

# The Old Paths

Volume 20, Issue 51

February 16, 2014

## “Are All Religions Equal?”

Jarrod Jacobs

**I**n our land of freedom, we are well aware of the fact that our Constitution enumerates various freedoms, including the freedom of religion. Folks in our country can worship Jehovah, or nothing at all. We can worship nature, or the stars. We can worship self. Our country affords us the right to worship or not worship as we please. This is a man-made law, true, but I am thankful to God for it because such a right allows me to preach, teach, write, etc., and spread the gospel in this country in freedom. In this country, I do not have to worry about retaliation taken by the government or others in authority against me simply because I am spreading God’s word. The apostles would have loved to have seen a day when they could preach the gospel and not be in danger of a prison cell or death.

In this society, though, such a right is a “double-edged sword.” This is because while we have the right to spread the gospel, so also do people have the right to spread the doctrines of men and call it “religion.” Therefore, we see various religions of men taught and promoted as “good” and often presented on an equal plane with the gospel found in the New Testament. Yet, can we say that any religion one chooses is as good as, or equal to the religion found within the pages of God’s word? Absolutely not! Sadly, I observe people who have

a tendency to consider each religion “equal”. Their attitude is, “Put all religions in a sack, shake them up, and accept whichever one falls out.” Friends, beware!

### Many Religions In The World Today.

There are literally thousands of religious groups these days. Their doctrines vary, as do their practices, but they are nonetheless available to the “seeker.” We could go from Astrology to Zoroastrianism, and do nothing but further the confusion most folks feel when it comes to spiritual matters. How can we know what (if anything) is true religiously? Is there such a thing? In our culture, we are encouraged to believe that anything and everything can be categorized as “religious” so long as we believe in God. Social movements called “pluralism” encourage people to believe whatever they want. There is a cry today for “religious tolerance,” wherein we are told that all religions are equal, worthwhile, and produce good things in people, in society, etc. Therefore we are told that we need to accept all religions. Yes, man tells us that all religions are equal in purpose and function.

In such cases, for someone to even suggest that there is only one true religion, this person is considered a bigot, narrow-minded, prejudiced, and the like. It is interesting for me to observe that the only “intolerance” that the religiously “tolerant” people tolerate is being

“intolerant” to those who say there is only one true religion which worships the one true God!

### A Standard Is Needed.

If we are ever going to learn about true religion, then we cannot merely claim to follow the one true God. Following the one true God demands that we submit to the right standard of authority. In other words, as John told us to not only love in word, but also in deed and truth (I Jn. 3:18), so also, we need to claim respect for God’s authority, and also submit to that authority (Col. 3:17). Therefore, upon what will we base our standard of authority? Will our authority be the U.S. Constitution? Will it be a denominational creed book? Will we follow the writings of Confucius? Will we encourage folks to listen to other philosophers? What will it be?

Many in our culture answer this question of authority in a variety of ways. However, if we are going to follow the religion God prescribes, then we need to follow what He says in the Scripture! How can we know what God wants? We can know what God wants when we listen to Him. In order for this to happen, we need to be reading and following the Bible (Eph. 3:4; Mk. 4:23).

### What Has God Said About Religion?

When we read and study the Bible, we see that God allows for only one true religion. The religions invented by men are not to be considered “equal” to, or similar to what God made. This fact is made clear when we read the Scriptures, and find God condemning folks for perverting pure worship. Such actions began with Cain (Gen. 4:5-7), continued through the times of the Isra-

elites (Ex. 20), into the time of the kings (I Kings 12-13), and finally the condemnation of the Jews who had perverted God's worship (Mal. 1:7-8, 10, 12-14). When Jesus walked the earth, He told the woman at the well, *"Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him"* (Jn. 4:21-23). On another occasion, He condemned the Pharisees for their false teaching. He told them, *"You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said, 'This people draws near to me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'"* (Matt. 15:7-9). Obviously, He thought there was only one religion which was pleasing to God!

Today, it is the same. *"God is a Spirit: and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (Jn. 4:24). That word "must" is a key word. When we see that word "must" in the Bible, we know there is no option except to do it exactly as God prescribes. Too, we must worship "Him" (God) *"in spirit and in truth"*. God our Creator makes sure that we understand that we worship Him, and in so doing, we worship Him a certain way! This was true with Cain and Abel. Remember, one was accepted, and the other rejected (Gen. 4:1-11). This fact was true in the days the Jews lived under the law of Moses. In like manner, it is true today for those of us who live under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:13). We are subject to this "new" law, this *"better covenant established upon*

*better promises"* (Heb. 8:6). When we understand this, then we will be open to listening to what God has said in terms of true worship and true religion.

### All Religions Are Not Equal.

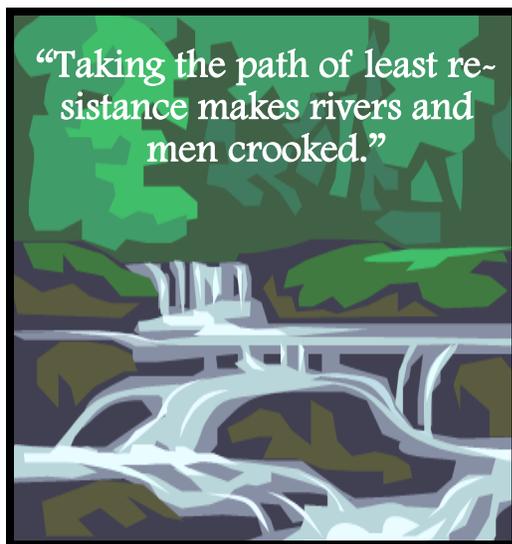
Having learned what we have about God's word, and the need for respecting His authority, we can be assured that all religions are not equal! When we remember that God has only one religion, then we know that all religions cannot be equal.

For further proof that all religions are not equal, remember that Jesus promised to die for His church, and nothing else (Matt. 16:18). His blood was shed to redeem His people (Matt. 26:28). No other world leader, or religious philosopher made such a claim. In addition to this, let us be reminded that many religions (ex: Islam) use carnal force in order to press and promote their precepts. Yet, the Bible tells Christians, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ"* (II Cor. 10:3-5). Study what James

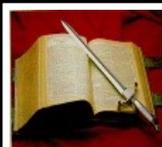
was inspired to write: *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world"* (Jas. 1:27). This definition is far different from what much of the world describes as "religion." No, all religions are not equal. There is only one true religion, and it was authored by the one true God!

### Conclusion

Don't be fooled by men into thinking that all religions are equal. There is *only one* religion God endorses, and it has its origin with Christ (Matt. 16:18), the founder of His church (Rom. 16:16). His people wear His name (Acts 11:26), and live faithfully for Him (Rev. 2:10).



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**Preacher/Editor:** Jarrod Jacobs **Phone:** (270) 589-4167