

Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up!

Introduction

In the early days of television, there was a show called, *“To Tell the Truth.”* Each week the show would feature a person with an unusual occupation. Only there were always three people on the show. One of them was the real person, but the other two were imposters. The idea behind the show was for the celebrity panel to try to guess who the “real” person was by asking them questions about their life and occupation. At the high point of each show, the MC would announce: *“Would the real ‘Joe Shmoe’ please stand up!”* There would be a dramatic pause, and then the real person would stand.

It is vital to be able to recognize and know the real Jesus. Many people these days are putting their faith in false or imaginary Christs who cannot save them. Let me ask you a question: how do you identify the REAL Jesus? We know there are a lot of imposters out there claiming to be Jesus. Jesus said, *“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”* (Matthew 24:5). If you do a quick web search you will easily find at least 40 people in the past and present who actually claimed to be Jesus. Among them is Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez. In November 2011, he fired nine shots with a semi-automatic rifle at the White House in Washington D.C. He told the authorities that he was Jesus Christ and was sent to kill U.S. President Barack Obama, whom he believed to be the antichrist.

Visit any Internet religious chat room and you’ll find a bewildering array of opinions regarding Jesus. Here are some contemporary answers to the question *“Who is Jesus?”* A good man ... The Son of God ... A Prophet ... A Galilean rabbi ... A teacher of God’s Law ... The Embodiment of God’s Love ... A Reincarnated Spirit Master ... The Ultimate Revolutionary ... The Messiah of Israel ... Savior ... A first-century wise man ... A man just like any other man ... King of Kings ... A misunderstood teacher ... Lord of the Universe ... A deluded religious leader ... Son of Man ... A fabrication of the early church.

As many people as you ask—that’s how many different pictures of Jesus that you will receive—some see Him as a revolutionary, a subversive, a rabbi, a buddy, a peasant, a charismatic, a prophet, a Pharisee, a figment of your imagination—you name it! So many people today cannot describe the true, biblical Jesus.

One survey showed that though 80% of Americans would call Jesus the Son of God, only 40% believed that He was God—and only 40% believed He was sinless. This shows that millions of people have a mental concept of a false Christ: one who cannot save them. I heard the story about different people who went to heaven and were asked by a divine being “Do you know Jesus?” The first one said, *“Yes, of course I know Jesus—He is kind and does good things for people.”* The second one was asked, *“Do you know Jesus?” Absolutely, I have lived a good life and done good deeds just like He asked me to.”* The third person was a tried-and-true saint of God who had a powerful prayer and devotional life. This one was asked the same question, “Do you know Jesus.” The saint took one look at this divine being and said, *“Of course I know you Jesus! I immediately recognized you because I have been serving you all my life!”* Here’s the truth: it is possible to know Jesus personally and believe in Him.

The Scripture says in Matthew 24:24 *“For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”* Also in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 it says *“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. (4) For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it! “*

Here is the truth of it all: Jesus must be proclaimed. It must be the real Jesus of the Bible. Many religious groups have a *false Jesus*

- The Jesus of the Mormons is one god among many gods and spiritual brother of the devil.
- The Jesus of the Jehovah's Witnesses is the archangel Michael and a created being.
- The Jesus of the spiritists is an advanced medium.
- The Jesus of the witches is a super witch.
- The Jesus of the Unitarians is an extraordinarily good man.
- The Jesus of the Christian Scientists is a divine idea.
- The Jesus of the Bahais is one of the nine great manifestations of the primal point of Divinity.
- The Jesus of the Theosophists is a reincarnation of the world's soul.
- The Jesus of the Moonies is a failure because he never had a chance to be married.

None of these are the real Jesus! The Jesus whom we worship, witness, and work for is: The Jesus of the Bible; The Son of God and God the Son; The Second Person of the Triune Godhead; Emmanuel, God with us; and Our soon-coming King.

So many people today people find bits and pieces about Jesus they like, discard those they dislike, and fashion their own Jesus. This Jesus tends to be whichever Christ is safe, convenient, and helpful for the individual's life in the moment. Here are four of the most popular versions of Jesus found in American society.

Heirloom Jesus

Heirloom Jesus is doubtless the shallowest and, sadly, most common Jesus found in America. This Jesus was treasured by great-grandma and has been passed down generation by generation, but with increasingly less value. Jesus might bring back great memories of times and persons gone by, but he's no longer of practical use to the family. Heirloom Jesus is merely kept out of duty—like an old figurine on a dusty shelf. As a beloved figurine might be considered “part of the family,” so too is this Jesus. They think they are Christians because “Mama was a Christian,” but the truth is *our God has no grandchildren*. They have a big family Bible with a picture of Jesus on the top, they go to church on Christmas and Easter, (we call them “CEO's—Christmas and Easter only) and they ensure their kids receive proper dedications and baptisms. They politely bow their heads before meals at the family reunion. They have a form of Godliness but deny the power thereof!

Political Jesus

Political Jesus is used to support political arguments. The “political Jesus people” ride His coattails for their own advancement in politics and that ultimate court of opinion: Facebook. Their image means everything to them. They preserve it at all costs. This Jesus only represents the political beliefs of the individual. Politicians love to use this Jesus on the campaign trail, drawing on His reputation to win a demographic area.

Insurance Agent Jesus

Insurance Agent Jesus *can* exist in the heart of a true believers, *but* their spiritual growth is stunted by a need to feel safe. This Jesus is summoned exclusively during crisis. Like a good neighbor, this Jesus is there in the event of serious injury, terminal illness, job loss, divorce, or property loss. He functions like an insurance agent. When things go wrong, he is just a prayer away. But only then—only in desperation. When things go well, he is, like an insurance agent, largely forgotten. This is NOT prosperity gospel because Insurance Agent Jesus doesn't offer prosperity, *but reassures safety*. Many of these types of Christians will gladly tell you about their new BMW or lake house. (They NAME their cars – *Beemer in the garage—had to take the Benz* and they drop names – *Mary Lou is at Harvard and Fred is at Yale*. Wouldn't it be great to reply with “*Our Chevy is junked and we had to take the bus! Jenny got kicked out of Harvard and Buddy is in jail!*”

But once the safety net has been removed, the house foreclosed, or the child lost to drugs, and the cars repossessed the boasts of faith are shattered and they run to find the Bible left on the car floor from some Sunday weeks ago. They flip through the pages, hoping to find the right words to pray. Insurance Agent Jesus is worshiped *fervently* and *wholeheartedly*—but only for a short time. When the season of trouble has passed, personal devotion goes with it, and the follower of this Jesus falls back into their old religious routine.

Therapist Jesus

Therapist Jesus is the most popular—and most handicapping—version of Jesus in America today. Therapist Jesus people come to Jesus not for forgiveness of sin because of some emotional turmoil in their lives. Therapist Jesus lives to make you feel better. He is a friend in the storm. If you are you depressed and life feels meaningless, *this Jesus is here to soothe*. True believers in Christ know that He will never leave nor forsake his children. But those who follow Therapist Jesus *mis-prioritize* these comforting promises and forget that Jesus came first to remove the condemnation of sin. They don't want to live a holy life, only a happy one. Therapist Jesus provides a shoulder to cry on, *not a Savior to believe in*. He functions like a motivational bumper sticker.

The Real Jesus

The real Jesus of the Bible didn't come merely to make us *feel* better. He came to *make* us better. He didn't come to *make good men better*—He came to *make dead men live!* He came first to forgive us of our sins and then to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The pain we feel, the hurt we endure, and the trials we face are all real, and He comforts us in the midst of them all. But these are symptoms, and symptoms are warning signs. We don't serve a God who just medicates the symptoms but dismisses the danger. What if you knew you had cancer and the doctor just gave you a couple of aspirin? We serve a God who removes the danger first—He takes care of our sins which are the cause of the symptoms!

On the cross, Christ finished the surgery to remove the tumor of sin from his people. The cuts on his back and punctures in his side provide healing for the sin-afflicted. After three days in the tomb, the real Jesus conquered sin and death and rose bodily from the grave. This is the Jesus we must *treasure*. This is the Jesus we must *obey*.

The “real Jesus” has stood up and still stands the test of time!

Jesus was God in the flesh and rose from the dead! Do you remember what He said in John 2: 19-21? He said, “*Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body.*”

He has this kind of power: His riches are unsearchable (Eph. 3:8); His love passes knowledge (Eph. 3:19); He receives our honor, glory, praise. (Rev. 5:12, 13 with Isa. 42:8; John 5:23); He is equal to the Father (John 14:9, 23; Matt. 11:27); He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11). He is Jesus now and forever more!

In 1905 Albert Simpson published a song titled “*What Will You Do With Jesus?*” Here is the refrain of that song:

What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be;
Someday your heart will be asking,
“What will He do with me?”

The truth is that someday He will judge you for your sins. Here and now He will forgive you and make you clean and whole. If you wait—it will be too late and He will judge you at the *Great White Throne Judgement*. This is the final judgment prior to the lost being cast into the lake of fire for ever and ever. You don't want to wait that long—it will be too late! Now is the time to believe in and accept the *real* Jesus of the Bible into your life!

This is an interesting story of where the vaccine comes from that protects against *yellow fever*. In 1927 a man named Asibi, a West African native, came down with yellow fever. Unlike so many others, he did not die. Because his system had conquered the disease, Asibi's blood contained the antibodies which the doctors used to develop a successful vaccine. That vaccine has saved the lives of untold numbers of people around the world. Each dose of vaccine can be traced back to Asibi's original blood sample. *One man's blood has saved the lives of millions of people.*

In a mysterious way we cannot understand, that is exactly what the blood of Jesus Christ did for us. His blood saves the lives of untold millions and millions of people. His blood is the perfect "vaccine" against the disease called sin. "*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7, KJV).