

9

Why Is Religion a Waste of Time?

Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6)."*

Way.... Truth.... Life! Very ordinary words are these; simple, commonplace and universal. Yet they contain the most profound mystery of God and God's most pertinent revelation to man – Jesus Christ; the meeting place of God and man.

Many would have us believe that Christ is but one way among many, all of which reach the same goal. God tells us differently: *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)."* God makes available no other way; past, present, or future.

How is Christ the WAY? By paying the purchase price (our debt penalty) for us which none of us could pay. He died in the place of each one of us and by means of that death has provided us with the only means of access to God. The plan of salvation has been provided by God but the responsibility of either accepting or rejecting His plan lies with each individual. Man must come to God according to God's terms.

The above verses clearly tell us that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the way to heaven. He does not merely show the way; He is THE WAY. Salvation is in a Person, not in a religion. Accept that Person as your own, and you have salvation. The Lord Jesus is not just one of many ways. He is the ONLY WAY. No one comes to the Father except through Him. The way to God is not by the Ten Commandments (law), the golden rule, sacraments, ordinances, baptism, confirmation, Mass, church membership or religious worship; it is through Christ and Christ alone.

Today many say that it does not matter what you believe as long as

you are sincere. They say that all religions have some good in them and that they all lead to heaven. But Jesus said, "*No one comes to the Father except through ME.*" Can it be any clearer than that? Why don't you listen and heed? You want to know how to get to heaven; well here is God telling you how. He is the Creator of the universe; He created you. He should know how you can get to heaven. Do you think you know more than Him? Do you think your church or religion has a better way and knows more than God?

And yet you'll get someone who will ask, "How can I prove to someone that Christianity is the only true religion?" Look, quit trying to prove it because Christianity doesn't save anybody. You're not saved by Christianity. Christianity didn't die on the cross for you. Christianity was not raised from the dead for you. Christianity is not sitting at the right hand of the Father for you. Christianity is a religion. And as far as a religion is concerned; Christianity isn't any better than any other religion unless what you call Christianity is a proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are in Christ Jesus you're okay.

You're not okay if you're in any religion, it doesn't matter whether you're in a Buddhist religion, Muslim religion, Catholic religion, Mormon religion or the Christian religion. It doesn't make an ounce of difference. You're not saved by being in a religion. The only way that a person is saved is being in Christ Jesus. Jesus didn't come to earth to form a religion. He came to form a relationship with us, to reconcile us to God and you and I enter into a relationship with one MAN and this is Christ Jesus. "*There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby you must be saved.*"

Now, there are people who will say, "Well, I was baptized." That's wonderful but it did not do one thing for you in regards to your salvation. A number of people believe that you have to be baptized in order to be saved. In other words it's the baptism that saves you. There are some denominations where that's exactly what is taught. The only problem with that is this; that they themselves don't

believe that. What they believe is that you've got to be baptized in my church, in my waters by my pastor in order to be saved. You see if they truly believed that baptism saves; then why wouldn't a baptism in any other denomination work when you try to join their church? So in essence it's my water, my pastor, my church. I don't want to pick on any one denomination but that is what some churches teach and believe and it is totally wrong.

Then there are other people who believe that in order to be saved you have to be a Catholic because it's the church. Why? Can't you tell? It's called Catholic Church and that means universal; so that's us. No it isn't! That's a religion made by man, not by God. So there is no church that you have to join that's going to save you; not one, including the one I go to.

Going back to the late 1950's, I remember my dad having to fill out some government forms and one of the questions they asked was, "what was his religion." He put down Lutheran because he immigrated from Germany and that was the key religion in Germany. Now my dad never went to a church nor did he ever read the Bible but he would say that he was a Lutheran. The only time he stepped into a church was probably for a wedding or a funeral but he still had his religion (Lutheran) and would proudly announce that whenever people asked.

Before I retired, I remember calling on a customer of mine and in our conversation I asked her if she was a Christian and she replied, "Oh yes, I was born in Canada." Why that answer; because in her mind Canada was a Christian country and being born here made her a Christian. You see anybody can call themselves Christian but they wouldn't know God from a goose. If you think going to a church makes you a Christian then going to a garage must make you a mechanic. Can you see what I'm getting at?

Another couple of examples of religion that come to mind is when God gave Moses His ten laws (commandments) to give to the Jewish people and then centuries later when Jesus arrives on the scene, the Jewish people had approximately 613 man-made laws to

contend with. It stifled them but that's religion for you. Then over in Rome at the beginning of the fourth century, Emperor Constantine saw an opportunity to use this formerly persecuted and politically alienated religious body to strengthen his hold on the empire and so he issued a decree making the whole Roman Empire Christian. This was the start of the Romanized state religion known later as the Catholic or "universal" church. By the stroke of a pen, pagan worshipers became Christian. One minute they're pagans and the next minute they're decreed by Emperor Constantine to be Christians. What were these priests in these pagan temples going to do? Did they destroy their idols and turn to Christianity? No! Here is what they did. They chiseled out the names of pagan idols and chiseled in new names, those of Jesus and Mary. Pagan temples (idol worshiping) now embraced Jesus and Mary. Heathen temples were restored and re-established. What was the result? A state-dominated religion that became a bizarre synthesis of beliefs, sacraments, rituals, practices and customs derived mainly from the pagan Babylonian cult. The new converts were content to dress up their paganism in a Christian cloak. Yes, these pagan worshipers had a new religion they called Christianity and were very religious, but LOST.

Can you see what I'm getting at? There is no church that died on the cross for you and me. There is no church that can save you. There is no church that was raised from the dead, only a MAN called Jesus; God Himself in the flesh. *"In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things (created) were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us as the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3, 14)."*

So, no man will ever be saved by joining a church, or a religion including the Christian religion. You may ask, "What is the Christian religion?" Is it the Baptist religion? Is it the Lutheran religion? Is it the Anglican religion? Is it the Pentecostal religion? Is it the Catholic religion or any other? Because if religion is a

doctrine, doctrines are all over the place; are they not? Christian religion flies under the banner of all kinds of things, even cults call themselves a Christian religion. That's why I want you to be very careful in your dealings with various Christian denominations. You have to be in a situation where you know the difference: the difference between religion and a relationship with God.

Religions are based on man's own effort to work for salvation. Religion can never change the hearts of people or give assurance of salvation. The best religion can do is give a false hope that good works will "balance the scales" against evil works on God's judgment day. But those who personally trust Christ as their Savior have absolute assurance now of sins forgiven and of peace with God. Only Christ can offer the hope of eternal life. Those who die "IN CHRIST" are absent from the body and present with the Lord in heaven. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:8).

So, when people ask you to convert to a Christian religion, it wouldn't really make any more difference than converting to a Buddhist or Muslim religion. Why? Because you're converting to a religion and that religion is not going to save you. The only conversion that can save you is being converted to a Person and that Person is Christ Jesus. You must keep your focus on what Jesus came to do. If you lift... what; the Christian religion up, I'll draw all men unto Myself. No! If you go out and practice church growth principles, I'll draw all men unto Myself. Is that what Jesus said? No! He said, "*If you lift ME up, I will draw all men unto Myself (Jn. 12:32).*" That's Him (Jesus); not a religion.

You have to ask yourself; have you been converted to Christ or were you converted to a religion? Are you a Christian religionist or are you a true child of the living God? Ask yourself this: if you die are the Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians or any other group going to send you to heaven. I don't think so! Only Jesus is going to take you to heaven and that's because you're in Him and NOT in a religion.

Salvation is of the Lord 100%. Our salvation is based on the cross

work of Christ. It is obtained only through the shedding of blood. *"And without shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22)."* When the perfect Lamb of God (Christ) shed His precious blood on Calvary's cross, He paid the price of redemption and provided forgiveness of sins and eternal life. All who are sheltered by the blood of Christ are BORN AGAIN into the family of God.

Salvation is not a matter of being religious but it is a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ through faith unto repentance.

Would it surprise you to know that God is non-denominational? He's not Jewish, He's not Christian, and He's not a Muslim. He's not even interested in religion. God is interested in relationships.

Let me explain: religions are about following rules and regulations, trying to meet some sort of standard in order to receive a reward – prosperity, health, place in heaven. Contrary to popular belief, this system of "earned rewards" is of no interest to God.

I know what you're thinking. God has rules, right? Everyone has heard of the 10 Commandments! And you're right! But almost all of God's commands can be compared to parents' rule for their children. Parents guide their children not so they can be good – but for their own good – for the benefits of their well-being. When a parent tells a child not to touch a hot stove, it is to protect the child from getting burned – not to enforce some kind of arbitrary set of rules.

God has instituted certain rules for our protection, but they are useless when it comes to "being good." Why? Because no one can obey each and every rule, every day, for their entire life!

In the book of Isaiah, the Scriptures say that, *"all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment"* to Him (see Isaiah 64:6).

Why? Why would our good deeds repel God? Doesn't He command us to do good things? Doesn't He want us to be good?

It's not possible to be good! A single bad deed, an impure thought, is enough to ruin an otherwise "good" life. No matter how hard you might try, you can never live a perfect life by God's standards.

Feeling pretty discouraging at this point? There is hope!

While being good is impossible for us, there is something else that is possible: to have a good relationship with Him. Just as the father loves his child in spite of bad behavior, God loves us in spite of our imperfect lives. And because of that love, He wants to be in a relationship with us.

Some people are so put off by a God whom they are unable to fit into their own image; that they refuse to believe one exists. God does exist, and He is who He is – not who we think He is or who we want Him to be.

God is unlike anyone we can imagine. And as I have mentioned before, He loves us so much, He has provided a way for the problem of sin to be overcome, and for us to be able to have a good relationship with Him.

Notice I said "a way" and not "several ways." Does God only have one way?

It can't be said any clearer than in these verses:

"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)." The apostle Peter proclaims unequivocally that Jesus alone holds the key to salvation, and in fact is salvation.

Jesus said, "I am the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Me (through who He is and what He has done)." John 14:6

Pretty strong words but again He is God and only He knows what you need to do to be saved and to be in heaven with Him for all eternity. Religion is a waste of time – salvation is all about a relationship.

It's all about Jesus! It's all about a relationship with God – not a religion.