

Christianity and Religion

A Study by Franklin

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been **clearly seen**, being **understood** through what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:20

- From the beginning of time, when man looks at the stars and all that is in the earth, he instinctually knows there is a Creator.

He has also **set eternity in the hearts** of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. Ecclesiastes 3:11

- Deep within the heart of every man is a longing and searching for eternal life, and knowledge of the Creator.
- This pursuit of the Creator and eternal life is the genesis of religions.

Religions are a set of beliefs, values, and practices based on the teachings of a **man**, or men, who are recognized by some as a spiritual leader. Therefore there are many religions that have come forth and have been promoted as to: who god is, how god is to be worshiped and the necessary **laws to be pursued** with zealous devotion **to obtain the favor** of the particular god.

A plethora of religions have been set forth by man making the question of **TRUTH** absolutely critical.

A careful study of the Bible reveals that it is not a book that could have been written by men and therefore:

❖ **Christianity is not the invention of man.**

Consider this:

The Bible contains **Sixty-six books** written by **over 40 authors** from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars. It is written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Subject matter includes **hundreds of controversial subjects** with **harmony and continuity** from Genesis to Revelation.

It is a book of ONENESS or UNITY and therefore a miracle. For 40+ authors with such varied backgrounds to write on so many subjects, over a period of approximately 1500 years, in **absolute harmony** is a **mathematical impossibility**.

The **many prophecies** written hundreds of years in advance declaring precise details of the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is also a **mathematical impossibility**. Of all the other "spiritual leaders" none have prophecies detailing their lives in advance. (See: Prophecy & Probability at www.treasurehisword.com).

The only adequate explanation is: "**no biblical prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**" 2 Peter 1:20-21

This separates Christianity from all other religions which originate with man.

The Bible (the inspired revelation from the One True God) reveals to man **who the One True God is and His desire for a relationship** with all men as seen in the **sacrifice HE provided** to make that possible.

Man's Religions set forth **their** path, **their** way and **their** sacrifices and **laws to be pursued** with zealous devotion **to obtain the favor** of their god and obtain the blessings necessary for a prosperous life.

THIS IS NOT SO with Christianity. The commandments and guidelines given are **not** to obtain the favor of God but the **Creator's instructions** as to how man (His creation) should live for a peaceful and prosperous life.

The Bible refers to **man's attempts to gain favor** with God as "works" and repeatedly says in different ways:

It is NOT by **works of righteousness** which we have done but according to His mercy **He saved us**. Titus 3:5

For **by grace** you have been saved through faith; and that **is not of yourselves**, it is the **gift** of God. Ephesians 2:8

Religion is inherent in all men as their conscience is aware of their sinfulness and need and desire for a right relationship with their Creator and with one another.

This is seen from the very first sin of man – Adam and Eve:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, (they saw each other and everything differently now) and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.
Genesis 3: 7

- This is **the first Religious Act** by man.
- Man inherently turns to Religion, **his** way and **his** attempts to **cover himself** and **make himself right**.

Man's religion is not sufficient to establish a relationship with the LORD GOD. The LORD GOD alone knows what is necessary, and HE provides it, just as He did for Adam and Eve, He does for all mankind.

The **LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.** Genesis 3:21

- The LORD, out of love and concern, replaced man's Religion with **His provision** and that which is necessary.

Religion soon entered again in Adam's sons:

Cain made an offering according to what **he thought** God would like and it was not accepted. **Abel** offered what **he knew** the Lord would accept as both had been told by their father Adam. Cain became very angry and **killed his brother** – the result of religion. Genesis 4

- The **religions** of the world often **reject, hate, and even kill** those who do not agree with them.

The One True LORD GOD ALMIGHTY says:

I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

It is not pleasing to the LORD for a person to disregard a relationship with HIM and substitute religious sacrifices. The only TRUE GOD desires to **be known**, He desires **truth** and **faithfulness** to HIM, and not impersonal man-initiated sacrifices of whatever kind.

Out of Love and concern for all of us, The LORD GOD sent His Son, JESUS CHRIST, to teach us and show us The Way. And as He did, JESUS encountered and continually had problems with the RELIGIOUS:

- Matthew 21:12-13 Jesus entered the temple and **drove out** all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the **money changers** and the seats of those who were selling doves. (13) And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a **robbers' den.**"
 - Jesus' anger of religion is seen here and elsewhere in the Scriptures
 - The Pharisees had made a religion out of the divine revelation given them, thus rejecting truth and faithfulness.
 - All religions, because of their source (man), have varying degrees of corruption. This is clearly seen throughout the ages and today, even in many churches where religion has crept in.
- Hebrews 10:5-7 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "**Sacrifice and offering You have not desired**, but a body You have prepared for Me; (6) in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin **You have taken no pleasure.** (7) "Then I said, 'behold, **I have come to do Your will, O God.**'"
 - Jesus Christ is the example for all mankind. To do anything other than "HIS will" is **to worship as it seems good to man** and that **is religion.**
- James 1:26-27 If anyone **thinks himself to be religious**, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this **man's religion is worthless.**
 - **Words**, the tongue, **hurt relationships** which the LORD deems far more important than religious activities.
 - Religious activities that harm relationships, hurt people, or that are substituted for and before a relationship with the One True God, "**this man's religion is worthless.**"

(27) **Pure and undefiled religion** in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

- The word “religious” and “religion” in the above verse in the original Greek means – “**ceremonial observance**” and that is what religion is.
- **However**, the verse, states that the “ceremonial observance” of Christianity is:
 - ✓ Visiting and caring for PEOPLE, those in need.
 - ✓ And keeping oneself undefiled physically and morally

CHRISTIANITY IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A **RELATIONSHIP** INITIATED BY THE ONE TRUE GOD REVEALING HIMSELF AND HIS LOVE, TO AND FOR ALL PEOPLE.

- **Prayer** is simply talking and listening to the LORD. However it can easily, and often does, become a religious ceremony only.

Jesus said: **When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men.** Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

- Praying in public seems to bring out the religion in man, praying long and loud with theological phrases to impress those listening rather than praying or talking to the LORD. Every Christian needs to consider and analyze the way they pray.

(6) But you, **when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.**

(7) And when you are praying, do not use **meaningless repetition** as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their **many words.** (8) So **do not be like them;** for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Matthew 6:5-8 NASU

- **Baptism** is not to gain the favor of the LORD but an act of obedience, and an action-picture to the person and others as to his commitment and new life as a believer. It has meaning and is not just a religious ceremony.

- The **Lord's Supper** is not a required "ceremony" (**do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.** 1 Cor. 11:25) It is an action-picture to remind the person of the sacrifice Jesus made for him and the New Covenant he has entered into with Jesus Christ. It can and often does become just a ceremony.
- **Fasting:** *Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that **they will be noticed by men when they are fasting.** Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (17) But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face (18) so that your fasting **will not be noticed by men,** but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.* Matthew 6: 16-18

Isaiah 58 clearly brings out the true purpose of fasting:

(6) *Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to **let the oppressed go free** and break every yoke? (7) Is it not to **divide your bread with the hungry** and bring **the homeless poor** into the house; when **you see the naked, to cloth him?***

- Fasting is for the purpose of good relationships with all, being willing to give up your food to help others in their time of need.
- **Meetings:** *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . .* (Hebrews 10:25 NKJV). Meeting together is highly recommended but not an absolute must. And it promotes relationships with one another.

True Christianity differs from religions because:

1. It is **not the invention of man**, but God's revelation to man of the value of people and how to live and prosper in peace with God and one another.
2. The **zealous devotion** of a Christian is not for the purpose of gaining the favor of God but to express grateful thanksgiving and appreciation for all that God has done for him.
3. True Christianity **does not reject** or hate those who do not agree, but reaches out to them in love, care and concern.

Therefore **Christianity is a relationship** with the One True God - Jesus Christ - and all people of His creation.

When Christianity began it was not considered a religion. They did not have a temple, or priests. They simply met together as small groups in homes or anywhere to discuss the teachings of Jesus, fellowship and pray together.

Leaders throughout the centuries have created **religious systems** out of Christianity changing it into a Religion or a mixture thereof.

- Denominations, including Catholicism, are examples of **a mixture** of Christianity and Religion.
- The Crusades are an example of not a mixture but religion in its ugliest form, demonstrating the misdirected zeal and hatred thereof.

Matthew 16:6 Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

- The leaven of the Pharisees was a zeal for their religion and a closed mind to anything else. Therefore they did not have a relationship with the LORD GOD and despised anyone that did not follow their ways.

Luke 12:1 He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is **hypocrisy**."

- **Hypocrisy** in this context means - to claim to be holy, righteous and good because of "good works" or ceremonial observance.
- **Hypocrisy** accompanies Religion and brings a correspondent degree of blindness.

For Example: Luke 18:9-14 And He also told this parable to some people who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and **viewed others with contempt**: (the result of religion) (10) "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. (11) The **Pharisee** stood and **was praying this to himself**: 'God, I thank You that **I am not like other people**: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. (12) I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

- Fasting and paying tithes can become a religious act if done to gain the favor of God or to secure a position with men instead of

an expression of gratefulness for what He has done for us. They are important and should be done, but for the right reason.

(13) "But the **tax collector**, (the man no one likes) standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, '**God, be merciful to me, the sinner!**' (this is a non-religious man) (14) "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself (which religion does) will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

- The Pharisee, blinded by religion and doing "good works", saw himself as righteous (as many religious people do today).
- The tax collector had no religion and saw clearly who he was, a sinner. And, **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.** 1 Timothy 1:15

The Bible clearly teaches that Christianity is a RELATIONSHIP with LOVE and COMPASSION for all people as seen in the GREAT COMMANDMENT:

Matthew 22:35-40 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? And He said to him, you shall **love the lord your god** with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall **love your neighbor** as yourself.

Christianity is the Lord God pursuing a Relationship with man and pays a Great Price to Reconcile or restore man to a right relationship with Himself.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 Now all these things are from **God**, who **reconciled us to Himself** through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them**, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God**. (21) He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- Reconciled means - **to be restored to a right relationship**

Matthew 5:43-46 You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. (44) But **I say** to you, **love your enemies** and **pray for those who persecute you**, (45) so that you may be **sons**

(mature ones) of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- The LORD GOD and True Christianity do not have hate or animosity toward anyone, whether they are good or evil, righteous or unrighteous.

Jesus had a continual problem with religion:

Luke 7:30 But the **Pharisees** and the **lawyers rejected God's purpose** for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

- The baptism of John was a confession that they were a sinner.
- Their religion blinded them to the truth. And it still does so today.

Luke 7:36-50 Now one of the **Pharisees** was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. (37) And there was **a woman** in the city who was **a sinner**; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, . . . (39) Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that **she is a sinner**." (40) And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." . . . (42) "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" . . . (47) "For this reason I say to you, **her sins**, which are many, have been **forgiven**, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." (48) Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." (49) Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "**Who is this man who even forgives sins?**" (50) And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

- Again the contrast is made:
 - a religious man who considered himself better than others
- and -
 - a non-religious person who knew the truth about themselves – that they were a sinner in need of forgiveness from the One who could forgive sin. With the result: "**Your sins have been forgiven.**"
 - This demonstrates how large of a stumbling stone religion is.

- It also demonstrates the true and extravagant worship which comes from a grateful heart of a non-religious person when they realize who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for them.

Luke 11:37-54 **Woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God.**

- Religious sacrifices, even if it is doing a good thing but for the wrong reason, blind a person to that which is of true value - love for the LORD and love for people. The degree of love is seen in the degree of willingness to give. Consider John 3:16
- Many today have the same Pharisaical religion and false sense of righteousness which exalts them and looks at others with contempt.

(43) **Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.**

- Religions elevate some to higher positions than others (i.e. the caste system in Hinduism).
- The same is true of many pastors, bishops, elders and deacons.

(44) **Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it.**

- Religions blind and can be deadly.

(46) **Woe to you lawyers (experts in the Old Testament law) as well! For you weigh men down with burdens (religious works and ceremonies) hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.**

- Religions add works, duties, sacrifices and obstacles of all kinds to be attained before one can please their god and impress others.

(52) **Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering.**

- Religions substitute their beliefs for True Knowledge.

(53) **When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, (54) plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say.**

- Religions show contempt, if not hatred, toward those who do not join them.

Jesus' problem with the religious continues:

Luke 13:14-17 . . . You **hypocrites**, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? (16) And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?

- Religions place great value on ceremonial observance and people are of little or no value. This is the exact opposite of true Christianity.

Luke 14:2-6 And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it **lawful** to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" (4) But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. (5) And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" (6) And they could make no reply to this.

- Religions are full of discrepancies.

A good summary of religion and what the LORD GOD thinks of it is seen in the following passage:

Luke 16:14-15 Now the Pharisees, who were **lovers of money**, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. (15) And He said to them, "**You are those who justify yourselves** in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is **highly esteemed among men** (religious pride and sacrifices substituted in place of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ) **is detestable** in the sight of God."

- This is exactly what religions do, they provide a way for man to justify, or attempt to justify himself, disregarding The Truth and accepting The Sacrifice provided by the One True LORD GOD.

Jesus said to him, "**I am The Way, and The Truth, and The Life**; no one comes to the Father but through Me." John 14:6

And **there is salvation in no one else**; for there **is no other name** under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

The Above Truths Can Be Seen in all religions: