

Choosing Between Religions and Sonship

Recently a Christian told me how impressed they were with the muslim community portrayed on a TV series. The actors presented this community as respectful, especially between men and women, forgiving and generous, non-threatening and peaceful. The person described those muslims on the show as completely opposite to the ISIS-styled, jihadis that feature prominently on our news media. The person mused over how they now have a softer opinion of muslims and that a discussion of their attributes was worthy of Christian groups.

This talk immediately reminded me of a number of students from a Christian school who visited the local Buddhist temple for their Comparative Religions class. As a result of the excursion, some expressed the opinion that they thought Buddhism was worthy to convert to.

How do we respond to situations like these?

There is a hidden foundation about religion that needs confronting because it has not been properly addressed these days among Christians, let alone any religious circle. I was confronted with this foundational thought when I was interacting with muslims recently. The point is:

- **Religion is about connecting with a deity.**

This is the premise of all religions, but it gets lost under all the religious activity, rules and regulations, and lifestyles that come from following a deity.

What should logically flow from this seminal point are these questions:

1. How do you know this deity exists?
2. Can you see it?
3. What does it look like?
4. How does it relate to you?
5. Has it communicated with you?
6. How do you know it hears you when you communicate with it?
7. What's its character?

You see, this is what being connected with a deity is all about. If it's not, then it's a façade. If religion (worshipping and serving a god) is only about religious activity, rules and regulations, and a particular lifestyle, then it can all be a mirage, a smokescreen, a fake.

When Christianity (i.e. the Christian religion) is compared side-by-side with Buddhism, Islam, animism, Confucianism, Sikhism, shamanism, Hinduism, Judaism, etc., there is essentially no difference if it's all about outward observances, ceremonies and lifestyle. They all have these, even though they vary. Observances, ceremonies and lifestyle are no indicator of the reality of a divine being.

Even holy books are no indicator of the existence of a god. Mormons and muslims have their venerated texts just as Christians have the Bible. These books were written by people, even if they say that 'god' dictated it or revealed it to the writers.

The proof is in the deity themselves. This is why the above questions are critical. If these questions can't be answered properly, then that's a good indication that people are involved in a ruse or a deception. This is the type of investigation Elijah conducted on Mt Carmel when confronting the prophets of Baal.¹

1 – 1 Kings 18:18-40

We can all quote from and appeal to our sacred literature, but in the end, is the deity we serve REAL?

The first Jesus-followers had no issues about whether God was real or not because he proved it by signs, miracles, deliverances, translocations, tongues, prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, visions, visitations and instantaneously changed lives. Jesus proved it to his disciples by walking on water, controlling the wind and the waves, displaying his deity on Mt Hermon, and rising from the dead.

Charismatic and Pentecostal believers today should be able to answer my above set of questions in a way that shows that Almighty God of real and that Jesus is alive. If they can't, there is something radically wrong with their faith – it's a religion.

Knowing and believing something is all well and good, but it doesn't satisfy non-believers. It also doesn't cut it when in a discussion or argument with an atheist or a person adhering to another religion.

As Kingdom citizens, our experiences with the spirit realm and the deception of our enemy puts us in a good position to assess religions. We know that demons masquerade as gods and are powerless against the authority of Jesus, both in us and in our declarations. This knowledge, however, doesn't always provide us with an opportunity to display the reality of Jesus. There are plenty of these types of opportunities in developing countries where the clash of the deities through the presence of Spirit-filled, fully-functional, believers is occurring. It is also happening in developed countries when witchcraft and demon possession are confronted by the Spirit of God.

For us, it shouldn't be, "The Bible says". It should be, "Let me demonstrate for you the existence of the God I serve". Just like Elijah, we should be able to receive a strategy from Heaven and carry it out in the presence of others that leaves no doubt that Jesus is God and King.

Secondly, and of lesser importance in the comparison of religions, is what they do for their followers.

This raises a number of different questions in relation to a person's god:

1. Is there divine favour on your life?
2. Are you experiencing miraculous interventions?
3. Are you having visitations from spiritual beings connected with your deity?
4. Are blessings unequivocally supporting your life?
5. Does your god serve you when you serve it?
6. Is it a benevolent god?
7. Is your god a loving god?

These additional questions serve to identify a divinity worth connecting with. This is required to help identify the demon-gods who are less powerful and much less benevolent than Jesus. These are invisible spirits, so not being able to see of them allows adherents to write off these questions as irrelevant.

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