



Getting Over Religion

JANUARY 3, 2021

There are a lot of competing ideas out there about God and spirituality, connected by several threads. This Sunday we tackle the word "religion" (both the good use and the negative use) and how Jesus came to end it all, not start a new religion/structure.

KEY BIBLE PASSAGES: *Amos 5:21, Jeremiah 2:13, Matthew 9:12-13 (NIV), Matthew 12:1-7 (NIV)*

BIG IDEA: Peace with God means getting over religion. Jesus came to end religious pursuits of God by providing direct experience of God for us. He is God. Religious structures can help, to a point, but they can also get in the way.

BIG APPLICATION: Jesus is not a religion. This thinking shift is fundamental to receive the life of God in your being.

STRUCTURES SUSTAIN OR SUPPRESS RELATIONSHIPS

New Covenant

- Covenant vs. Contract
- All relationships need structure

"Once the structure stops serving relationship and starts substituting for the relationship, it has become the enemy of God" (17).

"We call Jesus the Christ not because He brought a new religion, but because He is the end of religion, above religion and irreligion, above Christianity and non-Christianity"

-Paul Tillich (EOR, Cavey, 35).

- In the Gospels, most religious outcasts love Jesus and most religious leaders hate him. One heard hope, the other heard threats to their roles as stewards of religion 35.
- The "no carrying" law

"RELIGION" THE RANGE OF THIS WORD, GOOD AND BAD

POSITIVE

- Bruxy's response to Brian Zahnd's positive use of religion (<https://www.bruxy.com/book/is-religion-good-or-bad/>)
- "I'm spiritual, not religious"?
- "I'm not just spiritual, I'm religious"?
- From Matthew Bates: We need to understand the use of the word "Allegiance".

"Wright helped me recognize the degree to which my ideas of faith, sin, repentance, works, "heaven," the kingdom of God, and the like were constructed through sixteenth-century Protestant categories rather than first-century."
 - "Allegiance" is a stronger word than simply "relationship". Faith is trust and loyalty to a king.

NEGATIVE

Bruxy: "When I use the term religion, I am usually referring to any system of belief, behaviour, and belonging that people use to achieve rather than receive salvation" (EOR, 48).

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Letters from Prison* called for a "religionless Christianity". (49)
- Why do you kiss?

We don't lick the cup, we drink the water.

- "Religion does not lead people to God any more than cups quench your thirst" (53).

Jeremiah 2:13

"My people have committed two sins:

*They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*

- The call again is "come to me directly". When we refuse, he comes to us through the Holy Spirit.
- The church is most basically people with Jesus as the centre of their community. FULL STOP.
 - It is not a religious system, it's a base community, an eklesia
- When the pattern becomes the goal instead of shaping desires to ultimate love, then it's a dead tradition. 63
 - Note: It is not tradition itself, but when we never engage with it through our hearts, emotions, etc.

RECAP

FINAL WORD/NEXT STEPS

- The "R" word...
- Followers of Jesus are intimately connected with Him, like a body to a head.
 - Jesus called his followers to live "radical lives of active peacemaking, courageous nonviolence, limitless forgiveness, and other-centred love (Matthew 5:38-47, Luke 6:27-36).
- Do you want to live life like this? Are you tired of wars and wall-building ideologies that drive our world? If so, Jesus is calling you to follow him.

NEXT SUNDAY: The domestication of Jesus and the disrupting Holy Spirit. What happens when the institutional church gets sucked into the wars and walls of religion and ideologies?