

Study 13

The Religion
JESUS
commanded

Religion consists of rituals, ceremonies and observances. In one respect Jesus did not come to establish another religion, He came to reveal God and how we can know peace with God. Christ was very critical of the Pharisees who had invented many religious practices.

1. Christ called “religion” *traditions*. What did Christ have to say about this to the Pharisees in Matthew 15:3, 6?

2. Paul the apostle described “religion” as *works* (or “law”). What did Paul say that *works* could not do? (Romans 3:20)

3. How did the writer to the Hebrews describe religious works? (Hebrews 6:1; 9:14)

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4. Jesus had some stern words for religious leaders in Matthew 23:3. Based on this verse what does Jesus expect of His followers?
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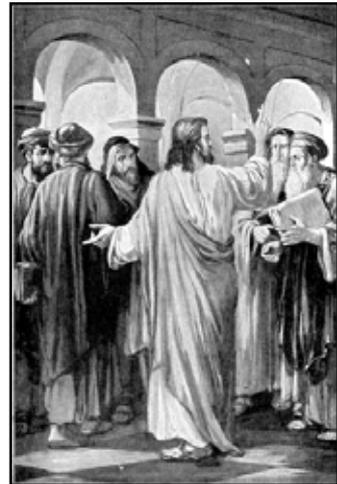
The religion that Jesus condemned was hypocritical, oppressive, and guilt-ridden. In Matthew 24:4 Jesus rebukes the Jewish religious leaders for imposing religious burdens on people.

5. Based on this verse (Mat. 24:4) what did Jesus say religious leaders *should* have been doing for people? (What insights does this give us for what Christ might expect from His leaders?)
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Religion that promotes the idea that someone is better than someone else because they are religious is obnoxious to Christ (Matthew 23:5). I once heard an American TV Preacher boast that he frequently experienced the blessing of God when travelling. Despite booking economy-class *because he was a man of God, he trusted God to upgrade him to First Class* every time he checked in for a flight.

6. How might Matthew 23:6 challenge this particular preacher's expectations about being upgraded in plane seating because he is a pastor?
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Some, particularly the religious, think that God wants people to be religious. Others, who have similar ideas, regard *all* religions as good and acceptable God. They regard God as being at the top of a mountain and religions as being like the many paths that lead to the top of that mountain. But this is not what the Bible teaches.



7. What did Jesus assert in John 14:6 that counters the idea that all religions lead to God? (Note Acts 4:12)
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8. Rather than religion being used to belittle people and boss them around, what did Christ command His followers to do in Matthew 23:11? (Note verse 12)
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But the New Testament doesn't just condemn religion- it begins to redefine it!

9. Note what James describes as "bad" religion in James 1:26-

10. What does he define as "good" religion in James 1:27?

11. Some Christians regard all forms of religious ritual as bad. For example, some Christians claim that tithing is merely being "religious" and therefore has no place in the New Testament church. But what did Christ say specifically about tithing in Matthew 23:23 and its relative importance?

12. Christianity is not merely about behaving, being nice, or looking good. Based on Matthew 23:27-28 what did Christ say was about people who were only concerned about how they looked to others?

13. In Matthew 23:34 Christ revealed His "leadership remedy" to prevent people from being deceived by dead religion. What is this remedy and what price might they have to pay?

Amen.