

Why God Hates Religion I

Worship God in “Spirit and in Truth”

Fred R. Coulter—July 11, 1998

Greetings brethren! At the 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, Mohammedism, 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 on one of these days: *Outside The Catholic Church There Is No Salvation*, written by 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 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 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!

Now here's part of the letter continuing:

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 'Greetings!' (v 1). 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.] ...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). 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 worshippers 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*. 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 go to Mark 7:1 and analyze it a little bit more, because Christ gets very specific here. 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 and your mind and 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.... [They are hypercritical and ‘religious’ people are always hypercritical.] ...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” (vs 1-3). 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.’

Now, 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 Mohammedism uses part of the Bible and recognizes Mary and Jesus, as a prophet equivalent to Mohammed. We need to understand really what the Bible is 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, ‘Once a Catholic, always a Catholic; once a Mormon, always a Mormon,’ so many people have said.

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? 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, '**I**f 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: "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 cumin, 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."

Verse 2: "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." 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—didn't he? 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*—didn't he? *Created his own 'religion,' created his own temple and it was all good works outside*—right? 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. And Pethor is *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. "...that Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground" (v 3).

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 and mind and 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... [He's 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.... ['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?] ...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. On the left hand, where He works, but I cannot behold Him. He turns to the right, but I cannot see Him.... [Well Job, the day had come when God came down and talked to you.] ...But He knows the way that I take; *when* He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (vs 2-10). 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... [‘Oh, 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—wasn’t He? *Yes, He was!* 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....** [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.] ...Surely every man walks about in a vain show! Surely they are in an uproar in vain....” (vs 5-6). 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.... [Well, 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—don’t they? *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.... [In the flesh temporarily, that's what he is talking about.] ...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.] ...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 5-13). ***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 go to Isaiah 1 and 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, which 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... [That's why President Clinton is so well liked today. Who better to run Sodom and Gomorrah than Bill Clinton?] ...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.... [Why? *Because you have a 'religion' and you created a 'religion' which 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.'.... [Then he talks about all the divorce and everything that is caused by it.] ...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?" (vs 7-10).

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 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 put everything—fenced it 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!***] ...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" (vs 3-4).

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... [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’**” (vs 1-2). 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 end up doing, *bar none!* God finally spoke to him. 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 He 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 lightnings, that they may go, and say to you, ‘Here we *are*?’ Who has put wisdom in the inward parts?... [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?” (vs 33-36). ***God has!***

This is one of my favorites and I have written a couple things on this recently; but this is so true, 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? God was saying.] ...He who reproves God, let him answer it.’... [Let’s have your answer Job. What are you going to say?] ...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.*** He 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, he is saying, ‘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 you, and you declare unto Me. Will you even annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me so that you may be righteous?’” (vs 1-8).

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; 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 9-14).

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!***

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 1:26-27
- 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
- 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 34:35-37
- 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
- James 2; 1:1
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- *Outside the Catholic Church There is No Salvation* by Adam S. Miller
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FRC: sr
Transcribed: 8-20-09
Formatted/Corrected: bo—12-20-11