

Imam Hussein: LIVING ISLAM (part 1 of 2)

transcript of the lecture on 7th Muharram (Sunday)

Kerbala, 61 A.H.

1400 years ago a man stood on the burning sands of Kerbala. He had the blood of the Prophet (s) flowing through his veins, and the heart of Ali (a) in his depths. Since dawn, he and his followers had been engaged in a bloody and bitter battle. His small band of companions lay strewn about the sand dunes, decapitated, the rivers of their blood flowing, already making its way to immortality... the blood of his dear sons and nephews, his beloved brothers and friends. An army of thousands surrounded him, ready for his blood... he could hear his women and children screaming as his camp burned behind him, and he was powerless to go to their aid. He was all alone. Yet, he stood his ground.

He didn't surrender. He would only have to give one word to save himself and his loved ones. But instead, he stood for truth and justice, for Allah and Islam, and saved the world.

Every year we retell the story, we relive the events of the 10th of muharram blow-by-blow... we cry for the imam (as) & his followers... we are all familiar with the outward aspect of the story – the literal events – but very rarely do we talk about the deeper meaning of the stance imam Hussein (as) and his followers took. We need to analyse the full impact and greatness of the events at Kerbala, to help us understand how the imam could revert the ummah from a state of **no islam** back to islam again.

History:

In the age of the Prophet (S), Arabia embraced Islam, and went from barbaric nomadism to a budding civilisation with a government, ideals, and believers so devoted that not even threats from the two world superpowers of Rome and Iran could deter them from their goal. In the time of the prophet (saw) the society structure was not based on class or lineage, but on faith; such that the most respected and those in authority were the most pious and obedient to Allah. The face of the world had been remodelled by the hands of the Last Prophet (S), to make way for the coming age of Islam.

As the blessed Prophet (S) passed away, power was seized by men who were not fit to take it... ones not appointed by Allah or His apostle... and eventually passed down to tyrants and corrupt officials. Cries of protest by the real believers were shouted down by the majority, who were happy to cooperate with a government established by men and not God. The masses were willing to compromise their ideals so much that they did not rebel against the government even when imams Ali and Hassan (as) were murdered. Although Muslim by name, many of the believers were already ignoring the teachings of the Prophet (S) and the aya of Quran, which states:

Whoever obeys the Apostle, he indeed obeys Allah (Holy Quran, 4:80)

In the minds of the people, the definition of being Muslim had become simply to perform the external actions of praying, going to the mosque and fasting, which allowed them to sit by as the government committed atrocities.

Decline of Faith:

The decline of a faith after people have believed in it is a common tale. You may know that the ka'bah was raised by nabi Ibrahim (as) in a barren area of Arabia, and the city of Meccah was only established due to the pilgrims which came to visit and settle there. As nabi Ibrahim (as) passed away and time went on, people lost touch with the pure, monotheistic faith and started introducing idols and superstition, until by the time Muhammad (S) came the religion in the area was the **complete opposite** of everything nabi Ibrahim (as) had taught. In the same way, the people of nabi Musa (as) embraced the faith, then when he was called away from them for 40 days and nights he returned to see they had started worshipping an idol of a golden calf, even though nabi Haroon (as) was still amongst them! This decline has been seen in all faiths that came before Islam... Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism... all have undergone corruption that took them away from the original faith. And the world before the tragedy of Kerbala was heading the same way, as a repeat of the cycle. Whats more, the events at Kerbala were the result of the greatest decline of any divine faith due to two aspects. ***Firstly, it was a fall from the pinnacle of religions; the religion of Islam, which is God's law, perfected for Mankind, brought by the Perfect Man (S), which was what all previous religions had been leading up to. And secondly, it was the final religion, brought by the Last Messenger (S), after whom there would be no other prophet to resurrect the faith. This was the ultimate decline of all religions, and the most tragic of them all as islam was only really established in Arabia... so this decline would mean the loss of the final, perfect faith of Islam to the entire world.*** And compared to other religions in the past this decline was accelerated, as after only 50 years the spirit of Islam would have become completely extinguished, leaving only a hollow shell of the religion.

The state of Islam had degenerated so much that:

- Drinking and gambling were common in public in Meccah and Medina (which is not even the case today)
- Corrupt officials were living lives of luxury out of public funds
- Rights were conditional on how much the government liked you; the poor, non-arabs and anyone to oppose the government were severely oppressed
- Beatings, torture, abuse, looting and burning of property by those in power was common
- Anybody who was suspected of being a follower of the Ahlul Bayt (as), along with their family, suffered the worst of this abuse

The faith of Islam in people's hearts was being crushed in two ways: firstly, from the torture and oppression of believers by the corrupt government; and secondly, the willingness of the majority to accept this situation, to support or cooperate with a government who allow what is forbidden by Islam, and not speak or act against it. ***These two factors combined to almost extinguish the final revealed religion, and completely revert the region from the ultimate guidance back to the unprecedented state of moral, spiritual and ethical ignorance known as Jahiliyya.***

The Greatest Decline:

The state of muslims had become worse than that of many believers who had lost focus in their faith in the past. The Quran tells us of previous prophets who were disbelieved by their people and outcast or killed, for example, nabi Hud (as) who was sent to the people of Ad, who disbelieved, strangled him and left him for dead. And the prophets of bani Israel such as nabi Yahya (as) and nabi Isa (as), who were denied and then attacked or killed. ***The muslims were worse than any people who disbelieved in the prophet that was sent to them and so lost a faith, because they DIDN'T disbelieve in the Prophet (S).*** They **ACCEPTED** the religion of Islam, a very large number of muslims met Muslim bin Aqeel at Kufa, but soon he was left deserted. They **BELIEVED** in Allah & his Quran, or so they said, and yet **STILL** they were willing to turn a blind eye or join an army and fight against & **KILL** the grandson of their own prophet, and at the same time they were doing the acts of prayer and fasting. ***Nominally, Islam was still supposed to be the religion of BOTH SIDES in the tragedy at kerbala.***

This was the worst possible loss of Islam, because a lot of the people did not class it as a loss at all... and if you think something is not lost, you never stop to look for it.

Living Islam:

Imam Hussein (as) was sent to these people, the ones who had made up their own definition of Islam that was compatible with an un-Islamic society, as a **LIVING EMBODIMENT** of Islam. *Imam Hussein (as) came to a people who had lost the WHOLE meaning of Islam, so to re-establish it he had to remind them of the WHOLE of it – and in the short time around the events of Kerbala manifest a comprehensive example of what Islam really was.*

Step by step

If we look at the events of kerbala, we see that every step of the way imam Hussein (as) represented Islam perfectly.

- In coming to lead the people who he knew would betray him, even though it meant his own death, the imam (as) revived the words of the nabi (S) when he said, as narrated in the hadeeth:

“None of you truly believes unless he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself”

And whats more, Imam Hussein (as) **PREFERRED** the people to himself and his own family, and gave up even their lives to stop the loss of islam & save the people of his generation and ones to come.

- The imam reminded people of the aya of the Quran, where it says about the hosts of Firoun:

And We made them Imams who call to the fire... (Holy Quran, 28:41)

Where we see that following the wrong imam can lead you to hell. The imam (as) reminded people of his qualifications in this matter, which were not equalled in any other person, let alone the corrupt government of yazid. The imam (as) is narrated to have written, in his letter to the people of Kufah:

“By my life! What is an imam except one who rules by the book, stands with justice, adheres to the religion & restricts himself to what is pleasing to Allah”

- Imam Hussein embodied respect for Allah’s boundaries, as it says in several places in the Quran:

These are the Limits of Allah, so do not go near them...”

When he left meccah before performing hajj, even though he knew it would be the last time he would get to do it. Imam Hussein (as) did not want to be killed in meccah out of respect for Allah’s house, saying (according to narration):

“My father told me that there will be a sacrificial ram, on account of whom mecca will be desecrated. I never desire to be that ram.”

- The imam reminded people of the temporary & deceiving nature of the life of this world, when he said as written in the hadeeth,

“life is a mean food, like a pasture covered in bad grass. Do you not see that truth is not followed & falsehood not discouraged? The faithful must desire to meet his Lord righteously. I do not deem death other than martyrdom and life amongst the unjust other than suffering and boredom”

with these words the imam (as) re-introduced the idea of preferring security in the next life over the false security in this one.

- The imam (as) resurrected the idea of real Islam according to the prophet's (S) words as narrated in the hadeeth:

"Religion is Sincerity... to Allah, His book, His messenger, to the imams of the Muslims & their common folk"

when he refused to compromise his ideals, and is narrated to have said:

“He who soothes righteous men through the sacrifice of his life, has parted with the cursed and opposed the criminal. If I live, I will not regret what I have done, and if I die, I will not be blamed. Let it be enough for you to live in humiliation and be reviled.

This powerful statement was a sharp reminder of the attitude of the first Muslims at Badr and those who supported the prophet (saw) at Uhud. In total contrast to the Muslims at the time who loved life of this world so much they were afraid to do anything that would endanger it, imam Hussein lived in the spirit of those who were happy to strip off their armour then run into battle, and fought with everything they had despite injury and small numbers. ***This was the spirit which had made Islam the greatest force on the face of the earth. Imam Hussein (as) reminded the Muslims that you can achieve victory whether you live or die, as long as you are fighting on Allah's path.***

- Imam Hussein (as) showed the people that it is ***impossible*** be both Muslim and pledge allegiance to someone who opposes the laws of God, when he said, according to hadeeth:

“a man like me can never give a pledge of allegiance to Yazeed”

and reminded them that you cannot sit by as someone like Yazeed takes power, unless you want to lose your Islam, in his words as narrated in hadeeth:

“O People! The apostle of Allah (S) said: whoever witnesses an unjust ruler considering the prohibitions of Allah as permissible, breaking the covenant of Allah, opposing the practices of the apostle, treating his servants sinfully & cruelly, and had seen all these misdeeds but did not oppose him by words or actions, Allah will surely punish him as He wills!”

illustrating that sitting idly by was the same as agreeing to the deed.

- And in asking them to stand, imam Hussein (as) relived the actions of the Prophet (saw) and imam Ali (As) who were always at the forefront of battle, and gave themselves no special treatment above their people. They lived and died with those people they asked to fight, and consulted them in matters relating to the battle. Imam Hussein (as) told his followers the situation & gave them a choice, as evident in the narration:

“our shia have deserted us. Those of you who prefer to leave us, may do so freely

and without guilt”

So as well as a living example of the Prophet (S) as he was, as well as being the Imam of the time, the whole way to kerbala the imam (as) was reminding the people of the side of islam which had escaped them.

The Result:

When islam had been almost wiped from the hearts of people, its meaning and spirit lost to them, Imam Hussein (as) was sent by Allah to resurrect it. Through his deeds, in a few short days he summarised the core of Islam, and presented himself as a living example of it. The people had, in their minds, begun to believe it was possible to be a muslim and not oppose the government, or speak out against murder and tyranny and injustice. Imam Hussein (as) redefined islam to them as it is supposed to be, once and for all separating the notion of being a real muslim and following the government blindly.

Before delivering the ultimatum before the army on the sands of kerbala, 1400 years ago, asking the people to choose between heaven and hell, imam Hussein (as) had already made a conclusive argument of the WHOLE of islam, and presented it before them.

Because, as Allah says in the Quran,

**And your Lord never destroyed the towns until He raised in their metropolis a messenger,
reciting to them Our signs...**

(Holy Quran, 28:59)

**This is because thy Lord destroyeth not the townships arbitrarily while their people are
unconscious (of the wrong they do)**

(Holy Quran, 6:131)

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