

Tompkins-Bischel: Another inconvenient truth – Prop. 8 wasn't Christian

Contributed by Gale Tompkins-Bischel

Tuesday, 11 November 2008

Last Updated Wednesday, 12 November 2008

If you are a follower of Jesus who voted for Proposition 8, you may want to sit down before reading this, especially if you think that the people who voted against it are immoral, liberal, non-religious and/or just plain crazy. I hope you'll experience a paradigm shift that will knock you off your feet.

Many people like to say that the United States of America is a Christian nation. In a truly Christian nation, however, love and commitment between any adult gender combination would be encouraged, applauded and honored.

Need convincing? Remember that those who crucified Jesus did so because he was advocating a rethinking of Judaic Law which was heavily laden with anger, fear and vengeance. Many of the ones who call themselves "Christians" today are, in fact, acting a lot like Jesus' murderers; xenophobes who couldn't get past any transgression of the Law.

Here are a few biggies that got the ancients' pants in a twist:

- According to Jesus, yes, it's OK to heal a sick person on the Sabbath – Luke 13.15-16.
- No, fasting is not necessary – Mark 2.19-20.
- Hey, it's OK to hang with people who are different than us – John 4.21-23.
- Don't stress about washing your hands so rigorously; it's what comes out that pollutes – Mark 7.1-24.

The list goes on and on. Some of these laws sound silly and unnecessary, even unbelievable to us today, but they were non-negotiable for Jews in Jesus's day.

The paraphrases I listed are from the canon you might find in your church. Try reading some of the Gospels that didn't make it in. In Thomas vs. 53, for example, Jesus explains that circumcision is not necessary because if it was, God would have made boys this way to begin with. Lo and behold, the Apostle Paul himself recruited many new Gentile Christian converts with the message that butchering their privates was not required.

What kind of person would advocate breaking so many long-established laws? Someone immoral, liberal, non-religious or just plain crazy? Not unless you include Jesus and Paul in that description. So maybe we need to rethink things a little bit ...

Newsflash! Jesus was a liberal. He was also quite religious, totally moral and definitely not crazy.

All of the above-mentioned transgressions of the Law were said to be punishable by death according to Dead Sea Scrolls material – much of which isn't in our bibles, either. In fact, some scholars now believe that the "Wicked Priest" referred to in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls was in fact Jesus – a Jewish rabbi despised because he dared to preach a variation of the Law. Jesus died trying to get people to understand that LOVE is the way, period. Now that's wicked!

With that said, it is indeed sad (and dare I say 'wicked') that so many followers of Jesus would dishonor the Savior today by morally linking both him and his Father to hateful causes such as denying gay people the right to marry.

Heads up: Old Testament Law prohibiting gay relations was written specifically for priests during Greek rule when the Jews desperately needed to populate their land. (Sex among men – especially with boys – was the "popular" thing then in Greek culture.) In fact, the Jewish rules regarding this issue changed from time to time as their population fluctuated up and down.

The fact that times and cultures change is the reason why Jesus wisely told his disciples that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven all that is necessary is to not murder, not commit adultery, not steal, not lie, honor your father and mother, and, of course LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR – Matthew 19.18-19. (Oh, and come follow Him after selling everything you own and giving it to the poor – Matthew 19.21 ... Wait, that smacks a bit of the dreaded 'Socialism!' What's going on here?)

Folks, these admonitions are simply the timeless basics that don't change if we want to live in peace with our fellow man and woman.

Here's the bottom line: Jesus came to Earth 2,000 years ago trying to get people to lighten up and focus on love and peace. Jesus's love is very powerful today as it is expressed through those who do His work. What is His work? Loving our neighbors and not being guided by fear, which fundamentally means respecting our neighbors' rights which don't affect us anyway. I, as a Disciple of Christ, am committed to choosing Love over Fear and this is why I voted No on Proposition 8.

Please, fervent believers who have been misled into thinking the Torah is the end-all-be-all, take some time to reconsider your positions. Don't be like those (such as Judas) who were so "zealous for the Law" that they ended up becoming angry and vengeful, and please quit demanding adherence to unreasonable Jewish Old Testament standards, many of which aren't appropriate for our time.

Besides its prohibition of gay relations, Leviticus also forbids shaving your beard, wearing clothes woven from two kinds of material, and touching the skin of a dead pig – maybe we should outlaw football? It further demands that adulterers be stoned to death, and that anyone with a skin disease dress in tatters, call out "Unclean! Unclean!" and be banished from the group.

How many of you come to church bringing offerings of ram and bull heads, pouring the requisite blood all over the altar? That, ladies and gentlemen, is Old Testament LAW; quite a far cry from Jesus' teachings in the New Testament.

The ancient religious scholars and Pharisees harassed and maligned many prophets, learned men and wise guides

sent by God through the ages to teach them new information – Matthew 23.24. Today, thanks to the hard work of scientists and researchers, we know that being truly homosexual is not a mental illness or a choice. Are we to dishonor their work too by continuing to unfairly blame and condemn gay people for something they have no control over?

Listen up! God didn't just send us his information in the old days; He's loving, flexible and still talking to us NOW.

The ancients were especially angered by one humble man advocating this shocking new principle: Love, Compassion and Oneness with all of humankind. Are you threatened too? If so, this scripture might apply: "Their ears are open but they don't hear a thing" – Luke 8.10

Meditate on it.

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