

## **DANGER OF RELIGION: RELIGION WILL KEEP YOU FROM GOD LOSING MY RELIGION SERIES**

### **I. RELIGION AND OUR CULTURE: IS RELIGION GOOD OR BAD?**

- A. WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?
- B. PLACE OF RELIGION IN THE LAST 100 YEARS
  - 1. Early 1900's—Religion is good and necessary
  - 2. Mid 1900's—Religion is dying and destructive (Freud, Marx, Nietzsche)
  - 3. Late 1900's—Religion is bad but spirituality is good
- C. LISTENING TO OUR CULTURE THROUGH MUSIC—REM AND JOHN LENNON
  - 1. Religion is hypocritical
  - 2. Religion is a way to be pride, arrogance, superiority
  - 3. Religion is judgmental and constantly compares
  - 4. Religion cleans the outside but leaves the inside dirty (crippled)
  - 5. Religion leads to power trips and abuse
  - 6. Religion creates war, not peace
  - 7. Religion lets you look good while being bad
  - 8. Religion lets you use God to accrue power through your own performance
- D. ARE THEY RIGHT? The only way to evaluate that is to learn from Jesus.

### **II. RELIGION AND JESUS: WAS JESUS RELIGIOUS?**

I would submit that Jesus is the most anti-religious person to ever found a religion. Yes, our culture has gotten their critique of religion correct, by and large, but they are incorrect in that they believe they have destroyed Christianity in the process. Instead, they are Johnny-come-latelies because Jesus leveled the same deconstructing critique at religion (harsher actually) that they do. What they have done has not served to destroy Christianity but to make way for it. This is exactly what Jesus did—deconstruct the current conceptions of religion to clear the ground for the powerful message of the Gospel. He constantly goes through his ministry refusing to allow anyone to justify him/herself, especially in the Gospel of Luke. The word 'religion' is only used positively once in the entire Bible and that reference is ironic or tongue in cheek (James 1.27).

- A. LUKE 10 AND THE GOOD SAMARITAN—You cannot justify yourself. His religion is not just bad, but it will literally keep him from God.
- B. MATTHEW 21.31—The tax collectors and prostitutes go in before you.
- C. MATTHEW 23.23—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.
- D. MATTHEW 23.25—"For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate but on the inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.
- E. LUKE 15 AND "THE PRODIGAL SON"
  - 1. Two ways to find happiness: Self-discovery and Moral Conformity
  - 2. Older brother represents the way of Moral Conformity
    - a. He did not leave home with the younger brother

- b. He did not embarrass the family
- c. He did not ruin the father's fortune
- d. He worked hard for the family (15.25)
- e. He obeyed every command (15.29)
- f. He always served the Father (15.29)
- g. Yet, he wants the father dead just like the younger bro

“The elder brother is not losing the father’s love in spite of his goodness, but *because* of it. it is not his sins that create the barrier between him and his father, it’s the pride he has in his moral record; it’s not his wrongdoing but his righteousness that is keeping him from sharing in the feast of the father. There are two ways to be your own Savior and Lord. One is by breaking all the moral laws and setting your own course, and one is by keeping all the moral laws and being very, very good.” (Tim Keller)

“The difference between him and his younger brother was that the younger brother was estranged and rebellious while absent from the house, but the older son was estranged and rebellious in his heart while he was in the house. The estrangement and rebellion of the younger son were evident in his surrender to his passions and in his request to leave his father’s house. The estrangement and rebellion of the older son were evident in his anger and his refusal to enter the house.” (Luqa Sa’id)

We clearly see the older brother in all the critiques of religion above—anger, superiority, externals, joylessness, desire to buy the father’s favor, to control, etc. “There was a deep, black, wordless conviction in him that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin.” “What keeps us from Jesus is often not our sins but our damnable good works.”

- 3. We all tend to look like one brother or the other. Though they look radically different, the roots are almost identical.
  - a. Both questioned their worth and identity (15.19, 29). The older brother almost needs the younger to be sinful. (**Ex. Everybody Loves Ray**) Yet the Father calls them both sons (15.24, 31)
  - b. Both have a wrong view of the Father as an overbearing taskmaster (15.12, 29). Yet he entreats, speaks tenderly, and humiliates Himself before both.

“People who are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons... Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce, defensive assertion of their own righteousness, and defensive criticism of others. They come naturally to hate other cultural styles and other races in order to bolster their own security and discharge their suppressed anger.” (Richard Lovelace)

### III. RELIGION AND THE GOSPEL

- A. WHO ARE YOU—YOUNGER OR OLDER?
- B. WHERE ARE THE YOUNGER BROTHERS IN OUR CHURCHES?
- C. WHAT DO WE NEED?
  - 1. Father’s Initiating Love
  - 2. A True Older Brother

Religion lets you buy God but the Gospel says that God must buy you, religion puts you on a power trip but the Gospel says Jesus cannot be used as a reason to perpetrate abuse, he came to earth to receive abuse; religion lets you feel superior to others because you have self-salvation but the Gospel says creates humility because we’re saved by grace; religion lets us avoid Jesus by avoiding sin but the Gospel points us to Jesus by making us honest about our sin.

### Losing My Religion by REM

Oh, life is bigger  
It's bigger than you  
And you are not me  
The lengths that I will go to  
The distance in your eyes  
Oh no, I've said too much  
I set it up

That's me in the corner  
That's me in the spotlight, I'm  
Losing my religion  
Trying to keep up with you  
And I don't know if I can do it  
Oh no, I've said too much  
I haven't said enough  
I thought that I heard you  
laughing  
I thought that I heard you sing  
I think I thought I saw you try

Every whisper  
Of every waking hour I'm  
Choosing my confessions  
Trying to keep an eye on you  
Like a hurt lost and blinded fool,  
Oh no, I've said too much  
I set it up  
Consider this, Consider this  
The hint of the century  
Consider this  
The slip that brought me  
To my knees failed  
What if all these fantasies  
Come flailing around  
Now I've said too much  
I thought that I heard you  
laughing  
I thought that I heard you sing  
I think I thought I saw you try

### Imagine by John Lennon

Imagine there's no Heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today

Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for

And no religion too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace

You may say that I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will be as one  
Imagine no possessions  
I wonder if you can  
No need for greed or hunger  
A brotherhood of man  
Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world

You may say that I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will live as one

### Crippled Inside by Lennon

You can shine your shoes and  
wear a suit. You can comb your  
hair and look quite cute. You  
can hide your face behind a  
smile. One thing you can't hide  
Is when you're crippled inside

You can wear a mask and paint  
your face. You can call yourself  
the human race. You can wear a  
collar and a tie. One thing you  
can't hide. Is when you're  
crippled inside

Well now you know that your  
Cat has nine lives  
Nine lives to itself  
But you only got one  
And a dog's life ain't fun  
Mamma take a look outside

You can go to church and sing a  
hymn. You can judge me by the  
color of my skin. You can live a  
lie until you die. One thing you  
can't hide. Is when you're  
crippled inside

### Forgiven by Alanis Morissette

You know how us Catholic girls  
can be. We make up for so much

time a little too late. I never  
forgot it, confusing as it was  
No fun with no guilt feelings  
The sinners, the saviors, the  
loverless priests  
I'll see you next Sunday

We all had our reasons to be  
there  
We all had a thing or two to  
learn  
We all needed something to cling  
to. So we did

I sang Alleluia in the choir  
I confessed my darkest deeds to  
an envious man  
My brothers they never went  
blind for what they did  
But I may as well have  
In the name of the Father, the  
Skeptic and the Son  
I had one more stupid question

We all had our reasons to be  
there  
We all had a thing or two to  
learn  
We all needed something to cling  
to. So we did

What I learned I rejected but I  
believe again. I will suffer the  
consequence of this inquisition  
If I jump in this fountain, will I  
be forgiven. We all had our  
reasons to be there. We all had a  
thing or two to learn. We all  
needed something to cling to. So  
we did

We all had delusions in our head  
We all had our minds made up  
for us. We had to believe in  
something. So we did