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War and Peace

The most misinterpreted verses of the Quran are those revealed within the context of war. Certain groups of people try to distort the image of Islam by wrongfully portraying it as a religion that preaches violence against non-Muslims. They do this by taking the verses out of context to justify their unfounded beliefs. This approach has caused a lot of confusion about the true teachings of the Quran amongst non-Muslims. Tragically a faction from amongst the "Muslims" have also aided in the creation of this false image. A number of "Muslims" have misrepresented the verses of the Quran and the teachings of Islam in general, and have perpetrated heinous crimes that are wholly against the laws of this divine religion. Their beliefs do no originate from the Quran.

We wish to present a very brief exegesis of the verses related to war and peace to show the authentic teachings of the Quran. The verses of the Quran were revealed to prophet Muhammad (saws) over a period of 23 years. These verses were revealed within a particular context and deal with issues that arose in his lifetime. We would have to study the life and teachings of the prophet along with the Quran to achieve a complete understanding of Islam. The verses of war also need to be studied within their proper context.

Prophet Muhammad (saws) was persecuted for his teachings by a group of people who feared that Islam would benefit the oppressed and would unsettle the status quo of the powerful oppressors. They rejected his message and drove him and his followers out of their homes in Mecca. Many attempts to end his life were made in the process. The Muslims set up homes in small town called Medina. The oppressive rulers form Mecca decided to put an end to Islam and gathered an army to attack Medina. Islam allowed the Muslims to defend themselves in the subsequent defensive wars. History records that all the wars fought by Prophet Muhammad (saws) were defensive in nature and all attacks were initiated by the enemies of Islam. The true nature of Islam was displayed when a contingent lead by the prophet (saws) took over a weakened Mecca without any bloodshed. All the people of that town were spared.

The prophet (saws) taught peace and tolerance to others and strongly encouraged the doing of good to other human beings. History shows that he lead by example.

Before we discuss the verses of the Quran it must be pointed out that the word "Kaffir" (usually translated to unbeliever / disbeliever) literally means those who reject and conceal the truth.

Peace is encouraged by the Quran

{2:224} And make not Allah because of your swearing (by Him) an obstacle to your doing good and guarding (against evil) and making peace between men, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

{25:63} and the servants of the Beneficent Allah are they who walk on the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them, they say: peace.

{8:61} and if they incline to peace, then incline to it and trust in Allah; surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

The Quran teaches us to be peaceful with people unless they are oppressors

{60:8} Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice.

{60:9} Allah only forbids you respecting those who made war upon you on account of (your) religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust.

The Quran disallows the Muslims to create unnecessary enmity

{60:7} It may be that Allah will bring about friendship between you and those whom you hold to be your enemies among them; and Allah is Powerful; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Defensive wars are allowed in Islam to protect the people

{22:39} Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them;

{22:40} those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered; and surely Allah will help him who helps His cause; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.

{4:75} And what reason have you that you should not fight in the way of Allah and of the weak among the men and the women and the children, (of) those who say: Our Lord! Cause us to go forth from this town, whose people are oppressors, and give us from Thee a guardian and give us from Thee a helper.

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