

Religion and Jesus

July 6, 2008 - Skip MacMillan

July 4, our country was founded on a bunch of people who were running from religion and looking for Jesus.

Separating Christ and His followers from Religion **Colossians 2:6-23; Matthew 23:1-12, 23-26**

The concern (2:8) was that religion was moving in trying to replace Christ.

3 Calls to the Church:

1. Do not let anyone judge you (2:16).
2. Do not submit to their rules (2:20).
3. Continue to live in Him (Jesus Christ) (2:6-7).
"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Religion and Christ:

God

Religion

" . . . he has lost his connection with the Head (Jesus Christ)" (2:19) – without God!
Use God for their own profit and gain but are not driven by God.
They have made God into their own image: condemning, manipulating, hateful, selfish, greedy, defensive.

Jesus

Christ is God (2:9).
The Body (believers) are inseparably connected to Him (the Head) through Him.
Believers are in Christ and Christ is in us.
". . . you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:20).
Ezekiel 36:27 - "I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees".
We are connected to God, He made the connection, He made us His, and permanently dwells in us.

Love

Religion

The tone of religion is angry, sterile, cold, hateful, harsh and punishing.

Without a love for God:

". . . these (religious) people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Mark 7:6).

Without a love for people:

People are to be controlled, they are a means to my end.

Jesus said, "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them" (Matthew 23:4).

Jesus:

"God is love" (1 John 4:8).

God: Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength (Matthew 22:37-38).

People: Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39).

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear Friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:10-12).

God loves sinners: John 3:16 and "Love one another so the world will know you are Mine" (John 13:34-35).

Jesus took on all the weight of our heavy load, lifting more than a finger to redeem and rescue you.

"Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29-30).

Jesus healed, fed, encouraged, shared the hope of the gospel, lived, died and resurrected for people.

Jesus loved all kinds of people: rich, poor, mainstream, fringe, religious, non-religious.

His followers are to see people as:

Created in His image, not concerned with demographics.

People are not to be used but to build relationships with.

Not to be condemned but to offer the same hope that was offered to you in Jesus Christ.

There is no hierarchy.

We are all one in the Body of Christ.

Rules, the Peripheral, and Hypocrisy

Religion:

Human traditions, basic principles of this world, depending on human traditions as opposed to Christ.

They have forfeited the mission of the God's Gospel so they retreat to the peripheral, "washing of hands."

If they have any mission, it is self preservation.

Jesus: Mark 7:1-9

Rules: wash hands, these are the "traditions of the elders," "traditions of men," "your own traditions".

The peripheral: didn't wash their hands, ignoring Mark 6.

Hypocrisy marks the religious.

Jesus defines hypocrisy in verses 6-7.

Merriam Webster: "a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion; a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings".

Words and heart are separated, Isaiah 26.

Scripture is what governs us, not rules taught by men or tradition of the elders.

Scripture sets our parameters, our standards, our direction.

Defines our attitude, Phil 2:1-11.

Defines our character, Gal. 5:22-23.

Violence

Religion:

Unable to beat Christ in a theological or verbal match, the religions murdered the Son of God.

Salmon Rushdie.

Wars throughout history between varying religions for land, power, and authority.

Conversions, violence to bring a forced conversion.

Think about threatening murder to move someone into a relationship with the Essence of love, peace and holiness. How does this even begin to make sense?

Jesus:

Jesus never started a war, never carried a weapon, and never called His followers to engage in war.

The only war Jesus wages is for the souls of men from the hand of darkness led by Satan.

As far as Armageddon, that is God waging the war, not His followers.

God does not need to be defended! He is God.

Conversions and commitment are won in the hearts of men, not by the edge of a sword or gun.

Jesus gave His life to the whip, beatings, the sword, the Cross in your place.

Coming to Christ is through the power of God's love, death and resurrection.

Seen by Men

Religion: "Everything they do is done for men to see" (Matt. 23:5).

Outward appearances reign, "you clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence" (Matthew 23:25).

Jesus: Matthew 6:1-6.

Pride, Positions, Titles and Arrogance,

Religion: Matthew 23:1-7.

Jesus:

"whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45).

Condemning, using Fear and Manipulation

Religion:

Religion condemned the woman caught in adultery, the prostitute, the woman at the well, John the Baptist, saying "he has a demon", and Jesus Christ, calling Him a "glutton, and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners."

Religion condemns people and the city by the sea and declares the wrath of God upon it.

Jesus:

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:17-18).

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5: 1).

What is our role as followers of Christ?

Give me one passage that says you are to declare what is and what is not the judgment of God in this world.

Tsunami, Katrina, earthquakes.

How does anyone know what is the judgment of God?

The Scriptures do not tell His church to run around the world and point out God's wrath and judgment.

What Scripture does say is that God is judge, not you.

God does call specifically for His church to be the Good Samaritan, to love, to help, to take His message of hope found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all peoples.

The Church's Call: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has not pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:16-18).

Money

Religion: Corban, Mark 7:10-13; money for their own profit at the price of the elderly.

Jesus:

"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27).

A selfless God.

A God who loves the hurting.

A purpose for His church, be generous with those in need.

A faith and belief that moves people to help others: this is the way of Christ.

Overall the concern of religion, the tone it sets is:

Material possessions are more important than people.

Money over integrity.

Our way over The Way and the truth.

Power and authority over serving.

Guilt and condemnation over forgiveness, love, and freedom.

This is not Christianity!

Overall tone of Christ and His followers is:

Transparency, vulnerability, honesty, truth, acceptance, confronting the reality of our situation, admits when it is wrong and asks for forgiveness; it doesn't hide the truth or take a defensive posture.

Themes: hope, forgiveness, faith, love, truth, wisdom, serving, grace, mercy, serving, humility, generosity, caring.

Love for God, people, and the Scriptures.

Believes and lives in the truth of God's sovereignty, God's power, and God's love.

God- and others-oriented perspective.

Attitude of Christ himself:

“. . . love, doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should not only look to your own interests but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:1-11).

No longer what you have to do to get to God but what you get to do because we are loved by God: worship, serving, living morally, praying.

Not defensive but on the offensive – going into all the world with the hope of the Gospel and God’s love.

Freedom in Christ, free from all condemnation, guilt and shame.

Change, changing into Christ-likeness day by day.

Christianity is about being and doing from deep within.

Separating Christ and His followers from Religion

Call to Action

1. “Do not let anyone judge you” (v. 16).

This is coming at you.

Don’t allow religion to judge you.

Remember Jesus and how He did not allow any of the religious to judge him or change his course.

2. “Do not submit to its rules” (v. 20).

This is you willing to get in line with religion.

Don’t submit to man-made rules and regulations; submit to God and God alone.

Remember Jesus; He never submitted himself to their man-made rules.

3. Don’t you judge anyone or demand that others submit to man-made rules.

4. Stay centered on Jesus Christ.

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (2:6-7).

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority” (2:9-10).

Christ fulfilled the law, Matthew 5:17.

Christ overcame “every power and authority”.

Of the World, NT Wright.

Of the Spiritual world just the same.

In Christ we have every thing we need

Spend your time walking through life with Christ.

Spend your time caring for other people.

Spend your time discovering the truths of God in Scripture and listening for God.

Spend your time walking in love and truth.

Place your belief and trust in Jesus Christ and all He accomplished for you.

You live in the power of the Holy Spirit within you and He will give you the heart to follow Him..