

Sticks and Stones

Weapons of sin destruction or Weapons of sin distraction?

It's not just clever words. Do you consider that the recent stoning of a young female teenager who was accused of committing adultery to have been a just execution? The brutal stoning was recorded by an eye-witness on his mobile phone and uploaded to the internet. You can watch the whole heart-wrenching event yourself if you would like to do so. After watching that brutal and barbaric act, then I would like you to ask yourself if you really believe stoning is holy or if the society which performed such an act – and performs them very often - is not a violent and unfair society.

When the footage of the stoning gained the attention of the US press, the Islamic fundamentalists defended the stoning by indicating that the young woman was dealt a just punishment since her sin was worthy of death. Punishments include beheadings, stonings and tossing offenders from roofs.

The stoning of an adulteress was the also very act which the Pharisees wanted to perform in John 8:1-11, but which Jesus intervened to prevent. *Consider:* if your daughter, wife or sister were accused of committing adultery, would you feel justified in taking a concrete block and slamming it into her head until her skull split open and her brain was exposed? That is exactly what happened to the young teenager accused of adultery. She was clearly terrified and in agony.

The Koran (or Qu'ran) is claimed to be an inspired book. It commands the death by stoning of adulterers. Don't you wonder about the coincidence that your god and the god of Islam and the god of the catholic religion all agree that violently torturing and killing people who have sinned sexually is holy? I sincerely hope that, as Jesus warned in Matt 5, you never make the mistake of looking after a woman to lust after her, because if you entertained the thought even for one moment, then you would be guilty of committing adultery in your heart, and we might need to find some holy person who would cast the first concrete block at you. There would be no chance for repentance or rehabilitation. You would be under unpardonable condemnation. This seems to be the way some think sexual sinners should be treated and they accept that this method was divinely inspired.

Matt.7.1

Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Is that the gospel that the Old Testament Israelites were taught? No. Is that the gospel that Jesus came to teach? No. Is that the attitude that Christ's life revealed to sinners? Luke 9.56 "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," said Jesus.

Pastors have often claimed that the Israelites were organised under a theocracy, but it is not so. Adam and Eve lived in a theocracy. They lived with God – face to face. The Israelites were not living under a theocracy. It was a monarchy. Two systems that were more properly theocratic were the Egyptian religion and the Roman religion. Their belief was that the divine god was embodied in the body of the Egyptian Pharaoh and in the Roman emperor. They took the commands of the Pharaoh and the Emperor as being god in human flesh. To disobey the divine leader (Pharaoh, Emperor) was to disobey god, because they believed the leader truly was divine. That was a theocracy, (albeit, their 'gods' were actually human, not divine beings).

The Israelites system was an autocracy or autarchy - that is a political system governed by a single individual. Moses was not considered to be a divine being, however as a human being, Moses' authority was unchallengeable. When various people spoke against his leadership, they simply died or were severely punished. In reality the Israelite system was like a police state - a national system that maintained repressive control over the people by means of 'moral' police – a system which

today still operates in Islamic fundamentalist countries. The moral police in the Israelites' society was the tribe of Levi, the priests.

In practice, the Israelite legal structure more closely resembled a monarchy - a form of government in which the ruler is an absolute dictator. Even centuries after the Exodus, the Pharisees were still claiming that Moses' authority was untouchable, even in the presence of Jesus - the Son of God! An absolute dictator's authority is not restricted by a constitution, laws or opposition etc. Evidence that Moses was deemed to be a dictator, is that, even though the 10 commandments forbade murder, adultery and stealing, the laws of Moses commanded all of those crimes - and justified them as being legal and holy by claiming God commanded them. It is impossible for me to accept that God later commanded those acts which He had just expressly already forbidden.

How can we justify the 'divine' penalty meted out to the man picking up a stick on Sabbath and being stoned to death at the command of "god." I'd like to present my opinion too. Have you ever broken the Sabbath? Even just a little bit? Have you ever spoken your own words on the Sabbath? Thought your own thoughts? Did you ever fail to prepare your food before Sabbath and end up having to finish the cooking a few minutes after Sabbath began? Did you ever fail to be completely finished your last minute rush to be ready for Sabbath before the sun sunk down behind the horizon? Did you ever steal just a minute of Sabbath time? Are you less sinful in doing so, than the man who collected sticks on the Sabbath in Exodus 16?

Please do not suppose that sexual sins and Sabbath-breaking sins are the only sins for which the death penalty applies. James 2:10 says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

Did you ever falter in keeping perfectly any of the other commandments?

What about lying? Even just a 'white' lie qualifies you to join the ranks of sinners on death row. What about dishonouring your father and mother? What about the odd swear word? What about anger? What about hating someone? That's the same as murder (1 John 3:15). What about eating junk food, which is dishonouring to the spirit of God? If you have committed any of these sins, you are guilty and under the death penalty.

Would you think that it was simply justice if the "the moral police" denied you the forgiveness of God and the opportunity to repent? Would you desire that some holy people should stone you right now for your sin? And if some holy people caught you in the act of sinning, and broadcast your sin in front of the whole religious society, and cast you at the feet of the Man from Nazareth, what do you suppose Jesus would do? I can guarantee, confidently that Jesus would not pick up a concrete block and slam it into your skull as the Islamic fundamentalist 'holy' people did to that young teenage woman. He would not do as the Pharisees wanted either, when they urged Him to stone the young Israelite woman who was caught in the act of adultery.

Of course Jesus refused to be uninvolved either. He never was as you say, "a stand-back observer." Jesus was not either of those two extremes. He was not a violent man who stoned people to death. Neither was He a passive man who overlooked sins. Check out how Jesus, our perfect example of love, did react to sin.

He healed sinners by drawing them to Him with His unwavering love (John 12:32; John 3:16; 1 John 3:15,16; 1 Tim 1:14). He protected sinners from condemnation (John 8:10, 11), from physical

abuse (John 8:1-11) and even from verbal abuse (Luke 7:36-50). He empowered forgiven sinners to 'go and sin no more (John 8:11) in the power of His magnificent love.

John 8:10

“When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

Jesus pronounced that the woman (who was just found in the very act of committing sexual sin), was not condemned. His ruling therefore, must mean that she was *already* justified by Christ while she was still sitting in the dust, before her accusers had sneaked away.

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

This justified woman must have been '*in Christ Jesus*' at that time of Christ's announcement. It was this justified, forgiven woman whom the 'righteous' Pharisees wished to stone to death.

1John.3.15

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

1John.3.16

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1Tim.1.14

And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Luke.6.37

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

John.3.16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Rom.8.1

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Let's stop kicking against our conscience as did the apostle Paul did when he attempted to justify killing 'sinners' prior to his conversion.

Let's drop the stones. Let's drop the sticks. Let's begin our walk in the spirit of love.