

Lesson 2

Religion or Jesus

In John 4:19-24, we read the story of Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. He asks her for a drink of water and tells her about the living water. When He gives her words of knowledge she perceives that He is a prophet and asks Him a question.

John 4:19 the woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 but the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth



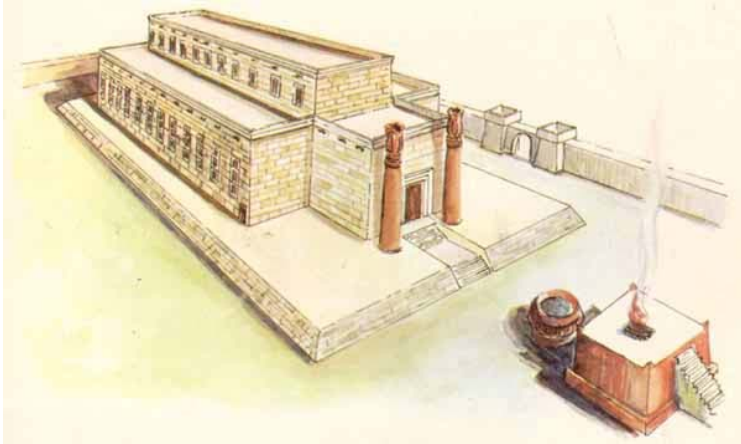
To understand what it means to worship God, we need to understand what it doesn't mean.

1 What it is Not

1.1 The Church

Many people believe that the church, the temple is a place where you conduct religious acts such as worshipping, listening to teaching etc. When we say the word church to people, the first thing they think about is that it is a building and a priest performing religious acts.

Jesus came to destroy the religious temple. He openly told the priests that he will destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Standing at the temple, he was talking about the temple, but referring to his own



body. He shows the difference between an earthly man-made temple where God visited His people, vs a God-made Spirit-filled living temple. (Old vs New)

John 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

In 1 Peter 2 He is described again as the living stone and we are described as living stones, a holy priesthood and in 1 Corinthians 6: 19-20 we are called the temple of the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 2: 4-5 As you come to him, a living stone

rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves, like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 6: 19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Church is not a place you go, it's something you are, as long as you are in Christ.

1.2 The Priest

He's seen as someone with a special calling and an education from a university, seminary etc. and standing between us and God as a mediator. We often see preachers with large ministries being put on a pedestal and people following them and what they preach, more than they follow Jesus. You also hear people debating biblical topics based on what these preachers say rather than on what the Bible says.

Under the old covenant, the Israelites chose to do away with a relationship with God. Instead, they had one "priest" speak with God and be their mediator. The Levitical priest system was introduced and for many generations, the Israelites followed the priests religiously. Aaron, the older brother of Moses was the first High Priest and his descendants were priests until 70A.D when Rome destroyed Jerusalem.

Jesus came to do away with the priesthood of man and became our high priest.

Hebrews 4:14-16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

With Jesus as our High Priest, we, as believers, are now called a royal priesthood as part of the body of Christ. (1Peter2:9)

Discussion: What does this now allow you as a believer to do?

The mindset of only a special select few being called into ministry work, is keeping many believers from discipling the nations as we all have been called to do.

If we were to pray for someone today and a demon manifested, who would we call to cast it out?

1.3 Worship

Discussion: What does worship mean to you?

For many believers, worship is something that happens only during a worship service and is something done on a Sunday in a particular place and time. It's also where selected people do special things that others don't. Worship services are good, but what does your worship look like on Monday, Tuesday etc.

1.4 The Holy Spirit

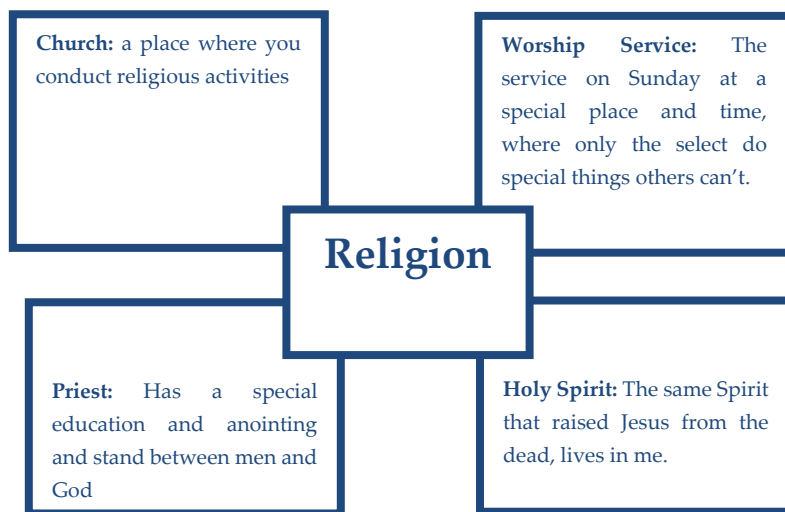
Discussion: What do you need to obtain, before you can start to do any type of ministry work?

In many churches, it is thought that the Holy Spirit anoints a select few people and that they are the only ones who can heal, preach and evangelize. This remains the old mindset of a select person, like a priest, called to carry out assignments for God.

Some churches invite special preachers to come with their special anointing to minister and pass on that same anointing. This mindset has caused many Christians to sit and wait in church, for a special man of God, to come and give them some of their anointing and only then will they have the power to be used by God for ministry work.

If you have received the Holy Spirit, you don't need a special anointing; you have already received the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. The gift is the Holy Spirit and He has 9 ways He manifests God's glory.

What does religion look like?



2 What it is

2.1 The Church

Jesus came not to build a new religion, but to establish a new Kingdom. A kingdom that is very different from all other religions. Unfortunately, many people still have a Christian religion rather than living in the Kingdom.

Jesus introduced Himself as the head of a body and a body is alive, each different part working together to reach a goal. The hand cannot grasp anything if the arm doesn't move and if the eye does not provide the direction.

Jesus came and He changed the way people were doing church, by breaking down the temple and making us the temple.

1 Cor 3: 16-17: Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

We are God's temple. We are His church. Everywhere we go, the kingdom is and can be an experience for others.

2.2 The Priest

Where, in the New Testament do we read about a priest standing between us and God? It's not there. Jesus has taken the place of a high priest in heaven for us. We no longer need a priest to perform animal sacrifices for our sins to be forgiven. The blood of Jesus paid once forever for all our sins.

Hebrews has several passages depicting Jesus as the High Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-5:10; 6:20; 7:11-8:2; 10:12). The office of priest was an important one in the Old Testament system and was fulfilled by Jesus

The Bible does however, refer to shepherds and bishops etc., but in context, if we were to disciple the nations, would that not make us a shepherd who would on occasion, see to the spiritual wellbeing of a newborn Christian?

The fivefold ministry was introduced by God to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. An example is if one becomes proficient at and understands prophesy, do they not become part of the fivefold ministry with a gift to teach others? The ministry is a function and not a position.

2.3 The Holy Spirit

The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is living inside of us. We all have the same Spirit that descended onto Jesus when he was baptized.

Discipleship is equipping others to live a life that mimics the life of Jesus and the first disciples. They spread the gospel not only in word but also in power. In today's churches, people are not being trained to preach the gospel with dunamis power and authority.

People learn and grow by doing, not by just listening.
How do we grow as Disciples? Here are a few hints:

1. Build your relationship with God under the new covenant. Inflow will cause overflow that will cause outflow.
2. We need to learn how to co-labor with Holy Spirit by creating opportunities and put ourselves in positions where we can learn, practice and grow into using all 9 spiritual gifts
3. The more we give, the more we receive. The word says that Jesus gives us life and life in abundance. What does it mean to have life in abundance? It is not an abundant life. (Big house, expensive cars etc.). It is life in abundance. Let's say you have a bag that holds only 50 marbles and I have 100 marbles representing life, to give you. When I start to fill your bag, one by one, soon your bag will be full and eventually overflowing. This is what life in abundance is like.

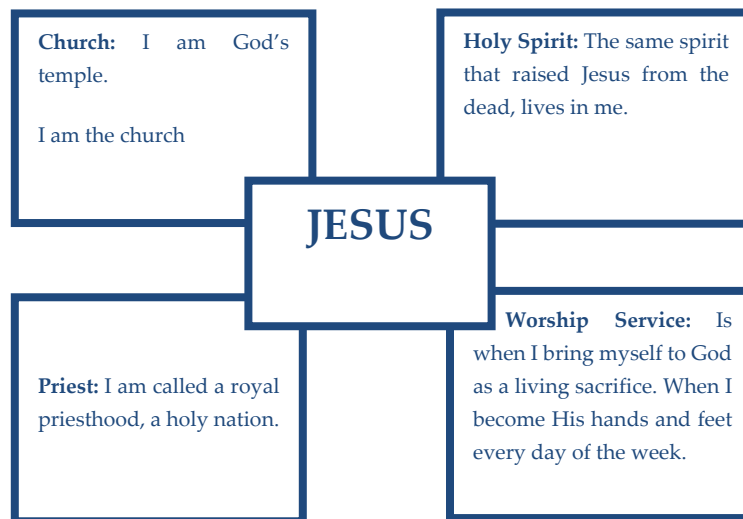
2.4 Worship

True worshippers will worship God in spirit and in truth. True worship is picking up your cross, following Jesus, obeying his word and living a righteous life. Worship is every day of your life and not just on Sundays

James 1: 27: Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world

(The word Religion in context is the Greek word: "Threskeia" and it translates as disciplined worship)

What does Jesus look like?



3 Exercise

Over the next few weeks, start to proclaim over yourself that you are the church and that you have the Holy Spirit inside of you; the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. When you are at work, busy shopping, stop, now and then, and ask: how can I worship you right now, Father?

There is nothing wrong with going to church or attending worship services. It is where we fellowship with like-minded believers and have the opportunity to grow together but it mustn't stop there.