

Christ, Christians, And Craziness

Joe Slater

Felix, crooked governor of Judea, asked the visiting King Herod Agrippa II to hear Paul's defense regarding the charges the Sanhedrin had brought against him (Acts 25:24-27). That defense consumes nearly the entire 26th chapter of Acts; it includes Paul's account of his own conversion and his commission to proclaim the gospel of the resurrected Christ.

Upon hearing these things, Governor Felix rudely interrupted Paul, loudly exclaiming, "*Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!*" (26:24). Both expressions ("beside yourself" and "mad") come from the same root, "mainomia," which gives us our words "mania" and "maniac." In essence Felix said, "Paul, you're a maniac! Much learning has driven you crazy!"

Paul's response to the governor used the same term: "*I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason*" (16:25). Far from being a raving kook, Paul's words were true, sound, and sensible.

We're not surprised at the governor's insult. Some of Jesus' own enemies said the same of Him: "*He has a demon and is mad! Why do you listen to Him?*" (John 10:20). They couldn't win by arguing against His teaching, so what else could they do but slander Him personally?

Why should our world view us any more favorably than it viewed Jesus or our ancient brethren? They were not intimidated by insults, nor should we be. Unfortunately, there is some real craziness going on in the name of religion, and we wisely distance ourselves from that. But if the world thinks we're crazy, it just might be because we're doing something right!

Warnings!

We are more aware of and better prepared for tornadoes than ever before. In part, this is because so many have been captured on our phone cameras and aired repeatedly on television. We also have better warning systems and better equipment to predict the development and track the progress of tornadoes. With so many advances, why do some still perish in spite of adequate warning? Perhaps, it is because a warning given and a warning heeded are two different things. History is filled with examples of those who rejected warning to their own tragic demise.

At the coming of the Lord, God's power will be displayed as never before. The Bible says that "Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire" (2 Th. 1:7). Scripture says, "*The heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up*" (2 Pet. 3:10). Jesus is coming again. The earth will be destroyed by fire. The warning has sounded. Have you become so accustomed to the warning that it no longer arouses your attention? When the trumpet sounds and Jesus is revealed in the clouds, will you be ready? Or, have you decided to leave the warning unheeded?

No doubt, if given the opportunity, some will try to capture the Lord's return in a video format. But, there will be no time to broadcast it on the six o'clock news. His coming will be like a thief in the night – unannounced, unexpected, and sudden. There will be no last-minute preparation – just eternity. Only those standing in the grace of God and walking in the light of Christ's teachings will be ready for His coming.

When told of a tornado headed their way, why do some leave the warning unheeded? More tragic still are those who live in rebellion to God and do not seek refuge

in Christ. We may never know why some choose to ignore the warnings of God in His word, but they will have eternity to think about why they did not respond to His love and grace.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)

Subtle Whispers Of Satan

We all know that Satan walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us (1 Peter 5:8), and for that reason Peter tells us to be sober and vigilant. What we learn from watching his behavior in other passages is that he rarely announces himself as such. He is usually very subtle in his approach. Therefore, the one seeking to devour you often whispers subtly in your ear:

- There is no reason to study the Bible!
- There is no need to get up and go to Bible Class
- You are too tired to make it Wednesday Night Bible Study
- Sunday night worship is a hassle
- Listen to Ole So-n-so at work; one church is as good as another.
- Nah, you don't have to be baptized to be saved
- Why hurry, you have plenty of time to live your life, you can get right with God later

On and on this list, can go, but the conclusion is the same: the quiet whisperings of Satan are as dangerous as his frontal attacks, if not more dangerous.

Remember: We cannot walk with God, while running with the devil!

--Author Unknown (via Mt. Carmel, Athens, AL)

*He who seeks only for applause from without
has all his happiness in another's keeping.*

--Oliver Goldsmith (via RSVP Newsletter)