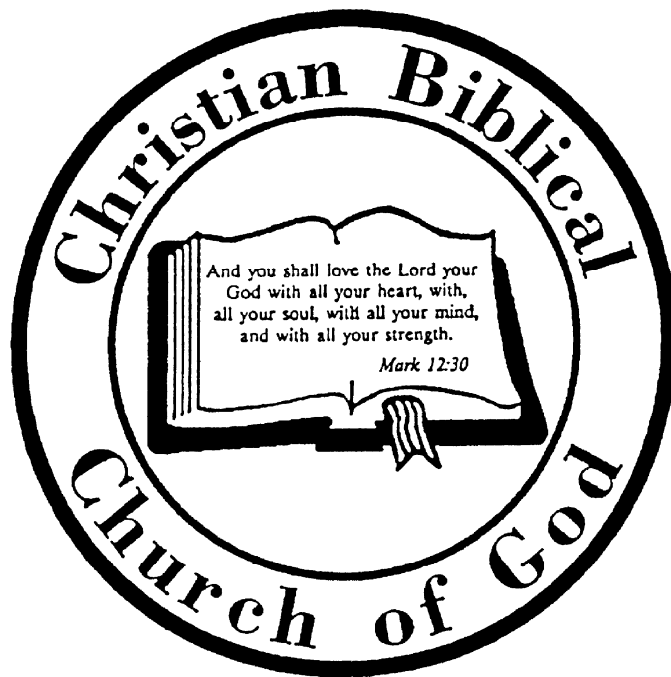


Why God Hates Religion



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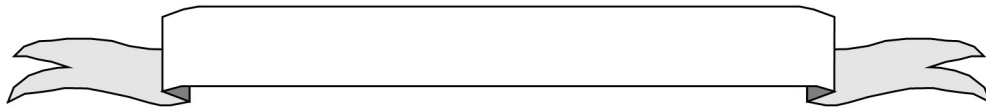
By Fred R. Coulter

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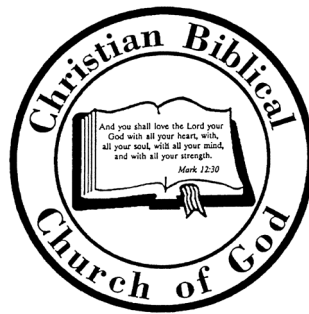
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Why God Hates Religion

Series of 7 sermons by Fred R. Coulter



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God Hates *Vain* Religion

Fred R. Coulter

Is God everywhere, in all things? That is what is called the *doctrine of omnipresence*: He is everything, in every part of everything that is created. That means that God is in the heavens, every part of the heavens. He's in everything that is out there. He's in everything that's on the earth. God is in every animal. God is in every human being. God is in every physical thing. So therefore, *based upon that doctrine*, God does not need a body. God does not need eyes, a mouth, hands or feet. God needs none of those, because God is everywhere and in all things. How does this reflect in the 'religions' of the world? *Well, it reflects this way*:

- Mystic Judaism believes that
- Mystic Catholicism believes the same thing
- Mystic Orthodox believes the same thing
- Mystic Islamism believes the same thing
- undoubtedly, the Masons do, too

So what you have in this doctrine, you have unity of 'religion' that people don't realize. Hindus believe that, and it comes across this way in the New Age religion: The way to salvation is to find Christ in you, because if God is in everything, everywhere and is in everyone, then you don't need to repent; you don't need to be converted. You don't need any of these things. All you need to do is find the Christ in you. Therefore, God is just a great glob out here.

First of all, let's find out what God is like. Let me draw your attention to the small article that we have: *Ninety Facts About God*. It goes through all of the Scriptures showing that:

- God has a face
- God has hands
- God has eyes
- God has a body

And since God has a body, He is not everywhere all at once at the same time. Just like you cannot be everywhere all at once at the same time.

Let's find out something concerning Moses and God. What does it say in Genesis 1:26: "...Let Us make man in **Our image**..." In order to have something made in the *image*—meaning an exact likeness of it—it has to be reflective of what the actuality is. You cannot have us in a human body and have God everywhere all at once in everything, because we're not in the likeness of God, nor in His image; so all of this becomes a mental exercise in trying to figure these things out. Those are called anthropomorphisms, which means that they *try and define aspects of God by human terms*, whereas God is defining Himself by what He is and what He looks like. So, we're made in the image of God, male and

female. We are the image of the reality of what God looks like.

After the children of Israel sinned, because God was giving Moses all of the judgments and instructions and everything on Mount Sinai, then he came down:

Exodus 33:7 "And Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tent of meeting. And it came to pass, everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tent of meeting, which *was* outside the camp. And it came to pass as Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose up, and each man stood *at* his tent door and gazed at Moses until he had gone into the tent. And it came to pass as Moses went into the tent, the cloudy pillar descended and stood *at* the door of the tent, and the LORD spoke with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand *at* the tent door. And all the people rose up and worshiped, each man at his tent door. And **the LORD would speak to Moses face-to-face, as a man speaks to his friend...**" (vs 7-11). There you have it—face-to-face. Now what does *face-to-face* mean? *It means face-to-face!*

Jesus said, 'none of you have seen God at any time or heard His voice,' (John 5) so the One here is the Lord Who became Jesus Christ. This is the Lord or Jehovah Elohim who became Jesus Christ.

- the prophets talked to Him
- Moses talked to Him
- Adam talked to Him
- Noah talked to Him
- Abraham talked to Him
- *Both face-to-face and in vision*

"...And he returned again to the camp. But his servant, Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent" (v 11). I think it's very interesting that we'll find that the relationship between Paul and Timothy was very much like the relationship between Moses and Joshua.

Now then, I like this little discussion between God and Moses here; this was almost a heated discussion, v 12: "And Moses said to the LORD, 'Behold, You say to me, "Bring up this people." And You have not told me whom You will send with me. Yet, You have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight." Now, therefore, I pray You, if I have found grace in Your sight, make me see now Your way, that I may know You, that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people.' And He said, '**My presence**

shall go *with you*, and I will give you rest.’ And he said to Him, ‘If Your presence does not go *with me*, do not carry us up from here; for how shall it be known that I and Your people have found grace in Your sight? *Is it* not in that You go with us? So we shall be separated, I and Your people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.’ And the LORD said to Moses, ‘I will do this thing also that you have spoken, for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name’” (vs 12-17).

He did reckon with God! He did talk with God! *And God heard!* It was pretty straight talk. *Presence* means that He is not dealing with the nation but person-to-person. He’s dealing with His Spirit and angels, called *His presence* in this particular case, but we’re going to see that He revealed Himself to Moses.

Verse 18: “And he said, ‘I beseech You, show me Your glory.’ And He said, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.’ And He said, ‘You cannot see My face...’” (vs 18-20).

That is in glory because it says He talked to him face-to-face. That would present a contradiction if God did not have the power to reduce His glory. In other words, when we’re dealing with God directly talking with Abraham, He obviously had to reduce His glory down.

Can God appear as a man? *Yes!* In other words, God also has control over His glory. When God is not in His glorified form:

- Abraham saw Him
- Isaac saw Him
- Jacob saw Him
- Jacob even wrestled with Him

Meaning that He had to reduce His glory down to the point that He appeared just like a human being.

Genesis 18:1: “And the LORD appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, and he sat at the tent door in the heat of the day. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him....” (vs 1-2).

We know that this was the LORD and two angels. When He’s in His full glory He still has His shape and form as a human. We can refer to Rev. 1, which shows Christ in His glorified form there.

“...And when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground. And he said, ‘My LORD, if now I have **found favor** in Your sight, do not pass away... [*favor* means *grace*, so in both cases to be in the presence of God requires the grace of God] ...I pray,

from Your servant. Let a little water, I pray, be brought, and wash Your feet, and rest under the tree. And I will bring a bite of bread, and will comfort your hearts. After that You shall pass on, for this is why You have come to Your servant.’ And they said, ‘Do so, as you have said’” (vs 2-5). This had to be when Christ was appearing as Melchisedec.

Verse 6: “And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, ‘*Make ready* quickly three measures of fine meal; knead *it*, and make cakes.’ And Abraham ran out to the herd and brought a calf, tender and good. And he gave *it* to a young man. And he hurried to dress it. And he took butter and milk, and the calf, which he had dressed, and set *it* before them....” (vs 6-8). It’s perfectly all right to eat meat and butter and milk at the same time. The Jews say: *No!* That is unscriptural.

“...And he stood by them under the tree, and they ate. And they said to him, ‘Where *is* Sarah your wife?’ And he said, ‘Behold, in the tent.’ And He said, ‘I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and lo, Sarah your wife *shall have* a son.’ And Sarah heard at the tent door, which was behind Him. Now, Abraham and Sarah *were* old, *well* advanced in days, and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore, Sarah laughed within herself, saying, ‘After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’ And the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I, who am old, truly bear a child?’” (vs 8-13).

Verse 14 tells us who it is: “‘Is anything too hard for the LORD?....’” This One was the LORD. He appeared as a man. Abraham talked to Him, and He ate food. In order to do that, you can’t be everything, everywhere, in everything if you are one place in human form. And that’s what God was at this place.

“...At the time appointed I will return again, according to the time of life, and Sarah *shall have* a son.’ Then Sarah denied, saying, ‘I did not laugh’... [notice how gracious God was to her]: ...for she was afraid. And He said, ‘No, but you did laugh.’ And the men rose up from there, and looked toward Sodom. And Abraham was going with them to send them on the way. And the LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do... [it was the LORD] ...since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his house after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment, that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him’” (vs 16-19). I just want to interject right here: What God’s way is, *it is a way of life! It is not a ‘religion’!*

James is the only one who uses the word translated in the English *religion*. That really could be translated *piety*, meaning *your good works*. ‘Pure and undefiled good works *or religion or piety* is to visit the widows and the fatherless’ and so forth. So, *God’s way* is not a ‘religion,’ ***it is a way of life!***

Let’s come back to Exodus 33 again. Now we have God going to show Himself in His glory. Why would Moses say, ‘Show me Your glory?’ *Because he hadn’t seen Him in His glory, that’s why!* He saw Him when He was not in His glory. If he had seen Him in His glory, he would not have requested it—right? *Simple deduction*—you can get out of the whole account, as we have here.

Exodus 33:18: “And he said, ‘I beseech You, show me Your glory.’ And He said, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.’ And He said, ‘You cannot see My face...’” (vs 18-20).

That is in the glorified form. You *can* see the face of God—as Abraham did, as Noah did, as Adam did, as Eve did—when He is *not* in His glorified form.

“...‘You cannot see **My face**, for no man can see Me and live.’ And the LORD said, ‘Behold, *there is* a place by Me, and you shall stand upon a rock. And it will be, while My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with **My hand** while I pass by. And I will take away My hand, and you shall see **My back parts**. But My face shall not be seen’” (vs 20-23). That tells us an awful lot:

- Face: in order to speak you have to have a mouth
- Eyes, ears: He’s hearing and talking back
- Hand: which means you have to have an arm
- He will pass by: have to have legs and feet
- Back part: have a complete body.

So then he hewed two more tables of stone. Exodus 34:4: “And he cut out two tablets of stone like the first *ones*. And Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone. And the LORD came down in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God... [Jehovah Elohim] ...merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy to the thousandth generation...’” (vs 4-7).

He just gave mercy to thousands! He said, ‘Yes I will go with you;’ whereas, His first proposal was: ‘Look, I’ll destroy all them and I’ll do it through you, Moses.’ But Moses said, ‘No, take my name out of the Book of Life if You’re going to do that.’ And God said, ‘No, I won’t do that and don’t tell Me to take your name out of the Book of Life.’ ***Moses and the Lord had some pretty good conversations!***

“...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but Who will by no means clear *the guilty*...” (v 7). Those who don’t repent will not have their sins forgiven. If He does—forgiving iniquity, transgressions, sin and so forth—will by no means clear the guilty, those who don’t repent.

“...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, to the third and to the fourth generation” (v 7).

What category of people does that go to? We’ll see what category of people that goes to. We’ll clarify something as we go along here. We will find that that applies to idolaters.

Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourselves any graven image, or any likeness of *anything* that *is* in the heavens above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, the LORD your God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation **of those who hate Me**” (vs 4-5).

Where there is repentance, then it’s not visited to the third and fourth generation. That’s what it’s talking about, but if you have those that hate God, then it will come to the third and fourth generation,

Verse 6: “But showing mercy to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.” God is not arbitrary and capricious about it. Let’s see that God even modified that.

Ezekiel 18:4: “Behold, all souls *are* Mine. As the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son, they *are* Mine. The soul that sins, it shall die. But a man who is righteous and does that which is lawful and right, and has not eaten on the mountains, nor has lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, nor has defiled his neighbor’s wife, nor has come near a menstruating woman, and has not oppressed any man, *but* has given the debtor’s pledge back to him, has robbed none by violence, has given his bread to the hungry and has covered the naked with a garment” (vs 4-7). You can put in there James 2, about clothing your brother who is naked and destitute.

Verse 8: “he does not lend out at usury, nor has taken any increase, he has withdrawn his hand from iniquity, has executed true justice between man and man, has walked in My statutes, and has kept My ordinances to deal truly, he *is* righteous, he shall surely live,” says the Lord GOD. ‘And if he beget a son *who is* a robber, who sheds blood, and who does the like of any one of these things—and *the father* does not do any of these *himself*—but *his son* has even eaten on the mountains, and has defiled his neighbor’s wife; has oppressed the poor and needy; has committed robbery; has not given back the pledge; and has lifted up his eyes to the idols; has committed abomination; has loaned out at usury; and has taken increase—shall *the son* then live? He shall not live! He has done all these abominations; he shall surely be put to death; his blood shall be upon him. But, *if a man* begets a son who sees all his father’s sins which he has done...” (vs 8-14)—and decides to do what is right, then the son will not be held accountable for his father.

Verse 20: “‘The soul that sins, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father... [if he chooses to do what is right] ...nor shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.... [because the son makes his own choices] ...The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins, which he has committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. All his transgressions that he has done, they shall not be mentioned to him; in his righteousness that he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?’ says the Lord GOD. ‘Is it not *pleasing, instead*, that he should turn from his ways and live?’” (vs 20-23).

Here God even modified it when there is repentance. That shows God is gracious, merciful, long-suffering and kind.

Verse 24: “But when the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, *and* does according to all the abominations that the wicked do, shall he live? All his righteousness that he has done shall not be remembered; because of his trespass that he has trespassed, and because of his sin that he has sinned, because of them he shall die.” We need to clarify that as we go along to show the difference here.

Exodus 34:7: “...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, to the third and to the fourth generation.” That has to do with those who hate Him, *who do not repent*. Upon repentance, God will remove those things.

In the book of Jonah. Jonah went to the Assyrians, the Ninevites and pronounced judgment

against them. What did they do? *They repented!* God removed the judgment! They had no covenant with God at all. When someone comes along and says, ‘Well look, this is kind of miserable and nasty of God to do this,’ then you have to understand there is some qualifying things that mitigate this.

Exodus 34:8: “And Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. And he said, ‘If now I have found grace in Your sight, O LORD, I pray You, let my LORD go among us, although it *is* a stiff-necked people. And pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your inheritance.’ And He said, ‘Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels...’” (vs 8-10)—and that He would go with them.

Let’s go to the New Testament because the subject is: What does God look like? ***The reason that God made us in His image was so that God could become a human being and human beings could become God!*** Jesus gave some pretty profound things here to His disciples.

John 14:1: “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me [saying that *He is God*, the same belief] ...In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were otherwise, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; so that where I am, you may be also. And where I am going you know, and the way you know” (vs 1-4). They really didn’t at that point, yet.

Verse 5: “Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going; how then can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. But from this time forward, you know Him and have seen Him’” (vs 5-7). Now, this was quite a statement since no man has seen the Father, no man has heard His voice, no man has seen His shape. Why does He say this?

Verse 8: “Philip... [probably remembering that Jesus said that before] ...said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and that will be sufficient for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long a time, and you have not known Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father; why then do you say, “Show us the Father?”’” (vs 8-9). So, whatever the Father would look like if He were in the flesh would be exactly what Christ looked like. That’s what He’s saying.

Did Christ, when He was on the earth, have a complete human body? *Of course!* He was born of the

virgin Mary! He was totally human, which means *that's how He looked, and if God the Father were to appear in the flesh, which He is not going to, that's how He would appear!* Yes, God does have a body. He's in one place at one time, not everywhere. He is undoubtedly in the third heaven.

Hebrews 1:1—this is really quite a powerful chapter: “God Who spoke to the fathers at different times in the past and in many ways by the prophets, has spoken to us in these last days by *His* Son.” That is why Christ is a *personal* Savior, coming personally from God the Father. It's one thing to have a prophet, inspired of God to even see a vision of God, maybe even talk to God in the sense that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the things we just covered. It's another thing to have a personal message from God through His own Son, His only begotten Son.

That's why John starts out very powerfully; John 1:1: “In *the* beginning was the Word... [we should have this memorized] ...and the Word was **with** God, and the Word **was** God.” *No question!* So, when He was here, He was representing everything that God in the flesh would represent. That's why it says in 1-Tim. 3:16 that God was manifest in the flesh. And He said, ‘If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father.’

Hebrews 1:2: “Whom He has appointed heir of all things, **by Whom also He made the ages; Who, being the brightness of His glory and the exact image of His person...**” (vs 2-3).

Now then, we're having it redefined again, that Christ looks just like the Father, the express image, the exact image of His person. *Person* means you have a body. *Person* means you are an individual, not an omnipresent glob which fills everything. Granted, it says, ‘The Lord fills heaven and earth’ in one of the Psalms, that is true, but that means with His power. That doesn't mean with His person.

“...and upholding all things by the word of His own power... [that's a lot of power; that's a lot of righteousness to uphold everything] ...when He had **by Himself** purged our sins...” (vs 3). Please understand that that's why He said when He was on the cross, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me,’ because He had to *by Himself*.

“...sat down at *the* right hand of the Majesty on high; having been made so much greater than *any* of the angels, inasmuch as He has inherited a name exceedingly superior to them” (vs 3-4). He wasn't made after the image of angels. We're not made after the image of angels. All angels do not look like human beings. Some of the spirit beings look like horses. Some look like other animals, as witnessed

by the cherubim that we find in Ezek. 1 & 6.

Verse 5: “For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘You are My Son; this day I have begotten You’? And again, ‘I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me’?”

You have the two Elohim. One: Jehovah Elohim who became the Word, revealed Himself to mankind all through the Old Testament. Then there came a point in time **when** God said, ‘All right, the One Who is going to become the Son will divest Himself of all of His *spiritual glory* to become the Son. That's why it says, ‘I shall be a Father to Him, He shall be a Son to Me’ and that was at the minute of the divestiture of Christ, Who then became the Son. Otherwise, They are still Elohim. So, Christ was not the Son eternally in the past. He did not become the Son until He became the Son—*this day* when He was begotten (Psa. 2).

Verse 6: “And again, when He brought the Firstborn into the world, He said, ‘Let all *the* angels of God worship Him.’”

Let's see where it talks about Christ in His glorified form. And what are we going to see? *We are going to see human characteristics*, not just a manifestation so that people could understand something about Him, but ***the actual vision of what Christ was like when He was glorified!***

Revelation 1:11: “Saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and what you see, write in a book, and send *it* to the churches that *are* in Asia: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.’ And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands; and in *the* midst of the seven lampstands *One* like *the* Son of man, **clothed in a garment reaching to the feet...**” (vs 11-13). So, He has feet. There are spirit clothes, clothes made out of spirit composition.

“...and girded about **the chest** with a golden breastplate. And **His head and hair** *were* like white wool, white as snow; and **His eyes** *were* like a flame of fire; and **His feet** *were* like fine brass, as if *they* glowed in a furnace; and **His voice** *was* like *the* sound of many waters.” (vs 13-15). This is describing almost the whole body!

Verse 16: “And in His right hand He had seven stars, and a sharp two-edged sword went out of His mouth... [the Word of God, because what God speaks *is*] ...and His countenance *was* as the sun shining in its *full* power... [I imagine you would do the same thing as John did if you saw this] ...And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if dead... [you're not going to be moving a muscle] ...but He laid His right hand upon me, saying to me, ‘Do not

be afraid; I am the First and the Last, even the One Who is living; for I was dead, and behold, I am alive into the ages of eternity. Amen. And I have the keys of *the* grave and of death” (vs 16-18). So then He gave the messages to the Churches.

Now we come over here to the third heaven and this is where God is. This is where His throne is, which Paul said that he heard things that are not lawful for a man to utter or speak. In other words, it's not permitted. What he heard somehow he understood, but he couldn't relate it. So, here he was called up there.

Revelation 4:2: “And immediately I was in *the* Spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *One* was sitting on the throne. And He Who was sitting was in appearance like a jasper stone and a sardius stone...” (vs 2-3). This is a different form of glory. I imagine that God has different radiating powers of His glory, all the way from just being a human being to being absolutely glorious; something like a glory rheostat.

“...and a rainbow *was* around the throne, like an emerald in its appearance. And around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones... [these are lesser thrones] ...and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments... [the 24 elders apparently have human form] ...and they had on their heads golden crowns. And proceeding from the throne were lightnings and thunders and voices; and seven lamps of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, *were* burning before the throne” (vs 3-5) We'll talk about the seven Spirits of God here in just a minute, because that's how God keeps track of things on the earth.

Verse 6: “And before the throne *was* a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne and over the throne *were* four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind.”

Myself, I cannot comprehend that. You read that, you just have to say that some things you just don't know. Were they eyes? *or* Were they just glistening? *or* Were they eyes that saw? *or* Were they just kind of like human eyeballs everywhere? *I doubt it!* I think it was some sort of glorious thing that looked like eyes, rather than it had actual eyes.

Then they praised God “...day and night they cease not saying, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty...” (v 8).

Let's see the two symbolic aspects of Christ, Revelation 5:5 “Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion Who is of the tribe of Judah... [the warring Christ] ...the Root of David, has overcome to open the book, and to loose its seven seals.’ Then I saw, and behold, before the throne and the four living creatures, and before the elders, *was* standing a Lamb as having been slain...”

(vs 5-6). It immediately went from a lion to a lamb showing the two sides of Christ, the two aspects of Christ

“...having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God that are sent into all the earth” (v 6).

If you want to liken it to remote television, that's the closest I can identify it with, but God knows what's going on everywhere at all times if He needs to know. There are myriads of angels who are carrying out His work, informing Him of things, carrying things out. You can find that in the book of Daniel. I won't get into angels at this particular time.

God is one Spirit Being, in one place, the third heaven, at one time, but has the power to know everything that's going on everywhere at all times through the spirit mechanisms that He has created and devised to do. God is not omnipresent, everywhere, in everything. ***He's in one place at one time***. That's why He has to return to the earth.

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Genesis 1:26
- 2) Exodus 33:7-20
- 3) Genesis 18:1-19
- 4) Exodus 33:18-23
- 5) Exodus 34:4-7
- 6) Exodus 20:4-6
- 7) Ezekiel 18:4-14, 20-24
- 8) Exodus 34:7-10
- 9) John 14:1-9
- 10) Hebrews 1:1
- 11) John 1:1
- 12) Hebrews 1:2-6
- 13) Revelation 1:11-18
- 14) Revelation 4:2-6, 8
- 15) Revelation 5:5-6

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- John 5
- James 2
- Jonah
- 1 Timothy 3:16
- Ezekiel 1; 6
- Psalm 2
- Daniel

Also referenced: Article:

Ninety Facts About God by Lloyd W. Cary

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Why God Hates Hierarchy

Fred R. Coulter

This special sermon is in response to a couple of sermons that I've heard entitled, *I Love Hierarchy* and *I Love Government* by one of the ministers in one of the Churches of God trying to justify a very rigid hierarchical system of church government.

Is that true? Is it that we should love hierarchy and love church government as administered by those who have a very rigid structured pyramid type of church government and organization? And in listening to it, he even went so far as to say that because God raised up Babylon and God raised up Nebuchadnezzar that the kind of government that Nebuchadnezzar had was the kind of government that God wanted from the top down, and since Daniel was a part of it, that was approved and accepted by God. Little did he realize that in Dan. 4 God humbled Nebuchadnezzar because of his exalted attitude.

We need to ask some very important questions here concerning a hierarchy. In listening to the sermon and the subsequent booklet that was put out, *For the Perfecting of the Saints, Do the People of God Need a Church?*... And of course, you need to understand that's the wrong question. The people of God don't need a church, they are the Church. So, you can see where this kind of thinking leads.

Is everything in the Bible something that we should follow and something that we should do? We'll have to say, no, not everything is in there that we should do. Should we do like Manasseh, king of Judah? *Of course not!* Let's understand now concerning hierarchy and we will see that God does not want a hierarchy and when we are done with this, you will see that *God hates hierarchy* in the way that man has it, and God's way in structure and function is entirely different.

In conjunction with this, I suggest that you go over the sermon series *Structure and Function*. That shows that the New Testament structure is not a hierarchy, and we go through the New Testament to show how the structure of the Church developed, the need for it, the functions of it, and so forth.

Let's understand something here that's very important for us to realize. First of all, let's see what God tells us concerning the need for ministers, for brethren, the whole overall goal that God wants us to have, and the whole reason for why we do what we do. I think that so many things have become eschewed because when we come to reading the Bible, in too many cases we read into it what we want to read into it and we assume when we're reading it that we are discovering something such as

a hierarchy because it's listed in a certain particular order.

One thing that is true, because someone is in charge does not mean it's a hierarchy. We're going to see that God does not want a hierarchy. **God wants a relationship.** There is a vast difference between a covenant relationship with God and a hierarchy to control, to manipulate.

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers for the **perfecting of the saints, for the work...** [or the service] **...of the ministry...**" (vs 11-12).

The ministry is to be *a service*. They are to serve; they are not to overlord. We'll see specifically how Jesus made that absolutely clear.

"...for the edifying of the Body of Christ" (v 12). That is for the **up-building of the Body of Christ**:

- to prepare it
- to perfect it
- to help everyone grow to have the mind of Christ
- to be ready for the first resurrection

"...until **we all** come into the unity of the faith... [Paul included himself in that statement] ...and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man..." (v 13).

God wants perfection! Let's understand something here that we need to realize. **Spiritual perfection can never be accomplished by physical means! You do not accomplish spiritual things by physical means!** We're going to see that a hierarchy is a physical means to try and accomplish a spiritual goal and *it will always fail* and we'll see why. Now, in listening to the sermon and in reading the booklet, it was '*I love hierarchy*' and '*I love government*,' and *not once, not once* in the entire sermon, nor in the booklet was it said, '*I love God*,' or that we ought to love God. That in itself ought to alert us to the dangers of this kind of hierarchy.

Verse 13: "Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ."

That is a great tremendous project that Christ is doing to accomplish that. One of the reasons why God is destroying the churches with a hierarchy is because a hierarchy goes contrary to this.

Verse 14: “So that we no longer be children...” There’s one thing that hierarchy does. It always keeps the brethren as children and infants in the sandbox and no higher than third grade. Well, I tell you what, if we’re going to be to the perfection of Christ then we have to go on beyond those things. You can’t do it without:

- the love
- the liberty
- the faith
- the grace

—which comes from God. You cannot do it with a hierarchy. A hierarchy is not a church. By saying that, do the people of God need a church? *What they’re really saying is, ‘The people of God need a hierarchy and the hierarchy needs to be us!’* There are many with rigid hierarchical systems.

Verse 14: “So that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men...” That’s how they do; they go to the Scripture and they:

- deceitfully handle it
- twist it
- turn it
- manipulate it

and they see

- a hierarchy here
- a hierarchy there
- hierarchy everywhere

It’s kind of Old MacDonald Had a Farm and the whole song that goes with it. It could be hierarchy here, hierarchy there, here a hierarchy, there a hierarchy, everywhere a hierarchy, hierarchy. What that does is it:

- creates tension
- creates carnality
- creates division

When we understand, when we get toward the end of it, I’m going to show you *the source* of the hierarchy and *the kind* of hierarchy that God absolutely abhors.

“...by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error... [whereby they lie in wait to deceive (KJV)] ...but holding the Truth in love, may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, *even Christ*” (vs 14-15).

Christ is the Head and all of us have direct contact to God the Father and Jesus Christ, and that’s where our fellowship is because it is a covenant relation; *it is not a hierarchy!* We’ll see that in just a minute, and we’ll see what the Bible has to say about a hierarchy and we’ll see how that happens.

If you have a carnal religion you need a hierarchy. If you have a carnal business that’s going to produce and make, you need structure and a hierarchy. You have a carnal church like the Corinthians, they said, ‘I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ.’ There are people who love to be in a hierarchical system and you’ll understand one of the reasons is that then when something goes wrong they can blame the one in charge.

We can be sure that the Third Reich was not the first one to come along and say, ‘Well, I just did what I was told.’ That’s as old as from Nimrod on. So, we need to understand that. Many times people are seeking God not for salvation, *but to satisfy the self or to satisfy personal ego.* That’s why a hierarchy is evolved. A hierarchy is employed when you reject a relationship; you must have a hierarchy, because then you cut yourself off from the kind of control that God wants you to have through a covenant relationship. What that leads to is a loveless power, which then becomes ruthlessness.

I just want to say something right here that’s very important for us to understand: *Never, brethren, is it that the word of the minister is the Word of God unless it is truly the Word of God!* He cannot come up and say, ‘How dare you correct me. I am God’s minister, I am His representative.’ And that’s what’s happened. ‘How dare you question the ministry!’ Well, *that’s why God destroyed the ministry and the hierarchy*, because they became arrogant, presumptuous, authoritative, intimidating and fear-mongering! And everything that has gone wrong in the Church, the brethren are at fault. Of course, *that’s not true!* Most of the fault in the Churches of God lies at the doorstep of the ministry. So then you have spiritual pride and ‘How great I am.’ All of that comes as a result of a hierarchy. God did not create a hierarchy. God did not give us a pecking order. There are many, many different things that we can learn from a hierarchy.

I remember in a conference that I went to in 1965 when Dolores and I got married in January, 1965, I was one of the only ministerial assistants to go. I was invited to the conference and Herbert Armstrong himself was the one who conducted the conference. There were a total of 42 ministers at that time, plus me. So I took the back row and I remember very distinctly Herbert Armstrong said—and we were up close, we could see him and he was very sincere in it—‘Well, I don’t know about this apostle thing. I’m not too convinced that this should be or that I’m an apostle.’ I remember the first time that this was ever preached was at a Feast of Tabernacles and Herman Hoeh was the one who did it and got up there and said, *There is our apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong.* Armstrong had to get up

there and correct him right afterwards, ‘I’m not so sure about this.’

But then a short two years later it began to evolve: not only an apostle, then *the* apostle, then God’s *only* apostle on earth. All of this was built up and added to because of the power and the counsel and the prestige of Stanley R. Rader and because of those like Rod Meredith and Herman Hoeh. It actually started years before that. Very few people realize that it’s all contained in the writings of the Radio Church of God/Worldwide Church of God, how the hierarchy came to be within that church. Carl Franklin has done a research paper entitled *The Rise of a Ministerial Hierarchy*.

When it was called the Radio Church of God and before it started really getting big, they had many, many people out there who were listening to the program. Then all of a sudden they got in trouble, supposedly with the IRS, and the IRS was going to take away their tax exemption. So Stanley Rader came to the rescue. He went back to Washington, D.C.; he went directly into the office of the director of the IRS and came back with the solution. The solution was: You must have an organized ministry, and that’s how the hierarchy started. Right after that there were articles, *Is the Church of God a Social Club?* And *Who Has Authority in the Church?*

Then Herman Hoeh and Rod Meredith began to tighten, *tighten, tighten* down on that and build it up! Then it got to the point where the ministers’ word was the Word of God, and the ministers were above correction and no one could question them. Then this thing built up to where then God had to destroy the whole thing. So if you want that article, you write in for it, *The Rise of a Ministerial Hierarchy* from their own documentation. This is not just the idea of Carl Franklin or one man.

Let’s look at something here that’s very important for us to understand concerning what God *originally* intended. Let’s go back to Gen. 2, because what God originally intended and what God is doing in the Church is that ***God originally intended a covenant relationship!***

Let’s understand something very clearly: A husband and wife relationship and a family is ***not*** a hierarchy. Is there authority? *Yes, there is!* Is the husband in charge? *Yes, he is!* But it is a *covenant relationship* so that the two become one. If you understand that, then that changes the whole perspective on the family. If you look at a family and say, ‘That’s a hierarchy,’ then everything else under the sun is a hierarchy—*but it’s not!*

We find that God created Adam, then He took a rib and created Eve. Notice what Adam said here. This is a covenant-created relationship. Man is

not in charge by virtue of a hierarchy, he is held accountable by virtue of creation. He is to love his wife, and he is to serve his wife. He is to love his children and serve his children, and likewise the wife the husband. By creation the wife is made to be in subjection to her husband, because she was taken from man.

Genesis 2:23: “And Adam said, ‘This *is* now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. *She* shall be called Woman because *she* was taken out of Man.’ For this reason shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife—and they shall become one flesh” (vs 23-24). ***A covenant relationship!***

A hierarchy relationship is *never* a one-flesh relationship. Now we can project forward to the ultimate of what God wants with His family and it is a one-Spirit relationship. Yes, obedience is required, but when there’s obedience, when there are laws and commandments, that doesn’t create a hierarchy. That’s just not so!

Let’s look at the first hierarchy right after the Flood; Genesis 10:8: “And Cush begat Nimrod. He began to be **a mighty one** in the earth”—one who ruled. Christ has something to say about that a little later on.

Verse 9: “He was a mighty hunter against the LORD.... [or in place of the Lord] ...Therefore, it is said, ‘Like Nimrod—the mighty hunter against the LORD.’” He was the first tyrant. He was the first hierarchist after the Flood. That’s where hierarchy began this side of the Flood. I’m sure it began on the other side of the Flood with Cain. So, that’s where it began.

Is that what God wants? *Of course not!* He wants the relationship; that relationship is very important. That way obedience comes because it is required within the relationship. When you turn that into a hierarchy, you turn that into something that is:

- hard
- cold
- loveless
- demanding
- destroying

Remember the movie, *The Sound of Music* with Julie Andrews? Remember how the navy man had his family? *He had them in a hierarchy* and he would come and he would toot his whistle and they would all run downstairs and they would all line up. He would come down and look them all in the eyeballs and make sure that everything was just right. ***No love! No freedom! All rigid! All fear!*** Well, how many churches have been run that way? ***Almost all of them!***

When you take a family and put it into a hierarchy, which almost all of us did—didn't we? I think the worst booklet that was ever written was the one on childrearing, the way it was done in the Worldwide Church of God. We were told that we could literally spank and beat the sin out of our children. We made the mistake, and we were told that our children were innocent, and if you disciplined them enough they would grow up and not have the same kind of sinful nature that we have. ***That was nonsense!*** All we did was destroy lives, destroy families, destroy children, and drive people away. I'll just have to say in my own life, my own family, I just wish that I hadn't learned that part of the hierarchy. I still look back and see that the hierarchy really is bad. But you know, we all need to ask ourselves:

- How much hierarchy do I still have in myself?
- How much do I still apply to my wife?
- How much do I still apply to my family?
- How much do I still apply to others around me?

It's the same old question, people are trying to find out where God is. Then they drag the same old church experiences with them that they had before, and when they come and start fellowshiping with us, then they have to begin to learn that there is a different way.

- God's way is based upon love
- God's way is based upon a relationship
- God's way is based upon grace

Not a hierarchy! Now, that doesn't mean that we believe in anarchy. That doesn't mean we don't believe in organization. That doesn't mean that we don't believe that certain people need to be in charge of certain things to get certain things done for the overall benefit of everyone. But that does not create a hierarchy. We'll see what a hierarchy is. Let's look at some here.

Sure enough there was a hierarchy that was instituted. I'll tell you one thing. When anyone starts off their church government by going to Exo. 18, I will guarantee you one thing, they do not have a clue as to what kind of structure there should be in the Church of God.

Let's understand what are we dealing with? Children of Israel, all carnal, just coming out of Egypt. They traveled over to where Jethro, Moses' father-in-law was, and *Jethro* gave this suggestion because Moses was killing himself trying to do everything.

Jethro said, Exodus 18:19^[transcriber's correction]: "Hearken now to my voice. I will give you counsel, and God will be with you. You be for the people toward God that you may bring the causes to God."

When you have 1.8-million people out in the desert you have a different kind of structure that is needed.

Here's what he suggested, v 20: "And you shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shall make them know the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do. And you shall choose out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness. And place them over the people to be leaders of thousands, and leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens" (vs 20-21).

Now then, this is a hierarchical system and Moses did institute it. But what are we dealing with? Are we dealing with the Church or are we dealing with the nation of Israel? *We're dealing with the nation of Israel!* What was their condition out there? *They were all together in one mass group!* They were all camping tent by tent-by-tent-by-tent. When you're in that close, and when the only thing between you and the next person is a couple pieces of canvas as it were, then you need some rigid control, because things will get out of hand with carnal people. But did God continue with this kind of organization after they got into the 'promised land'? A lot of people say, 'Well, this is here, therefore, this is right and we should do this.'

No! This is here and if you're in a camping situation with carnal people, then maybe you need something like this. If you're out in the desert and you're wandering around, maybe you need something like this. But the Church is not in the desert and the people are not in the desert and we are not camping, so we don't need something like this, and when they got into the 'promised land' they didn't have anything like this. God did not want them to have it.

What happens when you get the kind of control that way? *Soon you lose what God really intended!* Did that not happen? Right after God gave them the Ten Commandments, right after Moses went up to get the first message from God, and he left everything in Aaron's hands and he went up on the mountain—what happened? *All the carnal people rebelled and went after Baal, right there at the foot of the mountain after God spoke to them!* Did that hierarchical system work? ***No!*** *Because it was not based on the covenant!*

Let's see that even in spite of everything that Israel did, in spite of all the rebellion that went on, in spite of all the things that took place and all of the carnality, God still wanted a covenant relationship with them. We will see that when they got into the 'promised land' God gave them a *good* form of government, which was *not* hierarchical.

Let's see what God desired from the children of Israel. God desired the same thing. God does not

desire a hierarchy; ***God desires a covenant relationship***, and that's what He wanted to have with Israel. Right after giving the Ten Commandments:

Deuteronomy 5:29: "Oh, that there were such a heart in them that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always so that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" So, God was interested in their well-being, their children, that they would prosper, and so forth.

We will see what it builds to. You start from the beginning of commandment-keeping and you build to the covenant relationship that God wants you to have. If you are still just in the commandment-keeping mode and that's the highest level of your understanding, then you have a long, long way to go. You start with that. That is the beginning, but remember that *we're to go on to perfection!*

Deuteronomy 6:1: "Now, these *are* the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God commanded to teach you so that you might do *them* in the land where you go to possess it, that you might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you, and your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life, and so that your days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be diligent to *observe* it, so that it may be well with you..." (vs 1-3).

Most people accuse God of hatred, vindictiveness and harshness. Finally, after people just reject God so many times, He's got to punish them, *but that's not God's desire*. Part of the difficulty is, that we will see, a hierarchy was super imposed and that became the first form of punishment. Most people don't realize that, because *that hierarchy cuts you off from the covenant relationship with God* and then you have a relationship with a hierarchy. But God wanted it to be well with them.

"...and that you may greatly multiply, as the LORD God of our fathers has promised you, in the land that flows with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel. Our one God is *the LORD, the LORD*" (vs 3-4).

Here is the relationship that God wants this to develop into and in our lives as well. We'll see what Jesus had to say about that a little later on.

Verse 5: "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." There is the covenant relationship and your response to God, because you love Him.

Here's something that is so true: ***A hierarchical relationship does not have love.*** A

hierarchical relationship then becomes very cold; it becomes just law and order. And yes, you can have law and order without a covenant relationship, but it's fear, it's intimidation, it's ruthlessness, it's political, and that how all of the hierarchies work. And it's based on duty, you know like Douglas MacArthur—country, honor, duty.

- God wants you, because you love Him
- God has called you, because He loves you
- God has not called you into a hierarchy

I'll just state right here: ***The ministry is not the government of God!*** You need to understand that. We'll see what the true government of God really is, and you will see that we teach the highest form of church government, *the kind that God wants*, not the kind that men superimpose twisting and turning the words of God to have their own hierarchy so they can love it, and then control and intimidate people by the use of it. And you need to understand something else also with a hierarchy: *A hierarchy becomes very political.*

God desired, right here, v 5: "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." That's what God wanted: *the covenant relationship with them*

- so that He could bless them
- so that He could dwell with them
- so that He could be their God

Verse 6: And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. And you shall diligently teach them to your children... [that's a family relationship, not a hierarchical relationship] ...and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house and on your gates" (vs 6-9).

God wants it now written in our hearts and in our minds that it's a very part of our being, that we:

- *live* by the Word of God
- *think* by the Word of God
- *use* the Spirit of God
- *let God lead us*

That is a covenant relationship that God wants.

What kind of government did they have when they got into the land? *They set up a whole system of judges* (Deut. 16). Judges and a system of judges is *not* hierarchical. Let's look at it this way today: In the United States do we have a system of

judges? *Yes, we do!* Is our government a hierarchical system? We need to set aside the bureaucracies, because they are, but aside from the bureaucracies, it is not a hierarchical kingship. Do we as a result of that have more freedom, more liberty, more ability to express ourselves and develop ourselves, and whatever we desire to do to make choices that are right, than any other country in the world? *Yes!* That's the same kind of system that God set up in Israel when they went into the land. They set aside all of the rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds and rulers of fifties and rulers of tens because that was the camping organization. They did not keep it that way.

Deuteronomy 16:18: "You shall appoint judges and officers... [law-enforcing officers; that's the same thing we have here today] ...for yourself in all your gates..."

They were to choose and decide. just like we do today. When you live in something like a dictatorship, then you have a hierarchical system and your whole order of law is entirely different. That's the difference between the law of Europe and the law of America, because the law of a dictatorship is that you are guilty until *you prove* yourself innocent. The law of the system of judges is *you are innocent until proven* guilty. That's based on the principle that God had here.

"...which the LORD your God gives you, tribe by tribe. And they shall judge the people with righteous judgment" (v 18)—using the laws of God. Christ said *judge right righteous judgment!*

Verse 19: "You shall not pervert judgment... [in other words you're not going to twist and turn it for your own use and own ability] ... you shall not respect persons, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous."

When you have a hierarchy you have the political system. How do you get along in a hierarchy? *Oh, you please the boss and you 'stroke' him and you become a sycophant!* The Egyptian hierarchy was hierophants; those were the ones in charge. Then they had their sycophants, and the sycophants were the ones who 'stroked' the hierophants. The sycophants that had favor with the hierophants were then promoted and they were lifted up in position, because they pleased the hierarchy.

When you transfer that kind of thing into the Church of God, you know why the ministry went to 'hell in a hand basket,' brethren, and you will know why most of the ministry has been educated wrong and they need to repent. That's why all the reorganization in the world, unless you get rid of the hierarchy and there's repentance with it, isn't going to change a thing. It's just going to defer things for a

while. But I'll guarantee you, *by the Word of God and by the authority of the Scripture*, God is going to destroy every hierarchical Church of God, and He's going to put His heavy hand down upon them until they learn the Truth, that **God is love!**

Now back to this, the best carnal system, the system of judges here.

Verse 20: "You shall follow that which is altogether just so that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God gives you."

So, God gave them the system of judges. Let's go to the book of Judges and let's see what happened after Joshua conquered the land and all the elders that were after him and the judges that were with him. Let's look at what happens when people leave that kind of system and want something else. We're seeing that evolve here in America in quite a profound way. People are willing to give up their rights for law and order, which is a substitute for character.

Judges 2:8: "And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him on the border of his inheritance in Timnath Heres, in Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers..." (vs 8-10).

I want you to understand that there is coming in America a great generational shift. There has also been within the Churches of God a generational shift. Satan takes advantage of those generational shifts.

"...And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD... [we have the same thing transpiring today within the Churches of God] ... nor even the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim" (vs 10-11).

Now as we're going through and reading this, I want you to think about what's happening in the Churches of God. They are leaving God and leaving His commandments, and now they are becoming a more and more sinful state. As they are doing that, they are rejecting the covenant relationship that God desired to have with them, just like they're rejecting the judgeship that God set up for them.

Verse 12: "And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers..." I want you to remember that, because there's going to be a lesson that we're going to learn here in just a little bit: What happens when you forsake God and reject that covenant relationship that God desires you to have?

"...Who brought them out of the land of

Egypt. And they followed other gods, even the gods of the people who were around them, and bowed themselves to them, and provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD and served Baal and Ashtaroht. **And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel...**” (vs 12-14).

Brethren, I’m telling you *the anger of the Lord is hot against His Church and hot against His ministers!* And all those who love hierarchy better hear and fear and repent, because God’s heavy hand is going to come upon you, because you are cutting the people of God off from a relationship with God, and *God is not going to allow that to stand.* When I speak of the Churches of God, *I speak of those:*

- who started it
- who continue it
- who perpetuate it
- who use it for their own means
- who use it for their own religion
- who use it for their own church

God’s angry with the Church! That’s why He’s scattering it. That’s why God is causing the brethren to search out, ‘What’s right? Where is God?’

They can look at some of these hierarchies and see that God’s not there. *No, they forsook God!* And when you forsake God you must have a hierarchy. So what did God do?

“...and He delivered them into the hand of spoilers who spoiled them....” (v 14).

- Is that happening to the churches? *Yes!*
- Is that happening to the brethren? *Yes!*
- Is it painful? *Yes!*
- Is it miserable? *Absolutely!*

Verse 15: “And He sold them into the hand of their enemies all around, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil...” (vs 14-15). They didn’t repent. And finally, when they moaned and groaned, ***God raised up a judge to save them!***

(go to the next track)

Now let’s go to the very last verse in the book of Judges and this is a famous verse that people use to show that they must have a hierarchy.

Judges 21:25: “In those days *there was* no king in Israel. Every man did *what was* right in his own eyes.”

- Why did that happen? *Because of sin!*
- Was it because there was no king? *No!*
- Did they sin after they had kings? *Yes!*
- The king didn’t stop sin—did it? *No!*

- The hierarchy didn’t change human nature—did it? *No!*

Let’s see what a hierarchy does with the relationship of God, and where it was instituted. This is very instructive. This is something you need to think very deeply about and you need to really understand. This is not a wrong application of hierarchy. This is the whole substance and form of hierarchy.

1-Samuel 8:1: “And it came to pass when Samuel was old, he made his sons judges over Israel.” Then it gives the names.

Verse 3: “Yet, his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted judgment.” The opposite of what God said to do; all through the Bible we have a good king or judge and then a bad son. It’s always been a mystery as to why that worked that way. Was it that all the good judges and kings were bad fathers? Or was it that the sons saw what their fathers did and chose to do the opposite as more of a primary thing than the goodness or the badness of the fathers? *I think that they chose to do that!* They had the right example—didn’t they? Wasn’t Samuel a righteous judge? Wasn’t he one from conception that God used? *Yes!*

Notice how it was so bad, v 4: “And all the elders of Israel gathered themselves and came to Samuel to Ramah. And *they* said to him, ‘Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations’” (vs 4-5).

Notice what happened here. The elders didn’t come and say, ‘We read in the book of Deuteronomy that when we want a king thus and such.’ *No!* It wasn’t in the book of Deuteronomy at that particular time, otherwise, Samuel would not have responded this way.

Verse 6: “But the thing was evil in the eyes of Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you...’” (vs 6-7).

Sometimes God will give you exactly what you want. But what people want is not necessarily what is the best or the right thing. Notice what happens when you have a hierarchy and a king:

“...for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” (v 7). That’s what happens when you reject the covenant relationship and desire a hierarchy. *You reject God and you put yourself* one step removed from God. That’s why:

- hierarchies do not have love

- hierarchies do not understand the Word of God
- hierarchies do not understand the Truth of God

beyond the minimal points that they come to, because the hierarchy has rejected God in the first offset of things to begin with.

Verse 8: “According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even until this day—*works* with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they do also to you. And now hearken to their voice. Only, you shall surely protest solemnly to them...” (vs 8-9).

Then He shows what the king was going to do. He was going to oppress them, he was going to take from them their sons, their daughters and make armies, castles, vineyards and so forth.

Verse 19: “But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, ‘No, but we will have a king over us. And we shall be, also we, like all the nations...’” (vs 19-20).

God wanted them different from all the nations. Why should the Church of God be like all the churches in the world that have their hierarchy?

“...so that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.’ And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Hearken to their voice, and make them a king.’ And Samuel said to the men of Israel, ‘Every man go to his city.’” (vs 20-22). So then, they got ready and Samuel called them all back when he was ready for the king:

1-Samuel 10:17: “And Samuel called the people together to the LORD to Mizpeh. And he said to the children of Israel, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel, “I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms of those who oppressed you. And you have this day rejected your God...”’” (vs 17-19).

When you have a hierarchy in the church, you reject God! The other extreme of hierarchy is an ‘underarchy’ which is *controlled by the politics of the people*. God doesn’t want a hierarchy, doesn’t want an ‘underarchy.’ One leads to oppression from the top down, the other leads to oppression from the bottom up, *and you reject God either way*.

“...Who Himself saved you out of all your calamities and your tribulations. And you have said to Him, “But set a king over us.” And now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by

your thousands” (v 19). So he did and Saul was selected.

Verse 24: “And Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen, that *there is* none like him among all the people?’ And all the people shouted, and said, ‘Long live the king!’ Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and **wrote it in a book...**” (vs 24-25). We will see he put it in the book of Deuteronomy.

“...and laid it up before the LORD.... [in the Ark of the Covenant where the book of the covenant was] ...And Samuel sent all the people away, each to his house” (v 25).

Now in spite of the fact that they rejected God; in spite of the fact that they didn’t want God to rule over them; God said, ‘All right, I’ve got the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I’m going to fulfill, so I’ll work through the kingship in spite of its handicap.’ So likewise, in the Churches of God. God has worked through it in spite of the handicap, but *now is the time to get rid of it!*

Notice the instructions to the king. Did the kingships of Israel and Judah ever really work? *No! They were total failures!* Even David, a man after God’s heart, corrupted himself, though he repented of it.

- Did he cause trouble in Israel because of his sins? *Yes!*
- Did he cause trouble in his household because of his sins? *Yes!*
- What about Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the first king of Israel?

One of the most evil and wicked kings that was ever raised up; he had a chance to do it right, but he rejected even that, and caused Israel to sin. Set up his own calendar! Set up his own priesthood! Set up his own temples! **Rejected God!**

Here was a requirement that God gave for a king so that wouldn’t happen, but even ***all the kings violated that***, with the exception of maybe David when he repented, and Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat and Josiah; they did what God wanted. So to turn to the last verse in the book of Judges and say, ‘Well, God authorized a kingship, we need a hierarchy.’ They don’t go to 1-Sam. 8 and show that it rejects God.

In spite of the handicap, here’s what God said when Samuel wrote this, Deuteronomy 17:14: “When you come to the land, which the LORD your God gives you, and shall possess it...” At the time of Samuel they didn’t possess all the land. Later David had to go conquer it and the land was not fully conquered until the end of the life of David. When Solomon took over the kingdom then everything was conquered at that time.

“...and shall live in it and shall say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that *are* around me,’ you shall surely set a king over you, whom the LORD your God shall choose. You shall set a king over you from among your brethren. You may not set a stranger over you who is not your brother. Only he shall not multiply horses to himself... [which Solomon did and the others did] ...nor cause the people to return to Egypt... [to the Egyptian religion or the way of life in Egypt] ...so as to multiply horses because the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’ Nor shall he multiply wives to himself, so that his heart does not turn away” (vs 14-17).

Isn’t that what Solomon did? *It’s exactly what it said here!* It was right there as was a witness for Solomon and what did he do? *Transgressed the laws of God grievously!*

“...Nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold to himself. And it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law... (vs 17-18). The king was to go to the priest, get a copy of the Scrolls of the Law and handwrite himself a copy of the Laws of God so that he wouldn’t be lifted up among his brethren.

“...write for himself a copy of this law in a book from that which is in the custody of the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life... [the only one to ever do that was David, none others] ... so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them so that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren...” (vs 18-20).

Even then with his kingship God did want this hierarchy to be oppressive from the top down though the hierarchy rejected God. And it came just that way—oppression!

“...and that he does not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel” (v 20). Needless to say, the whole history, the whole history of it is how bad and how evil and how wrong it was.

I remember sitting in a Bible study in Pasadena and you’ve probably heard this. Herbert Armstrong came, when there was trouble in the Church, and he shouted at this Bible study, ‘If there’s any one thing the Catholics have right, it’s government from the top down.’ And he said it many, many times. I was sitting there in that Bible study and it wasn’t a rebellious thought, and it wasn’t an angry thought, and it wasn’t a thought of rejection or anything like that, but the thought just came in my mind: **Why would God use Satan’s**

form of government in His Church? And that thought stuck with me, but I just went on from there. I guess that was the beginning of the understanding of the hierarchy, and why the Catholic Church *does not have it right* and why should the Church of God follow the structure of any of the churches of the world? *Shouldn’t do it!*

Let me read to you from this book called, *The Jesuits: Society of Jesus and the Betrayal of the Roman Catholic Church* by Malachi Martin. Let’s see what he says about the kind of obedience that the Jesuits have, what kind of highly structured hierarchy that they have. And of course the whole Catholic Church is based upon a hierarchy.

The Jesuits: Society of Jesus and the Betrayal of the Roman Catholic Church by Malachi Martin

The Jesuits were to be based on the fundamental thing was the account of conscience which then was to be a father/son relationship between the Jesuit superior and the Jesuit subject. The account of conscience, also the superior as such was to be approached and treated and obeyed as Christ.

No man is as Christ. No minister had better, ever stand in the pulpit and say, ‘My words that I tell you are the same as Christ’s.’ If he’s reading the Scripture, then he’s reading Christ’s words and those aren’t his in the first place.

The corporate unity of such members...

The problem with the hierarchy is that it’s based upon a civil corporation or a church corporation in this world, which is hierarchical and that is tradition. ***And tradition rejects God and a hierarchy rejects God!***

The corporate unity of such members was insured by systematical obedience. The internal government and unity of mind in action within the society was carried on by a regular approved systematic practice of report writing.

That’s what Roderick Meredith instituted in the Worldwide Church of God. Every week the ministers had to report and send in a report and write up all the problems of every problem that they had in the Church, along with the names, the addresses, the problems, and send it in. This is a Catholic way of doing it. ***This is not God’s way of doing it!***

For their superiors there were three levels of obedience. Your obedience could be one of three kinds:

- 1) The lowest grade is the obedience in performance.

You do what you're told even though you may disagree with the whole idea, think that your superior is a fool, or think you know what he should have told you to do. You obey, but unwillingly. Ignatius who was the founder of the Jesuits, in his judgment, this grade of obedience was very imperfect.

- 2) The second grade of obedience, you may still think the superior is a fool and that you know what he should have commanded, but out of obedience to Christ...

And that's where the hierarchy locked in the brethren and put guilt trips on them and fear-trips on them, *that if you disobey the ministry you're disobeying Christ*. No one ever asked: What if the ministers are disobeying Christ? This is ***pure Catholicism! pure Jesuitism! pure Satanism!*** This is what Satan wants people to do: check your brain in at the door, be intimidated and fearful.

You decide you will do what he says willingly. The point here is that you are so intent in pleasing Christ that your obedience is transformed from unwillingness to willingness. In effect, you choose the same as your superior. At this stage, Ignatius comments, there is already joy in obedience.

Doesn't that sound familiar? *No, there's oppression in that kind of thing!*

- 3) There is yet one more, the highest grade of obedience. You do not merely do what you're told without showing any overt opposition, nor do you merely choose to will as your superior wills, to do willingly what he commands. Now you agree mentally with your superior.

You have the obedience of intellect. Unconditionally you think like your superior. You submit your judgment to that of your superior so far as only the surrendered will can sway the intellect. This highest form is what Ignatius calls blind obedience.

That's not God's way. God wants you to obey,

- because you love Him
- because He's God
- because you're in a covenant relationship with Him

and that you

- see
- you know
- you choose

- you understand

It's not blind obedience, because when you give yourself over to blind obedience you can be led down any heresy trail, to the end is satanism.

...called blind obedience, the voluntary renunciation of private judgment.

Jesus commanded us to have righteous judgment!

The grades of obedience obviously are arranged according to the degree one's will is engaged in that obedience. Accordingly, in other words, to one's willingness Ignatius penned a few short lines, his ideal of obedient Jesuit:

"Altogether... [Here's what he says of obedience]: ...I must not desire to belong to myself but to my Creator and His representative."

Unscriptural! You must belong to your Creator and Him alone!

"I must let myself, therefore, be led and moved as a lump of wax lets itself be kneaded. I must be as a dead-man's corpse without will or judgment; as a little crucifix which lets itself be moved without difficulty from one place to another; as a staff in the hand of an old man to be placed where he wishes where he can best make use of me. Thus, I must always be ready to hand so that the order may use me and apply me in the way that, to him, seems good."

Isn't that something?

Many, including early Jesuits have used military metaphors to describe the nature and mode of the operation that Ignatius designed for his society of Jesuits. The pyramidal chain of command, the division of Jesuits in the grades, the idea of Jesuit obedience, these elements are reproduced certainly in military groups. The very name Ignatius used to designate his group was "company of Jesus," seen by many to be derived from army structure.

Malachi Martin tries to justify it and say no it wasn't, but it is well known the Jesuits are the Gestapo of the pope. If you haven't seen the videos, *The Jesuit Agenda for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*, I suggest that you see them.

Let's understand something: If there's any one thing that the Catholic Church have *wrong* and that is government from the top down. There is in the Scripture government from the top down, but that's from Christ to each individual. That's the

highest form of government. Now, all of these are from the top down.

Let's see something very important, what Jesus said concerning what those apostles should *not* do, what the Church should *not* do, what the ministers should *not* do. He makes it very emphatic, just like the children of Israel rejected God when they put up a hierarchy, so do the ministers of God create a layer between the people of God with their hierarchy and they reject the words of Christ.

Do you think that as a minister or as a church if you reject the words of Jesus Christ that you're doing the will of God? And with the clear commands that Jesus gave here, do you think in continuing to institute a hierarchy—preach a hierarchy, love a hierarchy—and create this idol in the minds of the brethren and yourselves that you're going to please God? **No!**

You read the message to the Church of Pergamos who had the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, because the doctrine of the Nicolaitans comes from Nimrod who we saw was the first tyrant this side of the Flood. They rule over the people and they conquer over the people. Nicolaitans means *ruler over the laity*—not brethren—*laity*.

Matt. 20—there was some politicking going on here. Good old mamma Zebedee said, 'My sons—James and John—I want one to sit on the right hand, Lord, and one on the other hand.' And He said, 'No, that won't happen.' Then when the others heard about it (v 24), they were moved with indignation, because they wanted that, too. 'How dare they get up there ahead of us?' So, Jesus wanted to settle the whole score.

Matthew 20:25: "But Jesus called them to *Him and* said, 'You know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship over them, and the great ones exercise authority over them.'" The English translation here completion misses what the Greek really is. The Greek here is to *exercise dominion over*, that is 'kata'—in the Greek is *down*. And dominion comes from 'kurio.' 'Katakurio'—*to lord it over downwardly*. Government from the top down. That's the way the Gentiles do it. And is not the Catholic Church a Gentile church? *Yes, indeed it is!*

"...and the great ones exercise authority over them." To exercise authority, you don't get the sense in the English either. That is 'kata exousia,' which is *authority downward*. So, this is lordship down, authority downward, and who are the great ones? Who was a great one?

Let's see where it talks about one of the great ones who had an oppressive religion and let's what he did and how he did it. He was called Simon Magus.

Acts 8:9: "But *there was* a certain man named Simon, who had from earlier times been practicing sorcery... [that's what all of this gets down to] ... in the city and astounding the nation of Samaria, proclaiming himself to be some great one." He exercised authority downward, 'kata exousia.'

Verse 10: "To him they had all given heed... [yes, they bowed] ...from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God.'" He was the closest thing to the pope that you could get.

Verse 11: "Now, they were giving heed to him because *he* had for a long time bewitched them with sorceries." Let's see what Jesus says in relationship to them:

Matthew 20:25: But Jesus called them to *Him and* said, 'You know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship... [downward] ... over them, and the great ones exercise authority... [downward] ...over them. **However, it shall not be this way among you...** [Can anything be more clear? *It shall not be so!*] ...but whoever would become great among you, let him **be your servant**'" (vs 25-26)—*KJV*: minister. You do it by

- serving
- loving
- example
- Word of God
- persuasion
- inspiration
- up-building the Church

You don't do it by *ruling, controlling, beating, fearing, intimidating, corraling and using carnal means of command and control*. Because 'a man persuaded against his will is of the same opinion still.' So, all of those things didn't work.

- Did they work in the Worldwide Church of God?
- Where is it today?
- Is it going to work in the Catholic Church? **No! Christ is going to destroy it!**
- Has it ever worked in any church? *Oh, for a while!*
- Did it create Truth? **No!**

It created areas of subversion where the Jesuits could come in and twist and change and pervert and bring it back to what they lost when the Protestant Reformation took place. Christ says, '**It shall not be so among you.**' Those are the words of Christ! Yes, we need order, supervision and oversight, but the kind that is based upon this:

"...but whoever would become great among you, let him be your servant, and whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave; just as the Son of man..." (vs 26-28).

He was God before He became the Word, before He became the Son of man. He could have come to this earth and demanded anything, by saying, 'I'm the Creator. I made the heavens. I made the sun, the moon, the stars and everything on earth. Why don't you respect Me?'

- He came to His own and He was rejected!
- He was despised!
- He was a man of sorrows!
- He carried our sins!
- He loved us!

—because God wants a covenant relationship based upon love and love comes *down*. Agape love from God comes *down to us*. The whole lesson we need to learn out of this is that if you don't have the love of God and the love of brethren:

- you do not understand the purpose of God
- you do not understand the government of God
- you do not understand the relationship—the *covenant relationship*—that God wants you to have

You may have a religion, but **God hates religion**. You may understand carnally some Scriptures, but *that is not salvation*. You may be a good speaker, but *good speakers are a dime a dozen*. You can get them at the speaker's bureau. Whatever has to be done has to be to serve, *to minister*, because

- it's not head knowledge, *it's heart knowledge*
- it is not control, *it is conviction*
- it is not ruling over, *it's up-building and inspiring*

That's what God wants, v 28: "Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life *as a ransom for many*"—one of the most important sections that we have in the New Testament.

Now let's see how God brought this about. Let's understand that God could destroy this earth by command. It is upheld by the word of His power. One word and it's gone! But God is merciful and kind and longsuffering. God is not exercising His power. God is exercising:

- His kindness
- His longsuffering
- His mercy
- His understanding

—because God loves the world and God is going to save the world. God is not going to do it with a hierarchy. God is going to do it with a covenant relationship, because you love God and God loves you.

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son... [He *gave* Him!] ...so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life."

That is so profound for us to understand, brethren. How can you have a church with a hierarchy that doesn't have love?

- which discourages?
- which intimidates?
- which puts down?
- which rules over?

Can we not as brethren with the highest form of government possible, **Christ in us**:

- get along with each other?
- love each other?
- serve each other?
- have our fellowships together?

Just like our Feast of Tabernacles, they are fantastic, because that's how they are run. It runs smoothly, wonderfully, nicely, all in decency, in order and inspiring. That's what God wants it to be! **Christ in you is the highest form of government!**

Let's go to 1-John 4, because here's something that's very important to understand. You cannot understand the purpose of God and you cannot fulfill the purpose of God in your life, nor help it be fulfilled in others if you don't understand that God is love. The very God-likeness that God is trying to build in us is

- *based upon love*, not based upon hierarchy.
- *based upon yieldedness*, not based upon submission and obedience

because of power. It is based upon **love and obedience** because of desire from the inward part. Completely different. And that's based on the loved of God.

That's why John said, 1-John 4:16: "And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. God is love..." I think we still have so much to learn about it that I cannot even express it, yet. I'm still learning it, because we were so steeped in a hierarchical thing. I want you to ask yourself, and any who are elders: How much hierarchy is still in me? *May you be willing to let Christ take it out of you and replace it with the love of God! God is love!* ...and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him." There is the covenant relationship. That's what God wants.

That's why the whole Passover ceremony is a covenant relationship based upon the love of God. That's why John 13-17. That's why Jesus told His disciples, 'A new commandment that I give you that you love one another as I have loved you.' I don't

even think we have come close to fully understanding that. I hope we understand it more than we did the last time that we studied it and went over it. I hope we learn more in the future. But here's something that's very profound. You will hear me go over this again and again, and here's the time I'm going to go over it. May we all learn this, because *this is the heart and core of the whole covenant lesson that God gives us.*

John 14:15: "If you love Me, keep the commandments..." So, it's based upon love and then commandment-keeping. You cannot generate love by commandment-keeping, but commandment-keeping is a result of loving God.

Verse 21: "The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him."

Brethren, the more that you love God, the more that Christ is going to be manifest and revealed in your life, revealed in the Word of God, revealed in the things that you need to do and how you need to do them and everything. Christ is going to do that. He's going to reveal that to you.

Verse 23: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word...' There's no question of obedience, brethren. If you love God you will keep His words. You won't have rebellion in you. No, you won't need someone to come along and beat you over the head and say, 'Do this and do that and do the other thing,' because you will desire to do the things that please Him. ***That's the highest form of government that Christ wants!*** That is not a hierarchy.

Whatever church structure is necessary to carry out the functions of the Church, again, go through the six sermons, *Church Structure and Function*. You will see that where there's a need you structure to it. Where there is not a need, you don't need a structure.

"...keep My words; and My Father will love him, and **We** will come to him and make Our abode with him" (v 23). So, Christ and God the Father are *in you* by the virtue of the Holy Spirit and that is the covenant relationship. Fellowship begins with God the Father and Jesus Christ in the covenant relationship and here it is. The ones who don't have God's Word, they don't hear it.

Let's see what this is, Colossians 1:27: "To whom God did will to make known what *are* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

- Church government ***is not*** the hope of glory.
- Hierarchy ***is not*** the hope of glory.

- ✓ *They are the destruction of it.*
- ✓ *They are the tearing down of it!*

Christ in you—that's the highest form of government! You keep the commandments of God *because you love Him*. You keep the commandments of Christ *because you desire to do so*. This is what we want, brethren. This is what God has called us to. He's called us to shed aside all of this whole hierarchy thing. Leave out all of the 'religiosity' and 'churchiness' that you have had in the past. Ask God to help you overcome it and repent of it and don't bring it into the fellowships with the brethren of God.

Rather do this, Colossians 3:12: "Put on then, as *the* elect of God, Holy and beloved, deep inner affections, kindness, humility, meekness *and* long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also you *should forgive*" (vs 12-13).

I know that are some, even within the fellowships of the Christian Biblical Church of God, because of your past affiliations, your past faults, mistakes, 'religiosity,' self pride and 'religion' that you still have not come together as brethren and forgiven each other the way you need to do.

I tell you, we have the hardest job in the world to do to try and help the brethren coming from all being battered, bruised, wounded, kicked and ruled over to help them see the love of God and shed aside all of this.

- Can you do that?
- Can you put it aside?
- Can you go ask God to help you put it away?
- Can you, if you've been an elder, ask God to help get the hierarchy out of you and let the love of God flow into you?
- Let the service of God flow into you to help the brethren?

We need to!

Verse 14: "And above all these things *put on* love... [let the love of God come into you] ...which is ***the bond of perfection***." That's what binds us together. That is the unity in Christ. The unity in Christ must be based upon the love of God, because that's the purpose of God.

Verse 15: "And ***let the peace of God*** rule..."

Brethren, *God hates hierarchy! Hierarchies and kingships and power reject Christ*. I'm here to tell you that I know for sure, based upon the Word of God, that God is going to further correct and destroy if necessary.

To the Church of Pergamos Christ said He's is going to 'fight against those Nicolaitans with the sword of His mouth, with the Word of God' (Rev. 2). We know by the Word of God that there better be change and repentance on these things and this includes some of the highest 'ranking' ministers that were ever in Worldwide Church of God or any of the other Churches of God.

Can we not have the love of God and do as Jesus Christ said, 'Let the fellowship be with God the Father and Jesus Christ and if you love Me, keep My commandments. And if you love Me, be in that covenant relationship with Me.'

That's what God wants. He doesn't want a hierarchy. ***He wants that covenant relationship!***

- Video: *The Jesuit Agenda* (from the Seventh Day Adventist Church)

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All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order, a Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Ephesians 4:11-15
- 2) Genesis 2:23-24
- 3) Genesis 10:8-9
- 4) Exodus 18:19-21
- 5) Deuteronomy 5:29
- 6) Deuteronomy 6:1-9
- 7) Deuteronomy 16:18-20
- 8) Judges 2:8-15
- 9) Judges 21:25
- 10) 1-Samuel 8:1, 3-9, 19-22
- 11) 1-Samuel 10:17-19, 24-25
- 12) Deuteronomy 17:14-20
- 13) Matthew 20:25
- 14) Acts 8:9-11
- 15) Matthew 20:25-28
- 16) John 3:16
- 17) 1-John 4:16
- 18) John 14:15, 21, 23
- 19) Colossians 1:27
- 20) Colossians 3:12-15

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Daniel 4
- Matthew 20:24
- John 13-17
- Revelation 2

Also referenced:

- Sermon Series: *Church Structure and Function*
- Study Paper: *The Rise of a Ministerial Hierarchy* by Carl Franklin
- Book: *The Jesuits: Society of Jesus and the Betrayal of the Roman Catholic Church* by Malachi Martin

Why God Hates Religion I

(Worship God in “Spirit and in Truth”)

Fred R. Coulter

Greetings brethren! At a Feast we had quite a controversy over a sermonette that Bob Hunnicutt gave; where he entitled it, *God Hates Religion*. One of the brethren there, especially took offense to it and then went home and did a paper and mailed it out to many other people. I just let the thing go. I haven't had time to answer it until now.

Now I'm ready to answer what the charges were and so forth. Let me just mention here what Bob Hunnicutt said. I've got a transcript of what he said concerning 'religion.' We're going to find that Bob Hunnicutt was right. We're going to find that God does *hate* 'religion.' We're going to find that where it talks about religion in James 1—about *pure and undefiled religion*—that has nothing to do with worship of God. Here's what Bob Hunnicutt said:

Religion creates hate... [that is true] ...It creates hate, bitterness, jealousy, malice, strife, greed, lust, murmuring, complainers, and vain speakers....

We've seen that—haven't we? So far true.

...Religion is a work of darkness and deception, therefore political.

We're going to find that that is true, just like Judaism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Mohammadism, Taoism and whatever other 'ism' there is, they're all a form of 'religion.'

Religion does not teach one the one-on-one relationship with God. It teaches a hierarchical system with an elite group of people controlling the followers. Religion teaches therefore, that a church or an organization can save.

I've got a big thick book at home I'm going to bring a sermon one of these days on the book: *Outside The Catholic Church There Is No Salvation*, written by Adam S. Miller, a Catholic, saying that no one is going to be saved if you are not in the Catholic Church. As Bob Hunnicutt says, it's a *substitute* for Jesus Christ.

Religion teaches what man can do to be saved. *The Bible teaches* by grace through God's mercy you are saved. Religion is self-serving and it is the work of the flesh.

We will see that that is true and we will see that's what Jesus told the leaders of Judaism in His day: that they *worshipped Him in vain*. 'Worship' there, is the same word for *religion*. It's the *exterior* thing.

Religion does not teach a way back to God, but how to approach Him in a form

of worship. Religion increases the importance of man in his own mind. Religion teaches worldly love, not Godly love.... [absolutely true] ...Religion is the blind leading the blind.

That's what Jesus said, 'Let the blind lead the blind and they will both fall into the ditch.'

Yet, religion is by sight. Religion is not one-minded. Religion is a broad way. There are many religions, many ways and it's always changing. You watch it.

They change it—this doctrine and that doctrine and the other doctrine.

Religion will always be changing to placate the political influences of their group. Religion teaches to find something that a man will believe. It is of men. Religion has its own Bible.... [that's true] ...They can use a *King James Version* or any other Bible, but they pick and choose their verses. Religion is cruel and an enemy of God and His saints. Religious people among us are the ones who cause the problems.

That is absolutely true, because they get self-righteous. They have a way that they are going to do things. They have a 'religion' and it's not of God. We're going to see God's way is not a 'religion.' ***God's way is a way of life!*** We will see how the Bible defines 'religion.'

Religious people expect the same benefits that a saint will receive from God.... [true] ...Many religious people will come to Me in that day and say, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name?' (Matt. 7:21).... [Won't they? *Yes, they will!*] ...Jesus will say, 'I never knew you' because you didn't do the will of the Father, 'Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness'... [against the Laws of God.] ...That's what 'religious' people think they are doing, wonderful works, saving people.

We're going to find out that 'religion' actually began shortly after the Garden of Eden; actually *in* the Garden of Eden; as Paul says here, because Satan came along and gave the *substitute* way from *God's* way and that was a 'religion.'

Religion financed by Satan...

That is so true. Once you get a 'religion,' once you get a hierarchy, once you get everything going, then

its money, money, money! I recently read two letters:

1. from the Worldwide Church of God, where Bernie Schnippert, the man who is in charge of the finances, told the ministers that they—whether they believe it or not—are to preach and teach the Sabbath and Holy Days. He didn’t particularly believe it, but they had to preach it, because that brought in the money. The name of the game is money. They want money.
2. United Church of God just sent out a letter pleading for the biggest offering that they could ever give, because of all the troubles that they have. They said, ‘The life blood of the Church is the daily income.’

Those are ‘religions’! They are merchandising the brethren.

- Are they destroying the brethren? *Yes!*
- Are they causing division? *Yes!*
- Are they robbing God? *Yes!*
- What is the life-blood of a Christian? *The blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit!*

You may be able to run a ‘religion’ on money, but the only way that the true Church of God is going to run is *by the Holy Spirit of God*.

Zechariah 4:6: “...‘Not by power, or might, but **by My Spirit**,’ says the LORD of hosts.” We need to really understand that we’re dealing with something very insidious within the Church when we talk about ‘religion.’

Bob went on in his sermonette, saying:

Religion held Israel captive.... [true]
...Religion killed the prophets of the Old Testament.... [true] ...Satan tempted Christ with religion.... [true] ...Religion killed Christ.... [true] ...Paul was a very religious person.... [true] ...But he repented and he is an example of those who can come out from religion. God tells us in the Bible in many, many places that religious people—that’s Satan’s church—would also infiltrate the Church of God. Christians are not causing it. The saints aren’t causing it. It’s the religious ones among us that are causing it.

He tells about the tares and brethren; ***you can identify them!*** Then he explains and goes through the part of the parable of the ten virgins and that was part of their problem. I hope you can understand where he is coming from here. I think he did a very good job on the sermonette that he gave. It was really good.

We are going to talk about *true* religion and *false* religion. But as a result of that sermonette some of the brethren in Cincinnati—called the *Cincinnati Brethren*—who were there at the Feast, decided to take things into hand and decided to go ahead and send out a whole package of material to brethren, to stir them all up and exacerbate the problem and cause real difficulties. Here’s part of the letter that they sent:

(letter from *Cincinnati Brethren*): The latest method is the concept of Christianity is not religion; it’s a way of life. There are a number of connecting tangent ideas that go with this totally manmade assertion.

I’m going to show you that it’s not manmade. It’s right out of the Bible. Nowhere does the Bible say: ‘Christian Religion’—***nowhere!***

First of all, one will have to come up with a definition of religion that differs from *Webster’s Dictionary*, *Strong’s Concordance* as well as other Bible helps.

No, we do not, because it’s not a religion.

Religion is defined in *Webster’s Dictionary*—when you look at a group of people, they say—‘those who worship God or pray or have catechisms’ and so forth. When you look at an organization—and if you want the world to define you as a religion, then go right ahead...

They probably will define you as a religion.

...But what is your standing before God? Are we to let God define what we are? What we are to be? Or are we to let the world define that for us? Are we to go by the Word of God or by *Webster’s Dictionary*? When James wrote what he wrote and what we find in the Bible, do those words have the same meaning as religion today? Or as translated during the days when the *King James* was translated in 1611—does it have the same meaning as it does today? What meaning did it have when James wrote it?

Secondly, a substitute for religion will have to be used.

No it won’t, because we’ll define it properly by the New Testament.

Thirdly, a definition for Christianity and showing it has nothing in common with religion—since God supposedly hates all religion, then Christianity couldn’t possibly have anything in common with it; after all, ‘what communion has light with darkness’—will have to be given.

God doesn't want you to be 'religious.' **He wants you!** There's a vast difference. I hope you understand it. God doesn't want something from outside. He wants it from your heart. **God wants your heart converted!** God wants His laws and commandments written in your mind and in your heart so that's what you live by *as a way of life*. I think we are going to be surprised—we're going to find that every statement that Bob Hunnicutt made was absolutely true.

The reason for this concern is based on recent Church history. I'll give just one example: When *born again* was being introduced to God's people, I remember two vital reasonings that had to be established.

1. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit—didn't mean what it said.
2. It's just a matter of semantics. It's no big deal.

Well, look at where the Worldwide Church of God is today. I don't intend to wait and see where this 'God hates religion' concept is going to lead until God's people have another mess.

Well, I'm sorry about that, but you are already in a mess by doing this. We did not cause this. We did not mail any of this out. This is a mess that *you* have created, not what we have done. We have to answer it, because you mailed it out to hundreds of brethren.

- What are you trying to do, undermine their faith?
- What are you trying to do, have a 'religion' of yourself?
- What do you mean by saying, 'Well, how am I going to explain this to *my* people back in Cincinnati?'
- Since when did the brethren of God become *anybody's merchandise*?

There are some very strong things that have been said and going around. So, let's see if we can clear the air here just a little bit. Here's part of what went out. Let's also understand something here that is very important:

- Nowhere does it say that God loves pure and undefiled 'religion.'
- Nowhere does it say that God loves 'religion.'
- Nowhere is the way of God called *a religion*.

There just isn't!

{continuing with letter}:

Recently, I've been hearing a lot of comments along the line: God hates religion.

Well, that only came from you and maybe some people you know.

I find this remark to be an unqualified assertion, curious and perhaps even dangerous.

Now I'm dangerous. Is that what it is? Bob Hunnicutt is dangerous. Is that what it is?

I was born and raised a Catholic.

Maybe that is some of the problem you're still living with. I don't know.

My mother was a Catholic convert who would occasionally read the Bible to us. This was my only real exposure to the Bible in my early years. I was primarily taught Catechism and grew up viewing Scriptures through the eyes of the Catholic dogma and ritual. This was my *religion*.

Well, at least you stated it correctly, but let's also understand it was not **God's** 'religion' and God had nothing to do with it other than the fact that you read some Scriptures.

When I was about nineteen, I was introduced to a couple of books.

And he talks about the Jehovah Witnesses and then Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth*. He quotes James 1:26-27. We'll get to that in a minute.

Here are two plain verses, which fill the meaning and guidance concerning religion. One religion is called *vain*, the other *pure and undefiled*. Since God's Word states plainly that *pure religion* is what He expects of His people, I make no apologies for making it my daily goal. God does not hate religion. He hates *vain* religion. God loves pure religion.

Nowhere does He say He loves *pure* 'religion.' What kind of 'religion' are we talking about? What kind of 'pure and undefiled religion' was James referring to? You have to do more than just make a comment or an accusation. Now he quotes James 3 where it says: 'The tongue with which we bless even the Father, and therewith we curse men, which are made after the similitude of God.'

Brethren, he was talking to converted people.

Now, wait a minute—**James was not writing to 'converted' people**. That's the first mistake you made. When he says *brethren*, Jews always called themselves *brethren*. He was writing to the twelve tribes of Israel. You need to understand that. He was talking to the Jews who would go into the synagogues, James 2.

What is at the core of vain religion? The life of a Christian, a true follower of Jesus Christ is a life of overcoming vain religion by replacing it with pure religion and undefiled.

No it is not! The life of the Christian is one of *constant conversion, growing in grace and knowledge and developing the mind of Christ* and that is not a ‘religion.’ That is a complete recreation process that God is doing with you. What is happening here? God’s way, through these papers and this method, is being viewed as a ‘religion.’ But ***it is not a ‘religion,’ never intended to be ‘religion’ and wasn’t a ‘religion’!***

These plain, simple statements used in this article are but a small part in being able to force such a person to clarify themselves.

Well, I’ve been forced to clarify, so I will.

If they insist on defending such an assertion, I would personally be very suspicious of them.

Why are you sowing seeds of discord among the brethren?

The reason I am making such a big deal out of this is because denigrating religion could lead to an incremental way of doing away with God’s eternal spiritual law. Now, this is just an opinion that you have expressed. It is not true in fact. This is why I mentioned from the beginning, saying that God hates religion without qualification could prove to be dangerous.

So, now I’m dangerous and Bob Hunnicutt is dangerous and the Word of God is dangerous! I guess.

Maybe God in His mercy will lead us to live pure religion and undefiled and to remain unspotted right up until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then he gives the definitions here and so forth. He gives something about the Amish ‘religion.’ Remember, this is mailed out to a couple of hundred brethren and all of those who are supposed to be fellowshiping with us.

I’ll just tell you this. In 1995 I tried to have different men get up there and speak and give sermonettes and sermons. It really ended up being the worst Feast that we’ve ever had, because everyone there had his own way of doing things. Everyone had an agenda. I was constantly—the whole time—putting out fires here and there and everywhere. I had to go through a four-hour session with some people over *sacred names*. So, people are

going to have their agenda. If you have an agenda, you have a ‘religion.’ Well then, go have it to yourself, but don’t drag in other people; don’t drag in the brethren. Don’t try and bring them in on your side. It’s really quite a difficult proposition here.

Here’s another letter that was sent out. First of all, I didn’t say, ‘God hates false religion.’ That was my mistake when he called me and asked me about it. I said, ‘Well, then God hates false religion.’ Because at that time I hadn’t gone in to it and researched it and I told him I would. So, I did, but I changed the caption from ‘God Hates Religion’ to ‘God Hates False Religion.’ That was my fault when I did that.

(Another letter from Cincinnati Brethren):
God inspired James to use *vain* as opposed to *pure and undefiled*.

That is true, but what is he really talking about?

I wish Fred Coulter and Bob Hunnicutt would’ve done so to get a definition of religion. At least then I would have known what they meant by it and could have gone to my Bible to see if it fit God’s definition.

I hope you go to your Bible and see that it fits God’s definition.

Far from defining, they denounce and denigrate it with statements like: religion lies at the root of all strife, regardless of whether it’s related to religion or politics...

That is a true statement. Then in a second mailing:

...because we know about the conspiracy and the Illuminati and the Bilderbergers and the Trilaterals...

Then because we hate ‘religion,’ then I must be a Mason, because Mason’s say that all religions must be destroyed. So, you see there is an agenda somewhere. I have never walked into a Masonic Temple, except up in Seattle where I went to visit, when Worldwide Church of God was meeting there. To accuse me and Bob Hunnicutt and others of being Illuminists of Adam Weishaupt and being Masons—because of this—is pure emotionalism and throwing things at us that are not true. I’m not a Mason, never have been, but I’m for destroying all ‘religion.’

I use James 1:26-27 to highlight that God shows He doesn’t hate religion, but rather, He hates vain religion. When this happened I felt it necessary to show the “company” Fred Coulter is keeping, at least in terms of this teaching. So, an issue oriented packet was mailed out with a follow-up article.

Let's go to James 1:26-27 and let's take a look at it. It's a shame that this even needs to be done. It shouldn't even have to be done, but I'm going to do it simply because it was put out there and all the hatred and strife. We're dealing with someone who wants to be 'religious.'

- Are they creating strife like Bob Hunnicutt said? *Yes!*
- Are they dividing the brethren like Bob Hunnicutt said? *Yes!*
- Are they self-righteous in their approach to what they are doing? *Yes!*
- Do they have an agenda that they are working on? *Could be! One is to make a 'religion' out of God's way!*

James 1:26: “If anyone among you...” This is written to the twelve tribes of Israel, scattered abroad, he says:

Verse 1: “...Greetings!....” Were the twelve tribes of Israel converted? *No!* This was not written to converted people. This was written to unconverted people who attended synagogues.

Verse 26: “If anyone among you considers himself to be religious, and does not control his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* vain.” I think we have a little bit of that in this paper. ‘Bridles not his fingers’ from typing up accusations and mailing them out to brethren.

Verse 27: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and *the* Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” That's what is called *pure and undefiled religion* has absolutely nothing to do with worshipping God, has absolutely nothing to do with the inner part of Godliness, but has rather to do with the outward part.

Let's see how we are to worship God. God doesn't want *exterior vain* 'religion.' He doesn't want things on the outside. We're going to see how God even views this. We're going to see that one of the purest, one of the most undefiled men in all the history of the Bible, had to be corrected by God for *his* 'religion,' and that is Job. Here's how God wants us to worship Him:

John 4:23: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth...” Having nothing whatsoever to do with 'religion,' but it has to do with the heart. It has to do with fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

“...for the Father is indeed seeking those who worship Him in this manner. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth” (vs 23-24). Not in a 'religious' form. I'm

sorry about that that; you didn't really do your homework or your research the way that you should have.

Let's look at some of the definitions. If you need a good Lexicon, let me recommend that you get *Bullinger's Lexicon—A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* by E. W. Bullinger. It's very good. Here's what he has to say with *religion* from the Greek word 'threskeia'—*religious observance: the outward ceremonial service of religion, the external form*. What we read here is that James was an external form. You visit the fatherless; you visit the widow. That has nothing to do with the true converted relationship that one is to have with God.

God expects society to take care of the widows and the fatherless. Even the United States government has a whole welfare program to do that. Is that pure 'religion'? *and* undefiled before God? *No!* So, it's the *external* form as opposed to:

- 'eusebeo'—the *practical piety rightly directed*.

That is defined as *Godliness*. Godliness is what we are to strive for, and that is Christ in us, not a religion.

- 'theosebeia'—the *worship of God*
- 'eulabeia'—the *devotedness rising from Godly fear*

There is also *religious*. We are going to look at how these words are used. There is also a 'religious' person. This is:

- 'threskos'—*religious*, especially in a bad sense. *Superstitious*, as a substitute or for example, the zealous and diligent performer of the outward service of God. *Either of their mysteries or full of religion and so forth*.
- 'eusebeo'—to *stand in fear and awe before God*
- 'threskeia'—the *outward form of religion, the outward form of doing it*.

These are the words that are used in James 1.

Let's look at some other areas where the outward form was used, showing how the scribes and Pharisees did theirs. We're going to be amazed. Let's look at it here. Here is 'religious' worship. We'll see what Jesus Christ had to say. The scribes and Pharisees had a 'religion.' They had the *exterior* form. Everything they did was *outward*. Jesus Christ said, 'You hypocrites, you scribes and Pharisees, you clean the *outside*, but the inside—you're full of dead men's bones and rottenness. First *clean the inside* and then the outside will be clean.' They were full of hypocrisy.

Matthew 15:9: “But they **worship** Me in vain... [*religious*—the verb for *religion*] ...teaching *for* doctrine *the* commandments of men.” That’s what ‘religions’ do, no question about it. They teach “...*for* doctrine...” or teachings “...*the* commandments of men.”

Let’s analyze it a little bit more, because Christ gets very specific in Mark 7. Let’s see what happens with ‘religion.’ This is why God hates ‘religion’ and He does not want ‘religion’ in *His* Church. **He wants each one!** He wants *your ‘heart, your mind, your soul and your being.’* He doesn’t want the *exterior* form.

Mark 7:1: “Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes from Jerusalem came together to Him... [they sent their committee around to follow Him—the *watch squad*] ... And when they saw some of His disciples eating with defiled hands (that is, unwashed *hands*), they found fault” (vs 1-2). They are hypercritical and ‘religious’ people are always hypercritical.

Verse 3: “For the Pharisees and all the Jews, holding fast to the tradition of the elders, do not eat unless they wash... [with the fist up to the elbows] ...their hands thoroughly” (v 3). The tradition of the elders was Judaism. Judaism is a ‘religion.’ Catholicism is a ‘religion.’ Catechism from Catholicism teaches you the Catholic ‘religion.’ ***The Bible teaches you God’s way of life!*** It’s entirely different.

Verse 4: “Even *when coming* from the market, they do not eat unless they *first* wash themselves. And there are many other things that they have received to observe, *such as the* washing of cups and pots and brass utensils and tables. For this reason, the Pharisees and the scribes questioned Him, *saying*, ‘Why don’t Your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’ And He answered *and* said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors Me with their lips... [it’s outward] ...but their hearts are far away from Me.”’ (vs 4-6). They had a ‘religion.’

There may have been some that had a *pure and undefiled religion*. But the Pharisees certainly didn’t. They were very hypocritical.

Verse 7: “But in vain do they worship Me...” *Worship* here is the verb form of *religion*. ‘Howbeit in vain are you ‘religious’ to me.’

““...teaching *for* doctrine the commandments of men.” ‘For leaving the commandment of God, you hold fast the tradition of men, *such as* the washing of pots and cups; and you practice many other things like *this*.’ Then He said to them, ‘Full well do you reject the commandment of

God, so that you may observe your *own* tradition”’ (vs 7-9). That’s what ‘religion’ is.

‘Religion’ is the compilation. There may be things of the Bible in it—scribes and Pharisees had things of the Bible in it—but *that doesn’t mean it’s from God*. Mormonism uses parts of the Bible, but *that doesn’t mean it’s from God*. Catholicism uses parts of the Bible, but *that doesn’t mean it’s from God*. Many ‘religions’ use part of the Bible. As a matter of fact, even Mohammadism uses part of the Bible and recognizes Mary, and Jesus as a prophet equivalent to Mohammed. We need to understand what the Bible is really about. This kind of thing that was written shows a very complete lack of understanding of the Scriptures altogether and you’re not fulfilling what needs to be.

Let’s look at the Pharisees and let’s see what happens. Let’s understand what happens with ‘religion’ and Jesus made it very, very clear. When you have a ‘religion,’ you develop a *false faith*, because your faith is in the ‘religion’ and not in God. Your faith is in the way that you are doing things. That’s why so many people have said: ‘Once a Catholic, always a Catholic; once a Mormon, always a Mormon.’

Let’s come to the Pharisees and see what they were. Let’s understand that ‘religion’ *destroys the love of God*. The scribes and Pharisees had a ‘religion.’ *They did not have the love of God!* Remember, the Apostle Paul—before he was called—was Saul. He was breathing out hatreds and slaughtering. As we’re going to see, Jesus even told the apostles; ‘The time is coming when they are going to deliver you up and kill you and think they are doing service to God,’ which then, is an *outward* thing that they are doing. By the way, during the Inquisition, whenever they killed the saints it was a ‘religious’ service. They had hymns. They had prayers. This was an *outward* form of exterminating the heretics. Let’s understand it very clearly: If you are going to have a ‘religion,’ you are going to cut off the love of God.

Jesus is talking to the scribes and Pharisees, John 5:36: “But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works that the Father gave Me to complete, the *very* works that I am doing, themselves bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Himself, Who sent Me, has borne witness of Me...” [by all the miracles and all the things that He did] ...You have neither heard His voice nor seen His form at any time. And you do not have His Word dwelling in you... [they had their ‘religion’ abiding in them, but not the Word of God] ...for you do not believe Him Whom He has sent. You search the Scriptures...” (vs 36-39).

Because ‘religious’ people have their little

Scriptures that they go to. They really don't search them. Oh, they may do a study like we have here, but it wasn't thorough. This was very mediocre.

I've been receiving so many papers like this it's almost like 'teacher, teacher, teacher, who's got a typewriter? Let me do a paper.' It's unreal! Yet, there are people who will believe it. I think this is the way that God is taking care of a lot of the 'religious' people. God wants those

- who are dedicated to Him
- who love Him
- who serve Him
- who follow Christ
- who live under the grace of God

Verse 39: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think that you have eternal life; and they are the ones that testify of Me. But you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men...”

That's what all these 'religions' do. 'Oh, how great you are; how great this one, the right 'reverend' this, the left 'reverend' that, the cardinal, the bishop, the archbishop, the father' and so forth.]

“...but I have known you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves” (vs 39-42). That's very strong!

These people were very 'religious' and the Pharisees were of the strictest sect; as Paul said, 'The very strictest.' What did God have to do? God had to bring the Apostle Paul flat on the ground. *God had to bring Paul to the point that he said, 'Everything that was gain to me in the flesh, a Pharisee of Pharisees, of the law blameless'—pure and undefiled religion before God—he said, 'I count it all but dung that I may win Christ.' He had to repent of his 'religion.' I hope if there are any 'religious' people out there listening to this, I hope you repent of yours, because God wants a personal relationship with you!* Maybe you ought to really study the Bible more and do like Christ says to 'search the Scriptures' and find out the Truth and really understand what is in it.

Let's find out about the Pharisees. Where did their 'religion' come from? When you really define it, there are only two ways:

1. God's way
2. Satan's way

—which is very broad and there are many out there, there are many 'religions.'

Who is the father of *all* the religions? Even the Christian professing 'religions' of Protestantism are going more and more away from God. When they did follow certain things concerning the

precepts of God, they were right in that, but they still had a 'religion.' People who are called into the Church of God need to repent of a 'religion,' *because God is calling you to a way of life.* Who inspires the 'religions' of this world? We are going to see who the author of the first 'religion' was.

'Religion' is that *you* are going to do something *for* God. You are going to come to God and you are going to bring something to God and God very well better accept it because *you* have put forth this whole effort.

John 8:41—Jesus said to them: “‘You are doing the works of your father.’ Then they said to Him, ‘We have not been born of fornication. We have one Father, *and that is* God.’ Therefore, Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father... [which He wasn't] ...you would love Me... [which they didn't] ...because I proceeded forth and came from God. For I have not come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why don't you understand My speech? Because you cannot *bear* to hear My words.... [because you've got *your* 'religion' all blocked in your mind] ...You are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father you desire to practice. He was a murderer from *the* beginning, and has not stood in the Truth because there is no Truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he is speaking from his own *self*; for he is a liar, and the father of it'” (vs 41-44).

Every 'religion' has lies. Catholics do, Protestants do—*every* 'religion.' They come to God with their beads, with their crosses, with their crucifixes, with their idols to show God how 'good' they are and what they are going to do. ***That is not the way of God!***

Let's see what Jesus told them. Matt. 23 is an exhortation against 'religion,' where they go out and make proselytes, travel over land and sea and when they've made a proselyte they make him to be a worst hypocrite than their own. Here is what God says concerning 'religion':

Matthew 23:13: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and as a pretext you offer prayers of great length. Because of this, you shall receive *the* greater judgment. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven before men; for neither do you yourselves enter, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel the sea and the land to make one proselyte, and when he has become one, you make him twofold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever shall swear by the temple, it is not binding; but whoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is obligated to fulfill his oath'” (vs 13-16).

So, you get all nit-picky, with all these little things, little rules, little regulations. That’s all ‘religion.’ That is all defined by men; men critically judging other men and setting up little rules: ‘Well, I don’t like that rule, so let’s make another rule. This rule isn’t right, let’s make another rule.’

Christ says, v 17: “*You* fools and blind!... [that’s what ‘religious’ people are] ...For which is greater, the gold, or the temple, which sanctifies the gold? And *you say*, “Whoever shall swear by the altar, it is not binding; but whoever shall swear by the gift that *is* upon it, he is obligated *to fulfill* his oath.” *You* fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift, or the altar, which sanctifies the gift? Therefore, the one who swears by the altar swears by it, and by all things that *are* upon it. And the one who swears by the temple swears by it, and by Him Who dwells in it. And the one who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God, and by Him Who sits upon it” (vs 17-22). They are missing the whole point. They’ve left God out of the whole thing.

When you start with the smallest thing to build your own little tiny weensy little ‘religion’ and build up all your laws and fences and prohibitions and dos and don’ts, what do you have? *Just exactly what Christ described here!*

Verse 23: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, but you have abandoned the more important *matters* of the law—judgment, and mercy and faith....” There’s no judgment in maligned statements like that. To malign Bob Hunnicutt and me and say we must be Masons! Or we must be Illuminists! Do you understand the difference there? There’s no judgment! There’s no mercy! There’s no faith!

“...These *you* were obligated to do, and not to leave the others undone. Blind guides, who filter out a gnat, but swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but within you are full of extortion and excess. Blind Pharisees! First cleanse the inside of the cup and the dish, so that the outside may also become clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful *on the* outside, but within are full of the bones of the dead, and of all uncleanness.... [What a description of St. Peter’s Basilica, if you want a real, world-class ‘religion’!] ...Likewise, you also outwardly appear to men to *be* righteous, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (vs 23-28).

One thing you need to understand: Matthew was a Levite as well as a tax collector, so he knew what he was writing about. He knew what Jesus said. Let’s see what Jesus says that He does not want. *He does not want you worshipping Him in a*

‘religious’ form. What do I mean by that? Exactly what Jesus says here:

Matthew 6:1: “Beware *that* you do not bestow your alms in the sight of men in order to be seen by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father Who *is* in heaven. Therefore, when you give *your* alms, do not sound the trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward” (vs 1-2).

They did the *outward* ‘religious’ form. They threw the money into the treasury, they had their friend blow the trumpet, they had on their phylacteries, how great they are—and guess what? ***They had their reward!***

- Nothing from God!
- God did not notice!
- God did not care!
- God had no part in it!

Verse 3: “But *when* you give your alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall Himself reward you openly. And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, in order *that* they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into a private room; and after shutting the door, pray to your Father Who *is* in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*... [in ***their*** ‘religion’] ...for they think that by multiplying their words they shall be heard. Now then, do not be like them; for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him” (vs 3-8).

Then He gives the outline of how to pray. He talks about fasting, v 16: “And when you fast, do not be as the hypocrites, dejected in countenance; for they disfigure their faces in order that they may appear to men to fast. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But *when* you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, So that you may not appear to men to fast, but to your Father Who *is* in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall reward you openly” (vs 16-18). ***That is Christ’s opinion of ‘religion’!***

There’s a whole lot more that God has to say about ‘religion.’ Bob Hunnicutt said that, ‘religion undid Israel.’ It sure did, because when the ten tribes of Israel were taken away and given into the hand of Jeroboam, what happened? *He set up two golden calves; one in Dan and one in Bethel!* They worshipped them. They had a ‘religion.’ As a matter

of fact, Jeroboam was the head of the ‘religion.’ Jeroboam the son Nebat is the epitome of leading people into sin. Every time there was a bad king in Israel or Judah it says they followed the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made the children of Israel to sin. What did he do? *He created his own feast! Created his own ‘religion’! Created his own temple and it was all good works outside!* Oh, yes, everyone thought it was wonderful. There’s a whole lot more to it than meets the eye.

Let’s see the origin of men’s religion.’ It was started by Cain. You will find that if you go back to the book of Jude, Jude denounces the way of Cain and the way of Balaam. Balaam was the son of Beor in Pethor—*Peter*. Balaam was the equivalent to the pope that we have today. Let’s see what ‘religion’ does.

Genesis 4:4: “And Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock *and* of the fat of it. And the LORD had regard unto Abel and his offering.” Why? *Because Abel was not being ‘religious’!* Abel was doing as God had commanded. That’s why God had it.

Verse 3: “...that Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground.”

Verse 5: “But He did not have regard unto Cain and his offering....” Why? *Because Cain was saying, ‘Well, I’m going to give this to God and God is going to have to accept it!’* Listen! God doesn’t have to accept any ‘religion’ and He doesn’t accept any religion.’ *None!* If you come to God, you come to God on *God’s* terms. No one comes to God on *his* own terms.

- you must repent
- you must be baptized
- you must receive the Spirit of God
- you must worship Him in Spirit and Truth
- you must love Him with all your heart, mind, soul and being

That’s not a religion! That is a way of God, a way of life! Cain got mad:

“...And Cain was extremely angry and his countenance fell. And the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you so angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? But if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. Its desire *is* for you, but you must rule over it!’” (vs 5-7).

What happened then? *Cain got jealous! Cain killed his brother!* So, ‘religion’ does lead to killing; it is true. Almost every single war in the history of the world has been a ‘religious’ war, one way or the other; one religion’ against another, people against people. That’s why God hates ‘religion.’

Let’s look at a man who had a *perfect* religion.’ Even God said from the outside, *pure and undefiled religion*, Job had it. But was Job accepted of God spiritually? *No, he wasn’t!*

Job 1:6: “Now, there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD. And Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.’ And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil?’” (vs 6-8). There is *pure and undefiled* ‘religion’ and keeping yourself unspotted from religion—without a doubt.

You know the story. Satan said, ‘Well, let me afflict him.’ God said, ‘All right.’ Satan afflicted Job and came back and God said, ‘See, he didn’t curse Me.’ Satan said to God, ‘Skin for skin, let me afflict him.’ And God said, ‘All right.’ Job was afflicted with boils from the top of his head to the sole of his feet and his wife said, ‘Oh Job, get it over with. Curse God and die!’ Job sat there and scraped all the pus and threw ashes on himself to get rid of the pain; flies came around. After a few days, his friends came over and they sat down and just looked at him for seven days; sat there and stared at him for seven days, didn’t say a word!

Here’s what ‘religion’ does: It thinks it’s good before God, because it has a work that it’s going to do. Job was as *pure and undefiled* as could be, but it had nothing to do with salvation. That’s what we need to understand. It was all *exterior*. He listed everything that he did.

Job 9:32: “For *He is* not a man, as *I am*, that I should answer Him, *that* we should come together in court... [job is willing to meet God on a *man-to-man* basis] ... there is no umpire between us, *who* might lay his hand upon us both. Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear make me afraid; *then* would I speak and not fear Him; but *it is* not so with me” (vs 32-35). He was arguing all the way back and forth. If you want a really instructive lesson, read the whole book of Job.

Job 23:2: “Even today *is* my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh, that I knew *where* I might find Him, *that* I might come even to His seat! I would lay *my* cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments” (vs 2-4). ‘I would run up to God and tell Him, just exactly how good I am! What I’ve done! And I’ve got *my religion*.’ Of course, God never accepted it—did He?

Verse 5: “I would know the words, *which* He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me. Will He contend against me with *His* great power? No, surely He would give heed to me. There the righteous might reason with Him; and I would be acquitted from my Judge forever. Behold, I go forward, but He is not *there*; and backward, but I cannot see Him” (vs 5-8). The day had come when God came down and talked to you.

Verse 9: “On the left hand, where He works, but I cannot behold Him. He turns to the right, but I cannot see *Him*. But He knows the way that I take; *when* He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (vs 9-10). How wonderful I am! That’s what ‘religionist’ do. They look down and they thumb up their nose and their hands at people.

Job 27:2: “As God lives, He has denied me justice; and the Almighty has made my soul bitter. As long as my breath *is* in me, and the breath of God *is* in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit... [‘I’m going to do it right.’] ...Far be it from me that I should declare you to be right... [you miserable friends out there, who don’t know anything] ...until I die I will not retract my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness, and I will not let it go; my heart shall not shame me so long as I live” (vs 2-6).

Let’s see how God looks at all of that. When you understand it, in the final analysis God was very kind and merciful to Job. This tells us about man and *his* ‘religion’ and how great and marvelous it is.

Psalms 39:5: “Behold, You have made my days as a handbreadth, and the span of my days is as nothing before You. Surely every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.” All ‘religion’—even unspotted and undefiled—*are vain, because they don’t change the heart*. Was all of Job’s behavior vain? though perfect in the letter? though undefiled and pure? *Yes, it was!* It wasn’t from the heart and it wasn’t worshipping God. It was *serving himself*, building up his reputation; so it’s vain.

Verse 6: “Surely every man walks about in a vain show! Surely they are in an uproar in vain....” That’s the way all men are.

Let’s see how this argument continues here, because I want you to know that with Job we are dealing with the purest, most undefiled man that had ever lived.

Job 31:35: “Oh that I had one to hear me!... [even his friends weren’t listening to him] ... Behold, my desire is *that* the Almighty would answer me, and the indictment *that* my adversary had written.... [it was written and God did answer him] ...Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, *and* bind it *like* a crown *upon* my head.... [He would take

every accusation that anyone ever had] ...I would declare to Him the number of my steps; like a prince I would come before Him” (vs 35-37). He wasn’t coming to God repentant—was he? *No, he was coming as a prince!*

Job 34:1: “And Elihu answered and said... [v 35]: ‘...“Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words *were* without wisdom.”.... [he was all ‘religious’] ...My desire *is that* Job may be tried unto the end because *his* answers *are* like those of wicked men. For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps *his* hands among us, and multiplies his words against God”’ (vs 1, 35-37). Isn’t that what ‘religions’ do? *Yes!* They killed the prophets!. They killed Christ!

Job 35:1: “And Elihu answered and said, ‘Do you think this to *be* right, you *that* say, “My righteousness *is* more than God’s?”’” (vs 1-2). That is exactly what religionist do when they have their own rules. *They say their way is better than God’s!* Even a *pure and undefiled* ‘religion’ God does not accept for salvation.

- God wants your heart
- you are saved by grace
- God wants your love
- He wants to love you
- He wants that relationship

Can you imagine what a church would be like filled with Jobs from one end to the other? Can you imagine the strife, the nitpicking, the vanity, the fighting, the arguing and the abusing that would go on? Beating each other up with words and stupidity? *That’s what a ‘religious’ church does.* That’s what Bob Hunnicutt was talking about. People coming in with their own ‘religion’ and claiming that they are Godly. *Godliness* is another thing:

- Godliness is Christ *in* you
- Godliness is living by every Word of God, from the heart
- Godliness is worshipping God *in Spirit and in Truth*, not the outward form
- Godliness is doing as Jesus said: ‘When you pray, go into your closet, when you fast don’t appear to men to be fasting.’

When you do something that is right, you don’t brag about it. You don’t let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. You just do it! And let God bless you.

Verse 3: “For you say, ‘What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than *if* I had sinned?’ I will answer your words, and your companions with you. Look to the heavens, and see...” (vs 3-5). That’s a good place to start. That’s very humbling when you look up and see the greatness of what God has made. That’s a good

place to begin.

“...and behold the clouds; they are higher than you. If you sin, what do you do against Him? Or *if* your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand? Your wickedness *may hurt* a man like yourself; and your righteousness *may profit* the son of man” (vs 5-8). In the flesh temporarily, that’s what he is talking about.

Verse 9: “By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry out because of the *powerful* arm of the mighty.” That’s what ‘religion’ and politics have done: *oppressed*.

Verse 10: “But none says, ‘Where *is* God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night; Who teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?’ There they cry, but He gives no answer, because of the pride of evildoers. Surely God will not hear vanity...” (vs 10-13). ***Man at his very best state is altogether vanity!***

“...neither will the Almighty regard it. How *much less* when you say you do not see Him! The cause *is* before Him; you must wait for Him.... [not yourself, Job] ...And now because it is not so, He has visited in anger yet he does not understand even his great extremity. Therefore, does Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplies *his* words without knowledge” (vs 13-16). The purest, most undefiled ‘religious’ man on the face of the earth—there’s his sin: ***vain!*** He opens his mouth without knowledge and multiplies words against God.

Let’s see where God says He hates it; He can’t stand it, even though it originally was something that God commanded with all of the rituals and all of the sacrifices. It is all vain, because:

- they made a ‘religion’ out of it
- they became hypocritical in it
- they cast God out of it

When you have ***a way*** that casts God out of it, every time you get a ‘religion’ sooner or later God is cast out. There’s just no way around it.

Isaiah 1:10: “Hear the Word of the LORD, rulers of Sodom; give ear to the Law of our God, people of Gomorrah. ‘To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?’.... [What is it?] ...says the LORD. ‘I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I do not delight in *the blood of* bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats.... [God commanded it. Why?] ...When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to trample My courts?’” (vs 10-12). You’re coming in with ***your way*** and ***your religion***.

Verse 13: “Bring no more vain sacrifices;

incense is an abomination to Me—new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure...” Isn’t that what happened? When you get ‘religious’ you have so many activities in the Church, that you are doing this on Monday and you are doing that on Tuesday and you’re doing something else on Wednesday and Thursday and then you have Friday night Bible Study and then you have two Sabbath services on the Sabbath. ***It all gets to be a political thing in praising men.*** We’ve lived through that—haven’t we? What happened? ***God destroyed it, just like He destroyed Jerusalem!*** And it’s going to be further destroyed even more.

“...iniquity along with the solemn assembly! Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates...” (vs 13-14). You can even have them on the right day, but if you make it yours, by ‘religion,’ they don’t belong to God. We need to understand that.

Let’s see what God told the Levites, Malachi 2:1: “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not lay *it* to heart to give glory to My name,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘then I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yea, I have indeed cursed them *already* because you do not lay *it* to heart” (vs 1-2).

They had nothing in their heart for God. They had a ‘religion’ out here, and theirs certainly wasn’t pure and undefiled like Job’s was, but even Job’s wasn’t accepted of God, because Job had to repent.

God says He’s going to corrupt it, v 3: “Behold, I will rebuke your seed; and I will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your appointed feasts....” All your ‘religious’ *flu-flaw*, whatever it is, He’s going to just put it like so much dung, just spewed out upon their faces. And we’ve seen that in the ministry—haven’t we? We’ve seen that happen, *no question about it!*

““...And one shall carry you away with it.... [they are all caught up in their own dung] ...And you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, so that My covenant might be with Levi,’ says the LORD of hosts.... [we apply that to the ministry today] ‘My covenant with him was *one* of life and peace, and I gave them to him *for* fear; that he might fear Me, and he was in awe before My name. The Law of Truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips. He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned away many from iniquity’” (vs 3-6). But what happened? They turned and brought in ‘religion’ and went the other way.

Verse 7: “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and *the people* should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of

hosts. But you have departed out of the way; you have caused many to stumble at the Law....” (vs 7-8). Why? *Because you have a ‘religion’ and you created a ‘religion’ that ignores God!*

“...You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says the LORD of hosts. ‘Therefore, I have also made you contemptible and base before all the people, just as you have not kept My ways but have been partial in the Law’” (vs 8-9). Then he talks about all the divorce and everything that is caused by it.

Verse 10: “Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously, each man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?”

This is what happens when you have a ‘religion’: ***You begin to despise God’s way!*** I can understand with some of the *false* ‘religion’ that came in and so forth, that’s true. They despise God’s way!

Ezekiel 22:25: “There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst, like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her priests have done violence to My Law ... [with *their* ‘religion’] ...and have profaned My Holy things... [with *their* ‘religion’] ...They have put no difference between the Holy and the profane, and have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them” (vs 25-26). It’s quite a thing!

Let’s see what God says about this kind of righteousness and what it is and what happens here, Isaiah 58:2 “Yet, they seek Me daily, and seem eager to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and one that did not forget the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they seem eager to draw near to God.... [they honor Me with their lips] ...*They say*, ‘Why have we fasted, and You do not see? Why have we afflicted our soul and You take no knowledge?’” (vs 2-3).

They are trying to force God to do something for them, because of what they are doing and that’s the very essence of religion.’ That’s what Cain did. That’s what every ‘religion’ has done: ***They have fenced everything around God’s way and they make God’s way a burden, an absolute burden!***

“...Behold, in the day of your fast you pursue your business and exploit all your workers. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness; you cannot fast as *you do* this day, and expect to make your voice to be heard on high” (vs 3-

4).

God is going to answer you in a different way. God is going to answer you in a way that is going to be something! We need to understand exactly how this is.

Let’s see some more ‘religion,’ Isaiah 65:2: “I have spread out My hands all the day to a rebellious people who walk in the way that is not good, *even* after their own thoughts; a people who without ceasing provoke Me to My face; who sacrifice in gardens... [that’s like in the churches] ...and burn incense upon the bricks” (vs 2-3).

‘Oh, yes we have to have incense.’ If you watch the pope at high Mass at St. Peter’s Basilica—they’ve got these huge serpentine pillars rising up with a huge sunburst canopy at the top. They have this big altar and they have incense and they walk around and ring the bell. They’re all dressed in these long robes and *mumble and murmur*, ding goes the bell and whoosh goes the incense. It’s exactly what he’s talking about here.

Verse 4: “‘A *people* who sit among the graves, and spend the night in the tombs, who eat swine’s flesh, and broth of vile *things* in their vessels; who say, “Keep to yourself, do not come near me; for I am holier than you.” These *are* a smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day. Behold, *it is* written before Me; I will not be silent... [No, God will still answer it.] ...except I will repay; yea, I will repay into their bosom your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together,’ says the LORD...” (vs 4-7). *Their ‘religion’ has caused their iniquity!*

Here’s another ‘religious’ person, and we’ll compare this with what God really wants, Isaiah 66:3: “He who kills an ox *is as if* he killed a man; he who sacrifices a lamb *is as if* he broke a dog’s neck; he who offers a grain offering *is as if* he offered swine’s blood; he who burns incense *is as if* he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways... [it’s *their own* ‘religion’] ...and their soul delights in their abominations.”

‘Oh, it’s a wonderful thing! Look at that beautiful Christmas tree! Oh, this pork roast was so good on Easter—I can’t stand it!’ ***All the abominations!***

Verse 4: “I also will choose their delusions, and I will bring their fears upon them because when I called, no one answered; when I spoke, they did not hear. But they did evil before My eyes and chose *that* in which I did not delight.”

What God wants, v 1: “Thus says the LORD, ‘The heaven *is* My throne, and the earth *is* My footstool. Where, then, *is* the house that you build for Me?...’” That’s why God even told David—when

David wanted to build the temple—‘Look, I’ve lived in a Tabernacle all these years and not in a house,’ because God knew what would happen once it was built. And did it happen? Was Solomon destroyed with *the religion*’ of the other ‘religions’? *Yes, he was*, and yet, he built the House of God. Brethren, can we understand what God really wants? He says it here! He defines it!

“...And where *is* the place of My rest? For all these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,’ says the LORD....” (vs 1-2). Look, God can build temples, God can build buildings, God can build universes, but what does He want more than anything else?

“...‘But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word’” (v 2). That’s what God wants. **A converted attitude!** That’s what eventually happened to Job.

You can have zeal in ‘religion.’ You can be zealous! Yes, you can really do great things with ‘religion.’ You can organize, you can have drives, you can do many things. **But is God in it?**

Paul says of Israel, Romans 10:1: “Brethren, the earnest desire of my heart and my supplication to God for Israel is for salvation. For I testify of them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.... [No! They didn’t do it God’s way.] ...For they, being ignorant of the righteousness *that* comes from God, and seeking to establish **their own righteousness**...” (vs 1-3)—by creating their own ‘religion.’

That’s why nowhere in the Bible does it say, ‘God loves religion.’ Nowhere does it say, ‘Christian religion,’ because God doesn’t want you to be a ‘religious’ person. *God wants you to be converted*, with the kind of attitude we just read about there. When you go about to establish your own righteousness, what happens?

“...have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (v 3). So, that’s what they did.

Now let’s see what happened to Job once God exposed all of this that Job had done. Let’s see the extremes to what this comes to and the extremes to what ‘religion’ always ends up doing, *bar none!* God finally spoke to Job.; he had his wish.

Job 38:1: “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, ‘Who *is* this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?’” (vs 1-2). Who is this Job? Who God said at the beginning was perfect and upright? All of that which is in the flesh—*outward*—doesn’t count with God, because if your heart isn’t perfect before God it doesn’t matter. You can look righteous, you can have slogans, you can have banners, you can have

uniforms, you can have crosses, crucifixes or the lack thereof. ***If your heart isn’t right***, what good is it?

Verse 3: “Now gird up your loins like a man; for I will demand of you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?... [if you are so great] ...Declare it if you have understanding! Who has determined its measurements if you know?... [come on Job tell Me.] ...Or who has stretched the line upon it?... [If you’re so righteous, what did you do Job?] ...On what are the foundations fastened to?... [How does the earth hang in space? That’s what God asked him.] ...Or who laid its cornerstone” (vs 3-6). How was the world started when God created it? ***If you know, tell Me.***’

Verse 33—God said to Job: “Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set up their dominion on the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that floods of waters may cover you? Can you send lightning that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we *are*?’ Who has put wisdom in the inward parts?...” (vs 33-36). In other words, who gave you intelligence in the first place Job, to even come to this point that you could even ask these questions?

“...Or who has given understanding to the mind?” (v 36). ***God has!***

Job 40:1: “And the LORD answered Job and said, ‘Shall he who contends with the Almighty instruct *Him*?... [Are you, Job, really going to instruct Me?] ...He who reproves God, let him answer it.’” *Let’s have your answer, Job.* What are you going to say?

Verse 3: “And Job answered the LORD and said, ‘Behold, I am vile!...’” (vs 1-4). This is the beginning of his repentance. ***All the external things concerning ‘religion’ meant nothing.*** Job had to come to repentance.

Verse 4: “‘Behold, I am vile! What shall I answer You? I will lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.’... [In other words, ‘God, I’m going to shut up and listen.’] ...And the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, ‘Gird up your loins now like a man. I will demand of you, and you declare unto Me. Will you even annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me so that you may be righteous?’” (vs 4-8).

That’s what all religions do! They disannul the judgment of God concerning *His* Sabbath and *His* Holy Days. They disannul the judgment of God in the New Testament: ‘by grace you are saved.’ They’ve got to have all their little works and all their little flags and banners and dos and don’ts so that

they may be ‘righteous.’ Those who keep Sunday disannul the judgment of God concerning the Sabbath and condemn Him for giving it. Condemn Him and say that He gave the Sabbath as an evil thing to mark the Jews, therefore, none of us should keep the Sabbath, because the Jews keep the Sabbath. *Ridiculous!* But that’s what Job was doing. That’s what ‘religions’ do. ***They disannul God’s judgment and they condemn God, that they may be righteous!***

You can try that on any ‘religion’ and you can see that that is true. Islam does it very nicely with Jesus, by saying, ‘Well, we accept Jesus as a prophet like Mohammed, but not the Son of God.’ So, they condemn God that *they* may be righteous. The Catholics say, ‘We have the traditions of the fathers and we have our own version of the commandments. We keep the first day of the week holy,’ but nowhere does the Bible say the first day of the week is Holy.

Verse 9: “And *have* you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His? Deck yourself now with majesty and excellency...” (vs 9-10). Let’s see you, Job, sitting there with all of your boils and all of your ashes that you’ve spewed on you, all the flies that are there and the maggots that are crawling in all of this pus in your flesh. I haven’t let you die, but let’s see now, Job, let’s see you change.

Verse 10: “Deck yourself now with majesty and excellency, and array yourself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of your wrath; and behold everyone who is proud, and abase him. Look on everyone *who is* proud, *and* bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; *and* bind their faces in darkness. Then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you” (vs 10-14).

So, for those who are ‘religious,’ if they can do that, then they can save themselves with their ‘religion.’ But *no* ‘religion’ *is going to save any man!* ***Jesus Christ alone is going to do that!***

- 9) Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18
- 10) Genesis 4:4, 3, 5-7
- 11) Job 1:6-8
- 12) Job 9:32-35
- 13) Job 23:2-10
- 14) Job 27:2-6
- 15) Psalm 39:5-6
- 16) Job 31:35-37
- 17) Job 34:1, 35-37
- 18) Job 35:1-16
- 19) Isaiah 1:10-14
- 20) Malachi 2:1-10
- 21) Ezekiel 22:25-26
- 22) Isaiah 58:2-4
- 23) Isaiah 65:2-7
- 24) Isaiah 66:3-4, 1-2
- 25) Romans 10:1-3
- 26) Job 38:1-6, 33-36
- 27) Job 40:1-14

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- Matthew 7:21-23
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All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Zechariah 4:6
- 2) James 1:26, 26-27
- 3) John 4:23-24
- 4) Matthew 15:9
- 5) Mark 7:1-9
- 6) John 5:36-42
- 7) John 8:41-44
- 8) Matthew 23:13-28

Why God Hates Religion II

(See “the Way” with the “Eyes of Your Mind”)
Fred R. Coulter

Let’s understand something that is very important for us to realize. Let’s review James 1:26-27, where it talks about religion.’

Let’s understand that God has not called us to a ‘religion.’ **God has called us to a way of life!** God has not called us so we can be ‘good’ in this world, because He has called sinners—harlots and publicans—to repentance so that they can be in the Kingdom of God. Those who were ‘good’ in the world—like the Pharisees and Sadducees and scribes—looked upon Christ, at what He was doing, and they asked the disciples: ‘Why does your Master eat and drink with the harlots and publicans?’ They even called Him a ‘wine bibber.’ Jesus gave the answer and said that, ‘God came to call sinners to repentance and not the righteous.’ They thought *they* were righteous. So, you can have an *outward* form of ‘religion’ and that is what this word means.

James 1:26: “If anyone among you considers himself to be **religious**, and does not control his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is vain..”

We saw how that applied to Job. Even though he was perfect in the *letter of the Law*, that had nothing to do with salvation. You can find people who are ‘good’ in the world, but they are not righteous before God, because God wants to impute the righteousness of Christ to us. That is not a ‘religious’ thing. That is by the grace of God. That’s what this is; it’s the opposite of that. This is to have an *outward* form of ‘religion.’

Verse 27: “Pure and undefiled **religion** before God and *the* Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

Job was unspotted from the world. He was perfect, sincere and righteous, but that was not for salvation. God has not called you unto a ‘religion.’ **He has called you unto salvation!**

The Greek word here in both cases—vs 26-27—is ‘threskeia’—which means *religious observance, the outward ceremonial service of religion, the external form*. You cannot call what we do with the Passover as an outward form of worship. **The Passover is a covenant renewal**, which has nothing to do with the religious observance at all. You renew the covenant with foot-washing, with eating the broken bread and drinking the blood of Christ. He said, ‘This is the blood of the New Covenant.’ He was talking about His own blood.

When you pray you’re not to have an outward form of prayer. You are to go to your closet and pray to your Father Who is in secret. When you do your alms, you’re not to have an outward appearance of doing alms in public. You’re to not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. When you do things such as fasting, you’re not to have it so that everyone knows you’re fasting. All of that is *exterior* ‘religion.’ We saw how that God says He hates the ‘religious’ aspect in Isa. 1, where they made God’s way a religion.’ This ‘threskeia’ is *the external form of worship*.

Now let’s go to another one that is very similar to it: an external form of ‘religion,’ which we find in Col. 2, the worship of angels. This is where all ‘religion’ ends up: worshipping *fallen* angels or demons.

Colossians 2:18: “Do not allow anyone to defraud you of the prize *by* doing *his* will in self-abasement... [that’s what ‘religion’ is: *voluntary humility*] ...and *the worship* of angels...” The word here is ‘threskeia’—meaning that it is *an outward worship*. That’s what people do in worshipping angels.] ...intruding into things that he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his own carnal mind.” It does lift you up. It does give you a sense of importance.

That’s why there are such things as the ‘inner circle,’ the Rosicrucians, seeking the spirits and things like this, because people get ***all lifted up in their own vanity***. You have power; you have ability over other people. That’s what this is all about; when that happens, when you become ‘religious.’

Verse 19: “And not holding fast to the Head... [looking away from Christ] ...from Whom all the body, being supplied and knit together by the joints and bands, is increasing *with* the increase of God. Therefore, if you have died together *with Christ* from the elements of the world... [***That’s what religion is! The rudiments of the world!***] ...why are you subjecting yourselves to *the* decrees of men as if you were living in *the* world? *They say*, ‘You may not handle! You may not taste! You may not touch!’” (vs 19-21). All ‘religions’ have *their own laws*.

Let’s tie this in to v 6: “Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be walking in Him.” We’re going to see in a minute that Christ said that He was ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life.’ He didn’t say, ‘I am *the religion*.’ He didn’t come to establish a ‘religion.’ **He came to establish a way!**

He came to bring Godliness. He came so that we are to worship God in Spirit and in Truth. God is interested in our heart. He’s not interested in just the outward form and ceremony of a ‘religion.’

Verse 6: “Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be walking in Him; **being rooted and built up in Him**... [not in a ‘religion’] ...and being confirmed in the faith...” (vs 6-7). There is a *false* faith, which you can have in a ‘religion.’ It does work for a while, but sooner or later it’s going to collapse, because it’s not built on the foundation of Christ.

“...exactly as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Be on guard so that no one takes you captive...” (vs 7-8). The Greek there is *make a prey of you*. In other words, make you a victim of their philosophy, which is a ‘religion.’

“...through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ” (v 8).

We saw that all the worship that the Pharisees did in *their* ‘religion’ was *in vain*. They rejected the commandments of God so that they could keep their traditions. They even rejected Moses in whom they claim that they believed and they followed. Christ pointed out very clearly that with ‘your *religion* you did not have the love of God.’

In the material that was sent to me, the warning was given: ‘Well, let’s see where this love of God takes us’; indicating that because I preach and teach the love of God, being against ‘religion,’ therefore, whatever I’m doing and teaching is going to fall apart because we’re saying that God hates ‘religion.’ Well, let me tell you something very clearly: ***The love of God is the greatest thing that there is!*** There can never be enough preaching on the love of God and if you truly love God ‘with all your heart, mind, soul and being’ you’re not going to be ‘religious.’ If you want to be ‘religious’ you can have a form and we’ll look at this; notice what ‘religion’ allows:

2-Timothy 3:1: “Know this also, that in the last days perilous times shall come; for men will be lovers of self...” (vs 1-2). ‘Religion’ *allows* this. Whereas, God says that you love Him *first*, then you love your neighbor as yourself and you love the brethren as Christ has loved us—totally different.

“...lovers of money, braggarts, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers... [that’s what I’m going through right now] ... without self-control, savage, despisers of those who are good” (vs 2-3). This ‘good’ is not the human good, but this good is the good that comes

from the righteousness of Christ.

Verse 5: “Having an outward appearance of Godliness... [the exterior form] ...but denying the power of *true* Godliness. But *as for you*, turn away from *all* these.” So, we are told to get away from ‘religious’ people like this. We’re not to go ahead and embrace what they have done.

Now let’s go back and finish the story with Job. Let’s see what Job had to do. Job had to *repent*. of his ‘religion’ just like Saul had to repent of his before he became the Apostle Paul. Job had to go through a very similar experience in a different way; a different method to come to the point of *real* conversion. Let’s see the whole experience that Job went through after God cornered him and talked to him. God didn’t come down and crush Job and attack him. He just said, ‘Job where were you? I want to tell you something.’

Job 40:8: “Will you even annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me so that you may be righteous? And *have* you an arm like God?...” (vs 8-9). God didn’t come down and squash him. He said, ‘Job, I want you to think on this. I want you to really search your heart and mind if you can do this.’

“...Or can you thunder with a voice like His? Deck yourself now with majesty and excellency, and array yourself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of your wrath; and behold everyone who is proud, and abase him. Look on everyone *who is* proud, *and* bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; *and* bind their faces in darkness. Then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you” (vs 9-14).

Salvation has to come from God! God pointed to His creation and what He made so that Job could see that he was missing and lacking in understanding of God. Now let’s see how Job repented:

- Job repented!
- Saul repented!
- Many other people repented!
- ***God wants you to repent of your ‘religion’***

—and not bring it into the Church of God and make a ‘religion’ out of the Church of God.

Why do you think God is destroying many of the Churches of God today? *Because a ‘religion’ was made out of it!* When they made a ‘religion’ out of it, what did they do? *They said, ‘Well, look, let’s go to the world’s ‘religions’—called Christianity—and let’s see how they worship their god and we’ll do the same thing.’* So, lo and behold, once they became ‘religious,’ they gave up on everything concerning God. You see what happens in the

extreme as these things come along. They didn’t repent like Job did.

Job 42:1: “And Job answered the LORD, and said, ‘I know that You can do all things... [Job is beginning to see himself for what he really is] ...and *that* no thought can be withheld from You’” (vs 1-2). You’re not dealing with a ‘religion’; ***you are dealing with God and a relationship with Him!***

Job said v 3: “*You [God] asked, ‘Who is he that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore, I [Job] have spoken that which I did not understand...’*” Job said, ‘I was just a blithering idiot. I was out there babbling and going on and on about how good I was and how righteous I was, and how foolish and stupid of me to do it.’

“...*things* too wonderful for me; yea, which I did not know. Hear, I beseech You, and I will speak; *You said*, “I will ask of you, and you will declare to Me.” I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear... [that’s what ‘religious’ people do, ***they hear***] ...but now my eye sees You” (vs 3-5). This is the ***eye of your mind!*** You comprehend God! That is not a ‘religious’ concept. *That is a spiritual experience with the Spirit of God and Christ in you; that you now see and comprehend God.*

Verse 6: “Therefore, I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.” He came to repentance. He *saw* God, God blessed him, replaced everything double, and replaced his family and gave him the most beautiful daughters in all the world. So, the blessings came at the end. God doesn’t want us to be ‘religious.’

Eph. 1 is one of my favorites, about having your eyes opened. I hope that you do to. I hope, brethren, that the ***eyes of your mind*** are open:

- to *understand* God’s way
- to *see* the calling of God
- to see the love of God
- to *see* what God holds out for us
- to enter into His kingdom as spirit glorified sons and daughters of God

That’s not a ‘religion,’ brethren. That is *a reality of our calling!*

Paul said, Ephesians 1:16: “Do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you *the* spirit of wisdom and revelation in *the* knowledge of Him. And may the eyes of your mind be enlightened...” (vs 16-18). The only way that is going to happen is if you get rid of your ‘religion.’ God hates ‘religion’; it has caused all strife.

There are those that we’ve seen in some of these reports who say that they want to do away with

all ‘religion.’ That doesn’t make us party to them at all.

- Do you think that God, when Christ returns, is going to have Christ save part of:
 - ✓the Catholic Church
 - ✓the Protestant Church
 - ✓the Islamic Church,
 - ✓Buddhism
 - ✓Confucianism
 - ✓Deism
 - ✓animal worship?
- Do you think God is going to save a little bit of that because it’s ‘good’? ***No! That is the good from the Tree of the knowledge Good and Evil!***

Understand this: ***not all good comes from God; only the good that comes through His Holy Spirit!*** There’s a counterfeit good, which is in ‘religion,’ which comes from the Tree of the knowledge Good and Evil. God is going to ***destroy all religions!*** You need to think on that!

That’s why when you read in the book of Revelation when the Churches began to get involved in the way of the Nicolaitans, ***that’s religious hierarchy and in the way of Balaam:***

- eating things sacrificed to idols
- committing fornication with Jezebel the prophetess
- going into the depths of Satan

They were going into the ‘religions’ of this world. ***God corrected them!*** God said even to the Church at Pergamos that if they didn’t repent of the deeds of the Nicolaitans and the doctrine of Balaam that He was going to come and fight against them with the ‘sword of His mouth.’

We have seen that happen with the Worldwide Church of God. God fought against it with ***the ‘sword of His mouth’*** and it is no longer a Church of God. They didn’t repent! They didn’t heed! They wanted ‘religion’ so God let them have it. Now they have it and ***they don’t have God!*** We need to understand that. That’s why my prayer for you is the same as Paul’s:

That “...the ***eyes of your mind*** be enlightened in order that you may comprehend what is the hope of His calling... [not a ‘religion’] ...and what *are* the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the inner working of His mighty power” (vs 18-19). That’s what God wants us *to know*, and *to know* the power of His love and have the understanding that surpasses knowledge.

Let’s begin to see that ***God’s way is a way that leads to Godliness.*** True Godliness comes from

worshipping God in *Spirit and in Truth*, but we have to understand something very, very important: ***The way of Christ is not a ‘religion’!***

John 14:6: “Jesus said to him [Thomas] ‘I am **the Way**... [He did not say, ‘I am the religion.] ...and **the Truth**... [He didn’t say, ‘the way to good,’ because all Truth exposes good and evil] ...and **the Life**; **no one comes to the Father except through Me**.” That is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father. It isn’t going to be any other way.

Verse 15: **“If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments.”**

Verse 23: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.’” So, you have God the Father and Jesus Christ together. It’s really a tremendous and wonderful thing that God has called you to. Let’s hope that you **hear** the hope of His calling and **see** the greatness of God in it.

Let’s see what Jesus says about religionists and hirelings, John 10:1 “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the door, but climbs up **some other way**...” Different than Christ who is ***the Way***. Making a ‘religion’ out of ‘God’s way’ is *another way* and God does not want it. If you climb up some other way, what are you? *You are a thief and a robber, because you are ‘religious’!* Isn’t that what He said of the scribes and Pharisees? *No question about it!*

“...that one is a thief and a robber. But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger for they will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers” (vs 1-5). Why don’t they know the voice of strangers? *Because they are not ‘religious’!*

- they are converted
- they have the Spirit of God
- they are yielded to God
- they follow Christ wherever He goes

Verse 7: “Therefore, Jesus again said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.’” You have to go through Christ. And that verifies what Christ said:

John 14:6 “...‘I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.’” ***It can’t be any other way!*** He makes it very clear.

John 10:8: “All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers...” Of whom were the ‘religious’ leaders of Judaism, the ‘religious’ leaders of the other religions of the world, claiming to give salvation—***thieves and robbers!***

“...but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy...” (vs 8-10). That’s why God hates ‘religion.’ That’s what the ‘religious’ people have done.

“...I have come so that they may have life, and may have *it* more abundantly. I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But the one who is a hireling, and who is not *the* shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming ... [other religionists] ... and leaves the sheep, and flees. And the wolf seizes the sheep and scatters them. Now, the hireling flees because he is a hireling and has no concern for the sheep” (vs 10-13).

Christ on the other hand is entirely different. Christ wants a relationship with you. He doesn’t want you to have a ‘religion’ called *Christianity*. He wants you to be a Christian, with Christ in you, *the hope of glory*.

Verse 14: “I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who *are* Mine, and am known of those who *are* Mine” That tells you what Christ thinks about others who are ‘religious’ people.

Let’s understand some more about ‘religious’ people and what Christ thinks about them. What’s going to happen to some of them in the Day of Judgment? Sure enough

- they’re ‘religious’
- they’re prophets
- they may even use some of the Words of God
- they use the name of Jesus Christ

You can have a very strict ‘religion.’ You can be just like Saul was before he was called to be the Apostle Paul, of the strictest sect of the Pharisees. You can beat the flesh, but you’re still not going to be in the Kingdom of God, because that’s all *exterior*. Or you can have one of the many other ‘religions,’ which is *the broad way* to go.

Jesus said, Matthew 7:13: “Enter in through the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it... [‘religion’ is also *a way*, but ***not God’s way***] ...for narrow *is* the gate and difficult

is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it” (vs 13-14).

Then He gives a warning. Why does He give this warning at this place? *Because there will be many coming along with ‘religions,’ trying to tell people how to be saved;* do this, receive the Lord in your heart and so forth.

Verse 15: “But **beware** of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, for within *they* are ravening wolves.” You can’t convert the nature of ‘religion.’ You can’t convert the nature of ‘religious’ people if they want to stay ‘religious.’ You must repent of being ‘religious,’ just like Job did, just like Saul did.

Verse 16: “You shall know them by their fruits. They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit” (vs 16-17). If it is from God; the good from God

Verse 18: “A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree produce good fruit.” You can’t take the corrupt way of ‘religion’ and make it good enough to be accepted by God. ***There’s no way! It’s an impossibility!*** That’s why Christ died, so that we can repent and go *His* way.

Verse 19: “Every tree *that is* not producing good fruit is cut down and is cast into the fire. Therefore, **you shall assuredly know them by their fruits**” (vs 16-20).

What he says next is very profound and you need to understand this to the very depths of your being in order to understand ***why God hates ‘religion’*** and what He’s going to do to ‘religious’ people.

Verse 21: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven...” It’s not because you can be ‘religious.’ It’s not because you can say the name *Lord* or even say *Lord, Lord*.

Here’s what’s going to get you into the Kingdom of Heaven: ***...but the one who is doing the will of My Father, Who is in heaven***” (v 21). *Doing* means to be practicing as ***a way of life***; you are doing the will of the Father in heaven.

What about those who are ‘religious’? Verse 22: “Many will say to Me in that day...” ***In the day of judgment!*** You can just name off whomever you want to name off. You can turn on the television station—if you have Trinity Broadcasting in your area—and you can just go right down the line of all the ‘religionists’; put their name in there. Oh, they are doing good works. Oh, they’re doing wonderful things. They are supposedly healing people,

supposedly casting out demons and all of that sort of thing. But ***that doesn’t mean that they are from God!***

Verse 22: “Many will say to Me in that day ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name?....’”

- Didn’t I give many inspiring sermons in Your name, Lord?
- Didn’t I foretell events to happen in Your name, Lord?
- I was doing Your work, Lord!
- I was a very ‘religious’ person!
- I had the Bible!

“...And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name?....” (v 22).

- We’ve cast out thousands of demons!
- We had rallies and campaigns everywhere!
- They came by the hundreds, by the thousands, they fell over on their backs and they spoke in tongues!

“...And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?” (v 22).

- Lord, we built hospitals and we had clinics and we helped the poor and we helped the sick!
- We did all these things!
- Lord, we had a *pure and undefiled* ‘religion’—just like Job!

Verse 23: “And then I [Jesus] will confess to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.’” What is the greatest iniquity that can be worked, brethren? ***To make a ‘religion’ out of the way of God!*** You think on that. Maybe you might think that’s a strong statement, but that’s just the way it is.

Verse 24: “Therefore... [He tells how you do it rightly] ...everyone who hears these words of Mine and practices them, I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock... [that Rock was Christ] ...and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not practice them...(vs 24-26).

You may take part of them and make a ‘religion’ out of it. You may even use the name of the Lord, but ***you are not built upon Christ***. Many will appropriate the name of Christ. Many will say they have a ‘Christian religion,’ but that doesn’t make them Christians in deed before God.

“...shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand” (v 26).

When we had the rains in 1998 in California, we had 230% the normal rain. We have some of these riverbeds where they hardly have any water running in them most of the year. Only when we get some rain in the winter do they have any water in them. These rivers became raging torrents. Right out about three miles from our place, there is a bridge that crosses over the river, and just down from the bridge the river came in a bend. There was 800-feet of land, which was sand, and they built a house right on the sand. The floods came and the wind blew and it beat upon the bank of the river. It took away all 800-feet of sand and a brand new house, without escrow not having closed yet, fell and collapsed. It was a good house, a wonderful house, brand new, not even lived in. But it wasn't built in the right place.

If you are not built on Christ, it's going to fall! Christ says, “...and great was the fall of it” (v 27). He's saying these great self-important men, who applied themselves to a 'religion' called *Christian*, are going to fall. They are not going to be in the Kingdom of God.

Now let's look and see something here that's important for us to understand concerning *God's way*. We've seen this is *man's way*. It says in Proverbs that 'there is a way which seems right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.' We need to understand that in relationship to what we are doing. There is on the other hand *the way of God*. The way of man is very broad in the way it's doing, where it's going and how it's headed in all of its various forms of 'religion' and government, *but it's all coming to an end*. We're living in the end-time when it is going to collapse.

Now, let's look and see that God's way is called ***a way***. Let's understand that:

- God's way is *perfect*
- God's way is *righteous*
- God's way is not a 'religion'
- God's way is a *way of life*

Psalm 18:30: “As for God, His way is perfect...” If Christ is *the Way* and He is perfect, and if He is *the Truth* and *the Life*, which He is, and *God's way* is perfect; why would you want to pollute it and make it a 'religion'? ***Think on that!***

“...the Word of the LORD is tried. He is a shield to all those who take refuge in Him, for who is God besides the LORD? Or, who is a Rock except our God?” (vs 30-31). We are talking about the same thing in Matt. 7.

Now, Psalm 25:8 talks about God and *His way*: “Good and upright is the LORD; therefore, will He teach sinners in ***the way***.”

Verse 4: “Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me ***Your*** paths. Lead me in ***Your*** Truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You do I wait all the day long” (vs 4-5) You see how totally different this is.

- He's going to *teach* us
- He's going to *lead* us
- He's going to *bring* us in ***the way*** that is right

Let's see some Proverbs and then we'll see in the New Testament how it is called ***the way***—the way we are to live and conduct our lives. Notice what the Holy Spirit does here:

Proverbs 8:20: “I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice.” It says that ‘as many as are led by the Spirit of God ***they*** are the children of God.’ And if any have not the Spirit of Christ, ‘he is not none of His’ (Rom. 8). That's what happens with a lot of these ‘religious’ people. They look good, they sound good, but they don't have the Spirit of Christ; they are ‘religious.’ We need to let the Holy Spirit lead us in the way of righteous. Let God, *through His grace and love*, impute His righteousness to us. That way we're not going to be having a ‘religion.’

Proverbs 9:6 about the *way of God*: “Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the ***way of understanding***.” God's way is a ***way of life***; it is a ***way of understanding***.

Proverbs 10:17: “He who keeps instruction is in ***the way*** of life... [There it is again. It is ***the way***.] ...but he that refuses reproof goes astray.” You can take what I have to say anyway you want, but if it is the Truth and the Word of God, well, that's the way it is.

Nowhere do you find the words together: ‘Christian religion.’ ***Nowhere*** do you find that God loves ‘religion.’ What you find is that *God's way* is a ***way of life; a way to live!***

Acts 16:17: “She followed Paul and us *and* cried out, saying, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, and are preaching to us *the way* of salvation.’” Not a religion, but a ***way***. It's called ***the way of salvation***.

Acts 18:24: “Now, a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man who was skilled in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. He had been instructed in ***the way of the Lord***... [not in ‘religion’] ...and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John” (vs 24-25). You know the rest of the story, they came and taught him even more perfectly.

Verse 26: “And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And after hearing him, Aquila and Priscilla took him and expounded the way of God to him more perfectly. So, it is *a way*.”

Acts 19:8: “Then he [Paul] entered into the synagogue *and* spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God.” He went right into the midst of the lion’s den as it were, right into the synagogue where they had all their ‘religious’ folderol and things that they followed. A ‘religion’ has everything prescribed: you must do this and do that and do the other thing. Paul was in there speaking concerning the things of the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ.

Verse 9: “But when some were hardened and refused to believe, speaking evil of the way before the multitude, he departed from them *and* separated the disciples; *and* he disputed *these things* daily in the school of a certain Tyrannus.

What Paul did is he got away from the ‘religious’ people. He came and witnessed to them so that they would have some understanding of what they needed to do and where they needed to go. But he separated from them. Why stick around for all the ‘religious’ argument and everything that goes on that they have and what they do?

It’s the same way with the Church of God. God doesn’t want to have all kinds of ‘religious’ folderol and fighting and bickering and so forth. There’s one man that is a self-appointed teacher and he said, ‘Well, if you pray and ask God for something and He doesn’t answer, and you pray the second time and He doesn’t answer, then God’s answer is *no*. So you don’t pray anymore.’ Well, Christ gave the parable of the widow woman, that you keep coming to God and you keep asking and you keep coming to God. To say that you are limited to pray twice for something, spare me!

Christ is praying for us everyday. He is there as our Intercessor. He is there to help us and to uplift us. What if Christ only prayed for us twice in our entire lifetime and then gave up on us? You see where that kind of thing goes. This man does have a ‘religion’ and he does sound very convincing, but he is not sent from God, because he is not teaching the true *way of God*.

Verse 23: “And at that time it came to pass *that there was* no small tumult about **the way**”—*the way of God!* We’ll go through and see that *God’s way* is *the way*.

This is where Paul is explaining about how he was called, Acts 22:1: “‘Men, brethren and fathers, hear now my defense to you.’ And when

they heard him speak to them in the Hebrew language, they kept the more silent; and he said, ‘I am a man *who is* indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel...” (vs 1-3). He was very ‘religious’ and Gamaliel was one of the leading ‘religious’ teachers of the time.

“...having been instructed according to *the* exactness of the law of our fathers, being a zealot for God, even as you all are this day; *and* I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering up to prisons both men and women, as also the high priest and all the elderhood bear witness to me; from whom I received letters to the brethren, *and* went to Damascus to bring bound to Jerusalem those who were there also, in order that they might be punished” (vs 1-5).

Of course, he’s implying of the way that he was persecuting them. That’s what Paul was doing, persecuting *the way*.

Let’s see what God has called us to do. Let’s see that God has called us to Godliness. This is not a ‘religious experience,’ but this is truly something based upon living by every Word of God. This is what God wants with *His way*:

- God wants a *converted heart!*
- God wants a *converted mind!*
- God wants His Spirit, His love, His faith, His hope *to grow in you!*
- God wants you to *grow in grace and knowledge!*

This is what God will do, Hebrews 10:16: “‘This *is* the covenant that I will establish with them after those days,’ says *the* Lord: ‘I will give My laws **into their hearts**, and **I will inscribe them in their minds**.’” That is anything but *exterior*; *that is deep into your very being!* That’s why God hates ‘religion,’ because ‘religion’ stops this from coming into being a deep conversion.

Verse 17: “And their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again.” That means no more, *forever*. That’s what God wants. He wants this coupled with worshipping Him in Spirit and in Truth. Then you develop the correct Godliness as being led by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let’s see how this works. In the book of 1-Timothy Paul talks an awful lot about Godliness, because that’s what he wanted Timothy to do and to teach; *not ‘a religion.’* This word *Godliness* means *the inward kind of worshipping in Spirit and in Truth*.

1-Timothy 2:1: “I exhort, therefore, first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and*

thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men; for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all Godliness and respectability” (vs 1-2).

Godliness means that *you begin taking on the character of God*. You have the inner worship of God in Spirit and Truth. Whereas, ‘religion’ is:

- the *outward* form
- a *ritual*
- a *tradition*
- a standard set *by men*

—which they think is good and will then cause God to bless you because of your ‘religious goodness.’ **NO!** That’s not what God wants. That is not Godliness! Godliness is entirely different.

1-Timothy 3:16: “And undeniably, great is the mystery of Godliness...” The *mystery religion* of Babylon is a *mystery* ‘religion,’ but the mystery of Godliness is that *you can become the son or daughter of God!* He explains it:

“...God was manifested in *the flesh*...” (v 16). That has to do with the Godliness that Christ was able to bring when He came; that God actually came and became a human being so that He could be the perfect sacrifice for all those that He calls. God personally imputes that to you.

“...was justified in *the Spirit*, was seen by angels, was proclaimed among *the Gentiles*, was believed on in *the world*, was received up in glory” (v 16).

Let’s see what Paul’s admonition to Timothy was, what he should do. 1-Timothy 4:6: “If you are teaching these things... [all the teachings that he has through all the writings here] ...to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, being nourished by the words of the faith and of the good doctrines that you have closely followed”—a ‘good religion.’ **NO!** It’s not there! ‘Religion’ does not enter into it.

Verse 7: “But refuse profane and old wives’ fables; rather, exercise yourself unto **Godliness**.” Developing the character and the mind of Christ.

Verse 8: “For physical exercise is profitable for a short time; but Godliness is profitable for everything, having *the* promise of life—of the *life* that now *is*, and of the *life* that *is* coming.” He was telling Timothy—writing and instructing him—to develop the kind of *inward* Godliness, which *reflects the character of God* in his life.

1-Timothy 6:3: “If anyone teaches any different doctrine, and does not adhere to sound words, *even those* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine *that is* according to **Godliness**... [here’s the

‘religious’ person]: ...he is proud and knows nothing. Rather, he has a morbid attraction to questions and disputes over words, from which come envy, arguments, blasphemy, wicked suspicions, vain reasonings of men who have been corrupted in *their* minds and *are* destitute of the Truth—*men* who believe that gain is Godliness.... [and it’s not] ...From such withdraw *yourself*. But Godliness with contentment is great gain” (vs 3-6).

That’s what Paul was teaching here, the true *inward* Godliness. Here’s the charge that he gave Timothy. Again, all the way through 1-Timothy, he is talking about *Godliness*.

Verse 11: “But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, Godliness, faith, love, endurance *and* meekness. Fight the good fight of the faith! Take hold of eternal life to which you were also called, and did profess a good profession in the presence of many witnesses” (vs 11-12). That’s what he told him to do; not to develop *a* ‘religion,’ not to have *a form* of Godliness, but to truly have deep down Godliness *inside*.

Let’s see that the Apostle Peter wrote about this, too, concerning the kind of Godliness that we need to have, which comes from God through the Holy Spirit of God. You can’t create this with a ‘religion.’ You can’t do it with a standard that men set up. Any organization that does may prosper for a while, it may last quite a while, but sooner or later is going to come to an end.

Let’s see what God has called us to, 2-Peter 1:2: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in *the* knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as His Divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life an **Godliness**...” (vs 2-3).

Notice that ‘religion’ is absent in every one of these things. James wrote to the 12 tribes of Israel, wrote to carnal unconverted people. Yes, he called them *brethren*, but that doesn’t mean that they were brethren in the sense that they were brethren in the Church. That is just brethren in the sense that Jews call all Jews *brethren*—that’s all.

It’s Godliness, not ‘religion.’ You can’t take those two verses and say, ‘Yes, let’s have *pure and undefiled* ‘religion’ before God.’ What if you became just like Job in the letter? You would still have to repent sooner or later, *because ‘religion’ didn’t save Job*. ‘Religion’ isn’t going to save anyone. As a matter of fact, that’s why **God hates ‘religion,’** because it takes the name of God and creates its own version of what God wants and that’s not what God intended.

Verse 3: “According as His Divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by *His own* glory and virtue.” Then he

gives all the steps whereby you may grow in all the characteristics of Godliness:

Verse 4: “Through which He has given to us the greatest and *most* precious promises, that through these you may become partakers of *the* Divine nature...” We are not talking about a ‘religion’ so you can be a better person today. We’re talking about that *you receive of the nature of God, and you receive of the mind of Christ*. That is tremendous that we receive of the Divine nature!

“...having escaped the corruption *that is in the world through lust*” (v 4).

Then he shows what we are to be diligently doing. The Apostle Peter wrote this just before he was ready to die. He was urgent with the brethren that they understood what they needed to do. Because, who would know what they would do after he dies. Paul said, ***‘I know that after I die that many men are going to rise up and tear apart the Church of God, and many wolves will enter in and others will rise up taking disciples after themselves.’*** Brethren, if that is not the state of the Church today, I don’t know what is. We have all of this with ‘religion’ going on.

This is what we are to do, v 5: “And for this very reason also, having applied all diligence besides ... [you put your whole life to this, not a ‘religion,’ but *your whole life!*] ...add to your faith, virtue... [Godly character] ...and to virtue, knowledge.” When you have Godly character and you study the Word of God and you grow in the grace and knowledge of God then the Word of God becomes living. The Word of God really opens up to you for understanding. ***It leads you and guides you and is written in your heart and in your mind.*** That’s what God wants to happen.

“And to knowledge, self-control...” (v 6)—temperance.

- self-control comes from the Holy Spirit
- self-control comes from knowledge
- self-control comes from understanding

“...and to self-control, endurance...” (v 6)—patience—that you ‘hope all things, you endure all things and love never fails.’

“...and to endurance, **Godliness**” (v 6). These things must be built. The character of Christ must be *built in you*. You are to have the Spirit of God in you; that Christ has created in you.

Verse 7: “And to Godliness, brotherly love; and to brotherly love, the **love of God**.” Finally, *the love of God!* That’s the whole progression of how things are and how God wants it to be.

Let’s see how God is **creating Christ in us**. That’s the whole purpose of why God has called us. He has called us to be converted.

Ephesians 4:22: “That concerning your former conduct, you put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts.” Did Paul have to do that? *Yes, he did!* He had to put out Judaism. He had to put out his ‘religion.’ He had to forsake everything. He didn’t come back and try to recreate it again. *No! He forsook it!*

Verse 23: “And that you be renewed **in the spirit of your mind**; and that you put on the new man, which according to God is created in righteousness and Holiness of the Truth” (vs 23-24). **True Holiness**; Holiness is like Godliness, created in true Holiness. Then it tells you what to do with this.

It’s very important for us to understand that by grace we are saved, Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace you have been saved through faith... [not ‘religion’—**faith!** Not a *false* faith—**true faith!**] ...and this *especially* is not of your own selves...” It doesn’t come from within your being up to God. That’s what ‘religion’ is: **from the self outward**.

Verse 9: “Not of works, so that no one may boast. For **we are His workmanship**...” (vs 9-10). God is **creating in you** that you can be a son or daughter of God.

“...created in Christ Jesus unto *the good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them*” (v 10). Which is *the Way!* ‘I am *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*.’ God’s way is a way. It is not just something that is a ‘religion.’ Let’s hope we understand that.

Let’s see what Paul did with *his* ‘religion.’ Let’s see what we need to do with *our* ‘religion’ and what we need to replace it with.

Philippians 3:4: “Though I might also have *reason to trust in the flesh*. If any other thinks he has *cause to trust in the flesh*, I *have* much more: Circumcised on *the* eighth day; of *the* race of Israel, from *the* tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; with respect to law, a Pharisee; with respect to zeal, persecuting the Church; with respect to righteousness that *is* in law, blameless” (vs 4-6). **Pure and undefiled** ‘religion’—that’s what Paul had—**blameless!**

Verse 7: “Yet, the things that were gain to me, these things I have counted *as* loss for the sake of Christ. But then truly, I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count *them* as dung; that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is*... [religion] ... *derived* from law, but that *righteousness* which *is* by *the* faith of Christ, the righteousness of God *that is* based on faith; that I may know Him...” (vs 7-10).

This is the whole purpose of our being called, *that we might know Jesus Christ and God the Father*.

Verse 10: “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection...” Just think what that’s going to be like when Christ calls us out of the grave and we are raised from ignominy to glory; we are raised from dust to spirit and given a glorious spirit body and mind, having the very character and nature of God *for all eternity*. This is what we are dealing with. We’re not dealing with a ‘religion,’ with the *outside* ritual—NO!

“...and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead; not as though I have already received, or have already been perfected; but I am striving, so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained; but *this* one thing *I do*—forgetting the things that are behind...” (vs 10-13).

Forgetting the ‘religion,’ and forgetting all those things that Paul did, which were contrary to God; count them but dung, put them behind me.

“...and reaching forth to the things that are ahead, I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. So then, let as many as *be* perfect be of this mind...” (vs 13-15). Again, it’s Godliness *in the mind*. It is not perfection in a ‘religion,’ pure and undefiled exteriorly.

“...And if *in* anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal even this to you” (v 15).

Philippians 1:27—the ultimate that God wants us to be: “Only conduct yourselves worthily of the Gospel of Christ... [He didn’t say ‘your religion.’ ***Your conduct!***] ...so that whether I come and see you, or am absent, I may hear the reports about you; that ***you are standing fast in one spirit***, striving together with one soul for the faith of the Gospel.”

This is where all the brethren in the Church of God need to start focusing. We need to come above all of the stupid doctrinal things and every ‘wind of doctrine’ coming along with the slight and cunning of men.

Listen, brethren, I want to tell you something: ***If you really don’t begin to know and understand your Bible***, you need to ask yourself: ***Will you be in the resurrection?*** You can learn as much as you can. If you have life in you and you are learning and growing and overcoming, that’s what counts. God will add to you knowledge, but you need to be applying yourself to *know* the Word of God.

- that you can *think* with the Word of God
- you can *understand* the Word of God
- you can *live* with the Word of God

That’s what God wants!

Can we all start coming with one spirit and one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, the true faith of Christ. Not be fighting over whether we are a ‘religion’ or not. Of course, we are *not* a ‘religion!’ The world can look at us and they can claim that we’re ‘religious,’ but ***who cares what the world thinks about us!*** Sooner or later they are going to take their ‘religion’ and kill us anyway.

Are we seeking to please men or seeking to please God? *If we are seeking to please God and Christ is in us, then we will be in the Kingdom of God*, no question about it.

Verse 28: “and not being intimidated in any way by those who oppose *the Gospel*; which to them is a demonstration of destruction, but to you of salvation, and this from God; because it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His name’s sake” (vs 28-29). There are things we’re going to have to suffer and go through and that’s just the way it is.

Verse 30: “Experiencing the same conflict that you saw in me, and now hear of concerning me.”

Here was the Apostle Paul, one of the most prolific writers of God: 14 epistles in the New Testament. Brethren, that’s over half of all the books in the New Testament. Do you understand that? There are 27 books in the New Testament and Paul wrote a little over half of them. That has to tell you something about the Apostle Paul:

- what he suffered
- what he went through
- what he did
- how dedicated he was

—this is our example. That’s why God inspired these epistles to be here, to encourage us in really growing in grace and knowledge and faith and love and Truth. That’s what God wants us to be.

Philippians 2:1: “Now then, if *there be* any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of *the* Spirit, if any *deep* inner affections and compassions.” In other words, he’s saying, ‘If there’s going to be any end result of what we are doing here, in the *way of God* and what I am teaching you.’

Verse 2: “Fulfill my joy, that you be of the same mind...” (vs 1-2). How can we be like-

mind? *Not fighting and striving and bickering and sending out inflammatory papers here and there!*

I kind of feel foolish doing this whole thing, having to stand up and defend myself and Bob Hunnicutt. But if you can't take the Truth, if you can't take the heat, either learn to live in the kitchen and take the heat with the Word of God, or as the old saying goes: 'if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen.'

That's not to try and drive people away. That's not trying to say that God doesn't want you, but you have to come to God on ***His terms, not yours! No one is going to tell God or Christ what to do or how to do it!*** We go to God and ***He tells us*** what to do and how to do it and when to do it. And we say, 'Yes Lord, with all our heart, we will.' That's what God wants us to do. That's what Paul is talking about here.

"...having the same love... [the very love of Christ, the very love of God] ...being joined together in soul..." (v 2). ***One mind!*** This means *minding the one thing!* What is the one thing that God wants us to mind? ***It is the Kingdom of God!***

"...minding the one thing. *Let nothing be done through contention or vainglory...*" (vs 2-3). That's where 'religion' leads to. Always! ***Always! Always!***

"...but in humility, each esteeming the others above himself.... [because God has called each one of the saints] ...Let each one look not *only* after his own things, but *let* each one also *consider* the things of others. **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus**" (vs 3-5). That, brethren, is not a 'religion.' ***That is deep and profound conversion:***

- with the love of God
- with the Truth of God
- with Christ in you, the hope of glory

This is what we need to come to.

Verse 6: "Who, although He existed in *the* form of God... [that's what *being* means] ...did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, *and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a servant" (vs 6-7).

Christ did not come to establish a 'religion.' ***Christ came to establish the way of God the Father.*** Christ did not come so we could build church buildings and have fancy clothes and look 'religious' and do little rituals on the outside.

- ***He came because He wants your heart!***
- ***He came because He wants you to be totally dedicated to Him, to love Him!***

He's totally dedicated to you—isn't He?

- that He did these things
- that He emptied Himself of being God to come down here

Verse 8: "And being found in *the* manner of man, He humbled Himself..." The great God Who created everything that there is, humbled Himself to be born of the virgin Mary and to live a life. Yes, *the 'religious' hypocrites* of His time killed Him. That's why God hates 'religion'; they killed His Son.

"...and became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross. Therefore, God has also highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him a name, which *is* above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *beings* in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord to *the* glory of God *the* Father. So then, my beloved..." (vs 8-12).

That's what it needs to be with the brethren, that we all love one another. We're all beloved to God the Father and Jesus Christ and each other.

"...even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only... [because that's what 'religion' is, an *outward* show] ...but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God Who works in you both to will... [to give you the desire] ...and ***to do...*** [to practice] ...according to *His* good pleasure. Do all things without complaints and disputes; so that you may be blameless and without offense, innocent children of God in *the* midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as lights in *the* world, holding forth the Word of Life..." (vs 12-16).

The *Way of God*, the *Truth of God*! Always remember that Jesus said, 'I am ***the Way, the Truth and the Life.***' and 'Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus.'

"...that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, nor labored in vain" (v 16).

Brethren, ***let's not have 'religion.'*** Let's not try and make a 'religious' thing out of what God has given us. ***He's called us with the greatest calling ever. God has given us a great and marvelous thing, and that's why God hates 'religion.'***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) James 1:26-27
- 2) Colossians 2:18-21, 6-8
- 3) 2 Timothy 3:1-3, 5
- 4) Job 40:8-14
- 5) Job 42:1-6
- 6) Ephesians 1:16-19
- 7) John 14:6, 15, 23
- 8) John 10:1-5, 7
- 9) John 14:6
- 10) John 10:8-14
- 11) Matthew 7:13-27
- 12) Psalm 18:30-31
- 13) Psalm 25:8, 4-5
- 14) Proverbs 8:20
- 15) Proverbs 9:6
- 16) Proverbs 10:17
- 17) Acts 16:17
- 18) Acts 18:24-26
- 19) Acts 19:8-9, 23
- 20) Acts 22:1-5
- 21) Hebrews 10:16-17
- 22) 1 Timothy 2:1-2
- 23) 1 Timothy 3:16
- 24) 1 Timothy 4:6-8
- 25) 1 Timothy 6:3-6, 11-12
- 26) 2 Peter 1:2-7
- 27) Ephesians 4:22-24
- 28) Ephesians 2:8-10
- 29) Philippians 3:4-15
- 30) Philippians 1:27-30
- 31) Philippians 2:1-16

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Isaiah 1
- Romans 8

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Why God Hates Religion III

(Who Started *Religion*?)

Fred R. Coulter

- What is ‘religion’ *really* in the first place?
- How did it get started?
- How is it that God does not want a ‘religion,’ yet, most people believe that God wants a ‘religion’?

Today you can turn on the television, and they have all of the so-called ‘religious’ programs all on one channel. What they’ve effectively done with that is set ‘religion’ outside of living, completely censored it. On all the other television shows and movies, religionists are made—especially the Protestants—to be silly, Bible-thumping, fire-breathing, sweating, adulterating preachers. People are turned off at ‘religion.’

There is a good reason why you ought to be turned off at ‘religion.’ When you really understand who started it then you’ll understand why God *hates* ‘religion.’

- Where and when did ‘religion’ start?
- Who started it?
- On what basis was it started?
- How did it begin?
- Why is it perpetuated today to where most of the ‘religions’ today are so similar that they are all planning to get together now in a united ‘religion’?

united ‘religions’ of the world

- How did it get started?

Let’s look at it this way—I’ll tell you what ‘religion’ is: **a substitute for God’s way!** In almost all cases it has a substitute god, and it began with Satan the devil.

- he was the one who invented ‘religion’
- he is the one who designed ‘religion’ in his rebellion
- he wasn’t satisfied with being close to God, being the covering cherub
- he wasn’t satisfied with walking up and down in the stones of fire that depicts God’s throne
- he wasn’t satisfied with being the covering cherub, created in beauty and splendor

No! Satan wanted to be God.

Ezekiel 28:12: “Son of man, lift up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “You seal up the measure of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty... [we know that this is not talking about any man, because]: ...You have been in Eden the garden of God...”’” (vs 12-13).

When you read the account in Gen. 3, what do you find? *You find God, Adam, Eve, and the serpent* who was already Satan the devil at that point. No other person ever got into the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned. They were expelled from the Garden of Eden, because God put cherubim there with flaming swords to turn the way so no one could go into the garden. We know that where it says, ‘You have been in Eden the Garden of God,’ this is talking about the serpent. It could be no other one. This is also telling us that Satan is the one who is behind the prince of Tyre.

Verse 2 says: “Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre...” How did he graduate from being a prince to king? *The king of Tyre was Satan the devil who was the power behind the prince of Tyre!* That’s how that came to be.

Verse 13: “...in you in the day that you were created. You *were* the anointed cherub that covers, and I set you so; you were upon the Holy mountain of God...” (vs 13-14). That means right there where God has His throne. And as the covering cherub he would cover the throne of God.

“...you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You *were* perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, **until iniquity was found in you**” (vs 14-15).

This tells us that ‘religion’ was started *because of iniquity or sin*. We’ll show you every time that Israel apostatized from God, they got into ‘religion’ and *it was sin—every single time!* “...until iniquity was found in you.” It can’t be said of men, that we are perfect. The only one it was ever said of was Job, and it was found out that he was only perfect in the letter. *He was not perfect in the spirit!*

Verse 16: “By the multitude of your merchandise they have filled your midst *with* violence, and you have sinned...” That is a key of every ‘religion’ today. They merchandize and they kill. When we read about Babylon the Great, God lays the death of all human beings right on her. So, we need to understand what the whole situation is with ‘religion.’

“...Therefore, I will cast you as profane from the mountain of God...” (v 16). ‘Religion’ is really profane, but they try and make it appear Holy. And being a substitute for God, what it is, it is a substitute for *God’s way* so that people can ‘feel good’ and ‘holy’ about what they are doing. But it isn’t Holy with God, because it’s already a *rejection*

of God to begin with, because the author of 'religion' has rejected God; that is Satan the devil.

"...and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from among the stones of fire.... [get him out] ...Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness. I will cast you to the ground; I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you" (vs 16-17). God's ultimate judgment on Satan the devil is going to happen. We cover that on the Day of Atonement, so be sure and get any sermon on the Day of Atonement.

Verse 18: "By the multitude of your iniquities, by the unrighteousness of your trade, you have profaned your **sanctuaries**..." How was it that there were sanctuaries and they were corrupted? They had sanctuaries before they were corrupted, so in other words, there was some kind of worship of God with the angels where there were sanctuaries.

They became corrupted because Satan was merchandizing. I don't know what he told the angels that fell with him, but Rev. 12 says 'a third of the angels fell' with him.

- I don't know what Satan offered them
- I don't know what he promised them
- I don't know what he did to deceive them

But I do know that the first thing that he did was to *get their eyes off of the fact that God was God*.

When you get your eyes and mind off the facts and you get yourself into feelings and you get yourself into suppositions, then you get yourself into *self-deceiving*. That's exactly what happened with Satan. He thought he was as good as God and was going to be like God. Isa. 14 tells us of how he wanted to exalt himself and how he fell. Jesus said, 'I saw Satan fall from heaven.' That had to be before the creation of Adam and Eve and before the recreation of the Earth as we know it (Gen. 1).

Isaiah 14:12: "How you are fallen from the heavens, O shining star, son of the morning!...." His mission originally was to be a 'light bringer' for the angels of God, maybe even for the creation of human beings. But now instead of being a light bringer with the light of God, he's a light bringer *bringing darkness*. Jesus said, 'If the light in you is darkness, behold how great the darkness.' Why? *Because you are all cut off from God!*

Verse 13: "For you have said in your heart... [God knows the heart, so it wasn't just a slip up. It wasn't just a misunderstanding or something like that. **He said in his heart**]: ...'I will ascend *into* the heavens... [showing that the angels were originally on the earth] ...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God..." (vs 12-13). The stars of

God are the angels—to exalt himself above the angels—and he got one third to follow him in that exaltation.

"...I will also sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.... [but he was cast out] ...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High" (vs 13-14).

Stop and think for a minute: if there is God, which there is, and if He is the Most High, which He is, then ***no one else, no other being can be like the Most High!*** It's an impossibility! If it is not an impossibility, then the Most High God is not the Most High God. *That's why Satan was cast down!*

Verse 15: "Yet, you shall be brought down to the grave, to the sides of the pit." That's how 'religion' got started.

Now let's see what Satan wanted to do with the same thing that he did with the angels. Let's look here a little bit about Satan's thinking and his reasoning. We will see that he always appeals to emotions. *Emotions* are used to divert you from the facts. Satan always does that. *Religion* diverts you from the facts. Let me give you an example:

You walk up to a Protestant minister and you tell him, 'Look, I keep the Sabbath and it's the seventh day of the week and there's nowhere in the Bible that authorizes Sunday.' He will give you every reason, *no facts*:

- I think
- I feel
- we do
- we practice
- it is tradition

That way, if you get into that discussion with Satan, then you start finding out where you ***agree***. Or better still, where your carnal mind *disagrees with God*, because 'religion' ***is a substitute for God's way*** and ***Satan is a substitute for God!***

Genesis 3:1: "Now the serpent was more cunning than any creature of the field, which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Is it true that God has said... [he starts out with a lie] ..."You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?"'.... [sometimes you get trapped like Eve; she wanted to correct him] ...And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may freely eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the middle of the garden, God has *indeed* said, "You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die"'" (vs 1-3). She either added a little bit more to the instruction or she was instructed and *knew* not to take it, not to touch it, not to eat it. ***That was the fact!*** Satan comes along and gets you *away from the facts*, to get you into 'religion.'

Verse 4: “And the serpent said to the woman, ‘In dying, you shall not surely die!... [now there’s a conflict] ... For God knows that in the day you eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like God, deciding good and evil’” (vs 4-5). Well, you know the rest of the story:

They ate of the fruit, their eyes were opened and that’s when their nature was changed; they had a sinful nature. Then God judged them, gave the sentence of death, so that’s how the *law of sin and death* entered into human life. It entered in because they believed in ‘religion’ rather than God. What did God have to do? *God had to remove them out of the Garden of Eden*. So, there you have it!

Let’s see who carried it on, because it’s talked about in Jude 6: “And the angels who did not keep their own original domain, but deserted their habitation, He [Christ] is holding in eternal bonds under darkness unto the judgment of *the* Great Day. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah... (vs 6-7), what happened to them and all the things that they did. They are an example of suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Verse 8: “In the same way also, these dreamers of *filthy dreams* are defiling *the* flesh...” That is the ‘religionists’ who crept in. Certain men have crept in unawares. Ungodly men ordained to this condemnation of old. How old is it? *It goes back to Satan the devil!*

“...and are declaring as invalid *the* lordship of God, and are blaspheming *the* Divine powers. But Michael the archangel, when he was personally taking issue with the devil, disputing about the body of Moses, did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment against *him*, but said, ‘The Lord Himself rebuke you!’ As for these, whatever things they do not understand, they blaspheme... [that’s what Satan always does] ... but whatever things they understand by instinct, as irrational brute beasts, they are corrupting themselves in these things” (vs 8-10).

That’s what happens always in every ‘religion’; they end up corrupting themselves.

Verse 11: “Woe to them! For they have walked in the way of Cain; and for gain, they have wholly given themselves up to Balaam’s delusion, and have perished in the rebellion of Korah.” In his rebellion, what did Korah want to do? *He wanted to set up his own priesthood!* Every one of these things talk about ‘religion’ that takes you away from God.

The way of Cain is very profound. I want you to make sure that you get this book called *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop. This proves that papal worship is the worship of Nimrod, Semiramis, Horus and Satan. It all began with Cain. He is the

one who began it. He was not satisfied with coming to worship God *as God commanded*. Abel brought an offering and God accepted it; he brought it according to the command. But let’s see what Cain did with his offering. He brought something from the ground. If you bring something from the ground *according to the command of God*, He’ll accept it, but Cain didn’t bring it according to the command of God, so it wasn’t accepted.

Genesis 4:5: “But He did not have regard unto Cain and his offering. And Cain was extremely angry and **his countenance fell**.” Tyndale translates that ‘loured’; you could just see him *louring*. What was Cain trying to do with this? We need to think about it. If Abel was accepted because he obeyed God and he was a ‘preacher of righteousness,’ then Cain tried to worship God in a way that *God did not accept because it was sin*. Anytime you go against the commands of God it is sin. That’s what God said.

Verse 6: “And the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you so angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted?...’” (vs 6-7). Religion’ is a substitute so that people can *think* they can be accepted by God in a way different than God has commanded. That’s exactly what ‘religion’ is. That’s why nearly every ‘religion’ has

- *their own* rules
- *their own* regulations
- *their own* laws
- *their own* traditions
- *their own* festivals

And how many of them go to the Bible to say, ‘Let’s find out what the Word of God says and we’ll do that.’ Oh no, they go to the Bible and use this part and they go to the Bible and use that part, but they won’t take the thing as a whole. That’s exactly what Cain was doing here.

“...But if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. Its desire *is* for you... [the wages of sin is death] ...but you must rule over it!” (v 7). In other words, you can overcome sin.

What happened? *Cain killed Abel because Cain was jealous and he was angry* and he probably went around and said, ‘Why doesn’t God accept me? I did the best that I could.’ That’s just the way that ‘religion’ is. He was jealous and killed Abel. Then God decided not to execute the death penalty upon Cain, but sent him off into *the land of wandering*, or Nod, after He put a mark on him.

No one knows what the *mark of Cain* is. There have been many speculations. Some speculate that it was even a cross on his forehead. That may be

somewhat true, but we won't say that that's just a speculation. But:

- Do you think that Cain would admit that he was wrong? *No!*
- Do you think that he would admit that he was wrong in killing his brother? *No!*

He was justified in doing it, because God accepted 'him and not me!'

Man is justified in every thought of his own mind that what he's doing is right. Cain went out and he started his own civilization. What did that civilization lead to? *It led to the corruption of the earth*; so corrupt that God had to bring the Flood! Right after the Flood we have this event. We're going to find the one that carried on the *way of Cain* after the Flood is Nimrod and his wife Semiramis.

Genesis 10:8: "And Cush begat Nimrod. He began to be a mighty one in the earth." One of the stories is that he was so mighty—he was a giant—and was so strong and powerful that he went out and wrestled a bull to the ground, just twisted it's neck, took the head off and placed it on top of him, to show his power and his prowess. We'll see what that has to do with the golden calf later on. That is a symbol of the 'religions' of this world, a symbol of Nimrod.

Verse 9: "He was a mighty hunter against the LORD...." That doesn't mean that he was a mighty hunter with God's blessing. He was a mighty hunter *in place of God*, or placing himself between the people and God. That's what he did. He's the founder of the *way of Cain* on this side of the Flood.

"...He began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter against the LORD. Therefore, it is said, 'Like Nimrod—the mighty hunter against the LORD.' And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel..." (vs 8-10). Let's see what happened at Babel. Let's look at the rebellion of Nimrod. I know we can go back to these things and in these chapters we can pick out many different aspects of learning and understanding the Scriptures and so forth, but let's look and see in the aspect of 'religion' in its rebellion.

Genesis 11:1: "And the whole earth was of one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they traveled from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar. And they settled there. And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar" (vs 1-3).

This slime was actually asbestos. Right there in the area of Mesopotamia they had oil and tar oozing out of the ground. They actually made asbestos out of it so that they could make it

waterproof. They wanted to build this tower not only to make a name for themselves, but they didn't want to go to the places of their inheritance that God had designated that they should go to. They didn't want to be scattered. Well, God eventually scattered them by confounding their languages. In building this tower *they were in rebellion* against God. What do we have?

- *religion*
- *civil government*
- *rebellion against God*

And *religion and civil government* have been bedfellows from day one, and they are going to be again at the end.

You know the rest of the story: God went down and confounded their languages and scattered them into all the earth, then the three names of Nimrod, Semiramis and Horus were all changed. But all the names of the gods of the various pagan gods in all the nations of the world come right back to Nimrod, Semiramis and Horus (also known as Tamuz). This is one of the greatest books that has ever been done to document the history {*The Two Babylons*}, that that's how 'religion' got started this side of the Flood, right in Babylon.

- all the fables
- all of the lies
- all of the stories
- all of the false worship
- all of the control
- all of the merchandizing
- all of the fornication
- all of the murders
- all of the wars

lie right there. Satan the devil is the one who has inspired it. That's where 'religion' started.

Let's see what happens. When you have a 'religion' and you have a society based upon human philosophy, inspired by Satan the devil:

- that hates God
- that doesn't want God's rule
- that doesn't want God's Law
- that doesn't want the Spirit of God
- that doesn't want people to be in the Kingdom of God

Satan wants to kill and destroy and maim and make sure that everyone can't be there because he was kicked out.

Here's what happened, Romans 1:18: "Indeed, *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the Truth in unrighteousness.*" That's what they do.

Let me just say: ***Any of you who keep Sunday, you are holding the Truth of God in unrighteousness and you need to repent***, because you are following a ‘religion.’ You’re following a ***substitute for God’s Way and His Law and for God***. You think you’re worshipping God, but you’re not worshipping God. There are many that are going to say, ‘Lord, Lord, haven’t we done wonderful works? We cast out demons. Didn’t we do things in Your name? Didn’t we prophesy in Your name?’ And Christ is going to say, ‘*I never knew you, depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.*’ Because that’s exactly what it is, “...who suppress the Truth in unrighteousness.”

- Do you believe the Bible?
- Do you believe every Word of God?
- Are you willing to live by every Word of God?

Because that’s the way of God!

Whereas ‘religion’ says, ‘We’ll pick and choose. I don’t like that harsh one concerning the Sabbath. I think Sunday is just fine, because all of us good folks are sincere and how can you turn down all these good people. Let’s come to church on Sunday *or* I worship God every day.’ Well, you ought to, but when do you work if every day is holy to you?

You can’t make anything Holy! That’s exactly what ‘religion’ has done; put on collars upside down and backward and command to not marry. You read everything that the Catholics have there: confession, penance, rosary, idols, statues, and every ‘religion’ has those. Even the Muslims have their beads they do laps around. ***All ‘religion’ all a substitute for God!***

Verse 19: “Because that which may be known of God is manifest among them... [or to them; God left them with no excuse] ...for God has manifested *it* to them.... [God showed *His* Truth] ...for the invisible things of Him are perceived from *the* creation of *the* world, being understood by the things that were made—both His eternal power and Godhead—so that they are without excuse...” (vs 19-20).

- that means the pope
- that means the Dalai Lama
- that means Billy Graham
- that means Oral Roberts

and all of those of that ilk. They have the Bible, but:

- they won’t believe Him
- they won’t believe God
- they won’t keep the Word of God

No! *They’re without excuse!*

Verse 21: “Because when they knew God, they glorified *Him* not as God, neither were thankful; but they became vain in their own reasonings, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

So, they came up with myths to explain their gods. People say, ‘Ohhhh!’ But what it does, it appeals to carnal nature, because it will let you do the sin and let you not have to repent to God. You come and do some

- our fathers or hail Marys
- do laps around the beads
- pray to Allah five times a day
- sit and meditate yourself into oblivion as the Buddhists

Verse 22: “While professing themselves to be *the* wise ones... [Oh, yes, we have philosophy.] ...they became fools.” That’s what God thinks of every ‘religious’ leader in this world, because they’re all going the way of Cain, the way of Babylon the Great, following the mother of harlots and all the governments of the earth are with them. They are fools!

Verse 23: “And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into *the* likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed creatures, and creeping things. For this cause, God also abandoned them to uncleanness through the lusts of their hearts, to disgrace their own bodies between themselves... [that’s where it always ends up, right there!] ...Who exchanged the Truth of God for the lie; and they worshiped and served the created thing more than the One Who is Creator, Who is blessed into the ages. Amen” (vs 23-25).

I remember talking to a man and he told me, ‘Oh, you just got to go to the Sistine Chapel and see it. When I went there, I was just overwhelmed and tears came to my eyes.’ Well, I didn’t say anything to him because of the situation with other people around there, but if I had been alone, I’d have said, ‘That’s plain idolatry.’ If I went in there, I’d want to take a bazooka and start shooting down all these idols and start bombing out all of these paintings and things like that. All they do is glorify men and all they’re setting it up for is a great united ‘religion’ to come, *and it’s going to come!*

We find something very important here in Exo. 20. You may take this for granted; ‘Oh, there he goes to the Ten Commandments. We know the Ten Commandments.’ Well, I should hope you do. Do you know them by heart? Let’s read the first commandment, because this is profound.

Exodus 20:2: “*I am* the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods

before Me” (vs 2-3). You have to read the whole thing, not just “...You shall have no other gods before Me,” because it points you to the *right* God. What did He do? *He brought them out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage and all the ‘religion’ of Egypt*, which is the ‘religion’ of Nimrod, Semiramis, and Horus called Osiris and Isis. Then they had other names like Ra and so forth.

“...out of the house of bondage.... [their bondage was literally physical, but it was also spiritual] ...**You shall have no other gods before Me**” (vs 2-3). But you have to have that first part *first*, so that you know what God took us out of. Then He says not to make any graven image of any likeness of anything and so forth. After God got done speaking all these words, the people said, ‘Oh no, Moses, you talk to us; don’t let God speak to us lest we die!’

What is the first thing that the children of Israel wanted to do when they didn’t know where Moses was? *They wanted a substitute for God!* Even in the very presence of God they wanted a substitute.

Exodus 32:1: “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, then the people gathered themselves to Aaron...” It’s a thing everyone agreed to. Probably had feelings, ‘Well, I don’t know where he is. I have a suspicion. Did he fall in a volcanic hole up there? Maybe one of the gods got him.’

“...they said to him, ‘Up! Make us gods which shall go before us, for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him’” (v 1) This is the way that a politician does; he goes along with the people. Aaron should have said, ‘Look, God is up there, Moses is up there, have some faith. Now, you all get out of here and go home and pray.’ No, he didn’t. He said, ‘Bring your earrings and we’ll make the golden calf.’ So, they brought them.

Verse 4: “And he took *them* from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf. And they said, ‘These *are* your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.’ And when Aaron saw *the calf*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD’” (vs 4-5).

The one who was supposed to be the high priest, to bring the *way of God* to the people, was right there part and parcel in bringing the substitute ‘religion’ of the golden calves. That was the symbol of Nimrod with this bull’s head after he had ripped it off the bull and stuck it on top of his head to show his mighty power. So, they’re worshipping men; they’re worshipping idols. You know what happened there; you know the rest of the story. If it wasn’t for Moses pleading to God to save the people, God

would have exterminated them.

What God had to do is He removed Himself *outside* the camp. When they first started God was central to the camp, with the pillar of the cloud in the day and the pillar of fire at night; He was central. After that, the pillar of fire and cloud moved *outside* the camp and Moses set up the tent of the meeting out there for God to go to and all of the people had to rise up and stand and watch Moses go out and meet God. So, the moral of this story, and the lesson, is: ***If you want your ‘religion,’ God will let you have it!*** You’re going to chase Him away. God didn’t remove Himself totally away; He was still nearby.

Let’s see some of the commands that God gave the children of Israel, then we’ll see what they did. Why is it that people always want ‘religion’? *Because it makes them feel good!* They don’t want the commandments of God, which are the facts and the Truth to lead them. They want to go their own way and feel good about it, regardless. If God doesn’t come down and exterminate them immediately, they think, ‘Oh my, well this is fine. Let’s make this Holy. Oh, this statue is so beautiful. Look at how wonderful and it weeps.’ They are dumb idols!

Leviticus 18:1: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, “I *am* the LORD your God. As they do in the land of Egypt where you dwelt, you shall not do.... [everything, their ‘religion,’ their society, their dress] ...And you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Neither shall you walk in their ordinances’” (vs 1-3).

Why? *Because they’re all substitutes for God!* That is *their own* ‘religion’ worshipping Satan. What did Jesus tell the ‘religious’ leaders of Judaism in His day? *You are of your father the devil, and the deeds of your father you will do!* The devil was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the Truth. When he speaks a lie, he is a liar, for he is the father of it. They sought to kill Him because He condemned them for their actions and their wrong ‘religion,’ rather than falling down and repenting and say, ‘Ah, this is the Son of God. Forgive us.’ ***No!***

Verse 4: “You shall do My judgments and keep My ordinances, and walk in them. I *am* the LORD your God.” If you want an interesting study, go back and find out how many times God says, “...I am the LORD your God.” They didn’t believe it. They didn’t want to follow God. They wanted to follow their own way, their own ‘religion.’ Oh, they wanted God’s blessings, but they didn’t want to do it *God’s way*.

Verse 5: “And you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live in them. I *am* the LORD.” Then he gives all of the intimate sex laws that were violations that God said were gross abominable sins, which were done in Egypt, which were done in the land of Canaan and which are being brought back part and parcel into this society again today; because we have ‘religion’ and we don’t have the *way of God*—that’s why.

Verse 24: “Do not defile yourselves in any of these things, for in all these the nations, which I cast out before you, are defiled.... [that’s why they were going out, because of their sins] ...And the land is defiled. Therefore, I visit its wickedness against it, and the land itself vomits out those who live in it. You shall, therefore, keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations, *neither* the native, nor any stranger that lives among you; for the men of the land who *were* before you have done all these abominations, and the land is defiled. *You shall not do these* so that the land may not spew you out also when you defile it, as it spewed out the nations that *were* before you” (vs 24-28). They didn’t learn the lesson though, did they?

Deuteronomy 18:9, here’s what God said through Moses: “When you come to the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to do according to the abominations of those nations.”

Deuteronomy 12:29: “When the LORD your God shall cut off the nations before you, where you go to possess them, and you take their place and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself... [Watch out! Be on guard! It’s so easy to do.] ...that you do not become ensnared by following them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not ask about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods that I may also do likewise?’” (vs 29-30).

A specific command not to, but no, people have to have their ‘religion’—don’t they? And it’s even happened in the Church of God. Do you know why the Worldwide Church of God has been destroyed? *Because of:*

- religion
- people not wanting to follow God
- not wanting to keep His commandments
- not wanting to love and serve God from their hearts

Verse 31: “You shall not do so to the LORD your God, for every abomination to the LORD, which He hates, they have done to their gods; even their sons and their daughters they have burned in the fire to their gods. Whatsoever thing that I command you, be careful to do it. You

shall not add to it, nor take away from it” (vs 31-32). ***That is very clear!***

Deuteronomy 18:10 “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire... [even the kings of Israel did that] ...or that uses divination, or an observer of times...” There’s a command not to observe Christmas, right there!

God inspired Jeremiah to write: ‘Learn not the way of the heathen.’ Then explains about how they go out and cut a tree out of the forest and make a Christmas tree. And yet, thousands who were in the Church of God have gone back, just like the children of Israel, to ‘religion.’ They keep Christmas, Sunday, Easter and all of these holidays of the world, and say, ‘Oh my, isn’t this nice.’

If you’re one of them, *you better wake up! You better repent!* There are going to be those who won’t repent of their ‘religion’ and they’re going into the Lake of Fire, because they are idolaters.

Let’s talk about something concerning idols, *idols you make in your mind*. Every idea, every thought that is against God is an *idol in your mind*. Every practice and every deed that you do that is against God is an *idol in your hands*. You need to understand.

“...or a fortuneteller, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or one who seeks oracles from the dead. For all that do these things *are* an abomination to the LORD...” (vs 10-12). Walt Disney thinks they are just fine to teach all of our little children. Cartoons that kids watch are abominations.

- Do you want to feed your children’s minds on abominations?
- Do you want to teach them about witchcraft?
 - ✓through Disney?
 - ✓through tarot cards?
 - ✓through Ouija boards?
 - ✓through all of those games designed to destroy the mind of your children and make them commit idolatry?

They are not old enough to discern between good and evil. Think about it! Everything that God says is an abomination is a delight to Walt Disney.

“...And because of these abominations, the LORD your God drives them out from before you” (v 12). That’s why this nation is going to go down and go out, because we are turning into this same stupidity that they did.

They went into the ‘promised land.’ They finally conquered it, but they didn’t drive out all the people as they should have. We come over here to

the book of Judges and we find exactly what the children did. The first thing they did was ***find a substitute for God***. They found it in the Nimrod 'religion' of Baal and Ashteroth, because Baal is Nimrod and Ashteroth is Semiramis, Astarte or Isis, whichever name you want to put on it.

Judges 2:10: "And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers..." We are in a generational point here in the United States exactly the same way. We're in a generational point in the Church in exactly the same way. They have done exactly the same thing as the children of Israel did here.

"...And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD..." (v 10). They weren't keeping His commandments. They forgot God. They had all the blessings of God and they just let everything all slide together and it was so nice and it was so quaint, and God in His mercy didn't come and destroy them right away so they thought everything was fine.

"...nor even the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim. And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt. And they followed other gods, even the gods of the people who were around them, and bowed themselves to them, and provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD and served Baal and Ashteroth. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel..." (vs 10-14). *Yes, indeed!*

- God *is* God
- He *is* Creator
- He *is* Almighty
- He *is* Most High

'What are people doing down there giving My honor and glory to idols, to dumb stupid things'

- that can't talk
- that can't see
- that have no knowledge
- that can't think

Brethren, you need to understand this thing of 'religion' is profound. They never, ever learned the lesson—did they? *No!*

When the tribes of Israel split, the ten northern tribes, what was the first thing that was instituted? *The 'religion' of Egypt!* Solomon corrupted God's way (1-Kings 11). He had all these wives and concubines and made churches and incense altars for them and filled Jerusalem with the abominable temples of the false gods, and Jerusalem was the place where God put His name. Isn't that what always happens? Where God puts His name someone comes in:

- to pollute it
- to destroy it
- to twist it
- to turn it
- to corrupt it

And now you know what's wrong with the Church of God today.

People get all upset, because God condemns 'religion' and they blame me for condemning 'religion.' They blame me for condemning Job. Look, I didn't write the Bible! I didn't put it there. And because I read the words of God that condemn it, and I get hot behind the collar sometimes because I see all of this stupidity going on, and all of this in the name of God, and all this mealy mouth mush-mush, huggy-huggy, get-together; because of carnal men trying to do the ways of their own and force it upon God, ***you take it to God!*** If you have a problem with that, ***go repent to God*** or go start your own 'religion' and church, and then when God comes to judge you, ***then you tell Him!***

1-Kings 12:25: "And Jeroboam built Shechem on Mount Ephraim and lived on it, and went from there and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, 'Now, the kingdom may well return to the house of David! If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and return again to Rehoboam king of Judah.'" (vs 25-27).

Jeroboam didn't believe God. God said, 'If you'll obey Me, keep My commandments; follow Me, I will give you a dynasty just like I promised David.' He didn't believe God; He was afraid. That's what 'religion' says. ***If you believe in 'religion' you do not believe in God!*** You may believe in *a god*, but you don't ***believe God!***

Verse 28: "Then the king took counsel, and made..." They always do it by counsel. That's why God raises up one prophet, because if he loves God and serves Him and is independent from men, then he's not going to be corrupted. But a counsel will corrupt you nine times out of ten.

"...and made two calves of gold and said to them, 'It is too much for you...'" (v 28). Appealing to feelings. *'We're considering you. We're going to make it easy for you.'*

"...to go up to Jerusalem. Behold your gods, O, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' And he set the one in Bethel... [house of God] ...and he put the other in Dan" (vs 28-29). That was easy to do because it was already the idolatrous renegade Levites up there who had their

own Catholic ‘religion’ going in Dan. That was simple to do; they welcomed that.

Verse 30: “And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even to Dan. And he made houses *of worship* on the high places and made priests of the lowest of the people, who were not the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordered a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that *is* in Judah. And he offered upon the altar. So, he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places, which he had made. And he offered upon the altar, which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month, which he had devised out of his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel. And he offered upon the altar and burned incense.” (vs 30-33).

Jeroboam was the epitome of sin and every king that followed him was said that they went in the *way of Jeroboam*, the son of Nebat, who caused the children of Israel to sin. Let’s see what God had to do with them. God will only tolerate these things so long, and then He’s got to do some spewing, which He did with Israel.

2-Kings 17:7: “Now, it came to pass because the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt...” Notice how it always says, ‘*brought them up out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of Egypt*’, over and over again.

Verse 8: “And walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which the nations had made. Now, the children of Israel secretly did things that *were* not right against the LORD their God. And they built high places in all their cities for themselves from the Watch Tower to the fortified city. And they set up images and groves for themselves in every high hill, and under every green tree” (vs 8-10)—where they could have fornication and priestess prostitution and all of that.

It says there in the book of Isaiah *eating of mice*, all of these things were sanctified to the gods, which originated with Nimrod, Semiramis and Horus—every one of these! That’s what’s going on today. That’s what’s happening in the Church of God today!

Verse 11: “And they burned incense in all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had removed from before them, and they practiced evil things to provoke the LORD to anger, for they served the idols of which the LORD had said to them, ‘You shall not do this thing.’ And the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all the prophets, *by* all the seers, saying, ‘**Turn from your**

evil ways...’” (vs 11-13).

I plead with you the same way today. If you believe in ‘religion’—if you have been in the Worldwide Church of God and you’ve swallowed this Sunday malarkey and you’ve swallowed Christmas and Easter and all of this satanic stuff, ***I plead with you, turn from your way and repent!*** It may be too late if you think about it in the future.

“...and keep My commandments *and* My statutes, according to all the law, which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.’ Nevertheless, they would not hear... [they did worse, rejected His statutes and covenants] ...but hardened their necks, like the neck of their fathers who did not believe in the LORD their God” (vs 13-14).

I’m here to tell you that ***if you don’t keep God’s way, you don’t believe in Him***. You may mouth His name; you may hold the Bible up, but ***you don’t believe in Him!*** You may be skilled in going through Scriptures to prove your little point, but ***you don’t believe in Him!***

Verse 15: “And *they* rejected His statutes and His covenant, which He made with their fathers, and His warnings that He testified against them. And they went after vanity, and became vain...” That’s exactly what has happened. Brethren, don’t you see that? *Those leaders who have led you down this path are vanity and have become vain!* They’ve done everything that it says here, rejected all of God’s ways.

“...and went after the nations around them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them not to do like them. And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God and made molten images, two calves for themselves. And they made a grove, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire. And they used divination and sorceries, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. So, the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of His sight; not one was left, only the tribe of Judah by itself” (vs 15-18).

Judah didn’t learn from that, and Judah went on and had to be sent off into captivity. The Church of God has not learned it even to this day. Do we have to be sent off into captivity like they did? Let’s keep our senses about us. Let us understand some things here. Let’s realize some very important things.

There is coming the greatest deception that’s going to come on the world. If you’ve already rejected the commandments of God and are not going to repent of that, you’re going to be deceived;

because if you reject the commandments of God, ***you do not love the Truth***. All of His commandments are true and His Word is Truth.

That's why it's coming upon this world and it's going to come and it's going to be awesome. It's going to feel good and it's going to be magnificent and there will be miracles, undeniable false miracles will take place. It's going to be awesome. It's going to make Nimrod look like a piker, but he will be Nimrod's successor. This was already happening in Paul's day. Even then, the people couldn't stand to have the Truth. *No!*

2-Thessalonians 2:7 "For the mystery of lawlessness is already working; only *there is* One Who is restraining at the present *time* until it arises out of *the* midst.... [it's held for the time that God is going to let it happen] ...And then the lawless one will be revealed..." (vs 7-8). ***God is going to reveal it!***

The *lawless one* is going to be the ***son of perdition***, the ***man of sin***. He's going to go sit in the temple of God and say that *he* is God.

- all the world are going to go after him
- all the world is going to worship him
- all the world is going to worship Satan the devil

Satan will have completed his plan to where he will have the whole world deceived and away from God. That's when Christ is going to intervene and destroy the whole system. This thing about 'religion' is no small matter.

"...(whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth, and will destroy with the brightness of His coming); *even* the one whose coming is according to *the* inner working of Satan..." (vs 8-9). Satan and all of his glory, all of his power and all of every deceivableness that can be.

"...with all power and signs and lying wonders... [it is going to be awesome] ...and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those who are perishing because they did not receive the love of the Truth, so that they might be saved" (vs 8-10). ***If you don't love the Truth you will not be saved!***

- Do you grasp that?
- Do you understand that?
- Do you realize that?

We need to really think on that, brethren. And for those of us who are still mealy mouthing around with 'religion,' we need to repent of it and ask God to give us

- His way
- His grace

- His mercy
- His Spirit
- His Truth
- the love of His Truth
- the love of Him
- the love of Jesus Christ
- the love of brethren
- and the love of doing the things that God wants us to do

God is going to hold us accountable. Do you think God is going to open any door to do anything for this world if we're going to mealy mouth around and compromise with 'religion' and His way? ***I tell you NO!***

A man just recently wrote me a letter and said, 'I've heard you say that you believe that we've been Laodiceans from the beginning.' He says, 'I believe that also.' And he says if you look at the scattering and you compare it by doing this: If you take a cup of coffee and you put it in your mouth and you spew it out, what happens? *Droplets everywhere!* And he said, 'It's just like the scattering of the Church.' Brethren, that is what has happened! ***They are blind and they are naked and they think that they are just fine! They are not!***

Verse 11: "And for this cause God..." I want you to tie that in with Rom. 1; I want you to understand something profound. ***God means business!*** When something happens, *God* is the One Who causes it. If you sin and you love sin, He will let you go have more sin. That's what He did here. They didn't honor God!

Romans 1:20: "...they are without excuse; because when they knew God, they glorified *Him* not as God, neither were thankful; but they became vain in their own reasonings, and their foolish hearts were darkened. While professing themselves to be *the* wise ones, they became fools" (vs 20-22).

Verse 24, after their idolatry: "For this cause, God also abandoned them to uncleanness..."

Verse 26: "For this cause, God abandoned them to disgraceful passions... [God is the One Who has done it]

Verse 28: "And in exact proportion as they did not consent to have God in *their* knowledge, God abandoned them..." ***So, God is the One!***

2-Thessalonians 2:11: "And for this cause..."—because they didn't love the Truth! They went after the idols, they looked at this *man of sin*, the *son of perdition* as the savior.

"...God will send upon them a **powerful deception that will cause them to believe the lie**" (v 11). That's what 'religion' is. ***It is a lie!*** All

‘religions’ are lies! They may have some Truths in them, which they have borrowed from God, but since it is ***not the Truth of God, it is still a lie!***

Verse 12: “So that all may be judged who did not believe the Truth... [you have to love the Truth and you have to *believe* it] ...but who took pleasure in unrighteousness.” That’s what all ‘religion’ is, *all ‘religion’ is unrighteousness!*

Let’s see what else the Apostle Paul said. You can’t weld together ‘religion’ and the *way of God*. You cannot do it!

1-Corinthians 10:18: “Consider Israel according to *the* flesh. Are not those who eat the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What then am I saying? That an idol is anything, or that which is sacrificed to an idol is anything?” (vs 18-19). In other words, an idol is nothing. It is absolutely nothing!

Verse 20: “But that which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not wish you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink *the* cup of *the* Lord, and *the* cup of demons. You cannot partake of *the* table of *the* Lord, and *the* table of demons. Now do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” (vs 20-22) Think about that before you go do those things. No, there is no mixing of it—absolutely not!

2-Corinthians 6:14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers...” An unbeliever is one who believes in ‘religion.’ He may name the name of God. He may have certain set formulas of his ‘religion.’ It may sound all nice and sweet and lovely, because he uses the name of Christ and all of that, but he is an *unbeliever if*

- they don’t believe in the commandments of God
- they don’t believe in the Sabbath of God
- they don’t believe in the Truth of God
- they don’t love God with all their heart, mind, soul and being

“...For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common? And what fellowship *does* light *have* with darkness?... [None! Impossible! Can’t be!] ...And what union *does* Christ *have* with Belial? Or what part *does* a believer *have* with an unbeliever? And what agreement *is there between* a temple of God and idols? For you are a temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (vs 15-16).

That’s why ***God’s way*** is not a ‘religion.’ ***Christ in you is the hope of glory***, not the *external* things that you do. What you have to do is make the

tree good then the fruit will be good. If the tree is not good, you can’t make the fruit good. Do you understand that? That’s why you’ve got to make the tree good. The only way that is, is *Christ in you*, that *you’re the temple of God*.

“...‘God said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from the midst of them... [Who are *them*? *The ‘religious’ people* with their idolatry and their statutes and their judgments and their ways!] ...and be separate,’ says *the* Lord...” (vs 16-17).

Not go join them, not have ecumenical councils, not figure out what is the thing we have in common. What you better have in common *first* is:

- the *right* God—the Lord God and Jesus Christ
 - with the right understanding
 - with the right laws
 - with everything that’s correct out of the Bible
- otherwise there’s no agreement.

Verse 17: “‘Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,’ says *the* Lord, ‘and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you; and I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says *the* Lord Almighty.” (vs 17-18).

Paul was fighting this from the very day that he started. He was fighting ‘religion,’ Judaism on one hand, and all the heathen ‘religions’ on the other hand. He was cast out of the synagogue. He was cast out of cities. They came to worship him and Barnabas as Jupiter and Mercury. It was all they could do to keep them from offering sacrifices to him and Barnabas when they healed this man. He was fighting ‘religion’ every place he went.

Here’s what he tells us to do, Ephesians 5:1: “Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children... [not as rebellious, seeking your own way] ...and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us *as* an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (vs 1-2). Christ has done it for you, but that doesn’t mean He is keeping the commandments for you. ***You are to keep the commandments. Christ in you!***

Verse 3: “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, do not permit it even to be named among you, as is fitting for saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking or jesting, which are not becoming; but instead, thanksgiving. For this you know, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous *person*, who is an idolater...” (vs 3-5). To say nothing of those who commit idolatry straight out

“...has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.... [won’t be there] ...Do not let

anyone deceive you with vain words... [which are the myths of the pagan religions of this world] ...for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be joint partakers with them” (vs 5-7).

That’s strong language, brethren. It’s nice to read all the sweet and loving and kind and smooth things, but life just isn’t that way. Sometimes these things that are hard need to be said and they need to be said in such a way that it will be heard; need to be said in such a way that people will understand and begin to look at their lives and begin to repent and begin to return to God.

Verse 8: “For you were once darkness... [Why go back?] ...but now *you are* light in *the* Lord. Walk as children of light, (because the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and Truth); proving what is well pleasing to the Lord; and **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them**” (vs 8-11).

They are—that’s why this book—the Bible—Is so good, it exposes that darkness.

Verse 12: “For it is shameful even to mention the things being done by them in secret. But all of these things being exposed by the light are openly revealed. Therefore, He says, ‘*You* who are sleeping—wake up, and arise from the dead! And Christ shall shine upon you.’ So then, take heed that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as those who are wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. For this reason, do not be foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*” (vs 8-18). That’s what God wants.

1-John 5:21: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”

2-John 1: “The elder to *the* chosen lady and her children, whom I love in Truth...” I want you to listen to these words and let them sink in, let them be profound.

“...and not I alone, but also all those who have known the Truth; for *the* sake of the Truth that is **dwelling in us**, and shall be with us forever” (vs 1-2). That’s Christ, His Word, His commandments and His way.

Verse 3: “Grace, mercy, *and* peace shall be with us from God *the* Father, and from *the* Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced exceedingly that I have found among your children those who are walking in Truth... [God’s way is the *way of Truth* and you have to walk in it] ...exactly as we received commandment **from the Father**” (vs 3-4).

Why? *Because all the words here come from*

God the Father! As Jesus said, ‘I don’t speak anything of My own self, but what the Father has given Me commandment, that’s what I speak.’ That’s why we need to learn the Word of God and understand the Truth of God. That’s why it needs to be preached and taught. The ideas of men and philosophies of men are nowhere.

And speaking of philosophies of men, remember the first thing that happened to begin to lead people away from God in the Worldwide Church of God? What did they do? *They turned Stavrinides loose on them and flooded them with all the pagan philosophies!* That was planned! That was done deliberately to confuse! To take away *your* Truth through vain talking and jangling to deceive you! Remember, the Word of God is the commandment from the Father.

Verse 5: “And now I beseech you, lady, not as though I am writing a new commandment to you, but that which we have *observed* from *the* beginning, that we love one another. And this is the love *of God*: that we **walk according to His commandments....**” (vs 5-6). If you have a ‘religion,’ you’re not walking in His commandments.

“...This is the commandment, exactly as you heard from *the* beginning, that you might walk in it, because many deceivers have entered into the world; those who do not confess *that* Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.... [that’s the first thing that Stavrinides did] ...This is *the spirit of* the deceiver and the antichrist” (vs 5-7). Regardless of who he is, what his name is, anyone who does that is an antichrist.

Verse 8: “Watch out for yourselves in order that we may not lose the things we have accomplished...” Because there are men going around seeking to take your crown. They’re not going to come in and say, ‘Look at me, whoopee everybody, I’m a crown stealer.’ They aren’t going to do that. They’re going to come and say, ‘Have you ever thought of this?’ And you *bite*, and you’ve taken the first step.

“...but *that* we may receive a full reward. Anyone who transgresses and does not continue in the doctrine of Christ **does not have God.** *But* the one who continues in the doctrine of Christ **has both the Father and the Son.** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not say to him, ‘Welcome!’ For anyone who says, ‘Welcome!’ to him is partaking in his evil works” (vs 8-11).

That’s what’s happened in the Church of God, brethren. They brought in ‘religion.’ They did the same thing as Israel. They went after the gods of

this world, saying, 'How did they worship their gods, even so we will do likewise. Please tell us about the trinity,' instead of saying, 'There is the door, get out of here.' No, they went and joined them.

Let this be us, brethren, Revelation 3:8: "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, and have kept My Word, and have not denied My name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who proclaim themselves to be Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you" (vs 8-9).

- If you love God the Father, *Christ loves you!*
- If you love Christ, *God the Father loves you!*
- If you love God, *you'll keep His commandments and you'll patiently keep His Word!*

Those of the synagogue of Satan, which are organizing now in the greatest thrust ever to bring all 'religion' together; and to bring it all under the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church and to bring it directly under Satan the devil. God is going to make them come and worship before our feet when they are resurrected for their reward.

Verse 10: "...Because you have kept the word of My patience... [or patiently kept My Word] ...I also will keep you from the time of temptation, which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that **no one may take away your crown**" (vs 10-11).

Satan is the one who is doing it, but he sends his messengers and they are men who want to get you involved in 'religion,' away from the *way of God, to steal your crown. Brethren, don't let anyone do that! Now you know why God hates 'religion.'*

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order—A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Ezekiel 28:12-13, 2, 13-18
- 2) Isaiah 14:12-15
- 3) Genesis 3:1-5
- 4) Jude 6-11
- 5) Genesis 4:5-7
- 6) Genesis 10:8-9, 8-10
- 7) Genesis 11:1-3

- 8) Romans 1:18-25
- 9) Exodus 20:2-3
- 10) Exodus 32:1, 4-5
- 11) Leviticus 18:1-5, 24-28
- 12) Deuteronomy 18:9
- 13) Deuteronomy 12:29-32
- 14) Deuteronomy 18:10-12
- 15) Judges 2:10-14
- 16) 1 Kings 12:25-33
- 17) 2 Kings 17:7-18
- 18) 2 Thessalonians 2:7-11
- 19) Romans 1:20-22, 24, 26, 28
- 20) 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12
- 21) 1 Corinthians 10:18-22
- 22) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
- 23) Ephesians 5:1-18
- 24) 1 John 5:21
- 25) 2 John 1-11
- 26) Revelation 3:8-11

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 12
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- 1 Kings 11

Also referenced: Book: *The Two Babylons*
by Alexander Hislop

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Which *Religion* Will God Retain in the Millennium?

Fred R. Coulter

Greetings brethren! This series has stirred up kind of a storm. That was in reaction to those people who wanted to retain ‘religion’ and felt that I was really hard on James. I said some things in James, which was not quite exactly right on dead center mark. One man even said, ‘Well, Fred you are a Job basher.’ We need to address those things and see if that is so and see *about* ‘religion.’ I want you to think about *which* ‘religion’ will God retain when Christ returns and sets up the Millennium and the Kingdom of God? Let’s think about that for a minute.

- Will He retain witchcraft? *Absolutely not!*
That’s pure satanism. We can eliminate that. Witchcraft is a ‘religion’!
- Will God retain Masonry? *No!*
Masonry is a ‘religion’ and also worships the ‘religion’ of the ancient Baal worship!
- Will God keep Hinduism? *No!*
That is Baal and Ashteroth worship!
- Will God keep Buddhism? *No!*
It’s got all the idols and it’s all the self of man!
- Will God keep Catholicism? *No!*
- Will God keep Eastern Orthodox? *No!*
- Will God keep Armenian Christian? *No!*
- Will God keep Muslim? *No!*
- Will God keep Animist ‘religions’? *No!*
- Will God retain the Christian religion?

I want you to think about that before you answer, because the truth is that ***Christ is not going to retain*** what is normally called ***the ‘Christian religion’!*** We’ll see that in just a minute, but let’s first of all understand something of what ‘religion’ is in the world. ‘Religion’ in the world is defined as a *form* of faith, a *form* of worship, which entails ritual and works and so forth.

Let’s go to the book of James and let’s see what James was saying and to whom he was saying it. Let’s ask some questions about the places where it says *religion* and then we will examine ‘pure and undefiled religion.’ I think James 1 is a good place for us to start. Some people misunderstood when I said that James was writing to unconverted people. I should have said that a great majority of those to whom James was writing were unconverted people. However, within the scope of whom he was writing to, there were converted people.

James 1:1: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes, which are in the dispersion: Greetings!” Are all of those in the

twelve tribes converted? We would have to conclude, *no!* It’s like saying today: Are all of those who are in the Protestant religion,’ the Catholic religion,’ the Jewish ‘religion’—who diligently attend church every week—converted? *No!* Within general parameters of how the world looks at the Christian religion,’ they don’t know where to place us, because we keep the Sabbath and we keep the Holy Days. They don’t know if we are Jewish or if we are Seventh Day Adventists. They certainly understand we’re not Protestants. They have a hard time defining, with the world’s definition of ‘religion,’ where we fit. First of all, we need to understand that those to whom James was writing, the greatest majority were probably not converted.

James 2:1: “My brethren, do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.” He’s talking to brethren here who believe in Christ. But are all of those who believe in Christ *really converted*? In our lifetime, we’ve seen how many people *profess* belief in Jesus Christ, but really were not converted! We’re going to see a little bit later that even demons understand why Jesus came. We need to really take things in a broader perspective.

Verse 2: “Now then, if a man comes into your ***synagogue*** [assembly]...”—Greek is ‘sunagoge.’ Were all those in the synagogue believers in Jesus Christ? *No!* Here he is talking to brethren who believe in Christ; within the synagogue you actually had a small church. You had the church within the synagogue; the synagogue being the greater number of attendees and then those who were *called* and *believed* and were still attending at the synagogue at this time. He’s talking to them. We have this combination of whom James is writing to.

James 1:19: “For this reason, my beloved brethren...” You can check out in the book of Acts: *beloved brethren* can refer to brethren within the Church, but Jews talking to other Jews are also called *brethren*.

Acts 13:15—Paul stood up in a synagogue, his first time there: “And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue said to them, ‘Men, brethren, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, speak’” The Jews commonly refer to each other as *brethren*.

Acts 23:1^[transcriber’s correction]—we also find where Paul referred to the other Pharisees as *brethren*: “...Paul said, ‘Men *and* brethren...’” He used it not in the sense that they were converted, but

so he could turn the Pharisees against the Sadducees and upset their trial and accusations against him. Not exactly everywhere where it says *brethren* does it necessarily mean converted people with the Spirit of God.

James 1:19: "...let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger: Because man's wrath does not work out God's righteousness. Therefore, having rid yourselves of all filthiness and all *the* abounding of wickedness around you..." (vs 19-21)—all the works of the flesh. He's addressing those who, if they are converted, are just newly converted or those who are still practicing a 'religion' within Judaism. He's trying to reach both of them.

"...then in meekness accept for yourselves the implanted Word, which *is* able to save your lives" (v 21). That can be said to converted people and unconverted people. To the converted people so that they may grow in grace and knowledge; to the unconverted so that they may repent in meekness and accept Christ and go forward.

Verse 22: "Then be doers of *the* Word... [God requires *all* people to keep the commandments of God] ...and not only hearers, deceiving your own selves." He's talking to people who are *hearing* the Word, who weren't *doing* the Word and deceiving themselves. He's encouraging them to receive the Word and go forward with it and be doers of it.

Verse 23: "Because if anyone is a hearer of *the* Word and not a doer..." He's also speaking to those who are just hearers, those who are not converted or just newly converted or if we could say, marginally converted.

"...this one is like a man considering his natural face in a mirror. Who, after looking at himself, went away and immediately forgot what he was like. But the one who has looked into *the* perfect law of freedom, and has continued in *it*, this one himself has not become a forgetful hearer, but is a doer of *the* work. This one shall be blessed in his actions" (vs 23-25). We also have two forms of blessing with that:

1. the *letter of the law* blessing, which if the Jews would keep, they would be blessed
2. the *Spirit of the Law*—doing—which those who are converted are to do the Spirit of the Law

This can apply to either one. What you need to do is go back and read some of the Prophets, where God continually said that 'you didn't hear My voice, you didn't hearken to My words.' He was talking to unconverted people. As we can see there is a mix of converted and unconverted.

Verse 26: "If anyone among you considers himself to be religious... [here's one of the places where 'religion' is used] ... and does not control his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* vain." Even in the *letter of the Law* of 'religion.'

Most people—when they start coming to the knowledge of the Truth—are into a 'religious' type mode. When God first calls people, He calls some out of Catholicism, some out of Protestantism, some out of atheism, which is a 'religion.' When He calls them, the first thing that they do is begin looking for the right church, i.e. the right 'religion,' because they believe that 'religion' is the way that God wants it to be. That's where they start.

It would be fair to say that 'everyone who's a beginning Christian, begins as a 'religious' type person.'

- Is that all that God wants?
- Does God want us to remain 'religious'?

or

- Does He want us to grow to the full grace and knowledge and stature and measure of Jesus Christ?

I think the answer is obvious: ***He wants us to grow to the full measure and stature of Jesus Christ!***

Verse 27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and *the* Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

When you're talking to a Jew, he can keep himself unspotted from the world if he would follow the things that he was taught in the *letter of the Law*, which could be called a 'religion.' But what we're going to see is that every time people stray from God, they get into 'religion' and are leaving God. What we're dealing with here is that James is talking about the 'religion,' which is the *outer works*.

A *religious person* in the Greek is called 'threskos.' *Religion* is 'threskeia'—*the outer works; that which someone else can see*. It has nothing to do with the inner worship of God. None of this has to do with prayer, study, growing in grace and knowledge or growing in Truth and understanding.

What he is talking about here with 'religion' is the ***outward works***, which is called 'religious.' It's better to be 'religious' in the world and carnally speaking than it is to be in the world and not believing in God and not doing any good at all whatsoever. However, does this bring you salvation? We'll answer that question a little later, but let's just keep that in mind.

Things that you do out here, that other people see, you may be doing ‘good’: visiting the fatherless and the widows and helping those in need and keeping yourself from going into the world to become worldly. Even Protestants talk about that. Don’t they talk about people and bring sermons of repentance for backsliding? *Yes!* This is what we are dealing with here, We are not dealing with a way of conversion, the outer works, the things that other people see. If people know us, they may have an understanding from *their* point of view that we are ‘religious.’ If the world wants to define us as ‘religious,’ that’s all right. But does God want us to be ‘religious’ or into ‘religion’?

Let’s look at a couple of other places where ‘religion’ is used. Acts 26 will also show you that Pharisaism was a ‘religion’ and Paul was ‘religious.’ As far as the *law of the Jews* is concerned, the Apostle Paul was nearly as perfect. Some may object to that, but part of being perfect in Judaism was also destroying the enemy. He was killing and persecuting the *true* Christians who actually should be called *true believers*, those who are the firstfruits of God, those who are going to be in the first resurrection and are going to be the bride of Christ.

Even though we are called Christian, even though we refer to ourselves as Christian, even though the Bible refers to us as Christian, our Christianity is different than from what the world understands. We’re going to see that our Christianity is *a way of life*, moving on from ‘religion,’ growing out of ‘religion,’ and *growing into the true relationship with God*.

Paul is saying to the Jews, Acts 26:4: “The manner of my life from childhood, which from *the* beginning was among my nation in Jerusalem, all the Jews know... [they’ve understood me since I was a little boy]: ...who knew me from the first, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I formerly lived *as* a Pharisee” (vs 4-5). **Pharisaism is *a* ‘religion’!** Paul was ‘religious’ before he was called. Let’s understand what Paul later said about this.

- How did Paul view his ‘religious’ past?
- How was that in relationship to Jesus Christ?
- How did he count that?

Galatians 1:13 “For you heard of my former conduct when I was in Judaism... [the *Jews*’ ‘religion’] ...how I was excessively persecuting the Church of God and was destroying it; and I was advancing in Judaism... [*profited in the Jews*’ ‘religion’] ...*far* beyond many of my contemporaries in my *own* nation, being more abundantly zealous for *the* traditions of my fathers” (vs 13-14). Do the

traditions of the fathers save? The traditions of the fathers constituted ‘religion’?

Let’s let Jesus answer that question. Let’s see what the Jews and the Pharisees did concerning Jesus Christ and the disciples. Here we are talking about the kind of worship that ‘religion’ has; the *outward show* of it.

Mark 7:1: “Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes from Jerusalem came together to Him. And when they saw some of His disciples eating with defiled hands (that is, unwashed *hands*), they found fault” (vs 1-2). There’s one thing about ‘religious’ people: *they look at the physical things and find fault and judge*, because that’s what ‘religions’ are all about.

Verse 3: “For the Pharisees and all the Jews, holding fast to the tradition of the elders, do not eat unless they wash their hands thoroughly. Even *when coming* from the market, they do not eat unless they *first* wash themselves....” (vs 3-4).

When you go to the market and buy things at the market and you come home, would you consider your hands filthy? *No!* You could probably be at the market, and you’re buying apples and one of them looks really good to you, you reach down and you take it and you eat it. A ‘religious’ Jew could not do that, because he would have to first go home, wash his hands and wash all of the food and then he could eat, because that made him ‘right before God.’ Jesus said a little later on that *that did not* make them right before God.

“...And there are many other things that they have received to observe... [that’s what it means *to hold*] ...*such as the* washing of cups and pots and brass utensils and tables. For this reason, the Pharisees and the scribes questioned Him, *saying*, ‘Why don’t Your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’” (vs 4-5).

Let’s see what Jesus thought about ‘religion.’ I want you to understand something here. You can get out your concordance and you will not find the word *Christian* and the word *religion* together—you *won’t find it!* You will find *religion* and *tradition* and outward things such as the tradition of the Pharisees—they *were* ‘religious’! Paul said he was of the strictest sect of the ‘religion’ of the Jews, the Pharisees.

Notice how Jesus answered with Scripture, v 6: “And He answered *and* said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites...’” Hypocrite means *sanctimonious pretender* when it is referring to ‘religious’ leaders, because they *pretend* to be ‘religious’ but are not. They say one thing and do another thing. They are hypocrites before God

because they put *their* traditions and *their* laws and *their* rules and the enforcement of those above the laws and commandments of God.

“...hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips...’” (v 6). A ‘religious’ outward expression. Don’t a lot of people do that? *Yes!* They honor God *with their lips!*

It’s like this atheist: He was out fishing in Loch Ness and all of a sudden the Loch Ness Monster showed up and was coming full-bore to eat him and sink his boat. The Loch Ness Monster came, knocked him out of his boat and he was flying through the air. The atheist said, ‘Oh, God, help me.’ And God answered back, ‘I thought you didn’t believe in Me.’ He said, ‘I didn’t, and I didn’t believe in the Loch Ness Monster until now.’

Honoring God with your lips is only when *you think* you need God, or you are good enough to do something for God. They honor God with their lips. We’ll see a little bit more of that later on.

“...but their hearts are far away from Me” (v 6). Brethren, there is the whole key.

What is it that we have learned concerning the love of God, which is the basic foundation of true, Scriptural, New Testament Christianity, being firstfruits for the first resurrection and the bride of Christ? What did Jesus say? ‘*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself—on these two hang all the Law and the Prophets.*’ God did not give the Law and the Prophets to have *a* ‘religion.’ He gave them as *a way of life*, both Old Testament and New Testament.

What have men done with *their* traditions, which is *their religion*? *They have superimposed it upon God’s way!* In doing so, they reject God. Though they profess with their lips, their heart is far away. God is interested in the heart, because God is called ‘*the heart-knowing God*’ (Acts 15). That’s what it is in the Greek. It says there in the English, ‘And God Who knows the heart,’ But it really means, ‘*the heart-knowing God.*’ God is concerned with what goes on in your mind and your heart and your inward parts, because then the *outward* will be clean, as Jesus told the Pharisees concerning their religion.’

Verse 7: “But in vain do they worship Me... [outward worship] ...teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.” Let’s understand something very clearly: All ‘religion’ basically is following man-made rules, even though James said, ‘pure and undefiled religion’ is an *outward* thing. That has nothing to do with the worship of God.

That has nothing to do with your heart before God. That is an *outward expression*, though it may be in agreement with part of the Word of God. To do that does not necessarily mean that you are converted.

Let’s look at those who are in the world for just a minute. Do they not every Thanksgiving and Christmas feed the poor? Give gifts to the children? Are they converted? Did they do something good in helping the widows and the fatherless? *Yes!* But are they on the road to salvation because they have done it? *No!* That’s the kind of ‘religion’ that is being spoken of here in the New Testament.

Verse 8: “For leaving the commandment of God, **you hold fast the tradition of men...**” All I have to do is refer you to any other ‘religion’ in the world and you will see that is absolutely true. As a matter of fact:

- the Catholic Church is based upon the *traditions* of the fathers.
- Muslims are based upon the *traditions* of Mohammed.
- Buddhism is based upon the *traditions* of Buddha.
- Hinduism is based upon the *traditions* of Vishnu and all of the thousands of gods that they have.

All of these are the *doctrines of men*, which reject the commandments of God.

We’re going to see that almost all ‘religion’ is *carnal or satanic*. You need to understand that. If I’m going a few oxen because you want to keep *your* ‘religion,’ and *you think* that you are truly Christian, *you think* that you are converted: well, let me encourage you to grow up out of ‘religion’ and ***grow into a relationship with God, based upon the love of God!***

Verse 8: “For leaving the commandment of God, you hold fast the tradition of men, *such as* the washing of pots and cups; and you practice many other things like *this.*’ Then He said to them, ‘Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your *own* tradition” (vs 8-9).

The Jews have done this with the Sabbath. They have *their own traditions* on how to keep the Sabbath and what to do, what to eat, when to come in, when to go out, what to wear, what not to wear, when to breathe, when not to breathe, when to hold the lamp, when not to hold the lamp. ***They’ve destroyed the Sabbath!***

Catholics have their tradition of Sunday, which the Protestants follow right along, because they never finished the Reformation. What do they do? *They have their own traditions that they do on that day!* They lay aside the commandments of God

or they take some of the commandments of God and they do them in a carnal-minded way, which then is a 'religion.' We're going to see that God also hates that. We really need to understand and define this.

Verse 10: "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and 'The one who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man shall say to *his* father or mother, 'Whatever benefit you might receive from me *is* corban" (that is, *set aside as a gift to God*)..." (vs 10-11).

That is a gift to the temple. Oh boy! How many 'religions' have said, 'If you give money, if you give it to this 'religious' cause, you're going to be blessed'?

"...he is not obligated to help his parents" (v 11). In other words, he doesn't have to honor his father and mother. He doesn't have to carry out his obligations to his mother and father, because now we have *a tradition* that supersedes the Word of God.

Verse 12: "And you excuse him from doing anything for his father or his mother, nullifying the authority of the Word of God by your tradition, which you have passed down; and you practice many *traditions such as this*" (vs 12-13). We're going to look at some of these "...such as this" things that they do. We're going to see how it is. ***It is vain! It is a vain 'religion'!***

Let's see what 'religion' does to a person internally when you have all of these dos and don'ts. You can memorize them and you can do them and you can say them. Judaism is the epitome of it, because there is something—a law, a tradition, a command—that you need to do every single minute of every day, from the instant you wake up until the instant you go to bed.

If you've never read the book *Code of Jewish Law* by Ganzfried and Goldin, get one and read it and you'll understand what I mean. Then go to a Catholic store and buy a Catechism. What they need to do whenever they confess their sins to the priest—which is against the Word of God—and do *hail Marys* and *our fathers* and do so many laps around the beads. Isn't it interesting that all 'religions,' being carnal—even the Muslims have little beads that they use; Buddhists have little beads that they use; Catholics have the beads that they use; Orthodox have the beads that they use—***all physical things***.

What happens internally when you are a good, righteous and diligent 'religious' person? And this is what causes so much trouble in the Church. As Bob Hunnicutt said, '*Religious* people have caused problems in the Church.' We'll talk a little

bit more about 'religious' people in the Church. Have you ever been judged by someone unto condemnation? Someone in the Church? Someone who appeared righteous? Maybe even a deacon, an elder, a pastor or evangelist—condemn you and run you in the ground? Here's what happens to 'religious' people.

Luke 18:9: "And to some who trusted in themselves..." Who are we to trust in? *Jesus Christ!* When you have *traditions* you trust in yourselves; this is a Pharisee.

"...that they were righteous, and despised others..." (v 9). That is always what happens in 'religion.' The Catholics do; the Muslims do; the Eastern Orthodox do; the Protestants do; the Hindus, the Buddhists; they despise others, because *they consider themselves to be right*.

As a matter of fact, the Muslims consider themselves to be so right that if they kill someone who is an 'infidel' they give glory to God. Furthermore, there is a sect of the Muslims who believe that if one of their relatives does something against *their* 'religion' that they have the right to kill them—whether it be a mother, father, sister or brother—those who trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others.

- What kind of righteousness are *we* to have?
- Are *we* to have the righteousness of the exterior things that we do?
- Are *we* to have righteousness because we keep the Sabbath?
- Are *we* to have righteousness because we keep the Holy Days?
- Are *we* to have righteousness because we tithe?
- Is that righteousness that God wants us to have?

These things are not wrong!

- What is the righteousness that God wants us to have?

God the Father imputes to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's the righteousness we are to grow to, not this self-righteousness:

Verse 9: "...He also spoke this parable: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray... [right before God] ...the one *was* a Pharisee and the other a tax collector'" (vs 9-10). A publican was a tax collector, the most hated person on earth. An IRS agent—you could name them today. You wouldn't want an IRS agent knocking on the door and saying, 'Hello.' No you wouldn't.

Verse 11: "The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself in this manner..." Why? *Because he*

trusted in himself! He wasn't trusting in God, but he used God's name.

- all 'religious' people use God's name
- all 'religious' people quote some kind of 'religious' thing, even quotes from the Bible
- 'religious' people are the ones who take the Scriptures and use them deceitfully

If you don't believe that, go to any Catholic service or any Protestant service some Sunday morning for an education and find out. They are trusting in themselves. "...and prayed with himself..." He really wasn't praying to God, because in his own mind who was his god? *Himself!* 'The elders of Israel have set up idols in their mind' (Ezek. 14) That's what this man was doing here. That's what this Pharisee was doing. He was idolizing himself, but praising God.

Verse 11: "The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself in this manner: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men...'" Comparing yourself among yourselves, and those who compare themselves among themselves Paul said *are not wise*.

The Pharisee goes on and enumerates some of the worst sins: "...—extortioners, unrighteous..." (v 11)—*unjust!* How can he be just if he despises others? *There's no justice in that!* But he himself *thinks* that he is righteous., but looks down on other people, 'they're unjust.'

"...adulterers—or even as this tax collector.... [notice all the good works, the 'religious' works, *exterior* works]: ...I fast twice in the week..." (vs 11-12). That's a lot of zeal and diligence—isn't it?

Go back and read in the book of Zechariah: He said, 'all these years when you fasted in the seventh month and the tenth month, fasting twice a week; were you fasting unto Me to repent of your sins?' *NO!* You were fasting *to do your own things*.

Verse 12: "I fast twice in the week, *and* I give a tithe *of* everything that I gain.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat himself on *the* chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner'" (vs 12-13). Here was an attitude that was going to *change the heart*.

The 'religious' attitude did not change the heart. The 'religious' attitude alienated him from other people; actually *alienated him from God*, because he was not praying to God but to himself and using the name of God. *That's what all 'religious' people do!* The publican *repented!* What is the key here? *God is interested in repentance!* He is not interested in 'religion.'

Jesus said, v 14: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other...." *Justified* means *put in right standing with God*. So, the publican who repented was put in right standing with God, but the Pharisee—the other—was not justified though he had done all of these things. God required all those things to be done. We're going to see a little bit later that Jesus told the disciples, 'When you have done everything that you have been commanded to do, say we're unprofitable servants, because we have only done that which was commanded to be done.' *God is interested*

- in your heart
- with repentance
- with change
- with loving God

He's not interested in these *outward* things like the Pharisee had done here.

"...For everyone who exalts himself..." (v 14). That's what 'religion' does. The pope is very 'religious'! What does it gain him? *He has his reward!* Is he preaching *his* traditions? *Yes!* Is he preaching his ideas? *Yes!* Is he exalting himself? *Yes!*

Jesus said: "...**shall be humbled...**" (v 14).

Let's look at how Paul viewed his 'religious' life before he was converted and then after he was converted. Before he was converted he was exactly like the Pharisee.

"...For **everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled...**" (v 14). We're going to see that applied to the Apostle Paul in a very dynamic and profound way. Was he exalting himself when he was taking the orders from the high priest and going out and persecuting those who really believed in Jesus Christ, the true believers? Was he exalting himself in rising up in Judaism because of what he was doing? *Yes, he was!* Was he abased? *Instantly!* He was knocked off his donkey on the way to Damascus. You know the story about how God called him and converted him. He was abased.

"...and the one who humbles himself shall be exalted" (v 14). Just the opposite of what people think in 'religion.' 'Religion' *exalts* people!

Let's see how Paul thought of *his* 'religion' *before* he was converted and *after* he was converted. When people are called into the Church of God they may have come from an upstanding family, been 'religious,' gone to Sunday school, even read and studied the Bible. Their folks may have been very good. Their grandmother and grandfather may have been upstanding people. But let's understand something: *They weren't converted!* They may be sincere. They may be *religious*, they may be good people in the world, but:

Why God Hates Religion #4
Which *Religion* will God Retain in the Millennium?

- human goodness *does not equal salvation*
- human goodness *does not equal repentance*
- human goodness *is not going to force God to bring salvation to anyone*

You need to realize that.

These people may very well, without a doubt, qualify for the second resurrection. But the first resurrection is *a calling*, regardless of your past life. All of the good things that *you thought* that you did, even the motivation behind it, from a carnal point of view was *for self* in many cases. When we get done here we're going to go back and we're going to look at Job. We want to look at it properly, *through the eyes of God*, so we can understand that all the goodness that we can do—even though in the *letter of the Law* God may require it—your own works will not bring you salvation—period! We do have good works here, which we are to do, but those are to be motivated from the Spirit of God *from within*; from the love of God to us *from within to without*—not that we do something good to make us better.

Every year when you see the news and they feed the poor on Thanksgiving and Christmas or do these things—they ask them: 'How did you feel in doing this?' *Oh, I felt wonderful! I felt good!* That is purely all human. When you come to repentance, you don't feel good at all, because you are viewing your life through eyes of Jesus Christ and your own sins. When you do the things that are good, you are not to 'let your right hand know what your left hand is doing.' In other words, motivated by the Spirit of God *from within* to do those things *without*.

Ephesians 2:2: "In which you walked in times past according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air..." Satan has his goodness that looks good. He appears as an 'angel of light' and so do his ministers. But ***that good comes from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.*** That is not the good that comes from God the Father and Jesus Christ.

"...the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience; among whom also we all once had our conduct..." (vs 2-3). Every single one of us—even though we may have been good upstanding people, even though we may have never committed any really heinous crimes—lived in the world controlled by Satan the devil and were part and parcel with him. If you kept Sunday, Christmas and Easter, you are worshipping God with the tools of the devil. You need to understand that. God does not accept that worship.

- Are people sincere in those things? *Yes!*

- Do they *feel good* when they do those things? *Yes!*
- Do they have the righteousness of Jesus Christ? *No!*
- Does this 'religious' endeavor of *being good* make them righteous before God? *No!*

As a matter of fact, *God won't even accept it!*

"...we all once had our conduct in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and by the mind..." (v 3). All of this has to do with:

- to develop the self
- to educate the self
- be better
- be good
- strive
- discipline

You don't even have to be religiously 'religious,' but you can have your own 'religion,' not believing in a god of any kind:

- but helping yourself to be better
- to have more power
- to have more personality
- to have more strength
- to have a better body
- to have a disciplined mind

—all of that is *a desire of the mind*. All of that is *carnal!* That is *carnal goodness*, which then must be repented of because it is *vanity*. We need to realize that.

This thing of the difference between 'religion' and the true way of God is a profound thing that God is granting us understanding to realize, because God loves us and God has called us and God has given us His grace and knowledge and understanding, brethren. Yea, He's given His Son Jesus Christ as ***that personal sacrifice for each one of us***, that our sins may be blotted out, that we can be in right standing before God, through the grace of God. This is what Paul is going to bring out here.

"...and were by nature *the* children of wrath, even as the rest of *the* world." (v 3).

That's why God is going to bring His vengeance even upon those so-called 'good and sincere' people, because they are 'good and sincere' *in their own eyes!* They are 'good and sincere' *in the carnal way* in the world. ***They are not repentant and converted before God!*** There is a vast difference! It's very hard for some people to tell the difference between those two, because they are still hung-up on 'religion' and they are still into 'religion' rather than into God and a relationship

with God the Father and Jesus Christ. {see sermons: *Created Relationships*}

Down through the years as God has granted us understanding and knowledge, we have grown in grace and knowledge—all of that goes to God—that's not saying that we are something special or that we discovered these things on our own. When we began to realize that God doesn't want a hierarchy, that God doesn't want an *Invisible Idol/Visible Man* {see sermons} with the control and authority of 'religion'; then we began to understand that **God created us to have a relationship**. That is defined as a **created relationship**.

This is what God wants us to do: Step across the threshold of 'religion' and leave that behind and **enter into a true, loving, spiritual relationship** with God the Father and Jesus Christ. **That's what God wants!** You're going to understand once you cross over that threshold and you leave the 'religion' behind, that you love God with all your heart, mind, soul and being and you have this relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ

- through prayer
- through study
- through God's Spirit within you
- through yielding to God
- desiring God's way
- loving God
- loving His way

Your whole life is going to change! To overcome in a 'religious' sense is to beat the flesh. **You** discipline your mind. **You** discipline your body. All of that is *carnal* and **you can't accomplish spiritual things with carnal means!** You must be led of the Spirit of God. You must grow in the grace and knowledge of God. This is what Paul is talking about here.

Verse 4: "But God, Who is rich in mercy... [God understands all these things that I've just related to you] ...because of His great love with which He loved us." You didn't come and find God because you were 'good.' You didn't come and find God because you attended the Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Episcopalian, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Catholic, the Orthodox, the Muslim or whatever other 'religion.' **God called you because He loves you!** God has a special thing for you particularly and individually. He wants you to enter into that relationship that He has established by *grace*.

Verse 5: "Even when we were dead in *our* trespasses, has made *us* alive together with Christ. (*For* you have been saved by grace)." {see sermon: *Salvation is Creation*} There are three steps to being saved:

1. you **have been saved** from Satan the devil in this world now

2. you **are being saved** if you continue in the Gospel
3. you **shall be saved** at the resurrection when Jesus returns

You need to understand that. This is not saying 'once saved, always saved.' But it does mean in the Greek: *having been saved* by the *gracious action of God in your life!*

Verse 6: "And He has raised *us* up together and has caused *us* to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages that *are* coming ..." (vs 6-7).

That's when we are going to sit in the heavenly places; not now. The most heavenly thing that we have now is the Holy Spirit of God within us, which comes from heaven. That is true. That is a heavenly thing. We have the love of God and God's Word. Those are heavenly things that God has given us.

Verse 7: "So that in the ages that *are* coming He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness [graciousness] toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith..." (vs 7-8). The greatest thing you can do is believe in God and believe His Truth and believe His righteousness and believe in Christ; not all these *exterior* 'religious' works that people can do, even though on the surface it may even appear to be Christian as other people view it.

"...and this *especially* is not of your own selves..." (v 8). All 'religion' is **from self**, from within, motivated from the carnal mind. You need to have the Spirit of God come in, *circumcise the spirit of your mind*, and then let that motivation from within be the Spirit of God and not from self. We saw how the Pharisee was all motivated from self: prayed with himself, invoked the name of God. It didn't do him any good!

"...it is the gift of God" (v 8). Why is it that people think that the *exterior works* that they can do will bring them salvation when God has to give it? God gives it freely through Jesus Christ because you believe with all your heart, mind, soul and being. It's a whole different prospect. That's why God hates religion,' because people come along with all these *exterior works* and substitute for the true conversion within. You have an *exterior goodness*, but there is not an *interior goodness*. But the grace of God and the gift of God, which He can give, will bring that with the Spirit of God.

Verse 9: "Not of works, so that no one may boast." As I have mentioned concerning the Sabbath; what if there was a law which said: if you keep the Sabbath perfectly 1,000 Sabbaths in a row and you will earn salvation, but you have to do all 1,000 and

they all have to be in a row? What if you did that 999 times and you died before the next Sabbath came? You're resurrected and Christ looks at it and says, 'Well, you've got a pretty good record here. Your works show that you kept the Sabbath perfectly 999 times, but you died before you could do it 1,000 times. Therefore, you can't have eternal life, because the law said 1,000 times and you didn't do it.'

That's why *it's not of works*, "...that no one may boast." Think of the one who did it 1,010 times. If he were granted salvation and he would say, 'Right on Lord! I know how hard it is to do it 1,000 times and I did it 1,010 times.' That person is deserving to go in the Lake of Fire. That's why:

- it's not of *works*
- it's not of *self*
- it is not of *religion*

We are going to see how this applies to Job in just a little bit. Here is the key, v 10: "For we are **His workmanship**..."

- Is God the Father and Jesus Christ molding you?
- Working with you?
- Is Christ being formed in you?
- Are you developing the mind of Jesus Christ?

All of those things are not 'religious.' All of those things are *the work of the Spirit within* you. "...we are **His workmanship** created in Christ Jesus..." (v 10). Brethren, we have the Spirit of God; we are the children of God.

- Are you going to let God, with His Spirit within you, create Christ in you?
- Are you going to be the workmanship of God the Father and Jesus Christ?

or

- Are you going to have your own 'religious' works that you want to hold up to God and how good you are?

or

- Would you rather have the good works that God does to you and through you and being His workmanship?
- What is it that you want?

That's where the line is drawn, sharp and clear between 'religion' and *God's way*.

Verse 10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works..." What are the true good works that we do? ***The true good works are those things that are motivated from love from within***, not a 'religious' work that is out here. We may do 'good' for people. That's fine, but

- we don't do it to exalt ourselves
- we don't do it to be thought of as good
- we don't do it because we feel good or to make us feel good

We do it because:

- we love God
- we see a person in need and have love and compassion upon that person
- to help and serve in whatever way

Totally different! Thinking nothing of what you're going to gain or nothing of what you're going to get, but to exalt that person before Christ. That's what true service is all about

Notice these good works: "...that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them" (v 10). That is *faith and hope and love*. Those are the 'good works.' ***If*** you are loving God, everything else will flow in your life the way that it should.

Let's compare that to what Paul thought of his 'religion' before he was converted, Philippians 3:3: "For we are the circumcision..."—the true *spiritual* circumcision. Remember what Paul said: Even if you are a Jew and you don't do those things from the heart, 'your circumcision in the flesh is made uncircumcision,' because it is not the circumcision which is *outward*, but the circumcision which is *inward*—*the circumcision of Jesus Christ* to change our carnal minds. ***All 'religion' is carnal minded!*** That may come as a surprise to a lot of people, but it really is.

Verse 3: "For we are the circumcision, who serve God ***in the spirit*** and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in *the* flesh.... [*no confidence* in 'religion'] ...Though I might also have *reason* to trust in *the* flesh. If any other thinks he has *cause* to trust in *the* flesh, I *have* much more" (vs 3-4).

He's going to say, 'Okay, if you want to look at the things in the flesh, let's look at it.' In Paul's own eyes before he was converted, his 'religion' was pure and undefiled—in *his own eyes*, but not before God.

Verse 5: "Circumcised on *the* eighth day; of *the* race of Israel, from *the* tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews... [Boy! Look at my genealogy!] ...with respect to law, a Pharisee." The strictest sect of the Pharisees; 'we disciplined ourselves. We had rigor that we had in our schedule. We prayed and we fasted and we did things and we made broad our phylacteries,' which are like merit badges that they put along the borders of their garments.

Verse 6: "With respect to zeal, persecuting the Church..." How more zealous could you be than

actively destroying the ‘enemy of God,’ as he viewed it through his ‘religion’ being a Pharisee.

“...with respect to righteousness that *is* in law... [in the letter of the Law] ...blameless.... [pure and undefiled, no blame] ...Yet, the things that were gain to me... [talking about his ‘religion’] ...these things I have counted *as* loss for the sake of Christ” (vs 6-7).

He had to repent of all of his ‘religion,’ all of his works, all of his ‘do-gooding.’ He even had to look at the fact that even though he was of Israel—of the tribe of Benjamin, all of those things—that unless he was converted and had the Spirit of God, that didn’t matter one wit. Remember what Jesus said to those Jews when they said, ‘We be Abraham’s seed.’ He let them know being Abraham’s seed is not going to save them.

Verse 7: “Yet, the things that were gain to me, these things I have counted *as* loss for the sake of Christ. But then truly, I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...” (vs 7-8).

- Do you count that a loss?
- Do you realize and understand that when you are baptized, you are actually conjoined into the death of Jesus Christ?
- Knit together in that death of Christ?
- In a covenant pledge unto your death?
- That you will love God and be faithful to the end, through the power of God’s Holy Spirit?
- Do you understand that?

We are not in a ‘religion.’ ***We are in a covenant relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ***—our fellowship is with Them. Paul came to understand that. He wanted to have the ‘excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord.’

“...for Whom I have suffered the loss of *all* things...” (v 8). Everything that was gain: power, prestige, name, wealth, reputation, all of my ‘religious’ buddies.

“...suffered the loss of all things... [How did he look at them?] ...and count *them* as dung...” (v 8). A pile of ‘skubalon’—stinking and smelling and fetid and filled with flies and maggots and vermin. That’s how he viewed all of his ‘goodness,’ all of the ‘goodness’ that he had ‘religiously’—a pile of dung!

“...that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him...” (vs 8-9). This is not a ‘religious’ thing. You are found in Him if you have the Spirit of Christ. If the Spirit that was in Christ dwell in you, He shall raise you from the dead. We’re to be *led* by the Spirit of Christ, be found in Him.

“...not having my own righteousness, which *is derived* from law... [all defined by tradition; even the letter of the Law is not going to save] ...but that *righteousness*, which *is by the* faith of Christ, the righteousness of God *that is* based on faith” (v 9)—imputed to you.

Brethren, let’s understand something very important that is a great and marvelous gift of grace that God gives you: ***that He imputes to you the righteousness of Jesus Christ!*** So that *spiritually* you can become perfect in Christ. What can you do with a ‘religious’ *outward* ‘good’ work that’s better than that? *Not a thing!*

Verse 10: “That I may know Him...” through that personal relationship. Do you *know* Jesus Christ? Do you *know* God the Father? ***or*** Are you like Job? That you’ve heard by the ‘hearing of the ear,’ but you really don’t know Them? You need to think about that! If you don’t, then you ask God:

- to help you grow in *love*
- to help you grow in *faith*
- to help you grow in *hope*

—so that ***you know*** Them! That means you ***will keep*** Their commandments. That means you ***will love*** Them. But commandment-keeping is not, in a ‘religious’ sense, in the *letter of the law*. Commandment-keeping is that ***you do it from the heart***, spiritually, because you love and desire God’s way and God has made it possible for you to do so.

Verse 10: “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection...” Brethren, what good is it going to do to try and make God’s way a ‘religion’ and then lose out on the resurrection? Have we seen a lot of ‘religious’ people do that? *Yes, we have!*

“...and the fellowship of His sufferings...” (v 10). Paul personally—because he persecuted, killed, destroyed and imprisoned those true believers before he was converted^[transcriber’s correction]—now he understood the suffering of Jesus Christ, Who suffered so incredibly at the crucifixion. That he [Paul] is saying that he, in his life, needed to come to the understanding of the fellowship of His [Christ’s] suffering; so that he could realize and grasp what God the Father and Jesus Christ had done for him—and all of those that ***They call*** and all of those that ***They will call***.

Christ told Paul when he was *called* that he was going to suffer for the Word of God and that his life was going to be one of great difficulty. He came to understand that. He came to accept that. He came to say that he wanted to have the fellowship, the participation in the suffering of Jesus Christ. That’s how deeply converted that Paul was. That’s how far away he threw the ‘religion’ of the past.

Can we do the same thing? *or* Are we going to struggle along and try and make a 'religion' out of God's way? Because the truth of the matter is, to answer the question that I began with: ***God isn't going to bring any 'religion' on over into the Millennium—none!*** He's going to show the world ***His way*** to live.

"...being conformed to His death... [that covenant pledge of death] ...If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (vs 10-11). That's why we are here, brethren. We're not here to be 'religious.' We're here to love God, love our neighbors, love the brethren as Christ has loved us, to help and serve one another—no question about that! The whole goal is that we might attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Verse 12: "Not as though I have already received, or have already been perfected..." No! Paul understood the attitude of the Pharisee: 'I thank You I'm not as other men. I am perfect. I'm not an extortioner or unjust or even as this publican down here.' No, he [the publican] didn't consider himself perfect.

- perfection, brethren, comes day-by-day
- perfection comes through the Spirit of God
- perfection comes through the forgiveness of sin
- perfection comes with the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ

All of those are the acts and gifts of grace through Jesus Christ to each of us. It's not an *exterior* 'religious' thing that we do.

Paul says: "...but I am striving, so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained ..." (vs 12-13). Brethren, it is true, we have not attained until we die in the faith or are changed in 'a moment of the twinkling of an eye at the last trump' when Christ returns, if we are still living when that happens. We have not attained. We have not apprehended.

"...but *this one thing I do...* [this is why if you do this, 'religion' cannot be a part of your way of living before God] ...forgetting the things that are behind..." (v 13). God has said, He forgives your sins and won't remember them. You remember them and you try and figure out what good thing you can do to compensate for it. When you do that, you're *rejecting the forgiveness and righteousness of Christ*. You are reminding God of your sins, which He wants to forget. Do you understand that? Do you see where that conflict of 'religion' comes?

"...forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth... [stretching out, forward] ...to the things that are ahead" (v 13). It has to be that way,

brethren, in all of our lives. What we did yesterday, last week, last month, last year, five years ago, ten years ago, twenty years ago, thirty years ago. Some of us have been in the Church 40 years now. Those things are all behind. Hopefully, they were all motivated by the Spirit of God and that is fine. But how about all the sins that we have done in the meantime? All of those are forgotten. Put those behind you. Let Christ put it away from you. He says that He removes our sins and iniquities from us 'as far as the east is from the west' (Psa. 103)

Why do you want to go be 'religious' and bring those back and do 'good' works so you can compensate for what you didn't do? *You can't do that!* That's your own works! That's of yourself! You love God and let Him work *through* you and *in* you, then these things will come the way that Paul is talking about here.

Verse 14: "I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." That's what it needs to be. That is not a 'religious' statement. That is a whole *developing and continuous* relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ and the calling that has been given.

- there is no greater calling than *to be called to receive the Spirit of God*
- there is no greater calling than *to be in the first resurrection*
- there is no greater calling than *to be a son or daughter of God*
- there is no greater calling *to be the bride, as the first fruits of Christ*

You look at all the paltry things of 'religious' deeds that people do and you compare that with this *calling*. That's why Paul said all of this was dung! It is! It's outrageous when you really understand it.

Verse 15: "So then, let as many as *be* perfect..." You can be perfect spiritually with the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God in you. ***Be perfect! Be thus minded!*** You go forward. You live your life with the love and Spirit of God and you *be thus minded*. Then you are in perfect standing with God with the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ given to you. That doesn't mean you can go sin by any stretch of the imagination, because then you are not in perfect righteousness with God.

"...be of this mind. And... [here's a promise]: ...if *in* anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal even this to you" (v 15). For what purpose? ***That you may repent!*** That He may blot out your sins. That you may be able to then go forward as the Apostle Paul said.

Verse 16: "Nevertheless, *in regard* to that which we have attained, let us walk by the same

rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, be imitators together of me, and bear in mind those who walk in this way, as you have us *for* an example” (vs 16-17). This is what we need to do, brethren. **We need to walk in that way of God.** There it is right before us.

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Let’s understand the very basic foundation of what God wants us to realize in our relationship with Him, John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘**I am the Way...**’” He didn’t say that through Me you have ‘religion’ He is ***the Way***. As we are going to see before we’re done, it is the *way of God*, the *way of the Lord*, the *way of Truth*.

“...and **the Truth**, and **the Life**; no one comes to the Father except through Me.” Not by ‘religion,’ not by human works, not by good endeavors that you yourself may do, but through Jesus Christ.

Which ‘religion’ will God preserve and carry over into the Millennium? *I think we’ll have a great understanding as to why God truly hates ‘religion’! There will not be one single ‘religion’ carried on over into the Millennium!*

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) James 1:1
- 2) James 2:1-2
- 3) James 1:19-27
- 4) Acts 13:15
- 5) Acts 23:1
- 6) James 1:19
- 7) Acts 26:4-5
- 8) Galatians 1:13-14
- 9) Mark 7:1-13
- 10) Luke 18:9-14
- 11) Ephesians 2:2-10
- 12) Philippians 3:3-17
- 13) John 14:6

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Acts 15
- Ezekiel 14
- Psalm 103

Also referenced:

Book: *Code of Jewish Law* by Ganzfried & Goldin

Sermons:

- *Created Relationships*
- *Invisible Idol/Visible Man*
- *Salvation is Creation*

Can "Religion" Save?

(Lessons from Job)

Fred R. Coulter

Greetings brethren! We are going to ask the question: **Can 'religion' save?** Before we get into it, here's a very interesting article:

San Francisco Chronicle, March 12, 1999: *Iranian Leader, Pope Find Common Ground in Rome*. (articles.sfgate.com)

Khatami... [leader of Iran] ...hails historic meeting as 'promising day'. Vatican—In a landmark encounter of Christian and Islamic leaders, Pope John Paul II met yesterday with Mohammad Khatami, the moderate cleric who heads Iran's theocratic government, and said their 25-minute discussion made for 'an important, promising day.' Khatami, a Shiite Muslim, told the Roman Catholic pontiff that he hopes the two monotheistic faiths could join to inspire a more equitable world order...

If you read the book *Keys of This Blood: Pope John Paul II vs Russia and the West for Control of the New World Order* by Malachi Martin about John Paul II's plans for world domination; you'll see that it falls right in line with it. A lot of people have been wondering when is it ever going to be that the Muslims and Catholics will get together. Well, here is one of the very first steps.

"The hope is for the victory of monotheism, of ethics, of morals together with peace and reconciliation..."

This sounds just almost exactly like what the Catholics are saying and what the ecumenical Protestants are saying. The truth is, once you leave God then you still want some kind of morals. You want some kind of 'religion,' but you don't want the commandments of God, which says 'Thou shalt' or 'Thou shalt not.'

"...ethics, morals, live together in peace and reconciliation," the Iranian president said. "May God protect you."

The papal audience was an endorsement of Khatami's campaign for a "dialogue of civilizations" that would break Iran's twenty-year isolation.

At the end of their talks, conducted through interpreters, one of the three clerics accompanying Khatami asked the pope in English, "May I do something?" Surprising everyone in the room, he kissed the pope on both cheeks.

I wonder what inspiration he had to do that? Makes you wonder—doesn't it?

Khatami, 56, wore a gray clerical robe, a black cloak and the black turban signifying that he descends from the prophet Mohammed, founder of the faith that rivals Catholicism for the world's biggest flock. Each religion claims just over 1-billion faithful.

The tall Iranian cleric and his stooped, white-robed host... [John Paul II] ...have much in common. Both studied philosophy, and both preach about the need for economic justice...

And, of course, John Paul's economic justice is just one step away from communism.

...revival of spiritual values and tolerance among faiths. Speaking to European scholars Wednesday night, Khatami said, "All the divine religions are not quintessentially different."

What he's actually saying is that all the 'religions' are the same.

...Khatami's visit had landmark significance for two reasons. One is Iran's influence in the Islamic world, enhanced by the fact that Khatami is now president of the 55-nation Islamic Conference...

They are all coming home to Rome; all roads lead to Rome. That fits in very nicely, because 'religion' is going to unite all the 'religions' of the world on their common ground—the things that they do together—so that they can try and find world peace and that they can bring all men together. What's going to happen? Is all of this 'religious' movement going to save them? *No! It's going to destroy them!*

Will *or* can 'religion' save? I know that a lot of people are still wondering why I am attacking 'religion.' I'm not attacking 'religion.' I'm just pointing out the Truth of what's in God's Word.

In the world there are many 'religious' people, of many different faiths. Many of them in the societies and the countries where they live are upstanding citizens, law abiding. They do 'good works'; they do many different things. The world recognizes those kinds of things as 'good,' a good influence. 'Religion' is a way where people can come together on their terms of what they believe, so

that they can worship God in the manner that they choose. That's what 'religion' is.

Let me read a definition of 'religion.' Someone sent this to me. As I read it, I want you to understand something that's very important. The English word *religion*—as we find in James 1—does not have the same meaning in the Greek that this *Webster's Exhaustive Dictionary* definition has. So, as people view us, they will say, 'You are *religious*,' because anyone who believes in God has got to be 'religious,' as opposed to being an atheist or an agnostic. if you let people know you believe in God and Jesus Christ: What 'religion' do you belong to?

Webster's Exhaustive Dictionary:

1. A personal commitment to and serving of God or a god with worshipful devotion, conduct in accord with divine commands, especially as found in accepted sacred writings and declared by authoritative teachers.

A personal commitment is something that the person does. *God's way* is more than a personal commitment. *It is a calling.*

2. It is a way of life...

Well, at least they have that part right, but the way of life that we follow is not *a way* of life, but the way that Jesus has laid down as *the Way*. He is *the Truth!* You see the subtle differences here. You could read this and think, 'Boy! Yes, we are a 'religion.' But as I have pointed out, you cannot find the word *Christian* and *religion* together in the New Testament, it just isn't there.

- Judaism is a 'religion'
- Catholicism is a 'religion'
- Protestantism is a 'religion'
- Mohammadism is a 'religion'

All those who have *their own* "faith" are 'religions,' but these 'religions' *will not* and *cannot save!* We'll show you that. That's the whole point I'm trying to make.

When God first calls us we automatically think in terms of 'religion.' Or if we have been in one church and God calls us out of that because we want to know the Truth of God, it isn't that you just change churches. It's not like going from the Lutheran to the Baptist or the Baptist to the Mormon or the Mormon to the Reorganized Mormon or leave that and go to the Buddhists, that's just changing 'religions.' And as he said, 'quintessentially all 'religions' are not different'—they are the same.

...Recognized as a way of life, recognized on incumbents as incumbent upon true believers...

they've got that one fairly close

...and typically the relating of oneself to an organized body of believers.

There is the social club! Pick out the church of your choice. Billy Graham says, 'Come to the Lord and then you go back home and you pick out a church that you'll be comfortable going to.' That is 'religion.' So, while they have one sentence in here that comes very close to the Truth, not one of them says the true believer in Jesus Christ, Who declared that He *is the Way, the Truth and the Life*—is there?

3. The state of a religious person... [it says nuns here] ...The state of a religious—the nun died in her 13th year of her vows or whatever.
4. One of the systems of faith and worship. A religious faith, monotheistic or tolerant of all religions. Forbidding discrimination because of race, color, or religion. The body of institutionalized expressions of sacred beliefs...

In other words, *the traditions!* This is all manmade. So, out of the whole thing we have found one sentence that gets kind of close in the definition of 'religion.'

5. The observances and social practices found in a given culture in context for example, the religion of this primitive people... [they give] ...The profession or practice of religious beliefs, religious observances. "The colonel is of his practical belief was that it was respectable" and beneficial to one's business... [That's where most of it comes—merchandising.] ...to be seen going to services.

So all of these things define 'religion.' There are some other things here concerning 'religion.' Let me continue with some of the definitions here. They are very interesting.

6. A personal awareness or conviction of the existence of a supreme being...

Many people believe that. That makes many people 'religious.'

...or of supernatural powers or influences controlling one's own humanity or all natures destiny... [Isn't that something?] ...The access of such an awareness or conviction accompanied by or arousing reverence, gratitude, humility, the will to obey and serve.

7. Religious experience or insight: A cause, principle, system of tenets, held with ardor, devotion in

conscientiousness and faith. A value held to be of supreme importance.

That could be almost anything. You could make ‘religion’ almost anything.

8. A quality, condition, custom or thing inspiring zealous devotion. Conscientious maintenance and cherishing of the religion.
9. Synonyms include: faith, church, creed, communion, denomination, sect, cult, persuasion. Religion is a general term, especially applicable to the great religions and the larger subdivisions; among their believers the Christian religion, Roman Catholic, Methodist religion. Faith is applicable to any formulated and established major religious group. It may or may not suggest ardent, complete acceptance such as you could have the Mohammedan faith, the Mormon faith, men of all faiths; churches likely to stress existence of a formed organization and procedure. It may suggest a Christian rather than non-Christian context. Creeds differ from faith in more strongly suggested formal doctrinal expressions of what is believed...

That broad definition has no meaning or relevance to James 1. Let’s just review that. I think it’s important for us to understand that James was writing, as I have said several times, to a combination of those who are converted, newly converted, unconverted, those who were just in synagogue.

James 2:20: “But are you willing to understand, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”

Verse 19: “Do you believe that God is one? You do well *to believe this*. Even the demons believe and tremble *in fear*.” He’s really not talking to too many converted people here in this case, because if they were converted they would already know that.

He says over here in the first part of James 2 that if you break one of the commandments, you have broken them all. Well, if you are truly converted you understand that. What James was dealing with is the Zealots. Of course, a lot of the Zealots, though they profess Jesus, later turned away in the rebellion against Rome and were killed and destroyed in the destruction of Jerusalem. So they weren’t converted.

Concerning *religion*, James 1:26: “If anyone among you considers himself to be religious... [‘threskos’]—in this sense a ‘religious’ person is a

‘threskos’] ...and does not control his tongue, but deceived his own heart, this one’s religion *is* vain.... [that’s clear] ...Pure and undefiled religion before God and *the* Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (vs 26-27).

There are a lot of people out in the world who consider themselves ‘keeping themselves unspotted from the world’ in drinking and carousing and all of those things. People can do that who are not converted, but too many of the problems and difficulties that we’ve all had in the Church is that it was made into a ‘religion’ rather than into what God really wanted. That’s why God had to deal with the Church just as He dealt with Job. There are some very important and profound things that we need to learn from the book of Job. That’s a long, long book with many, many lessons in it.

Can a ‘religion’ save? *No!* God alone can save and Jesus Christ is Savior.

Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves...” It doesn’t come from yourself. It’s not from a personal commitment, though you must have a personal *covenant pledge* to God. That is greater than a personal commitment. Your personal commitment to God as a true Christian runs far deeper than a personal commitment. It is a *covenant pledge*.

“...*it is* the gift of God” (v 8). If it is the gift of God then it cannot be earned. All ‘religions’ have an *earning works* formula:

- if you do *good* you will go to heaven
- if you do *bad* you will go to purgatory or hell
- if you do not take the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, you do not have salvation
- if you do not do the *hail Marys* and *our fathers* and attend Christmas and Easter and all of that sort of thing with *their* ‘religion,’ you have no salvation
- if you don’t come to church on Sunday you don’t have salvation

The thing is; all of those are *human mechanisms designed to control people*, to keep them in the organized group, to keep them in the organized ‘religion’ for the sake of power and control. That’s what the pope is doing in the world in everything he can get his hands on, and all of his agents.

- they’re very *religious*
- they’re very *devout*
- they’re very *pious*
- they’re very *zealous*

They know what they are doing. They're out to *destroy the true faith* of Jesus Christ and that means that they're out to destroy what you really truly believe. I think it's about time that we go to God and we ask God for some:

- faith
- zeal
- energy
- drive
- dedication to God

—and quit all of our silly little bickering over 'religions.' We just need to do that. The time has come that it's got to stop!

"...it is the gift of God... [You are not going to be saved by 'religion.' **God alone gives it to you as a gift!**] ...not of works, so that no one may boast" (vs 8-9).

So, it's not of any works that you can do. There is no such thing as an account chart with your name on it in heaven, where your name is there and listed over here on this side the good deeds, listed over here on this side are the bad deeds. If you have more good deeds than bad deeds, you're going to make it. *Not so!* You have to have a complete covenant relationship with God. If you do then you have the righteousness of Christ imputed to you so that everything is the *works of Christ*.

Verse 10: "For we are **His workmanship**... [God is working with us] ...created in Christ Jesus..." **Salvation is creation.** God doesn't want us to be just good sincere people in the world. He wants us to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and being and to live *His way* and to love Jesus Christ, with His Spirit, let Him put the mind of Christ in us. That's very important for us to understand that.

"...created in Christ Jesus unto the good works... [these are the **true good works** of love, faith and hope] ...that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them." Of course, that has to do with commandment-keeping, no question about it. But commandment-keeping is not where it ends; commandment-keeping is where it **begins**, because God has called us to this covenant relationship.

Let's go to John 6 so that we understand this covenant relationship. You have to be called of God. It is a special, Divine, individual act by God the Father **to you as a person**. The calling of God comes from the greatest Supreme Being in the universe—God the Father. He's not calling you to a 'religion.' He's calling you to a relationship with Him and to be in the **Family of God**, but that is going to take a **covenant commitment**.

John 6:44: "No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise

him up at the last day." The Father has got to draw you. The **Father works in your life and in your mind to call you**. Then it's up to you to respond and repent.

Verse 45: "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.'..." Whose doing the teaching then? *God is!* I can read the words, you can read the words, but it's *God's Spirit in your mind* that does the teaching and gives you understanding. That's what's really happening.

"...Therefore, everyone who has heard... [you have to hear and answer] ...from the Father, and has learned, comes to Me" (v 45).

John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, 'I am **the Way**, and **the Truth**, and **the Life**; no one comes to the Father except through Me.'" So, no one can get to Jesus except through the Father and no one can come to the Father except through Jesus and that is *very clear*. This is not a 'religious' endeavor that takes place. He brings us to the point that we repent of our sins and we are baptized.

Let's understand what our dedication to God is. It is a **covenant death**. That's important. You have to completely die to Christ.

Romans 6:3: "Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were **baptized into His death**?" You're conjoined with His death. You have pledged to God, by the very act of baptism and being conjoined to the death of Jesus Christ, that you will follow Jesus Christ and God the Father. **That is not a religion!** This is a covenant between you and God. Moreover, in being joined to His death, Jesus Christ—to make it possible—died for your sins and eventually the sins of the whole world. So, you die to sin when you are buried in the watery grave of baptism.

Verse 4: "Therefore, we were buried with Him through the baptism into the death; so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness of His* resurrection" (vs 4-5).

Brethren, that is a great calling. That is a marvelous thing to realize and understand. That's why God has not called you to a 'religion.' And 'religion' **can't save**. Even the very best, most pure, most undefiled 'religion' **cannot save**. It may look good to the world. It may look to other people. You may be counted a very 'righteous' person in the eyes of some people, but it **cannot save**; only Jesus Christ can.

Verse 6: "Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with *Him*..."

- Do you figure that you have been crucified?
- Do you?
- Do you consider yourself that dead; that you were crucified with Christ, the old person before baptism?

That's what it's all about. Those who really do not understand that are 'religious' people, and they may even be amongst some of the brethren of God in whatever Church of God it may be. The sins of the Churches in Rev. 2 & 3 were sins where they went away from God *to* 'religion.' Did Christ not have a lot of very stern things to say to them because of their sins? *No doubt about it.*

"...in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin" (v 6). Sin originates in the mind! ***We're to be converted and have the mind of Christ!*** And the *exterior* things of 'religion' ('threskeia') *cannot*, with these outward works, ***cleanse the inside.*** Matt. 23 shows how 'religion' leads to destruction. We're going to see who the founder of 'religion' is, and it ***is not God!*** It just is not.

Let's see what God has *called us to*. He has called us to a family relationship: ***He is our Father! We are His children!*** We are not Christians in *a* 'religion.' We are only Christian in identifying that we are following Christ, that's all. We are actually the Church of the Firstborn, the harvest of the firstfruits. Therefore, all of the 'religious' connotation that people bring in because that's all they're used to, if you were brought up in the Baptist Church or the Methodist Church or Presbyterian or Catholic, you had certain things that you did. You even read from the Bible. You even studied the Bible in many cases. But all of that, being as it is, *isn't going to save* unless you believe, are called, are converted and receive the Spirit of Christ. That's what's so important.

Romans 8:9: "...But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

- Do you believe that?
- Do you understand that?
- To whom does God give His Holy Spirit?
- *To those that obey Him (Acts 5:32)!*
- *To those that love Him!*

The only way that you are going to truly have a relationship with God and fellowship with God is if you truly love Him, because you know that Christ died for you. You have joined in this covenant death with Christ for the marvelous opportunity to be the very sons and daughters of God.

1-John 3:1: "Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us..." He gave it to us. The very fact that we love God, brethren, comes from God's Holy Spirit, that we can do it. Of and by ourselves we do not have the love that is necessary to love God spiritually, but God gives that to us.

"...that we should be called the children of God!..." In this case, the children of God—the 'teknon'—His own begotten offspring. Do you realize that? That God the Father Himself has begotten you in the spirit of your mind for a great and a marvelous purpose that no 'religion' of this world can possibly understand? They only selectively choose some of the things that *they want to do or they take the Scriptures and cleverly twist and turn them* to fit ***their own*** traditions and ***their own*** pagan philosophies and whatever.

"...For this very reason, the world does not know us..." (v 1). That's important to understand. Most of the 'religions' in the world are coming together in a whole united religious movement that is taking place. They don't know God! Satan is going to be right there and perform many, many miracles and ***all*** the 'religious' people—all of those who do not have the Spirit of God and actively use the Spirit of God to grow in grace and knowledge—are going to be deceived because they ***don't love the Truth.*** That day is coming!

If you think that going through trials and difficulties *now* are difficult, I don't think we have a clue as to what is going to happen down the road and how bad and serious it's going to be. We may in fact have to really give our lives. That's why with a covenant pledge of baptism, conjoined into the death of Jesus Christ, we have already committed ourselves to death. That's something we need to realize.

Verse 2: "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is." That's something, brethren! We need to realize that.

God has called us to a greater, *greater*, ***greater*** thing than just keeping the commandments and keeping the Holy Days! Those are all fundamental and required. Please don't let anyone misunderstand, and please don't think I'm trying to put those down. Please don't think that I'm trying to say, because you have religiously kept these for years and did a lot of good works during the Feast or whatever that now I'm putting you down. I'm not! I'm just saying that it isn't going to work in saving you.

Let's look at the commitment that we are to make. This is what God wants us to do. This is how the pledge—it's not just a personal commitment—that you have laid your life down to death—that's what you have done—**to live to God!** Jesus makes this very clear. We will see this when we get to the book of Job.

Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." The Greek there is 'ou adunatai'—*the impossibility* of any power of making you a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Verse 27: "And whoever does not carry his cross... [because you have been crucified with Christ or whatever difficulty that comes along] ...and come after Me cannot be My disciple"—'ou adunatai.' We're going to see that's what Job had to learn. Job did not understand that; Job did not realize that. Job was very 'religious'!

Let's look here at another 'religious' man. Luke 18:18: "And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Then Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good except One—God. You know the commandments: "You shall not commit adultery. You shall not commit murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother."' And he said, 'I have kept all these *commandments* from my youth.' And after hearing these things, Jesus said to him, 'You still lack one thing; sell everything that you have, and distribute to *the* poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come *and* follow Me'" (vs 18-22).

He wasn't willing to really give up. He wasn't really willing to die that covenant death with Christ.

Verse 23: "But when he heard these things, he became very sorrowful; for he was quite rich. Now, when Jesus saw him become so sorrowful, He said, 'How difficult *it is for* those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! For it is easier *for* a camel to go through an eye of a needle than *for* a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.' And those who heard *this* said, 'Who then is able to be saved?' But He said, 'The things *that are* impossible with men are possible with God'" (vs 23-27).

Here is something to understand in commandment-keeping: Remember that the certain ruler said, 'Lord, I've done this all my life.' He did all of those things. They are required for salvation, no doubt about it! But he was not willing to totally let himself die in Christ.

Luke 17:5: "Then the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' But the Lord said, 'If you had faith as a *tiny* mustard seed, you might say to this sycamine tree, "Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea," and it would obey you. But which of you having a servant plowing or shepherding will immediately say *to him when* he comes in from the field, "Come and sit down *and eat*"? Rather, will he not say to him, "Prepare what I may eat, and gird yourself, *and* serve me while I eat and drink; and afterwards you may eat and drink"? Is he thankful to that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? **I think not**" (vs 5-9).

Here is a statement that so very few people can really understand.

Verse 10: "Likewise you also, when you have done **all the things that are commanded you**, say, "We are unprofitable servants, because we have done that which we were obligated to do.""

'Religion' has taken all of the things that are a duty to do and they've wrapped it up in *their 'religious' things* and *their traditions* and so forth, and that cuts them off from progressing. Even 'pure and undefiled religion' ***cannot save you***.

Let's go back to Job and let's understand something that's very important for us to realize. People have wondered why the book of Job—42 chapters long—has some of the most incredible arguments *based upon all of the philosophical reasonings of the world*. ***All*** the major world's 'religious' philosophies are contained in here and spoken by Job and the three friends that came to him.

Job *in the letter* was perfect; even God said so. But there's one thing that's very important to understand: ***God is interested in the heart!*** A person might ask: Why did God have all these things done to Job? Why do it to someone who is perfect? *Well, the truth is, in heart Job was not perfect!* Something happens when people become 'religious' and do 'good' works. ***They get self-righteous!*** The hardest, ***hardest, hardest*** thing to repent of are all the self-righteous 'do-gooding' that a person has done, because you have done good to help someone and that did do some good. Did it save? ***No!*** Job did not understand that.

Job 1:1: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job. And that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and turned aside from evil."

- Do you think in today's world you can't get any better than that?
- Does that save?
- Will it save?

Verse 2: "And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters. And his possessions also were seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys, and a very great household, so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east" (vs 2-3).

That's something to understand—isn't it? As I'm reading all of this I want you to remember what we just read in Luke 14. 'If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother and brother and sister and lands and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.'

In all of this, God is going to bring Job to a Luke 14:26 situation *where he really sees himself*, because Job figured he was pretty perfect. The one sin that Satan can never understand is the sin of self-righteousness, because he himself is self-righteous. Satan is a 'stealth' god. That's going to be something for all of us to learn.

Verse 4: "And his sons went and feasted in their houses, each one on his day...." We don't know exactly what this means. We don't know if these were feasts to the *true* God or whether these were birthday parties or these were feasts to other gods. We don't know, it doesn't say.

"...And they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And when the days of feasting were concluded, Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job continually did so" (vs 4-5).

That's generally indicating something here that they weren't doing right. Apparently they were doing something that wasn't right. Maybe they were worshipping other gods, so he's trying to atone for them. Here's a lesson: ***You can't atone for someone else!*** You can pray for them, but they have to be responsible for their own lives, and that's what Job did.

Verse 6: "Now, there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD. And Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' Then Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro in the earth....'" (vs 6-7). He's as a roaring lion going to and fro in the earth, seeking whom he may devour, as the Apostle Peter wrote.

"...and from walking up and down in it." And the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil?'.... [just the kind

that Satan's looking for] ...And Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' (vs 6-9).

Satan's got benefits! He only does it because he's getting something out of it! And most 'religions' try and offer you something—don't they? *You get a benefit! God wants to give you more than benefits; He wants to give you eternal life!*

Verse 10: "'Have You not made a hedge around him, and around his house, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.'"

All true statements. God never denied it. This shows that for 'religious' people who do things and 'pure and undefiled religion', there are certain blessings that come. **Does it save? No!**

Verse 11: "But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face." Job had some deep lessons to learn here. God knew what *He* was doing. God knew that the time had come that Job had to graduate from being one who was *pure and undefiled* in 'religion' to becoming someone who has a relationship with God. All of his goodness and all the things that he did, he never came to that. God said, 'All right, Satan I'm going to *use you* for that.'

Verse 12: "And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has *is* in your power. Only do not lay your hand upon him.' And Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. Now, there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And there came a messenger to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing, and the donkeys feeding beside them. And the Sabeans fell *upon them*, and took them away. Yea, they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword. And I only have escaped alone to tell you' While he *was* still speaking, there also came *another* and said, 'The fire of God has fallen from the heavens and has burned up the sheep and the servants, and destroyed them. And I only have escaped alone to tell you.' While he *was* still speaking, there also came *another* and said, 'The Chaldeans formed three bands and swooped down upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and have killed the servants with the edge of the sword. And I only have escaped alone to tell you.' While he *was* still speaking..." (vs 12-18).

Here's trial after trial—BAM! BAM! BAM!—taking everything that he had, because he was looking to those things.

Verse 18: "While he *was* still speaking, there also came another and said, 'Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in

their oldest brother's house. And, behold, a great wind came from the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead. And I only have escaped alone to tell you.' And Job arose, and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshiped. And he said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.' In all this Job did not sin, nor charge God foolishly" (vs 18-22).

He didn't know it was just starting. That was quite a thing! 'Religious' people can do things like that—can't they? There was something he did to show his grief, to show what he was willing to do.

Job 2:1: "And again it came to pass on a day that the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD. And Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' And Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.' And the LORD said unto Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil? And still he is holding fast to his integrity... [it is not God's integrity, but *Job's*.] ...although you moved Me against him to destroy him without cause'" (vs 1-3). *That is on the surface!*

Verse 4: "And Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has he will give for his life.... [that's the motto of the AMA; you can believe that] ...But indeed put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life.' And Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the top of his head. And he took a broken piece of pottery to scrape himself with. And he sat down among the ashes" (vs 4-8).

That was so bad the only way to deal with it was just to take a potsherd, that's like a cut glass, and just scrape and cut the top of these boils off and let the pus ooze out, and in all the pain, just squeeze it and let the pus drip. He had it all from his head to his feet. I don't know of anyone that I've ever met who has had anything close to that kind of pain. Sore boils, maybe like carbuncles all over, you know those deep things that really hurt.

He *sat down among the ashes!* The reason is when you put ashes all over you, that dries it up, because it pulls all the pus out. Here is Job—I don't imagine his hair had grown out very much since he shaved it the first time—now covered with boils

from head to toe, sitting down, throwing ashes on himself and scraping himself, and just trying to ease himself of the pain.

Verse 9: "And his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold to your integrity?....'"—you're a hypocrite. You can just hear it. So much for Mrs. Job! That's the first and last we heard of her! She probably ran off and hid and stayed away from it all.

But notice her advice: "...Curse God and die!"... [you're better off dead] ...But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speak. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (vs 9-10). Now it's getting to his lips.

Verse 11: "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, and they each one came from his own place: Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had met together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and did not recognize him, they lifted up their voices and wept. And each one tore his robe, and *they* threw dust upon their heads toward heaven. And they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights. And no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that *his* grief was very great" (vs 11-13).

Seven days and seven nights just sitting there; scraping and ashes. You know what's going to happen? Guess what attracts flies? *Pus and blood!* There were flies coming around. I imagine he was waving to chase away the flies. Later on he says, 'Though worms destroy this body...' What was he referring to? *Maggots in his flesh!* His friends were really not very much of a comfort.

Job 3:1: "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his *birth*."

Verse 25: "'For the thing which I greatly feared has come upon me... [At least he's being honest here. In all of his righteousness he still had fear—didn't he? *Perfect love casts out fear!* Did Job have perfect love? *No!*] ...and that which I was afraid of has come to me."

Now then, three friends started giving him advice. All kinds of advice back and forth, 'Job, come on admit it, you're a sinner. You're a wicked man.' *No, I'm not.* 'Yes, you are.'

Job 9:1: "And Job answered and said, 'Truly I know *it is so*, but how can man be just with God? If he desired to argue with Him, he cannot answer Him one time out of a thousand *times*. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength. Who has hardened *himself* against Him and has prospered'" (vs 1-4). So, he started out with wisdom—didn't he? But later

he even went against that.

He starts complaining to God, and this is one that really shows the problem, v 32: "For *He* is not a man, as I *am*, that I should answer Him, that we should come together in court; there is no umpire between us, *who* might lay his hand upon us both" (vs 32-33).

What happens when you have self-righteousness? *and* That self-righteousness is destroyed? *Well, you really don't know what to do!* You don't want to curse God, because you are righteous enough to know you ought not to do that, and Job didn't do that. But you're bitter enough about it that you wish there were someone there that could put his hand on God and on you and really work the matter out. What it really comes down to is that in the final analysis, in all of this, ***self-righteousness is the hardest thing to see and to repent of***, because self-righteousness has been so 'good.'

Job 13:15: "Though He slay me, I will trust in Him..." This sounds like Peter. 'Lord, I'll go to the death with you.' Remember that? The Lord said, 'No, you won't. You'll deny Me three times before this night is out.'

"...but I will maintain my own ways before Him [*I was right!*] ...He also *is* my salvation, for a hypocrite shall not come before Him" (vs 15-16). 'Look, I'm not a hypocrite, all you guys with your arguments and telling me all this sort of thing. I haven't sinned. I haven't done wrong. I maintain my right.'

Verse 17: "Listen carefully to my words, and to my declarations with your ears. Behold now, I have set *my* cause in order; I know that I shall be justified. Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die. Only do not do two *things* to me; then I will not hide myself from You. Withdraw Your hand far from me, and let not Your dread terrify me. Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and You answer me" (vs 17-22). He's kind of laying down the terms here to God—isn't he? That won't work that way. You can't lay down terms to God.

Verse 23: "**How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.** Why do You hide Your face, and reckon me as Your enemy?" (vs 23-24). Those are pretty strong words against God. He's challenging God to come and show him his sins.

What I want you to do is read all the way through the book of Job. You're going to see that even some of the very arguments that the three friends in Job used, *you have used*. And the reason being is that you haven't quite yet graduated out of

'religion' into a relationship with God. Read the whole thing. When I first read it, I really thought God was wrong, because I was just newly baptized and just starting. I thought I would read the book of Job.

- Why would God do that to a perfect man?
- Why would He go through this?

Look at all the things that he did. I looked at my life and I had to admit my life was nothing like Job's. How could Job be counted a sinner? Look at all the things that he did.

Job 29:1: "And Job continued speaking, and said, 'Oh, that **I** were as *in* months past, as *in* the days when God watched over **me**; when His lamp shined upon **my** head; and when **I** walked *through* darkness by His light; as **I** was in the days of **my** youth, when the secret of God *was* upon **my** tabernacle; when the Almighty *was* yet with **me**, and my children were around **me**; when **I** washed my steps with butter, and the rock pressed out rivers of oil for **me**; when **I** went out to the gate of the city; when **I** prepared **my** seat in the square! The young men saw **me** and hid themselves; and the aged arose *and* stood up. The rulers refrained from talking, and laid their hands on their mouths" (vs 1-9).

Here's mighty Job walking in, the very important man! Everyone stopped in *hush* as the righteous, perfect Job passed by.

Verse 10: ". The noble's voice was subdued, and their tongue clung to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard **me** then it blessed **me**.... [Oh, Job that was so good!] ...And when the eye saw **me** it gave witness to **me**.... [Right on Job!] ...For **I** delivered the poor who cried for help..." (vs 10-12).

Does this not relate to James 1, 'pure and undefiled religion'? *Yes!* Job was the purest and most undefiled in his religion, but he didn't have a relationship with God.

- he knew of God
- he feared God
- he kept His commandments

—but *he did not have a relationship with God!* He was trusting in his own goodness, even though they are the commandments of God. Do you understand? ***No human being with the 'law of sin and death' within him or her is ever capable of being spiritually perfect.*** Job was not spiritually perfect. He was *carnally perfect*. He was *religiously perfect*. Did it save him? *No!* What saved him? We'll see when we get a little further on.

Verse 12: "For **I** delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who *had* none to

help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and **I** caused the widow's heart to sing for joy" (vs 12-13). He did James 1:26^[transcriber's correction] just as the best as can be! Better than James ever thought it could be done.

James 1:26: "If anyone among you considers himself to be religious, and does not control his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this ones religion is vain."

Job 29:14: "**I** put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice *was* like a robe and a diadem.... [that gave me authority and great stature] ...**I** was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. **I** was a father to the poor; and the cause which I did not know, **I** searched out" (vs 12-16). He was so righteous; he went out and searched out for things that were wrong so he could make them right. That's something!

Verse 17: "I broke the fangs of the wicked, and plucked the prey out of his teeth." Yes, as a reigning monarch—the greatest of anyone in the East country—he went out and he took care of the wicked people. 'Yes, I'm 'religious'; I got rid of them.'

Verse 18: "Then I said, 'I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply *my* days like the sand.'" In other words, he's going to just fix everything up really nice. When it comes time for him to die, he's going to die in his nest. It isn't going to be a tragedy. It isn't going to be anything wrong. It's going to be perfect because '*I'm going to make it perfect.*'

Verse 19: "My root *was* spread out to the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory *was* fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. They listened to me, and waited, and kept silent at my counsel.... [none could do better than Job] ...After my words they did not speak again; and my speech dropped on them. And they waited for me like the rain; and they opened their mouth wide *as* for the latter rain.... [Just 'Ahh!' Drinking it all in when they heard Job speak.] ...I smiled on them *when* they did not believe; and the light of my countenance they did not cast down. I chose out their way, and sat as chief; and I lived like a king in the army, as one *who* comforts the mourners'" (vs 12-25). I tell you what, ***you talk about being 'righteous'!***

Job 31:5: "**If** I have walked with vanity..." He just spoke vanity! Just like the young man said, 'I've done all these things from my youth up.' Jesus said, 'All right, go sell everything that you have.' In this case Job didn't sell it, God took it—same thing.

"...or **if** my foot has hurried to deceit" (v 5). Here he is deceiving himself with his own goodness. That's what's so hard to see! ***When you***

are 'good,' what do you have to repent of? The self and your evil nature!

Verse 6: "Let me be weighed in an even balance..." Yes, because he thought of the good works/bad works thing, and all those good works will just pull it right up good.

"...so that God may know that I am blameless. If my step has turned out of the way, or my heart has walked after my eyes, and if any spot has cleaved to my hands; *then* let me sow, and let another eat; and let my harvests be rooted out. If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have laid wait at my neighbor's door, *then* let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down upon her. For that *would be* a heinous crime; yea, it *would be* an iniquity *to be punished by* the judges" (vs 6-11). On and on and on; I tell you it was something!

Here's Job's plea, v 35: "Oh, that I had one to hear me!... [you three friends out there, you're not listening to me] ...Behold, my desire is *that* the Almighty would answer me, and the indictment *that* my adversary had written." He got both! God did answer him and it's written in a book. Here it is.

Verse 36: "Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, *and* bind it *like* a crown *upon* my head. I would declare to Him the number of my steps..." (vs 36-37). I would show God what I did. 'Look God, I did this, and I did this and I did this, and, God, I am a perfect human being.' But you still have sinful nature and all the good that was done was done out of sheer pride and self-righteousness.

"...like a prince I would come before Him.... [I would walk right up to God] ...If my land cry against me, or its furrows weep together; if I have eaten its strength without paying for it, or have caused its owners to lose their life, let thorns come forth instead of wheat, and weeds instead of barley.' The words of Job are ended" (vs 37-40). After that, what can you say?

Job 32:1: "And these three men ceased to answer Job, because **he was righteous in his own eyes**.... [someone always let's you know the truth] ...Then was kindled the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram. His wrath burned against Job, because he had justified himself rather than God. Also his wrath was kindled against his three friends, because they had found no answer and *yet* had condemned Job" (vs 1-3). When you come to the end of it, when Job had to offer sacrifices for himself and his three friends, he didn't have to offer it for Elihu.

Verse 4: "Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they *were* older than he in days. When Elihu saw that there *was* no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled. And

Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, ‘I *am* young, and you *are* very old; therefore, I was afraid, and dared not show you my opinion. I said, “The aged should speak, and the multitude of years should teach wisdom.” But *there is* a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding. Great men are not *always* wise... [Very profound!] ...neither do the aged understand justice. Therefore, I say, “Hearken to me. I also will declare my opinion.”’” (vs 4-10).

Verse 18: “For I am full of the matter; the spirit within me constrains me.”

Verse 21: “Let me not, I pray you, accept any man’s person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man.”

Job 33:8: “Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I have heard the sound of *your* words, *saying*, ‘I *am* pure, without transgression; I *am* innocent, and *there is* no iniquity in me’” (vs 8-9). That’s what he heard Job say.

Verse 12: “Behold, *in* this you are not right; I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you fight against Him? For He does not give account for *any* of His matters” (vs 12-13). That is, to any man.

Job 34:1: “And Elihu answered and said, ‘Hear my words, O you wise men; and give ear to me, you who have knowledge; for the ear tries words, *as* the palate tastes food. Let us choose for ourselves what is right; let us know among ourselves what *is* good. For Job has said, “I am righteous; but God has denied me justice; should I lie against my right? My wound cannot be cured; *I am* without transgression.” What man *is* like Job, *who* drinks up scolding like water; who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men? For he has said, “It profits a man nothing when he delights himself in God.” Therefore, hearken to me, O you men of understanding; far be it from God to commit iniquity; and from the Almighty, *that He should commit* iniquity. For the work of a man shall He render unto him, and cause every man to find according to *his* ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment” (vs 1-12).

Verse 35, Elihu continues: “‘Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words *were* without wisdom.’ My desire *is that* Job may be tried unto the end because *his* answers *are* like those of wicked men. For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps *his* hands among us, and multiplies his words against God.’” (vs 35-37).

Job 35:1: “And Elihu answered and said, ‘Do you think this to *be* right, you *that* say, “My righteousness *is* more than God’s”? For you say,

“What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than *if* I had sinned?” I will answer your words, and your companions with you. Look to the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds; they are higher than you. If you sin, what do you do against Him? Or *if* your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?”’” (vs 1-7).

Verse 12: “There they cry, but He gives no answer, because of the pride of evildoers. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it” (vs 12-13).

- What is he referring to?
- What is the vainest thing possible?
- *Religion that claims to save!*

That is vanity, and *self-righteousness is vanity*. Elihu kept going on. He went on for another whole two chapters, showing Job about his self-righteousness, and **finally God answered**.

Job 38:1: “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, ‘Who *is* this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man; for I will demand of you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare it if you have understanding! Who has determined its measurements if you know? Or who has stretched the line upon it? On what are the foundations fastened to? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?’” (vs 1-7)—pointing to the creation.

Job 40:1: “And the LORD answered Job and said, ‘Shall he who contends with the Almighty instruct *Him*?... [Is anyone going to instruct the *heart-knowing* God?] ...He who reproves God, let him answer it’” (vs 1-2). *Come on Job, answer!*

Verse 3: “And Job answered the LORD and said, ‘Behold, I am vile! What shall I answer You? I will lay my hand on my mouth.... [Job finally learned how to; **time to shut up!**] ...Once I have spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.’” (vs 3-5). Here’s the whole core of everything to do with ‘religion’ and why ‘religious’ *works*—even the most pure and undefiled ‘religious’ works, the *exterior* ‘religious’ works that you do—cannot save.

Verse 6: “And the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, ‘Gird up your loins now like a man. I will demand you, and you declare unto Me. Will you even annul My judgment?....’” (vs 6-8). Every single ‘religion’ does it.

- they have *their* traditions
- they have *their* own commandments

- they have *their* own rules and regulations.
- they declare that the Sabbath is not right, but Sunday is
- they have disannulled the judgment of God

“...Will you condemn Me so that you may be righteous?” (v 8). Isn’t that what religionists and theologians do? *‘Well, God gave the Sabbath and His commandments because they were harsh and God just wanted to punish them. But we are righteous and sweet and good and have grace and love,’* and all of this cloyed stickiness of self-righteousness.

Verse 9: “And *have* you an arm like God?...” In other words, if you are going to condemn Me, are you God? That’s what He’s saying.

“...Or can you thunder with a voice like His?” (v 9). Job, you think you are so good. There he is with all the pus and scabs and flies and ashes, everything all over him.

Verse 10: “Deck yourself now with majesty and excellency, and array yourself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of your wrath; and behold everyone who is proud, and abase him. Look on everyone *who is* proud, *and* bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; *and* bind their faces in darkness. Then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you” (vs 10-14).

‘Religion’ **cannot save!** Your own self-righteousness **cannot save!** That is all required. When you have done everything that is commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants.’ God wants us to go above and beyond that by not pushing ourselves up, but by:

- yielding ourselves to God
- asking for His Spirit
- asking for His love
- entering into a relationship with God

because God alone can save us.

Are you willing to repent of your ‘religious’ self-righteousness? That’s the reason that this whole controversy got started over a sermonette that Bob Hunnicutt gave where he said that God hates religion. God does hate religion. Look at all the perfectness of Job.

- Did it save? *No!*
- Did it do some good out here? *Yes!*
- But how quickly can all that be taken away? *BAM! Just like that!*

God took it away. He had none of the physical things around that **he** could build himself up with and say, ‘Look, I did this and I did that’ and so forth.

Job 42:1: “And Job answered the LORD and said, ‘I know that You can do all things, and *that* no thought can be withheld from You. *You asked, “Who is he who hides counsel without knowledge?”... [Job is talking to himself, about himself] ...Therefore, I have spoken that which I did not understand...’*” (vs 1-3). He said, ‘I spoke with no understanding.’ If you want to retain a ‘religion’—though you may call it Christian—you do not have understanding. You need the understanding of God.

“...*things* too wonderful for me; yea, which I did not know. Hear, I beseech You, and I will speak; *You said, “I will ask of you, and you will declare to Me.”* I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear... [that’s what ‘religion’ is: you hear of God by the hearing of the Word] ...**but now my eye sees You**” (vs 3-5).

To see the true perspective, here is Job repenting, and he had to repent of all the good that he did. Was it hard? *Yes!* Men couldn’t convince him to repent, but when God dealt with him personally, God led him to repentance. And it’s the same thing with us. The graciousness of God leads us to repentance. Oh, you did good things in the past, that’s fine! That’s all expected.

- Do you love God?
- Have you totally repented to Him?
- Do you understand that the human heart is deceitful above all things, even in its own goodness?

Verse 6: “Therefore, I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.”

When that happened, Job was healed. God blessed him. He had to offer the offerings for those three friends, but not for Elihu. Of all of the people that were there with Job, only one man understood that God is so great, marvelous and supreme that our righteousness, as Isaiah has said, is just like ‘filthy rags.’ We stand before God and try and hold those up to Him. It’s the same as Job arguing with God and saying, ‘God, I have done so good, You just got to come down here and I’m going to convince You of what **I** have done. How good **I** am.’ So, he had to repent.

- Can you repent of your ‘religious’ things?
- Can you repent of making a ‘religion’ out of God’s way?
- Can you change and really see that there is **the way of God** that you have to follow with all your heart, mind, soul and being?

That’s what it’s all about, brethren. ***‘Religion’ cannot save! It is the gift of God through Jesus Christ!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

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- 4) John 6:44-45
- 5) John 14:6
- 6) Romans 6:3-6
- 7) Romans 8:9
- 8) 1 John 3:1-2
- 9) Luke 14:26-27
- 10) Luke 18:18-27
- 11) Luke 17:5-10
- 12) Job 1:1-22
- 13) Job 2:1-13
- 14) Job 3:1, 25
- 15) Job 9:1-4, 32-33
- 16) Job 13:15-24
- 17) Job 29:1-13
- 18) James 1:26
- 19) Job 29:14-15
- 20) Job 31:5-11, 35-40
- 21) Job 32:1-10, 18, 21
- 22) Job 33:8-9, 12-13
- 23) Job 34:1-12, 35-37
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- 25) Job 38:1-7
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