



KILLER RELIGION

RELIGIOUS IDEAS THAT BRING SPIRITUAL DEATH

PT. 2, TRADITIONAL RELIGION

This is the 2nd in our series called, Killer Religion—religious ideas that will bring spiritual death. This week's killer religion, "Traditional Religion", is holding onto our tradition—what we've always done or were raised to do—even when it goes against what God says in the Bible. That is, knowing the truth but rejecting it for the sake of tradition.

You may have heard the story of Harry Truman who refused to evacuate his home on the side of an active volcano because he had lived there for 50 years and it was comfortable. On May 18, 1980 Mount St Helens erupted. The explosion reduced its summit 1,313 feet from 9,677 feet (2,950 meters) to 8,364 feet (2,550 m) in elevation and replaced it with a one-mile-wide (1.5 km) horseshoe-shaped crater. In all, St. Helens released an amount of energy equivalent to 27,000 Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs and ejected more than a cubic mile of material. Needless to say, Harry was never heard from again.

We think, "Harry was a fool. How ridiculous for a man to refuse to heed warnings that could have easily saved his life just because he didn't want to give up what he'd been used to for the past 50 years." But unfortunately many people do the same thing today in their spiritual lives. You see, the Bible gives us a lot of truth. And sometimes that truth goes against our long held traditions. That's when we have to decide whether or not to follow traditional religion.

Mark 7:5-9 (NKJV)—Jesus said that when we hear the truth, set it aside, and instead teach and follow tradition, our worship is vain—pointless.

When we reject Biblical truth we are not rejecting the teacher who taught it to us, or a church, or even the teaching itself, but we are rejecting God. In effect we are saying, "I care more about my traditions, and what my family has always done than I do about God. (This refers to people who knowingly lay aside truth; not those who have yet to learn a truth, see vs. 8, 9)

John 14:15—Traditional religion says, "I know that Jesus said 'if you love me keep My commandments', but I don't love Him more than the tradition I'm comfortable with."

One of the most common reasons we reject truth for tradition is because of family ties. "My parents, grandparents, even great grandparents did it this way, so I will, too!"

Exodus 20:3—Whenever we put tradition or convenience above what Jesus says, we are breaking the first commandment.

GOD'S ANTIDOTE: NOT TRADITION BUT TRUTH

Matthew 7:24-27—It probably was harder for the wise man to dig down to rock before building his house, but the payoff was well worth it! When we hear and follow Jesus' word we may have trouble and ridicule, we may even have to change our way of life (like those who evacuated from Mt. St. Helens), but our "Rock" will hold us up (Deuteronomy 32:31).

If we cultivate a love and commitment to the truth we will find a strength and closeness to God that is better and stronger than any tradition. If we base our lives on the sands of tradition we'll eventually find ourselves buried by that same tradition, just like Harry Truman.

1 John 2:3-5—Claiming to love God but following tradition instead of Him is living a lie. But choosing to live for Him and obey His word will build a relationship with Jesus and connect us to His love.

Which will you choose; the Rock of God's truth or the sand of your tradition? It may seem like a simple question, but when you're faced with that dilemma the pull of tradition or family expectations can seem irresistible. Which choice will you really make?

NEXT STEPS:

1. Identify some Biblical truth that the Holy Spirit is asking you to follow.
2. Identify the traditions that get in the way of your obeying God in that point. Ask God to help you surrender these things.
3. Draw close to God and ask Him to help you make new traditions that honor Him.