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*"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"*

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## **Mini Study**

### **The West - *is it Best?***

*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3)*

Individually, we each have our "standards." In general, we live by them, and any breach pricks our conscience. We like to think that how we behave is "normal." Not only individuals, but nations too, have their collective set of standards. They are constantly in flux, and not everyone at any one time will wholeheartedly support them. Extend that to "the West;" and we consider our standards somewhat superior to others. But are they?

- The foundation of Western morality (defined as how we behave) is Christianity based on the Bible, though now much diluted by rationalism and the rising tide of secularism. That, in its benign form, has been our foundation for around four centuries - since the Protestant Reformation and the coming of the "age of reason."
- There are other claimants to the moral high ground. Other major faiths wave the flag for their own beliefs (which affect their behaviour). Not least is Islam. There are strident cries, for example, for the introduction of Islamic Sharia (law) in Western society. Indeed it has been considered at Government level in Canada and Australia, and there are calls for its introduction in some areas of the United Kingdom.
- The general perception by non-Muslims of *Sharia* is one of barbarism. The literal principle of "*an eye for an eye*" is rigorously carried out in some Islamic nations. The effect is indeed literal: a hand removed for theft, stoning for adultery, exact "tit for tat" for other crime.
- The Christian interpretation, somewhat lost in our day, calls for a balanced response: restorative justice, equivalence of penalty, mercy, rehabilitation. Sin, says Jesus, erupts from the human heart - and He never suggested we remove that organ; although Scripture says we must rend (figuratively) our heart (Joel 2:13).
- Islamic Law incorporates the principles of the Ten Commandments: One God (though not the God of the Christian Scriptures, JHVH), family stability, aversion to personal violence and infidelity. But there are elements anathema to Western ears: the Muslim mistreatment of women, banning of alcohol, education for *jihād* (the struggle against "infidels"), death for apostasy, and *fatwāhs*.

...note, however, that there is widespread hypocrisy. For example, Bahrain - attached by a bridge to Saudi Arabia - hosts a week-end influx of thousands of Muslims consuming the free-flowing alcohol and enjoying the night life. There is a "black market" in alcohol in several Islamic nations. The antics of Arab "nobility" in the world's capitals are notorious. Moslem youth is no better than those of other nations. Islam, in other words, in its practice is, whatever its claims, in no way superior to Western civilization. And *vice versa*.

### **The West - *is it Best?***

- Our Western nations may not be viewed as an expression of “Christian” values, though the external symbolism is everywhere. The stench of moral decay permeates business, entertainment, government and all facets of the social structure. The abhorrence of some Western practices by Muslims is all too often justified. The Anglo-Saxon nations are especially culpable. Despite human failings, our nations have in modern times experienced unparalleled prosperity - prosperity that is fast slipping away through personal and State profligacy. The treasure-house of divine wisdom that has guided us in the past is bare, sold off to satisfy greed and perverse liberalism.
- The prophet Jeremiah foretells (*ch 16*) a time when our nations will experience severe chastisement for our rejection of the principles that have fueled our national prosperity and stability. Many of our people will be taken captive to largely Islamic nations. Our nations begin to reflect the plight of the ancient House of Israel prior to their captivity: *“Israel, you are a sinful nation loaded down with guilt. You are wicked and corrupt and have turned from the LORD, the holy God of Israel. Why be punished more? Why not give up your sin? Your head is badly bruised, and you are weak all over. From your head to your toes there isn’t a healthy spot. Bruises, cuts, and open sores go without care or oil to ease the pain”* (Isaiah 1:4-6 CEV).
- The underlying character of the LORD - in contrast to Allah - is *love*. (The Islamic names for God don’t include it.) He is a Father to His creation, and as with any sane father, He trains and corrects those He loves. He wills us to succeed - personally and nationally. God’s way - revealed throughout the Bible - is the “hedge” that, when obeyed, protects us from predators. As we tear down the hedge we expose ourselves to many enemies: crime, family disruption, environmental pollution, corruption of the body politic, and hostile invasion. The message of the prophets is - *“repent,” “think again.”*

Request: ***What Do You Mean - ‘Repent’?*** and ***The Two Houses of Israel***

*(All Scripture references are KJV unless otherwise noted.)*

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