

"True Religion"

Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. Our dear friend and brother in the Lord, Mack Lyon, began this program in 1980 and was its only host for thirty years. Our dear friend passed away August 5th and is now with the Lord. We remember him.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Mack Lyon recently reminded me of Ephesians 4 verses 4 to 6 "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called in one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." You know when there is just one, there can't be more than one. We want to find that one true body, the one true Spirit, the one true hope, the one true Lord, the one true faith, and the one true baptism, and the one true God who is over all. We're grateful to you for joining us in this search of the Scriptures, because we don't want to settle for anything other than the truth. We want to be a part of your life each week.

On September first, 1980, Mack Lyon spoke of In Search of the Lord's Way for the very first time in Ada, Oklahoma, on KTEN. Brother Lyon saw the need to broadcast the gospel truth to our nation so people could see the difference between the church of the New Testament and many religious groups today. He wanted people to become true Christians and be added to the New Testament church, and that's our desire today; so, we go to the Bible, the Word of God, to find the truth. We want nothing more and nothing less.

Brother Lyon was a genuine Christian. What you remember on television was what he was everyday! He wanted everyone to love and to serve the Lord. He spoke the truth in love, and a whole generation became endeared to his kind and humble ways. Because of God's blessing and His hard work, people in every corner of America today can view this television program. And we're grateful for the love of God that we saw in his life.

Today we're talking about true religion, and we offer this study free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, and we'll read from Colossians 2:6 to 8, and then we'll explore what true religion is all about.

Our reading today comes from the Epistle to the Colossians, chapter 2, verses 6 through 8. "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." We must live our lives according to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Word. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us to avoid the traditions of men and to look to You for our truth. And Father may we always be obedient to Your Word, to love You and to serve You. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

Since this program is entitled, In Search of the Lord's Way, we seek for the true, genuine, and authentic faith in Christ. We realize that there are many false religions in the world; we're seeking the true religion, the true church. We aren't interested in imitations or substitutes; we're not interested in opinions or the guesses that arise out of someone's imagination. We want the truth, unembellished

truth, uncompromising truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If we settle for anything more than the truth or less than the truth, we'll find that our hope has no firm foundation.

Now the Lord God rebuked Judah more than once, because the people would forsake the truth to follow the idols of the nations surrounding them. Through his prophet Jeremiah, God said in Jeremiah 2 verses 11 to 13, "Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

Now ancient Israel knew how precious water is, because they had so little. Many of their creeks would only run during certain seasons of the year. Living water was flowing and pure; the water in cisterns would often become foul. Now if a tiny crack formed in the plaster inside the cistern, all the water could eventually leak out; and the cistern would be empty. Well the Jews chose a broken cistern in their idols over the living river of water in God. How shocking! Who would do that?

Now people today have done the same thing! They've sold out the genuine Christianity of the New Testament for pop psychology, for manufactured religions from false prophets, for entertainment-based enterprises, or for a false god that accepts everyone and everything and never judges. They've traded the truth for a fantasy, for a broken cistern.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 verses 13 to 14, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." These verses surprise a lot of people; they don't even know the Bible says this. Most people think that almost everyone's going to be saved and almost no one's going to be lost, but the Bible doesn't teach that. Even people who call Jesus "Lord" may be lost, if they fail to live as God teaches. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 verse 21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." My friends, we're saved by God's grace, but not a grace that accepts people no matter what. God expects His people to do His will on earth as it is in heaven.

True religion points to the Lord Jesus; false religion points to the men who presume they are an addition to or better than Jesus. Jesus said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father except through me." Now Jesus was insistent on this. Later, Peter told the Jewish Council in Acts 4 and verse 12, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." We have God's truth in Jesus Christ! If we add anything to Him or take away anything from Him, we have left the truth for a broken cistern. Jesus is Lord; He's the only Lord. He alone paid the price for your sins and mine; He alone has risen from the dead; and He alone will judge you on the last day. Don't sell Him short; He has no equal.

True religion realizes that we're created in the image of God; false religion tries to recreate God in our own image. Many people don't want God unless He's like us or agrees with what we already think. Many people would rather manufacture a god that suits them than they would to listen to the true and living God that's revealed in the Scripture. Now this is not a new thing; people throughout time, throughout history, have resisted God in order to worship their idols. They wanted a god that followed them rather than the one true God they had to follow. Romans 1 verses 18 to 23 explains, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because

God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they didn't honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."

True religion holds to the inspired word of God, the Bible; false religion points to the writings of men, or to creeds and councils. True religion searches the Scriptures to see if these things are so; but false religion swallows whatever people like. True religion is content to hold to what is written in Scripture; but false religion feels it must edit what God has said to suit the times. Now if you want to find the truth, you must search for it in the right place. You can't get a full understanding of God in the woods, or in space, or in philosophy, or even in people; you find God in the Scriptures. The Lord God revealed Himself most fully and most accurately through the written word. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 21, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe."

Now this is why Solomon said in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding." You find that truth by your diligent study of the Scriptures, by looking here; there are no substitutes or shortcuts. Now the Bible applauds those who devote themselves to a careful, serious study of Scripture. The Bereans practiced that. Acts 17 verse 11 says, "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; and they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Now they didn't take the word of some individual; they wanted to know what the Bible itself said! The Scriptures settled the truth for them, and it should settle the truth for you too!

True religion is poor in spirit; while false religion is full of selfish ambition. James described the difference in James 3 verses 13 to 17. He said, "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, oh no, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere." Now many religions make their followers their focus, wanting them to do what makes them feel good about themselves. Now instead of helping people to become focused on God, they lead them to become focused on themselves.

True religion sees our utter need for God; false religion thinks God has an utter need for me. You know true religion is about love and service to God and others; false religion is all about self-esteem and what I feel. True religion longs for truth and fellowship with God; false religion longs for power. True religion makes one a servant of the living God; false religion turns a human into a god. True religion loves the truth and grieves at the lies that men tell; false religion so longs for its own ways that it ignores or dismisses the truth.

True religion appeals to the soul and the spirit; false religion appeals to the flesh. True religion is unashamed; false religion must hide what it really believes. True religion wants righteousness; false religion wants to please itself or please people. Many churches today have accepted as moral what God calls immoral in Scripture. They have chosen to please the people rather than follow God's teaching. They have chosen to appeal to the flesh rather than think about their souls. Moses once said

about Israel in Deuteronomy 32 and verse 29, oh, "If they were wise, they would understand this; that they would discern their latter end!" People will live as they choose, but God will judge them according to His standards not theirs. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 11 and verse 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment."

Now true religion calls men to repent; while false religion demands everyone accept them as they are without the need for repentance. True religion understands that repentance is turning away from what God defines as sin to what God defines as righteousness; false religion wants to rewrite what God says about morals. While true religion accepts responsibility and repents; false religion excuses its sins by pointing to the failures of others. False religion says that since everyone sins, we should accept everyone as they are without asking them to change. False religion says accepting people is more important than accepting God's moral law. Well the world expects religion to change, but God expects the world to change. When religious groups leave God's will, they leave God. When churches forsake the truth and the morals of God, God removes them from His grace.

True religion makes every person responsible for himself, while false religion blames our sins upon others. God said in Ezekiel 18 verse 4, "Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die." Now throughout this chapter God says clearly that each of us will face judgment for our own actions, not the behaviors of our parents or our children. God will hold each one of us accountable only for our own sins, not for the sins of others. Ezekiel 18 verses 30 to 32 says, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live."

Well why does all this matter? It matters because true religion recognizes the wrath of God is real, while false religion ignores it. True religion realizes that Jesus will return someday to judge the world, but false religion acts as if everyone will be saved regardless of their beliefs or their behavior. Don't be deceived! If your sins aren't washed away by the blood of Jesus, you'll face God as a condemned sinner. John 3 and verse 36 says that, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." My friend, are you right with God? Let's pray together. Oh Father, we pray that we may come to love You more and to serve You more, and to do Your will in our lives. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen!

George Orwell said, "The farther a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it." Jesus predicted that evil people would hate Him and hate those who followed Him, because evil people hate the light that exposes their evil deeds (John 3 and verse 20). Jesus loved the world, even when the world hated Him. Many think it's okay to discriminate against Christians, but think with me a little. People who love others tell them truth even when it hurts, but people who remain silent about sin and allow half truths and lies to be spread, these are people who have no compassion.

Now you may think you're being kind by being tolerant toward those who are in sin, but remaining silent about the destructive forces of sin is the worst kind of cruelty! You're allowing people to condemn themselves by failing to warn them. Remaining silent about sin or false doctrines robs people of hope and salvation. Many who believe a lie have built their houses on false hopes that rob people of eternal life. Jesus loved sinners, but His love for them meant calling them to repentance. Jesus didn't

leave people where He found them. He didn't leave them deceived about sin or about salvation, or even the church. Jesus spoke out against sin and against doctrinal error, because He loved their souls.

Now if you love your soul, if you love the Lord Jesus, then place your trust in Him, turn away from every sin, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ! You're baptized into Christ when you're immersed in water in His name. Now in baptism, God unites you with Christ, He makes you His child, He adds you to His church, and He forgives every sin. Don't wait another day to become a child of God. Become a Christian today!

Well we hope that today's study about true religion has stirred you to consider your relationship with God. Are you right with God? Now if you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can download these lessons or a newsletter online at www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, if you get a hold of us, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. If you need to talk to someone about a spiritual problem, we're here to help. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us, tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.