

# One Faith

Lesson 3:

Is It Possible To Be Religious And Still Be Wrong?



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

## One Faith

### Lesson 3: Is It Possible To Be Religious And Still Be Wrong?

Learn from Bible examples that both doctrine and deeds matter to God

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#### Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

**Study Number:** DGW35

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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# Lesson 3:

## Is It Possible To Be Religious And Still Be Wrong?

In our first study, we discovered the truth from Ephesians 4:1-6 that there is only one faith (system of religion) that is acceptable to God. We also discussed why there are so many different churches today and the importance of unity.

In our second study, we discovered that everyone can't possibly be right! There are many different beliefs, practices, and doctrines in the religious world and they simply cannot all be right in God's sight. Furthermore, we discussed the truth that there is only one Way – and briefly discussed that Way.

Still, some say that it does not matter how you worship or how you live – saying that all morally good, religious people will be saved. But, is this a concept that is to be found within the pages of God's word? I believe that we will (upon investigation) find that this idea is foreign to the word of God and is a lie!

As we continue our study of "One Faith," let's ask a third question: "Is it possible to be religious and still be wrong?" Briefly, let's define what it means to be religious. The term implies devotion to something/someone (either to God or a god). Religious people would include (but are not limited to): The atheist who is devoted to his god

("science"), the Buddhist who is devoted to his god (Buddha), the Muslim who is devoted to his god (Allah), the Jew who is devoted to God and the observance of Old Testament laws and Jewish traditions, the "Christian" who believes in God and claims Christ as Lord – but who is not truly following the one Way described in the Bible (perhaps one who is involved in denominationalism), and the Christian who is following the Scriptures and is part of Christ's church.

Now, let's also take a moment to identify what is under discussion when we talk about the word "wrong." Let's phrase the question another way: "Is it possible to be religious and still not please God and be saved eternally?" Therefore, to be wrong in this sense is to remain lost in sin and be destined for eternal punishment in Hell fire!

This question, then, has great implications to our overall study of the "one faith" that is identified in Ephesians 4:5. If God is pleased with all or most of the ways in which folks express their religious beliefs, then it does not matter which church an individual is part of, what an individual believes, or what an individual practices in the name of religion. However, if the Scriptures demonstrate that it *is* possible for an individual to be religious (and even be a "Christian") and still fail to please God, then it does matter which church an individual belongs to, what an individual believes, and what an individual practices in the name of religion!

As always, please investigate this question with an honest and open heart that is seeking for the truth and make the proper applications of the answer! Let's begin this study investigating some Bible examples that should answer this question for us.

### ***Examples***

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As we are diligent to search the Scriptures and accurately interpret them, do we find examples which demonstrate a God who does not care how individuals serve and worship Him? Or, do we find examples demonstrating a God who wants people to serve and worship Him only according to the

instructions He has given? Let's consider some examples of people who were religious – and observe whether their religious beliefs and practices were acceptable to God.

## **Cain**

Cain was religious. He was the son of Adam and Eve. All indications are that Cain believed in the Lord. In fact, during Cain's lifetime, we find the Lord directly speaking to Cain (see Genesis 4:6-15). In addition, we also read about Cain offering a sacrifice to God. His brother, Abel, also brought an offering to God. Yet, consider the Scripture records which demonstrate Cain to have been wrong.

Genesis 4:3-5 says, "And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell." The passage then proceeds to identify how that Cain became angry and killed his brother out of envy. However, the Lord had told Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" (verse 7). Therefore, this passage (while we do not have all of the details) demonstrates that there was something about Cain's sacrifice which was not pleasing to God. God did not "respect" it (that is, He did not look upon Cain's offering with favor). A couple of New Testament passages will help to provide some additional information.

Hebrews 11:4 gives the following testimony of Abel's faith in God – and also comments concerning Cain's sacrifice: "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks." In 1 John 3:12, as John gives instruction concerning the need for Christians to love their brethren, he says, "not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous." Therefore, these two inspired verses provide some commentary on the nature of Cain's sacrifice – and why it was not approved of God. The Hebrew writer implied that Cain's sacrifice was not "by faith" and was not as "excellent" as

Abel's offering. Then, John said that Cain's offering was evil, while Abel's offering was righteous.

So, Cain was religious (believing in God and offering a sacrifice to God); yet, Cain was wrong (by failing to offer an acceptable sacrifice to God)!

## **Nadab and Abihu**

Nadab and Abihu were religious. They were two sons of Aaron (the high priest to God). In fact, they were priests themselves (being from the tribe of Levi). Therefore, they would perform the duties as priests that were identified under the Old Testament Law. Yet, the Scriptures record how these two individuals failed to be pleasing to God – and experienced the consequences as a result.

Consider the events recorded in Exodus 24:9-11, as the Lord called Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel to come to the mountain in the wilderness of Sinai: "Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank."

Now, consider the record in Leviticus 10:1-2: "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

While we do not have all of the details regarding their sin, consider what we are told in the passages we've just read. Clearly, Nadab and Abihu had seen God – and should have been devoted to serving and worshiping Him according to His instructions. God had given very clear instructions concerning the sacrifices that were to be offered by the priests. However, rather than obeying those instructions, they violated them in some way. The passage states that they offered "profane fire" which God "had not commanded them." The *New International Version* of the Bible says that they "offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary

to his command.” Perhaps this fire was from an unauthorized source. But, regardless of the specifics of this error, they had failed to be diligent to obey God – and they suffered the consequences!

So, Nadab and Abihu were religious (being priests of God and having seen God); yet, they were wrong (by failing to obey God’s instructions and by offering a sacrifice that was unauthorized by God)!

## **The Pharisees**

The Pharisees were religious. A “Pharisee” referred to an individual in a particular sect of the Jewish faith. In particular, Paul (who had been a Pharisee) said that to be a Pharisee was to be part of the “strictest sect” of the Jewish religion (Acts 26:5). Yet, the Scriptures reveal that these individuals (who prided themselves on their strict observance of Moses’ Law) often failed to please God.

In Matthew 23, Jesus Christ exposed some of the scribes and Pharisees as being hypocrites! He said that 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. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matthew 23:2-4). Often, within this chapter, Jesus would condemn the hypocrisy of these individuals – and even pointed to the condemnation that they would receive (Matthew 23:14)!

In another encounter with this religious group, Jesus again exposed their error. In Matthew 15, the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus, “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread” (vs. 2). Jesus responded, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition” (vs. 3), saying that they had “made the commandment of God of no effect by [their] tradition” (vs. 6). Then, He continued by saying, “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” (vs. 7-9).

So, the Pharisees were religious (in their practice of Judaism and their traditions); yet, they were wrong (by their hypocrisy and vain worship, holding to the traditions of men over the commandments of God – and ultimately rejecting Jesus Christ)!

## **The Jews**

The Jews were religious. They were God’s own special people during the Old Testament times. They were the people through whom God fulfilled the promises He had made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-5. They were the people God had made His covenant with in the Old Testament. They were the people who had seen the mighty works of God on numerous occasions (i.e. the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the conquest of the Canaan land, etc.). They were the ones who were expected to devote themselves completely to the observance of God’s laws. Yet, the Scriptures reveal that these individuals (who were supposed to be devoted to following God’s ways) often lived in ways which were contrary to God!

They complained and rebelled against God shortly after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. They forsook God in order to serve and worship the idols in other nations. They rejected God as King over them and wanted a human king (so that they could be like the other nations). They even lost the book containing God’s law. The history of the nation of Israel is full of examples of such failure to obey God. Then, whenever these things would take place and they would refuse to repent, God would bring consequences upon the nation of His people – just as He had promised!

Particularly, during the time of Jesus, the people God had been preparing to accept His only begotten Son (Jesus Christ, the Messiah) rejected Him! Notice, then, the sad statement Paul made about the Jews in Romans 10:1-4: “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and

seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Clearly, these people were religious. They had a “zeal for God.” However, their zeal was misdirected (it was “not according to knowledge”). They were “seeking to establish their own righteousness” through the works of the Law of Moses rather than seeking to submit themselves to the “righteousness of God” that was available only through faith in Christ!

So, the Jews were religious (in their belief in God and their adherence to portions of the Law of Moses); yet, they were wrong (because of their refusal to obey God and accept Jesus Christ)!

## **Saul**

Saul was religious. Saul (who would later be known as Paul) was a Jew (being from the tribe of Benjamin, Philippians 3:5). He had been circumcised on the eighth day in accordance with the Law of Moses (Philippians 3:5). He was devoted to the observance of the Law of Moses. In Philippians 3:5-6, Paul says that he had been a Pharisee – and blameless according to the Law of Moses. Acts 22:3 reveals that he received training from a highly regarded Jewish teacher, named Gamaliel. However, this zealous Jewish man who had received training from one of the most prominent teachers in Jewish history was not pleasing to God!

Consider what Paul said about himself in Acts 26:9-11: “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”

This persecution that Saul brought against Jesus’ followers was done in “all good conscience” before God (Acts 23:1). Therefore, Saul was truly doing what he thought God wanted him to do – even in persecuting Christians. However, the Scriptures

demonstrate that Saul needed to stop fighting against Christ – and live for Him! Whenever Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, he was instructed to go into the city of Damascus so that he would be told what he must do in order to be saved (see Acts 9:1-19). Particularly, Saul was told that he must be baptized in order to have his sins washed away, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

So, Saul was religious (being zealous for God and doing all things in good conscience); yet, he was wrong (because he was not following the way of Christ)!

## **The Athenians**

The Athenians were religious. The people of the ancient city of Athens were noted for their philosophy and interest in learning new things (i.e. the latest philosophies of others). In fact, when Paul arrived in this city in the first century, the Scriptures say, “For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). Particularly, these individuals were identified as being “very religious” by Paul in Acts 17:22. However, their religion did not make them pleasing to God!

Their religious nature is further explained by the text in Acts 17. Verse 16 says, “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.” Sources say that the city was literally covered with idols. There were so many different idols in this city that, as Paul was passing through the city and saw the great number of idols, he even saw one altar that especially grabbed his attention. This altar had the inscription: “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (verse 23). So, just in case they missed a god, they had an altar erected to it!

Paul, to these religious people, then began to proclaim the truths about the one true and living God they truly did not know! As he does, he contrasts the true God with all of their idols, demonstrating that their gods are not real and living gods – and that they needed to repent of their sins because the one true God has appointed a Day upon which He will judge

the world in righteousness by His Son, Jesus Christ (see Acts 17:30-31)!

So, the Athenians were religious (worshiping a great number of false gods); yet, they were wrong (because they were not worshiping and serving the one true God)!

## **Ananias and Sapphira**

Ananias and Sapphira were religious. These were husband and wife – and members of Christ’s church. So, unlike the other examples we have been discussing up to this point, these individuals were Christians. This conclusion can be reached by considering the Biblical account of their lives in Acts 5:1-11. However, these Christians still conducted their lives in a way that displeased God!

Acts 4:32-37 describes the work of the early church regarding a contribution for needy Christians. The passage describes how that Christians were selling their possessions and bringing the proceeds from the sales to the apostles – who would distribute the funds properly in order to meet the needs of the other Christians. The story of Ananias and Sapphira finds itself in this context. The passage describes how both of them were involved in the lie of selling a certain possession and keeping back part of the proceeds for themselves, while claiming they had given the entire amount from the sale to the apostles.

Later, the Biblical record reveals how Peter confronted both of these individuals separately – and how they lied to God by refusing to tell the truth about the actual selling price of the possession. Therefore, the text records how that both of them fell down and died – being killed by the Lord!

So, Ananias and Sapphira were religious (as they had become Christians and were involving themselves in giving to needy Christians); yet, they were wrong (because they lied to God)!

## **Simon**

Simon was religious. When we are first introduced to Simon (in Acts 8:9), he is identified as being a sorcerer and astonishing the people of Samaria. In fact, they were convinced that he was someone great (as he had deceived them for a long time with his sorceries). Then, whenever Philip (a

Christian evangelist) came to Samaria and performed true signs and miracles from God, they believed him as he preached the message of Jesus Christ and His kingdom to them. Some of the Samaritans were baptized (Acts 8:12). Acts 8:13 says, “Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.” However, even though Simon had once accepted the gospel and became a Christian, he then chose to sin against God and become displeasing to God!

Beginning in Acts 8:14, the Scriptures record how that the apostles Peter and John came down to Samaria after they had heard that the Samaritans had obeyed God’s word. When they came to Samaria, they laid their hands on the Samaritans so that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit. Then, Acts 8:18-24 records Simon’s sin – and Peter’s response.

“And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’ Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’”

So, Simon was religious (as he had become a Christian); yet, he was wrong (in his desire to purchase the gift of God for money)!

## **Apollos**

Apollos was religious. He is introduced to us when the Scriptures teach that he was a Jew, an eloquent man, a man who was “mighty in the Scriptures,” and a man who had come to the city of Ephesus (Acts 18:24).

The Scriptures also indicate that this man was a sincere man who was only interested in helping people to understand the way of the Lord. In Acts

18:26, the passage reveals that he “began to speak boldly in the synagogue.” However, though he had taught the way of the Lord “accurately,” he had erred in one specific area – baptism.

Acts 18:25 says, “This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.” He had (evidently) never been accurately instructed concerning the baptism that Jesus had commanded – and been informed that John’s baptism was no longer in effect. Fortunately, two Christians (Aquila and Priscilla) heard Apollos’ teaching and took him aside in order to explain the way of the Lord “more accurately” to him (Acts 18:26).

So, Apollos was religious (having been proclaiming the way of the Lord boldly – according to his knowledge); yet, he was wrong (because he did not have an accurate understanding about baptism – and he needed to learn, follow, and teach this way of truth)!

### **Man in 1 Corinthians 5**

The man in 1 Corinthians 5 was religious. Though we do not know this man’s name, it is implied that he was a Christian and was a member of the church in Corinth. However, this Christian man was not living his life in a way that was pleasing to God!

Specifically, 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 identifies the sin that this man was involved in: “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles — that a man has his father’s wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.”

Because of this man’s fornication – and the Corinthians’ improper response to his sin, Paul rebukes the congregation and gives them specific instructions concerning how they were to deal with him. Specifically, Paul instructs them to put him away from them – and not even to eat with him!

So, the man in 1 Corinthians 5 was religious (having become a Christian – and evidently remaining a member of the Corinthian church, even

though he was living in sin); yet, he was wrong (because he was living in fornication)!

### **5 churches in Asia Minor**

The churches of Christ in Asia Minor were religious. They were composed of individuals who had been obedient to the saving message of the gospel and become Christians. It may even be reasonable to believe that these congregations were all strong and faithful to the Lord at one point (certainly, this was true about the Ephesian congregation – as you can observe from the book of Ephesians). However, by the time the book of Revelation was written (perhaps right before the end of the first century), five of the seven congregations that were addressed were not pleasing to God (though some of the individual members were).

Take some time to read Revelation chapters 2 and 3 to consider everything that Jesus says about these congregations, including what He says about the two congregations who were faithful to Him. For now, take a moment to consider an overview of what Jesus says about those congregations which were not pleasing to Him.

The church in Ephesus had left their first love. Even though they were doing some good things, they were lacking the love (fervor) that was essential to pleasing God. The church in Pergamos had compromised the truth of the gospel. Even though they had been steadfast for the Lord in some difficult times, there were those permitted to remain in the congregation who held to the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (which the Lord hated). The church in Thyatira had become corrupted by sin. Even though they had grown in their service to the Lord in many ways, they had allowed a woman to remain in the congregation who had taught and seduced Christians to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. The church in Sardis was dead. Even though they had a name that they were alive, God knew their works and saw that they were spiritually dead. The church in Laodicea was lukewarm in their faith. Even though they thought they had no need of anything, they were a wreck spiritually because they were simply not zealous to follow the Lord.



So, the churches of Asia Minor were religious (having become Christians); yet, five of them were wrong (because they were not living according to God's standard)!

## Summary

Numerous other examples could be provided like the ones we have just briefly studied. However, these examples should make it clear that it is possible to be religious and still be wrong in God's sight. And, as we have seen, this does *not* just apply to those who do not classify themselves as Christians (i.e. Jews, idolaters, etc.); but, we have seen that this can be just as true about those who would classify themselves as Christians!

Now, before moving on to consider our final points very quickly, I want to review something we observed from Romans 10:1-4. Remember that the Jews had a zeal for God; but, not according to knowledge. Then, in Revelation 2:1-7, we saw that the Ephesian Christians had an accurate knowledge of God's will and were "going through the motions"; but, they had lost their fervor (left their first love). Therefore, it is fair to conclude that there are two aspects that are essential to being true followers of Jesus Christ (being religious and RIGHT): (1) Right doctrine and (2) Right deeds.

## Doctrine Matters

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Does it matter what we *believe* in religion? Does God care what doctrines we accept as being true – as long as we accept Jesus as His Son? What place does doctrine have in true religion that is acceptable to God?

### Man says...

Some say, "It doesn't matter what doctrines you believe – just as long as you believe in Jesus" (i.e. His Deity, virgin birth, sacrifice, resurrection, etc.). Some say, "We cannot all understand the Bible alike so as to believe the same doctrines." Some say that "The Bible is just a 'love letter' from God and a book of suggestions – not a law which must be strictly adhered to."

Therefore, doctrines like the following are seen as being unnecessary/inconsequential to salvation: Baptism, the organizational structure of a local church, the work of a local church, instrumental music in worship, the frequency of the Lord's Supper, and many, many others.

### God says...

God says that His doctrine (His teaching) is an essential component to the "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5). Remember (as we briefly discussed in lesson 1) that the faith is revealed in the gospel (according to Philippians 1:27). Then, Jude also indicates that doctrine is an essential component to this one faith when he instructed Christians to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

In order to be pleasing to God we must abide in the doctrine of Christ. 2 John 1:9-11 says, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." Now, please understand that the "doctrine of Christ" is not just God's teaching about Jesus Christ; but, all of God's teaching!

Therefore, to change any part of God's message is unacceptable to God (see Galatians 1:6-9 and Revelation 22:18-19). In addition, while the words of Jesus Christ will judge us on the Last Day (according to John 12:48), Paul also informs us that his inspired writings will also judge us (Romans 2:16) – because the things he wrote are the commandments of God (1 Corinthians 14:37). Therefore, in order to be acceptable to God, we must hold to the right doctrines. We must hold to the pattern of sound/uncorrupt words (2 Timothy 1:13) found within the pages of God's word!

So, it *does* matter what we believe in religion. We must believe Bible doctrine! For, in order to *do* the right things, we must *believe* the right things!

## Deeds Matter

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As long as you believe the right things in religion, does God care how you actually conduct your life? Isn't faith in God and a clear conscience the only things that God actually requires of you in order to be acceptable in His sight?

### Man says...

Some say, "If you believe in Jesus, it doesn't matter how you live your life – God's grace will save you." Some say, "In Christ, you are at liberty to choose how you want to live." Some say, "Your sinful conduct won't condemn you to Hell if you believe in God and have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior." Some say, "God only cares if you live your life according to the directions of your own conscience."

Therefore, the Bible's instructions are ignored in many areas: In baptism, in the choice of a church to assemble with, in the consumption of alcohol, in marriage, divorce, and remarriage, in entertainment choices, in choices involving sexual sin, and in many other areas.

### God says...

Again, remember that the "one faith" does not *just* include religious belief and teaching which is acceptable to God; but, it also includes actions which are acceptable and pleasing to God. You may recall (as we briefly discussed in lesson 1) that the one faith was something which must be obeyed (as demonstrated in Acts 6:7).

In order to be saved, we must not *just* believe in the right things; but, we must also obey Him. Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus Christ became the Author of eternal salvation to "all who obey Him." In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus makes this point very clear: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will

declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

In order to be pleasing to Him, we must be doers of His word; not just hearers only. In fact, if we are only hearers of God's word, we are said to deceive ourselves (James 1:22-25). In addition, James says that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26) – and that we are not justified before God by faith only, but by works of obedience (James 2:24). Furthermore, James writes that if we keep the law in all points; but, fail in one area, we are guilty of all (James 2:10). Similarly, Paul wrote that if we fail to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will experience the wrath/vengeance of God (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

So, it *does* matter how we live our lives! Our lives, as Christians, must be *entirely* devoted to serving the Lord!

## Conclusion

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There is much that could be added to our discussion – including many examples and passages to consider. The Bible is full of illustrations and instructions that could be added to further demonstrate the things we have been considering throughout this lesson.

So, is it possible to be religious and still be wrong? The answer is, "Yes!" In order to be right in the sight of God we must believe Bible doctrine and be obedient to Him! Doing neither will not result in pleasing God – nor will only partially doing these things be pleasing to God! God requires both! Remember, from Matthew 7:13-14, the way to eternal life is narrow – and it will take a determined effort in order to be saved eternally in Heaven!

Since it is possible to be religious and still be wrong in God's sight, we should each spend a great deal of time in personal evaluation – evaluating our lives compared to the standard of God's word to see if we are believing and practicing the things that are pleasing to God (2 Corinthians 13:5)! Your soul is too valuable to take anything for granted (see Matthew 16:26)! And, since it is possible to be religious and still be wrong, we will want to consider

the question, “How can I know who is right?” – so that we will be following the way that is pleasing to God. This will be the focus in the next lesson of this study.

J. Man in 1 Corinthians 5 –

K. 5 churches in Asia Minor –

## ***Study Questions***

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What does it mean to be religious?

What does it mean to be wrong?

### **1. Examples**

From the following examples, discuss how it is possible to be religious and still be wrong.

A. Cain –

B. Nadab and Abihu –

C. The Pharisees –

D. The Jews –

E. Saul –

F. The Athenians –

G. Ananias and Sapphira –

H. Simon –

I. Apollos –

List some conclusions from these examples.

### **2. Doctrine Matters**

What do some men say about the importance of doctrine?

What does God say about the importance of doctrine?

### **3. Deeds Matter**

What do men say about the deeds that are done?

What does God say about the importance of deeds?

**\*Is it possible to be religious and still be wrong?**