

Was this verse « قُلْ لِلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ ... » revealed about the battles of “Abu-Bakr” against “companions of Reddah”?

Notice: “Companions of Reddah”: Those who didn’t swear allegiance with “Abu-Bakr” after Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] and didn’t give him “Zakat” because they didn’t know him legitimate caliph, they were called apostate by “Abu-Bakr” and he fought them.

Description:

I saw on one of Sunni websites that this verse had been relied on to prove the caliphate of “Abu-Bakr”. Please send me the response.

It’s written in Surah “Al-Fath” verse 16:

قُلْ لِلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ سَتُدْعُونَ إِلَيَّ قَوْمٍ أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ تُقَاتِلُونَهُمْ أَوْ يُسَلِّمُونَ فَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا .

Say to the Arabs who lagged behind: 'You shall be called upon to fight a mighty nation, unless they embrace Islam. If you are obedient you shall receive a good wage from Allah. But, if you turn away, as you turned your backs before, He will punish you with a painful punishment.

After this holy verse was revealed, no battle was occurred in the time of messenger of Allah [PBUH] other than battle of “Tabouk” {expedition to Tabouk} and in that battle neither war

occurred nor any unbeliever became Muslim, so probably the meaning of that fight {in above verse} is the battle against Arab apostates during the caliphate of "Abu-Bakr" and battle against infidels, Fars and Rome during the caliphate of "Umar" otherwise this sentence "fight a mighty nation, unless they embrace Islam" will be meaningless. So, if the caliphate of "Abu-Bakr" and "Umar" isn't right, this divine promise won't be fulfilled and ascribing "Breaking promise" to almighty god is blow the dignity of Muslim.

Response:

One of verses that Sunnis rely on to justify the caliphate of "Abu-Bakr" and "Umar" is 16th verse of chapter Al-Fath. You saw an example of their argument in above question. We'll respond to this reasoning using Sunni Tafsir books.

1: many of commentators on Quran such as: "Ibn Hayyan Andulusi" have emphasized that this verse was revealed in the sixth year of Hegira, after returning from treaty of "Hudaybiyyah", he writes in this regard:

"هذه السورة مدنية ، وعن ابن عباس أنها نزلت بالمدينة ، ولعل بعضها نزل ، والصحيح أنها نزلت بطريق منصرفه صلى الله عليه وسلم) من الحديبية ، سنة ست من الهجرة ، فهي تعد في المدني"

This Surah was revealed in "Medina". "Ibn Abbas" has said that it was sent down in "Medina", it might that some of its verses revealed in "Medina", but correct quotation is that this Surah was revealed in the sixth year of Hegira, when Prophet was returning from the treaty of "Hudaybiyyah", so it was sent down in "Medina".

"Ibn Hayyan Andulusi" – Tafsir al-Bahr al-Muhit – vol. 8, p 89

So, this sentence that after revealing this verse no battle occurred other than battle of "Tabouk" is unacceptable; because after this verse was sent down many fights including battle of "Hunayn" against people of "Hawazin" and "Ta'if" and battle of "Muteh" occurred and each of them has been amongst the most difficult battles of messenger of Allah [PBUH]; thus, there isn't any reason to say that this verse is just for after Prophet's demise.

"Jalal al-Din Suyuti" one of Sunni great scholars writes in this regard:

“قل للمخلفين من الاعراب ستدعون إلي قوم أولي باس شديد قال فدعوا يوم حنين إلي

هوازن وثقيف فمنهم من أحسن الإجابة ورغب في الجهاد”

Say to the Arabs who lagged behind: 'You shall be called upon to fight a mighty nation, so they were called upon on the day of "Hunayn" and some of them accepted god's invitation.

"Al-Suyuti" – Al-Dur al-Manthur – vol. 6, p 72

And he quotes this narrative proving his opinion:

“أخرج سعيد ابن منصور وابن جرير وابن المنذر والبيهقي عن عكرمة وسعيد بن جبير رضي الله عنه في قوله ستدعون إلي قوم أولي بأس شديد قال هوازن يوم حنين”

“Ibn Mansur” and “Ibn Jurayr” and “Ibn Monzar” and “Beihaghi” have quoted from “Akramah” and “Saed bin Jubayr” that this verse “ستدعون الي قوم أولي بأس شديد” was sent down about the battle of “Hawazin” on the day of “Hunayn”.

“Al-Suyuti” – Al-Durr al-Manthur – vol. 6, p 73

2: Sunni scholars have responded to this argument. “Fakhr Razi” the biggest Sunni commentator on Quran has talked about it comprehensively:

وفي قوله * (ستدعون إلي قوم أولي بأس شديد) * وجوه ... ثالثها : هوازن وثقيف غزاهم النبي صلي الله عليه وسلم ، وأقوي الوجوه هو أن الدعاء كان من النبي صلي الله عليه وسلم وإن كان الأظهر غيره ...

There are three opinions about this verse:

“ستدعون إلي قوم أولي بأس شديد”

... Third opinion is that it's been sent down about these two tribes "Hawazin" and "Saghif" that Prophet [PBUH] fought them. It's the best opinion; because it was Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] who'd invite people fighting.

Tafsir al-Razi – vol. 28, p 92

And "Al-Gharnati al-Kalbi" writes:

(ستدعون إلي قوم أولي بأس شديد) * اختلف في هؤلاء القوم علي أربعة أقوال الأول أنهم هوازن ومن حارب النبي صلي الله عليه وسلم في غزوة خيبر والثاني أنهم الروم إذ دعا رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم إلي قتالهم في غزوة تبوك والثالث أنهم أهل الردة من بني حنيفة وغيرهم الذين قاتلهم أبو بكر الصديق والرابع أنهم الفرس ويتقوي الأول والثاني بأن ذلك ظهر في حياة رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم.

There are four opinions about this verse:

“ستدعون إلي قوم أولي بأس شديد”

1: this verse was sent down about "Hawazin" tribe and those who fought Prophet Muhammad

[PBUH] in battle of "Khaybar"

2: it was revealed about Romans that Prophet invited people fighting them

3: it's about "Companion of Reddah" from "Bani Hanifah" and others whom "Abu-Bakr" fought them.

4: it's about people of "Fars".

First and second opinions are better because invitation {to fight} was done when Prophet Muhammad was alive.

Al-Tashil li Oloum al-Tanzil – vol. 4, p 53

Thus, this verse has nothing to do with the caliphate of "Abu-Bakr" and "Umar bin Khattab".

Good luck.