

James 1:26 [Paragraph 6] If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. (NASB)

1. The verse begins with the protasis of a first class condition by the particle **εἰ (ei)**: “If and it is true.” This is followed by the indefinite pronoun **τις (tis)**: “anyone.”
2. This first class condition is directed at a group of believers who have a personal opinion of themselves indicated by the present active indicative of the verb **δοκέω (dokéō)**: “think, consider, imagine.”
3. The present tense is aoristic or instantaneous. “It is normally a verb of *saying, thinking, or having an opinion*. The act itself is completed at the moment of speaking. The time frame of the introductory verb is concluded once the utterance is over.”¹
4. In addition, this verb takes on the concept of subjective thinking resulting in a pious, God-fearing mental attitude.
4. What this group of believers think they are is stated next with the predicate adjective, **θρησκευτικός (thrēskos)**: “religious.” This is the mind-set that is in opposition to the grace plan of God which is the divine policy in every dispensation.
5. The use here of the word **thrēskos** requires us to take up the subject of religion and note the negative impact upon the souls of men.

Summarization of Religion

1. Lucifer is ruler of this world. Among his policies religion is a system by which he parlays human good into sin and evil.
2. Self-righteousness is the mental attitude behind human good and produces a saturation of evil in a client nation.
3. The greatest of all forms of evil used by Lucifer is religion. It was created by him to counterfeit the plan of God.

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 517.

4. At its foundation, religion is man seeking approbation from God on the basis of human works. In James 1:26, the word “religious” is the hapax legomenon, **θρησκός** (*thrēskos*) and means, “religious, pious, devout,” and is practiced overtly.
5. The works performed by the religious person are motivated by fear and are overt, whereas the works performed by the mature believer are motivated by grace. The word for the latter is the noun **χάρις** (*cháris*).
6. *Thrēskos* is oriented to works while *cháris* is oriented to gratitude.
7. Therefore, in verse 26, the motivation for the cosmic believer is external and therefore prone to commit sins of the tongue.
8. The noun form of *thrēskos*, “religious,” is **θρησκεία** (*thrēskeía*): “religion.”
Expression of devotion to transcendent beings, especially as it expresses itself in cultic rites. James contrasts empty, vain religion in v. 26 with the pure religion of v. 27.²
9. Lucifer could not successfully deny the existence of God since he obviously is in a protracted struggle against Him.
10. The counterattack he devised was to structure a system that mimics the end result of a believer growing in grace and producing good works from a resident inventory of divine thought and motivation.
11. Therefore, his concocted lie to heathen and uninformed Christians is that good works will result in receiving approbation from God.
12. In the Church Age, the divine system of communicating the Word of God is the local church. Nowhere in the New Testament can there be found a requirement for denominations nor is there ever an example of a human hierarchy that rules over a collective of churches.
13. The apostles had authority to establish churches and to train pastors to teach doctrine to their congregations.

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 459.

14. Once the canon was completed and the last apostle died, the responsibility for teaching the Word of God was left to evangelists and pastor-teachers.
15. Evangelists primarily work outside the church by evangelizing the lost and directing them to a local church for spiritual growth. There the authority to teach doctrine is assigned to the pastor-teacher.
16. Each local church is independent of any other and there is no legitimate roll for pastors to submit to a religious hierarchy.
17. The church's administrative responsibilities are to be managed by its Board of Deacons staffed by men only. The ministries of the church function under the aegis of spiritual gifts which involve both men and women.
18. This is the biblical system. One church with one pastor who teaches doctrine to those who assemble the predominance of whom are believers.
19. Unfortunately, the early church evolved into two spheres of influence. The Eastern areas had their headquarters in Constantinople which was previously named Byzantium when founded by the Greeks in 660 B.C. It became Constantinople in A.D. 33, which translated means Constantine's city, who chose the site for the new capital of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire.
20. Constantinople was captured in 1453 by the Turks under Ottoman Sultan Mehmed \me-'met\ II. The city's name was changed to Istanbul in 1930.
21. So Byzantium became Constantinople and Constantinople became Istanbul. All of that is a mouthful and to assist Americans with the update Nat Simon and Jimmy Kennedy wrote this catchy and instructive tuneful ditty named, "Istanbul: (Not Constantinople)":

**Istanbul was Constantinople
Now it's Istanbul, not Constantinople,
Been a long time gone, Constantinople.
Now it's Turkish delight on a moonlit night.**

**Every gal in Constantinople
Lives in Istanbul, not Constantinople
So if you've a date in Constantinople
She'll be waiting in Istanbul.**

Even old New York was once New Amsterdam,
Why they changed it I can't say,
People just liked it better that way.

So, take me back to Constantinople,
No, you can't go back to Constantinople,
Been a long time gone, Constantinople.
Why did Constantinople get the works?
That's nobody's business but the Turks.

22. The western branch based its outfit in Rome in the Western Roman Empire where they invented the office of the Pope, sat him on a throne, and called him *Papa*.
23. The Catholic Church arrogated the apostle Peter as the first *Papa*. Peter would not have accepted the authority of individual power over all of Christendom.
24. Peter was given this title retrospective to April 1, A.D. 33, which date places his promotion prior to the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter “lost the seat” following his execution in Rome in A.D. 67.
25. The first real pope was *Papa* Linus who took charge in June 67 and the title has been passed on over two millennia presently held by *Papa* Francis who is the 266th to hold the designation.
26. It took about 300 years before the Roman Catholic Church successfully consolidated all the churches of Europe:

The reign of Constantine ushered in a new era in the life of the church. The Edict of Milan (313) recognized the church as a legal religion, and by the end of the 4th century Christianity was the state religion of the empire. Its privileged position allowed the church to flourish. Moreover, its location in the imperial capital enhanced the prestige of the See of Rome. During this period, the hierarchical structure of the church was further elaborated, and the foundations of Catholic theology were set by the Church Fathers, especially St. Augustine.³

27. The continued erosion of biblical authority became evident in the twelfth century with the emergence of the Sacred College of Cardinals, a group that was arrogated the power to choose succeeding *Papas*. This College now totals around 225 cardinals.

³ “Roman Catholicism,” in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Micropaedia* (2010), 10:149.

28. The Pope assumed the power to speak *ex cathedra*, a Latin term meaning, “from the chair,” which means, “with authority derived from one’s office or position.” This authorizes him to issue writings called bulls which are fittingly referred to as “Papal bulls.”
29. This human imputation of authority to the *Papa* gives him unilateral power to issue decrees that Scripture does not grant.
30. Many Christians in some churches began to insist they preferred to follow what the Bible says. In other words, not *ex cathedra*: “from the chair,” but rather, *ex liber*: “from the Book.”
31. Christianity is designed for each believer to devote his energies to the inculcation of the Word of God and application of its teachings to the circumstances of life.
32. From this emerges the ability to make good decisions from a position of strength. From this emerges fellowship with others.
33. We will learn from this verse about the terrible affects religion imposes on the souls of believers and unbelievers alike.
34. Religion is Lucifer’s invention. He is the “god of this world,” the ultimate *Papa*, who has devised from his chair a pseudo Christianity that is held together by fear and guilt.
35. Religion is all about fallen mankind impressing God with good works which are inspired by a clergy that insists that salvation and divine favor are achievable if prospects will just do good works for God and Jesus.
36. Human good is taught as the problem-solving device to get back in the good graces of God. The alleged violations observed by a local church’s hierarchy may or may not have been sinful, but the accusations are deemed serious enough to call into question a person’s salvation.
37. Fear emerges in the souls of the convicted and good works are necessary and must be produced over the long haul and certified by the powers that be for salvation to be a possibility.

38. These efforts of human good are really designed to impress the local *Papa*, not God. Good works must be judged adequate for either salvation or a return to good standing in the denomination.
39. A few Bible passages are sufficient to discredit the doctrines that Lucifer's demons peddle among the churches.
40. The key word to best understand Christianity and one's function as a Christian is the word, "grace."

Romans 4:4 The one who works [**human good**], his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

v. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Titus 3:5 He saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of His mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,

v. 6 whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior.

v. 7 And so, since we have been justified by His grace, we become heirs with the confident expectation of eternal life. (NET)

Hebrews 3:19 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace.

41. Grace is the antithesis of religion. Religion is the devil's ace in the hole that is designed to trump the grace of God in the souls of the benighted.
42. Human works are designed to convince both unbelievers and believers that God's love a mercy can be won by human good. The favorite play Lucifer uses to lure many is the promise of good times, approbation, and a trouble-free life.
43. Such motivation is based on the mental attitude of fear and God must somehow be placated by good works.