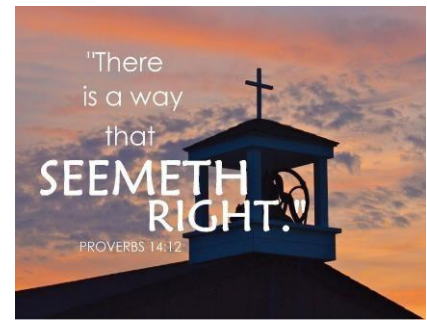


New Life Bible Study

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP #11 – FALSE RELIGION



DAILY READINGS:

- {**Monday:** The devil creates a substitute for the true (Genesis 3:1-5; Exodus 7:8-12; 1 Kings 13:1-19).
- {**Tuesday:** The false prophets tried to convince Israel that Baal was the true God (1 Kings 18:21-26).
- {**Wednesday:** The scribes and Pharisees were religious but vain (Luke 18:10-14; Luke 20:46-47).
- {**Thursday:** Teachers of false religion are called false and evil (Matthew 7:15; 2 Peter 2:1-2; Philippians 3:2).
- {**Friday:** Some descriptions of false teachings (2 Corinthians 11:4; Hebrews 13:9; 1 Timothy 4:1-3).
- {**Saturday:** How to detect false religion (Psalm 119:104; James 1:27; 1 Timothy 4:7).

MEMORY VERSE: *"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death."*

–Proverbs 14:12

A Form of Religion

Have you ever known anyone who received counterfeit money? That fake money was created by making a copy of real money. Although it may have looked almost exactly like the real thing, that money was actually only a copy and worthless. These bills are sometimes called Funny Money, although there is nothing humorous about it when you are the one left with a piece of paper that you thought was real money. The devil has been referred to as the Master Counterfeiter. He has created many substitutes for the one true religion. Because these substitutes (false religion) are so convincing, the devil has deceived countless millions into thinking that they are right with God when they are not. This, perhaps, is the most deceptive of all the devil's tools.

Religion	Examples of World Religions
(1) To believe in, worship, and serve God (or gods)	Christianity
(2) A system of faith and worship	Islam
(3) A set of beliefs, attitudes, and practices	Judaism
	Hinduism
	Buddhism

It has been estimated that approximately 85 percent of all the people in the world consider themselves to be religious. Some people say that there are many roads to God and it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. Other people believe all religions basically teach the same thing. Some people tell you that no religion is wrong; different cultures just have different ways of identifying God. A popular saying of the religious world has been, "Go to the church of your choice." Then there are people who say that their religion is the only one that is right. With so many differing opinions, how can you know what is the truth? Are there religions that are only a form (or a substitute) of the true? Most important, what does God's Word say?

A FORM OF GODLINESS

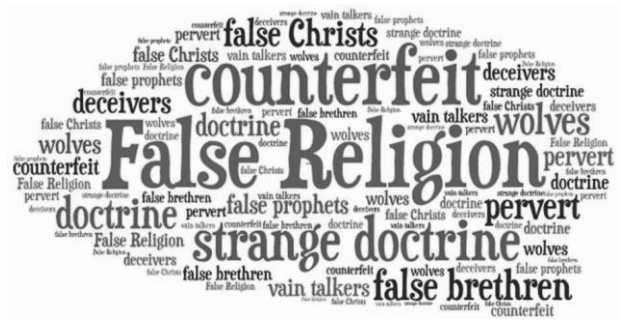


False Religion Is a Substitute

When Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, he presented her with a substitute for the command of God. God said if Adam or Eve ate of the tree, they would die. But Satan said if they ate it they would "be as gods" (Genesis 3:5). When Moses stood before Pharaoh, showing him the mighty works of God, the "magicians of Egypt" worked to imitate the miracles with "their enchantments" (Exodus 7:11). When the true prophet of God was commanded by God to not eat or drink until he returned home, a false prophet tricked him by saying that an angel had given him a different command (1 Kings 13:18). When the Prophet Elijah was trying to persuade Israel to worship the one true God on Mount Carmel, the prophets of Baal did their best to convince Israel that their god was the better god

(1 Kings, Chapter 18). Time after time, we can read in God's Word where the devil tried to substitute a false religion for the one true religion.

This deception continued in the New Testament. Many people claimed to be right with God, having a "form of godliness" (2 Timothy 3:5). The Jewish scribes were men who spent much time studying the Law of Moses. They were very religious. Jesus said that they loved "to walk in long robes," receive "greetings in the markets," to pray "long prayers," and to have the "highest [best] seats in the synagogues" (Luke 20:46-47). By only looking at their outward appearance, one could be deceived into thinking that they had true religion, but it was only a form. When the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray, he was proud that he was not like the publican (a tax collector) who was praying nearby. However, in Luke 18:14 Jesus made it clear which man had true religion and which man did not. When Paul visited Mars' Hill, he saw so many idols (forms of religion) that he said, "I observe that you are very religious" (Acts 17:22 AMP). Yet, they were ignorant of the one true God.



False Teachers

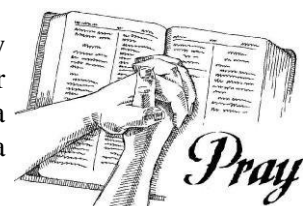
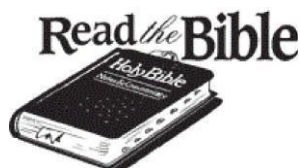
How can you tell what is true religion and what is false? Many people have been completely deceived. Jesus warned that some people falsely believe that their good works are what will get them into Heaven (Matthew 7:21-23). Often there are "false prophets" who preach false teachings and doctrines; Jesus described them as "ravening wolves" wearing "sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15). These men claimed to be Christians. They were very convincing, but Paul wrote that they "pervert [distort or change] the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7). Instead of preaching the doctrines (the teachings of Christ), they were "teaching . . . the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Men's ideas, which were often wrong or unnecessary teachings, replaced the truth of God's Word. Paul described it as "another Jesus" or "another gospel" (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:17 that we must "beware" of "being led away with the error of the wicked." This is anything that causes you to leave the path of righteousness. It is trading the truth for a lie. Some of the lies being taught today include: it does not matter which church you attend; no one can live free from sin; a loving God would not send anyone to hell; once saved, always saved; the devil was once an angel in Heaven; and the dress standard does not matter because God looks at the heart. Many people believe that these teachings are "right," but the truth is they are "the ways of [spiritual] death" (Proverbs 14:12).

What Is True Religion?

Many people are being deceived, thinking that they are right with God when they are not. It is vital to know what is true religion and what is not. Just as the best way to recognize a counterfeit bill is to know what a real one looks like, so it is with religion. It must begin with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It has been said that false religion is facing inward (what makes me happy), but true religion is facing upward (what makes God happy). Daily Bible reading, prayer, and meditation are necessary if you do not want to be deceived. Psalm 119:104 tells us that learning God's "precepts" (laws) will give us understanding of the true way, and we will "hate every false way."

James 1:27 says that "pure religion" is "to keep himself unspotted from the world" (holy living) and "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (love and care for others). James also warned in verse 26 that if one seems "to be religious" but does not control his tongue, his religion is "vain" (or useless). If you claim to be a Christian, but it does not show in your talk, in your attitude, and in how you treat others, you are deceived. If this happens, ask God to forgive you. Be more faithful in your Bible reading and study. This is considered spiritual "exercise" (1 Timothy 4:7) and will help you to identify and avoid "profane and vain babblings" (1 Timothy 6:20), or doctrines and ideas that are worthless and untrue. Developing a "love of the truth" is the best way to avoid being deceived by a "strong delusion" or "a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).



- 1. What is a counterfeit?**
- 2. What was the counterfeit (or substitute) Satan presented to Eve?**
- 3. How did the false prophet deceive the man of God in 1 Kings 13:18?**
- 4. What did the Jewish scribes love, according to Luke 20:46-47?**
- 5. Why might the Jews believe that the scribes had true religion?**
- 6. How did Jesus describe false teachers in Matthew 7:15?**
- 7. According to Matthew 15:9, what was being taught instead of the doctrines of Christ?**
- 8. What is the "error of the lawless" (2 Peter 3:17)?**
- 9. What are the two things that make up "pure religion," according to James 1:27?**
- 10. What is spiritual exercising?**
- 11. How does spiritual exercising protect you from false religion?**

