

ISLAM, CHRISTIANITY, AND THE WRATH OF GOD

Anger. In the "war on terror", anger abounds. Professing Muslims are angry. Professing Christians are angry. Angry Jihad is launched in the name of Allah. Angry justice is sought in the name of the Christian God. Is God angry? Does Islamic jihad express the anger of God? Does American retaliation express the anger of God?

The Challenge of the Wrath of God

Both Islam and Christianity have their spokesmen who, although they cannot deny that the Koran and the Bible contain language of wrath, are intent upon interpreting that language as metaphor. The "liberal" Muslim defines jihad as "struggle, striving" and sees jihad in the effort made to live the Muslim religion. The "liberal" Christian often redefines doctrine as poetic metaphor which generates religious sentiment. The liberal views the cross of Christ as a divine expression of sympathy with human suffering; and the resurrection as a metaphor for hope. This kind of "Christianity" simply denies the Bible's teaching on God's wrath and hell. This God would never send sinners to hell. This God is not a God of wrath, but a God of tolerance, accepting, indifferent about what men believe or how they live. The idea of divine wrath is repugnant to many - Muslims and Christians. Yet the doctrine of God's wrath is found in both Islam and Christianity.

Islam and the Wrath of God

Jihad (Holy War), is a religious tenet unique to Islam. Islam, unlike Biblical Christianity, is a religion designed to be practiced in a "theocracy": a society governed by Allah. Christians ought not to view America as a nation governed by God - it is not, nor does it profess to be. It is a society that has been influenced by Christian principles and Christian people, but America is not a theocracy. Yet the Muslim would view America as the expression of Christianity, in the same way that his Islamic society expresses

Islam. In spite of American denials, the Muslim, especially the Central Asian Muslim, interprets the actions of America as actions against Islam: a Christian society against an Islamic society. Such a conflict constitutes a jihad - a Holy War. It is a war between Allah and Satan. Koran 4:76 *Those who believe fight in the way of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of the Shaitan. Fight therefore against the friends of the Shaitan; surely the strategy of the Shaitan is weak.* It is a war which uses military weapons and concerns political and national disagreements, but it is essentially a religious war. Koran 9:5 *Slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*

The *ghazi* (warrior) is, in jihad, an expression of the wrath of Allah against the infidel idolaters. Indeed, if the *ghazi* dies in jihad, he immediately merits entrance into the Garden of Paradise - the Islamic heaven, which is filled with all manner of sensual delights and pleasures. To express the wrath of Allah is a supreme virtue. The core virtue in Islam is to be angry for God. The epitome of piety is to feel a righteous indignation for the cause of God. But, the Christian Scripture tells us *the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God* (James 1:20). But, says the Muslim, jihad is not the expression of man's anger as much as it is the human expression of Allah's anger. In jihad, we meet up with the anger of God!

Christianity and the Wrath of God

Scripture does, in fact, inform us that the anger of God is incited against idolatry. The second commandment tells us of God's jealousy and vehement displeasure of idolatry. The God of the Bible is a God of wrath. John the Baptist urged men to *flee from the wrath to come* (Luke 3:7). Jesus taught about God's wrath more than any other Biblical Prophet. He taught of hell in Mark 9:44 as *the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.* Paul calls the

coming day of judgment the *day of wrath* (Romans 2:5). John describes hell and those in it in Revelation 21:8 *But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* It is evident that the Christian God is also a God of wrath. Can we, who are sinners, really flee from this divine wrath? The answer to that question is the essence of the good news of the gospel.

In the face of the threat of divine wrath, we see the cross of Jesus Christ. It is there that the wrath of God is satisfied in behalf of all who trust in Jesus. Scripture prophesied of the coming Messiah who would suffer the punishment of divine wrath in behalf of his people (Isaiah 53). This Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth. His death was a sacrifice, a guilt offering for sin. All who believe in Him, receive forgiveness of sin based upon the satisfaction of God's wrath which was poured out upon Christ on the cross. There, God's wrath was *propitiated*: appeased, spent and satisfied. There we see the love of God for undeserving sinners. 1 John 4:9,10 *By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* This is divine love: the divine Son of God bearing divine wrath in our behalf on the cross. This is the good news of the gospel: the wrath of God is propitiated by the death of Jesus, the divine Messiah. Rather than receiving the sentence of death and wrath, all who trust in Jesus receive forgiveness and life. This is the message of the resurrection. Death has been conquered. Sin has been atoned for. Wrath is appeased. Our Lord Jesus is risen and eternal life is ours by faith in Him.

How Can God's Wrath Be Satisfied?

Islamic jihad is not the display of God's wrath. The "liberal" Christian's denial of divine wrath is not an adequate interpretation of the Scripture. The hard reality is that God is a God of wrath and we, as sinners, are liable to His wrath. The most important thing before us, is not the jihad to come, but, as John the Baptist said, *the wrath to come*.

The Scripture presents us with two places where the wrath of God is satisfied, and both places have eternal value in the courtroom of God: the cross of Christ or hell. Either Jesus pays the penalty of our sin by His death on the cross, or we pay *the penalty of eternal destruction* in hell (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Those are the only two ways God's just and holy wrath is appeased against us as sinners: the cross or hell. We must go, as sinners, to one or the other.

Do not fear jihad. There is something far worse. Jesus said *I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!* (Luke 12:4,5) How can you fear Him? By obeying His call to repent of your sin and trust Jesus as the Savior of sinners, whose death has satisfied God's wrath. *He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.* (John 3:36) Repent, and believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead as the living Lord who is able to save all who call upon Him in faith. *If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.* (Romans 10:9,10) Flee from the wrath to come. Flee by faith to the cross of Jesus Christ!

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OUR GATHERINGS

The Lord's Day

Bible School.....9:30 a.m.
(Classes for all age groups)
Worship.....11 a.m.
Worship.....6 p.m.
(Nursery is provided at all services.)

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:30 p.m.

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