**The Religion of Peace**

This is a phrase that is thrown around pretty loosely these days. Someone will perpetrate some heinous violence against the innocent in the name of their religion and the media will quickly stress that the terrorists are a poor representation of the religion they claim to espouse. The purpose of this short series of articles is not to investigate that premise. The reason this study is important is because the argument is sometimes made that Christianity is just as violent as any other religion. Anyone who would make such a claim is either dishonest or ill-informed. The purpose of this series is to rectify the latter.

This three-part series will deal with the inherently peaceful nature of the kingdom of Christ, the church.

* Part 1: The kingdom of Christ is governed solely by the New Testament.
* Part 2: The kingdom of Christ is apolitical.
* Part3: The kingdom of Christ is composed of peaceful individuals.

In 2006, a candidate-soon-to-be-president asked the following questions in a public speech: “Which passages of scripture should guide our public policy? Should we go with Leviticus, which suggests slavery is OK and that eating shellfish is an abomination? Or we could go with Deuteronomy, which suggests stoning your child if he strays from the faith? Or should we just stick to the Sermon on the Mount? So before we get carried away, let’s read our Bibles now. Folks haven’t been reading their Bible.” Allow me to suggest that the man in question has read his Bible just enough to be dangerous. The simple fact is, Christians are governed solely by the teachings of the New Testament. Any reference to the old law of Moses to characterize Christians is either arrogant dishonesty or ignorance.

**Moses’ Law was for the Israelite nation (1500 BC – 33 AD)**. The Hebrew writer made it clear that the old covenant was made obsolete to make room for the new (Hebrews 8:13). The apostle Paul taught that the “handwriting of ordinances” of the old law had been nailed to the cross of Jesus (Colossians 2:14). In fact, Paul expended an inordinate amount of effort combatting Jewish Christians who were attempting to bind Mosaic requirements on Gentile Christians (Galatians 5:4). While God spoke to us in various ways in the past, in these last days He has spoken to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). While Jesus never wrote a book, He sent the Holy Spirit to guide His apostles into all truth (John 16:13), so their writings contain the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

The implications of this principle are profound. I can learn a great deal by reading about the battles of the Israelite nation under Joshua’s leadership (Romans 15:4), but those historical records provide me with absolutely no authorization for engaging in physical warfare in the name of religion. The New Testament teaches me about the kind of warfare Christ wants me to wage. “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:11-12). Then verses 14-17 describe the armor: Truth, Righteousness, Preparation of the Gospel of Peace, Faith, Salvation and the Word of God. Most of this armor is defensive in nature; the only offensive weapon on the list is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. I am engaged as a soldier of Christ as I do my best to teach the truth of the gospel. Anyone who believes citizens of the kingdom of Christ are dangerous need to actually read the New Testament.

If you have any concerns about anything you find in this article, feel free to contact me. Nothing but good can come of respectful, civil discourse and a friendly exchange of ideas. Write me at westmurraychurch@gmail.com or Box 203, Murray.

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