

Jihad: Holy Struggle or Holy War?

by Matt Slick

Understanding the Islamic concept of Jihad is crucial for non-Muslims to comprehend the motivations and actions of some Muslim groups and nations.

Topics: "Islamic Theology", "Holy War"

Description

Matt Slick delves into the controversial topic of Jihad, exploring its various interpretations within the Muslim community. He discusses the Greater and Lesser Jihad, highlighting the spiritual struggle towards submission to Allah versus the Holy War against non-Muslims. Slick examines the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith regarding Jihad, emphasizing the encouragement of Holy War as a means of reward and martyrdom. He raises important questions about the implications of these beliefs on actions and the treatment of non-Muslims in Islamic nations.

Transcript

Among most Westerners, the term "Jihad" ("struggle" in Arabic) often brings up images of Muslim terrorists killing people who disagree with them. Jihad is an emotionally charged word that is heralded by the Western news media in descriptions of Middle East activities. People need not wait long to hear the term used during nightly news and see the affects of present day Islamic struggles in vivid pictures of destruction beamed to our televisions. But is this a fair assessment of the Muslim community as a whole?

Jihad has been interpreted by Muslims in different ways. The Muslim sect of the Kharijites has elevated Jihad to one of the Five Pillars of Islam -- making it Six Pillars. This kind of belief is seen in the extremist Muslim groups we call terrorists. They use the concept of Jihad as a justification for killing anyone who isn't a Muslim. However, most Muslims disagree with this extremist position of some Muslims and advocate peace. These Muslims view Jihad as a spiritual struggle against evil in a metaphorical sense.¹

For the most part, there is the Greater and Lesser Jihad. The Greater Jihad is the internal spiritual struggle of the Muslim toward submission to Allah. The Lesser Jihad is Holy War against non-Muslims based on principle of belief. It is this latter that has caused the most concern among Westerners. Is that concern warranted? Many think so.

Islamic scholar Jamal Badawi, chairman of the Islamic Information Foundation in Halifax, insists that a jihad is 'permitted only in self-defense or against tyranny and oppression--not as a tool to promote Islam.' But, experts added, the ancient Islamic empires were built as much by force as by persuasion. Islam's

founder, Mohammed, frequently used force, or the threat of it, to unify the nomadic tribes of the Arabian peninsula. The caliphs, who succeeded Mohammed as leaders of the Arab world, successfully took up arms against the Christian Byzantine Empire in Egypt and the Holy Land. By the end of the ninth century, Arabian armies had extended Islamic power from Spain to the borders of India.²

Anyone who has studied Islamic history must surely notice how frequently the Muslims were involved in battle after battle. Within 200 years after its inception, Islam had spread through a huge geographical area and many converts were made by the sword.

What does the Qur'an say about Jihad?

The Qur'an is the single most important authority in all of Islam. It is the scripture given from Allah through the angel Gabriel. Does the Qur'an teach Jihad? Absolutely yes. As you will see in the following quotes from the Qur'an, Holy War is definitely taught and encouraged.

"Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure," (Surah 61:4).

"Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits...¹⁹¹And slay them wherever ye catch them. and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for persecution is worse than slaughter; But fight them not at the sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; But if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who reject faith. ¹⁹²But if they cease, Allah is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. ¹⁹³And fight them on until there is no more persecution. And the religion becomes Allah's. But if they cease, Let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression" (The Qur'an, Surah 2:190-193).

"O ye who believe! what is the matter with you, that, when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, ye cling heavily to the earth? Do ye prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter. Unless ye go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty, and put others in your place; but Him ye would not harm in the least. For Allah hath power over all things," (Surah 9:38-39).

See also Surah 4:74-76; 61:10-12.

What does the Hadith say about Jihad?

The Hadith are the recorded sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. It is second in authority only to the Qur'an and is often used to clarify things not specified in the Qur'an. What did Muhammad say about Jihad as recorded in the Hadith?

"The Prophet said, "The person who participates in (Holy battles) in Allah's cause and nothing compels him to do so except belief in Allah and His Apostles, will be recompensed by Allah either with a reward, or booty (if he survives) or will be admitted to Paradise (if he is killed in the battle as a martyr). Had I not found it difficult for my followers, then I would not remain behind any sariya going for Jihad and I would have loved to be martyred in Allah's cause and then made alive, and then martyred and then made alive, and then again martyred in His cause" (Volume 1, Book 2, Number 35, Narrated Abu Huraira).

"Allah's Apostle said, "A pious slave gets a double reward." Abu Huraira added: By Him in Whose Hands my soul is but for Jihad (i.e. holy battles), Hajj, and my duty to serve my mother, I would have loved to die

as a slave" (Volume 3, Book 46, Number 724: Narrated Abu Huraira).

"Allah's Apostle said, "Allah guarantees (the person who carries out Jihad in His Cause and nothing compelled him to go out but Jihad in His Cause and the belief in His Word) that He will either admit him into Paradise (Martyrdom) or return him with reward or booty he has earned to his residence from where he went out" (Volume 9, Book 93, Number 555: Narrated Abu Huraira).

Obviously Muhammad taught that Holy War was an acceptable and good thing to do. To clarify, he even stated that if a Muslim were to die in battle, fighting for the cause of Allah, that he would be guaranteed to go to Paradise.

Why is this important?

Why is understanding the Islamic position of Jihad important? Simple. People act according to their beliefs. If a large group of people believes that war against "unbelievers" is a holy thing, that it is a thing sanctioned from God, then those who are not Muslims should be concerned. Of course, at this point, most Muslims might accuse me of being sensationalistic and pointing to only a few extremists and out-of-context verses to make Islam look bad. First, let me say that by far the majority of Muslims I have encountered here in the United States have been polite and peace loving. Second, in other parts of the world, Jihad is taken to extremes not simply by terrorists, but by Islamic led governments.

In Egypt, a Muslim country, Christians have been persecuted heavily for their faith and only recently are things beginning to change.³ "Roman Catholic Bishop John Joseph of Pakistan shot himself to death on May 6 to highlight the case of Ayub Masih, a Christian sentenced to death for supposedly making blasphemous remarks against the Prophet Muhammad and thus against Islam. In a letter sent to a local newspaper just before his death, the bishop stated that he hoped his suicide would galvanize his fellow bishops and others to work for the repeal of sections 295 B and C of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), which make any blasphemy against Islam a serious crime and blasphemy against Muhammad punishable by death."⁴ "Farag Foda, an Egyptian intellectual who expressed scorn for the Islamist program, was shot and murdered.

And Naguib Mahfouz, the elderly and much-celebrated Nobel Prize laureate for literature, was seriously injured in Cairo when an assailant knifed him in the neck, presumably in revenge for an allegorical novel written decades earlier."⁵ "Hundreds of thousands of Muslims assembled in Jakarta and declared a holy war against Indonesian Christians shortly after dawn Friday to avenge the deaths of Muslims in religious clashes in the Maluku Islands (the Spice Islands). Assembled in central Jakarta, the Muslims shouted "Jihad (Holy War)!

Jihad!" Most of those gathered wore white robes and white bandannas marked with quotes from the Koran about the "Holy War." It is time for us to do a jihad against Christians," said Husen al-Habsyi, a former political prisoner, who was jailed for masterminding an explosion in the Borobudur Buddhist Temple in the early 1980s.⁶ This Christmas season, Pastor Rod Parsley is taking a lead in an effort to help free the tens of thousands of Sudanese women and children held in captivity in the Sudan, many of which are Christians.

This great effort will help stem the horrific tide of genocide and enslavement of Christians in the African nation. Bridge of Hope, the missions outreach of Breakthrough is located in Columbus, Ohio...The Government of Sudan, a fundamentalist regime that represents only 10% of the population in Sudan, has

declared a holy war (jihad) against Christians and animists in their own country. Since 1985, this reign of terror is responsible for the murder of over 2 million Sudanese ... and over 4 million have been displaced.

The Government of Sudan will not stop short of total annihilation of all Christians and all others that do not believe in this totalitarian regime...During Government sponsored raids in peaceful villages, men are killed; village elders are hacked with machetes and left for dead; the village is burned and devastated; and women and children are captured as slaves. Slaves are subjected by their masters to systematic physical and psychological torture, including gang rape, beatings, death threats, genital mutilation and forcible conversion to Islam.⁷ Anyone can make any group look bad through selective quotes.

Each religious group has elements of its history it wishes it could ignore. The Muslims could cite the Crusades or the Inquisition as examples of "Christian behavior." In response, the Crusades, right or wrong, were a retaliation against the Islamic Jihad that was sweeping through Europe. The Inquisition, on the other hand, is a perfect example of what happens when a religious group (the Roman Catholic Church) gets in power and tries to root out heretics and blasphemers. Islam is no different.

The Islamic run country of Pakistan (No. 9 above) has anti blasphemy laws where the punishment for speaking blasphemy against Muhammad and the Qur'an is death. Islamic run Sudan has already killed, and still is killing, millions of people, mainly Christians, in its own country in addition to making many of them slaves. (No. 12 above). It is these kinds of facts that cannot be ignored and should not be ignored. Muslim and Christian alike should be very concerned.

I do not know if other Muslim countries are condemning the actions of these Islamic nations that so easily violate human rights. I do not know if Muslims outside of those countries are even aware of the problems going on within their theologically diverse ranks of other nations. But, when a Holy Book like the Qur'an advocates Holy War, when the very sayings and deeds of their beloved Prophet Muhammad advocate Jihad, and when we see some Islamic nations killing non Muslims -- because they are not Muslims -- how can we not be worried about what they would do if they had control of the world....as is their goal.

Here in the States, Muslims enjoy freedom of religion and expression. Such freedoms for Christians are basically non existent in many Islamic nations. Is that right?

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