

A Study of Religions Beliefs

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Introduction: Why do we need to have such a study?

- A. Because we want to save as many as possible.
 - 1. How did Paul reach out to those of different backgrounds? **(1 Cor 9:19-23)**
 - 2. Consider how knowledge of the beliefs of others helped in his teaching.
 - a. Of the Sadducees and Pharisees. **(Acts 23:6-9)**
 - b. Of the Greeks. **(Acts 17:27-28)**
- B. Because we need to be challenged in our love for the truth. **(Acts 17:11)**
 - 1. When we consider the various beliefs we should be humbled and also careful.
 - 2. We better not be like the Pharisee. **(Lk 18:11-14)**
 - 3. The search for truth must never stop.

I. We need to recognize the limitations of this kind of study.

- A. Man-made religions are constantly in a state of change.
 - 1. Because of that defining what a group believed even 5 years ago may not be accurate.
 - 2. When a group is detached from the solid rock of God's word this would be expected. **(Col 2:6-7, 18-19)**
- B. Most members of religious group have little idea about the core beliefs of the group they are a member of.
 - 1. Because of that you could be making a great mistake in attacking that belief system without knowing what your prospect believes himself.
 - 2. Trying to define a belief system and then attack it is very difficult if the person you are teaching has no previous knowledge of the subject.
 - 3. There is no substitute for carefully listening to the one you are teaching rather than trying to fit him into a preconceived mold. **(Prov 18:13; Acts 23:35)**

II. The goals of this study

- A. To give a brief overview of the beliefs of some of the major religious bodies in this country.
 - 1. We cannot be thorough with only one or two classes.
 - 2. I will make available more material upon request.
- B. To examine in more detail some key core beliefs so that we can examine these in a Biblical context.
 - 1. We will look at the best arguments that these groups use to establish their beliefs.
 - 2. Here is where we will look both at passages that answer the error and also talk about the best way to teach.
- C. To discuss the best way to teach others who may be from these backgrounds.

III. Questions to consider as we examine a given group

- A. What Bible concepts have these groups failed to apply?
- B. What things have kept people in these groups from seeing these things?
- C. From those of you who were once in these groups what helped you learn and contrary to your background?

- D. How might we duplicate the very failures that have led to movements like these?
- E. How can we better reach our friends caught in a false movement?

IV. The Common Ground of all man-made beliefs – the world.

A. Worldliness is a **philosophy of life. (1 John 2:15-17; Rom 8:5-7)**

- 1. The root idea lies in an unrestrained fulfillment of our lusts.
- 2. **How do you make decisions?**
 - a. The worldly person looks within, to the things seen, and is self-centered.
 - b. The Godly person looks to God.
- 2. Worldliness is very subtle; **most worldly people do not know it!**
- 3. One is worldly if his guide is self and not God.
- 4. He may focus on what **outwardly seems good.**
 - a. **Family. (1 Cor. 7:32-33)**
 - b. **Religion. (Col. 2:8)**
 - c. **Strict rules of men. (Col 2:18-23)**
 - d. **An outward devotion to God. (Matt 6:1-2, 5; 2 Cor 10:12, 18)**

B. The worldly life is a deception of Satan. You may think of yourself as being in control of your life, but in fact your lust do!

(Ephesians 2:1-3 NKJV) "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, {2} in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, {3} among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the **lusts of our flesh**, fulfilling the **desires of the flesh and of the mind**, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

- 1. Notice the emphasis on “flesh” and “desire”.
- 2. Where will your lusts lead you?
- 3. This mind is from “the prince of the power of the air”, that is Satan.
Satan is the ruler of all worldly people! **(John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4)**
- 4. Most worldly people consider themselves as right with God! They have been deceived by the great deceiver! It is time to wake up.

C. What are the standards of the world?

- 1. There are three basic “standards” of the morality of the world. (Note: when any of these are the goal you can lie, cheat, etc.. as long as you meet the goal!)
 - a. What will work? (Utilitarian practicality)
 - b. What do most people accept? (Majority rule)
 - c. Who has the strength to impose their will on everyone else? (Power Politics)

“The church which is married to the Spirit of its Age will be a widow in the next.”
—William Ralph Inge (The Cultural Church F. LaGard Smith p. 75)

- 2. The Bible views these standards as “carnal weapons” and they must be overthrown in the heart of every Christian. **(2 Cor 10:3-5)**