

Christianity vs Religion  
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

*“Religion which is merely ritual and ceremonial can never satisfy.”*

*Samuel Shoemaker*



Christianity is not a religion! Does that statement surprise, even shock you? Some of the worst crimes against humanity have been committed in the name of religion. Religion has played a role in holy wars, prejudice against *women and hypocritical leadership*.

*Religious people have stoned the prophets, persecuted the apostles and crucified Christ.* History records the lofty aspirations and actions of good religion, but also the ignoble thoughts and deeds of bad religion.

*There are some similarities but* when rightly understood Christianity appears very different from what we usually think of as a religion. As we examine the basic meaning and real essence of the Gospel of Christ, so many unique, unmatched differences surface that Christianity must be granted its own category.

Let us show some distinction between “religion” and the Gospel of Christ.

In all world religions except Christianity, man gropes blindly after God, seeking to merit salvation through ritual, ceremony and good works. By contrast, the Bible tells of God graciously reaching down to mankind, bridging the chasm between heaven and earth.

- Religion is the human quest for God; the Gospel is God seeking lost humanity.
- Religion is often man-made; the Gospel is God-given.
- Religion is something man does for himself on the outside--reform, respectability, resolutions.

Though the Gospel God does something for us on the inside—a new heart, new motives and desires. Religion can dress up the outside of a person but only Christ can cleanse the heart.

Basic differences between religion and the person of Christ:

**Religion** –Belief in God, attending religious services, rituals, ceremonies, prayers and resolutions; avoiding gross sins and trying to be good, devout, respectable, an outward show—devoid of heartfelt attitudes of love and worship. Scriptures such as Micah 6:6-8 and 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:22 stipulate that if our hearts are not right with God. we cannot please Him by simply going through the motions of worship.

**Christ** –Someone to know and trust; Someone who can forgive our sins and be close to us; Someone to feel our pain and intercede for us; Someone to give us joy, peace, hope

and love; Someone who has proven His love for us by dying in our place; Someone Who rose victoriously over death and Who can live His life through us; Someone Who can assure us of eternal life and fellowship with God in our heavenly home.

I invite my readers to look objectively over these two lists and decide to which you want to commit your life, for time and eternity.

*We can study all of the world's religions and find that no provision has been made for forgiveness of sin apart from the Cross and Christ's atoning sacrifice.*