

## ***Was Yazīd ‘forgiven’?***

Centuries after the tragedy of Karbalā, no Muslim has forgotten the sacrifices of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him) and his followers. By refusing to give in to the demands of the tyrant Yazīd, Imām al-Husayn taught us the invaluable lesson - that Islam does not tolerate injustice, oppression and evil. Insha Allāh until the Day of Judgment, the name of al-Husayn will live on to denote bravery, courage, unparalleled devotion and piety.

However, to the astonishment and surprise of countless devotees, there is a small minority of Muslims who argue that Yazīd should not be categorised as a bad leader. In fact, they go as far as suggesting that he is forgiven. To defend their position they offer in evidence a hadīth narrated in *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*:

Umm Haram informed us that she heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) saying: ‘Paradise is granted to the first batch of my followers who will undertake a naval expedition’. Umm Haram added, ‘I said ‘O Allāh’s Messenger! Will I be amongst them?’ He replied; ‘You are amongst them’. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) then said: ‘The first army amongst the followers who will invade Caesar’s City will have their sins forgiven’. I asked ‘Will I be one of them, O Allāh’s Messenger?’ He replied in the negative.<sup>1</sup>

Yazīd’s supporters purport that Yazīd was the first to invade Caesar’s City, and therefore he is deemed as ‘forgiven’, in the words of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

This hadīth does not offer a vindication for Yazīd. In no sense does the saying of the Prophet act as a praise for him or a form of forgiveness. There is clear historical evidence to prove conclusively that Yazīd was *not* the first person or part of the first army to attack Caesar’s City (Constantinople). The reason is as follows:

\* According to Ibn Khaldūn, one of the most famous and credible Muslim historians, the first group of Muslims to attack went in the year 42/662. He writes: ‘The Muslims first entered the Roman territories in 42/662 and they fought with them and killed a number of them’.<sup>2</sup>

According to Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr, in his book *al-Bidāya wa’l-Nihāya*, Mu’āwiya (may Allāh be pleased with him) was the first to attack Constantinople, in the year 32/652. According to Shaykh Muhammad Khudrī: ‘In the year 48/668 Mu’āwiya prepared a large army to conquer Constantinople.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, Book of Jihad; Chapter 93 ‘What is said about the fighting of the Byzantines.’

<sup>2</sup> Cited in *Muqalaat*, Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī, II: 329-330.

<sup>3</sup> Source; *Lessons from the Muslim Nations*.

These three authentic sources differ with regards as to when the first attack took place (42, 32, or 48 A.H.) But two of the sources believe that it was Mu'āwiya (may Allāh be pleased with him) who prepared the first mission there.

\* As for Yazīd, his army, by unanimous agreement of the scholars first went to Constantinople in 52/672. According to Ibn Kathīr, by this time, Mu'āwiya had already been there sixteen times. He writes:

'Mu'āwiya prepared armies to Constantinople sixteen times. He used to send an army there twice a year, once in the summer and once in the winter.'

How do we know Yazīd's first visit was in 52/672? The historians all agree that Yazīd was head of the army in the year Abū Ayyūb al-Ansārī (may Allāh be pleased with him) passed away. The historians agree that he passed away in 52/672. Ibn Hajar writes:

Yazīd's mission to Constantinople took place in the year 52/672. In this mission, Abū Ayyūb al-Ansārī passed away. Before he died, he asked to be buried next to the main door of Constantinople.

Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr writes: '...Yazīd went in 52/672, the same year Abū Ayyūb passed away.'

This analysis, from authentic sources, shows that Yazīd was by no means the first person to attack Constantinople. It was Mu'āwiya (may Allāh be pleased with him), and thus he was most likely to be 'forgiven', in the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). Yazīd cannot be deemed as 'forgiven', in the context of this hadīth.

## **Conclusion**

Our biggest concern is that anyone who shows *any* amount of sympathy towards Yazīd is forgetting the magnitude of the crime committed against the Sovereign of Martyrs Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him). After all, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said, 'I am from al-Husayn, and al-Husayn is from me.' In another Hadīth, he said: 'Whoever loves [al-Hasan and al-Husayn] they love me, and whoever shows hatred towards them, is showing hatred towards me.' By even indirectly showing support or sympathy for Yazīd, one can risk being counted as those unfortunate beings that have upset and angered the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

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