

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

VAIN RELIGION

A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART NINETEEN OF SIXTY FOUR

We often hear people say, "One religion is just as good as another." We question whether anyone really believes this. If they do, they do not believe the Bible. God's word definitely identifies certain religions as being vain. "If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26). Jesus declared, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mt. 15:9). "Vain" is used in the Bible to refer to that which is "void of result" (I Cor. 3:20) or that which is "to no purpose" (Vine). Surely one religion is not just as good as another since the Lord says some religions are "to no purpose and void of result."

The passage in James indicates it is useless to worship God while living in disobedience to His will. He commands us to be "slow to speak" (James 1:19). If we ignore this command and "bridleth not" our tongue, we are ignoring His will for our will, thus making our religion vain. The same principle is taught

in Mt. 15:9. God has a plan by which we are to worship and to serve Him. It is clearly revealed in the New Testament (II Pet. 1:3). When we substitute "the precepts of men" for the commandments of God, our worshiping and service to God is in vain.

A man is not acceptable to God merely because he is often engaged in religious observances and duties. They are without value if he is not seeking to do exactly what God has said. The primary object of religion is to please God. Any religion that does not seek to follow His will is vain. "This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Mt. 15:8).

We hate to think that any of our efforts are in vain. We all want to accomplish that which is of lasting value. Sad as earthly failures are; sadder are the eternal. Do you worship in vain? Are all your religious exercises empty of eternal value? There is only one way to find out. "Try your own selves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (II Cor. 13:5).

(B. G. Echols)

CHURCH OF CHRIST

412 East King Street
Shippensburg, Pa. 17257