

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE – PART THREE: ONE RELIGION

From the earliest days of human history, religion has been part of man's nature. Wherever men dwell, they build altars, form rituals, and seek to explain life and death. Yet the world's religions, with their conflicting beliefs and countless deities, reveal not the truth of many gods, but the confusion of a fallen race. God has not left man to wander in darkness; He has revealed one true faith—rooted in His Word, centered in Christ, and confirmed by obedience to His will. In a world filled with competing creeds and spiritual philosophies, this lesson proclaims the unchanging truth that there can be only one true religion.

Introduction:

1. This is the third lesson in the series *There Can Be Only One*, which emphasizes five absolute truths: one God, one revelation, one religion, one way of salvation, and one church. Having seen that there is only one God who has given one perfect revelation, it follows that He has revealed only one true system of faith.
2. The idea of “many religions” coexisting in truth is appealing to the world but impossible before the God of truth. Truth cannot contradict itself, and divine revelation cannot produce conflicting doctrines (**John 17:17**).
3. From the days of Cain and Abel, mankind has divided between true and false worship (**Genesis 4:3–5**). True religion originates with God and is based on His revealed will, while false religion arises from man's imagination and self-will.
4. In this lesson we will examine the marks of true religion, expose the vanity of man-made religion, and learn how to practice the one faith that pleases God.

1. The Origin Of True Religion (Genesis 4:3–5; Romans 10:17):

True religion originates with God, not with man. It is the product of divine revelation, not human invention.

- a. The first record of worship in Scripture contrasts two approaches—Abel's offering, which was “by faith,” and Cain's, which was according to his own will (**Genesis 4:3–5; Hebrews 11:4**). True religion therefore begins where faith begins—with hearing and obeying the Word of God (**Romans 10:17**).
- b. When man departs from what God has revealed, he creates counterfeit religion. Every idol, superstition, and false system is born of human pride, not divine authority (**Romans 1:22–25**).
- c. Because God is the source of truth, He alone determines how He will be worshipped. Any attempt to worship God apart from His instructions is vain and displeasing (**Leviticus 10:1–2; Matthew 15:9**).

2. The Character Of True Religion (Micah 6:6–8; James 1:26–27):

True religion is not measured by ceremony or outward display but by obedience, humility, and purity of heart.

- a. The prophet Micah declared that God desires justice, mercy, and humility more than ritual sacrifice (**Micah 6:6–8**). True religion flows from a transformed heart, not from external formality.
- b. James described “pure religion and undefiled before God” as caring for the fatherless and widows and keeping oneself unspotted from the world (**James 1:26–27**). This religion is active, compassionate, and holy.
- c. True religion therefore combines right belief and right conduct. It demands both truth in doctrine and integrity in life, for “faith without works is dead” (**James 2:26**).

3. The Folly Of False Religion (Matthew 15:8–9; Acts 17:22–23):

False religion is man's attempt to reach God on his own terms. It substitutes tradition for truth and emotion for obedience.

- a. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for drawing near to God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (**Matthew 15:8–9**). Such worship may appear devout but is empty before God.
- b. Paul observed that the Athenians were “too superstitious,” building an altar to “the unknown God” (**Acts 17:22–23**). They had religion but not revelation, zeal but not knowledge.

- c. False religion always exalts human authority above divine command. It follows feelings, customs, or leaders instead of Scripture (**Colossians 2:8**). It promises salvation but cannot provide it, for it is built on sand, not on the Rock (**Matthew 7:26–27**).

4. The Unity Of The True Religion (Ephesians 4:4–6; John 4:23–24):

There is one faith just as there is one Lord. The religion revealed by God is universal in scope but singular in truth.

- a. Paul wrote of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” showing that the true religion is not divided into many systems but united under one message and one Savior (**Ephesians 4:5**).
- b. Jesus declared that true worshippers must worship the Father “in spirit and in truth” (**John 4:23–24**). This unity of heart and truth transcends all cultures, languages, and traditions.
- c. The religion of Christ unites all believers into one spiritual fellowship. Denominations, sects, and competing creeds are evidence of human division, not divine design (**1 Corinthians 1:10–13**). True religion restores unity by calling all men back to the revealed Word of God.

Conclusion:

1. True religion begins with God’s revelation and ends in man’s obedience (**Romans 10:17**). It is not one of many paths to God but the only path He has made known. Every other religion, however sincere, stands outside the circle of truth because it originates in man rather than God. To accept multiple religions as equally true is to deny the nature of divine revelation itself.
2. The marks of true religion—faith, humility, obedience, and compassion—cannot be manufactured by ritual or tradition. They are the fruit of a heart transformed by God’s Word and Spirit (**Galatians 5:22–23**). The evidence of pure religion is not in the grandeur of buildings or ceremonies but in lives devoted to righteousness and mercy.
3. False religion, though popular, is powerless to save. It may soothe the conscience for a time, but it cannot cleanse the soul. Jesus warned that “every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (**Matthew 15:13**). The only religion that endures is that which God Himself has established.
4. The unity of true religion reflects the unity of its Author. There is one Lord, one faith, and one body, and all who submit to His Word share in that unity. Our task is to hold fast the pattern of sound words, reject every false way, and live in such a manner that others see the beauty and harmony of divine truth (**2 Timothy 1:13**).

Applications:

1. Since there is only one true religion, we must examine our faith by the Word of God (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). Many are religious, but not all are right with God. The question is not, “Am I sincere?” but, “Am I following what God has revealed?” Sincerity cannot save if it is misplaced.
2. We must practice religion according to God’s will, not man’s invention (**Matthew 7:21**). Worship that pleases God must be both in spirit and in truth, combining genuine devotion with obedience to His commands. Anything less is vain worship.
3. True religion must express itself in righteous living. It is not confined to the assembly but displayed daily in integrity, kindness, and service to others (**James 1:27**). Faith that does not change one’s conduct is not the religion of Christ.
4. We must reject the tolerance of modern pluralism that treats all religions as equal. Love for souls requires us to declare that there is only one truth and one way to God (**John 14:6**). To remain silent for fear of offending is to betray the gospel.
5. The knowledge of one true religion should move us to gratitude and devotion. God has not left us guessing which path leads to Him; He has revealed it plainly in His Word. Our response must be to walk faithfully in that truth and to share it boldly with others (**Psalms 86:11; Philippians 2:15–16**).

Questions:

1. What does the account of Cain and Abel teach about the origin of true and false religion (**Genesis 4:3–5; Hebrews 11:4**)?
2. What qualities does God require in true religion (**Micah 6:6–8; James 1:26–27**)?
3. Why did Jesus condemn the religion of the Pharisees (**Matthew 15:8–9**)?
4. How does Scripture show that there is only one true faith (**Ephesians 4:4–6**)?
5. How should we respond to the truth that there is only one true religion (**John 4:23–24**)?

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Questions & Answers:

1. What does the account of Cain and Abel teach about the origin of true and false religion (**Genesis 4:3–5; Hebrews 11:4**)?

Answer: It shows that true religion begins with faith and obedience to God's revealed will, while false religion arises when man substitutes his own way for God's command (**Genesis 4:3–5; Hebrews 11:4**).

2. What qualities does God require in true religion (**Micah 6:6–8; James 1:26–27**)?

Answer: God requires justice, mercy, humility, compassion, and purity of life rather than mere ritual or ceremony (**Micah 6:6–8; James 1:26–27**).

3. Why did Jesus condemn the religion of the Pharisees (**Matthew 15:8–9**)?

Answer: Because their worship was based on human tradition rather than God's commandments, and their hearts were far from Him (**Matthew 15:8–9**).

4. How does Scripture show that there is only one true faith (**Ephesians 4:4–6**)?

Answer: Paul declared there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," proving that true religion is unified and singular, not divided into many competing systems (**Ephesians 4:4–6**).

5. How should we respond to the truth that there is only one true religion (**John 4:23–24**)?

Answer: We must worship God in spirit and in truth, rejecting false ways and devoting ourselves fully to the religion revealed through Christ (**John 4:23–24**).