

One of the greatest lies that Satan has foisted on the human race is that religion can save you. "Religion," means to adherence to the beliefs and practices of a religion in the hope that your performance will gain you right standing with God.

Those who are into religion deceive themselves by thinking that their outward rituals and rules will impress God, while at the same time they dodge dealing with the sin that is in their hearts.

The important thing with the Lord is what is in our hearts. He sees and judges "the thoughts and intentions of our hearts" In John 2:23-25, Heb. 4:12-13.

Later, when the Pharisees questioned Jesus about why His disciples did not wash their hands according to their traditions, He blasted them (Mark 7:6-8):

Whether it is Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, or even Christianity, there have always been millions who mistakenly thought that obedience to their religion would earn them eternal life. Ephesians 2:8-10

The four Gospels make it clear that the most difficult people to reach with the gospel are not the wicked, but rather the outwardly religious. Matthew 23:27-28

There are numerous accounts of corrupt tax collectors and immoral people coming to salvation. Luke 17:11-17, 19:1-10, 23:39-43.

They knew that they were sinners and that they could not save themselves. But it was the religious crowd that opposed Jesus and eventually crucified Him. Matthew 27: 41-43

They were blind to their own sins of pride and self-righteousness. Their religion served not to save them, but to condemn them. John 3:18-20

But Jesus Christ did not come to promote religion. He did not flatter those who were religious by saying that He was glad to see their religious activities and that He, too, was a religious person. When the religious leaders complained that Jesus socialized with sinners, He replied in Luke 5:31-32

He was not saying that some are righteous enough to get into heaven by their own good deeds. Rather, by the "righteous," He meant the self-righteous. Their pride blinded them to their sin and kept them from coming to Jesus for forgiveness and salvation.

Thus all the religion in the world cannot resolve our basic problem of being alienated from God, because religion is based on human works that stem from the flesh and feed our pride.

To be subject to the King, we need the new birth that gives us a new nature that delights in obedience to God from the heart (Rom. 6:17-18).

We need a radical transformation, not just some behavior modification. We need something that the natural man cannot produce. We need nothing less than to be reborn from above. John 3:1-3

The way we can know that we're born again is that we observe signs of new life in our hearts: faith in Christ and His promise of eternal life; love for God; a new desire for the things of God; thankfulness to

mourning or and hatred or sin and a desire for noiness.

In short, you will have new desires for God that you did not have before the new birth. It is not that you will never desire to sin again, but rather that the new direction of your life will be marked by these new desires that come from the new birth.

*Craving up the old for New.*