**Religion of Peace – Part 2**

There are ill-informed folks who, in the interest of political correctness, have taken the position that Christianity is as violent as any other religion. The purpose of this series is to refute that claim using the teachings of the Scriptures. In our first article of this three-part series, we noted that the old covenant was between God and the Israelite nation and covered a period of about 1600 years, culminating in the death of Jesus the Christ. Therefore, any attempt to characterize God’s people today by referring back to the Old Testament is flawed. Christians are directed solely by the teachings of the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Our second installment of this study will focus on the nature of Christ’s kingdom as He Himself described it.

**God never intended for the kingdom of Christ to be an earthly theocracy.** In fact, the Israelite nation was the only legitimate earthly theocracy that has ever existed. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the chosen people of God, they were given a law that was both a civil law and a religious law and there was virtually no distinction between crimes and sins among the people. Those guilty of breaking the law of God were punished with civil penalties. But when the old covenant was replaced by the new (Hebrews 8:13), the nature of the kingdom changed. Jesus told the people of His day that some of them would still be around to see the kingdom of God (Luke 9:27). When Pilate asked Him if He was a king, Jesus acknowledged it, but added, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm” (John 18:36). Christ’s kingdom is spiritual, not temporal. Jesus reigns in the hearts of His subjects so the kingdom has no geographic borders. The subjects of Christ’s kingdom are engaged in spiritual warfare, wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul wrote that civil government acts as God’s minister to protect the innocent and punish the wicked (Romans 13:3-4). He wrote this when the corrupt, pagan Romans were in power, but the principle remained the same. Christians turn the other cheek instead of taking vengeance because God executes justice through civil government. The church Jesus built was created separate from civil government before separation of church and state was popular!

The New Testament authorizes the church to be engaged in evangelism (Philippians 4:15-16), building up of the body and its members (Ephesians 4:11-13) and helping saints in need (Romans 15:26). Individual Christians gladly help anyone they can (Galatians 6:10), but the focus of the Lord’s church is primarily spiritual in nature; sharing the saving gospel of Jesus Christ with a lost and dying world. Church involvement in political activism is simply not authorized in the pages of the New Testament.

Any religion that seeks to combine their religion and civil government is dangerous. Christianity does not. Any religion that views civil government as an enforcement arm of their religion (or vice-versa) does so without God’s authority. Any religion that resorts to threat of bodily harm to make converts and keep them is a dangerous religion. The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom and the only sword used to convert souls is the word of God. Yet the Sword of the Spirit is so feared by some religions, it is not allowed in the countries they dominate. Apparently sitting down and reasoning together is a dangerous prospect.

If you have comments or questions, I’d love to hear from you. Write me at westmurraychurch@gmail.com or Box 203, Murray, KY 42071.

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