

FOURTH QUARTER STRATEGIES - February 27, 2016

We've all at times received a gift, some gadget, unwrapped it and then realized we could not try it out simply because there were no batteries included! Once we got our hands on the right size batteries we were then able to enjoy the gift. In the meantime, we were deeply disappointed that the gift would not function. Well, man-made religions don't come with batteries either and I'm not aware of any outside "power source" to adequately charge such religions. So, what constitutes a religion anyway?

Well, let's take a look at *Wikipedia's* modern and quite broad definition of Religion - "... a system of social coherence based on a common group of beliefs or attitudes concerning an object, person, unseen being, or system of thought considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine or highest truth, and the moral codes, practices, values, institutions, traditions and rituals associated with such belief or system of thought." This particular definition covers a lot of territory and I imagine much of the world will find it acceptable and inclusive. Certainly some will prefer a narrower definition, but I believe it works nicely for the direction I plan to take the rest of this discussion.

You see, the point I want to make is this - religions in themselves are powerless. They are limited in their effectiveness by the human energy carried about by their followers. In other words, batteries are not included! Throughout the Old and New Testament scriptures we see man creating his own idols out of wood and stone. I see this as simply man's feeble attempt to fill the void that exists in our hearts. We naturally want to believe that there is some higher power that can take us through the difficulties of life. Unfortunately, man-made gods can't help us fill that void.

While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens, he used the opportunity to preach Christ in the synagogue. While there, the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers took him to Mars Hill and allowed him to present this new teaching at the Areopagus. In Acts 17:22-34, Paul referred to an inscription he found on one of their many altars "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" and proclaimed Christ. Through this teaching, many sneered and walked away, but others joined him and believed.

Yes, there is One Who can come into every human being's life and He's accessible to all. You can have your religion of choice or you can join me in a personal relationship with Almighty God. Man has not made God - He has made man and woman in His image. And, once you've asked Him to come into your life, His Holy Spirit comes in and dwells in you. He brings the power source into your life that cannot be found in any other religion you may follow or conjure up. Batteries are included in the person of Christ and the Gift is there waiting for you to open your heart, let Him in and finally experience the true Living God!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Exodus 20:3-5; Leviticus 19:4; Leviticus 26:1; Acts 17:22-34; 1 John 5:21

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Exodus 20:3-5 New King James Version (NKJV)

³“You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; ⁵you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me,

Leviticus 19:4 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I *am* the LORD your God.

Leviticus 26:1 New King James Version (NKJV)

26 You shall not make idols for yourselves; neither a carved image nor a *sacred* pillar shall you rear up for yourselves; nor shall you set up an engraved stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I *am* the LORD your God.

Acts 17:22-34 New King James Version (NKJV)

Addressing the Areopagus

²²Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: ²⁴“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ ²⁹Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. ³⁰Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

³²And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this *matter*.” ³³So Paul departed from among them.

³⁴However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

1 John 5:21 New King James Version (NKJV)

²¹Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.