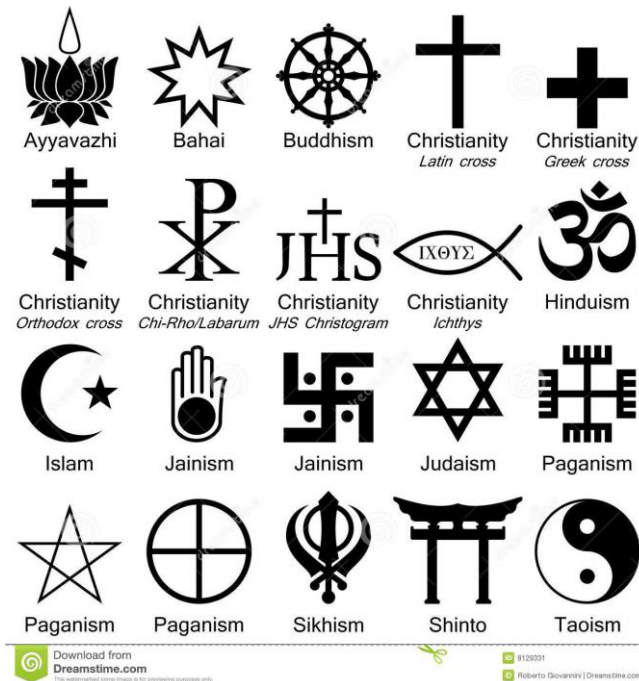


RELIGIOUS – BUT LOST!



TEXT: Romans 1:18-24 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

INTRO.: As you can see from the symbols above, (you can add a Catholic crucifix) although it may be labeled "Christianity" it is NOT Bible Christianity being represented. Also, though it may be called a "church" and have a steeple and a cross it may be far from Bible centered. One clue is to look at the platform or "altar". If it has two "pulpits", one on one side and another on the other side, it means that the message is divorced from the Scriptures. Church geography is important.

A. The question is often asked: "Isn't one religion as good as another?" or "Are the heathen really lost?" or "Would a 'loving God' really send people to a burning, eternal hell?" We will address these questions in this study. These questions are usually asked:

1. As a diversion to get a prospective soul-winner off-the-track.
2. As implying that God is cruel, condemning those who have never had an opportunity.
3. As an implication that God is only loving and not just, and condones rather than condemns sin.
4. Sometimes as a question of legitimate concern for the lost and their eternal welfare.

B. The question cannot be answered until we discover what the word **"heathen"** means; what the concept of **"religion"** is; and what the biblical and true nature of God is.

1. The Hebrew (O.T.) word **"goyim"** translated 141 times as "heathen" in the sense of "nation" and 30 times as "Gentile" – simply means those who were outside of the truth of God's plan of salvation. The "heathen" are simply those who in the O.T. were not Jews" and a part of the chosen people, or simply ignorant of the truth of God's Word.
2. The Greek (N.T.) word **"ethnos"** translated 7 times as "heathen" and 99 times as "nation" and again simply means anyone who is not a Jew.

Psalms 2:1 *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?*

Acts 4:25 *Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?*

3. The dictionary definition is: "An unconverted member of a people that does not acknowledge the God of the Bible; a pagan.
3. Our definition includes the dictionary definition but goes beyond it to include all who may acknowledge the God of the Bible, but who have not received Christ as their Savior.

ILLUS.: The "heathen" then include those pagans who have never heard of Christ or embraced Christianity, along with many who have embraced Christianity and call themselves "Christians" yet have never received. Christ. The fact is, you can be a "pagan" heathen or a "Christian" heathen!

Matthew 7:21-23 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

John 1:12 *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

John 3:16-21 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

4. The term "religion" or "religious" is only used seven times in the Bible, all of them in the N.T.
5. It is usually used in a negative way, i.e., as **"having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"** (2 Tim. 3:5); in other words, an empty ceremonial or liturgical nod in the direction of God through one of the non-biblical forms of worship.
6. One passage of Scripture includes both a negative and positive use of the word which clarifies the concept.

James 1:26-27 *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

I. MAN IS INCUREABLY RELIGIOUS: (see TEXT above)

ILLUS.: A few years ago *National Geographic* magazine published pictures and did a lead story on a tribe in the Philippines which seemed to have no form of religion whatsoever. The news media went into a frenzy using the Tasaday tribe to prove that man is NOT basically "religious" or spiritual in nature; that he has no innate hunger for God. Some time later the whole thing was exposed as a hoax. These people were not some lost, extremely primitive tribe cut off from the rest of the human race and not having any "religion" at all. In fact, the photos were deliberately staged and failed to show the Tasadays smoking cigarettes, wearing modern clothing, etc. The media also failed to reveal that the Tasadays indeed had a primitive, though unbiblical, and heathen, "religion" after all. (*National Geographic* later published an obscure "apology" for being taken in on this scam, and 20/20 did a TV expose of the whole sordid mess.)

A. He is created in the image of an infinite God, thus has an infinite spiritual appetite for God:

1. This appetite cannot be satisfied with finite things.
2. This appetite is spiritual and cannot be satisfied with material things and is "driven" to worship something, or some being he calls "god."

Psalms 135:15-18 *The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.*

- a. As our text shows man will worship animals, idols, or anything in place of the true and living God, before abandoning all "religion" and becoming "reprobate" to the extent that he becomes a "fool" and completely denies God or becomes an atheist.
- b. Finally, when man becomes "reprobate" he sinks to new lows of depravity and engages in immoral activity of the basest kind by using his body to further degrade the "image of God" by practicing homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism, bestiality, etc.

B. He is created indirectly by God and has a "homing instinct" for heaven:

ILLUS.: Bees make a "beeline" for the hive when taken away! Salmon fight the currents and rapids to return to their birthplace. Man too has a "homing instinct."

1. Man is never "at home" in this world.
2. He instinctively knows there is more to life than what his senses experience.

ILLUS.: Travel to the South Seas and you will find worshippers; to Alaska and view the totem poles; to Africa to discover witch doctors; to China and see them worship their ancestors. Men worship the elements of nature and the creatures of nature and will even resort to worshipping other men. Anything but the Creator Himself!

3. Man will always find something or someone to "worship."

ILLUS.: The Hindu's main god is Brahma, but he is too evil to worship! Their god Shiva's chief characteristics are revenge and malignity! Their god Juggernaut is represented by an idol without arms or legs (he was ordered to have them amputated because of his incurable sinfulness.)!

C. He feels trapped on earth, but longs for heaven:

1. The soul is like a bird born in a cage.
2. Outwardly the bird only knows its cage, but inwardly it longs to fly.
3. It knows it should be flying but cannot.

II. MAN IS IMPLICITLY RESPONSIBLE:

Romans 1:18-21 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without*

excuse: *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

A. Book #1 – *The book of man’s reason or inner consciousness: v.19 (...in them)* (Theme: “God must be.”)

1. To trade what is obvious, for what is conjured is stupid. (*“God hath showed it unto them...”*)
2. To trade what is honest, for what is false is ridiculous. (*“God hath showed it unto them...”*)
3. To trade what is temporal, for what is eternal is insanity. (*“God hath showed it unto them...”*)

B. Book #2 – *The book of nature: v. 20,23,25* (Theme: “God is.”)

1. Civilization doesn’t help; man seeks to escape through entertainment, drugs, etc. (*“...without excuse”*)
2. Education doesn’t help; man seeks to escape through evolution, “science”, etc. (*“...without excuse”*)
 - a. Creation is a signpost pointing to God, but it is ignored.
 - b. Creation is a testimony to the Creator, but man refuses to listen.
 - c. Creation is a loudspeaker telling of the Creator, but man turns it off.

ILLUS.: Man has a microscope revealing the infinitesimal complexity of creation, and a telescope revealing the immensity and seeming infinity of creation, but man chooses to ignore the evidence, or reinterpret the evidence in favor of **a creation which creates itself!**

C. Book #3 – *The book of God’s Word:* (Theme: “God’s Person.”)

Psalms 19:1-2 *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

ILLUS.: There is not salvation in books #1 & #2. Salvation only comes from book #3! The person of the revelation of book #3 unfolds the way to know the God you reason and the One creation tells you exists.

1. Psalm 19:1-4a deals with book #2 – creation.
2. Ps. 19:4a-6 deals with book #2 – an illustration of creation.
3. Ps. 19:7-9 deals with book #3 – God’s Word.
4. Ps. 19:10-11 deals with book #3 – an illustration of God’s Word.

Psalms 19:1-11 *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

III. MAN IS IRREVOCABLY RUINED:

A. Man is “born lost”:

Romans 5:12 *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Ephesians 2:1 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

1. Man is not only born a sinner, but is dead in trespasses and sins.
 - a. This places the responsibility of revelation on God.
 - b. This places the responsibility of responding on man.

ILLUS.: It is God who has chosen to reveal Himself through man's reason, nature, and His Word. It is man's responsibility to respond to God's revelations. When a man responds to **book #1 & #2** it is then God's responsibility to see that book **#3 arrives**.

Romans 10:13-15 *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

- c. They must call on Christ. V.13
 - d. They cannot call on Someone they do not believe in. v.14a
 - e. They cannot believe on Someone they have never heard about. V.14b
 - f. They cannot hear without a preacher. V.14c
 - g. They cannot hear unless someone is sent to preach to them. v.15a
2. God is sovereign in the birth business.
 3. God can collect into groups a whole population of rejecters.
 - a. If people do not like the fact of God, they will not be interested in the Person of God.
 - b. If people do not receive books #1 & #2, why send book #3?!

B. Man must be born-again:

1. Religion doesn't help!

ILLUS.: Pagan heathen may read and reject books #1 & #2. "Christian" heathen may read and reject book #3! We wonder how a pagan can read books #1 & #2 and worship a crocodile or a river, but more amazing is the idolatry of "Christian" heathen who read book #3 and do not respond positively to it! The idolatry may be more "Christian" but it is not less "heathen."

2. Goodness doesn't help!
 - a. Heaven is a fellowship.
 - b. Fellowship involves people with the same interests.
 - c. The fellowship of heaven is where the people like each other due to a common interest, our Sample of heaven.
 - d. Heaven is for those who have "tasted" a Sample of heaven and like Him.
3. Only the new birth helps!
 - a. We are made in God's image.
 - b. Nothing less than His own image can satisfy God.

CONCL.: In Eden God said it was **"not good for man to be alone"** – so God created someone in Adam's image for him. Could we not say **"it was not good for God to be alone"**? God desires to re-create in us His Son's image so He can love us and be loved in return. As the lower animals could not satisfy Adam, so nothing less than God's image can satisfy God. To restore that fallen image we must be "born again"!

WHY THE 'HEATHEN' ARE LOST!

TEXT: Romans 1:18-32

INTRO.: A. Having stated that the heathen ARE lost, we now proceed to tell WHY they are lost – from the Scriptures – the only true and infallible record of these facts.

B. First, let's reiterate what a "heathen" is. We have combined the dictionary definition with what we believe is a biblical definition. Thus a heathen is not only a pagan, but includes all who may acknowledge the God of the Bible, but who have never received Christ as their Savior. The fact is, you may be a "pagan" heathen or a "Christian" heathen!

C. What follows is the history of man's devolution. He started out with a knowledge of God and His truth, and ended up rejecting God, His Word and His rule over him. Ultimately he will end up in hell. Man apart from God devolves, he does not evolve! He moves downward, not upward.

I. STEP #1 – RESPONDED TO GOD’S TRUTH BY CHANGING IT INTO A LIE! vv.18, 25, 26

A. They suppressed the truth. *v. 18 "...hold the truth"*

1. The word "hold" means to hold down or suppress.
2. They literally held down the truth; it made them uncomfortable because of their rebellion.
 - a. Through their ungodly attitude. *"...ungodliness"* = disregard of God, unaccountable
 - b. Through their unrighteous activity. *"unrighteousness"* = wickedness of conduct – serving self

NOTE: God’s response to sin is *"wrath...from heaven!"*

B. They subverted the truth: *v.25 "...changed the truth"* (see Oliver Greene’s commentary on Romans, p.42)

1. They changed the truth of God into a lie. v.25a
2. They changed the truth of creation into a lie. v.25b
3. They changed the truth of nature into a lie. v.26

ILLUS.: The first step in the devolution of man results in the unnatural used of sex. God gave up the most precious gift He had given to man – woman – and women "did change the natural used into that which is against nature." The lesbianism of today is God’s way of punishing man for changing God’s truth. "Vile affections" are now paraded down our city streets today. The Bible’s commentary on this activity is *"God gave them up!"*

II. STEP #2 – REFUSED THE WITNESS OF REASON AND CREATION: vv. 19,20

A. The non-saving disclosure of God in man’s conscience is refused. v.19

B. The non-saving disclosure of God in marvelous creation is refused. v.20

NOTE: When the "truth of God" (the Word) is rejected, all hope is gone. The light of the conscience is dismissed and the light of creation is darkened, so the light of revelation is eclipsed.

III. STEP #3 – REJECTED THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD: vv. 21,28

A. All humanity on planet earth "knew God" on at least two occasions:

1. In Eden – yet Adam and Eve sinned against that knowledge and plunged the human race into spiritual darkness.
2. After the flood – yet Noah and his sons sinned against that knowledge and plunged the "new race" into spiritual darkness.

ILLUS.: Sinful parents produce sinful progeny! Adam and Eve produced Cain. Noah produced Ham. Your parents produce you! The effect of an ungodly home on children in that home is more ungodliness. Nations plunge into moral darkness through their families and individuals rejecting the knowledge of God. Note God’s response in v.28! (The words "not convenient" refer to the 32 sins listed in vv. 29-31)

B. All humanity on planet earth should "know God" today:

1. That is why the great commission includes "every creature."
2. That is why the great commission says "go into all the world!"

IV. STEP #4 – RENOUNCED WORSHIP OF THE CREATOR AND REPLACED HIM WITH THE CREATURE: vv. 23,24

A. Man’s devolution is in direct proportion to God’s demotion: v.23

1. Man worshipped man: (the "gods" or "giants" of Gen. 6?!))
2. Man worshipped birds: (the "bird-men" gods of ancient civilizations, e.g., Egypt)
3. Man worshipped beasts: (the bulls, goats, etc. of Israel, Egypt & nations)
4. Man worshipped serpents: (the sacred cobras of India, etc.)

B. Man's dishonor is in direct proportion to God's demotion. v.24

Note God's judgment in v.24: ***"God gave them up!"***

V. STEP #5 – REPAID GOD'S GOODNESS WITH FILTH AND CORRUPTION: vv.26-32

A. They are enlightened concerning the prospects of sin. v.32a

1. Man created in God's image.
2. Moral absolutes are found in the being of God and transferred to man through conscience, creation, and written law.

NOTE: Those who teach conditional morality "situation ethics"), universalism, annihilationism, or liberalism, are all in intellectual and moral rebellion against their Creator.

B. They are entangled in the pleasure of sin. vv. 27, 32b

NOTE: The homosexual agenda is being promoted openly in our society. Politicians, entertainment icons, the news media, and even churches are cooperating in this anti-God movement to remove the normal concept of a family (one man, one woman, and children), and further erode not only "family values" but God's laws and restrictions on mankind.

C. They are encouraging others in the pursuit of sin. v. 32c

CONCL.: The bottom line on man's devolution is given by God in the first verse of Romans 2: ***"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man..." v.1***