

HISTORY, RELIGION AND THE PRESENT STRUGGLE

By: Bill Irby – Minister, West Hobbs Street Church of Christ, Athens, AL

History is a tricky business, particularly religious history. The present struggle between elements of the Islamic religion and the rest of the world is an important example. Most of the media folks who inform (and I use the term loosely) us about the conflict seem to have little understanding of the history of Islam and its interaction with the west. This is harmful stupidity. Ignorance of history invariably leads to disaster.

Here is a “for instance.” In the politically correct West we are told that we must never use the word “crusade” in connection with the present conflict. It is said that this horrible word reminds the Islamic world of the wars against them in the Middle Ages. Well, I am sure it does. But the context of the Crusades is rarely mentioned. Muhammad forged a powerful religion and military force that in short order unified much of the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Islam. After his death, the men who followed him led armies that subdued all of North Africa and Spain. They were moving rather smartly into France when finally stopped at Tours in the year 732. In the east the Islamic armies moved north from Arabia and then west through what we know as Turkey. The armies of Islam were a powerful force, which took on all comers and bested most of them by cunning and military might. The Crusades were a *response* to these Islamic victories. The Crusaders fought back, badly. As a matter of fact, I would rather we did not invoke the crusades today, either...not because of political correctness, but because they were badly led and mainly ineffective. But if we don't pay attention to the history of the situation, we are doomed to accept the faulty interpretation of reality presented of the nightly “news.”

The sad fact is that the situation that exists today is worse than folks realize. Though it is inaccurate to call that which we are in a “religious” war in the West is not so officially religious, it is a war of what can be called *world views*. The world view that arose out of the content of Christianity is one wherein the individual is expected to make decisions based on available evidence. In the extremist portion of the Islam world, the individual hardly exist. We are involved in a struggle with a potent force that does not believe in individual freedom (exemplified in there prohibition missionary work among their people).

Jesus offered the world an invitation: “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Unless and until those that rule the Islam world allow their people the right to accept or reject that invitation on their own, there will be no hope for a peaceful and quiet world. And unless we pay a little attention to history we won't know what happened to us until after it is all over.