

The Old Paths

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“An Atheist Speaks About Religion”

Jarrod Jacobs

In “Dear Abby’s” column from July 5, an atheist wrote concerning some advice Abby had given in an earlier column. I do not have access to the original column, but saw this article in which an atheist calling himself a “Happy Heathen in Texas” spoke out against all religions. He called them “superstitions” and said that religion “for the most part, is harmful to people.” He then cited the destruction of the federal building in Oklahoma City, as well as the Muslim attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon as examples of how religion(s) harm people. “Abby’s” basic response was that it was not “religion” which prompted such acts of terrorism, but fanaticism that prompted this response.

Since “Abby” had her chance to answer that person, I thought I would take my turn, too. Let me begin by noting that it is a tragedy to see religion such as the Bible describes being included in the descriptions of the actions of hateful, cruel men, who are acting in ways that are diametrically opposed to God’s word! The God of the Bible has never given permission for His people to kill men in cold blood. Yes, there was a physical army of Israel which fought God’s enemies, but they were never authorized to simply go into a land and kill people just because they didn’t like them. Anytime God commanded that

His army fight an enemy nation, it was a punishment for sin. This fact is seen in the conquest of Canaan when the Israelites were reminded that it wasn’t for their righteousness, but because of the Canaanites’ iniquity that God sent them into the land to possess it (Deut. 9:4-6).

When we study the New Testament, we find that God has not commanded His people (Christians) to be war-mongers, nor killers of those who do not believe in God. In fact, it is clear that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal” (II Cor. 10:4-6). God speaks of His people being engaged as soldiers (II Tim. 2:3-4), and clothed with armor (Eph. 6:13-18; Rom. 13:12); but this is in reference to His people being SPIRITUAL soldiers, wearing SPIRITUAL armor, in a SPIRITUAL battle! At no time does the God of the Bible tell me to ruthlessly and cold-heartedly go and kill people for not serving Him!

Furthermore, the “Happy Heathen in Texas” stated that religion is harmful to people. This man needs to be reminded of such truths as “do unto others, as you’d have them do unto you.” He needs to be reminded of the necessity of “love thy neighbor as thyself” and “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” When he is reminded of these truths, he will see that such teachings came not from the mind of men, but the mind of God (see: Matt. 7:12, 22:39; Acts 20:35). This is the same God who said we need to be religious! Furthermore, God

defines “pure religion.” It is, “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27). Do any of these things sound like a “rallying cry” to kill, destroy, and maim innocent people in the name of religion? Of course, not!

No, not all religions are the same, and many follow a false god rather than the true and living God in Heaven! However, “HH” ought to be ashamed of himself for trying to lump the God of Heaven in with all the false gods which permeate our society! “HH” is doing something similar to what Sennacherib did in Isaiah 36:18-20 when he “lumped” Jehovah in with all of the false gods in the surrounding nations.

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Mark Your Calendars!

- Lord willing, next week (July 17-22), we will have the opportunity to hear God’s word preached.
- Brother Joel Plunkett will be here to preach God’s word.
- Make plans NOW to attend each and every service.

Things WE can do to prepare for this meeting:

- Pray for brother Plunkett.
- Attend every service.
- Invite friends and neighbors to the meeting.

Sennacherib was wrong in doing that, then; "HH" is wrong today!

Conclusion

No, the religion of Christ is not superstition. It is not harmful to men, but is helpful in their daily lives, and most importantly has the power to save their souls (Rom. 1:16). "HH" may think he is "happy" now, but there is nothing that can compare to the joy we have in Christ as His child (I Pet. 1:8). When we are what God wants us to be, not only can we have eternal life, but this world will be a better place.

Christian, Remember...

Gordon Skinner, Paoli, IN

.... you are in a covenant relationship.

Satan labors to undermine the faith of all Christians, be they new converts or mature. One method he uses is to establish an emotional argument within us to override God's revealed will. He used this effectively against Eve, Gen. 3:4-6. It was utilized in the divisions in the church in the mid-19th and 20th centuries. It came to the forefront of the latter among those seeking church support of orphan homes. Rather than simply provide Bible authority for such, they utilized prejudicial and emotional arguments. Faithful brethren stood on the word of God and cared for the unfortunates individually, Gal. 6:10, Jas. 1:27. A few men begged such institutions to allow them to find families for such unfortunates. Their appeals went as unheeded as the calls for Bible authority for churches to build and maintain such human institutions.

One of the strongest emotional appeals that Satan utilizes against Christians is to get us to question God's revealed will about salvation. This appeal often appears to those considering obeying the gospel as well. I admit it was a huge obstacle for me. I attended and later became a member of the United Methodist Church my parents were members of. It was relatively easy for me to see my own lost condition. It was much more difficult for me to admit others were under the same condemnation. One of my mom's best friends was also a member of that Methodist Church. Lillian was a woman full of good works. When I was young, she kept me one summer when my mom had a major surgery. My dad farmed and worked at a factory, so his time was filled. Lillian died of cancer some time before I ever learned the truth. To think one such as she was lost was a very hard pill to swallow. Lillian's husband was a gruff man. After her death, he was a changed man. Her meek and quiet spirit had softened him when she was no longer there to care for him. How could such a person be lost? I had to resolve this question before obeying the gospel myself. I did this first by acknowledging I didn't know if she had heard and rejected the truth. Secondly, I was sure she would have desired me to follow what I believed to be the truth. Thirdly,

and more importantly, I read 2 Thess. 1:8, 9, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." That meant me, my parents, Lillian, and anyone who hadn't obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ! I knew what I needed to do to and honesty and the gospel called me to obey, 2 Thess. 2:13, 14.

When Satan tempts us to depart from the faith by thinking God surely will allow others to be saved without obeying the gospel, we must remember that His word will always take precedence over any emotional arguments we make.

Christian, remember you are in a covenant relationship with the God-head, Acts 2:47, Eph. 3:4-21, Col. 1:12-23. In this relationship, you enjoy blessings and promises not available to the world, Eph. 1:3, 2 Pet. 1.

Each of us will be tempted by emotional appeals. To accept them over the word of God is to break our covenant with Him, 2 Jn. 9, 1 Cor. 4:6, Rom. 1:16-18, Gal. 1:6-10.

Christian, also remember how you entered that covenant relationship, 1 Pet. 1.

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