

Sermon Title: Take Worldly Thoughts Captive (New Year 2024, #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Various

Date: 1-21-24

This year, our New Year sermon has become three. I was collecting things all year long, and I wanted to say some good and encouraging things—not *just* caution you about things. So, we have taken the theme—it is going to be the same for our Vacation Bible School with the kids this July: Take Every Thought Captive to the Obedience of Christ (see 2 Cor. 10:5).

I promised you when we started that I was going to aim for three things; I want to give you some pastoral help in three categories:

Number 1: Being And Making Disciples. That is talking about the ministry of Biblical Counseling.

Number 2: Living In A Hostile Culture.

And thirdly: Since this is a Leap Year, it is also a presidential election year—and how do you navigate *that* as a Christian these days?

So, I want to just review a little bit about Being And Making Disciples. As I said, this is about the wonderful growing movement of Biblical Counseling taking place in Bible-practicing churches, and we hope it will *continue* to flourish here and multiply.

Just a few things I want to remind you of, and in case you missed it:

"Biblical Counseling" is a strong, *very* helpful movement among Bible-practicing churches. The theme of it all—the foundation of it all—is the understanding that Scripture *is* sufficient for *everything* we need for "life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3; cf. 2 Tim. 3:15-17). So that means—as it says in Romans 15:14—Christians are *competent* to counsel "one another," and we *need* "one another" (e.g., Rom. 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:19; 15:7; 1 Cor. 12:7, 25; Gal. 5:13; 6:1-2; Eph. 4:16; 5:19, 21; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 4:9, 18; 5:11, 14-15; Heb. 10:24-25; Jas. 5:16; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8-10; 1 Jn. 3:11, 23).

I can't tell you how many times I hear people excuse being insensitive or uncaring or downright rude, and saying, "Well, that's just the way I am," or, "That's how I was raised," or something like that. My friends, Jesus loves you *way too much* to leave you "just the way you am"! That is *not* how you want to be! (see Rom. 13:14a; Eph. 4:24)

Our standard is: "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Our standard is "with humility of mind regard[ing] one another as more important than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3). (NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

I also pointed out to you last week that Psychology is a *competing* worldview, on *many* points in opposition to Christianity (Lk. 16:15b; 1 Cor. 3:19). Psychology is essentially a competing religion: It is a *different* definition of mankind (Prov. 28:26; Jer. 17:9). It is a *different* definition of the *problems* of mankind (Is. 59:2; Rom. 3:19, 23; 6:23). It is a *denial* of the truth that God *has* given us everything we need for "life and godliness." It is a *denial* of the truth that we *are* able to help each other. That may not sit well with some people, but it is true, and it needs to be said.

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The *psychologizing* and the *medicalizing* in our culture fights against Biblical Counseling and the sufficiency of Scripture—where you are defining everything in psychological terms rather than biblical terms; you are trying to find medical/chemical solutions to things that are *soul* issues. Now, that is *not* a denial of the value of medicine (Matt. 9:12), but it is something we need to be aware of, because medicalizing a problem *removes* the moral aspect of the situation. If it is a problem in our soul, in your character, in your heart, and you can *call* it an "illness" and say, "Here is a pill that will make you not feel quite that way anymore," you have *removed* the need—you have removed the *perception* of the need—to deal with the problem as it is.

So, as one person put it: "Psychologizing" turns 'the sword of the Spirit' (Eph. 6:17) into a feather duster." You know—"You silly little Christians! You can go around and you can clean the dust off of things, but if you want *real* answers, you have to leave the church, go outside somewhere, and put yourselves in the hands of someone who *denies* the essence of your identity in Christ! And then, we can fix you."

I also spent time—I wasn't sure I had offended everybody yet, so I also pointed out that what is labeled "*Christian Counseling*" or "*Christian Psychotherapy*" is *not* the same as "*Biblical Counseling*." There are people—*well-meaning* people, and brothers and sisters in Christ—who are trained in worldly psychology and psychotherapy; *but* they want to inject Christianity into it, so they add Bible verses where they are deemed to be appropriate. Well, I think that is *better* than having you contemplate your navel and blame everything on your mother, but it is *not* Biblical Counseling.

And I can tell you: In my decades of ministry, almost every—I couldn't quite say every—*almost* every person that I know of who has been referred from a Bible-practicing church like us to a "licensed" counselor, or a "Christian Counselor," has ended up leaving the church and/or a marriage. That is *tragically* common.

And I wanted to make sure you got the point here: I am praying for *many* in the Heritage Bible Church family to take the basic training for Biblical Counseling. I announced it earlier in the service. The need is the greatest for males. If you are of the girl-type, you are *more* than welcome—but we *especially* need men to be able to help with counseling and encouraging men. And this training is going to be available locally very soon.

So, today I am going to aim at the other two targets under the labels: Living In A Hostile Culture, and Surviving A Presidential Election Year. How do you "take every thought captive" while you live in a hostile culture?

And by the way, my friends: We live in a hostile culture! It is obvious that our culture is *rotting* morally (cf. Rom. 1:21-32). Can you *imagine* our grandparents having a discussion about a girl deciding to "transition" and be a boy? Can you *imagine* them thinking of a former Olympic decathlon champion being named "*Woman* of the Year" by *Glamour* Magazine? And by the way, there is no women's decathlon; it's a heptathlon for women, so, a little mistaken identity there. Could you imagine people who survived the U.S. Civil War or World War 1 or World War 2 even *pondering* the idea that the *number one cause of death* worldwide would become *abortion*? And that is now the case.

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Now, I could list things for you ad nauseam that you already know. I don't need to *prove* to you that our culture is rotting. I want to help you maybe understand how to *think* about it *as* the rot goes on around you, and you get things splattered on you (Ps. 94:20b; Prov. 4:14; Is. 29:21; 1 Cor. 5:9-11; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 2:15; Jas. 1:27b; 1 Pet. 4:1-5).

Second Timothy Chapter 3, Verse 13, tells us that what is happening now is what we *knew* was going to happen: "But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." This is in Paul's last inscripturated letter. He writes to Timothy about the corruption of the *world* infiltrating the *church*. *That* is what I want to help you with: How do we cope with these things going on around us?

Now, If you haven't noticed: More than ever, our *minority status* as Christians is being confirmed (see Matt. 7:14), and we are being marginalized. *Now*, if you advocate for the lives of unborn children (Ps. 139:13; Jer. 31:8; Lk. 1:41; 1 Thess. 5:3), or if you oppose radical gender ideology (Deut. 22:5; Mk. 10:6), or if you oppose anti-biblical definitions of race (Gen. 3:20; Is. 49:6; Acts 17:26; Rev. 5:9), you *might* just now receive a new label that you probably had not heard of a couple of years ago: *Now*, the label that is getting stuck on a lot of us is: "Christian Nationalist Extremist."

Now, "Christian Nationalism"—it's a *thing*. It has quite a spectrum of beliefs in it, but the *essence* of it is: This is—or, this *should be*, or, we must *make this*—a "Christian Nation." It never *has* been. It was founded by people with a largely biblical worldview, but "Christian Nationalism" can go from well-intended things like "righteousness exalts a nation" (Prov. 14:34), and "I want to be an advocate for righteousness in our world" to the people who want to turn this into a theocracy—who want us to bring America under the authority of the Bible (see Jn. 18:36).

And the "Christian Nationalist *Extremist*"—oh, I mean, *that* is the lightning word, right? "If anybody believes something *I don't believe*, they are *at least* stupid and misguided; but if they believe it strong enough to *say* something—why, *they* are an *extremist!*" Call people a "Christian Nationalist Extremist"—that means you are deemed to be hateful and dangerous, that you probably advocate violence, and that you are likely a closet "White Supremacist"; and you have to at least be ignored; and if possible, you need to be *silenced!* Watch out for that label. It's out there, and don't do *anything* to try to attract it to you. Just be a Christian—how's that? (1 Pet. 4:15-16)

Now, the verse *before* that one I just read to you is rapidly making its way into the understanding of people in our world, that this is not just something that applies to Christians elsewhere—it applies to people sitting in this room. Second Timothy 3:12—"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." That is becoming more and more of a reality.

Now, how do you live in a hostile culture? Well, you know what? We believe in the sufficiency of Scripture—that the Bible contains everything we need for "life and godliness." It *even* addresses the issue of: How should Christians live in a culture that is in *rampant* opposition to them? (see 2 Pet. 2:9)

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Well, the Apostle Peter wrote to Christian friends who lived under an emperor who was fond of arresting Christians in Rome, torturing them, and then executing them as public entertainment! We are not that far, yet—yet. Some of them were thrown to wild animals; some of them were burned alive as living torches. What do you say to Christians in a world that is *that* hostile?

Well, how about First Peter Chapter 2, Verses 11 through 17—"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

Now, *how* do we live in a culture like that? Well, it *starts* with understanding: We do not *belong* to this world! (Phil. 3:20) "Aliens," "strangers" (Eph. 2:19; cf. Ps. 39:12; 118:19; Heb. 11:13)—we are not only "aliens and strangers," we are "ambassadors" of a different kingdom (2 Cor. 5:20), "the Kingdom of God" (2 Thess. 1:5).

It is our duty to *accurately* portray the character of our King (Phil. 2:15), to accurately *proclaim* the Good News of the "Gospel" (Mk. 16:15)—how you can be an adopted child of God (Jn. 1:12; Gal. 4:5), and brought into His Kingdom (Col. 1:13; cf. Eph. 1:13).

It is therefore our duty in this world to be the *best* citizens we can (e.g., Matt. 17:25-27; Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1).

It is our duty to "keep" our "behavior *excellent*" (cf. Neh. 5:9; Matt. 5:16; 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:8; 1 Pet. 3:16). There are enough reasons that people hate Christ (Jn. 7:7b; cf. Ps. 2:2-3; 12:4; Prov. 19:3)—we don't want to act so much like jerks that we make them hate *us*. And if they hate us, it should be because we so represent Christ (Ps. 37:12; 69:9; Jn. 15:18-19).

It is our duty to submit to the government in *everything* that it asks of us that does not require us to sin (Acts 5:29).

It is our duty to lead the way in showing "honor" to "all people." We don't want to be *combative* (2 Tim. 2:24-25; Titus 3:2). We want to deal with *ideas* (Jn. 8:32)—not call names (Acts 23:1-5; Eph. 4:31; 1 Pet. 2:1).

We need to lead the way in loving each other (Jn. 13:35) and in "fearing God" (Job 1:1; Ecc. 8:12; 12:13; Rev. 14:7) and respecting all civil authorities.

So, *my* exhortation for living in a hostile culture—it's nothing new. But what *is* new is: I want to remind you that the heat is *continually* being turned up against us.

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And it means *ever more*, it is *crucial* for us to make sure that we live as the *right kind* of people. We are not to taunt, we are not to mock, we are not to ridicule, we are not to gossip, we are not to "return evil for evil" (1 Pet. 3:9; cf. Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14, 21). Now, if that sounds like I'm saying, "Don't talk like Donald Trump," I think you are starting to get the point. Even people who *largely* represent things that you agree with—when they *say* it in such a manner that diminishes their character, *it's wrong!* We *need* to "keep our behavior *excellent*," and that is harder and harder, the more personal it gets. It is sad and embarrassing when somebody agrees with you in a manner that is disgusting. Don't be that person!

Don't ever forget our theme-verse: Second Corinthians 10:5—"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." (cf. 2 Ki. 19:22; Dan. 5:23; Jer. 4:14; Matt. 15:19; 2 Thess. 2:4; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:14-15, 22)

"Speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God" refers to *ideas*. And especially "speculations"—things people *make up* against God (Rom. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:23). It refers to the strategies implemented against God and against His Word and against His people (Ps. 2:1-2).

We need to "take [*our*] every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" as we oppose those things. We do that by "speaking truth in love" (Eph. 4:15; cf. Prov. 3:3)—speaking truth against error (Rom. 1:18; 6:23; Eph. 5:11b), showing love even when there is hatred against us (Lk. 6:28; 1 Cor. 4:13; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-23). We need to address faulty ideas; we need to respond to lies with truth. And the more *personal* it becomes—the attack, that is—the *harder* it is to be the right kind of person. So, we need each other, *especially* the more we are under attack for what we believe and practice.

A few months ago, I personally achieved a new status: You came on my heels, and we were inducted into a new fraternity, of sorts: A few months back, we actually had one of our sermons *removed* from YouTube. It was the New Year message from three years ago; and my *crime* was "violating community standards by spreading false medical information."

Now, I don't know if you remember, but back in 2020, we had "Co...Co...*something*" going on around here. And what I did was, I *quoted* "medical misinformation" *that I was refuting!* But because I *stated* the misinformation, *even though I refuted it*, I had spread "medical misinformation," and therefore, "Bad boy! You're out of here!" I don't know if we have now been flagged. I can't imagine what they are going to do with *this one*.

That is the world we live in! "We will"—and the secular term is: "We will *cancel* you! You won't *have* a forum anymore! You won't *have* a channel anymore! You won't *have* a website anymore! We will see to that."

Well, we appealed immediately, and the appeal was immediately denied. You could tell it was handled by a computer because the denial came back way too fast for anybody to have *possibly* listened to that sermon in its entirety.

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So, I don't waver from reminding us that Second Peter 2 applies *directly* to us *and* what we do *and* what we say.

I *also* need to point out, though: I want to help you *think* about how to *deal* with these things. And we need to navigate a minefield of words and thoughts—"speculations" and plans "raised up against God." And we need to be *very* careful about *how* we do it. So, I want to see if I can help you see how this works, and I am going to start with something really trivial, and then we will see some different levels of application.

I know I was *astounded* some years ago—I don't know, maybe ten years ago by now—when I was first in the grocery store, and I saw a display of tomatoes, and next to the display of tomatoes was a display of tomatoes that looked just the same, but they were labeled "organic," and the price was about twice as much.

Now, I have a degree in chemistry. Even though I did not choose to pursue a career in chemistry after God called me into the ministry, I know enough to tell you: There is *no tomato* that is *not* "organic"! "Organic" has a *very specific meaning*! If it was *inorganic*, it would be a bright red gemstone, okay?

What we have done—and it's a *silly* example, but I wanted to show you how *lies*—"speculations raised up against God"—start to take root. You *subtly* alter the meaning of words! That is how things are working.

Now, chemistry is not the only thing I studied. I also took a lot of math. Back in my sordid, misspent, pre-Christian youth, I won some spelling bees. I worked hard at learning how to write precisely and accurately, and to read critically. Well, in Math, I learned the meaning of "zero." In English, I learned the meaning of the word "partial." I had already learned the word "vehicle" long ago. And I know the meaning of the word "emissions." At my age, we try to keep emissions under control.

So, I was rather amazed when I first saw a car that was labelled "PZEV." I had to go look up the meaning. It stands for "Partial Zero Emissions Vehicle." Now, to qualify for that label—I mean, there is really a *thing* behind it—to be able to put "PZEV" on the car that you sell, it has to meet stringent standards for emissions. And I am all for not recklessly causing pollution—but "PZEV" is *nonsense*! It is *true*: it's a "vehicle." It is *true*: it produces "emissions"—all vehicles do. But the amount produced is *not* "zero"; and since "zero" means "none at all," there is *no such thing* as "partial zero"! Maybe if you only draw half a circle—is that a "partial zero"?

But the acronym—the "PZEV" label—actually looks pretty cool. And it helps some people feel morally superior for *choosing* such vehicles as opposed to your other "*emission vehicles*"!

And those are kind of funny, in a way. They *deserve* to be made fun of because *they're nonsense*! But, *that* is the technique: how you *tell lies* by subtly twisting words. And, *boy*, is it a minefield out there!

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It is common these days to speak of "book bans." It has happened in *my* neighborhood, about the schools in our neighborhood. "Banning books! These *zealous* 'Christian Nationalist Extremists'—they are all about wanting to *ban books!*"

My friends: Book banning is real. It has happened in communist China. It happened under Hitler in Germany. A book is *banned* when it is illegal to publish it, sell it, or buy it. To choose to not have a certain book in any particular library is *not* a "book ban," and to call it a "book ban" is *to tell a lie*—to make words mean what they don't mean!

There is *no* library in the world—isn't our Library of Congress the biggest one?—there is *no* library in the world that contains every book in the world! So, by this *ridiculous* definition of "book ban," *every library* is guilty of being book banners! It's ridiculous!

There is a *choice* involved in every book that is selected to be in a library. You will not find Doctor Seuss books or Star Wars books in a medical library—and if you do, switch medical libraries! You *should not find* books promoting various sexual practices in an *elementary school library!* That would be *foolish!* And no one should be labeled "dangerous" or "hateful" for saying, "We need to make the best choices that we can—*especially* for children and teenagers!"

"Abortion." Now, the word "abortion"—they are trying to redefine it. "Abortion" is the tragic voluntary ending of the life of an unborn human being in the "womb" (Jer. 20:17). The battle rages about abortion, and we need to be on the right side of that. We need to speak truth about it—always in love, and always with compassion. But it is a *lie*—it is a *bald-faced lie* to say that "abortion" is "healthcare"! "Healthcare" is about "caring" to keep somebody "healthy"! Abortion is not about health! In every abortion, only one person emerges from the procedure alive. That is *hardly* healthy!

Now, *don't go too far* in the attitude category! "Speak truth in love." Understand: Women who have had an abortion—*they are not our enemies!* Women who are feeling *pressured* into abortions—*they are not our enemies!* They are people who *need* the compassionate love of a Savior, mediated through the hands and the ears and the eyes of those who love Him (2 Cor. 5:19-20; cf. Matt. 11:28; Jn. 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 2:3-4).

"Gender" is an interesting one going on in our world these days. You know, God invented gender! Day Six of the existence of the Universe: Genesis 1:27—"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." But as a society today, we are using *fantasy terms* as if they represent truth.

A big one today that people just say, as if it makes any sense: They say there is your "gender assigned at birth." No. Your "gender" is *not* "assigned" at birth—it is *recognized* at birth! There is a 100 percent reliable test known to *every* obstetrician and every parent in the world to tell which of the two genders a person is!

So, now we have *another* term: "*Transgender.*" That is a *myth!* It is a "speculation raised up against God."

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Now, let's be compassionate here. There *are* people who deal with "gender dysphoria." That is one of those psychologized terms for people who are uncomfortable with the expectations of the traits associated with their sex—or, their gender.

See our previous messages on Biblical Counseling. Through *that* portal, you can learn how to bring *genuine* help to people with gender dysphoria, or to people who are dealing with loved ones with gender dysphoria. Our own Gracie Nelson has written a pamphlet about helping parents deal with children with gender dysphoria.

But if you deal with a person with gender dysphoria: If you encourage them to live out a charade contrary to nature, if you feed them dangerous hormones, or you perform surgery to remove healthy body parts—*that is not loving!* That is *tragic!* That does not help *anyone!*

This is a *huge* issue—you know that. And we need to be *extremely* careful about *how* we discuss it, because we need to show *compassion* to very confused people *who need a Savior*, who need a worldview that corresponds with how the Creator made things. And we need to be careful about throwing gasoline on fires of argumentation (e.g., Job 15:3; 1 Tim. 6:4, 20; 2 Tim. 2:14, 16; Titus 3:9). If you haven't figured it out already: Social media is probably the *worst place in the world* to have a conversation—well, you're not having a conversation; you're usually lobbing hand grenades at each other.

There's another minefield. It kind of made a big splash—oh, I don't know, three years ago or so. There was this *tremendous* amount of *heated* discourse about "Critical Race Theory." It is *patently* anti-God—"speculations raised up against God" about the nature of man. When we went through Ephesians in Chapter 2, I think I spent four sermons showing that "CRT" is *antithetical* to the Gospel and to Biblical Anthropology.

Now, are there *problems* of racism in the world and in our culture? *Of course there are!* But you *don't solve them* by changing the meaning of words!

"CRT" goes along with "Identity Politics" and "Intersectionality." If you need to go back and review those messages in Ephesians, God bless you! I don't want to hear them again. It was *yucky*, dealing with all that stuff!

But *all of that* is derived from the Marxist sociological concept that every person is either "oppressed" or an "oppressor." And then there is a corollary of that believed by many people: If you are white, you are *automatically*, by definition, *hopelessly* racist, and there is *nothing* you can do about it! And even if you say, "But I'm *not!* I don't believe 'that' or 'that' or 'that' or 'that,' and I *do* believe 'this' or 'this' or 'this' or 'this!'" I have had this one brought back to me: "See, that *proves* you are a racist because you are protesting that you're not!" I kid you not! Some people take it to that extreme.

And adapting *any* kind of that thinking into who we proclaim the Gospel is *terrible* error! We need to be on the lookout for it; it is *all around*—but it is *so easy* to get trapped into stepping into something that you cannot get off your shoe!

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We need to be "gentle" (Phil. 4:5). We need to be "compassionate" (Ps. 103:8). We need to take the time to *understand* what people are saying. We need to be loving and truthful, but stand firmly against it (1 Cor. 13:6).

There was an infamous document published by the Southern Baptist Convention—[about five years ago]—and they said that "Critical Race Theory" is non-Christian, *but* it is a useful "analytical tool." Now, there again, we are *shading* words. That is like saying, "If you want to understand the Doctrine of Christ, you have to use the definitions that come from atheists!" They are *mutually exclusive*! And even though well-intended people might want to deal with racism—and I don't want *anybody* to be killed for the color of their skin, persecuted for the color of their skin; I have always called that what it is: that is *satanic*! The *whole idea* of treating people based upon the shade of melanin that they have is *utterly against God*! (see Acts 17:26-27; Rev. .5:9)

So, make no mistake where we stand. But using that terminology and marrying it to the Gospel is a *horrible* mistake.

I want to commend to you something that I think you would find very helpful. I have listened to this at least two or three times. You can Google the name "Darrell Harrison," and you will find a talk that he has given a number of times: "The Spiritual Deception of Wokeness."

"Wokeness" is another one of those terms. "Woke" *used* to mean: "I got up." Now, it means: "I have *finally* been enlightened to realize that your Christians are all *idiots*, and you really *should* be pro-LGBTQ, you really *should* be in favor of same-sex marriage and 'DEI' training and all of those things!" Brother Harrison has done a really good job dealing with that.

Now, there are things that come and go. I have been at this a long enough time that I know movements come, movements go; fads come, fads go in the public discourse. But even after the fire dies down, they leave *smudges and stains* in the church.

And among them are "Critical Race Theory," "Identity Politics," "Anti-racism," "DEI"—they all *openly oppose* those of us who proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and understand that *only* in Him is there the *true* racial and ethnic reconciliation (Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 3:6; Col. 3:11). I am *all for* getting people to not shoot each other, not persecute each other—but the *ultimate answer* is in Christ!

And the idea that there *are* "races" is *anti-God*! *One race: human* (Gen. 3:20; 9:18-19). Nissan builds cars for them. That was an old, old ad. You know, I *expect* twisted teaching like that from the world, but it's *so dangerous* when *the church* invites it in!

There was one example that I dealt with of a well-intended, very well written book and a workbook that goes with it. It was called "Be The Bridge." I read it very carefully, and I was *bitterly* disappointed at how eloquently it promoted anti-biblical racist ideas in the name of supposedly applying Christianity to solve problems of racism. It is *sad* when those things are *invited* into the church!

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Another one: Our current president boasts that he played a role in a milestone—and he did. The milestone was: the election of the first "African-American" woman to a national office—specifically: vice president of the United States of America. Kamala Harris is, indeed, a woman. She is, indeed, the vice president of the United States. She has a *really cool* last name. But what is her ethnicity? She is the daughter of an Indian—as, from India—she is the daughter of an Indian immigrant mother and a Jamaican immigrant father. Now, being of Indian-Jamaican descent—that's a pretty rare combination. And I would, you know, go throw a party for that! *Celebrate* it! That is unique, and that is cool, and that kind of thing is *wonderful*! One of the ways to break down racism is to just go one generation where nobody marries the same color! We would all look like our son when we were done. Try that experiment.

But you know what? I also studied some other things in school. Neither India nor Jamaica is in Africa. *But* the term "African American" *sells better* and makes more *political* points in an age of "Identity Politics."

But twisting words to *change the tint of a lie—a falsehood*—in order to score political points—that is just an example of what we mean by "speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." It is a *minefield* out there, brothers and sisters!

I took too much time in the first service, but I contrasted two books. I was assigned one in college—and I actually met somebody after the service who had also read it in college. It was written in 1967. The title was: "Famine 1975! America's Decision: Who Will Survive?" Then there was another book written in 2006 by former Vice President Al Gore: "An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It." It had a whole bunch of doomsday prophecies that have already been proven false—as were the doomsday prophecies in the "Famine 1975!" book.

What was the difference between them? They both said, "*We are all going to die! We don't have a generation left! We don't have ten years left!*" Why? The 1967 book said the ice age that is beginning is going to make it *impossible* for us to feed this ridiculously exploding human population! And what did Gore's book say? Oh, give it a decade or two—cities like New York are liable to be *inundated* with seawater up to the level of the memorial for the Twin Towers because of "Global Warming"!

Look, they were *proven* false, but *both of them* say—and I just used them as examples, because you may have heard of them—*both* of them say that this is based on *proven science* that no one can dispute or refute. Now, they don't pay attention to the people who, *at the time that they wrote it*, said, "Uh, *no!* That is not what that really means." So, were we going to enter an *ice age* in the 1970s, or are we all going to *burn up* in the early 2000s?

Whether it's the threat of freezing or boiling, understand this: One of the other things that we deal with is another false religion out there: "Climate Activism." It is a works-based religion that leads *only to despair*—there is *no hope ever offered* in that realm, because it is not about the right thing.

Sermon Title: Take Worldly Thoughts Captive (New Year 2024, #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Various

Date: 1-21-24

Now, the Earth gets warmer; the Earth gets cooler. The Earth gets warmer; the Earth gets cooler. It has to do with phenomena happening on that star nearest us—the one that we call "the Sun." *And* we are in an era of warming. What was the hottest year on record? 2023. I mean, couldn't you feel that last week when we all stayed home because there was too much ice? *No*—see, *that* is the kind of snarky stuff we *don't* need to do!

But we need to understand that *theories* abound, and *now*, you don't have to have *any* particular expertise. If you have a connection to the Internet, get yourself a YouTube channel; and until you are cancelled, you can put anything up there you want. You can write your blogs, you can do your podcasts, and *anybody* can spread *any* amount of misinformation they want to, and they can download it at the click of a mouse. *This is a minefield!* And we have to live there to be *very careful* about our words.

Astonishing claims are made *daily*—without astonishing *proof*. And if you can claim it and you can do a video about it and you can sell a vitamin supplement, you can *probably* get *pretty wealthy* before you are found out. It is done all the time.

It is *all* the work of the one who wants to "raise up speculations and every lofty thing against the knowledge of God." *Satan* is behind all of this! (see Jn. 8:44) The predictions of the planet freezing to death or the planet burning up—they have *all* been proven false. Books are *not* being *banned!* There *are* exactly *two* genders. Marriage is *designed* for those two genders—one "man" and one "woman" (1 Cor. 7:2).

Words have *meaning*, and it is sinister to *twist* them *as if* they mean something *other* than what they actually mean (e.g., Is. 29:21), just to make people feel better while they continue to reject God.

I was going over these notes this morning, and I thought, "You know, I should probably go back and read a book that I read a couple times—I think when I was in junior high. *You* would enjoy reading it. It was published the year that I was *born*. The title is: "1984" by George Orwell. If you haven't read it, *read it*—and you will start thinking that George Orwell *did* do time travel, he came to the early twenty-first century, took notes, and went back and wrote his book. And it was *so far off* in the future—1984! You know, I read it in the '60s; and I thought, "Oh, *wow*, we'll never get *that* bad."

Well, you know what? How do we deal with these things? We need to understand that "CRT" and "Identity Politics" and "Intersectionality"—things like that are *all* anti-biblical; they have *no place whatsoever* in the church! Abortion is *not* "healthcare"! Books are *not* being banned!

How do we deal with that? Well, you tell the preacher to shut up sooner. Second Peter Chapter 3. You're going to understand: He says "mockers will come," and he says they say, "Everything is going on like it always has, and it always will go on the same way"—well, they sort of ignore that "flood" thing, and they sort of ignore the promise that there *is* going to be a day of "global warming": God is going to *melt down in a fire* everything in the Universe (cf. Rev. 20:11), and replace it with the "new heaven" and the "new earth" (Rev. 21:1).

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So, my point is: Fear God, not "Climate Change," not the machinations of man (Is. 8:12; 1 Cor. 3:20).

Understand: There are *very intelligent* people out there, *very influential* people whose eyes remain "blinded" to the truth of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). And they believe that it is good and it is necessary and it is acceptable to impose something that will destroy the world economy, starting with the United States—and *that* is in the best interest to *save mankind!* Don't buy it.

"Speak truth in love," and show "compassion" (Col. 3:12)—but do not back down from the *real* doom that faces mankind (Acts 17:31; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

How did Jesus put it? Matthew 10:28—"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

God left us here to do His work (Matt. 28:19-20; Lk. 24:47). And the need of *every soul* on this planet is to "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). We are not placed here to save a culture. We *cannot* save a planet—it's out of our ability. We are here to spread the *astounding* "good news" that saves souls (Is. 61:1; Acts 8:12; 13:32; Rom. 10:15)—that Christ, the One "who knew no sin" became "sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21)—and therefore, "We *beg* you": "Be reconciled to God" (vs. 20; cf. Rom. 5:10-11). *That* is our message to the world!

Now, your sphere of influence may be very small. Your sphere of influence might be larger. You might have the ears of people at a school, at a corporation of some kind; you might run for a local political office; you might become a presidential candidate—you'll never get *elected*, believing what *you* believe...and that is going to be another subject. But *that* is our message: We preach the risen Savior (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

So, that is the end of our message. That is also the end of our time. And you know what? I promised you Number 3: Help For Surviving a Presidential Election Year. I am going to write a booklet on that. Lord willing, you will have it by next Sunday; and I wanted to get it out in *January* because it may be needing to be refined in February, March, April, and up through the election—when both sides say the other side cannot possibly win unless they cheat.

Let's pray:

Well, Father, help us be wise, as Jesus says: "Wise as serpents and gentle as doves"—gentle with Your compassion; careful with Your love, to distribute it freely. Let us not get sucked into arguing; let us "take thoughts captive" by "speaking truth in love" against lies. Help us hold one another accountable to "speaking truth in love," and help this be a haven where that is all that is done—"speaking truth in love" and rejoicing in the unity that we have in Christ. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.