

Unworthy x3

Only one life, 'twill soon be passed/Only what's done for Christ will last.

Christianity is not a religion. Islam is, and so are Hinduism and contemporary Judaism. But not Christianity. OK, Christianity has answers to the ultimate questions in life, such as, Where did I come from, and Where am I going, and How should I live? So in that sense it's properly formally classified as a religion. But in the traditional sense of what religions are, with organized meetings, priests, rituals, sacred myths, holy days, unique doctrines, and etc, it's not a religion. (Although in many sectors it has all these in abundance!)

Christianity is a relationship. It's a real, dynamic, personal relationship with the living Creator God. A relationship that's formed thru prayer and meditation on the Word of God and mediated by the Person of the indwelling Spirit. That this is so is because many believers actually experience it. But it's also evident to anyone who reflects on the N.T. Scriptures. That's what Christ calls us to. But, sadly, few are even reading their Bible any more, let alone spending time meditating on it. So the fact that it is in essence a relationship with the risen and exalted Jewish Messiah-King is lost. It's gone, vanished. In America, Christianity has become something like a life insurance policy that guarantees heaven when we die. And little more. The professionals of the Church, its theologians and Bible college teachers, go deeper to varying extent, but the vast majority of its adherents, those in the pews or those who claim on surveys to be Christians, have an appallingly superficial understanding of Christianity.

Jesus says, "Come unto Me." Not come to church, and not come to a doctrinal statement, nor come to an organized hierarchy of exquisitely dressed religionists with an assemblage of impressive sacred rites. No, Christianity is "Come unto Me." Paul understood this, which is why he could say, "For me to live is Christ." The risen Christ was Paul's *life*. Stephen gave his life because of the intimate relationship he had with Jesus, saying as he died, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He lived with Jesus, and he died with Jesus. And his post-mortem existence was with Jesus.

Even in the Old Testament, the saints then had a dynamic relationship with God. This is fully evident in the Psalms. Who can miss it? The Song of Songs extols a personal relationship that mirrors our relationship with God. The beauty of the Book of Ruth is the relationships that are so evident there. David was "a man after God's own heart," meaning a vibrant relationship existed. Likewise with Abraham. And Moses. And others as well.

God created the cosmos and its climactic creature, man, to offer Himself. Let's understand this. God's great purpose in creating was to have a creature made in His image who could enter into a personal relationship with God to be blessed by His presence. In humility and love, God condescended to make a creature vastly inferior to Himself who He would invite into His own glorious presence to enjoy the love, joy and peace of the Godhead. In the Garden, there was fellowship between man and God. Yet, it wasn't a party. God also gave His humans work to do. They were to serve Him by serving His creation. They were to be like priests, intermediaries between God and the rest of the world and acting on God's behalf in the world. It was a relationship with mutual responsibilities: God would providentially care for His beloved humans, and the humans would serve God according to His will.

The debacle in the Garden was that the first couple preferred another being to God, so they transferred their loyalty to that other (wicked) entity. They may not have understood all that was happening in that act, but that's irrelevant. They did it. They betrayed the God who had made them and who loved them. So that relationship, the physical presence of God with them and the fellowship they enjoyed with Him, was sundered.

In the Gospel, the invitation is extended to return to that original relationship. What's different is, the Son came to earth in the very tangible form of humanity. God is transcendent and invisible, but in the Person of Messiah Jesus, we can easily relate to Him. By offering Himself to us, we're invited to participate in the relationship and fellowship that was God's eternal creation purpose, His purpose for us and for creating. In grace, God did everything necessary to restore us, but to an even better relationship than what obtained in the Garden. He offers this new relationship as a free gift. It's an expression of His ineffable love. God purposes to bless us by sharing Himself.

Sadly, most of us in the church today have missed all this. As a result, I easily identify three forms of failure occurring in the church in America today. The Book of Revelation was written as a warning to the church to be careful about committing these very acts of failure. In chapters 2 and 3, the churches are warned about lacking love for the One who saved them, about being faithless to God (that is, being worldly, compromising, immoral, and idolatrous), and about

abandoning the responsibilities that God requires of His people. Our own indifference to God's great purposes, our faithlessness, and our lovelessness are hugely on display today. Let's discuss these.

First, the issue of billions of years of earth history and its concomitant story of evolution. Our church leaders are stampeding to this atheistic origins' narrative. What's wrong with it? It impugns the majesty and omnipotence of our sovereign Creator. Also it denies that God had any purpose in creating. After all, if God dithered for 14 billion years while His universe was taking shape, and waited millions more years for life to appear and take the form that it has today, He must not have cared much about His creation. Attempting to bring God into the narrative doesn't resolve the purposelessness of science's atheistic story of origins. To the contrary, it transfers it to God! If God had no reason to bring humanity into existence, then nothing about our world, about life, or about transcendent matters makes sense. But the worst part of it in my mind is, these church leaders are compromising with the world, with what Satan offers as a (counterfeit) origins narrative, and so they are faithless to the Word of God. They are making an idol of Science. But there are lots of other ways to compromise with the world. Any compromise with the world means we listen to the voice of the Serpent instead of to God alone. It means we treasure what the Serpent puts on offer rather than what God has for us. We want what the world offers, esteem and wealth and happiness, for example, rather than the ignominy, ridicule, and perhaps persecution and martyrdom that comes from being faithful to Christ. Christians across America are foolishly committing exactly what Jesus warned us in those letters to the churches in Revelation not to do. Such people are not following Christ.

Second, Christianity in America today has become passive spectatorship. We attend church as if we're at a sports event, or a concert, or a stage show. And for most of us, that's the extent of it. God is an acquaintance. No thought of doing something – *anything* – to serve the Lord, which is our creational responsibility. (Jesus repeatedly states in these two chapters in Revelation, "I know your deeds." Deeds? What deeds? Do we need even to ask?) "I'm here to enjoy life. Sunday morning is church." The problem with this form of flaccid religion is, being passive leaves us wide open to all the influences of Satan and his army of demons and their ungodly world system, as well as to the powerful pull of our sin nature. It is impossible for a passive Christian to be spiritual or pleasing to God. It's only by actively pursuing righteousness and sanctification and mortification that we are able to please God. Only by actively pursuing God Himself, seeking to know Him and seeking to please Him, can there be the precious relationship that is offered in the Gospel. This is essentially a "heart" issue, just as it was with Solomon. Unlike his father David, Solomon was passive, inert, doing nothing for God but basking in the glory that God by grace bestowed on him. And – no surprise! – soon he was betraying God by doing what it was illegal for a king to do. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," and "Seek the Lord while He may be found," say the Scriptures for a good reason. We are admonished to draw near, deliberately, to be with God and to know Him and His will for us. Relationships have to be developed and maintained; they aren't like machinery that runs on its own. Indifference to God and to the relationship He offers is essentially faithlessness, which is exactly what Jesus warned against in Revelation. It's difficult to regard the passive spectators in churches as following Christ either.

Third, Christians in America today would rather gargle with radioactive waste than share the Gospel with others. Yes, some do, and I praise God for them. But most Christians would be horrified if they were asked to do that. And they won't do it. What's the problem here? Lovelessness. There's no love for others. "I got mine. You can get yours too if you want it, if you can find it." There's no love for God's great passion, which is to have myriads of His beloved human creatures with Him in heaven for an eternity. Refusal to share the Gospel with others is possibly, for some of us, because we don't even know what the Gospel is. But more likely we don't do it because we're afraid that others will laugh at us. "Americans don't do things like that." So the problem is really self-love or pride, isn't it? We love ourselves too much to love Christ as we ought. We love ourselves so much in fact that we don't care if others suffer an eternity in hell. The essence of this problem must be that there's no love for Christ. That's because if there were, the indwelling Spirit would impel us to be doing His will. This lack of love for the wise and beautiful One who saved us from hell is exactly what Jesus warned against in Revelation. To me, this too is failure to follow Christ.

Jesus won't have His Bride faithless, compromising, worldly, idolatrous, loveless, deeds-less, and with no understanding of the purpose for her existence or of her responsibilities. The Bride in Revelation is to "make herself ready"! This means, it's *our* responsibility to be all that Christ expects of us. In the world today, as in the Book of Revelation, a great confrontation of powers is going on. And we, the church, are caught in the crossfire. Of course, Christ has the victory, but the Book was not written primarily to inform us of His victory, but to exhort us to be doing our part. We are to triumph in Him. We do that by being faithful even to the point of death, by sharing Christ with unbelievers so that they too can share in the victory, by our practiced holiness, and by our deeds of righteousness.

The world we live in is an exceedingly dark place. It's *oppressively* dark! Don't allow yourself to be lulled to sleep or distracted by all that the Serpent places on offer. It's just gaudy, gauzy and glittery. *All* of it. To "enjoy life" is to wallow in the Serpent's puffery. Satan is out to deceive us, to make fools of us. Don't be fooled. And don't waste your life. Only the light of the Scriptures is able to shine into anyone's soul. The Book of Revelation is no candle or flashlight, but a powerful beacon of light, and we're culpable for ignoring it. Only by obeying the word of Christ is anything in life worthwhile. Obey the Word! Dear reader, if you find yourself in one (or more!) of the above three horrid categories, repent. There's still time, and God is gracious. Repent and become an "overcomer" so that you can enjoy all the blessings of salvation.