

# Disentangling Church-Based Religion to Prepare for Christ's Return

**Introduction:** You are religious and a regular churchgoer! That is good! Which church-based religion characterizes your life? In this study, Religion means Ways or Practices, which aim to reveal God (1 Peter 2:9). There are different types of church-based religion; you know that, do you not? This study focuses on

1. Type 1: [The Religion of the Chief Priests & Pharisees](#),
2. Type 2: [The Religion of the Hypocrites](#), &
3. Type 3: [The Religion of Christ](#)

The labels: Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3, are not consequential; they just provide a way to list or identify categories. What matters is what each category discusses. Therefore, a discussion of each category follows.

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The Religion of the Chief Priests & Pharisees—“...The Authorized Interpreters of Moses' Law” (Matt 23:2, GNT/NLT): What is the Religion of the Pharisees? Perhaps a definition of Pharisees may help. They comprised “...a selective community... within mainstream Judaism, ...[during the] intertestamental [period that] developed their own body of interpretations, expansions, and applications of [Moses'] Law that they came to regard as of divine origin” (<http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/pharisees/>). The acronym: FROM DJB VIBES summarizes the Religion of the Pharisees. A brief description follows.

1. **F**aitless—Religion not of faith (Matthew 12:30-40; John 1:11; Isaiah 53:3; John 19:6, 15, & 12; 2 Tim 3:1-5, GNT)
2. **R**egressive—Focused on externalities that do not contribute to inner reform (Matthew 23:15, 23-31)
3. **O**bststructionary (Matthew 23:1-4, 13-15; Matthew 9:34; Acts 13:45)
4. **M**isalignment—twisted, skewed, lopsided, out of kilter, major in minors and minor in majors (Luke 11:37-47)
5. **D**eception (Matthew 3:7; 16:6, 11-12; 19:3; 22:15)
6. **J**udgmental (Luke 7:39-47, TLB; Matthew 9:34 & 12:24)
7. **B**ragging (Luke 18:10-14)
8. **V**iolent (Matthew 12:14 & Luke 23:23);
9. **I**mpenitent—Not sorry for courses of action and makes no reform (Matthew 21:45-46, NLT; 22:15, 34-35; 27:62-65, GNT)
10. **B**lind (Matthew 15:14-20, GNT)
11. **E**xclusive (Matthew 9:11),
12. **S**trict—Outward conformity and discipline only (Matthew 5:20; Matthew 9:14; 12:2; 15:1-2; 16:1; Acts 26:5, GNT)

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The Religion of the Hypocrites—(2 Timothy 3:5, GNT/NLT): What is the Religion of the Hypocrites? Perhaps a definition of Hypocrites may help. They comprised "...persons who pretend to have virtues, moral or religious beliefs, principles, [and so on] that s/he does not actually possess" (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/hypocrite>). The acronym: SOWESA summarizes the Religion of the Pharisees. A brief description follows.

1. **S**elf-Assured (Job 36:13; Luke 11:35; 1 Corinthians 3:10 & 1 Corinthians 10:12, NKJV): Confidence in one's abilities
2. **O**stentation—Outward display intended to impress or attract notice, (Matthew 6:2, 5, 7, & 16, GNT):
3. **W**icked—Lacking the fear of God (Matthew 22:1-18; Psalm 36:1-4)
4. **E**levate Human Traditions to be Equal to or Above the Requirements of God—Invalidate Christ's teachings (Matt 15:1-7, CJB)
5. **S**piritually Blind—Lacks discernment in divine matters (Matthew 16:3; Matthew 23:13-17, NKJV; John 9:41, & Luke 12:56)
6. **A**uditory—Lip service, talking heads (Mark 7:6, NLT)

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**The Religion of Christ:** What is the Religion of Christ? How does the Religion of Christ differ from the Religions of the Pharisees and the Hypocrites? Perhaps a definition of Jesus Christ may help. He, according to the Scriptures, "...though [being] in the form of God, ...took the form of a slave by becoming like human beings are, ...and humbled himself... by becoming obedient even to death..." (John 1:14 & Philippians 2:6-8, CJB). The acronym, PAD GAS CPR PURER, summarizes the Religion of Christ. A brief description follows. Follow along and examine a few, (not all), distinguishing characteristics of the Religion of Christ!

1. **P**rays Sincerely—Pray in faith with thanksgiving (Isaiah 25:1-5, Matthew 6:6-13 & Isaiah 65:24, GNT/NLT)
2. **A**voids Distraction—Your life's focus is God's purpose (Mark 10:45, Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 2:49; John 4:30-35; 17:4)
3. **D**efends the Defenseless—Provides free advocacy services for the oppressed (John 8:10-11)
4. **G**ives God Joy—Make the godhead happy (John 10:27; 17:4, & 9:4; Psa 40:8 & 37:4, 23-24, 30-31; 2 Pet 1:17, NLT)
5. **A**nointed—Filled with Holy Spirit & empowered with inner strength (Matthew 3:16-17, Acts 10:38; Ephesians 3:16-19, CJB)
6. **S**elfless Servant of the People—Joyfully labor as Christ labored (Psalm 40:8; Matthew 20:25-27 & 30-34; 9:27-26, NLT)
7. **C**ross Bearing & Sacrifice—Heaven's road is narrow (Matt 7:14 & 16:24, Isa 53:7; Luke 23:26; Eph 3:16; & 2 Cor 4:9, TLB)
8. **P**ersonal Time with God—Although His mission was clear, (Rev 13:8), yet He daily consulted God (Mark 1:35, CJB)
9. **R**elies on the Word of God—God's Word was the Way by which Jesus lived (Matthew 26:30-31; John 17:14; Psa 39:1, TLB)
10. **P**rayerful in Despair—Soul rests in God's plan (Matthew 26:36-45; 1 Peter 5:7; Isaiah 65:24; 2 Chronicles 7:14, TLB)
11. **U**nappreciated by the Devoutly Religious—Despised and rejected by men (Isaiah 53:3; John 15:18 & 1:11; Luke 21:17)
12. **R**edeeming Influence—Christ drew sinners to God (Luke 19:10; Matthew 9:10-11; Luke 5:30-31; Mark 2:15-16; John 7:45-47)
13. **E**mpathetic—Christ demonstrated thoughtfulness and kindness toward others (Matthew 9:36; 15:32; & 20:34)
14. **R**esilient Faith—Wait on God (Eph 1:4; Matt 25:34; John 14:23; 2 Tim 2:3; Php 3:14; Rom 8:15-19, 28-31, 35-39, & Isa 54:17)

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## Disentangling Church-Based Religion to Prepare for Christ's Return

**Conclusion:** The Christian's life follows one of three patterns, which flavors his or her existence. The ideal existence for the Christian is the Religion of Christ, which "...gives... assurance of sharing His glory" (Colossians 1:27, NLT). Some may ask whether certain aspects of all three patterns, (Type 1, Type 2, & Type 3), may coexist simultaneously. "Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olive or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you cannot draw fresh water from a salty spring" (James 3:11-12, NLT). Christ—"...the fountain of life, the light by which we see" (Psalm 36:9, NLT)—gave us "...an example to follow, [that we should] do as [He did]" (John 13:15, TLB). His religion demonstrated the ultimate humility in the form of being "...wounded for our transgressions... [and] bruised for our iniquities..." (Isaiah 53:5). Moreover, He "...said, I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you will NOT have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life" (John 8:12, NLT). Great exemplars of the Religion of Christ include "...the disciples, [post Pentecost experience, who] were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26), and the Apostle Paul, who, "serving the Lord with much humility and with tears, in spite of... tests... [which came from] the unbelieving Jews" (Acts 20:19, CJB). The divine mandate is to follow the Religion of Jesus Christ! "...Since we have a great cohen gadol, (high priest), who has passed through to the highest heaven, Yeshua, (Jesus), the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we acknowledge as true" (Hebrews 4:14, CJB). In view of these things, whose Religion do you have? Which Religion do you want? Take an inventory of your personal religious experience, and then decide what changes, if any, are appropriate as next steps. Life is too short to spend it foolishly, even as a church attending person, especially when Jeremiah 8:20 and Matthew 25:1-10 looms.