

MUHAMMAD'S BIOGRAPHY (PART 11 OF 12): THE RETURN TO MECCA

Rating: 4.4

Description: Events which led to the conquest of Mecca, and eventually to the end of idolatry in Arabia.

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By: IslamReligion.com

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The Campaign of Khyber

In the seventh year or the Hijrah the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, led a campaign against Khyber, the stronghold of the Jewish tribes in North Arabia, which had become a hornets' nest of his enemies. The Jews of Khyber thenceforth became tenants of the Muslims. It was at Khyber that a Jewish woman prepared poisoned meat for the Prophet, of which he only tasted a morsel. Hardly had the morsel touched his lips than he became aware that it was poisoned. Without swallowing it, he warned his companions of the poison, but one Muslim, who had already swallowed a mouthful, died later. The woman who had cooked the meat was put to death.

Pilgrimage to Mecca

In the same year the Prophet's vision was fulfilled: he visited Mecca unopposed. In accordance with the terms of the truce the idolaters evacuated the city, and from the surrounding heights watched the procedure of the Muslims.

Truce broken by the Quraish

A little later, a tribe allied to the Quraish broke the truce by attacking a tribe that was in alliance with the Prophet and massacring them even in the sanctuary at Mecca. Afterwards they were afraid because of what they had done. They sent Abu Sufyan to Medina to ask for the existing treaty to be renewed and, its term prolonged. They hoped that he would arrive before the tidings of the massacre. But a messenger from the injured tribe had been before him and Abu Sufyan failed again.

Conquest of Mecca

Then the Prophet summoned all the Muslims capable of bearing arms and marched to Mecca. The Quraish were overawed. Their cavalry put up a show of defense before the town, but were routed without bloodshed; and the Prophet entered his native city as conqueror.

The inhabitants expected vengeance for their past misdeeds, but the Prophet proclaimed a general amnesty. In their relief and surprise, the whole population of Mecca hastened to swear allegiance. The Prophet ordered all the idols which were in the sanctuary to be destroyed, saying: "Truth hath come; darkness hath vanished away;" and the Muslim call to prayer was heard in Mecca.

Battle of Hunain

In the same year there was an angry gathering of pagan tribes eager to regain the Kaaba. The Prophet led twelve thousand men against them. At Hunain, in a deep ravine, his troops were ambushed by the enemy and almost put to flight. It was with difficulty that they were rallied to the Prophet and his bodyguard of faithful comrades who alone stood firm. But the victory, when it came, was complete and the booty enormous, for many of the hostile tribes had brought out with them everything that they possessed.

Conquest of Taif

The tribe of Thaqeef were among the enemy at Hunain. After that victory their city of Taif was besieged by the Muslims, and finally reduced. Then the Prophet appointed a governor of Mecca, and himself returned to Medina to the boundless joy of the Ansar, who had feared lest, now that he had regained his native city, he might forsake them and make Mecca the capital.

The Tabook Expedition

In the ninth year of the Hijrah, hearing that an army was again being mustered in Syria, the Prophet called on all the Muslims to support him in a great campaign. In spite of infirmity, the Prophet led an army against the Syrian frontier in midsummer. The far distance, the hot season, and the fact that it was harvest time and the prestige of the enemy caused many to excuse themselves and many more to stay behind without excuse. They camped that night without food or drink, sheltering behind their camels; and so they reached the oasis of Tabuk, finally returning to Mecca after converting several tribes. But the campaign ended peacefully. The army advanced to Tabuk, on the border of Syria, but there they learnt that the enemy had not yet gathered.

Declaration of Immunity

Although Mecca had been conquered and its people were now Muslims, the official order of the pilgrimage had not been changed; the pagan Arabs performing it in their

manner, and the Muslims in their manner. It was only after the pilgrims' caravan had left Medina in the ninth year of the Hijrah, when Islam was dominant in North Arabia, that the Declaration of Immunity, as it is called, was revealed. Its purport was that after that year Muslims only were to make the pilgrimage, exception being made for such of the idolaters as had an ongoing treaty with the Muslims and had never broken their treaties nor supported anyone against those they had treaties with. Such, then, were to enjoy the privileges of their treaty for the term thereof, but when their treaty had expired they would be as other idolaters. This proclamation marked the end of idol-worship in Arabia.

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