

WHY RELIGION EXISTS

A LOOK AT THE PURPOSE AND PROBLEMS OF RELIGION

*"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:
for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

~ Romans 3:20

1. Religious People

- a. When asked about their salvation, a common response is what they've done.
- b. (You've been there, too.) *Why?* Religion exists. People are religious. *Why?*
- c. Religion ~*def.* The duties required to satisfy God's wrath or earn God's favor.
- d. Religion entails obedience, appeasement, worship, reverence, submission, performance.
- e. True? *"religion is man-made", "all religions are same", "religious people are hypocrites"*

2. Beginnings of Religion

- a. First religion to keep man from sin/death "LORD God commanded" - Gen 2:16
- b. When Adam and Eve were exposed, they "made themselves aprons" - Gen 3:7
 - i. The first manmade religion. Followed by the first religious hypocrite.
 - ii. *"Who told thee that thou wast naked?"* - A: the forbidden fruit. Gen 3:8-11
 - iii. People are vain materialistic hypocrites. Religion exposes hypocrisy.
 - iv. Since the beginning, men cover up their weakness/failure – justify themselves.
 - v. The LORD God clothed them himself - Gen 3:21
- c. Cain and Abel: the work and offering God respects - Gen 4:2-8 (Heb 11:4)
 - i. "Religion begets violence!" - Sin produces violence. Cain had a false religion.
- d. God instituted sacrifices, rules, priests before the law - Gen 9:5-6, 14:18, 17:9-14
- e. Religion ordained in Israel to express righteous governance over man's heart - De 10:12
 - i. Divine governance not only over civil/public choices, but private – Jam 1:27

3. The Problem of Religion

- a. People value exhibition > truth: PhD over intelligence; badge over justice; ring over love
 - i. Religion can be replaced with tradition, done in ignorance, done by hypocrites.
- b. People participate in religion because they want what it represents: divine approval.
 - i. They see proof of spiritual superiority with God in religious practice. Mk 7:8-9
 - ii. How all religions are the same: all sinners seeking spiritual superiority - 1Ti 1:9
 - iii. *"religious people are hypocrites"* - of course, that's why religion exists Rom 5:20
- c. Want the truth? You don't need the tradition, show, façade, you need help.
- d. The truth about God will not make you look better, smarter, richer, superior. Rom 3:20

4. The Problem of Spirituality

- a. Surveys show more people claim to be spiritual than religious.
- b. Religion seen restrictive/elitist/pompous – spirituality seen unbound/subjective/limitless
- c. Religion appears empty (actions without heart), spirituality is substance (exists in heart)
- d. Now, spiritual superiority expressed by no boundaries, openness, inclusivity, acceptance
- e. To escape judgment/right v wrong is another way to self-justify. Lk 10:29
- f. "Feel connected to God" "spiritual experience" "God is in everything" "higher power"
- g. Spirituality disconnects from empty religion, but also the anchor of truth. Prov 25:258
- h. Want spirit? Feelings don't determine, they may be wrong, guilt, there's one to obey
- i. Spiritual people can be just as hypocritical, ignorant, traditional as religious. Rom 10:2

5. Jesus Christ and Religion

- a. Jesus said the Father seeks worshipers in spirit and in truth – John 4:23
- b. Like God in the garden – he does the required work himself – Rom 3:25, 2 Cor 5:21
- c. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness – Rom 10:4
- d. Solving the problem of empty religion, Jesus Christ requires faith not works.
- e. Solving the problem of boundless spirituality, Jesus Christ reveals the truth of God.
- f. Solving the problem of our own spiritual superiority, all become guilty – Rom 3:19
- g. He justifies the ungodly, the sinner, the incapable, the failure – Rom 4:5
- h. Religion existed to point to our sin, and to the need for grace thru Christ – Eph 2:8-9
- i. Even man-made religion accomplishes this, but it blinds men to the truth.
- j. Jesus Christ crucified replaces all our religion – Gal 3:19, Rom 3:21, Titus 3:5