

*Romans Part One: What It Takes to Change the World – Sixth Week*

# ***Reaching Religious Non-Christians, Pt. 1***

*Understanding Who they Are and How they Think – Romans 2:17—3:8*

**Introduction:** In Romans 1:18—3:20, Paul identifies 4 types of people who need the atoning work of Christ. Having dealt with the secular (1:18-32), and the moral non-Christian (2:1-16), Paul turns his attention to the religious non-Christian. Today we look at who they are and how they think, so that we can reach them.

## **1. A LOOK AT CULTURE – The state of religion is changing all over the world today. Romans 2:17-20**

- A. From the middle-1700s to the middle-1800s Europe and America witnessed a slow and steady decline in the Christian consensus.
- B. From about 1990 to present there has been an explosive growth in new spiritualities.
- C. The new spiritualities contain two key elements.

## **2. A LOOK AT THE BIBLE – Paul uses the Jews as a case study in how to think about non-Christian religions. Romans. 2:17-29**

- A. Non-Christian religions develop a very strong cultural identity that makes them feel they possess absolute truth – even if they are officially “relativists.” 2:17-20
- B. Non-Christian religions generally contain some teachings that are true. We call these “micro-truths”. This does not mean the religion at its core is true. 2:17; Acts 17:22-23
- C. Members of non-Christian religions generally feel contempt toward certain outsiders. 2:19
- D. Non-Christian religions embrace a system of morality, but the members violate it, placing them in a position of being hypocritical. 2:21
- E. Non-Christian religions embrace rituals that are often descend into external and legalistic expressions of faith. 2:25
- F. Core issue: What God really wants is a personal relationship with his creatures. 2:28-29

## **3. OUR RESPONSE – How do we reach religious unbelievers?**

- A. On the negative side – We must address ourselves. American Christianity is in crisis.
- B. On the positive side – We need to speak and act like the Christians of the first three centuries.