

Equipping Thoughts for Leaders



Thomas Jefferson Bible

April 5th, 2021

HELPING GOD'S PEOPLE AVOID CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

I distinctly remember thoughts and feelings I had a few years ago in Washington D.C. as I stood face to face with the famous "Thomas Jefferson Bible." I have used it as an example several times when teaching theology and worldview issues but I had never seen the real thing. For those who may not know what the Jefferson Bible is, it is a Bible in which Thomas Jefferson cut out various passages of Scripture he didn't like or agree with.

As I imagined Jefferson hunched over his desk with a razor and scissors, carefully slicing out passages from the Bible that he didn't personally like, I couldn't help but think that many people are still doing the same thing today.

Yes, Jefferson was a founding father of our nation, but he also is an example of Christian Humanism in 2021, especially when it comes to God and His word. Jefferson thought Christianity was a "good expression of natural religion," Jesus was a "good moral teacher," but neither were divine. We know from his writings that he rejected miracles, the resurrection, and the atonement. As a naturalist, he didn't see any need for it.

He thought the Bible was helpful, but like him, people don't have to agree with all of it or see it as divine. As I stared at his Bible that preserved under glass, I could not turn the pages. I am sure he cut out the passages about fornication and adultery because he famously cheated on his wife and fathered several children by his slave Sally Hemings.

There has always been a threat and drift towards “Humanistic Christianity” (which is an Oxymoron) when it comes to God’s word. For God’s people, however, this goes directly against His design for His family, the church. The church is called to be “His family, which is the pillar and support of His truth”

- *1 Timothy 3:14-15 I’m writing this to you (15) in case I’m delayed. I want you to know how people who are members of God’s family must live. God’s family is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

Humanism and God’s word

Demonically inspired Humanism is nothing new. It was the first temptation of humankind that led to the original sin. That sin brought corruption upon humans and the earth that we still deal with today. Satan approached Eve with the words, “Did God really say that...do what you want and become your god.” (Genesis 3:1,5).

Humanism is a way of thinking (Philosophy) that sees human beings, not anything divine, as central to life and meaning. We see it throughout the Bible with instances like the Tower of Babel, “Let us build a city and tower for ourselves to make ourselves great” (Genesis 11:4). It is the foundational sin for which our Savior, Jesus, came to deliver us from because “We all like sheep have gone astray and turned to our own way” (Isaiah 53:6, 1 Peter 2:25, etc.).

People who self-identify as Christian but embrace Humanism feel a growing freedom to disregard God’s word. This is an important issue, especially regarding identifying as God’s people. Paul goes on in His second letter to Timothy with a thought connected to our calling to be founded upon and holding up God’s word.

- *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

The idea of inspiration means “God-breathed.” The Scriptures are inspired by God and therefore authoritative in the lives of His people. This has been the way God’s people lived through the Old and New Testament and throughout the history of the church.

Some try to believe that only parts of the Bible are inspired; therefore, only parts are authoritative (Partial Inspiration). Once they go down that road, they are open to another heresy, Gnosticism, in which they have “special revelation” about something that enables them to live in violation of God’s word and feel justified in doing it.

People who, like Jefferson, take a more humanistic approach to the Bible try to point out inconsistencies as a reason to not embrace the Bible as authoritative. I have heard most of

these arguments and they are problems with interpretation, not inspiration or authority issues.

We need an awakening/revival according to His word

We are indeed living in a time when we need to see what the Psalmist prayed for, “Revive us according to Your word” (Psalms 119:25, 37, 40, 93, 107, 149, 156, 159). What does this type of awakening look like?

God’s word becomes our objective basis for our faith and the practice of it. It measures our thoughts, feelings, and actions. We determine what God desires and what leads to His life through what He has said in His word.

There is a desire to hear and obey His word. In any area of life, we seek to see and live by what God has said about it.

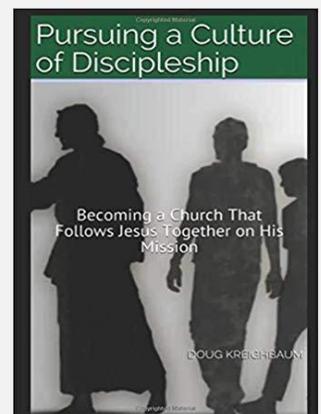
We fellowship with God’s people around the hearing and obeying of His word (Matthew 28:18-19, Ephesians 4:16, 25).

We seek God’s freedom that comes from consistently “abiding in His word” (John 8:31-36).

We put away the “Jefferson Pen Knife,” through which we try to cut out the parts of God’s word we don’t like or disagrees with what we want.

The calling on God’s people is to live by His Word, and local churches are to be “the pillar and support of God’s truth.” Therefore, we reject and help God’s people reject all forms of humanistic Christianity

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