

## God, Obama, And Religious Tolerance

God's Charge to Israel

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It was quite a newsworthy week, I believe. One of the things that I found interesting occurred at the very beginning of it. Actually, it was at the end of the week before, because after a long delay, President Obama finally broke his silence about the proposed mosque to be erected within a few blocks of where the Twin Towers were, there in New York City—within a few blocks, I think it's about two blocks, of Ground Zero, where 3,000 Americans lost their lives. The theme of his comment was that we must be tolerant of those practicing another religion, even though this was the religion practiced by those who attacked this nation.

Well over the weekend, he must have gotten an awful lot of flak. I do not know whether he heard it personally, but it was probably delivered to him by his aides. So, what was coming back at him? By Sunday the 15th, he clarified his statement saying that in his first comments, he was not addressing the wisdom of building the mosque; he was only addressing their right to practice their religion as they see fit.

This immediately got some more protests, when people said that his comments completely missed the point of their protests. It's not the Muslims right to practice their religion that is the issue. Their concern is that the area itself should not have anything of that nature built there. This morning in *The Charlotte Observer* was a very interesting political cartoon, which showed a mosque being built on the White House grounds. Did they make their point? Yes, they did. There are some places that simply are not appropriate for that sort of thing.

Now, are these people being 'intolerant'? Interestingly, in the week following this flap, it was announced that a survey revealed that 19% of Americans believe President Obama is a Muslim, despite his claim that he is Christian. He has joined no church, they said; he rarely attends one, and he has been caught on film bowing in a mosque.

Tolerance is one of those virtues that sounds reasonable, good, and acceptable in this melting pot nation to those who are largely schooled in what they mistakenly believe is Christianity, and therefore the religion of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. But brethren, let's examine briefly what God shows in His Word what His level of tolerance is toward other religions. This is a level of tolerance He expect His worshippers to have.

Let's begin by stating that God says that He is "a jealous God." In Deuteronomy 12:2-3,

just in the last months before Israel entered into the land, God said this:

**Deuteronomy 12:2-3** These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree [That covers everywhere, brethren]. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.

He doesn't sound very tolerant, does He?

I hope that you've been following David Grabbe's six brief article series ["The High Places"] in our weekly comment publication. These articles follow God's reaction to the conduct of five Judean kings, all of whom were ancestors of Jesus Christ. God was mildly pleased that a couple of them, at least personally, worshipped Him. But He was not pleased one iota if they personally turned from Him, or failed to follow that command we just read in Deuteronomy 12, allowing their pagan places of worship to remain in Judea.

But people nowadays will say, "Yes, but that was the God of the Old Testament. What about Jesus Christ? Didn't He attend services with the Jews? And what about the Apostle Paul? Didn't he, too, go to the synagogue to preach? They were tolerant of the Jews' worship, weren't they?"

Sometimes, brethren, I wonder whether these people are reading the same Bible that we are. Here's a quick overview. Jesus began His ministry in His hometown synagogue. Have you noticed what the conclusion of that meeting was? They were so offended by what He said they tried to throw Him off a cliff to His death! What He said must not have been so acceptable. Twice—once at the beginning of His ministry and again at the end of His ministry—He overturned the tables and scattered the animals being offered for sale as sacrifices, creating such an uproar that everybody was disturbed. That doesn't sound as though He approved of what they were doing. By His zeal, He let the people clearly understand that He would not tolerate such things being conducted in and near His Father's house. They were giving God a bad name.

In between those two spectacular events, other put-downs by Him occurred. In Mark 7,

Jesus confronted the Pharisees directly, accusing them of hypocrisy, telling them they laid aside the commandments of God in order to keep their own traditions. And He was telling them right out that they were idolaters, and by the Bible's standards they were worthy of death.

In Matthew 23, Jesus accused them of abusing the title "Rabbi," of exalting themselves, of hypocrisy, being blind guides, falsely swearing, foolish, whitewashed tombs, serpents, murderers, and self indulgent. Within the scope of His authority given during His ministry, we can easily see that He was most *intolerant* of the religious falseness within Judea.

The same is true of Paul. Have you not read in Acts that almost everywhere he went, he preached to the Jews, and then they raised a ruckus? Why? It was because of what he said about God's way in the gospel, combined with what he said about their practices in their false religion, and that they needed to repent. In their eyes, he certainly was not tolerant, and they were offended. And so they attacked.

What did Stephen do that the Jews killed him? Again, it was because what he said was considered by them as most intolerant, and they retaliated:

**Acts 7:54** When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart.

**Acts 7:58** and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. . . .

The Christians were tolerant? Those early Christians were very intolerant, by American standards, where God's truth was concerned. Modern Americans of the Obama sort are virtually ignorant of God's word and what He expects of His children in regard to His truth. King Obama is doing exactly the same thing as the Israelite kings who worshipped the false gods of their times. That man is walking on a tight rope, and he knows that he must compromise or lose his office. He is a vivid example of political correctness and sin against God, at one and the same time.