

PURE AND VAIN RELIGION

In our lesson text, James contrasts,

- **Pure** (katharos) [cleansed, free from corruption] Religion
- from**
- **Vain** (mataios) [free of idolatrous practices] Religion.

Vain religion is mentioned in Acts 14:8-18, during Paul's first missionary trip at Lystra.

(Acts 14:15) "And saying, 'Men why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you and preach the gospel to you should turn from these things to a living God, Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.'"

This lesson will study four aspects of Pure and Vain Religion.

1. One of my courses in theology school was the Eleven Religions of the world. I found my old text book, "World Living Religions" by Dr. R.E. Hume.

According to Hume, "Asia was the birth place of every one of the World Living Religions." (pg.14) Three of the world religions declare their origin out of the Bible and Abraham's seed:

- **Judaism** Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- **Islam** Abraham, Ishmael, and Esau
- **Christianity** Adam, Seth, Shem, Abraham (Luke 3:23-38; Matt.1:1-17).

2. The Greek word for religion is threskeia.

This word is used three times in our lesson text. Threskeia refers to both external ceremonial ritual as well as a theological body of beliefs.

It is used in our lesson text to distinguish between vain and pure Christian religion (James 1:26-27).

It was used also by Paul for Judaism's legalistic rituals and theological system of beliefs in conflict with those of Christianity (Acts 26:5, 22-23; Col.2:8,16-18, 23).

3. Christianity begins with the gospel of Jesus Christ for each person who believes it (Eph.1:3-14) (one Greek sentence).

Every prophetic reference in the Old Covenant of Christ was fulfilled when Jesus Christ died on the cross for sin, was buried and raised from the dead on the third day to give the believer eternal life. (1 Cor.15:3-4; Rom.1:16; Eph.2:8-9; John 5:24).

(Heb.9:15) "And for this reason **He is the mediator of a New Covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**"

4. Vain Religion is the Devil's alternative to Pure religion's gospel of grace salvation through faith (Eph.2:8-9; John 3:1-16; John 3:9-10; John 3:14-16).

(Jn.4:14) "And we have beheld and bear witness that **the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.**"

(Titus 2:11-14) "For **the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, **looking to the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purity for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.****" (one Greek sentence)

(Heb.2:9b) "...that by the grace of God, **He might taste death for everyone.**"

HOME STUDY

God recorded Jesus' personal prayer to the Father from Gethsemane before going to the cross in (John 17:1-24).

This prayer is divided into three sections for your study.

Jesus prayed for Himself

(John 17:1-5) "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

Jesus prayed for those who believed in Him as Savior.

(John 17:15-16) "My prayer is not that You take them out of the world, but that You protect them from the evil one . They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Jesus prayed for those who would believe in Him as Savior.

(John 17:20) "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message."

Next lesson, we will discuss James' challenge to grace believers living in the world to live differently than unbelievers living of the same world (Bridle Your Tongue).