

Lecture 9: False Religions

By now the class had gotten used to meeting in the dark, dreary basement. Professor Grimes in particular had become accustomed to the new class location, and had even managed to find a makeshift desk. True, it wasn't an actual desk; it was just a large crate that he had dragged over from the corner. But it gave him a place to lay his notes, and that's all he needed.

"Good morning, class," the professor said cheerfully.

"How can you possibly tell that it's morning?" Brad said sourly.

"Just because this basement has no windows does not mean that the beautiful day that is outside has suddenly vanished. It is still there whether we can see it or not. If you didn't happen to notice the sun and the sky on your way to class, then I suggest you open your eyes and learn to observe what is around you."

“If you say so,” Brad replied.

Professor Grimes chose to ignore him. “Today we are going to talk about false religions. By this time you should be familiar with Christianity – although, based on your test scores, I have some serious doubts about that. Since we’ve already covered the gospel it’s time that we covered things that are *not* the gospel. The truth is that there are only two different religions: you are either saved by God’s grace or you are saved by your own works. Christianity falls into the first category, while all other religions fall into the second category.”

Wally spoke up. “There’s, like, a whole lot more than just two religions. I bet there’s thousands of them.”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “It may seem like there are many different religions in the world, but they’re just different window dressing on the same idea. Only Christianity teaches that God saves you. All other religions teach that you must save yourself by your own good works. They’re all just different variations on the same idea – and they all lead to Hell.

"Now, some false religions are more subtle than others. The one that I want to talk about first is the one that I think is the most dangerous of them all. That would be—"

"Islam!" Iris exclaimed.

"I'm afraid not," the professor replied. "Oh, I agree that Islam is very dangerous and is causing a great deal of harm. It is definitely a false religion and we *are* going to talk about it today. But there is another false religion that has caused far more damage over a much longer period of time. You see, Islam is not the only religion that has forced people to convert at the point of a sword, and that has sent out armies to murder their enemies. No, the false religion that I'm thinking about is Catholicism."

Iris looked surprised. "You think the Catholic Church is more evil than Islam? Really?"

Professor Grimes nodded. "I'm afraid so. Today most people view the Catholic Church as some sort of nice organization that isn't that different from Protestant churches. That is one of the things that makes it so dangerous: modern Christians have so little

discernment that they can't distinguish real Christianity from counterfeits. That is *not* the case with Islam – at least, not yet. Only a complete moron would confuse Islam with Christianity, but practically everyone confuses Catholicism's teachings with the gospel. That makes it incredibly dangerous. It is an enemy that the Church is not fighting.

“Let's start by looking at the doctrines of Catholicism. We unfortunately don't have enough time to cover all of their heresies – and there are a *lot* of them – but we can hit upon the main point, and that is this: Catholicism teaches that you are saved by works. In the Council of Trent, which was written in the 16th century and reconfirmed by Vatican II in the 1960s, the Catholic Church stated that if you believe that you are saved by grace alone, apart from works, then you are going to Hell. Regardless of what individual Catholics may tell you, or what the priest down the road has to say, *that is their official stance*. The Catholic Church officially teaches that if you believe that works are a *fruit* of your salvation and not the *cause* of it then you are going to Hell. The Council of

Trent is very clear about this and wanted everyone to know that you are saved *by your own deeds*, and not by anything Christ did for you.”

Wally spoke up. “But that’s not what my Catholic friends tell me. They believe they are saved by grace.”

“Did you ask them what they mean by ‘grace’?” the professor asked. “One common tactic of false religions is to take words and give them new meanings, to deceive people into thinking that everything is fine. To a Protestant grace means that God forgives you because of Christ’s death, and you contribute absolutely nothing to your salvation. To a Catholic grace means that God gives you the ability to keep His Law and avoid sins that make you lose your salvation, so that your lifetime of good deeds can earn you entrance into Heaven. Those two definitions are *not at all* the same thing. The Catholic Church has redefined ‘grace’ to mean ‘works’.”

“That’s not very honest,” Iris spoke up.

“Well, Satan is the father of lies,” Professor Grimes pointed out. “The devil will do whatever he can to drag as many people

as possible to Hell. It is *very* common for false religions to lie to you about what they actually believe. Islam freely allows Muslims to lie about Islamic beliefs if it makes Islam look better, and Mormons have the same concept – it’s called ‘lying for the Lord’. Of course, the reality is that they are actually lying for their father the devil.

“Incidentally, the best way to find out what other religions actually teach is to read their official books of doctrine that are targeted at people who have already accepted the religion. Those books will be honest because they are aimed at ‘the choir’, so to speak. But don’t expect any honesty from the people who come to your door and try to convert you. I’ve dealt with them before and I have yet to meet a group that was willing to tell me what they *really* believed. They always lie.²⁹”

Brad spoke up. “Now there’s a cynical

²⁹ This has happened to me. Mormons will come to my door and lie to me about their beliefs. When I use their official sources of doctrine to reveal their lies, they suddenly tell me they can’t talk anymore and have to leave. It would be funny if it wasn’t so sad.

attitude for you.”

“Do you always dismiss truths you don’t like as ‘cynicism’?” Professor Grimes asked. “If you call something ‘cynical’ do you think that it somehow makes unpleasant realities go away?”

Brad didn’t respond, so the professor continued. “As I was saying, Catholicism is a works-based religion. That is very unfortunate for them because the Bible says repeatedly that we are saved by grace, and *not of works*. If you don’t believe me you can look up Ephesians 2:8-9 and read it for yourself. Genuine salvation is *not of works*, period. In fact, the entire book of Galatians was written because that church had rejected the gospel of grace and had turned to works! Paul warned them that if they did not repent they would be lost. A works gospel *cannot* save you. Therefore, all organizations that teach a works gospel – such as Catholicism – are false religions. This means the Catholic Church is leading billions of people to Hell.”

“That’s horrible,” Iris replied.

“It most certainly is. It astonishes me that anyone considers the Catholic Church to be

Christian. All it takes is a cursory look at what that organization really teaches to discover how different their message is from the gospel. For instance, Catholicism teaches that baptism is required for salvation – unlike the Bible, which says no such thing. Catholicism teaches that baptism purifies people from their sins, whereas the Bible explicitly says baptism does *not* do that. Catholicism teaches that in order to be saved you need the sacraments that only the Catholic Church provides – which means you cannot be saved apart from the Catholic Church. That, too, is a lie from Hell. The Bible teaches that if you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved. Church membership is *not* required.

“Catholicism, though, says that faith in Christ is simply not enough. You can repent and believe in Jesus as much as you want, but you’ll still go to Hell if you don’t live a life of good works, avoid sins that take away your salvation, aren’t a member of the Catholic Church, aren’t baptized, and so forth. They teach that Christ’s death alone *cannot* save you. The blood of Christ *cannot* wash away

your sins. Instead it's up to *you* to live a good life and earn your salvation. In fact, they even teach that if you believe you are saved, you have sinned the sin of presumption.³⁰

"I don't understand," Iris said. "What does that even mean?"

"Well, the Bible teaches that when you become a Christian, you are saved at that point and that is the end of it. You can *know* you are saved and you don't have to worry about doing something and becoming lost again. The reason you are saved is because Christ's death paid for your sins. Since your sins were paid for by His death, there's nothing you can do to add to that and there's nothing you can do to take away from that. Jesus handled the entire payment, so you are good to go. The transaction is finished. Since you weren't responsible for paying the bill, you can't do anything to mess it up.

"However, Catholicism teaches that in order to avoid Hell you have to live an entire

³⁰ *Understanding Roman Catholicism*, by Rick Jones. I recommend reading the whole book – it's short and to the point, and covers a whole lot of ground.

life of good works, making the right decisions and doing the right things. You can *never* actually ‘be’ saved because at any moment you might slip up and ruin everything. You are always just one wrong decision away from Hell.”

Iris spoke up. “That’s terrible! How could anyone live that way?”

“Many people actually *prefer* it,” the professor replied. “They don’t want to be saved by God’s grace. The truth is that people *want* to earn their way to Heaven. They want to pay their own way, to prove that they are special people who are better than everyone else. They don’t like the idea that they need a Savior. Sadly for them, you *can’t* earn your way to Heaven. You will either enter Heaven *solely* on the basis of God’s grace, or you won’t enter Heaven at all.”

Wally spoke up. “But Catholics believe in Jesus! That makes them Christian.”

Professor Grimes sighed. “Yes, they do believe in Jesus – but they deny the power of the cross. They reject the idea that Christ’s death can save you, and instead teach that you must save yourself. They reject the idea

that He suffered for your sins, and instead teach that you must suffer for your own sins in Purgatory. They reject the idea that repenting and believing is enough to save you, and instead teach that your salvation depends upon your works. In other words, they reject the message that Christ taught. Since they have utterly rejected the gospel and replaced it with a Satanic lie, they are not a Christian group.”

Brad spoke up. “But weren’t they the Church in the Middle Ages? I mean, for a long time that’s all there was.”

“I’m afraid that isn’t true. In fact, it’s actually quite the opposite. For more than a thousand years the Catholic Church *persecuted* the real church. They have tirelessly hunted down and murdered all those who rejected their false gospel and clung to the belief of salvation by faith alone. During the course of their existence they have murdered an estimated *fifty million people*.³¹

³¹ This number seems to appear in multiple places; for example, in Dowling’s *History of Romanism*. However, the actual number could be lower or very

No other organization in the history of the world has done more to attack Christianity over a longer period of time, and with more bloodshed, than the Catholic Church.”

“Fifty million people?” Iris asked, shocked. “How is that possible?”

“If you enroll in my church history course – which might be difficult, since there won’t be another semester after this one – you would discover *exactly* how that was possible in rather gory detail. The truth of what the Catholic Church has done throughout history is utterly horrifying. For more than a thousand years they relentlessly hunted down those who disagreed with their doctrine and murdered them. They murdered people for owning Bibles, or even parts of Bibles. The Pope sent out his armies to raze entire cities to the ground and murder all their inhabitants. They tortured to death and murdered men, women, and children *by the*

much higher. In 2006 David Plaisted did a study entitled “Estimates of the Number Killed by the Papacy in the Middle Ages and Later” that did a thorough analysis of that number. The evidence indicates the actual death toll could be far larger than a “mere” 50 million.

thousands – and they did so without pity or remorse. To this day they have never apologized for the millions that they slaughtered. Today people are terrified of Islam because Islamic terrorists behead people and murder Christians. However, for more than *a thousand years* it was the Catholic Church who terrorized the world. In fact, the last time they tried to execute someone was in 1902. There was a man who was giving away Bibles, and the Archbishop of Sucre in Bolivia demanded that he be put to death for it. The only reason the Catholic Church has stopped murdering people is because they no longer have the power to do so.³²

“That’s horrible,” Iris replied.

“It is far, far more horrible than you know. If you ever read what the Catholic Church has actually been doing, you would be deeply shaken. People despise the name of Hitler for his genocidal campaigns – and rightly so – but

³² *Rome and the Bible*, by David Cloud. It’s not a short book, but it’s quite gripping and is extremely well documented. Catholicism is far more vicious and has killed far more people than most people realize.

the Catholic Church has killed vastly more people. There is nothing remotely Christian about them.”

Professor Grimes picked up a sheet of paper from his makeshift desk. “But getting back to your point, Wally – one thing you must realize is that it’s not enough to believe in *a* Jesus. In order to be saved you must believe in the *real* Jesus. For instance, suppose that you went into your backyard, picked up a rock, and called it Jesus. You can pray to that rock all you want, but it’s not going to save you. Calling it Jesus does not *make* it Jesus. In order to be saved you must believe in *the real Jesus* – the Jesus of the Bible. Believing in a counterfeit Jesus will do you no good. That is one of the problems with Mormonism.”

Isaac spoke up. “Are those the people who come to your door and pester you?”

“Well, they do go door to door, but they’re not the only ones who do so. Jehovah’s Witnesses do the same thing. Now, in our day Mormons desperately want people to think that they are Christians, but they are

most assuredly *not*.³³ Their teachings are utterly bizarre. For example, they reject the idea that there is only one God. They teach that God the Father was born as an ordinary man and then lived a life of good works and earned His way to Godhood. They also teach that many people throughout eternity have earned their way to godhood. In fact, if you are a good Mormon you can do the same thing. The fact that Isaiah 44:6 says that there is only one God, and besides Him *there are no other gods*, is apparently of no concern to them.

“Likewise, they reject the idea that Jesus is part of the eternal Trinity. In fact, they reject the idea of the Trinity altogether and call that belief ‘apostasy’. They teach that Jesus earned His position through a life of service and good works. They teach that Jesus

³³ *Mormonism 101*, by Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson. I also wrote an entire paper on Mormonism, which you can find in my book *Collected Sunday School Lessons (2010 – 2011)*. That paper goes into far more detail, and includes many quotes from actual Mormon leaders. You can read it for yourself – they really do make all these weird claims.

and Satan are brothers who competed to see who would be allowed to save mankind. They teach that Jesus was *not* born of a virgin but was conceived the way all children are conceived. They even teach that the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden was a good thing. They believe that Eve made the right decision and celebrate her ‘wisdom and courage’.”

Iris spoke up. “But didn’t God curse Adam and Eve for what they did?”

“Oh yes,” Professor Grimes said. “The Bible is very clear that Eve made the *wrong* decision and that untold horrors have fallen upon the world because of the Fall. But that doesn’t concern the Mormons. They claim that what Eve did was a ‘transgression’, and transgressions aren’t sins. Considering that I John 3:4 says that *sin is the transgression of the law*, that is an exceptionally stupid thing to say.

“But that’s not all! Mormonism teaches that Christ didn’t suffer for our sins on the Cross; no, instead He suffered in the Garden, when He sweat blood. They actually reject the idea that we are saved by Christ’s death on the cross, and that His blood can wash

away our sins. Like the Catholic Church, they teach that you must earn your way into what they call the ‘celestial kingdom’.”

Iris spoke up. “So you have to live a good life to be saved?”

Professor Grimes hesitated. “It’s more complicated than that. Mormons believe that all men are basically good and are saved unconditionally. Only extremely wicked people will go to Hell. Everyone else will be fine. However, if you want to reach the highest ranks of Heaven then you need to be a good Mormon and live a good life. Under the Mormon system you only have to become a Mormon if you want to reach the highest levels of glory. Otherwise, as long as you’re a fairly decent human being, you can be an atheist and God isn’t going to care. You won’t reach Heaven, but you’ll live comfortably on the earthly kingdom and your life will be fine. Hell is only for the worst of the worst.

“Mormonism is, therefore, a form of universalism. It denies many of Christ’s teachings: that many people will go to Hell and few people will go to Heaven; that Christ is the only way to be saved; and that all those

who do not repent and believe will face the eternal wrath of God. It replaces the gospel with a system of works.”

Professor Grimes glanced at his watch. “We are running out of time, but I would like to point out that Islam does the same thing. All of these—”

Wally spoke up. “But isn’t Allah the same thing as God?”

The professor frowned. “Most certainly not! Allah is more closely related to our concept of the devil. Allah is not part of the Trinity; Muslims utterly reject that teaching. Unlike the God of the Bible, Allah is not holy. He can do good or evil, and he can keep his promises or break them. He can do whatever he wants because there are no limits on his behavior.

“Muslims do believe in Jesus but they reject the idea that He was God, or that He died for the sins of mankind. They accept Him only as a prophet and not as a Savior. There is also the not-insignificant fact that Islam is an incredibly violent and bloody religion.”

Wally interrupted. “No it’s not. In fact, the word Islam means peace. The terrorists

aren't practicing true Islam at all."

"You could not be more wrong," Professor Grimes replied. "The word 'Islam' does not mean peace; it means *submission* – as in, submit to Islam or die. The Koran is full of references to murdering all those who refuse to submit. It urges the complete genocide of the entire Jewish race. The truth is the terrorists are actually the ones who are taking Islam seriously. They are following in the footsteps of their bloody forefather, Mohammed – who led armies to kill all those who opposed him and his teachings.

"On top of that, Islam is a works-based religion. The reason so many Muslims are willing to die in jihad is because it is a guaranteed way to be saved. Apart from jihad there isn't any way to be sure that Allah is happy with you and will grant you entrance into paradise. Only killing other people in a holy war guarantees salvation."

Iris spoke up. "And you still think Catholicism is worse than Islam?"

"Look at it this way: no Christian with a functioning brain would mistake an Islamic terrorist who beheads children for a true

Christian. Islam is an obvious lie. However, *millions* of Christians mistake Catholics for true believers. People will stand up and witness to Muslims, but they won't evangelize Catholics because they think they're already saved. The most dangerous lie is the one that people believe, not the one that people immediately see through and reject."

Professor Grimes glanced at his watch. "I can see that we have run out of time for today. There are obviously many other false religions out there; if you are interested in learning about them feel free to sign up for my class on false religions and cults. I'm not sure where I'll be teaching next semester, but I'm sure I'll be teaching somewhere. As long as the truth needs to be taught I will be out there teaching it. Class dismissed!"

"Hold on a minute!" Isaac exclaimed. "You didn't tell us what our next topic was going to be."

Professor Grimes eyed him curiously. "If I had, would you have studied for it and read the assigned reading?"

"Um, maybe," Isaac replied.

“Then I have good news for you, young man! The class syllabus – which I gave to you weeks ago – lists all of our sessions and includes what chapters each lecture covers and what the topic of that lecture is going to be. Despite inclement weather, the collapse of buildings, and criminal negligence in high places, we have stuck to that schedule without interruption. We will cover exactly what that syllabus says we are going to cover.”

“Which is...?” Isaac asked.

The professor sighed. “Just read chapter 19, like your syllabus says.”

