

10 Reasons to **Believe** **in Christ**

Rather than Religion



by Dr Bruce Woolard

10 REASONS TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST RATHER THAN RELIGION

1. CHRIST IS SOMEONE TO KNOW AND TRUST

Christ is more than a system, tradition or belief. He is a Person who knows our needs, feels our pain, and sympathizes with our weakness. In exchange for our trust, He offers to forgive our sins, to intercede for us, and to bring us to His Father. He cried for us, died for us, and rose from the dead to show that He was all He claimed to be. Conquering death, He showed us that He can save us from our sins, live His life through on earth, and then bring us safely to heaven. He offers Himself as a gift to anyone who will trust Him.

John 20:24-31

“Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So, he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing.” And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

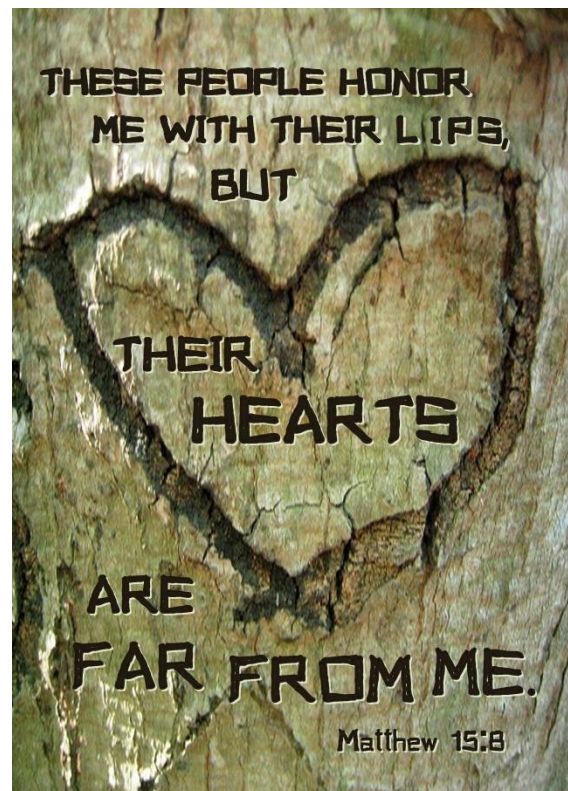
2. RELIGION IS SOMETHING TO BELIEVE AND DO

Religion is believing in God, attending religious services, taking catechism, being baptized, and receiving communion. Religion is tradition, ritual, ceremony, and learning the difference between right and wrong. Religion is reading and memorizing Scripture, offering prayers, giving to the poor, celebrating religious holy days. Religion is singing in the choir, helping the poor, and making amends for past wrongs.

Religion is something that was practiced by the Pharisees, those Scripture-loving, conservative, separatist, spiritual leaders, who hated Christ enough to call for His death. They hated Him not only because He broke their traditions in order to help people, but because He was through their religion to their hearts.

Matthew 15:1-9

"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO CURSES FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have



received from me is a gift to God"— then he need not honour his father or mother.' Thus, you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well, did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'THESE PEOPLE DRAW NEAR TO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' "

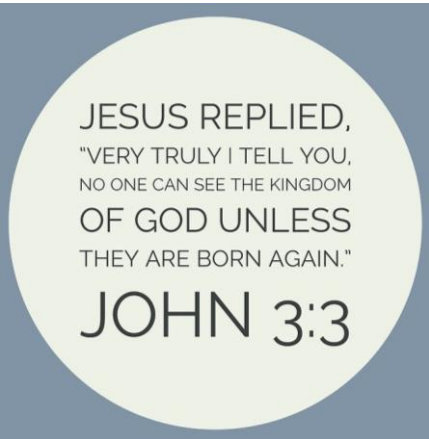
3. RELIGION DOESN'T CHANGE HEARTS

Jesus likened the religious Pharisees to a group of dishwashers who clean the outside of the cup while leaving the inside dirty. He said, *"Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?"* **Luke 11:39-40.**

Jesus knew that a person can change his image without changing his act – **Matthew 23:1-3**

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do."

He knew that religious credentials and ceremony cannot change the heart. he told one of the most religious men of His day that unless a person is *"born again"* by the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God – **John 3:3**. Yet from that day until now, many of the most religious people in the world continue to forget that while religion can give attention to outward appearance, only Christ can change the heart.



JESUS REPLIED,
"VERY TRULY I TELL YOU,
NO ONE CAN SEE THE KINGDOM
OF GOD UNLESS
THEY ARE BORN AGAIN."

JOHN 3:3

4. RELIGION MAKES MUCH OF LITTLE

Jesus spoke to religionists who had a passion for detail when He said, *“Woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone”* – **Luke 11:42.**

Jesus saw our tendency to make rules and to focus on “morally correct” behavior instead of keeping our eyes on a bigger issue of why we are trying to be so right. While the Pharisees were big on knowledge carried out to its logical conclusions, they forgot that God does not care how much we know until He knows how much we care.

It was this greater “why” that the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote, *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal . . . And though I bestow all*

my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing”

Corinthians 13:1-3.

Ten ways to love

1. Listen without interrupting. (Proverbs 18)
2. Speak without accusing. (James 1:19)
3. Give without sparing. (Proverbs 21:26)
4. Pray without ceasing. (Colossians 1:9)
5. Answer without arguing. (Proverbs 17:1)
6. Share without pretending. (Ephesians 4:15)
7. Enjoy without complaint. (Philippians 2:14)
8. Trust without wavering. (Corinthians 13:7)
9. Forgive without punishing. (Colossians 3:13)
10. Promise without forgetting. (Proverbs 13:12)

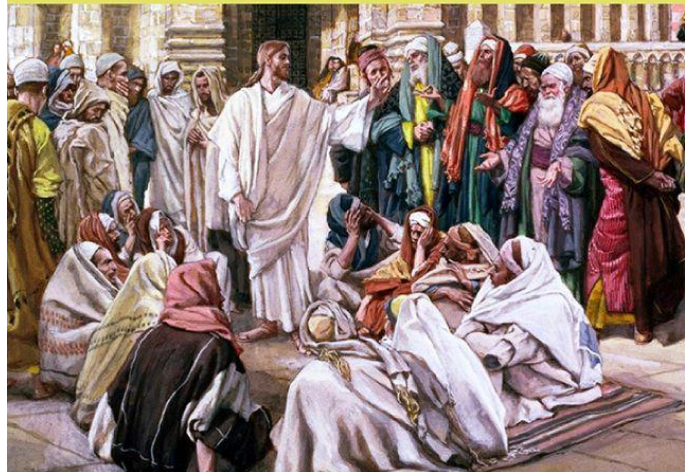
5. RELIGION OFFERS THE APPROVAL OF MEN RATHER THAN GOD

Jesus reserved His strongest criticism for those religious people who used their spiritual reputation to get social attention and honours. To such religionists Jesus said: *“Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the market places”* – **Luke 11:43**, then, speaking to His disciples, He said to the Pharisees, *“All their works they; do to be seen by men”* – **Matthew 23:5**. Jesus saw clearly into the practice of religion, which holds the opinions and attention of man to be more important and desirable than the approval of God.

6. RELIGION MAKES HYPOCRITES OF US

Jesus said, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” For you are all like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them”,* - **Luke 11:44**. What looks better than being dressed right, attending religions services, doing things that mark us a decent God-fearing people? Yet how many religious scholars, ministers, and faithful followers withhold honour and encouragement from their wives, attention from their children, and love from their doctrinal enemies? Jesus knew what we often forget: What looks good may have a heart of evil.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.
- Matthew 23:25-26 -



7. RELIGION MAKES A HARD LIFE HARDER

Because religion cannot change a heart, it tries to control people with laws and expectations that are not even kept by the religionists who interpret and apply the rules. With this “burden factor” in mind, Jesus said, ‘*Woe to you also, lawyers (experts in religious law)! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers,*’ – **Luke 11:46**. Religion is good at describing high standards of right behavior and relationships, but poor at giving real and merciful help to those who realize they have not lived up to those expectations.

8. RELIGION MAKES IT EASY TO DECEIVE OURSELVES

It’s been jokingly said, “I love humanity. It’s people I can’t stand.” The Pharisees acted out a similar idea, but it wasn’t funny.

According to Jesus, the Pharisees prided themselves in honouring and building memorials to the prophets. The irony is that when they met a real prophet, they wanted to kill Him. Barclay says, “The only prophets they admired were dead prophets; when they met a living one, they tried to kill Him. They honoured the dead prophets with tombs and memorials, but they dishonoured the living ones with persecution and death.”

This is the point Jesus made in Luke **11:47-51** and in a parallel passage in **Matthew 23:29-32**. The Pharisees had fooled themselves. They didn’t think of themselves as prophet-killers. Religionists don’t see themselves as the God-rejecting people they are.

9. RELIGION HIDES THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE

One of the greatest dangers of religion is that it causes us to be a danger not only to ourselves but also to others. To the very religions biblical experts of His day Jesus said, *“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered,”* – **Luke 11:52.**

Religionists take away “the key knowledge” by distracting people from the Word of God and from a “right attention of heart” by the unnecessary additions of denominationally correct traditions and expectations. Rather than leading people to God, religionists shift the focus to themselves and their own rules. Religionists are those who trust the beliefs and actions of their religion to do what only Christ can do.

10. RELIGION LEADS ITS COVERTS AWAY

Matthew 23:15, Jesus said. *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”*

Converts of religion are in double jeopardy. They bring a double enthusiasm to their new way of life, and with zeal they blindly defend their blind teachers. They put themselves in the trust of people who have exchanged a system of rules and traditions for the life, forgiveness, and relationship of an infinite Saviour.

Religion is important in its place (**James 1:26-27** – “*If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.*” *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*”), but only when it points us to the Christ who died for our sins and who now offers to live His life through those who trust Him (**Galatians 2:20** “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*”

and

Titus 3:5 – “*... not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit).*”

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

You're not alone if you are unconvinced that Christ is all He claimed to be. But keep in mind that He promised God's help to those who have honest questions about who He is and what He taught. He said, “*If any one chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own,*” – **John 7:17**.

Jesus will give divine help to those who want to know the truth and are willing to surrender to it.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

17 that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped



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