

INTRODUCTION

How do we deal with the deal with the religious confusion around us?

As to how people get into a state of religious confusion, we studied that in the scriptures last week. It has to do with God saying that He is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him, those who disobey His commandments.

In the case of King Jeroboam, his breaking of the second commandment, and causing Israel to break it, his introduction of corruption into the worship of God, began a sad progression that went like this:

- Once corruption of religion was introduced,
- religious corruption went from bad to worse;
- religious corruption spread;
- true religion became mixed with pagan religions; and
- that state of religious confusion persisted for generations;
- so that the people who lived where Jeroboam had ruled, who eventually were called the Samaritans, were in a state of religious confusion all the way until the time of the New Testament, which was about a thousand years.

So, we know from the scriptures how people can go from having true religion revealed to them by the word of God, to being in a state of religious confusion.

But, today, when we find people around us in such a state of religious confusion, how do we, the disciples of Jesus Christ, deal with it?

Or if you, yourself, are in a state of religious confusion, how are you to deal with it?

TEXT

John 4:3-42

BODY

I. Recognize It By Its Symptoms

A. Misinterpreting the Spiritual Meaning of the Word of Christ (10-11) or Taking the Words of Christ Literally that Are Meant Figuratively (10-11)

1. Here the Samaritan woman hears the Lord Jesus talking about living water, and she takes Him to be talking about water
2. This is common in regards to the two ordinances:
 - a) Many around us take baptism in water, which is a physical representation of a spiritual phenomenon, and think that the physical act produces a spiritual change.
 - (1) Act 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - (2) As if this means that being baptized results in remission of sins
 - b) 2. Others take the Lord's supper, which is a physical representation of the death of Jesus Christ, and think that the physical act produces a spiritual change; as if a person who does not trust in Christ, and has not repented of sin, gains some sort of approval from God if he eats the Lord's Supper
3. Many take the Old Testament prophecies of blessing on Israel in the time of Messiah, and think God is talking about land, grapes, grain, military conquest, Jerusalem, and a literal rebuilding of the temple.
4. Dear ones, understand that the Bible is to be taken literally, certainly, where it is meant to be taken literally. But it must be taken figuratively where it is meant to be taken figuratively. Much of the Bible's content is about spiritual things phrased in physical terms.
5. Jesus spoke of water as a way to present the Holy Spirit of God bringing God's grace to the soul

B. Insisting on Family Relations As the Basis for Peace with God (12)

1. See how quickly the woman runs to her attachment to Jacob
2. Many around us have this same theory of religious standing
 - a) “my family is catholic”
 - b) “my grandpa is a preacher”
 - c) “America is a Christian country - God bless the U.S.A.”
3. Understand that having relatives who are righteous before God does not make you righteous in God’s sight
4. Being part of a country with a Christian history does not make you righteous in God’s sight, either
5. Instead of an appeal to religious ancestry, Jesus spoke of how the woman could appeal to Him

C. Showing interest in religious doctrine only for the temporal benefits (13-15)

1. this woman, like so many in the world, had to do the hard work of drawing water from the well every day. When she heard talk of some way she could be enriched, so she wouldn’t have to draw water every day, she became very interested.
2. that attitude is all around us, of course, and religious leaders use it to their advantage
 - a) give to this ministry, and the Lord will reward your faith with financial gain in this life
 - b) come to this church---you will learn how to have a happier marriage and better kids, and your family will make friends and enjoy using our family life recreation center
3. but of course the Lord Jesus is not talking about temporal benefits; He is talking about the wonderful spiritual change made by His Spirit on the inside of a person, which yields benefits in this life and forever in the life to come

D. Deflecting matters of law and sin with religious questions or controversy (16-20)

1. the Samaritan woman did not want to talk about herself as a lawbreaker, guilty before the great holy Judge; like everyone else, she had some way of justifying herself; whatever she had done was not wrong, or if it was wrong, it was someone else's fault; when the Lord Jesus brings up her sin, her lawbreaking, her guilt, she looks for cover in religious questions and controversies
2. that practice is all around us today, also. Talk to someone about his or her sin and the need for forgiveness in Jesus Christ, and what does he say? Does he say, "You know, you're right, I am a sinner before God. I need forgiveness somehow"? No, here's what he'll say:
 - a) "I'm Pentecostal. I believe in speaking in tongues. Why are you Baptists against speaking in tongues?"
 - b) "I don't believe in predestination. We're not just robots and puppets, you know!"
 - c) "Why do you meet in a church building? Shouldn't we just meet in people's homes?"
 - d) "Why do you meet on Sunday, and the Bible says that Saturday is the Sabbath?"
3. having some knowledge of various controversies in the church, and being able to bring them up for discussion, might give a sinner some cover in the eyes of human beings. But it certainly does not give any cover at all in the eyes of God. He sees right through this. Your breaking of His law is not the least bit obscured from His sight by your wrangling over controversial questions. You stand before Him utterly exposed as a vile, wicked sinner.
4. your response to God's law revealing you as a sinner should not be trying to hide behind religious questions, but should be humble repentance, looking to Jesus for forgiveness from God

- E. Believing something about Christ without knowing who He is (25)
1. the Samaritan woman knew that there was a promised deliverer, and that He was coming, Messiah or Christ. But she didn't know that He already had come, or who He was, even though He was right there in front of her speaking to her
 2. that certainly is the confused state of many people around us today.
 - a) everyone has heard something about Jesus.
 - b) but generally, despite the fact that the bible is sitting right there in front of them, they don't know who He is.
 - c) they think He is as artists have portrayed Him
 - (1) a cute, helpless little baby in a manger
 - (2) a helpless man being crucified
 - (3) a man knocking on the door, waiting to be let in, helpless to open it himself
 - d) they think He is as men have imagined Him
 - (1) a permissive man, giving approval to any lifestyle, embracing any sinner, no matter how brazenly impenitent
 - (2) a kind of Santa Claus, ready to give whatever worldly gifts we ask for
 3. but the Messiah or Christ is really Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the one who spoke the words we have in the Bible

II. Insist On the True Religion Revealed in the Word of God, the Bible, the Holy Scriptures

- A. Understand the second commandment as Jesus applied it (22-24)
 - 1. if a person says he worships God, but does not worship according to what the Bible says, he really does not know what he is worshiping
 - 2. to worship God, a person's worship must be in spirit and in truth
- B. Identify correctly who Christ is (26)
 - 1. Christ is not the one portrayed in dramatic productions or visual arts
 - 2. Christ is not the one people imagine
 - 3. the one who has said and done all that the Bible records of Him is Christ
 - 4. when you hear all that the Bible says about Christ, and understand it how the apostles explained it, that person is Christ
- C. Understand the words of Jesus how He meant them (32-34)
 - 1. before getting intense about something in what Jesus said, take care you are understanding Him right
 - 2. many of the things in the Bible are said in figures
 - 3. they are also said in plain language
 - 4. example: John 4:10-14 with John 5:24
- D. Prioritize doing the will of God over everything else (32-34)
 - 1. when Jesus was thirsty, He was willing to talk about the gospel rather than having any water
 - 2. when Jesus was hungry, He was willing to talk about the gospel rather than eat
- E. Look at the confused people around you as a field for harvest (35)
 - 1. it is tempting to look at them as enemies
 - 2. look as Jesus told us to look
 - 3. be willing to enter the labor yourself
 - 4. pray that the Lord of the harvest send workers into His field
- F. Believe because of the word of Jesus (42)
 - 1. it is good to believe in Jesus because someone told you about Him (39)
 - 2. but you should hear his words yourself and believe in Him

CONCLUSION

How do we deal with the religious confusion of the people all around us?

-recognize it by its symptoms

-insist on the true religion revealed in the Bible

Dillon - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - Psalm 119:145-152

Stephen - Scripture Reading - John 3:1-21

Thad - Congregational Prayer

Audrey - Prelude - Trinity 731 "And Can It Be?"

Rita - Trinity 168 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" - Andrew

Journey - Trinity 89 "Come, Thou Almighty King" - Alex

Haven - Trinity 413 "O Thou That Hear'st"