

Eight Tests of True Religion

by Russell DeLong

The sermon outlines eight standards for measuring true religion, which is fulfilled by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Matthew 5:48, Matthew 13:45, Matthew 16:24, John 8:31, John 14:27, Romans 2:6, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "True Religion", "Christian Living"

Description

Russell DeLong preaches about the importance of discerning true religion by setting up standards for judging any religion as true. He presents eight proposed standards including durability, supernatural claims, ethical living, personal transformation, victorious living, belief in justice, cost, and pragmatic satisfaction. Despite the existence of over 500 religions, the gospel of Jesus Christ is highlighted as the only religion that fulfills all these standards, providing power for successful living, demanding high ethical standards, believing in justice, requiring a high cost, and satisfying the deepest cravings of the heart.

Transcript

Text -- Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31).

Borden Parker Bowne, that great philosopher, said, "For good or for ill the world is full of religion." True! It is estimated that there are over 500 different organizations purporting to be religious. At the same time in the United States and Canada there are over 75,000,000 persons who are not affiliated with any church whatsoever.

How would a non-church member proceed to ascertain just what is true religion? A

distinguished businessman courteously refused my invitation to a religious service saying, "There are so many religions and because I cannot investigate all of them, I have decided to investigate none." He might just as well have said, "There are so many foods advertised and because I cannot sample all of them, I will eat none," or "There are so many books and because I cannot read all of them, I will read none," or "There are so many theories and because I can't know them all, I refuse to think at all." Oh, no, we must think and our spiritual nature must be provided for or life becomes empty and meaningless.

We are living in a scientific age of tests, measurements, and standards. Why investigate all 500 religions? Why not set up standards for judging any religion as true? Such is the objective of this sermon. Here are eight proposed standards. No one by itself is sufficient but it would appear that all eight taken together will

measure true religion.

Number One -- The Standard Of Durability

It must be a religion that has demonstrated its strength by having withstood the onslaughts of scientists, critics, skeptics, agnostics, and atheists. Dean Inge said recently, "There are two kinds of fools. One says, 'This is old, therefore is good.' The other says, 'This is new, therefore, is better.' " A thing is not true because it is new nor is it false because it is old. But with religion - a matter of primary importance -- it does not square with reason to suppose that the human race had to wait until 1946 to find the true religion. The fact that a religion has been tried and tested over centuries, gives some indication of its truth.

Number Two -- The Supernatural Standard

It must be a religion that claims to be supernatural. If I am to transcend nature -- If I am immortal -- my religion must be more than natural. No man-made, humanistic religion can qualify as true religion. Such a religion is merely an ethics -- not a religion. If I am not immortal I do not need a religion, just a social philosophy of conduct. But if I am to live beyond the grave, my religion must also carry through and be supernatural.

Number Three -- The Ethical Standard

It must be a religion that sponsors high, clean living. Any religion that does not lift me to a higher plane of ethical ideals is false. A religion that permits me to go to church an hour a week or a month and continue to live on a low, corrupt, immoral plane, is unworthy of serious consideration as a true religion. Something within me demands that religion shall be associated with the highest and best in life.

Number Four -- The Standard Of Personal Transformation

It must be a religion that can change me. I find myself bound by habits -- within are uncontrollable passions, ungovernable tempers, unbridled instincts. I need a religion that can do something to change my nature and make me a new creature. If a religion can do nothing for me, I am as well off without it. I need a dynamic that can break bonds of habits, purify passions, and give me a new freedom of mind and soul.

Number Five -- The Standard Of Victorious Living

It must be a religion that can give me power to meet the problems of life successfully. Steep hills are met frequently, jagged rocks protrude, thorns are numerous, scalding tears wrung from a broken heart flow, financial reverses come, dark hours with death arrive when it seems that all the lights of life go out. I need a religion that can endue me with power, not to remove earth's ills, but to meet them victoriously. If a religion cannot help me in the hour of trouble, it is worthless.

Number Six -- The Standard Of Justice

It must be a religion that believes in ultimate rewards and punishments. There is something within all of us that demands justice. If a Hitler or Al Capone are to receive the same rewards as St. Francis or Abraham Lincoln, the universe is a madhouse. There is an "eternal fitness of things" in the world that is reflected in

every mind, namely, that in the end, the scales will balance - the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished.

Number Seven -- The Standard Of Value

It must be a religion that costs me something. The degree to which a person values anything is commensurate with the price he paid for it. The best things in life are the costliest. The sands of the seashore are numerous and cheap but the pearls of great price are rare and difficult to procure. Could it be otherwise with religion? Jesus told of the man who sold all that he possessed to buy the pearl of great price. Yes -- true religion demands a high price -- it demands you -- and when it has you it has all you possess.

Number Eight -- The Pragmatic Standard

The final standard -- and most important -- demands that true religion shall satisfy my

nature. It must bring peace, rest, poise of mind, contentment of spirit, and satisfaction of heart. My physical hunger finds satisfaction when food is provided. My intellectual hunger finds satisfaction when facts are obtained. My spiritual nature must also find satisfaction. Any religion that fails here is false. We demand a sort of negative pragmatism. A religion is not true because it satisfies but it satisfies because it is true, Therefore, our final standard demands that true religion meet the needs of the heart.

Eight standards for the measurement of true religion. Most of the 500 religions have now

dropped out, being unable to meet one or more of the standards. But is there a religion that can measure up? There is.

The vital, vibrant, potent gospel of Jesus Christ fulfills all the innate demands and requirements of the mind for the evaluation of true religion.

In spite of critics, skeptics, and atheists, the gospel of Christ has come down over the

centuries victoriously. It has withstood the vicious attacks of all comers and today is more powerful and potent than ever before.

It is a religion that can change man's nature so that one can exclaim with St. Paul, "If any

man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, a" things are become new."

It is a religion that provides power daily to make living successful.

It is a religion that demands the highest ethical standards. It heralds the Ten

Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, and lifts a man to new plains of ethical living.

It is a religion that believes in justice. It contends that in the long run the scales will

balance, and the Judge of the universe will ultimately say to the righteous, "Well done," and to the wicked, "Depart ye cursed."

It is a religion that demands a high cost. If you are to receive the pearl of great price, you must give yourself completely and unreservedly.

And finally, it is a religion that will satisfy your deepest cravings, bringing peace, rest and joy. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Wherever you may be -- this very moment -- whether in Maine or California, Oregon or Florida, Texas or Michigan, Alaska or Puerto Rico, Hawaii or South America, pause for a moment, bow your head by your radio or, better still, kneel, and yield your life to Christ by praying:

Have Thine own way, Lord!

Have Thine own way!

Thou art the Potter, I am the clay,

Mold me and make me after Thy will,

While I am waiting

Yielded and still.

Let is new day dawn in your life. Christ can turn darkness to light, sorrow to joy. He can

break sinful habits. He can liberate your soul. You, too, can know the truth. He will set you free. Yield yourself to Him -- your will, your heart, your intellect -- your all.

Have Thine own way, Lord!

Have Thine own way!

Hold o'er my being absolute sway!

Fill with Thy Spirit 'til all shall see,

Christ only, always

Living in me!

Reach out for Christ. Open your heart and this very moment He will come in.

Let us pray: O God, meet hundreds of hearts just now. Let Thy truth flood their minds. Set them free from sin, superstition, and fear. Speak the word of pardon. Break fetters that bind. Mold yielded souls and fill opened hearts. Amen.

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