

# SEED & BREAD

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BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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# RELIGIONLESS CHRISTIANITY

The title of this study may sound quite strange to some and come as a shock to others, especially to those who have always thought that Christianity is one of the great religions of this world. Many will insist that there can be no such thing as Christianity without religion. Nevertheless, no matter what some may say or feel about it, Christianity divorced from all religion is a way of life that I have lived, loved, and practiced for almost half a century. Furthermore, I am not alone in this, since I am personally acquainted with hundreds of true Christian men and women, boys and girls who are true followers of Jesus Christ in every characteristic that is in the Bible postulated to those who, in this dispensation, profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These bear all the earmarks of salvation that are so plainly indicated in the Scriptures, but they have no religion, they practice no religion.

No doubt there are thousands more whom I do not know who are truly related to God through Jesus Christ, fully believing the record God has given of His Son, enjoying all the present blessings that are available in Him, and all this apart from religion. Among these are those who are badly misunderstood by family members and friends just because they give religion no place in the new life they have found in Christ Jesus. The devotees of religions cannot understand how one can find his sufficiency in Christ, taking his stand by faith in God's word that he is "**complete in Him**" (Col. 2: 10).

All who have considered it will know quite well that there is a popular religion in the western world that is called Christianity. One can become part of this simply by joining one of the numerous organizations called churches and submitting to whatever religious practices it may lay upon him. At present these churches are to a great extent composed of those who God says would proliferate in the concluding days of this dispensation - those who have the forms of godliness but deny the power thereof. They are big, powerful and wealthy, and it can be to one's social, material, and political advantage to be a member of one of them. Those who make up organized

religion today are, as A. W. Tozer describes it, "Caught up in the monstrous heresy that noise, size, activity, and bluster make men dear to God."

The religion called Christianity has one test for everything material and numerical success. To it, truth is whatever works. If men will not endure sound teaching, it will find something they will endure. It is busily engaged in dispensing instant Christianity to others, always laying hold of those upon whom the Spirit of God is working, dousing the light that He is generating by large or small applications of water, or by some other ceremony in their catalog of religious exercises.

Many who give themselves over to popular Christianity find it to be financially rewarding, especially in view of the explosion of piety that is seen on every hand today, also because Christianity has become one more form of entertainment. This was seen in the declaration of a female singer to a talk-show host: "My grandmother advised me to go into show business. She said that if I did not make it there, I could always go into religion."

Today we see the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy task of providing entertainment for professing Christians. To quote A. W. Tozer again: "Many churches these days have become little more than poor theatres where fifth-rate 'producers' peddle their shoddy wares with full approval of evangelical leaders who can even quote a holy text in defense of their delinquency. And hardly a man dares to raise his voice against it."

Many who read these lines will at once ask what is meant by the word "religion," even calling upon me to define my terms. I will admit to being somewhat diffident about doing this, not wishing to "paint myself into a corner." Therefore, no attempt will be made to fix a definition upon this word at this point in the study. All readers will know what I mean by it as the subject unfolds.

When God created the first man and placed him in the garden of Eden, He gave him no religion. When He surveyed all that He had created and declared it to be very good, there was not a speck of religion anywhere. When Eve was added to this beautiful scene as a "help meet" for Adam, she did not bring into it a load of religion to lay upon her husband, as so many wives are trying to do to their husbands today. This first pair had no ceremonies, rituals, ordinances, or exercises by which they were to show their reverence for and devotion to the God who had created them.

Of course both Adam and Eve were expected to revere and honor God with the profound respect that was due to Him, and to do what they knew to be right and refrain from what they knew to be wrong. As partakers of "the true Light" that enlightened every man who comes into the world (John 1:9), they would know what

these things were. In addition to this they had certain specific instructions from God (Gen. 1 :28, 2: 17); but this Light gave them no days to observe, no garments to wear, no ordinances to keep, no sacrifices to offer, no incense to burn, no symbols to revere, nothing to bow down to, and nothing to stand up for but God. In fact, Adam and Eve were entirely without religion. Their relationship to God **was religionless**.

When Cain and Abel were born, Adam and Eve had a vast amount of truth to pass on to them. But they had no religion to give them and mother Eve did not try to dig up or manufacture some for them, as myriads of mothers are trying to do today.

As these first children developed into manhood it appears that they meditated upon their relationship to God. Most certainly they sought after Him, an attitude generated by the fact that He was seeking after them. A closer fellowship was desired by both. And, based upon logical and honest deductions, it also appears certain that they sought His mind as to what they could do for Him or bring to Him in return for all the benefits He had bestowed on them. Subsequent revelations (Heb. 11 :4) indicate that He would be pleased to receive a lamb as a sacrificial offering. So it was by faith, that is by taking God at His word and responding accordingly, that Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11 :4).

The Biblical record shows that Abel's sacrifice was an act of faith, and that it was not a ritual or ceremony that he was to do, again and again. Any repetition of this sacrifice would have destroyed the typical significance of Abel's lamb. In type it was intended to point to the Lamb of God who by one offering for sin would take away the sin of the world.

Abel did what God had instructed him to do, but his brother Cain decided to follow another path. And in doing so he performed the first religious act in human history. In partial obedience he brought an offering, one that was far more esthetically attractive than the bleeding lamb of Abel, but it was rejected by God. Thus, Cain made the first footprint in a trail that millions have followed since that day. Thousands of years later the prophet Jude (Jude 1: 11) spoke of those who have "gone the way of Cain." His act was one of worship in selfwill. Cain felt that God should be pleased with whatever he brought, but his offering was a manufactured religion. I was recently told of one of Cain's followers - a woman in Chicago who declared that since some of the money went to the church she always felt she was serving the Lord in her small way when she played Bingo every Thursday night.

In the Biblical revelation we find that in due time God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham and his descendants after him, and that the sign of this covenant was the rite of circumcision (Gen. 17:10). Thus it was that for the first time in human history a divine religious obligation was given to one portion of mankind,

Abraham and his seed after him that came through his son Isaac.

The rite of circumcision was quickly laid hold of and adopted wrongfully by other people, who were always looking for some religious act to perform in the hope it would bring them favor *from* God. But this rite was not given to any other people and it was utterly meaningless when adopted by them. However, to the seed of Abraham, the people of Israel this rite became the foundation of all the multiple religious acts that God gave to and laid upon them. Israel was the first and the only people that were given a divine religion. This religion was enshrined in the law given to them (Deu. 4:7,8). It was given for the purpose of making this one nation and people different from all others. A very definite part of the program of so-called Christianity has been to see how much it can appropriate from the promises the laws, and the religion God gave to Israel.

It was sometime after A.D. 70 that a new alignment of religions appeared in the Roman Empire. This was called Christianity. It was an amalgam of Greek philosophy, Mithraic ritualism, and religious elements from many sources. It called itself the Christian Church, and it was far removed from the simple fellowship of the first followers of Jesus Christ. It did not come out of Him, since it was built by men who today are universally acknowledged to have been "the church fathers." Fifteen of these are recognized in ecclesiastical history between 70 A.D. and 440 A.D. Ten of them are commonly called "the Greek fathers," and five are called "the Latin fathers." It was these men who produced from many sources the religion of Christendom, which today had developed into a thousand-and-one companies, a great myriad of ceremonies, rituals, acts of exterior worship, all of which together pass for Christianity today.

There are those who say that one is no part of Christ unless he is in some way a part of this conglomeration. This we repudiate. And in defense we would point to the truth declared by Paul in Colossians 2:8-23. This portion when honestly translated and understood sets forth religionless Christianity in all its splendor. It removes from the believer in Christ every vestige of religion both human and divine, and declares without equivocation: "And you are complete in Him."

There is much more that needs to be said, but this must await other studies.

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