

FALSE RELIGION

Don't you hate it when someone lies to you? Are there any lies in religion? Is there such a thing as "false religion?" Even though people hate to be lied to, when it comes to religion, it seems that many people do not want to talk about the possibility that there may be false religions in the world. Does "lying religion" bother you?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

An inspired man once wrote that "There are six things that the LORD hates, [even] seven that are an abomination to him: (17) haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, (18) a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, (19) a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers." (Pro 6:16-19 ESV.) Did you notice that God hates a lying tongue? Furthermore, God also hates a "false witness who breathes out lies" trying to make people believe the wrong thing. Of course, a person who speaks lies wants his hearers to assume that he is speaking the truth. The liar wants to substitute his lie for the truth. A person who teaches that a piece of wood or metal shaped into an image is a god or goddess is teaching a lie. But in our world today it is considered bad etiquette to call that person a liar. It is considered bad etiquette even to challenge that person's religion to present evidence that what he preaches is truth. False witness is the foundation of false religion! Since false witness is something that God hates, then false religion is also hated by God.

All religion is a search for that which is higher than nature. It is a search for the Creator of nature. The true and living God is invisible to the human eye. But the invisible God tugs at the human heart. We look at His handiwork and we begin to thirst for its Creator. Even though we may wish to blot it out of our minds...

"The heavens keep telling the wonders of God, and the skies declare what he has done. (2) Each day informs the following day; each night announces to the next. (3) They don't speak a word, and there is never the sound of a voice. (4) [But] Yet their message reaches all the earth, and it travels around the world. In the heavens a tent is set up for the sun. (5) It rises like a bridegroom and gets ready like a hero eager to run a race. (6) It travels all the way across the sky. Nothing hides from its heat. (Psalm 19:1-6 CEV.) Surely you are curious about the

identity of this Creator. All religion is a search for this great God who has revealed himself and His majesty in the creation around us.

“O LORD and Ruler, your name is wonderful everywhere on earth! You let your glory be seen in the heavens above. (2) With praises from children and from tiny infants, you have built a fortress. It makes your enemies silent, and all who turn against you are left speechless. (3) I often think of the heavens your hands have made, and of the moon and stars you put in place. (4) Then I ask, "Why do you care about us humans? Why are you concerned for us weaklings?" (5) You made us a little lower than you yourself, and you have crowned us with glory and honor. (6) You let us rule everything your hands have made. And you put all of it under our power-- (7) the sheep and the cattle, and every wild animal, (8) the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and all ocean creatures. (9) O LORD and Ruler, your name is wonderful everywhere on earth!” (Psalm 8:1-9 CEV.)

Yes, all religion is a search for this great person whose name is wonderful. But not all religion is true! How can a person know the difference between religions? How can one know what is true and what is false? The great creator has revealed Himself in a written word. That’s right! God calls it by several descriptive terms; one of His favorite expressions is the word “Law.”

“The Law of the LORD is perfect; it gives us new life. His teachings last forever, and they give wisdom to ordinary people. (8) The LORD's instruction is right; it makes our hearts glad. His commands shine brightly, and they give us light. (9) Worshiping the LORD is sacred; he will always be worshiped. All of his decisions are correct and fair. (10) They are worth more than the finest gold and are sweeter than honey from a honeycomb. (11) *O my Lord*, By your teachings I am warned; by obeying them, I am greatly rewarded.” (Psalm 19:7-11 CEV.) Notice that in this passage the Written Word of the great Lord is called law, teachings, instruction, commands, and decisions. Here is the way to distinguish between that which is false and that which is true.

“O LORD, you bless everyone who lives right and obeys your Law. (2) You bless all of those who follow your commands from deep in their hearts (3) and who never do wrong or turn from you. (4) You have ordered us always to obey your teachings; (5) I don't ever want to stray from your laws. (6) Thinking about your commands will keep me from doing some foolish thing. (7) I will do right and

praise you by learning to respect your perfect laws. (8) I will obey all of them! Don't turn your back on me. (9) Young people can live a clean life by obeying your word. (10) I worship you with all my heart. Don't let me walk away from your commands. (11) I treasure your word above all else; it keeps me from sinning against you." (Psalm 119:1-11 CEV.)

God's wonderful written Word is the world's safeguard against lies. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) Jesus was well acquainted with God's Truth and He used it against Satan's lies. Satan came to Jesus to tempt him in the same way that Satan tempts you and me. Satan first tempted Jesus by appealing to Jesus' physical needs. Jesus had been fasting for 40 days and he was exceedingly hungry. So Satan said, "If you are the Son of God then command these stones to be turned into bread." Satan's lie is found in the little word "if." Satan was attempting to cause Jesus to doubt his sonship. Jesus' response was written in the scripture, "it is written", Jesus said, "Man shall live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4.) What is true for humans is also true for Satan. Satan should also be living by every word of God. But Satan does not live by the word of God and neither does the majority of the world who has been deceived by Satan.

Satan does not attempt to lead the world away from religion. Oh, yes, there are some who have been tempted to say that there is no god, but the majority of humans on this planet believe there is a God, a Creator for this universe. To most people it appears to be exceedingly foolish to deny the existence of God. And so Satan likes religion, but not true religion. That is, Satan does not like the religion taught in God's Word, the Bible. But Satan loves false teaching and its result, false religion. And why does Satan love false teaching, because false teaching will destroy us and Satan is a murderer. Satan knows that God hates lying and false witness. Jesus said that Satan "was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, [that is, from his own nature], for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44.) Satan prompted Cain's murder of his brother Abel. And it all started with Cain's false religion. False teaching and false religion are in the world because the spirit of Satan is in the world.

Friend, to stand with God you must stand against false teaching and false religion. How will you know the difference between what is false and what is true? The

Word of God is the answer. God has given the Bible to the world so that we can study and learn God's truth. The Bible is a reliable guide. There are some people who do not believe in the importance of doctrine. They want to live and let live. They believe that people can practice any religion as they choose and it will make no difference with their eternal existence. Even Christian denominations do not take stands against false teaching. In fact, they practice doctrines that have no basis in the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

Take "Lent" as an example. "Lent" is a period of 40 weekdays from so-called Ash Wednesday to Easter. It is traditionally observed in many Christian churches by fasting and penitence. It is designed to get people spiritually ready to celebrate Easter. None of this do you read in the Bible. Lent is a concoction of men. There is no such thing as an Easter celebration in God's Word. There is no biblical "Ash Wednesday". It is not in the doctrine of Christ. But yet preachers speak of Lent and churches practice it as if God had commanded it. What are we thinking? If you are going back into history to find a religious doctrine, why stop off in the Middle Ages, the dark ages of the apostate religion? Why not go all the way back to the teaching of Christ and His apostles, found in the New Testament of Jesus Christ? This is where you find the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is not found in the traditions of medieval apostate religion. The Spirit's teaching is found in the book we call the New Testament of Jesus Christ. If you cannot find it the New Testament, don't practice it. Why, because God hates lies, and He hates those who bear false witness. To say that "Lent" comes from God is to tell a lie. To practice it in the name of Christ is false religion.

I challenge you friends to find your religion in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. In the words of the Psalmist, may this be our prayer, "O Lord, Obeying your instructions brings as much happiness as being rich. (15) I will study your teachings and follow your footsteps. (16) I will take pleasure in your laws and remember your words. (17) Treat me with kindness, O LORD, so that I may live and do what you say. (18) Open my mind and let me discover the wonders of your Law. (19) I live here as a stranger. Don't keep me from knowing your commands. (20) What I want most of all and at all times is to honor your laws. (21) You punish those boastful, worthless nobodies who turn from your commands. (22) Don't let them sneer and insult me for following you. (23) I keep thinking about your teachings, O LORD, even if rulers plot against me." (Psalm 119:14-23 CEV.) In the words of Jesus' apostle Paul, "Finally, be strong in

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the Lord and in the strength of his might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” (Eph 6:10-11 ESV.)

False religion comes from Satan. Practicing lies will condemn you!