

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT BASED ON THE BIBLE

There is a Word it is based on, though...

To many Christians being true to every word of the Bible is what defines Christianity. Mohammed of Muslim fame observed this about Christians in his day too, describing them in his writings as “people of the book.”

Christians, however, do not base their religion on the Bible. Jesus himself made this clear in John 5:39-40 when he said the purpose of the scriptures was to point to him. It is Jesus, therefore, that Christianity is based on, not a book.

The people Jesus was talking to at the time were Jewish scholars who, like Muslims, believed their eternal life depended on their absolute obedience to every word in a book. It was to these well-educated Jews that Jesus made the startling statement that for all their diligent study of the Torah they had, in fact, missed the entire point of it, which was that he, Jesus, was their source of eternal life, not the scriptures.

He, not the book, was the key.

When Christians understood this and went public a few years later, they weren't known as people of the book. They were known as followers of Jesus, or “Christians.”

It was a person they were identified with, not a book.

They didn't have a book to base their religion on anyway, because no book of Christianity existed until nearly 400 years later. When the New Testament finally came into being, the reason for its existence was not to create a new book that Christians must now obey in every word to seal their eternity; it was written, as John 20:31 reads, “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

The purpose of this new book of scripture was to help people put their trust in Jesus Christ. It described in great detail who Jesus was and why God had sent him, much of it gleaned from the Old Testament as Christians saw Jesus all over the pages of that book, too (Luke 24:44). Old or new, it was the same underlying message all the way through, that Jesus is the key to our eternity.

It wasn't words in a book that were the key to our eternity, it was him.

Christianity, therefore, is not a book religion like Judaism and Islam, where every word had better be obeyed if one hopes to see eternity, because the Bible cannot save or destroy. It does, however, point to the One who can (Revelation 1:17-18).

To many Christians, though, the Bible is God's inspired word, therefore it should be worshipped as infallible, eternally unchanging and without error, much like Muslims view the Qur'an.

But nowhere does the Bible point to itself that way, as an object of perfection to be worshipped. It does, however, constantly point to Jesus Christ as being perfect, infallible, eternally changing and without error, and therefore worthy of worship.

There are also Christians who refer to the Bible as God's “ultimate word.” But again, the Bible does not speak of itself that way. It speaks very clearly, though, of Jesus as God's ultimate word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1-2)” - referring, of course, to Jesus (verse 14).

The object of worship for Christians, then, is the ever-living Word, Jesus Christ, not words in a book.

On the other hand, we wouldn't know about the ever-living Word if it wasn't for the Bible. So the Bible serves a wonderful purpose too, not as an object to be worshipped but as an aid to faith in Christ. And that's why Christians study the Bible, not out of fear of losing their eternity if they don't, but to grasp the importance of the ultimate Word of God, Jesus Christ, as the one through whom God is accomplishing his plan for the entire Universe (Colossians 1:19-20).

The Bible isn't shy about saying it was inspired by God (2 Peter 1:20-21), or that the words of Jesus were those of God himself (John 14:24). But Christians open themselves up to needless criticism making a god out of the Bible.

It isn't the Bible that Christians worship, or that being true to every word of it defines Christianity, because the future of humanity doesn't rest in a book, it rests entirely in Jesus Christ.