

# Arabs and Muslims —are not “ragheads”—

It grieves me every time I hear someone, especially Christians, make jokes referring to Arabs and Muslims as 'ragheads', 'diaperheads', or some other racial slur. I lived for several years in New York city, and regularly saw many people from the Middle East region. They are no different from any other person who has a religious belief; but for some insane reason, it seems accepted to ridicule this particular race. I say 'race' because ultimately that is all that people see. The average person sees someone of Middle Eastern descent (or even from India), and straightway labels them as 'ragheads'.

Before you misunderstand me, I clearly understand the dangerous tenets of the Muslim religion. However, their religion does not excuse this reaction to their race or culture. When a society at large gets to the point where it is accepted to ridicule and devalue a race of people, we are no different than the Nazis who broadly labeled the Jews, Gypsies, and 'lesser' races as 'inferior'. When a society comes to view a race as an object of ridicule or sub-human, then we should not be surprised when that society abuses people of that race. Quickly, those concerns are brushed away by statements to the effect that they deserve it.

I am reminded in our own American history where people with black skin were derided with slurs not worth mentioning here. People joked about them (and still do), and thus their view of those people excused their treatment of them. I am extremely concerned that the popular view of Arabs and Muslims will fester to a point where actions are made without conscience. It has already fostered a hatred in those regions, not necessarily because we are attacking their religion, but that our view of the people affects all aspects of how we treat them.

As Christians, we are not to treat one race different than another, or deride a race just because their culture may be less advanced than ours, or their religion is different than ours.

Romans 10:12 says, *"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

When we make a 'difference' between the peoples, we run the risk of falling into the same trap that the early church had to confront, where the Gentiles were seen as more 'sinful' because they were Gentiles, and did not have the Law.

Also, in Titus 1:12 Paul had to address how some 'prophets' labeled the people of Crete as *"alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies."* No doubt there were accepted cultural views that excused these prophets when they ridiculed the people of Crete. Paul corrects that idea soundly, and tells Titus (who was a pastor in Crete) *"Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."*

James 2:1 says, *"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. ...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors."*

Are there cultural and religious differences between Americans, Christians, Arabs, and Muslims? Most assuredly. However, any differences are rooted in the spiritual realm. We need to witness to them, and show them the God of Love and Forgiveness. Any culture is ultimately derived from its belief system. Attempts in foreign policy to change a culture without first addressing the spiritual needs will never work. It will only lead to resentment, derision, and friction.

As Christians, this is an opportune time in our society and world for Christians to treat Arabs and Muslims as lost souls. We were lost at one time too. Ultimately, that is all we are - humans with lost souls. Christ died for lost souls, not just Americans with a republic form of government. "They are so hateful, and their religion is so twisted", you say. They probably say the same about us, seeing the way our society treats them. Muslims, Arabs, Catholics, Mormons, etc. - anybody takes notice when they are treated respectfully. We may disagree with them on beliefs; but we do not have to be disagreeable in demeanor.

1 Peter 2:12 says, *"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

Sometimes, our best means of getting the Gospel message heard is to show the world that it is worth listening to.

Titus 2:7 *"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."*

When you hear a Christian brother or sister joke about someone's culture or religion, deriding them, perhaps a simple reminder that Christ died for them too, can help increase our testimony and witness to this lost and dying world.