19:30

Reality 4: Quran 19:51 says that Prophet **Moses was a *Nabi* and a *Rasul***. Even though he was given *Torah*, a new *shariah*, yet Quran does not say that he was only a *Rasul* and not a *Nabi*.

Reality 5: "We gave Moses the scripture (*Kitab*) and **followed him up with messengers (*Rasul*) in quick succession**. ...". Quran 2:87.

Please note that Quran says that Moses was given the book, then messengers (*Rasul*) came in quick succession and then ayah talks about Prophet Jesus. It is very obvious that messengers (*Rasul*) coming in quick succession after Moses would mean no new message or scripture but the continuation of the message (book) of Prophet Moses. This fact also discards the idea that *Rasul* is a *Nabi* who brings new *shariah* / holy book.

Reality 6: "And We have already sent Noah and Abraham and placed in their descendant's prophet hood (*Nabuwwat*) and scripture (*Kitab*)...". Quran 57:26

Please note that Quran did not say *Risalat* and *Kitab*, rather it says *Nabuwwat* and *Kitab*. Again, we find here that the theory of only *Rasul* getting *Kitab* is a fabricated concept. Let me repeat, **Quran has not put receiving of revelation / *shariah* / new holy book as a factor for differentiating between *Nabi* and *Rasul*.**

I don't know how this false notion – "every *Rasul* is a *Nabi* and only *Rasul* got holy book"- became so popular. This idea is entirely wrong according to Quran.

Conclusion:

1. *Nabi* is a person who receives divine guidance and revelation from God.
2. Every *Nabi* was a *Rasul*. *Rasul* is someone who carries a message.
3. Quran uses *Rasul* for *Nabi*, angel, normal human being etc.
4. So, every *Nabi* was a *Rasul* but every *Rasul* need not be a *Nabi*.
5. Holy book or revelation is not a factor in differentiating between *Nabi* and *Rasul*.

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