

## **What is True Religion : James 1:18-27**

There are hundreds of religions in the world today with thousands of people claiming different religions or no religion at all. The media and the world that we live in today are constantly using the word religion without a real clear understanding of what the Word of God actually says about religion. In this lesson we are going to look at the word religion as it is found in the King James Bible and see what God has to say about the matter.

In the main text that we are using for this lesson we see that there is a religion that is vain, which means empty and hollow or of no real value, and one that is said to be pure. It is interesting to note that in a King James Bible the word religion only occurs 5 times (**Acts 26:5** ; **Galatians 1:13** ; **Galatians 1:14** ; **James 1:26** ; **James 1: 27**).

Now in all but one of the above 5 references religion is connected with something bad or doing something else for salvation other than trusting the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the word of God the number 5 is usually connected with death and that is just what a religion that is not based on receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior by grace through faith without works will get a person.

Therefore we see that the word of God says that there is only one way to heaven and that is through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (**John 14:6** ; **Colossians 1:14**). So salvation is only found in one person and that is Jesus Christ and him alone (**Acts 12:4** ; **1 Timothy 2:5**) Only one time is religion used in a positive or good way that is because in God's eyes there is only one way to be saved and that is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in his finished work on Calvary.

### **What is the difference between religion and salvation?**

To answer this question we must first explain what salvation is in the church age, that is the age that we live in right now. We are saved when we by faith ask God to save us on behalf of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 10:9-13** ; **Ephesians 2:8-9**). It has nothing to do with works, water baptism, speaking in tongues or joining any church of any denomination (**Ephesians 2:9** ; **Galatians 2:16**).

In **James 1:22-27** we see that pure religion is living according to the word of God by doing what it says. With this in mind we see that a person can be saved but not religious. It is true that many people live good lives and go to church all the time but if they have not been saved that is born again by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they are still lost. They may be religious by the worlds standards but not God's.

Now where saved people have messed up is that they are saved but many do not practice what the word of God says. This leads to a bad testimony not only for the individual person by it also leads to shame and reproach to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is one of the reasons that the world around us today is in such bad shape because people who are saved act just like the

people who are saved which gives Christianity a bad name, and confuses the world on what religion truly is.

### **What does the word of God say true religion really is?**

Before answering this question it is important to note that the root word for religion means to bind or bind anew. This is interesting because for those who are saved we are bound to the Lord Jesus Christ and his word (**John 14:23**). Many who are not saved are bound to a vain religion trying to earn their way into heaven. This is important because every man is bound to something, whether it is the Lord Jesus Christ or some religion or maybe just yourself and what you think about the matter. So you had better make sure you are bound to the right thing!

James says that true religion is first to visit the fatherless and the widows, and secondly it is to keep yourself unspotted from the world. This last one is talking about the fact that even though we live in the world we do not have to look, talk, smell and act like the world. There should be a noticeable difference between a saved person and the world.

These two things are interesting because the second one has to do with loving God with all your heart, soul and mind. If we love God whole heartily it is easy to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (**1 John 2:15-17**). The first one has to do with loving your neighbor as yourself. It is interesting that these two things are chosen because this is what Jesus told the lawyer in **Matthew 22:34-40** who asked him what is the greatest commandment.

Therefore the most important thing is for a person to be saved and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are saved and on their way to heaven. After that they should strive to have pure religion by hearing and doing the word of God.

