

Understanding and Responding to Islamic Terrorism

Lesson 5: Martyrdom Ideology

Lesson Outline

- Martyrdom and Reward
- Martyrdom and the Islamic Prohibition Against Suicide
- Biblical Response to Martyrdom Ideology

Martyrdom and Reward

The Qu'ran Promises Paradise for Martyrs

- **Surah 3:157**—“And if you are killed or die, in the cause of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all (the wealth) they can cumulate.” (3:157)
- **Surah 4:74**—“So let those who prefer the next life over the present life, battle on (against aggression) in the cause of Allah. To him who fights in Allah’s cause whether he is killed or victorious, soon We shall give him a great reward.”
- **Surah 4:74 (Ali)** – “Let those who fight in the cause of God who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. To him who fighteth in the cause of God,—whether he is slain or gets victory—soon shall We give him a reward of great (value).”

Martyrdom and Reward

The Qu'ran Promises Paradise for Martyrs

- **Surah 9:111**—“Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur’an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment.”

Martyrdom and Reward

Muhammad Promises Paradise for Martyrs

- Hadith 20:4645 from Muslim: "He (the Messenger of Allah)...said: 'There is another act which elevates the position of a man in Paradise to a grade one hundred (higher), and the elevation between one grade and the other is equal to the height of the heaven from the earth.' He (Abu Sa'id) said: 'What is that act?' He replied: 'Jihad in the way of Allah! Jihad in the way of Allah!'"

Martyrdom and Reward

Muhammad Promises Paradise for Martyrs

- "Beverley writes, 'The prophet is quoted as saying, "The sword is the key of heaven and hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of Allah, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting or prayer; whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven, and at the day of judgment his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim.'"

Martyrdom and Reward

Muhammad Promises Paradise for Martyrs

- Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari records: "Our Prophet has informed us that our Lord says: 'Whoever amongs us is killed as a martyr shall go to Paradise.'"
- Hadith 52:73 from Bukhari: "Allah's Apostle said, 'Know that Paradise is under the shades of swords.'"
- "There are two kinds of eyes that will never see the fire of Hell: those of soldiers who act as guards on battlefields and fronts, and those who weep because of the fear of God."

Martyrdom and Reward

- "When God gave permission to His apostle to fight, the second Aqaba (agreement) contained conditions involving war which were not in the first act of fealty. Now they bound themselves to war against all and sundry for God and His apostle, while he promised them for faithful service thus the reward of Paradise." (TLM, 208).

Early indication that Muhammad believed that faithfulness to Islam (and Allah's prophet) included/entailed fighting to protect/advance/enforce Islam.

The Qur'an on Those Who Fight

- Surah 61:10-12—“O you who have believed, shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment? [It is that] you believe in Allah and His Messenger and strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if you should know. He will forgive for you your sins and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence. That is the great attainment.”

The Qur'an on Those Who Fight

- Surah 4:74-76—“So let those fight in the cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And he who fights in the cause of Allah and is killed or achieves victory – We will bestow upon him a great reward. And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, ‘Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?’ Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of Taghut. So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak.”

The Qur'an on Those Who Fight

- Surah 4:95-96—“Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] – other than the disabled – and the mujahideen, [who strive and fight] in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives. Allah has preferred the mujahideen through their wealth and their lives over those who remain [behind], by degrees. And to both Allah has promised the best [reward]. But Allah has preferred the mujahideen over those who remain [behind] with a great reward – Degrees [of high position] from Him and forgiveness and mercy. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful.”

Problems with Muhammad's Promise of Forgiveness

1. Allah is not bound to forgive anyone for any reason
2. Allah forgives those whom he chooses to forgive (2:284; 5:18)
3. Muhammad wasn't even sure of his own salvation (46:8-9; 48:1-2; and later 110:1-3)

Question: Why didn't Muhammad die in jihad for guaranteed Paradise?

Martyrdom and the Islamic Prohibition Against Suicide

Muslims can experience a martyr's death through various means.

- Dying in battle
- Dying as a prisoner of war
- Suicide bombings

Martyrdom and the Islamic Prohibition Against Suicide

Great emphasis today in Islamic extremist movements is placed on suicide attacks

- Muslim fighters usually wearing bomb vests or driving cars filled with explosives
- Detonate in areas with greatest number of soft targets (people)
- Can be used to attack direct targets (military, government facilities, etc.)
- Also used to attack non-combatants who are thought to be supporting the enemy in some way.

Bukhari (52:256) – “The Prophet...was asked whether it was permissible to attack the pagan warriors at night with the probability of exposing their women and children to danger. The Prophet replied, ‘They (i.e. women and children) are from them (i.e. pagans).’”

Martyrdom and the Islamic Prohibition Against Suicide

Suicide in the Qur'an and Hadith

- Suicide is condemned in **Surah 2:195**—“And from your (own) wealth, spend in the cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction; But do good: Because Allah loves those who do good.”

Al-Tabrīzī records a tradition of Muhammad in which the prophet condemns suicide and prescribes a drastic punishment. Muhammad states, “One who throws himself off a mountain cliff and kills himself as a result will be doing the same permanently to himself in Hell. And one who takes poison and kills himself as a result shall be holding the same poison in his hand taking it permanently in Hell.”

Harsh condemnation of suicide, but consider Surahs 5:32; 17:33

Martyrdom and the Islamic Prohibition Against Suicide

Suicide vs. Martyrdom

- From a logical standpoint, it appears that martyrdom via suicide bombings goes contrary to the Islamic prohibition against suicide. However, a distinction is made between “suicide” in the general sense of the word, and killing oneself in the cause of *jihad* .

Abu-Muhammad al-Maqdisi – “His case rests on the premise that suicide is motivated by fear and desperation, and that it is an inherently selfish act; martyrdom operations, on the other hand, cannot be considered suicides because they have altruistic intentions.”

Martyrdom and the Islamic Prohibition Against Suicide

Suicide vs. Martyrdom

- According to Hadith: “The Prophet said, ‘Nobody who enters Paradise will ever like to return to this world even if he were offered everything, except the martyr who will desire to return to this world and be killed 10 times for the sake of the great honor that has been bestowed upon him.’”

“By defining suicide bombing as martyrdom, radical Islamists have succeeded in providing a religious justification for their use of the tactic.”

CONCLUSION: Suicide in *jihad* is justified because of great honor and religious motivation.

Biblical Response to Martyrdom Ideology

Dying for God vs. Living for God

- The phenomenon of Islamic martyrdom ideology is fascinating in that it promotes dying for God over living for God.
- Notice that the heroes in this ideology are not the lifelong religious adherents who daily yield to Allah in submission. The heroes are the ones who kill themselves and others to absolve their sins.

Luke 9:23-24—“And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”

Biblical Response to Martyrdom Ideology

Martyrdom and Salvation

- Martyrdom via suicide is rationalized because of its role in religious jihad. It is different from suicide in the general sense.
- Martyrdom via death in battle is also greatly prized by Muslim fighters.

Why is there such a great desire for martyrdom?

- Islam offers no guarantee for Paradise. It is a works-based salvation system that exhorts followers to store up good deeds to outweigh their bad deeds on the Day of Judgment.
- Martyrdom through jihad offers greater hope for making it into Paradise.

Biblical Response to Martyrdom Ideology

Martyrdom and Salvation

“Individuals who become martyrs, according to the jihadist concept of martyrdom, accrue numerous benefits, ranging from the well-publicized seventy-two virgins in heaven to lesser-known benefits, such as dying without pain and having blood that smells like incense. Perhaps most important, because of the religious implications of suicide, one of the biggest benefits promised is that martyrdom erases prior sins.” – Springer, Regens, and Edger, 178

Biblical Response to Martyrdom Ideology

Martyrdom and Salvation

- Martyrdom offers a “guarantee” into Paradise in a religion that offers no guarantees for the average follower.

How do Christians respond?

- The Gospel offers a guarantee of salvation.
- Followers of Jesus can know that they have experienced new life in Christ and will live forever with him in heaven.
- Our guarantee does not require death in the name of religion or the murder of other people.
- We rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Questions and Concerns