

Detailed Biography of Prophet Muhammad - Meccan Period (part3 of 3)

Description: A three-part lesson detailing the life of Prophet Muhammad before prophethood and the years to follow after prophethood until the Muslims were forced to leave Mecca. Part 3: Rejection of the message and the persecution of Muslims.

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Objectives

- To learn about the rejection of the message of the Prophet.
- To learn about the persecution of early Muslims.
- To learn about the migration of some Muslims to Abyssinia.
- To learn about the Prophet's visit to Taif.
- To learn about the Pledge at Aqabah.

Arabic Terms

- *Kabah* - The cube-shaped structure located in the city of Mecca. It serves as a focal point towards which all Muslims face when praying.

Rejection of the Message

There were several different reasons why people refused to accept the message of Islam.



First, most of them were so attached to their tribal customs that they could not imagine abandoning the ways of their ancestors.

Second, the leaders among the Quraysh were fearful of losing their position and power.

Third, the Arabs loved their freedom to indulge in all types of immoral behavior.

The Meccan opposition began in the form of insults and accusations. Some resulted to character assassination, calling the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, a magician, a poet or insane.

Persecution

Islam was making progress, slowly but surely, despite the negative propaganda. People began to make fun of the believers openly, laughing at them as they walked by. So the Quraysh stepped up their persecution and began torturing several Muslims, especially the slaves and the poor ones.

Bilal ibn Rabah, a black slave from Ethiopia who had accepted Islam, was dragged out into the burning hot desert by his owner and forced to lie with his back on the scorching sand. Then, a giant boulder was placed on his chest and he was told, "You will stay like this until you die or until you reject Muhammad and worship our idols." He would respond by saying, "One! One!" meaning that he will only worship Allah alone. One day, during the torture process, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq passed by, purchased Bilal, and set him free, as he did with six other Muslim slaves who were being persecuted.

In Abyssinia

In the 5th year of prophethood, the Messenger of Allah recommended that some of the believers migrate to Abyssinia. This land, which is across the Red Sea in Africa, was run by a just king known as Negus. Over a dozen Muslims, both men and women, migrated, including even the Prophet's own daughter, Ruqayyah, with her husband.

Relief Comes

In the sixth year of the mission, Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib, one of the uncles of the Prophet, had a change of heart and sincerely accepted Islam. His acceptance of Islam came as a great shock to Mecca. Hamza's Islam proved to be a great source of strength for the Muslims and would help ease the persecution.

Later, Umar ibn Al-Khattab also accepted Islam and did not keep it a secret. He went to the enemies of Islam and told them that he had become a Muslim. They were enraged but there was nothing they could do, because they feared Umar. Because of both Hamza and Umar, the Muslims were able to worship openly at the *Kabah* without fearing the Quraysh.

Sanctions

Quraysh were getting frustrated. They had tried every possible way to stop the message of Islam. But the more they tried, the more Islam continued to spread. Something more drastic had to be done. Some particularly Islamophobic leaders of the

Quraysh held a secret meeting in which they decided to boycott the clan of Prophet Muhammad until they agree to hand the Prophet over to them. An agreement was signed that both the clan of Hashim and their close allies, the Muttalib clan, would be boycotted by the Quraysh. No one would be allowed to buy, sell or intermarry with them. The situation lasted for three years until some of the Meccans decided that it was enough.

Year of Sadness

Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet, was ill and nearing his last days. Before he breathed his last, the Prophet would try one last time to get him to reconsider Islam, but he refused. It became open season to target the Prophet, now that his clan protection was virtually gone. Shortly after his death, his hostile uncle Abu Lahab took this opportunity to target his nephew. He forced his own two sons to divorce their wives, both of whom were the daughters of the Prophet.

Visit to Taif

After ten years of spreading Islam in Mecca, the Prophet traveled to a nearby town called al-Taif, about fifty miles to the east. He visited the leaders from the tribe of Thaqif, only to be insulted and rejected by them.

Calling Tribes to Islam

For several years, the Prophet called the different tribes of Arabia to Islam during the pilgrimage season. Since most of the tribes would have at least some of its members go to Mecca every year, most of Arabia had already at least heard about the message of Islam. In the eleventh year of prophethood, a few men from the tribe of Khazraj accepted Islam. They lived in a town called Yathrib which had recently been plagued with constant civil wars.

Pledges at Aqabah

The following year, the men from Yathrib returned to Mecca with a delegation of twelve people. The Prophet met them secretly at night at a place called Aqabah. This time, the Prophet made them take a pledge of loyalty: “you will not ascribe any partners to Allah, you will not steal, you will not commit adultery, you will not kill your children, you will not slander others and you will not disobey me in any good that I order you.”

It was now the thirteenth year of prophethood and this time seventy-three men and two women went to Mecca to meet the Prophet during the pilgrimage season. They met again secretly at Aqabah, but this time they specifically requested that the Prophet come to Yathrib and serve as their new leader.

Before accepting their offer, he took a pledge from each one of them: “you will listen

and obey me whether it is easy or difficult, you will donate whether you are well-off or otherwise, you will encourage others to good and warn against evil, you will not fear any censure when you do something for the sake of Allah and you will protect me the way you would protect your own families.”

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