

One of the great lies that Satan peddles is: one can be non-religious. This lie has been accepted and asserted by many. Those who adhere to and advocate this view are ignorant of what religion is. They believe that religion must involve something deemed as divine. However, that is not the case.

The Merriam -Webster dictionary defines religious as: relating to or manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity.

It also defines religion as: a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices; a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith.

What this means is, everyone is religious; even those who deny the divine. After all, they possess a personal set of beliefs and practices and they are "faithfully" devoted to what they believe is an acknowledged ultimate reality.

Romans 1 tells us that religion has existed as long as man has existed (For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.). Even when mankind denied God, they did not cease to be religious, they simply exchanged the object of their devotion (Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures . . . For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.).

Whether or not humanity understands this reality regarding our religious nature, Satan surely does. Over the years he has deceived people into religions built upon falsehoods and lies by marketing them as knowledge and wisdom. There are way too many cults for us to study them all and I believe that we should spend more time studying the genuine rather than the forgery. But there are a couple of prominent cults that stress the importance of worldly knowledge leading to arrogance rather than godly wisdom which leads to repentance.

So this morning we are going to take a little time to get an overview of these "knowledge" cults.

Scripture: 1Timothy 6:20; Isaiah 47:10

I. Knowledge Cults

A. No God, Know Science

1. Atheism

- a) Built on scientific theories and postulates that have yet to be proven or are unprovable
- b) Seeks to offer natural explanations for supernatural events

(1) Everything from nothing through random natural accidents

B. Gnosticism

1. An ancient set of religions that dates back to the 1st - 4th C
2. "Knowledge is given a central and distinctive role in their understanding of reality and salvation"^[1]
 - a) Radical dualism
 - (1) Matter is evil, Spirit is good
 - (a) The God of Genesis 1 is not the true God
 - (b) Jesus could not be God if he came in flesh => He was spirit
 - (2) Human spirit is good but trapped in an evil fleshly body
 - b) Entrapment is due to ignorance not sin
 - (1) Salvation comes through rediscovering the knowledge that one's spirit is part of the true god
3. Paul and John address early gnosticism in their epistles
 - a) John 1:14; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7
 - b) Phil. 2:7; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:4
4. Modern Scientology

C. New Age

1. Various cults that stress "enlightenment," reincarnation, and/or spiritism
2. Enlightenment - becoming aware of one's own divinity (Isa. 47:10)
3. This knowledge allows us to manipulate energy and matter by our thoughts

D. Not Christian

1. Word-Faith
 - a) Benny Hinn, Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, Paula White, Kenneth Copeland, Jesse Duplantiss
 - b) Man is created as gods => Man is equal to Jesus (Ps. 82:6-7)
 - c) We can speak things into being (positive confession [health and wealth])
 - (1) God can't be poor or sick
2. Mormons (LDS)
 - a) Continuing revelation through Joseph Smith/Brigham Young
 - (1) The Bible isn't enough, we need extra revelation (knowledge)
3. Jehovah's Witnesses
 - a) The Bible can only be understood through the Watchtower
 - (1) Only knowledge that comes from the Watchtower can lead to salvation

In our time together this morning we covered a wide gamut of religions. We started with a religion that denies God's existence and calls its adherents to trust in

scientific theories and postulates deemed as true or proven. We then saw religions that deceive people with the "knowledge" that they are gods who have become ignorant of their godhood and just need to rediscover this "knowledge". And finally, we have looked at heresies which are advertised as Christian or Christian adjacent while actually being rooted in extra-biblical divine revelation knowledge.

All of these are dangerous because all of them deceive mankind and keep humanity from recognizing the truth of the Gospel. Not only do they blind people to the truth, they make their followers arrogant in their folly. It cannot be described any better than with Paul's words from Romans 1:22: Claiming to be wise, they became fools.

The armor we are told to put on includes truth, the Gospel, and the Bible. It is our responsibility as servants and soldiers of the Lord to guard ourselves from religious lies and guide others to redemption through the Lord Jesus. That means we must be diligent in our role as watchmen and we must be deliberate in our role as evangelists. Will you dedicate yourself to that today?

[i] Scholer, D.M., "Gnosis, Gnosticism," Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments, (InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, IL, 1997), p.400