



September 12, 2010

Blowing Smoke

I think everyone is aware of the threat by a Florida minister to burn copies of the Koran (or Quran if you prefer that spelling) which raised international tensions to a very high level. On Wednesday evening we had a very good invitation that touched on some of the points that I had started to work on and there are a lot of lessons that can be learned from this event. The first is that obviously not everyone who calls themselves a minister of Jesus Christ really lives up to that. When Christ stood before Pilate and was questioned about the nature of his kingdom, Christ stated, ***“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” (John 18.36)***. Nowhere in the scriptures do we see Christians working to eliminate evil in a physical way. We don’t read about protests, marches or other things that have the intention of removing or defeating others in their planned pursuits. There are a lot of people who don’t believe that however and in our day and time social and political activism have become part of the perceived work of the “church”. I don’t see that in the scriptures so maybe I am the one missing the point. My view of the warfare that Christians engage in is spiritual, not physical. That is what Christ’s response to Pilate was about. So, that brings us back to the events of the past week. What is the point of the threat to burn the book that represents the beliefs of someone else. How is that productive in ever hoping to open a discussion between a Christian and Muslim? We understand from history that Islam spread at one time by physical force and coercion. The threat of conversion or death was real as the religion moved out of the Middle East to Europe and plunged those regions into armed conflict during the period of the Crusades. This is not the way of Christ. We have an example of those who burned books representing their denunciation of a way of life. While at Ephesus, Paul taught and converted many and we see the effect of the Gospel. ***“Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” (Acts 19.19)***. These individuals demonstrated their change of heart, or repentance, by physically separating themselves from what they had followed. It was their personal statement of belief and faith in God which obviously would have an effect on others who were not Christians who saw what they did. God’s appeal to man has always been based on intelligence and belief. Isaiah brings this out in his writing as God appeals to his own people to do what is right. ***“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isa 1.18)***. Even in the face of physical threat Christians who were scattered did not attack but went on teaching the Gospel (**Acts 8.4**). If Christ intended for us to force others to accept the Gospel we would have more specific instructions to seek out and destroy any and all who did not believe. Those are the tactics and practices of others. There was a time when God used his people to destroy the evil of idolatrous nations but that time and day have passed. We live in a time in which the power and expressed might of God lies not in the physical ability to damage and suppress but in the Gospel which is God’s power to save (**Rom 1.16**). The Gospel is able to penetrate even the most stubborn defenses and expose what lies underneath. ***“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb 4.12)***. The events of the past week reveal more about personal agendas and ignorance than the Gospel. The end result is this may be more of a stunt and blowing smoke for attention than being about God.

TLC