

What Is True Religion?

The word "religion" is based on the Latin *religare* which means "to bind." Religion's purpose is to bind us back to God. However, what exactly is true religion? If you were to look in a dictionary you may get a response like this: (1) man's expression of his acknowledgment of the divine; (2) a system relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in a community; or, (3) something which has a powerful hold on a person's way of thinking, interests, etc.

I have read that religion is like the coin of a certain country, intended for all classes of people, and circulated among all classes or levels of society. It is like the air, the common source and sustainer of life to all men. It is like the sun, giving light to all who walk with open eyes in its rays. The Bible sufficiently reveals to us the definition of religion. Religion is not a system of notions; not merely a public profession; not external respectability; but, it is a real force which renews the heart (2 Corinthians 4:16). Let us consider several characteristics of true religion.

Religion has been necessary since the time of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:6). Although there was no sacrifice in Eden, God commanded it to begin soon afterward (Genesis 4:3-4). This was the imperfect means of reconciliation between God and man until the perfect sacrifice, Jesus, came into the world (Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 10:4, 12).

It is also important to note that true religion is inspired. Religion which comes from any other source than God cannot be true according to His own revelation (2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 14:37). The gospel reveals God's will to us and calls us to obey it (2 Timothy 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; Romans 1:16). That will did not need to be revealed in the 1800s (i.e., Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Pentecostals) and it does not need to be revealed in the present day.

True religion is also a way of life. It forms a relationship between God and man, and each of us must play our part in this relationship (Matthew 6:5-15; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 10:19-22). A true, deep change of life is a must (Deuteronomy 10:12; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Hosea 6:6; Titus 2:11-12; James 1:26-27)! True religion demands that one forsake their way of living and succumb to being guided by God. Religion is maligned because of hypocrisy in those who profess to wear the name of Christ. Those who will not follow God do great harm to the cause of Christ. Therefore, we must imitate those who are righteous (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 4:9). However, imitation can sometimes prove to be as much a snare as it is a blessing. You need to be sure of what and who you are imitating (John 8:44)!

True religion involves obedience to God. The Lord requires obedience from us (Hebrews 5:8-9; Matthew 7:24-27; Micah 6:8). The commandments of the Bible are not complex and burdensome, but simple and easy (1 John 5:3; Matthew 11:30). Paul condemned false teachers who wanted to turn Christians away from their single-minded faithfulness to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3, 15).

Finally, true religion is not in the world to come. At that point, the purpose of religion will have been ultimately fulfilled. No longer will we have to worship God from "afar." We will be able to approach His throne and sing praises to Him forever more (Revelation 7:9-17).

I have read that religion is a work of light upon the understanding, a work of truth influencing the judgment, a work of love softening the affections, a work of holiness cleansing the conscience and a work of grace changing the heart. True religion is not to be taken lightly. Think about the fact for being right and wrong for a moment. If we are all wrong and the Bible is not accurate, what harm have you done by living righteously? What if we are right? If you have not entered that relationship through obedience, we beg you to do so and enter into the blessings prepared for those who do His will.

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