

## What Is Religion To You?

*Michael Cawthon*

I was asked recently, “What is religion to you?” and had to think about it for some time before giving an answer. After some deliberation I finally came up with the answer.

Religion to most everyone is confusing. Have you ever thought about how many different religions there are? Some people worship God, others follow the doctrines of men, some relate to the weather for direction, others give their allegiance to animals, and yes, some people worship themselves. Some believe in one god and others are convinced that there are many gods. Even the way in which people worship varies greatly. In the name of religion, people have sacrificed their very children by putting them in fire (2 Kings 17:31). Worship for some meant engaging in fornication with temple prostitutes (Numbers 25:1-3), while others renounce all relations for their entire lives. Religion is confusing!

The apostle Paul dealt with religious people as his travels took him through Athens, Greece, a city “*given over to idols*” (Acts 17:16). Using their religious practices as an opportunity to preach the gospel, Paul says, “*Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you*” (Acts 17:22, 23). Paul preached to them about the one, true God and then His only begotten Son, Jesus.

As religion goes, even Jesus has been the object of great confusion. Who was He? Even while He walked the earth, people offered differing opinions of His nature. Jesus asked His disciples who people were saying that He was. “*Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets*” (Matthew 16:14). Was Jesus just a good man or perhaps a prophet? Instead of asking “What is religion to you?” a more direct question might be “What is Jesus to you?”

Jesus made claims that other religions would not dare to make. He claimed to be the only way to God. “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one gets to the Father, except through Me*” (John 14:6). Either He is or He isn't.

Jesus also claimed to be the solution to man's problem with death. “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live*” (John 11:25). Man has searched for the Fountain of Youth in many ways. All men who have no hope fear death. Jesus claims that through Him, man can live after death. Do you believe that?

Perhaps the most disturbing claim to people is that Jesus said He was deity, or God in the flesh. When asked by the elders, chief priests and scribes if He was the Son of God, Jesus answered, “*You rightly say that I am*” (Luke 22:70). This infuriated some of the people to the point of putting Him to death. The claims made by Jesus demand an answer. Savior or sinner? Christ or crazy?

What is Jesus to you? Peter answered that question with, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). Other people today give that same answer, yet they do not live their lives in accordance with what Jesus has said. “*But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and not do the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). Jesus demands total allegiance. He is the authority for everything we do. Some people will follow Him as long as it doesn't make them change their current lifestyle or do something uncomfortable. After a hard teaching, many of Jesus' disciples turned away and followed Him no more

(John 6:60-66). Jesus asked the apostles if they too, wanted to leave. “*But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’*” (John 6:68). Peter recognized that even though Jesus may teach and demand some difficult things, there was nowhere else to go, no one else to turn to.

The religious world is a confusing place. We can find whatever we want to satisfy our spiritual curiosity. Whether it be going to worship once a year or worshipping yourself every day. However, our answer to who Jesus is will not only have eternal consequences, it will show in how we live our daily lives.

Jesus is my Savior. He paid the price for my sin on the cross; a punishment I deserved. Jesus is my Lord. He has authority and say so for everything I do in my life. Jesus is the truth that I believe. No other religion makes sense to me. God has given me everything I need to believe that Jesus is His Son through His word. Jesus is my way. He alone has the words of eternal life.

What is Jesus to you? Maybe we should be asking our friends and neighbors that question!