

Judas And The Deception Of Religion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 October 2026

Preacher: Rich Chasse

[0:00] Maybe you've heard me say it before. Religion is a dirty word. I've been saying that for a long time, since before I came here, probably as much as long as I've been a Christian.

It is a loaded statement, isn't it? Religion is a dirty word. It's coarse. It's maybe harsh. It comes from, in my case, being raised in religion.

I was raised in a church setting, a religious setting that had rituals and things that we did that contributed to that mindset.

Once I became a Christian, I rejected that and really developed a disdain, a hatred for religion.

And yet, the older that I get, the longer that I am a Christian, the more I recognize that even though I'm 62 now and I've been a Christian since 1981, I still struggle with religion.

[1:23] I still see it creeping up into my own life, my own practices. And I hate it when I recognize it. I want to get it out of my life as much as I possibly can.

The world's definition, if you ask people what is the definition of religion, much of the time it would be considered a set of beliefs or dogmas that we ascribe to, that sort of thing, practices that would be associated with that.

And it's different from what you find in the scriptures. There's always this one passage of scripture in the book of James, James 1, verses 26 and 27, that I always kind of struggled with.

It kind of nagged at me because it seemed to put religion in a positive light. Whenever I would say that word or perhaps even type it in social media and say, well, religion is bad or religion is a dirty word, you'd get some people that would respond back or say back to you, well, what about James 1?

James 1 seems to suggest that religion is a good thing, a force for good in the world. And so I wondered about that.

[2:51] And today we're actually going to do a little bit of a word study to ask that question. Is that what James is saying, that religion itself is a good thing?

And so let's go ahead and dive into that. James 1, verse 26. Of course, this is the half-brother of Jesus, not the apostle James, who writes this.

And much of what he writes has to do with making sure that our actions match up with what's inside of us. Because if our actions betray what's inside of us, if our actions don't match up, if we say that we believe, if we say that we have faith, and yet our actions don't demonstrate that, James is going to ask the question, what good is that faith?

Why bother with that? It's dead faith. It doesn't count for anything if there's no life change that's going on in your life. So he says it this way in verse 26.

If anyone thinks he is religious, there's our word, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

[4:08] And so here in verse 26 we have it in an adjective form and also a noun form. This person's worthless, this person's religion is worthless if he can't bridle his tongue, if it contradicts what's in his heart.

It goes on in verse 27. And so what is James actually saying about religion?

Well, the word that he chooses to use here is found five times. The only time you see the word religious in all of the New Testament text, New Testament was written in what is known as Koine Greek, and the word religious is found just the one time, and it's James 1.26.

It's the only time you see that word. The noun form, religion, how it's translated here, is found a total of four times in all of the New Testament, and James uses it twice, once in verse 26, once in verse 27.

Let me show you the other two places where the same word is used. Acts 26, verse 5, talking about a description. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion, I have lived as a Pharisee.

[5:37] This is Paul testifying before the governor and talking about his past life, how in his past life he lived by, as a Pharisee, a religious code of conduct, if you will.

Is he using it in a positive light here? Absolutely not. He's not. And then the other place that it's found is in Colossians 2, Paul writing here, let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism, things that make you look humble, and worship, here's our word again, but here it's translated worship of angels.

Again, I would ask, is this used in a positive context? And again, I would say no, that's not the use of the word here. And so when you look at the Greek word here, and you look at the definition for it, and you have this now on your notes, religion then becomes this, the meticulous, outward observance of religious exercise or ritual.

Okay? It's the outward observance, and it's meticulous. It's something that you're dedicated to.

Okay? So it could be a ritual. It could be words expressed.

And so you have the continuation of this. It could be an action or in words. But it's an outward expression that can or cannot reveal what's in a person's heart.

[7:11] We don't know because all we see is the outward expression. We don't know what's in a person's heart. James would say, well, your actions kind of betray what's inside.

And it can be something that is either sincerely or hypocritically performed. If I'm being hypocritical in my religion, it means that I'm expressing religious acts or religious performance that is in contrast to what's really going on on the inside of my heart.

So I could be an unbeliever in my heart and yet still look religious on the outside. Of course, the Pharisees, probably a prime example of this in the Gospels, many of the Pharisees were very religious.

But what was on the inside was nothing but rot. And disease and decay and ruin. They weren't believers at all in the one true God.

Now, what's interesting, by the biblical definition then, religion kind of functions as a tool. In the same way, let me give you some examples of tools that we have.

[8:31] For instance, the Internet. Let me ask you a question. Is the Internet a positive for our culture and our society, or is the Internet a negative, a bad thing?

Is it one or the other? Actually, we would say it's a tool. The Internet itself is neutral. We can use it for really good things.

Then we can also use it, and it certainly is, used for things that are very evil. Same can be said for our cell phones, right? Cell phones, are they a good for our world, or are they an evil for our world? And again, you could say that, well, they certainly can provide a good service. They can do good things if we use them in such a way. But we've also seen many instances of the way that cell phones can be used in an evil way.

Let me switch gears a little bit and talk about knives. A knife. A knife. Is a knife a good thing or a bad thing?

[9:41] Again, it's kind of neutral, isn't it? It depends on what you're using it for. If I take a knife and I use it to stab someone, that's using it for evil. And we see in the news people, criminals, who are stabbing people and doing very evil things with it.

And yet a doctor with a knife, we call it a scalpel, but it's a knife, can use it to cure and bring to health people who are suffering because of what's going on in their body.

So it can be something that's used for very good. Same thing with fire. James actually refers to fire later on in his letter. And again, fire can be something that's used for good.

We use it for warmth, for cooking. And yet fire can also do some incredibly bad things, especially with people with evil intent, can set things afire and cause all kinds of harm and destruction with it. So religion, in that sense, is a tool. Let me kind of describe to you how we are, even though I don't consider myself religious, right?

[10:52] If you were to say rich is very religious, I might hit you. I would be upset with that.

My brother-in-law one time called me pious. He meant it as a compliment, but I took it as a, oh, what am I doing wrong? And he meant it in such a way as he wanted to recognize that I was living an upright life.

But because of my background, because religion is what we were trusting in, we were trusting in the religion, now I bristle at that.

And yet today I am still by definition religious. Why? I go to church every week, right? I'm there. That's, I do it religiously.

Okay? Now, is that a good thing? Or is that a evil thing? Depends on what my view of my church attendance is.

[12:02] Is my church attendance because I've got to put a notch in my holster or my Bible that says, I was there on October 18th. I went to church.

God's going to throw on me. That's evil. You might not think of that being something evil, but it is because that's not the purpose of church attendance.

God's not impressed by your church attendance. But if I'm going to church because I want to fellowship with the believers and I want to set aside time to worship God together and I want to open up the word with others and study his word, those are all healthy things that we need.

And so, yes, in that sense, I want to be, even though I don't want to say that word, I want to be religious in that sense. The same thing with offerings or tithes, as some people call it.

We do that in a religious way, but I don't want to make it a religion. I do it because of my love for the Lord, not because of rote, not because it's just a thing that you do.

[13:15] It's because of what motivates on the inside. When I spend time in prayer with the Lord, am I thinking, okay, I spent 20 minutes in prayer this morning.

Ooh, ooh. Ooh, you know, God's going to bring good things my way today. That's evil. That kind of thinking is not from God.

I want to spend time in prayer because that means I'm spending time with my Lord because I love him and I know that he loves me. And it's not that I'm there just, you know, belting out my list of stuff that I want.

That's not the purpose of prayer. Although he wants us to bring our requests to him, but it's more about him changing my heart and drawing me closer to him and making me more like him.

It's the purpose. Same thing with Bible study. These are the things that we do that can be viewed as religion or religious, but not in the way that the world sees religion.

[14:26] And so we have to be cautious with that. So the danger, and you have this now on your notes, the danger here lies in playing the part of the religious man or the religious woman until you convince yourself that you truly are religious.

Play the part of the religious man until I'm convinced that's me. I'm a religious man. With the concluding idea that I'm right with God because I'm religious.

That is very dangerous. You are not right with God because you are religious. It has nothing to do with that.

And yet so many people in our world are convinced, well, I'm a Christian, or I belong to God. Why? Because I do these things.

Because I am a religious person. No. Dangerous place to be. Even to this point here, you're self-deceived if you think this way and never more lost than when you feel the most secure.

[15:44] Whoa. Whoa. This is the danger of religion because religion can make you look and feel secure in your place before God and it's a false security.

It is a false sense because I'm religious. I do all the things that the religious people do. Right? And when I look around me, I see a bunch of, in our world today, unreligious people.

They are religious. Just not in the ways that we think of religious. Their God is the world or their God is their self and they're very religious toward their God.

But we think, oh, my religion is good and so I am secure in my position before God because when I compare myself to other people, and this is what the Pharisees were famous for doing.

Right? The one Pharisee who came to the temple to pray and he's praying, Lord, thank you that I'm not like this guy. And this guy is over here beating his chest.

[17:06] Lord, forgive me. And Jesus asked the question, which one went home righteous? It wasn't the religious one. Your religion does nothing for you in terms of your standing before God.

And I want to say that religion, for the most part, for how we think of religion, it is a net evil. A net negative in our world.

The guy that we're studying today in Luke 22, that's where we find ourselves as we continue this long journey through the gospel of Luke.

Luke 22. We're getting close to the end. But we're looking at verses 1 through 6 and the guy that we're looking at today is Judas. And most of you know the story of Judas Iscariot, right? The one who betrayed Jesus. How did we get here with him? Let's take a look at this. Take a look at this passage. This is an alarming passage of Scripture.

[18:15] It should alarm us. Now, the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And Luke is setting this up. He's describing the time frame of year that Jesus now is going to be betrayed and eventually brought before the Sanhedrin and then before Pontius Pilate and be crucified and buried and risen from the dead.

It's the time of the Passover. In the Old Testament, prescribed that Jesus would be crucified the time of the Passover. Verse 2, and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death for they feared the people.

And we've seen this for a while now in Luke that these priests and these Pharisees and these scribes, they're like, hey, we got to get rid of this guy. He's going to cause us trouble.

The problem is he's popular and the people seem to really like him. And so if we just go about our business and get rid of him, that's going to mean trouble for us.

And so how do we do this? And so they're wondering, you know, every time he goes out in public, there's huge crowds and we can't just go in front of those crowds and arrest him. That wouldn't work out well.

[19:32] So how are we going to do this? Verse 3, And then Satan entered into Judas.

How's this possible? He's been with Jesus for three years, close at hand, seeing all of the miracles performed.

listening to all the teaching, seeing Jesus in action, knowing he has committed no sin. He's completely guiltless in every way.

And Judas had a front row seat to all of it. And then the statement, Judas, or I'm sorry, Satan entered into Judas.

Now, if you're sitting here and you're like, well, could that happen to me? The answer to that question is, if you are a believer, no. Because the Holy Spirit has residence within you.

[20:47] The Holy Spirit would not allow another occupant to come within, to abide within you. But what does that tell us about Judas?

Judas, he was not a believer. After three years of that intimate contact with the Savior, Judas himself, not a believer.

Not a believer. It goes on, verse four, he went away, talking about Judas, he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them, how he might betray Jesus to the chief priests and the scribes.

And they were glad. Hey, we're going to kill someone! That makes me happy. Yay! I doubt they expressed it quite that way, but in their heart, this is how they felt.

And they agreed to give him some money. We know later it's 30 pieces of silver. So he consented, Judas did, consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

[22:10] And so Judas goes back. In a sense, the trap has been set, the context the context has been has been laid here and Judas is okay.

Where will there be an opportunity where the crowd will not be that I can tell them to come and I will betray Jesus to them and they can arrest Jesus and do what needs to be done.

And so the the plot has been laid out, the plan has been set into place and my question is how could something like this happen? I mean, Judas, what we may know or understand about Judas and here's some things on your notes when it comes to this.

Number one, Judas was get this, chosen by God. Let me, let me, let me, a little theology here. Jesus is God.

Yes? Okay? Yeah. Some people maybe struggle with that but yes, Jesus is God. We have the expression of our Lord in a trinity. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

[23:25] He is God and he chose Judas to be one of the twelve. We see this back in Luke chapter 6 verses 12 through 16. In these days he went out to the mountain to pray and all night he continued in prayer to God and of course my question is okay Jesus you prayed all night what good did it do you?

You still ended up choosing the guy who was going to betray you and that's kind of silly thinking in the sense that of course Jesus knew Judas was going to betray him.

That was all part of God's preordained plan for him. Remember he came to give his life. This wasn't a travesty of injustice although it was but Jesus knew what he was doing and he intended to do this.

And when day came he called his disciples and chose from them twelve so there's a larger group of disciples and he chooses twelve specifically whom he named apostles and Luke sets then out to name all twelve until he comes to the twelfth name.

[24:38] Judas Iscariot and then Luke gives us this further commentary because they didn't know at the time but how he would become a traitor a betrayer of Jesus.

Another aspect of Judas' life he was sent out to proclaim the gospel which he did with authority. Wow! Judas preached the gospel and he did it with authority.

I mean people were saved and people trusted Christ and lots of incredible things happened. Luke chapter nine and he called the twelve together and he gave them power and authority that included Judas.

I mean how awkward would it have been if he sent all twelve out and then Judas kind of like slinked away and didn't participate.

That's not what happened. He was all in. So he's there preaching the gospel and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

[25:51] And he did! Absolutely! Which sets up the next one. Judas performed miracles. What?

What? What? What? What are you talking about? Yeah! Judas performed miracles.

Again from Luke 9. They departed, went through the villages preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. By inference Judas participated in this.

Mark's gospel says this. Mark chapter 6. So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent and they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. Can you imagine Judas who's been given power and authority by Jesus even though he's lost even though he's going to be filled with Satan chapter 22.

[26:51] He's out here casting demons out of people in Luke chapter 9. I want to tell you brothers and sisters when you're watching TV or you see miraculous things happen supposedly miraculous things happen do you automatically assume well that must be of God because it's a miracle beware we know from scripture that the demons and Satan himself they are supernatural beings and they have power to perform miracles so as to deceive even the very elect so be discerning just because someone does a miracle if it's genuine in the first place do not assume it's of God test the spirits we're told to know is what they're preaching and what they're teaching matching up with what you see them performing be careful with this

Judas was a performer of miracles there's another aspect of Judas's life that he was trusted by the other eleven how do we know that just in this expression here he became the keeper of the money bag right and in our world the keeper of the money bag better be somebody who's trustworthy right you don't give somebody who's not trustworthy the money bag now was their trust warranted we don't know the circumstances was it because Judas was like behind the scenes saying I'll do it I'll do it yeah give me the money bag I'll do it and then he just kind of ended up with it or was it a conscious decision among the eleven well Judas we don't necessarily know but we do know that they were fine with him being the keeper of the money didn't work out so well because we also know this about

Judas that he harbored hidden sin and this is true for anyone who places their trust in religion if your trust is in religion you're harboring in some way some sin that others cannot see we see this with the money bag with Judas Judas Iscariot was one of the disciples who was about to betray him again Luke gives us that commentary that looks ahead and Judas said why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor I mean this is this is Judas now acting all righteous and complaining about this woman who has brought this very expensive ointment to the feet of Jesus and broken the jar and poured out this ointment at the feet of

Jesus and Judas all he sees is the dollar signs what a waste there's a lot of money that she just dumped out on the ground why wasn't it given to the poor and again Luke tells us in the very next verse he said this not because he cared about the poor because that was just a religious thing for him to say but because he was a thief and having charge of the money bag he used to help himself to what was put into it ouch Judas very religious knew all the right things to say knew the verses right could sing the Sunday school songs would go to Awana and quote the verses right he could

he could have done all of that knew the times to sit up sit down and get on his knees and do the signs and knew all of it was there when the doors were open there was nothing inside that was genuine so what do we look out for what is it that we're that we're what do we need to guard against in my life in your life that we are on guard against the of religion and here is the first thing that you have on your notes recognize that

Satan uses religion and this is kind of a value statement that I'm making here but I really believe this is true Satan uses religion more than any other tool that he has in his belt to deceive men and keep them entrapped in his domain of darkness Satan loves religion I heard someone say this I don't know where this originates but someone said a long time ago Satan's not interested Satan doesn't want to make you evil he just wants to keep you dead and he will use religion to do it because if he can use religion and make you think I'm very religious I go to church

[33:32] I do all the right things compared to others I'm just fine if he can get you deceived into thinking that religion is something that is a positive thing in your life in this way that you're trusting in your religion he's got you because you'll die in your sin and you'll go to hell without Christ again I remind you of this Judas had every advantage and was still lost here's another thing that it's also something to guard against people can profess and belong to the one true religion and yet be in alliance with

Satan the one true religion that I'm talking about is Christianity okay I'm not talking about Islam I'm not talking about Buddhism or Mormonism or any of the other things I'm talking about Christianity itself the danger of Christianity is when we turn it into a religion we dare not turn Christianity into a religion it is not and there's a lot of people who would argue against me I made a post on social media and a couple people were like oh if well if you believe in Jesus that means your religious no no no another one said well faith and religion is the same thing no no your definition of religion is the world's definition not the biblical definition it's not the same not at all the same but if we turn Christianity into just a set of outward expressions well I go to church and I pray and I give and I do this and I read my Bible and I'm good and that's how I know that I'm saved you're lost you're lost and you're deceived you're self deceived because there's one way it is only through Christ through Jesus Christ and what he did for us has nothing to do with what I do the one time I remember when I was in high school and they came and they visited and they were speaking to my mother and they said Rita was her name and Rita if you die today and go to the gates of heaven and the Lord were to ask you there why should I let you into my heaven what would you say she said all the right religious stuff

I go to church we give I haven't killed anybody like let's set the bar real higher right and she was she was religious she was lost I was two at the time I probably would have answered it the same way but when I heard her say those words I was like that's not it I don't know what is but I could recognize that's not the right answer I don't know what the right answer is but I want to know and it was soon after that that I met with another man at a golf course and he shared the gospel with me and I put my faith and my trust in Christ to save me not religion had nothing to do with religion had everything to do with what Jesus did for me and that's where my faith that's where my trust resides day by day and this is the stinker this is the problem with religion is that even for a Christian someone who is genuinely saved we can start falling back into the trap of thinking well I go to church and I pray and I do these things therefore I'm right with God and it's it's not so much about the relationship anymore it's about the ritual it's the danger even for someone who is a Christian someone who is genuinely saved we can turn our relationship back into a religion and we need to guard against that listen understand this religious profession is not enough I walked an aisle I prayed a prayer has!

[39:10] there been evidence of life change in your life it's about placing your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ alone have you done that have you repented of your sin and said yes to Jesus Jesus you are the only hope of salvation that I have it has nothing to do with rich it has nothing to do with me it is all of Christ that I trust in him religious knowledge I've met a lot of unsaved people who knew a lot of the Bible wow dangerous place to be by the way if you were raised and you may have even memorized scripture but if you've never trusted Christ as your savior for you made it personal that's a dangerous place to be because that scripture becomes pointing right back at you it's not about how much knowledge you do or don't have it's not about religious position that's talking about people like me

I have a religious position right I'm a pastor or you might be a deacon or a teacher or a leader in some way in your church but has nothing to do with that none that there's listen there's plenty of unsaved pastors out there beware beware you may be looking at one I'm serious when I say that you you may be looking at one because you need to look is there fruit there and if you don't know me well enough to see to recognize any kind of spiritual fruit then you don't know because there have been preachers who stood for years proclaiming the gospel of Christ just like Judas did with power and authority lost as could be has nothing to do with position it's not ritual just because you get up and go to church or you you know set your alarm clock and you have a designated time to open up your

Bible and to spend time in prayer and I pray for my grandchildren and I pray for this and I pray for that congratulations you're good at religion is it real is it genuine does it come from a heart that's motivated by your relationship with Christ if it is pray absolutely honor the Lord that way bring your requests to him but if you don't have that relationship what good is that prayer going to do you nothing nothing religious service well I taught Sunday school for such and such a time or I did this or I did that here's another one that I hear quite often when I introduce myself and they greet me and they're not involved in church at all they don't they're not really interested in spiritual things but their granddaddy was a preacher so they're sure to tell me well my granddad was a preacher that's great what is that going to do for you

I'm in polite company so I don't necessarily blurt it out that way but I want to find a way and I do I find a way to where are you at with the Lord because that's what matters it's not about your dad or your grandparents or whatever their faith may or may not have been it's where are you at there was an old southern gospel song way back in the day God ain't never had a grandchild only a child will do anybody heard that song before let me sing it for you nobody's heard it it was a foot stomper God ain't never had a grandchild only a child will do I'll stop I'll stop religious affiliation is not it well I belong to the right church the right denomination it has nothing to do with that nothing listen this is a Baptist church I'm kind of partial you'd think I would be to to to to there's a lot of unsaved Baptists out there a lot of unsaved Baptists and there's a lot of unsaved every other stripe because it's not about your denomination your affiliation it's about your relationship with Christ and it's not about religious there's a hot one today religious experience there's a hot one there's a hot one it's still religion if you had a religious experience you might have had a an emotional experience right because now we know how to manipulate people's emotions right we do this I've got stories we joined the church in Texas when I was going to seminary and every Sunday preacher was just incredible we loved his preaching just on fire for

[45:18] God end of every service he'd give an invitation you guys some of you are familiar with invitations right he'd give an invitation every Sunday every Sunday he'd be crying at the invitation telling some emotional story and just shedding tears found out he got arrested for shoplifting condoms having an affair with his secretary okay I don't know if he's lost or not I don't know but I know he's religious that's the definition of religion because what was coming out was fake okay sad thing was the next church that we went to that we skipped a few Sundays we didn't go and then we decided well we're going to go to this big mega church in Dallas Texas right huge mega church and we snuck in right you know right at the time to start

I know how you guys are and we were there too and big church right so we could hide nobody would know who we are we don't know anybody sat down service starts music's going pastor stood up confessed his affair with his secretary our O my my know our our our our our our our our lip lip lip lip we we in your our lip lip lip lip lip lip lip line lip lip lip sat brown lip lip i lip lip lip lip pop lip lip lip lip lip known lip lip lip good or bad, could be properly motivated or not.

I don't want to make judgments on that. Lighting can be used, right? And then the crescendo of the song and the room is filled. You know who understood those kind of tactics?

I remember this when I was taking a class in Bible college. Hitler. Hitler understood the use of emotion and room dynamics to motivate people to take action.

Another guy, Frank Mesmer, we get our word mesmerized from it. And he would use lighting and loud music as a way to manipulate people into thinking that something genuine happened in their life.

[47:58] It wasn't even a Christian. But then you started seeing Christian evangelists and televangelists and healers using his same tactics.

You ever heard a slang in the spirit? You boom somebody in the forehead and they fall over. Where do you see that in the Bible?

It's not. You know who perfected that? Frank Mesmer. Ungodly man. And now you have got Christian people who are using that as a tactic with all of those other tactics to manipulate people's emotions.

Whatever experience you have had, whether it was an emotional high, praise God, you had an emotional high. Tell me what happened to you three days later when you're living in your house and having to make the same decisions that you were making last week before that experience.

Are you following the Lord? Are you still being obedient to him? Do you love him? Regardless of what good or bad is happening in your life?

[49:06] I'm going to be faithful to him whether everything in my life comes crashing down or everything in my life turns up roses.

Doesn't matter. And yet we can become so fickle in American Christianity that if things are going well, praise the Lord. And if things aren't, well, then God's not interested in me and God's disfavor is upon my life.

No, those are lies. God loves you. And yes, he allows difficult things in your life for the purpose of helping you to grow and to mature and to stand firm in your faith.

At its core, religion lacks genuine conversion. John 1.12, But to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, this is a real statement about what conversion, what genuine conversion looks like.

To those who received him by trusting in his name, he gave the right, the authority to become children of God.

[50:43] You didn't give yourself the right to do that. He gave it to you. You were born not of blood or of the will of the flesh, nor of your own will, but of God.

God is the one who gave you the grace to trust him. You didn't generate that of yourself.

It didn't come from within. It didn't come from within you. It came from him. He's the one who brings that to pass in your life.

At its core, religion rejects Jesus Christ as Lord. This is an interesting one because sometimes it's the legalists.

And by legalists, I'm talking about people who are living by the rules. And their security comes from the rules. That's the dangerous part.

[51:46] The rules are what is Lord, not Jesus. So if I'm following the rules, or more importantly, if you are following the rules, because it's not about me, my relationship with God, it's about you.

Are you following the rules? Are you doing what's right and what's wrong? Are you doing all of that? Dangerous place to be. Jesus said it this way.

If anyone come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. That's what following the Lord looks like. Taking up a cross. Cross means death.

You're putting yourself to death. Romans 12.1, you're putting yourself on an altar. You do that.

That's putting it to death. That's what the sacrifice is. And you allow him to live through you.

What does that look like? Well, it's not religion. Colossians chapter 2 describes that dead religion. Paul warns us about that. If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, you died to religion.

[52:54] Why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations? These are the regulations he's talking about. Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.

It's the rules. When we turn religion into a list of rules, well, if you do this, if you do all, here's all the things, and sometimes these kinds of churches will give you all the list of this, and you've got to do this, you've got to do this, you've got to do this, and you've got to not do this, you can't do that, you can't do that.

And if you obey the list of rules, they'll make you a deacon. They'll give you a leadership position because you're a good rule keeper. That's not Christianity.

It's the world's religion. Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. Referring to the things that all perish as they are used, according to human precepts and teachings.

Look what he says going on, verse 23. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion. Different Greek word, by the way.

[54:06] Self-made religion. They have an appearance that they look good, right? The rule keepers look good on the outside. They like to think of themselves as looking good too.

And they look at other rule keepers and they say, well, they're good because they're keeping the rules. Are they? Or have they trusted in Christ? Now, there are some rule keepers who have placed their faith genuinely in Christ, but they're stuck in this religious mindset of rule keeping.

The dangerous place to be. And asceticism, that's the doing things to keep you humble. And severity to the body, beating yourself.

I don't see a whole lot of that in our world today. But they are of no value. These rules, all this list of rules are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

That's why you have preachers caught shoplifting condoms. Having an affairs. Stealing money.

[55:16] Going after the money. Robbing people. For the sake of the money. For the sake of the power, the influence, the authority that comes from their position.

Because the rule keeping does nothing to slay that lust.

To slay that greed that we have within us. It just doesn't do it. It's why you have someone. I don't know if some of you even know this name.

Jack Hiles was a preacher from the 60s and 70s. I'm really dating myself. But he was like the most well-known preacher in America during that time frame.

Okay? I mean, huge. Huge ministry. And when he finally died earlier, I don't know, about probably 15, 20 years ago now, he died. It was found out that he had been having an affair with his secretary that was a kept woman for like 30 years.

[56:24] How can something like that happen? Because the rule keeping, and this is what he was famous for, was the rule keeping, does nothing.

It has no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. The only thing that does is a life that is submitted to Christ. For people in that position, their Lord is the religion, is the rules.

And if your Lord becomes those things, look out. What's hidden will be exposed in time. And then it also cultivates a selfish desires under the pretense of religious commitment.

Real quick, I'm going to run through these real quick. Money and material things. We saw this with Judas. He was a thief. Prestige and recognition.

The Pharisees were all about that. I mean, my goodness, Jesus made mention of this back in chapter 20 of Luke. Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes. They'll love the greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, the places of honor.

[57:46] And then he also throws in the money thing here. Who devour widows' houses. That's what they would do. Under the pretense of doing a righteous thing, a widow was not allowed to own their house.

If a woman became a widow, she couldn't own her house. So he would step in and buy it. Ah, isn't it wonderful? And then kick her out. And then sell it and make profit, make money.

That's what these guys were known for. That's what they would do and pretend to be. They make a pretense. Long prayers. Power and influence, that's all they really cared about.

Was keeping their position, keeping their power. Here are the scribes and the Pharisees questioning, Well, if we let this Jesus go on like this, everyone will believe in him. And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

That's what they cared about. That's why they wanted to put Jesus to death. And here's the last warning. Initially, religion can bring satisfaction and gain, but ultimately it brings ruin and destruction.

[58:57] Initially, Judas was like, hey, 30 pieces of silver.

I'm set. We might think of 30 pieces of silver and think, oh, has he got like 30 quarters in his pocket? No, no, no. No, no, no. It's a lot of money. And he was set.

They gave him that money. Initially, you know, religion does pay, by the way. You've got to understand that.

Religion does pay. Because if you follow religious rules, chances are you're going to handle your money pretty well. You're going to handle it religiously. And you're probably going to profit off of it, and you're going to save some money, and you're going to be well set.

But beware the dangers of religion. This is what happened to Judas. Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned to death, changed his mind, he brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, I have sinned by betraying innocent

blood.

[60:09] He didn't repent. He had remorse, but he did not repent. They said, what is that to us? See to it yourself. Throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed.

He went and he hanged himself. This is what religion does. It brings death and ruin and destruction. Ultimately, if your trust is in religion, it will bring you straight to hell. The only hope that we have is in what Jesus Christ has already done for us.

And I would encourage you. I would beseech you, stronger word, to put your trust, your faith in Christ alone.

Not religion. He is the only one who can save you. Let's pray. Lord, thank you. Thank you for the lesson of Judas, who is front and center, a picture of what religion can do.

[61:29] It is dangerous. It is dangerous. And yes, there are some respects where we can be religious because there are activities that we do, going to church and praying and giving and all of these things, Lord.

But may we not view that as religion, as if it's something for us to trust in, as it's something for us to measure ourselves against other people and to think, well, I'm more religious than.

That's what religion does, causes us to compare. Help us, Lord, to reject all of that kind of thinking and to simply trust you.

I pray for those here today that perhaps have been deceived in the past into thinking that some value to religion. Lord, I pray that they would even today just set that aside and place their trust their faith, their belief in you.

Not believing that you exist or that you even died and rose again, but that you accept it for yourself. I trust you with my life.

[63:03] I have no other hope. There is no other plan. My hope is in Christ alone.

The fact that Jesus went to the cross and there paid the penalty for my sin and then rose again from the dead.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for providing a way of salvation. I trust you. I trust you. Now, Lord, as we go from here, may we continue to reject what religion offers.

May we just serve you and live for you because our hearts are motivated by a desire to live our life as a way of saying, thank you, Lord, for what you've done for me.

I want to live my life in such a way as to honor you because of what you've done for me. I know I'm not earning any extra measure of grace by the way I live my life.

[64:17] It's just my desire to live for you and honor you with my life. I love you, Lord. May that be our prayer. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.