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Is Faith Dangerous?

Lee Moses

In the aftermath of 9-11 and subsequent terror attacks, there have been many efforts from those in power to avert the finger of blame from pointing at the Islamic religion and its holy book, the Qur'an. Some have claimed that Islam is a "religion of peace," and therefore not responsible for influencing the conduct of these and other countless Muslim terrorists. Others have tried to say that all religions are equally bad. Professed Christians, apparently to make a show of charity, have asserted that Christianity has been just as guilty as Islam in promoting terrorism. Atheists, however, have used the events of 9-11 as an opportunity to gloat. Many atheists have claimed that all religion is evil and will continue to result in evil, citing 9-11 as proof. One article advocating this notion asserts, "Faith is dangerous."

Predictably, those trying to say that Christianity is equally evil with Islam will point to such events as the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Holocaust, and the like as proof. But were any of these prompted by Christianity, the system of religion? The basis of true Christianity is the New Testament, and any Christian activity must be authorized by the New Testament (Col. 3:17; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3). There is no New Testament authority for anyone to wage a "holy war" in the name of Jesus. Contrarily, when Peter attempted to engage in physical combat for Jesus, Jesus told him, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Mat.

26:52). The New Testament instructs each believer to "suffer as a Christian" (1 Pet. 4:16), not "as a Christian, cause others to suffer." Time and again, the New Testament instructs mankind not to retaliate in vengeance; much less does it encourage physically attacking others unprovoked (Mat. 5:38-44; Luke 9:52-56; Rom. 12:17, 19; 1 The. 5:15; 1 Pet. 2:23; 3:9). Meting out justice upon earth is a charge which has been specifically enjoined upon civil governments (Rom. 13:1-4). Christianity is a religion that cannot be imposed by physical force, and nowhere does the New Testament encourage such imposition. Those who have claimed to be doing God's will by slaying unbelievers merely act in their own self-interest. The Crusades were supposedly to reclaim the "holy land" from the Turks; however, there is no physical holy land in Christianity—only a spiritual holy land (John 4:21-24). The Crusades likely appealed to the masses as an opportunity to plunder great fortunes amid famine in Europe. They appealed to pope Urban II as an opportunity to increase the power and prestige of the papacy.

The previously mentioned article ("Faith is Dangerous") derives the following as its conclusion:

Peaceful coexistence with tolerance between Islamic and the western pro-Christian peoples would be considerably enhanced if both societies would reject faith-based thinking and adopt pro-fact cultures using the scientific

method with emphasis on critical thinking supported by verifiable evidence...Blind faith is the problem. Faith is promoted by religious clerics to prevent inquiry and rational thinking to protect insupportable religious dogma. Faith is an obstacle in the way of intellectual growth, tolerance and consequently, world peace.

This statement would be true if the writer did not interchangeably use “faith” and “blind faith.” Blind faith is a belief/system of belief that cannot

be supported because it is not based on evidence. If people would only understand that true faith (Christianity) depends upon verifiable evidence! (Acts 17:2, 11; 18:4, 19; Heb. 11:1; 1 John 4:1). True faith does not cause people to act irrationally. True faith does not cause people to murder one another. True faith can be proven, demands that people live righteously, and is the only way one can be saved. Is faith dangerous?

Union City, TN

The Gospel Age

Johnny Ramsey

In Acts 2:17-21, we find some of the most fascinating verses in the whole Bible. It is a shame that some religious leaders abuse this section of Holy Scripture. Our purpose in these few comments will be to set the record straight on matters that pertain to our souls' salvation. In Acts 2:16, Peter informed the audience on Pentecost that Joel's prophecy had come to fruition by stating, “This is that”! Some folks insist on denying that apostolic affirmation. B. H. Roberts, the Mormon historian, had the audacity to say that Peter was mistaken because the people of Salt Lake City believe the last days began 1800 years after Pentecost! But Peter was not wrong; the followers of Joseph Smith are! During the Gospel age, which began in Acts 2 and will end when Jesus comes again (Mat. 28:20; 1 Cor. 15:23-25), the provisions of Joel's prophecy would be in effect. However, Pentecostal religionists of today overlook the passing of the miraculous aspects of Joel's prophecy, as found in the words of Christ in Mark 16:20, in Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 13, and in a passage in Hebrews 2:1-4. It is also significant that the last chapter of the Bible warns against additional prophecy after the first century! All the verses clearly teach that the purpose of miracles was to confirm the Word of God until the perfect revelation of truth had come. There has been no additional Scripture since the apostolic era because the Holy Spirit guided the apostles into

all truth (John 16:13), and the last one died before the second century started! During the first century, there were handmaidens that prophesied (Acts 21; 1 Cor. 11), but no one does so today, scripturally (Rev. 22:18-19)!

The most controversial part of Acts 2:17-21 has to do with the phrase: “Wonders in heaven above.” However, an honest look at Old Testament passages that use the same language as Acts 2:19-20 will shed light on this matter. When Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel spoke of the decline of great nations and the rise of new systems to replace the once-powerful dynasties, they used similar imagery. Their point was clear; just as the sun, moon, and stars seem so certain and immovable, so did Babylon, Egypt, and Judea seem to be forever secure. However, those powers would be overthrown and replaced. This would be compared to the effect made upon us if the sun, moon, and stars were to fall from the sky. It was the prophets' way of using extreme language to get their point across (Isa. 13:10; Lam. 2:1). The usage in Acts 2 is clear as a bell. Judaism was fading away, and Christianity would now rule and reign in the hearts and lives of thousands. Read this contrast in Galatians 4:21-31 and Hebrews 12:19-29!

But the most perverted of all the verses in Acts 2 is verse 21 that tells us that “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” So

many preachers in our day misuse that passage by leaving the impression that merely crying out to Jesus will redeem us. But Matthew 7:21 and Luke 6:46 clearly tell us that obedience is always involved in such an arrangement. We are “called by the gospel,” and that message must be obeyed

(2 The. 1:8; 2:14). In fact, the best commentary on Acts 2:21 is Acts 22:16, which points out the only way, properly, to call upon the Lord: “Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Deceased

Why Felix Trembled

F. E. Exum

Felix was governor of Judea, a man of power; and yet, under the spell of Paul’s preaching, he had a feeling of fear. Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and Felix “trembled.” Of the three phases of Paul’s reasoning, the latter was undoubtedly the cause of Felix’s trembling. Paul was tried and condemned in a court of injustice; but the judgment of which Paul spoke is a court of justice, and the powerful in this world, as well as the weak, may well tremble if they are not trying to live in harmony with the Word of God. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, said, “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31). Perhaps the apostle had said these very words to Felix. At any rate, Felix, through obedience to the Gospel, could have placed himself in the hands of God, where we need not fear the judgment to come, but he said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee”

(Acts 24:25). If that “convenient season” ever came, we have no record of it. Felix took the wrong road. For two years after that time he, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

The same parting of the ways that came to Felix comes to every responsible person, and before the same great court of justice before which Felix must stand, we all must stand. It is a show of wisdom to be afraid and trembling in contemplating the day of judgment, but it is a far greater show of wisdom to work righteousness and use temperance to escape condemnation in the judgment to come. Paul said, “he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world” (17:31). John, in his Revelation, said:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works (20:12-13).

There is no escape from this judgment, but there is an escape from condemnation. When that day shall come, if Jesus says to you, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” all fear and anxiety will have passed. If we place ourselves in the hands of God now while we have time and opportunity by obeying His will, we cannot fall into His hands for condemnation.

Deceased

The Gospel is a picture of God’s free grace to sinners. Were we in a room hung with the finest paintings and adorned with the most exquisite statues, we could not see one of them if all light were excluded. Now, the blessed Spirit’s illumination is the same to the mind that outward light is to the bodily eyes. A compass is of no use to the mariner unless he has light to see it by.

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“Resist beginnings.” You cannot curb the power of the river; choke its source. You cannot arrest the fury of the conflagration; put out the spark. It is almost impossible to check hatreds that have been allowed free course; never let them begin. An animosity will sometimes spring up before one knows it; make its life a brief one. Animosity grows into ill will and malignity and rancor, and these are far more hurtful to us than to those against whom they are directed. Subdue them by the spirit of Christ, without which we are none of His.

Author Unknown

Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Bill & Peggy Crowe	Nancy Travis
Linda Worley	Carla Burleson
Bill & Pam Busch	Linda Parks
Pete Maldonado	Phyllis Brantley

Defender and Beacon

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Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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