

WHAT IS JIHAD?

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Since 9/11, the word "Jihad" has become a household word. Jihad literally means "struggle" in Arabic. Among conservative Muslims, the word has come to mean "holy war".

There are actually two kinds of Jihad. There is the Greater Jihad, which is the inner struggle for sanctity. Then there is the Lesser Jihad, or an actual fight against infidels, or non-Muslims. For our purposes, we will discuss only the Lesser Jihad. After all, this is the Jihad that has resulted in countless attacks against U.S. and Israeli interests. The Muslim scripture - the Qur'an - refers to Jews and Christians specifically as infidels. Therefore, it should be no surprise that Israel and the U.S. (a nation at least founded as a Christian nation) would be the primary targets of the Jihad.

Many would say that only "radical" Muslims espouse Jihad. If that is so, then every Muslim who believes in the Qur'an must be radical. As you shall see, the Qur'an specifically makes a case for waging Jihad against infidels. The following are quotes from the Qur'an:

- "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into the hearts of the enemies of Allah...Whatever ye spend in the cause of Allah shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly." (**Surah 8:60**)
- "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" (**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**).
- "For the unbelievers are to you open enemies" (**Surah 4:101**)

- "Seize them and slay them wherever ye find them; and in any case take no friends or helpers from their ranks." (**Surah 4:89**)
- "Then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them and seize them, beleaguer them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war." (**Surah 9:5**)

As you can see, the commandment to wage a holy war against infidels comes not from some radical Islamic cleric. It comes, in fact, from the Islamic scripture! And while there are radical Muslim sects, one of which thinks that Jihad should be the sixth Pillar of Islam, the practice of Jihad is mainstream. For even more evidence, let's refer to the Hadith. The Hadith are the quotes and actions of the Muslim prophet Muhammad. They are often used in conjunction with the Qur'an to clarify scripture. As you can see, Muhammad favored Holy War as well:

- "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.

Why is it important to know this? Because every non-Muslim must realize that according to Islam, you are an infidel. And to a faithful Muslim who believes the Qur'an and faithfully executes his religious duties, you are an enemy.

It's also important to know this, because fundamental Islamic nations make war and fund terror based on the belief in Jihad. Many of these nations outlaw not only Christian evangelizing, but also the very *practice* of Christianity. People have been imprisoned and even sentenced to death for being openly Christian. These people are Christian martyrs, who contended for their faith and the cost of their own earthly lives. What great rewards God must have for them in Heaven!

Jihad in the Quran and Hadith

Jihad in the Quran

The Qur'an is considered by Muslims to be the most important authority in all of Islam. The Qur'an clearly teaches and encourages Holy War, or Jihad.

1. **Surah 61:4** "Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure,"
2. **Surah 2:190-193** "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits...And 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. But if they cease, Allah is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And 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"
3. **Surah 9:38-39** "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.
4. **Surah 8:59-70** "Their state is like that of the people of Pharaoh, and of those before them who treated their Lord's signs as lies. We therefore destroy them in their sins, and We drowned the people of Pharaoh; for they were all doers of wrong. The worst beasts truly in the sight of God are the thankless who will not believe; They with whom thou hast leagued, and who are ever breaking their league, and who fear not God! If thou take them in war, then, by the example of their fate, scatter those who shall follow them - that they may be warned: Or if thou fear treachery from any people, throw back their treaty to them as thou fairly mayest, for God loveth not the treacherous. And think not that the infidels shall escape Us! They shall not weaken God....O Prophet! stir up the faithful to the fight. Twenty of you who stand firm shall vanquish two hundred: and if there be an hundred of you they shall vanquish a thousand of the infidels, for they are a people devoid of understanding....No prophet hath been enabled to take captives until he had made great slaughter in the earth. Ye desire the passing fruitions of this world, but God desireth the next life for you. And God is mighty and wise.
5. **Sura 9:5** "And when the sacred months are passed, kill those who join other gods with God wherever ye shall find them; and seize them, besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush: but if they shall convert, and observe prayer, and pay the obligatory alms, then let them go their way, for God is gracious, merciful.
6. **Sura 9:12** "But if, after alliance made, they break their oaths and revile your religion, then do battle with the ring-leaders of infidelity - for no oaths are binding with them - that

they may desist. What! will ye not fight against those Meccans who have broken their oaths and aimed to expel your Apostle, and attacked you first? Will ye dread them? God is more worthy of your fear, if ye are believers! So make war on them: By your hands will God chastise them, and will put them to shame, and will give you victory over them, and will heal the bosoms of a people who believe;"

7. **Sura 9:30** "Make war upon such of those to whom the Scriptures have been given as believe not in God, or in the Last Day, and who forbid not that which God and His Apostle have forbidden, and who profess not the profession of the truth, until they pay tribute out of hand, and they be humbled. The Jews say, "Ezra is a son of God"; and the Christians say, "The Messiah is a son of God." Such the sayings in their mouths! They resemble the saying of the infidels of old! God do battle with them! How are they misguided? They take their teachers, and their monks, and the Messiah, son of Mary, for lords besides God, though bidden to worship one God only. There is no God but He! Far from His glory be what they associate with Him! Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths: but God only desireth to perfect His light, albeit the infidels abhor it. He it is who hath sent His Apostle with the guidance and a religion of the truth, that He may make it victorious over every other religion, albeit they who assign partners to God be averse from it.

Also see Sura 61 and Sura 4

Jihad in the Hadith

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. The following is what Muhammad had to say about Jihad as recorded in the Hadith.

1. **The second best deed is to participate in Jihad (Volume 1, Book 2, Number 25, Narrated Abu Huraira)** - Allah's Apostle was asked, "What is the best deed?" He replied, "To believe in Allah and His Apostle (Muhammad). The questioner then asked, "What is the next in goodness? He replied, "To participate in Jihad (religious fighting) in Allah's Cause." The questioner again asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To perform Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca) 'Mubrur, (which is accepted by Allah and is performed with the intention of seeking Allah's pleasure only and not to show off and without committing a sin and in accordance with the traditions of the Prophet)."
2. **Muhammad said if someone leaves Islam, to kill them (Volume 4, Book 52, Number 260, Narrated Ikrima)** - All burnt some people and this news reached Ibn 'Abbas, who said, "Had I been in his place I would not have burnt them, as the Prophet said, 'Don't punish anybody with Allah's Punishment.' No doubt, I would have killed them, for the Prophet said, "If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him."
3. **Volume 1, Book 2, Number 35, Narrated Abu Huraira** "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 saiya 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."
4. **Volume 3, Book 46, Number 726** "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 (holy battles), Hajj, and my duty to serve my mother, I would have loved to die as a slave."

Volume 9, Book 93, Number 555 "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 or return him with reward or booty he has earned to his residence from where he went out."

Clarifying Jihad in the Qur'an Using The Principle of Naskh

“Islam is a religion of peace.” That has been the motto repeated frequently by politicians, the media, and Islamic organizations on a frequent basis lately. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many have tried to distance the peace-loving Muslims from those who commit terror by claiming that Islam really is a peaceful religion, and it has been “hijacked” by extremists who do not practice the true, peaceful teachings of the Qur'an. But what is the truth? Is Islam really a religion of peace? What about all those verses in the Qur'an that speak of love and peace? In this article – which will be a religious study rather than political – we'll examine what the Qur'an says about love, peace, war, and jihad, and how these reconcile.

We've received many emails from Muslims. While some have been vitriolic and even threatening, the majority of the emails have been, at the very least, respectful and courteous. These earnest and sincere Muslims point out that the Qur'an directs Muslims to be respectful toward “people of the Book” (Christians and Jews). They'll point out that the Qur'an teaches that there is no compulsion in Islam, and true Muslims are to act with love and respect for mankind. They claim that Islamic terrorists have twisted the Qur'an to justify their evil acts. They provide many examples from the Qur'an to back their claims. **Surah 2:62** says, “*Verily! Those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.*” **Surah 2:256** says that there is no compulsion in religion. Indeed, there are at least 114 verses in the Qur'an that speak of love, peace, or forgiveness.

Where then, is the justification for waging jihad? What motivated the nineteen terrorists on 9/11? What inspires the homicide bombers around the world? Well, the answer to that is also found in the Qur'an, as well as the Hadiths (the recorded teachings of Muhammad). While at least 114 verses speak of love or peace, sixty percent of the Qur'an deals in some fashion with jihad! **Surah 9:5** says, “*Then when the Sacred Months have passed, then kill the Mushrikûn (those who join gods with God) wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and prepare for them each and every ambush. But if they repent and perform As-Salât (prayers), and give Zakât (alms), then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*” This seems to contradict the verse that speaks of no religious compulsion in Islam.

When the Qur'an speaks of “those who join gods with God,” it refers to the polytheists. To Muslims, this includes Christians who believe in the Trinity. The concept of the Trinity eludes most Muslims, who believe that Christians worship three separate gods, rather than one triune God. Moreover, because of the reverence paid to Mary by many of those in the Middle East that Muslims know as Christians, most Muslims (Muhammad included) think the Trinity refers to God the Father, Jesus, and Mary. So any time the Qur'an refers to polytheists, or “those who join gods with God,” it is referring to Christians as well.

Surah 4:89 tells Muslims to not take Christians, Jews, or pagans as friends, and also orders the murder of those who depart from Islam: *“They wish that you reject Faith, as they have rejected (Faith), and thus that you all become equal (like one another). So take not Auliya’ (protectors or friends) from them, till they emigrate in the Way of Allah. But if they turn back (from Islam), take (hold) of them and kill them wherever you find them, and take neither Auliya’ (protectors or friends) nor helpers from them.”* **Surah 9:123** says, *“O you who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are close to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who are the Al-Muttaqun (the pious).”* The list goes on:

“And fight them until there is no more Fitnah (disbelief and polytheism: i.e. worshipping others besides Allah) and the religion (worship) will all be for Allah Alone [in the whole of the world]. But if they cease (worshipping others besides Allah), then certainly, Allah is All-Seer of what they do.” **8:39**

“It is not for a Prophet that he should have prisoners of war (and free them with ransom) until he had made a great slaughter (among his enemies) in the land. You desire the good of this world (i.e. the money of ransom for freeing the captives), but Allah desires (for you) the Hereafter. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.” **8:67**

“Fight against those who (1) believe not in Allah, (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (4) and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (i.e. Islam) among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), until they pay the Jizyah (tax) with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.” **9:29**

If I went on to cite all such verses from the Qur’an, this article would be almost as long as the Qur’an. And that doesn’t even include the extra-Qur’anic teachings of Muhammad that are recorded in the Hadiths. So the question arises, how does one reconcile the verses that command Muslims to wage jihad against infidels with the verses that speak of love, peace, and forgiveness? How do we reconcile the teaching that there is no compulsion of religion in Islam, with the teaching that those who leave Islam must be killed, and Christians and Jews may escape death if they convert to Islam or pay the Jizyah?

The answer to those questions is the principle of *naskh*. In his book *Islam and Terrorism*, Dr. Mark Gabriel described *naskh* in this way, *“Naskh is based on the fact that the Quran was revealed to Muhammad at different times over a period of about twenty-two years. Some parts of the Quran came later, and some parts came earlier. To solve a contradiction, they [Islamic scholars] decided that new revelations would override (nasikh) previous revelations.”*^[1] The disparity between the earlier writings of Muhammad and the later writings which took precedence can be understood by a brief examination of Muhammad’s life at that time.

Muhammad began writing the Qur'an when he was living in Mecca. At that time, his followers were a small minority there. Muhammad committed himself to peaceful activities such as prayer, writing, and fasting. His new doctrine of Islam was spreading slowly at that time, and wasn't very popular with the local populace. As a result, his Qur'anic writing put a kind, peaceful, and non-threatening face to Islam. Muhammad spent several years in Mecca, but began to suffer persecution at the hands of his tribe. The Quraysh tribe was the largest tribe in the area, and its leaders were unhappy that many in the tribe were departing from idol worship and adhering to this new religion Muhammad had started. After failing to silence Muhammad with bribes, they persecuted him (even attempting to kill him), and ultimately caused him to flee Mecca. Muhammad settled in the area of Medina, known in that day as Yathrib.

In Medina, Muhammad faced less resistance, and his band of followers grew in number. As his following swelled, his tone of peaceful co-existence began to change to one of preparation. He was not simply enlarging a body of religious converts; he was raising an army. He had not forgotten Mecca or the Quraysh tribe, and he had plans for them. His followers multiplied to a number that was at first, influential. Then they surpassed merely influential and became dominant. Muhammad had his army. His writings shifted from preparation to jihad. He would now increase his following by conquest. The sword replaced the pen as his means for proselytizing. His army waged war on the "unbelievers," and Muhammad personally led the charge in dozens of battles. His revelations on jihad became bolder and more specific, and his religion became political as he sought to make the Arabian lands submit to Islam.

With that history in mind, it is easier to understand that the portions of the Qur'an Muhammad wrote in Mecca have more of a "let's get along" ring to them. The portions he wrote in Medina, especially after he began his conquests, spoke more of forced conversion and spreading Islam through conquest (wars of jihad). Using the principle of *naskh*, these later writings supercede any contradictory statements written earlier.

Does the Qur'an speak of a religion of peace, love, and forgiveness? It certainly does. Does the Qur'an also speak of jihad and conquest against non-Muslims? Yes, this is also true. The *mujahadeen* (those who wage jihad) are those who correctly understand the principle of *naskh*, and practice the doctrine of jihad against the infidels. They have not hijacked Islam. They practice the fundamental teachings of their prophet.

Jesus commanded His followers to spread the gospel to every nation. Yet He did not teach or condone evangelism by force. In fact, his tone is much different than Muhammad's: "*You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous*" ([Matthew 4:43-45](#)). Jesus and His disciples understood that everyone has free will. Rather than force unbelievers to pay a tax or die (like Muhammad did in [Surah 9:29](#)), Paul told Christians, "*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ*" ([Ephesians 4:15](#)). Jesus wants us to share the gospel with the world, including Muslims. At the same time, he wants us to do so with the love and patience that comes from the Spirit of God. As we speak of the One True God, eternally present as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, let us do so with the love and charity Christ demands of us. Let us demonstrate to the world that peace comes through Christ Jesus our Lord, and not through conquest and *jihad*.

1. Mark A. Gabriel, *Islam and Terrorism*, (Florida: Charisma House, 2002), p. 30. Dr. Mark Gabriel earned his Ph.D. in Islamic Studies at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. He was an imam at the Al-Azhar mosque and taught at the university. After accepting Jesus Christ as his personal savior, his own father tried to kill him. Dr. Gabriel was forced to flee his homeland, and he changed his Muslim name to his current Christian name. As a student at Al-Azhar, one of his lecturers was a blind sheikh named Omar Abdel Rahman, who was later convicted of masterminding the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City.

* Quotes from the Qur'an were taken from The Noble Qur'an.