

## **WHAT RELIGION MEANS TO THE CHRISTIAN**

Religion is defined by Webster as: (1) the service and worship of God or the supernatural (2) commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance. For our consideration in this article, I am using the word in the sense of the service or practice that stems from conviction. Religion may be right or wrong; sincere or insincere; true or false; full and rewarding or vain Matt 15:9; Jas 1:26, 27. What difference does your religion make in your life? When converted to Christ: the Eunuch went on his way "rejoicing" Acts 8:39; the Jews were "praising God" Acts 2:47 and the apostle Paul was ready to die Acts 21:13. So, what does religion mean to you? Look with me at what religion should mean to one who is a Christian.

Because they are practicing the religion of Jesus Christ, Christians realize they must live a pure life Tit 2:11-14. For there to be a pure life, there must first of all be a pure heart Matt 5:8 and a person's heart is purified by faith Acts 15:9; 1Pet 1:22. A person then demonstrates purity in their life by what they think Phil 4:8; Prov 23:7; what they say Eph 4:29; Jas 1:26 and what they do Phil 2:14, 15; 1Thess 5:22.

Religion, to the Christian, gives them a sense of direction. In life, most people want good health, homes, children, security and everything that goes to make for a pleasant and enjoyable life. But, one needs to stop and consider, in which direction do I want my life to go? Our religion should cause us to want to be a Christian; to set a good example for others and to have our ultimate goal of heaven. Therefore, our religion causes us to not be a friend of the world Jas 4:4; Jhn 15:19; 1Jhn 2:15-17. Following Christ with conviction and purpose brings a sense of well-being to our lives.

To the Christian, religion takes away the fear of defeat and gives them a spirit of victory. There are some seeming contradictory ideas involved in one being religious by the standard of Jesus Christ. To be a follower of Christ one becomes victorious by surrendering Matt 11:28-30; becomes alive by dying Gal 2:20; finds life by losing it Matt 16:25; and become free by becoming a servant Rom 6:16-18. Jesus set the example for us when he said: "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" Matt 26:39. Because Jesus was willing to do His Father's will he was victorious over death and as a result we can be victorious in our fight 2Tim 4:7,8; Phil 4:13; 1Jhn 5:4. We too can have victory over death 1Cor 15:57

However, being religious according to God's standards presents a great challenge. Too many have given up the challenge. Individuals can be heard to say: they "use to be Christians". And then there are those who think they have "arrived" and are lulled into complacency Rev 3:17. Most people today are concerned more about "things" than they are about pleasing God, that is, living according to His standards. What about when we die Matt 16:26; Lk 12:16-21? Of what value will all our "things" be to us then? We must use what we have to God's glory 1Cor 6:20; Matt 25:14-30. This is the challenge to the Christian as they practice the religion of Christ.

To the Christian, religion provides refuge and security. God promised: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" Heb 13:5. In this world of change and everything being transient we need a place of security and Christ is that place. He is able to keep that which we give Him 2Tim 1:12. We must plant and water but God gives the increase 1Cor 3:6. When we give ourselves to Him completely, he then becomes our keeper and helper. We must surrender body, soul and spirit to God Matt 22:37. We must trust him at all times Prov 3:5. We must let His word be our authority in all things 2Tim 3:16, 17. And our bodies and minds must be His servants Rom 6:16; 12:1, 2

So, what does your religion mean to you? If it is not true religion "Christianity" it means little in respect to eternity. Our religion must have meaning, but meaning from a scriptural viewpoint or it is meaningless or vain Matt 15:9. (jlh)