

You Can't Hate All Religion and Love Jesus

Introduction:

- 1) Not long ago it was hard to be on Facebook without seeing something about a YouTube video entitled “Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus.”
- 2) A nice looking and talented young man named Jefferson Bethke wrote the poem and the video has received almost 22,000,000 hits.
- 3) Not only has this video swept the nation (world?), but I’ve seen it pushed by Christians.
 - a) One preacher’s assessment was that it was somewhat of an overreaction and he was a little apprehensive about it.
- 4) We should be a lot more than a “little apprehensive” and the young man did a lot more than overreact to some legitimate concerns. This video is wrong on so many counts that it should not be “liked,” “shared,” or promoted in any way.
 - a) Not that it doesn’t have a few legitimate points in it, but they are nowhere near the main part of the video.

I. BEGINS WITH A FLAWED PREMISE.

A. General Nature of the Video.

1. Throughout the video the author/artist simply makes assertions without seeking to prove them from Scripture.
2. Those assertions usually have some foundation in passages or stories people are familiar with, so it has that ring of truth to it, yet they are not the truth.
3. Don’t fall for a trick like that of Satan in the garden or as some did to Paul. **Rom. 3:8**

B. Abolish Religion?

1. The poem begins: “What if I told you Jesus came to abolish religion?”
2. Throughout the poem/video religion is portrayed as a very negative thing that has started wars, was invented by man, hated by Jesus and something Jesus intended to abolish.
3. I would reply that if you told me Jesus came to abolish religion you would be mistaken.
4. What is religion?
 - a. “The service and worship of God.”
 - b. “Commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance.”
 - c. “A personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.” All from *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*.

5. Did Jesus come to do away with the worship of God? Abolish commitment to religious faith or observance? I don't think that is what he meant.
6. I believe Mr. Bethke was thinking of the "institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices."

C. Did Jesus Come to Abolish Institutionalized Religion?

1. He did not come to destroy, but to fulfill the Law and prophets. **Mt. 5:17, 18**
 - a. This Law with its organized worship, prescribed rituals, etc. was not seen by Jesus as a human invention, but a divine requirement for that time.
2. He regularly participated in synagogue worship. **Lk. 4:16**
3. It was Jesus who told the Samaritan woman worship in spirit and truth was required. **Jn. 4:19-24**
4. The Lord Himself left a "ritual" to be followed. **Mt. 26:26-28; Lk. 22:19, 20; cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-26**

D. His Apostles.

1. James contrasted useless religion with pure and undefiled religion. **Js. 1:26f**
 - a. Some religion is of human invention and worthless, but there is also religion that is pure and undefiled—should we hate that?
2. The apostle Paul, the one to whom Bethke seems to allude when speaking of grace, sought to organize the religion of disciples. **Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Cor. 11; 14:23, 33f, 40**

E. False Religion.

1. "But in the Old Testament God actually calls religious people whores."
 - a. Actually, it was the idolaters He called fornicators (harlots). **Hos. 1:2; 4:11-14**
 - b. They were being called harlots for forsaking the true religion, not for being religious.
2. "Which is why Jesus hated religion, and for it He called them fools."
 - a. In the very chapter where Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees fools, He also exhorted people to heed their instructions from the Law. **Mt. 23:1-3**
 - b. That which was condemned was their hypocrisy, not their religious devotion.
3. "Now back to the point, one thing is vital to mention. / How Jesus and religion are on opposite spectrums. / See one's the work of God, but one's a man-made invention."
 - a. As already shown, Jesus did not seek to abolish all religion, and all religion is not man-made, but make no mistake about it, Jesus did condemn religion that is not from God. **Mt. 7:21-23**
 - b. Note the word "does" in **7:21**. That's crucial to the next point.

II. GRACE DOES NOT ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR OBEDIENCE.

A. Quotes from the Video.

1. “See because religion says do, Jesus says done.”
2. “Religion is man searching for God, Christianity is God searching for man. / Which is why salvation is freely mine, and forgiveness is my own. / Not based on my merits but Jesus’s obedience alone.”
3. “See I spent my whole life building this facade of neatness. / But now that I know Jesus, I boast in my weakness. / Because if grace is water, then the church should be an ocean. / It’s not a museum for good people, it’s a hospital for the broken. / Which means I don’t have to hide my failure, I don’t have to hide my sin. / Because it doesn’t depend on me it depends on him.”

B. Biblical Response.

1. No question but that salvation is by grace and not our own merits. **Eph. 2:8, 9**
2. But does Jesus say “done” in the sense that I don’t have to “do?”
 - a. **Heb. 5:8, 9; Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46; Jn. 14:15; 15:14; 2 Th. 1:8**
3. Maybe Bethke didn’t mean it this way, but his line about not a museum, but a hospital seems to imply that grace allows a person to remain “broken,” when the purpose of the hospital is to heal.
 - a. Grace requires repentance. **Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30, 31; 2 Pet. 3:9**
4. I hope we appreciate God’s grace as we should, but if Jesus’s obedience alone was all it took, then all would be saved. **Mt. 7:13, 14**

III. MISCELLANEOUS FALLACIES.

1. “What if I told you voting republican really wasn’t his mission. / What if I told you republican doesn’t automatically mean Christian.”
 - a. Since most people in the 1st century couldn’t vote and there were no Republicans, Democrats or Libertarians I don’t think anyone should be surprised by those statements.
 - b. And I’m in complete agreement with the statement that Republican doesn’t automatically equate to Christian.
 - c. However, it is fair to observe that NT Christians and conservative evangelicals have increasingly turned away from the Democratic Party because of its support of abortion, gay rights, labor union extortion, etc.

2. “And just because you call some people blind. / Doesn’t automatically give you vision.”
 - a. Absolutely. But it seems appropriate to here recall **Rom. 2:17-24**.
 - b. While I believe Mr. Bethke to be guilty in this regard, let’s realize none of us are immune to this. Don’t simply make assertions, and that someone is wrong doesn’t automatically make you right.
3. “I mean if religion is so great, why has it started so many wars? / Why does it build huge churches, but fails to feed the poor?”
 - a. That wars have been fought in the name of Christ does not mean all religion, i.e. true religion, is wrong, but it speaks to the danger of losing sight of who and what our King really is. **Jn. 18:36, 37**
 - b. The primary mission of the church is not the feeding of the poor, for the world has far greater needs, but is it fair to ignore the incredible amount of charity that takes place in the name of Christ?
4. “Tells single moms God doesn’t love them if they’ve ever had a divorce.”
 - a. Not sure who he is talking about here. Most Protestant churches now treat divorce as a relatively routine thing.
 - b. Both he and most Protestants today need to heed **Mt. 19:6, 9**.
 - c. That being said, I’ve never heard anyone even hint that God doesn’t love a divorced woman (or man).

IV. ANY VALID POINTS?

1. All in all the video is misguided and based on several false premises about religion and grace, but there are a few issues raised that bear careful consideration.
2. “I’m just saying quit putting on a fake look / Cause there’s a problem if people only know you’re a Christian by your Facebook.”
 - a. He has a long rant against hypocrisy that is right on.
 - b. The Bible is clear that our obedience must be from the heart, and our love, worship, etc. must be sincere. **Rom. 6:17; Mt. 23:23-28; Js. 1:19-27; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:1-3**
 - c. Let’s all make certain we are not simply “building this façade of neatness.”
3. “Religion puts you in bondage, while Jesus sets us free.”
 - a. In its context I’m not sure what he means, but I know this is not without limitations. **Gal. 5:13, 14**
 - b. We are not free to indulge the flesh, worship any way we choose (**Jn. 4:24**), etc., but do we ever forget that the NT warns often about binding things not bound by God? **Col. 2:20-23; 1 Tim. 4:1-5**
 - c. I believe it is valid to reason from **Gal. 5:19-21** that most modern dance, making out, etc. are wrong, but let’s always make sure we can support our conclusions.
 - d. Sometimes Christians are guilty of trying to eliminate legitimate liberties.

Conclusion:

- 1) I chose to close with a reference to some legitimate points, because, number one, they are legitimate, but even more because it illustrates the danger of this video.
- 2) The young man is talented, likable, and uses enough truth to make the lies more attractive.
- 3) But when you look beneath the surface, the vast majority of what he says is completely wrong. You can't hate all religion and love Jesus.
- 4) Do you love Jesus enough to be a part of His true religion?
- 5) His grace will save you if you will come in obedience to Him today. **Mk. 16:16**