

The Historical Occasion of the Triumphant Victory of Islam over Christianity

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24th Zilhajj 10th Hijrah is celebrated as the Eid al-Mubahila. On this historical occasion, Islam emerged triumphantly against Christianity. The historical event of Mubahila also reveals the exalted status of the Ahlul Bayt [Family of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)]. This milestone event in

Islamic history since then has assumed the status of Eid in the history of Islam.

In the early days of Islam, Najran was a large centre of people in Yemen who had changed from idol worship to Christianity. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) had sent letters to the heads of different countries inviting them to Islam. One such letter was addressed to the Christians of

Najran. It read as follows:

"In the Name of the God of Ibrahim, Ishaaq and Ya'qub.

This letter is from Muhammad, the Prophet and Messenger of Allah to the Asqaf (Bishop) of Najran.

Praise be to the God of Ibrahim, Ishaaq and Ya'qub. I invite you to worship Allah instead of (His) servants. I invite you to come out of the rule of the servants of Allah and into the rule of Allah Himself. If you do not accept my invitation, then you should (at least) pay Jizya (tax) to the Islamic State (so that your lives and properties may be protected), otherwise you are warned of a danger."

By using the names of the ancient Prophets (A.S.), the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) wanted to let the Christians of Najran know that the belief in One God he was teaching was the same as that preached by the previous Prophets Ibrahim, Ishaaq and Ya'qub (A.S.), in whom they also believed. It is also mentioned that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) included the following verse of the

Holy Qur'an in the letter:

Say, (O Muhammad), "O people of the Book (Bible), come to an agreement between us and you; that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall claim no partner to Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords besides Allah." And if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims (those who have surrendered to Allah)." Surah Aali Imran, 3:6]

Christian Pontiffs in Madinah

When this message was delivered to Abu Haris, who was the Asqaf and leader of the Church, he read it carefully and then appointed a committee of some religious and wise people to

decide on the matter.

One of them, who were an experienced and intelligent person, advised that a group representing the people of Najran should go to Madinah to study the claim of Prophethood by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.).

Sixty people, considered the most wise and knowledgeable from the people of Najran, were elected. Three of their pontiffs led the Christian high-level delegation. The group arrived in Madinah and entered the mosque wearing silken clothes, golden rings and crosses around their necks. On seeing them dressed in this fashion, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) was disturbed and he ignored them. They realized that something was wrong but were unsure as to what to do.

On the advice of Imam Ali (A.S.) the Christian delegation of Najran changed their style of dress to simple clothes and removed their ornaments. They then returned to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) who received them with a warm welcome. Before they entered into a discussion, they requested permission to say their prayers and this was granted. They were put in one part of the mosque where they could pray with ease and comfort. Then the following conversation took place:

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.): I invite you towards the belief of Tawhid and the worship of One God and submission to His will. (Then he recited verse 64 of Surah Aali Imran.)

Christian Pontiff: If Islam means faith in the One God of the Universe, we already believe in Him and follow His Commands.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.): Islam has a few signs and some of your actions show that you have not accepted true Islam. How do you claim worship of One God when you worship the cross and do not abstain from eating pork and believe that God has a son?

Christian Pontiff: Certainly he [Isa (A.S.)] was the son of God because his mother Mary [Maryam (A.S.)] had given birth to him without marrying anyone in this world. Therefore, obviously his father is the God of this Universe. We also believe in Jesus [Isa (A.S.)] as God because he used to bring the dead back to life, cure the sick and create birds from clay and make them fly. All this points to the fact that he is God.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.): No, he was the servant and creature of God, and placed in the womb of his mother Maryam (A.S.). God granted power and strength to him.

At this time, angel Jibraeel (A.S.) brought the following verse of the Holy Qur'an from Allah : Surely the example of Isa to Allah is like that of Adam; He created him from dust, and then said to him, "Be!" and he was. Surah Aali Imran, 3:59 This meant that if Isa (A.S.) could be called the son of God because of the fact he was born without a father, then Adam (A.S.) deserved

this title more, because he was born without a father or mother. The Christian Pontiffs could not reply to this argument but they continued to argue out of obstinacy. After lengthy discussions which have been presented in details in Ibn Husham's "Sirah" 573/1, no agreement was reached on the position and standing of Jesus.

Then the following verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed:
"And whoever argues with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say, "Come, let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and ourselves and yourselves, then let us humbly pray (to our Lord) and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars".Surah Aali Imran, 3:61

The Challenge of "Mubahila"

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) produced this verse before the Christians and declared the challenge of "Mubahila", which means to curse one another. The Christians consulted each other and announced their acceptance of the challenge. Then they returned to their camp. This verse refers to the famous event of ' Mubahila ' which took place in the year 10 A.H against the Christians of Najran. A deputation of 60 Christians of Najran headed by Abdul Masih their chief monk priest came and discussed with the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) the personality of Hazrat Eesa (A.S.). The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) told them not to deify Jesus for he was only a mortal created by God, and not God Himself. Then they asked who the father of Jesus was. By this, they thought that since he was born without a father the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) would helplessly accept Jesus' father being God himself. In reply to this question was revealed the Verse Verily, similitude of Jesus with God is as the similitude of Adam; He created him out of dust then said He unto him BE, and he became.

When the Christians did not agree to this line of reasoning, then this verse was revealed enjoining upon the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) to call the Christians to Mubahila. To this, the Christians agreed and they wanted to return to their place and would have the Mubahila the next day.

When the Christians of Najran returned to their tents after accepting the challenge of Mubahila, their Chief Pontiff advised them in these words:
"Tomorrow if Muhammad comes out of his house with the members of his family, then you should never agree to Mubahila. But if he brings his companions, then you need not fear at all and you should certainly go for to Mubahila."

He knew that the Mubahila was a question of life and death for both the sides, including their

family members. If the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) had the slightest doubt in the truth of the message of Islam, he would not have given the challenge of Mubahila to the Christians. If he had the slightest fear of the curse affecting him and the close members of his family, he would not have considered coming out with them to face the Christians. It was agreed between the two parties that the contest would take place the next day in the open desert outside the city of Madinah.

The Historical Event

On the 24th of Zilhaj 10 A.H., the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) came out for Mubahila. Early next morning the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) sent Salman al Farsi to the open place, fixed outside the city for the historic event, to erect a small shelter for himself and those he intended to take along with him for the contest. On the opposite side appeared the Christian priests, while at the appointed hour the Christians witnessed the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) entering the field with Imam Hussain (A.S.) in his lap, Imam Hasan (A.S.) holding his finger, and walking beside him, Lady Fatima (A.S.) and followed by Imam Ali al Murtaza (A.S.).

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) on reaching the appointed spot stationed himself with his daughter, her two sons and her husband, raising his hands towards the heaven said : Lord these are the People of my House. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said to them, "when I pray you should say Ameen."

In obedience to the verse of Mubahila sent by Allah , the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) had brought Imam Hasan (A.S.) and Imam Husain (A.S.) as his "sons", Bibi Fatima (A.S.) as his "women" and Imam Ali (A.S.) as his "self".

The Chief Pontiff on knowing that the baby in the lap of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) was his young grandson, Imam Hussain (A.S.), the child walking holding the Prophet's (S.A.W.) hand was his first grandson, Imam Hasan (A.S.), the Lady behind him was daughter, his only surviving issue was Fatima (A.S.) the mother of the two children and the one who followed the Lady was his son in law, the husband of Fatima (A.S.), addressed the huge crowd of the people who had gathered on the spot, and addressed them saying:

"By God, I see the faces which, if they pray to God for mountains to move from their places, the mountains will immediately move !

O believers in the Jesus of Nazareth, I will tell you the truth that should ye fail to enter into some agreement with Muhammad(S.A.W.) and if these souls whom Muhammad(S.A.W.) has brought with him, curse you, ye will be wiped out of existence to the last day of the life of the earth ! The people readily agreed to the advice counseled by their Leader. They beseeched the

Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) to give up the idea of the agreed Mubahila and requested for themselves to be allowed to continue their faith, offering to pay ' Jizya '. - Al Tabari, Commentary of the Quran, v 2 p 192 - 193

When the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) heard these words he remarked, "By God, had the Christians of Najran contested with us, they would have been transformed into monkeys and swines. Fire would have rained over them."

Christians Signs Treaty with the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)

When the Christian Pontiffs backed away from Mubahila, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) gave them two choices; to either accept Islam or agree to come to terms. The Christians would not agree to accept Islam and therefore a treaty was signed on the following terms:

1. Every year, the Christians of Najran would give to the Islamic Government two thousand pieces of clothing, the cost of which would be forty dirhams each.
2. They would also provide 30 horses, 30 camels, 30 battle armours and 30 spears, temporarily to the Muslim army, if the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) needed these in any war.

The treaty was dictated by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), written by Imam Ali (A.S.) and had the signatures of four companions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) as witnesses.

In addition to the above, the treaty also had the following words:

"..... The people of Najran will remain under the protection of Allah and His Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). Their lives, their religion, their lands and property, will all remain safe and it will be the responsibility of Allah and His Prophet (S.A.W.) to protect them. This treaty holds good for all people of Najran, whether they are present here or not, whether they are members of the tribe or dependent upon them, whether they are slaves or servants. No change will be made in their rights or privileges....."

One of the important conditions agreed in this treaty was that the people of Najran would not deal in usury (interest taking) of any sort, otherwise the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) would not remain bound by the treaty with them. After the Christian returned home, a few respectable persons from Najran came to Madinah and willingly accepted Islam and became true Muslims.

Unique Triumph of Islam

The event of Mubahila is an extremely important part of history because it shows how close the Ahlul Bayt were to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) and Allah. Imam Ali (A.S.) used to be called the "Soul of the Prophet" after the event, because the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) took him to the

field of Mubahila as his soul.

On the basis of the "mubahalah verse", Sunni interpreters such as Zamakhshari, Baydawi, Imam Fakhr Razi and others regard `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn (A.S.) superior to all other people and argue that Hassan and Husayn are the sons of the Messenger (S.A.W.) of Allah. The term "anfusina" in the "mubahalah verse" proves the unity of the heart and soul of Prophet Muhammad and `Ali. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) stated: "`Ali is of me and I am of `Ali." ("Fadail al-Khamsah" 343/1).

The "mubahalah tradition" has been recounted in different books of "sirah" and history with various wordings. These include those of Tirmidhi ("Sahih" 166/2) which quotes S`ad ibn Abi Waqqas as follows: "When the mubahalah verse was recited, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) summoned `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn and said: `O Allah, these are the Members of my Household." This tradition has been narrated by Hakim Nishaburi in "Al-Mustadrak" 150/3 and Bayhaqi in "Sunan" 63/7. Hakim regards this tradition as authentic.

The Verse of Malediction (mubahilah): "But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then, say, 'Come, let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, and let us beseech Allah and invoke His curse upon the liars'." This milestone event in Islamic history has been narrated by all the historians, narrators, and commentators of the Qur'an and is an event which reveals the exalted status of the Family of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.).

Although other women were present in the family the Prophet (S.A.W.) at that time, all the commentators, narrators, and historians agree that, in this Qur'anic verse, "our women" refers only to Lady Fatima al-Zahra' (A.S.), "our children" refers only to Hasan and Husayn (A.S.), and "ourselves" refers only to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) and Imam 'Ali (A.S.).

Zamakhshari, in his Tafsir al-Kashshaf, narrates the event in this way: "When this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) asked the Christians to the malediction to invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars. The Christians held a discourse among themselves that night in which their leader, 'Abd al-Masih, states his views as follows. He said: "O Christians, know that Muhammad (S.A.W.) is a God-sent prophet who has brought you the final message from your Lord. By God, no nation ever dared to challenge a prophet with malediction but that woe befell them.

Not only would they perish, but their children would also be afflicted with the curse." Saying this - that it is better to reach a compromise with the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) rather than challenge his truth and perish - 'Abd al-Masih advised his party to stop hostilities and retain their religion by submitting to the Prophet's terms. "So if you persist (for a confrontation) we will all perish.

But if you, to keep your faith, refuse (to have a showdown) and remain as you are, then make peace with the man (the Holy Prophet) and return to your land."

The next day, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), carrying Husayn in his arms, leading Hasan by the hand, followed by his daughter Lady Fatima, behind whom came 'Ali, entered the appointed place and was heard saying to his family: "When I invoke Allah, second this invocation." The Christian Pontiff of Najran, upon seeing the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) and his family, addressed the Christians: "O Christians!

I am beholding such faces that if God wishes, for their sake, He would move mountains for them. Do not accept their challenge for malediction, for if you do, you would all perish, and there would remain no Christians on the face of the earth till the Day of Resurrection." Heeding his advice, the Christians said to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.):

"O Abul-Qasim, we have decided not to hold malediction with you. You keep your religion, and we will keep ours." The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) told them: "If you refuse to hold malediction, then submit to Allah, and you will receive what the Muslims receive and contribute what the Muslims contribute." The Christians delegates, saying that they had no desire to fight the

Muslims, proposed a treaty asking for peace. The Prophet of Islam (S.A.W.) accepted. This historic event of a unique triumph of Islam is taken by the Shias as a religious thanksgiving festival of the triumph against falsehood. Some of the significance of this event are as follows:

- This event un-questionably establishes the truth about the spiritual purity of the Ahl al Bayt (A.S.).
- It proves beyond any doubt as to who are the members of the house of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.).
- The seriousness and the solemnity of the occasion demands absolute purity, spiritual as well as physical in the individuals to serve in the fateful occasion for the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) to ! present them to God as the best one of His creation to be heard in the prayers of Truth