***Religion  
  
RV134-01***

We are now dealing with the second increment of the tribulation converts in Revelation 7:9-17.

John observes, in heaven, a huge multitude of people standing before God's throne. These are people who were born again in the tribulation, but who suffered martyrdom. We have this indicated to us in verse 14. We've already seen earlier in chapter 7 that God raises up a special core of Jewish evangelists: 144,000, to be precise. These are the people who are capable of conveying the gospel message during the tribulation era. That tribulation time will begin with nobody born again – everybody headed for the lake of fire. So, John sees the product now, in heaven, of this evangelistic effort.

Furthermore, these 144,000 Jewish evangelists do not restrict the message, nor is it hindered because of the nation in which they are proclaiming this truth at the time; the race of people to whom they are speaking; the social rank of their listeners; nor, the particular language in which these people speak, and in which they must communicate the message. None of these things will be a hindrance. God will have worked out all the barriers so that there is no problem of communicating the gospel to everybody on the face of the earth. And of course, everyone needs to be born again (who has ever been born into the human race), if he is to escape hell; and, everyone has the right, therefore, to hear the gospel. And if he is positive toward this message, he will receive the eternal life that it will provide.

The people that John sees in heaven, we have observed, are wearing white robes, which is the sign of their ultimate sanctification. They have reached the final and ultimate good that God has prepared for His people. They hold palm branches in their hands, which symbolize a state now of personal happiness in the salvation which they have received from God. These palm branches are reminiscent of the feast of tabernacles in the Jewish religious year, which was the feast when all the harvest had been brought in, and everything was stowed in the barns, and the people looked forward now, in the winter months, with full divine provision. They could now rest from all their labors of agriculture and they could now enjoy what they had grown, and what God had provided them with, so that it was a time of great rejoicing.

In commemorating this event at the feast of tabernacles (the feast of ingathering), palm branches were a prominent part of that celebration. So, that's the connection here. The palm branches indicate a time past labors, with no more suffering – now in a position of great joy and peace.

**A Loud Voice**

John then hears this multitude of tribulation martyrs begin shouting, as one voice, the praise of God for His grace in saving them. So, we begin now at verse 10: "And cried with a loud voice." The word "cried" is the Greek word "krazo," and it does mean indeed "to shout." This is the unified voice of these tribulation martyrs. It is in the present tense, which tells us that they continually repeat this particular expression of praise. It is active in its voice, which means that these individuals themselves are there sounding off, with their mouths and their vocal cords, this particular expression of praise. It's indicative mood – a statement of fact. We're told that the expression is "loud," which is the Greek word "megas," from which we get our English word "megaphone," for example. It is indeed a loud proclamation. What they are using is their "phone;" that is, "the voice." They are speaking in a loud voice. The voices of all these martyrs put together are speaking out in a unified expression:

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying." The word "saying" is the Greek word "lego." It introduces what these martyred saints are shouting about in heaven. This word stresses particularly what they are saying – the content of their expression of praise.

The bodies of these people at this particular point in time are back on earth in graves, but their human spirits and their souls, which can never die, are in heaven. The disembodied spirit and soul, however, we can see here, is able to function as if it still had a body. Notice in verse 9, they can stand on their feet. They don't have any physical feet. Those physical feet of back there on earth in the graves, but they have something to stand on.

Furthermore, we see they're wearing clothes, which tells us that there must be something that they hang these clothes on – these white robes. Furthermore, they have hands – hands with which to hold the palm branches. Then in verse 10, they have vocal cords, because they are shouting something in a loud voice. Then in verse 11, we're told that they bow their faces to the earth, so they have something in the way of a head, and a front of a head, and a back of a head. They have faces to bow down to the ground in worship.

**An Interim Body in Heaven**

So, the believers in heaven, who are now awaiting, at this point in time, the resurrection body, have some kind of interim body. Each believer is recognizable, furthermore, as the individual who died, and who once had a body that this soul and spirit has been dwelling in. These saints in heaven have eternal life from God, but they still have to await a resurrection body minus the sin nature.

So, we have here a clear indication that when you leave your physical body behind in death, and you come into the Lord's presence, that immediately there's an intermediate body of some kind that you are provided with, so you are recognizable in heaven, just as you are recognized here on earth, and you can function in that physical body as you can function here on this earth.

**Rejoicing**

The thing that these people, as we shall see, are saying is an expression of praise to God, because they are in heaven as a result of a salvation that He has provided. They are in heaven because they made a decision before they left those bodies that are behind on the earth in those graves. This eternal life, that they are rejoicing in, can only be secured when you are still on this earth. Once you have left this earth in death, there is no second chance.

In 2 Corinthians 6:2, we read, "For he said, 'I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." What does he mean by now, the accepted time, and now, the day of salvation? He means very simply that if you wait until after you have died, there is no possible salvation for you. Right now, when you're alive on this earth, is the time when that choice can be made.

Acts 16:31, of course, tells us that that is secured by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the result of that faith in Christ as Savior will be that you are born again. In John 3:36, we have the statement of our possession of that eternal life now, while we are alive on this earth – when we have to secure it.

John 3:36 says, "He, that believes on the Son has everlasting life. He that does not believes not the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him." So, everybody right now is either under God's wrath and judgment to the lake of fire, or you are in possession of eternal life.

Therefore, all religious systems which promise a second chance for salvation after death are purely a deception of Satan. For example, Roman Catholicism says that the worst that can happen to you is that you'll end up in purgatory, a weigh station between heaven and hell. And if the appropriate things are done for you by your relatives that have remained behind, in the form of masses, and of penance, and of good works that they perform in your behalf, you will receive grace to get you out of purgatory and into heaven. How much is necessary is, of course, never known.

Such groups as Mormons say that because you have not heard the Mormon gospel of salvation, or you never would take it seriously, you will be given a second chance after you have died. You will stand in God's presence, and God will say to you, "That's right. Joseph Smith was my man. That was the truth." Then Mormons say that you'll have another chance to be able to decide.

Well, of course, Hebrews 19:27, as you know, says that it is appointed unto men once today, and then the judgment." And when you have died physically, which is what it's referring to there, then comes a judgment.

So, this stage of the believer's experience is one that he has entered because of a decision that he has made while he is still alive on this earth. After that, there's no second chance. This is a stage in heaven before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The 24 elders, who are up in this throne room, represent the body of Christ, the Christians, because we, too, are in heaven at this time. The thing that we can observe at this point is that here, everybody is equal in happiness at this point of time. No matter how you lived your life here on this earth as a Christian, you will have equal happiness at this point of time – the point of time that John is viewing these martyrs, because until the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place, until the gifts are distributed – the rewards and the crowds, everybody will be equally happy. After the Judgment Seat of Christ, everybody will not be equally rejoicing.

**Salvation**

What they are particularly happy for here, and that they are speaking forth with in a united voice, is their salvation, which is the Greek word "soteria." This refers to your personal preservation from the lake of fire by the work of Christ on the cross. The Greek Bible has the word "the" in front of it, so it is speaking of *the* salvation. The reason it does that is because God the Holy Spirit knew that the sin nature of man was going to invent all kinds of plans of salvation. But only one is *the* salvation, and only God has that particular plan. There are many plans which are purportedly qualified to satisfy the justice of God. But God says, "There is *the* salvation, and that one alone, which will satisfy his justice against the sinner. Many plans of salvation that are in the world today have been invented by human reason. These inevitably are based on human merit; on good works; or, on good ritual, in some way to appease God. With God, there is only one (*the* salvation, and that is the only one that works in enabling us to escape from the lake of fire. Any plan of salvation that deviates from justification by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ is going to take the follower into hell, including those groups who call themselves Christians.

Recently, somebody disagreed with me when I said that people who are in the Roman Catholic Church, while they view themselves as Christians, and while they call themselves as Christians, cannot, in the biblical sense, be called Christians. Why not? Because they have a false doctrine of salvation. Anybody who is a Roman Catholic, who follows the Roman Catholic Church works-based salvation will go no place but into the lake of fire. There is no way to escape that. And you are very foolish in trying to protect a vast number of people that you are reluctant to relegate to the lake of fire.

It is true that somebody who is a Roman Catholic might ignore the works salvation program that he has been taught, and actually come to a grace salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and still remain a Roman Catholic. Yes, there are people who do that. They continue because that's how they were brought up. Their family are all Catholics. They have social contacts within the Catholic community. For one reason or another, they keep that association, but they could be born again. That doesn't very often happen. It's not likely that, in the long run, the person would stay in it.

It's possible that somebody who is a Mormon could realize that Joseph Smith was a con artist, and come into a true knowledge of the Word of God, and be truly born-again. But because he lives in Utah, it's smart to stay in the Mormon Church, if you've been in it. It's good for your business. It's good for your personal health and other things. So, you stay in it, even though you may be born again. It's not likely that somebody would, on the long-term (on the long haul) do that because the cost is so terrible.

The same thing is true for any of these groups that suggest that you can lose your salvation. Anytime that a group says, "It is possible for you to be headed for heaven today, but headed for hell tomorrow – that indicates that there is something in you that can change (that determines) your destiny. And the thing that's going to change in you is that you don't behave yourself in some way. You commit something in the way of a sin that is considered of sufficient degree of seriousness to merit your being switched from a destiny of heaven to a destiny in hell. Therefore, somebody who is in a group like that will indeed find it very difficult to be born-again – to get the gospel straight.

This is the problem with the charismatics. There are some charismatics indeed who know the gospel of salvation by grace, and they're going to go to heaven. They're not going to have very much good, because they're all balled up on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which is the key agent in their being able to qualify for the maximum good. Some will get into heaven, but most of them will not, because they come from a background and a heritage which teaches them that, unless they act in a certain way, they cannot go into heaven. And what you're trying to do there is to mix grace and works, and they cannot be mixed.

The salvation that these tribulation martyrs in heaven are rejoicing over is the salvation – it says, "To our God," using the Greek word for God ("theos"), and again, it's "*the* God," indicating the salvation of God our Father. More specifically, what this is saying is that: "*the* salvation (the true and real salvation plan) belongs to our God." That is the idea that is being stated here. They are praising the salvation which belongs to our God.

God the Father originated the true plan of salvation, which is needed by all mankind. This is the God who is the sovereign one. He is the one whom they see sitting upon the throne ("kathemai") – the position of being seated upon the heavenly throne in the heavenly throne room. This is present tense. It is the Father's constant place. It is active in meaning. He Himself is so seated. It is a participle expressing a spiritual principle. He is seated upon the throne. It is the one who is seated upon the throne who came up with this plan.

Furthermore, they are praising the one who is executing the Father's plan of salvation, namely the Lamb (the "arnion"). This is the Lord Jesus Christ who has provided the salvation by paying the price of sin. It is the death of Christ, while bearing the sins of the world, that fully satisfies the justice of God. So, consequently, you can't add anything to it. God's justice must be satisfied. The Bible uses the word "propitiated." That's what it means: If God's justice were not satisfied, then you need to add something to try to get Him satisfied – to appease the wrath of God. But if you try to add any human work to God's salvation, then what you have done is that you have removed the grace basis upon which God must be approached if you want justification.

So, these people recognize that the salvation that worked for them was a salvation that God Himself produced –, the one before whose throne they now stand, and who did it with the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed for the sins of the world, Jesus Christ, who also stands there before the Father's throne with them in heaven.

**Works-Based Salvation**

As you know, Ephesians 2:8-9 is the classic verse that makes how you go to heaven clear: "For by grace." What does grace mean? It is a gift that you do not deserve, and cannot earn: "For by grace you are saved." And how do you secure it? You secure it: "Through faith, and that not of yourselves (it is the gift of God), not of works, without any man should boast." So, if you're going to go to heaven, it's going to be on the basis of a gift. It cannot be on the basis of something that you have earned. *The* salvation is a grace-based salvation.

So, when the Roman Catholics come up with a work-based salvation; when the Mormons come up with a work-based salvation; and, when all the cults of one kind or another come up with a work based salvation, we cannot say anything other than the fact that anybody who follows that plan will not go to heaven. They will never be standing in the throne room of God. And only a very short-sighted attitude on your part would make you reluctant to alert these people to that tremendously important fact.

Romans 4:4-5 apply to this: "Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of death." If you work for something, then you're entitled to receive payment. If you work for salvation, then it isn't a gift. It's something that you are being paid for. Verse 5 says, "But to him that does not work, but does nothing more but believe on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." So, if you work for it, you get zilch – zero. If you do nothing more than believe the gospel, you get it all.

Romans 11:6 says this: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." If you have a King James translation, you should cross out the rest of the verse. It sounds good, and what the rest of the verse says is, "But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." That's true. But that apparently was slipped into some copy. Some copyist put that out in the margin to explain the verse a little more clearly, and then, a little later, somebody else came along and stuck it onto the end of the verse. But it doesn't belong. The verse stands sufficiently on what it says: "And if it's by grace (a system of gift from God, apart from human doing), then it is no more of works. Otherwise, grace is no more grace."

The point here is that grace and works are mutually exclusive. You cannot say, "Yes, I believe in salvation by grace,” and then you add something that you do to secure it; to keep it; to earn it; or, to deserve it.

Any salvation plan which incorporates some human provision or effort to satisfy divine justice is a form of religion. It is not Christianity. You must remember that. That is religion, and there's a big difference between Christianity and religion. If you try to add something to what God has provided, you neutralize the grace basis, and you simply cannot be born again.

Religion always originates with Satan, who creates something which is a good counterfeit, so that the salvation that he offers will keep you out of heaven, but it seems like the real thing. Satan does not produce bad counterfeits. He produces excellent counterfeits that indeed seem like: "This is the way that you can secure eternal life."

Some of the human works that people provide for securing eternal life are the obvious kind, that everybody catches: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive water baptism, and you shall be saved." Now, that's a gross addition. You know that that's an open adding of something to grace so that it's no more grace. You've added a human work. Or: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and join Berean Memorial church, and you shall be saved." That's an open violation. You know that joining a church is not going to take you to heaven. But many a preacher, without coming out and saying it, implies this at the end of every service: "Do you want to go to heaven? Meet this lady right here. She has got the application forms for membership.

Or they use tithing. I love it. If you give 10% of your take-home pay, now that's fair. It's not 10% of your gross income. It's not after the government gets through beating your brains out, but: "Of what you can take home, give God a tithe of that, and you shall be saved." That's an open form of work that everybody can recognize.

Then, of course, you have the hustler – hustling around suffering for Jesus, and doing good works. That's an open obvious trying to add a works basis of salvation.

The problem is that there are other human works that are interjected that keep people out of heaven that are more subtle: "Those of you who would like to spend your eternity in heaven with God, with every head bowed now, would you raise your hands?" That doesn't seem so bad. That's subtle: "Stick your hand up. Then, for those of you who had not raise your hand, we close the service and say, 'I'm sorry, you did not raise your hand.'" And what am I telling you? "You're out, buster. I gave you a chance to come in. Slip your hand up."

Some preachers say, "Come down the aisle. If you don't want to come down the aisle, and if you're bashful about that, we're going to fix it up. We have a 'down-the-aisle' committee. And every Sunday, somebody is going to start moving down that aisle." These are Christians. They're going to say, "Sam, you go first; Mary, you go second; Jack, you go third; then I'll go; and, then you go." Pretty soon the unbeliever gets caught up: "Oh, I'm not the only one. I'll go forward too." And don't think that they don't do that. Every big evangelist does that. That's how he starts priming the pump to get people to get out of their seats in order to be saved – to make a public move. That's a more subtle type.

You also have the clean-up-your-life routine: "I'm going to be born-again. I'm going to clean up my life." Well, that's a good thing to do, but it's a subtle interjection of work. God says, "Come as you are, and I'll do the cleanup."

**Faith**

So, faith in the gospel message is what is required to be born-again. But the people who want to throw in these works, subtle and obvious, I have discovered, will say to you, "But faith is a human work. Faith is a work." Of course, if faith is a work, then you cannot possibly accept the biblical position that salvation is through grace – a gift by faith. That is because if believing is a human work, then there is no possible way of not being saved except through doing a work. But the Bible is very clear that faith is a mental admission that God is telling the truth about how to go to heaven. That's all faith is. Faith is a mental admission on your part that he's not lying. Faith is non-meritorious, and remember that.

Here's how we know: We go back to Ephesians 2:8, which says that one is saved from hell: "By grace, through faith." Then verse 9 states the opposite of faith. What does verse 9 say? "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Have you noticed that? Verse 8 says, "For by grace you are saved through faith;" and, verse 9 says, "Not by the works way," which is the opposite of faith, which indicates that faith is not a work. That's the whole point of verse 9. You're going to be saved by the faith way, not by the works way, because the two are the opposite of one another.

Faith thus does not merit salvation as if it were a work. Faith is simply the means by which one accepts God's gift of salvation. Verse 8 says, "*The* salvation from God." It is the salvation which is described in the context here, in Ephesians 2:4 on down through the first part of verse 8. It is a salvation, we are told, which is entirely of God. It does not originate with man. It's a gift from God, and you cannot earn it by human efforts. So, there's no ground for human boasting.

**Rationalism**

The only other way that you can secure something, and the only other way you can respond to something, is on the basis of rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism is arriving at some conclusion by your reasoning powers. People who have a better IQ, therefore, are more to be commended for the decisions they come up with. The higher IQ people have more merit.

**Empiricism**

Empiricism is making the decision on the basis of experience. You try this, and you try that. The people who have more discernment know when something really works, and when something is a good way to do a thing. The people with less discernment do not have as much credit to them.

So, rationalism and empiricism are personal merit-types of decisions. Yet, most non-biblical ways of salvation are the result of somebody's reasoning, and of somebody's capacity to exercise empirical decisions. Faith is a system which finds merit only in its object. That's why we say that faith is not a human work. Faith is simply finding its merit in the object that you believe in. In the case of salvation, what gives your faith value? It's because you placed it into Jesus Christ. As a Christian, what gives your faith values? It's because you placed it in the inerrant Scriptures. So, the object of faith is what determines its value.

The tribulation martyrs are here revealing that they have a very clear understanding indeed of the issue of salvation. They understand the doctrine that brought them into this happy place in heaven. What happened to them was that they received some accurate information about the gospel from these Jewish evangelists. They received accurate information. They got two things. One – these evangelists came, and they told them the gospel. They explained their condition of sin. They explained what God has done. They explained that God, as the God of justice, must punish them with death for that sin. They explained how God satisfied His justice against that sin by paying for that sin through His Son, and that now He offers this to them as a gift. They explained the gospel. Secondly, they told him what to do with this information: "Now that I have explained the gospel to you," the Jewish evangelist told these martyrs, "you must believe it (you must accept it), and you must trust Jesus Christ to do just that."

What are they being called upon to do? To make Christ their Savior – not their lord and Savior. That's another one of those subtle things. That's where cleaning up your life comes in. How many times have you heard the evangelist say, "Come and make Christ the Lord and Savior of your life, and you will have a pathway to heaven." You don't make Him the Lord of your life. You make Him a Savior – and that's all that you can make. And He comes in at the point of salvation as the Lord of your life automatically, because, as you know, at the point of your salvation, you not only come into the outer circle of eternal fellowship, but you come into this inner circle of temporal fellowship. So, at the point that you're born again, here's where Christ is Lord, and He automatically is Lord of your life. Now, the first time you sin, and bounce out of that inner circle, you must make confession and come back in, and that's how you make him Lord of your life again. But this is a human action. This is a human work on your part – of confession. Don't tell people, "Make Christ the Savior and Lord of your life," because that confuses the issue, and it leads them away from believing the gospel, to doing something about their conduct.

So, the tribulation martyrs had the experience of somebody giving them the gospel, and telling them what to do with it. They responded with positive volition. They believed the gospel, and they were born again. This tells us that if you give somebody a wrong gospel, they cannot be born again.

So, we come back to the fact that any church group (any religious group) that teaches a gospel which is based upon human effort, is telling people a way that seems right, but is going to end up, as Proverb says, "In death."

The apostle Paul was very sensitive about this business of giving a Bunco gospel. That is what was happening in the territory of Asia known as Galatia, where the churches had succumbed to a lot of Judas thinking and a lot of legalism of reimposing the Mosaic Law – the doing system upon them. And Paul, in Galatians 1:8-9, then says something to these Galatians. And I mean, he's just beginning the letter. He's not gotten but to the eighth verse, just to show you what terrible things are taking place, and what he's concerned with. And through this letter, I mean, he comes down really rough. This is one of the rough letters of the New Testament, where the apostle Paul really lets them have both barrels, because he's just sick and tired of people that had great opportunity to know the Word of God, and to have been born again through the grace of God, to be willing to listen to these idiots who are coming along and saying, "Now you must succumb to the ritualistic system of the Mosaic Law again."

So in Galatians 1:8, he says, "But though we (the official evangelists, or the official representatives of God) or an angel from heaven (even a supernatural spirit being) preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And Paul pronounces a divine curse upon anybody who gives a wrong gospel message. And you know from Romans what the true gospel message is – of salvation by grace, through faith, apart from human works.

So 9 emphasizes it again. He hits it a second time: "As we said before, so, I say know again: if anyone preach any other gospel unto you then that which you have received, let him be accursed." Now that's very strong language: "May the curse of God rest upon you."

So, these people had a true gospel. That's what got these tribulation martyrs into heaven. Their sincerity in believing a false gospel would not have satisfied the justice of God. And that is the problem.

**Religion**

So, what we face today is this terrible substitution of religion for the reality of the gospel. And religion will take you into hell. Only the gospel will take you into heaven. Here are some things you should remember about religion.

1. **Religion is Gaining the Approval of God by Human Works**

When we talk about religion, we're talking about men seeking to gain the approval of God by some human works that he performs. We've looked at Romans 4:4 and Romans 11:6 that refer to this. Religion says, "I'll give you a works salvation." Religion says, "I'll make you spiritual as the result of works. Do you want to be spiritual? I have this rule of ten things that you should not do. If you will not do those ten things, you'll be spiritual. You'll grow spiritually." That is religion's way. That is why people like the Roman Catholics are fanatic about going to Mass. Don't you realize that every time you go through the religious ritual of being there in the presence of Christ being sacrificed on that altar, you take another step up toward heaven? You should go to the confessional. Don't you realize that every time you confess your sins to that priest, and he says, "Ego Te Absolvo" (I absolve I absolve you of that sin) that you take another step up the ladder toward heaven? That's why they're fanatical about doing these human works. That's what religion gives you as a substitute.

1. **In Christianity, God Gets All the Credit**

Christianity is God doing something for man through His grace, and then God gets the credit entirely. That's the point of Ephesians 2:8-9. Titus 3:5 says the same thing. This is God giving you salvation. This is God making you spiritual and mature.

1. **Religion is a Universal Phenomenon**

Religion is a universal phenomenon which is found among all the nations of the world in any state of development. I don't care where you go among the peoples of the earth, they all have religion. They all believe in the existence of some spiritual powers: some good; some bad; some superior to man; some able to affect man's present life; and, some able to affect their future life. Whatever their myths that have accumulated, they all have a system of religion with a system of beliefs.

Furthermore, all believe that there's a difference between what is right and what is wrong, even though that often is not clearly defined. But all religious systems are moral. Don't think that when we say religion, that we're talking about people who are degenerates. Religion always has a basis of morality, even though it may be seemingly very terrible. In the more pagan religions, even such a thing as human sacrifices were viewed as a moral thing to God.

Everybody in a religious system believes in an afterlife of some kind. All the religions of the world, that man has invented, anticipate a happiness or a misery in the life that follows. And in some measure, they all believe that that happiness or misery is dependent upon their conduct or the rituals that they've observed in this life. So, what does Hinduism say to you? Hinduism says, "If you act badly in this life, then you're going to have a bad karma, because when you come back in the next life, you're going to have to make up for that.

What did the ancients do? A Pharaoh dies; they put him into a tomb; and, they stuff it with all the things he's going to need to take him to the afterlife: the food; the boat to get across; and, the gold that he's going to need to buy his way. All of the things that he needs are put there, because they think there is something after death.

1. **Religion is a Satanic Counterfeit of a Real Relationship with God**

Religion is the satanic counterfeit of a genuine relationship with God. Isaiah 14 tells us that Satan decided he wanted to be like God. The Bible reiterates how this is exactly what Satan does. 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13 are descriptions of Satan attempting to be like God.

1. **Religion Expresses Itself in Rituals**

Religion expresses itself in dignified or in crude rituals, because of the emotional domination of the soul of the religious people. The Pharisees had their rituals without reality. The heathen have their emotional frenzy, like the profits of Baal, when they confronted Elijah. We say that religion is a ritual, but Christianity is a relationship.

1. **Religion is the Greatest Opposition to God's View**

Religion is the greatest opposition to God's view that exists. It is pure human viewpoint arrogance,

1. **Human Good Production is the Basis for Religion**

Human good production, that we often refer to as do-goodism, is the basis for religion. Religion seeks to make it with God by doing the things that man considers good that will please God. So, this is where the religious group, and great denominations, get into big social action programs – efforts to make life better for man on this earth. It is a production of Satan, and basically it is a worship of Satan. Human good comes from the old sin nature. So, ultimately, it's Satan's doing.

1. **Religion Appeals to the Lusts and Emotions of the Sin Nature**

Religion appeals to the lust pattern of the sin nature and to the emotions which are disoriented by that sin nature. You will find that, in people who have religion and not Christianity, there is little connection between morality and their religion. Religion has, as you know, been responsible for hallowing some of the most terrible immoralities, like the human murder of human sacrifice.

1. **Religion is the Greatest Persecutor and Murderer of Human Life and Freedom**

Religion is the greatest persecutor and murderer of human life and of freedom. This includes the sacrifices to the gods. Christianity preserves human freedom, and views it as a sacred part of human volition: so, that the church and the state are separated; and, so that the elements of the state cannot impose upon the church. Religion wants the state to be part of the church, and to impose its views.

1. **Religion is Money-Minded**

Religion is money minded. It always seeking pledges, and always sending you notices when you haven't paid up. It seeks to control its favors through the money that it can grant.

1. **Religion is a Mass Solution, while Christianity is a Personal Solution**

Religion is a mass solution, while Christianity is a personal solution. Religion is the worst thing in the world. Just read, at your leisure, Matthew 23 – the Pharisees, in their finest expression of religion, and it's a loathsome chapter. But Christianity, on the other hand, is the best thing in the world. Jude 24, says, "Now to Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Christianity will prepare you faultless before God. Religion can never do that.

Nothing that Satan has ever done has been so successful in blinding the minds of men to spiritual truth and to salvation than has religion. Revelation 13:5-8 tells you how successful that will be out in the tribulation. In Revelation 13:13-17 and Mark 13:22, Satan, through the antichrist is going to be enormously successful in blinding people to the real truth of God.

Religion, over a period of time, always becomes corrupt. The priests become corrupt, and the leaders become corrupt. Immorality begins invading the higher echelons. It always becomes corrupt, because it is religion. It is always natural. When religion goes long enough, it always degenerates into what it is really based upon, which is the sin nature of man.

So, this is no small proclamation that these tribulation saints are making here, when they cry out with a loud voice. They don't whisper it. They shout it in tremendous joy: "*The* salvation belongs to our God; *the* God who sits upon this throne, because He is the imperial majesty of the universe; and, to the Lamb, His Son, who made it all possible. Apart from him, there is no salvation."

These people knew. Some of them had suffered terribly before they came to this salvation, and afterward, as they died in their own martyrdom. These people knew what it was to have the truth, and not to believe the lie that most of the tribulation world will believe.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)