

Interpretation & Application – “What does it mean and what am I going to do about it?”

Is God Intolerant of other Religions and Beliefs?

Deut. 6:6-7 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

The New Atheists think that religious education of children breeds generational intolerance and is child abuse.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXg-yy-riEg> 3:40-4:40 Harris clip suggests that teaching kids about God is child abuse.

The Skeptics Annotated Bible: (Exodus 22:20)

He who sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed. (Exodus 22:20)

“If this commandment is obeyed, then the four billion people who do not believe in the biblical god must be killed.”

1. God is intolerant of other religions and beliefs because He does not tolerate error and falsehood. The truth is that He exists and that He made us for a purpose. When we deny His existence and refuse His purpose, we do ourselves harm and we do others harm.

- A. This note in the Skeptics Annotated Bible fails to take into account that Exodus 22:20 was a law for Israel in their country, for Israelites who had sworn allegiance to the covenant with Yahweh. This law was not instructions to kill everyone else on the planet who did not worship Yahweh. –JPT3 (Review Exodus 19-20)
- B. Those who did not want to worship Yahweh were free to leave the congregation of Israel during the 40 years in the wilderness or to leave the county when Israel took possession of the land of Canaan. Only those who entered the covenant or stayed in Israel were to be executed for idolatry.

2. All religions are not the same.

A. The major religions differ in key areas:

- ✓ Who is God? Who is Jesus Christ? (What is His nature and character?)
- ✓ Who is Jesus Christ? (What is His nature and character?)
- ✓ Who is man and what is his purpose and destiny? (Who are we and where are we going?)
- ✓ What is man’s problem? And what is the solution to man’s problem?
- ✓ How does man find salvation (deliverance from whatever the religion says his problem is)?
- ✓ How does man achieve his destiny? (How do we get where we are going?)
- ✓ Where does man go at death? Why?
- ✓ How does the religion understand heaven and hell (or whatever they call it)?

SEE THE CHART COMPARING RELIGIONS in Q&A w/D file

The point: All religions are not basically the same. They differ on their understanding of God, Jesus, man, life’s purpose, sin, salvation, heaven and hell! The major religions of the world are vastly different from each other!

NT Christianity is unique in that God becomes man, in order to bring man to God. All the religions of the world have man working his way to God, earning God’s favor. Only NT Christianity has man saved not by his works, efforts or goodness, but by God’s grace laid hold of through repentance and faith.

B. Each of these religions claims to be the right way. (Technically, one could argue that Hinduism and Buddhism are philosophies, not religions.)

Each of these religions claims to be the only way to “God” (however it defines God).

Each of these religions claims to be the only way to “heaven” (however it defines heaven).

C. The problem is that these religions (philosophies or worldviews) make contradictory truth claims.

For example, Jesus claimed to be the only way to get to the Father.

Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father unless he comes through Me” (John 14:6)

Mohammed came along about 600 years later and said there was another way. Mohammed said that the way to God and heaven was through the keeping of certain religions rites and practices, the Five Pillars of Islam.

Contradictory claims can't both be right. Either one is right and the other is wrong, or both are wrong. But they can't both be right!

The major world religions *are similar* in that they are trying to get people to live good lives depending on how they understand "good".

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31-32)

D. Jesus believed that truth was knowable. A person could know what was really true. (John 8:31-32)

The point: God does not want anyone to believe error, to embrace falsehood and to live apart from Himself.

He does not tolerate His people devoting themselves to error or to his enemies (the devil and demons which are behind idols and idolatry).

Those who are in covenant relationship with Him are bound by the covenant to be faithful to Him.

Those who are not in covenant relationship with Him are welcome to enter the covenant.

3. Theism and atheism are competing worldviews. They are both religions.

A. Define religion:

- ✓ Belief in God? Buddhism does not believe in a personal God, Zen Buddhism doesn't believe in a God at all.
- ✓ Belief in the supernatural? Hinduism does not believe in a supernatural realm *beyond* the material world, only a spiritual realm within the material world.

"A set of beliefs that explain what life is all about, who we are, what's important, what's right and wrong, a master narrative, an account of the meaning of life along with a recommendation for how to live based on that account of things." –Keller

B. Beliefs form a worldview, a meta-narrative, a religion.

Whatever term you use, it is a set of faith-assumptions about the nature of things. Unproven perspective that colors the lens through which you see the world and yourself in it. In this sense, everyone lives out his religion, whether he calls it a religion or not. Everyone lives out his view of the world, his worldview.

C. Religion is as integral to a person's worldview as the absence of religion. Theists and atheists and agnostics alike all have a worldview. Whether you call it worldview, religion, meta-narrative, etc. they all answer the same questions and guide us as to how we live life. Who are we? How did we get here? Where are we going? What is right/moral? What is wrong/immoral?

Richard Dawkins is a missionary for his religion, atheism. What the apostle Paul was to 1st century Christianity, Richard Dawkins is to 21st century atheism.

4. God should be intolerant of other religions and beliefs.

A. The fact is that the God of the Bible exists, He is the only God that exists, and atheism, deism, misdirected monotheism and polytheism are an affront to His righteous character.

- ✓ Human beliefs and behaviors that violate His will displease Him. He alone can say what's right or wrong, because He made us and is the Moral Authority of the universe. Remember, "objective" means outside us, a standard above and beyond us.
- ✓ This entire issue comes down quite simply to whether a Supreme Being exists Who has the right to reveal to His creatures who He is, what He is like, who they are, what they are like, how they should approach Him, how they should relate to Him, and how they should live.

B. While God does not want anyone to live apart from Him and His purpose for their life, He is patient and longsuffering with people and is very willing to forgive our sin.

- ✓ God is not a people-hating bigot. He is a people-loving God who hates sin.
- ✓ He does not like it when people reject Him and His moral authority. He loves it when people turn to Him for cleansing and forgiveness. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

C. The New Atheists vehemently object to the idea of a God who is *the* moral authority in the universe and Who requires people to live according to His rules and to Whom all people are accountable.

- ✓ The New Atheists disdain the idea of a God who punishes violations of His law.
- ✓ The New Atheists reject the concept of an objective moral standard outside themselves or their society.

- ✓ The New Atheists seek to show that the rules, laws, and ways of God written in the Bible are unreasonable and [immoral](#). They read the Old and New Testaments through the lens of 21st century Western eyes, seemingly oblivious to the historical and cultural contexts in which they were written.

D. Since God truly exists, then worship is moral, spiritual creatures getting in touch with reality. (Copan, p.30)

- ✓ God insists that we worship Him because He doesn't want us to detach ourselves from ultimate reality, which only ends up harming us. (Copan, 30)
- ✓ When we worship God we are functioning according to design, living in relation to our Creator, and taking our proper place in the order of things. To not worship Him is to engage in reality-denying idolatry.
- ✓ When we praise God we are simply recognizing and expressing His greatness and worth-ship. **He does not need our praise (Psalm 50:12), rather we need to praise Him for our own well being and proper perspective. He thoroughly enjoys our praise, for true praise is an outpouring of gratitude and an expression of love.**

E. The Ten Commandments form the foundation of the law God gave to Israel. And all ten are repeated in the New Testament. So God's requirements expressed in the Ten Commandments cannot be limited in application to Old Testament Israel. Look at the first four.

(1) Not worshipping Yahweh is a sin.

(2) Worshipping any one or anything else is a sin.

(3) Misusing His name or (4) His day is a sin.

- ✓ So all the religions of the earth that do not worship Yahweh are wrong, and are sin.
- ✓ Now, in our age of relativism and tolerance such a statement is highly offensive and such an idea is received with contempt, scorn and ridicule. But God Himself wrote the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 34:1)

The point: God thinks worshipping anyone else or anything else is sinful and wrong.

And though the New Atheists think it's child abuse, God wants parents to teach their children His rules and His ways.

Deut. 6:6-7 **These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.**

Message

God does not tolerate error and falsehood in our worship.

Action Points:

- If you'd like to talk about this topic, I would love to discuss it with you.
jtalone@fardaletrinitychurch.org or 201-825-1823
- Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.
(1 Peter 3:15-16)
- Sunday School and Folds are a great way to get to know the Bible!
- Read a book of the Bible this week. Pick a book, any book!