

DO YOU KNOW THE REAL JESUS? ...DON'T BE FOOLED

Jesus said, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." [Matthew 10:37-39]

The Jesus many people worship is a fake—an imposter; a figment of their imagination. He is the Jesus they want and not the Jesus who is fully God... who is both Savior and LORD. Jesus addressed his disciples, "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"¹

- Let's take a look at who Jesus is not... and in the process see the real Jesus.

THE RELIGIOUS JESUS... is not the real Jesus

The Jesus many people know is a religious Jesus... the Jesus of figurines and crucifixes, liturgies and stained-glass windows, of rituals, doxologies, holy days, of twice a year services—Christmas and Easter... that Jesus never existed.

The real Jesus was not religious... in fact, the biggest problem he had was with religious people—Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes... who had traded holiness and faith for rules and traditions. With those folks who saw holiness as a matter of tradition and ritual rather than of the heart. The real Jesus never asked his disciples to be religious, but instead to open their lives and hearts to the real power of the living God... working in them and through them. The real Jesus is still that way... telling us to offer ourselves as "living sacrifices."

Jesus said, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." [Matthew 5:20]

THE ONCE-A-WEEK JESUS... is not the real Jesus

Jesus was never once a week... nor could his presence be confined to the four walls of a church or synagogue. He is either present seven days a week—24/7 in our daily life or he is not present in our life at all.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

THE NICE JESUS

Many people see Jesus as a good teacher, a nice man, an enlightened leader; or as a righteous prophet, a man who taught great truths, or a spiritual guide to help them live a successful life. This Jesus is a phony also... he never existed. The real Jesus came as Lord of all, the God of heaven come down to give life... life to mankind—dead in sins! One cannot simply call him a good or nice man; he did not come to be nice... he came to glorify God through changed lives: Period!

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." [Luke 4:18-19]

THE EASY JESUS

Among the most popular of the Jesus versions is the easy Jesus. This is the one you fit into your life and around your schedule and your plans; the one you call upon whenever you're in trouble or need a favor, the one you add to your life so you can feel better about yourself... a kind of therapeutic Jesus. But this one too is a fraud... the real Jesus is neither comfortable nor convenient, nor our heavenly servant! And those who try to fit him into their lives can never know him, since the only way to know the real Jesus is to know him as Lord: Lord of every part of your life.

¹ Matthew 16:15

Romans 10:9-10 **That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.**

This means you conform your life to his. You follow him... you seek his will above your own... asking, "What did Jesus say?" (WDJS) "What did Jesus do?" (WDJD) for if he is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all.

You don't fit Jesus into your life—you fit your life into Jesus. *"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.* Mark 1:17-18

THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The historical Jesus is a fake as well... not that Jesus did not exist in history; he existed in history as much as did Herod, St. Augustine, or Mother Teresa. Jesus' feet walked the first-century roads of the Judean wilderness, his hands touched the welts and sores of the first-century wandering lepers, and first-century Roman soldiers scourged His body and pierced his side.

But the Jesus who lived 2,000 years ago is not the real Jesus... because the real Jesus is not the Jesus of the past but the Jesus of the now... he is alive in every believer. And that never changed... for he said: *"I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20b). The real Jesus still walks the earth, still touches the needy, still heals and makes whole, still works his miracles, and still transforms the lives of all those who truly receive him. Those who truly know him know him no other way... because anything else is just history, not the real Jesus.

The apostle John wrote, *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."* [1John 1:1-3]

THE FINAL IMPOSTER

The last and most fake of all impostors is the Jesus who does not totally and absolutely change your life. This is the one who neither requires nor causes any real transformation in the lives of those who claim to know him. The real Jesus did not come so that your life would remain the same. The real Jesus is the one who said the words, *"You must be born again"* (Matthew 3:7b). He never got wrapped up in religion or "works"... but he did speak of a new birth, a total surrender, a total new beginning, and a total change of heart and life.

If your life has not been totally and absolutely changed, you do not know Jesus or, at least, not the real one. A Jesus who is not real will never be able to make a real difference in your life.

2 Peter 1:3-4 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

The real Jesus came to give **you** something very real... life—real life... his life in you. Everything else is just a pale imitation... the real Jesus said, *"...I have come that they may have life, and life to the fullest."* (John 10:10b)

THE REAL JESUS IS “THE CHRIST” (MESSIAH)

His name is Jesus... but he is also “the Christ,” the Anointed One—the Messiah. When the gospel writers used "Christ," or wrote of “the Christ,” they were giving Jesus the title of God's Anointed One—Messiah. The word "Christ" affirms that Jesus has been specially commissioned by the Father to an important office... he was anointed.

In the Old Testament the word "anointed" is closely linked with two offices--that of king and that of high priest. It was prophesied that Jesus, from David's kingly line, would one day hold ultimate authority in our world... and as high priest, Jesus offered himself up for us and lives today to make intercession for us.

In Jesus' day, then, “the Christ” was thought of as Israel's deliverer. God's “Anointed One” would redeem Israel, rule as king over the restored kingdom. The promise of divine rule will be fulfilled, but in Jesus' second coming... upon his return!

The second coming (2nd Advent)

The Bible tells us that Jesus is coming to: 1) be present with us; 2) intervene in history; and 3) to unveil reality. 1. Christ is coming to be present with us... "*When he comes*", his appearance in person will initiate the resurrection of all born again believers and mark the beginning of history's end. These believers caught up and transformed to meet the Lord in the air, "*will be with the Lord forever*" to experience the joy of his presence (1 Corinthians 15).

2. The Bible also says Jesus is coming to intervene in history... he will come in a starburst of power. When Jesus and his kingdom appear, in unmistakable power, all will be subject to judgment (2 Timothy 4:1). Jesus' messianic return will constitute a disrupting intervention in a world that has rejected God's grace; not believing that Jesus is “the Christ,” the Son of God. The world system of today will be replaced by the long-awaited kingdom of righteousness—the Kingdom of Christ and evil will be judged.

Born again believers are challenged to look at the ways of the world in which we live and to utter a decisive “**no**” to human society's values. We are to commit ourselves simply to doing good while we long for Jesus to return to intervene and at last restore the tangled world to its intended beauty.

3. Jesus is also coming to unveil reality... his second coming highlights the fact that while information about Jesus has been shared with humanity and recorded in the Bible, it is Jesus himself who will be disclosed when he comes again. Then all preceding revelation about him will be unmistakably confirmed. The coming of Jesus as God's final, culminating disclosure will vindicate every promise and affirmation of the Word of God. The most wonderful truth for believers is that Jesus will come in person for them. In the resurrection, we will be transformed... enabled at last to share fully in joyful fellowship with God forever.

For all others, Jesus' appearing will constitute a jarring intervention. All mankind's values and hopes, settled as they are on the narrow confines of this life, will be exposed as empty and meaningless... and mankind will come face to face with reality.

Philippians 2:6-11... **Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

In Jesus Christ... God's eternal plans, purposes, and love are shown with unmistakable clarity. Every aspect of God's eternal plan is brought into focus in him. He is the central figure, the focus of history, the climax of the sacred drama... the one through whom all things are at last explained (Col 1:15-20).

Jesus told his disciples that he would be leaving them... and the news that Jesus had to go away stunned the disciples; but Jesus immediately reassured them, saying: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am"* (John 14:1-3).

These words of promise have brought comfort to generations of believers since Jesus' ascension. Jesus lives... he is preparing a place for all born again believers; and when the time is right, he will return for them.

THE REAL JESUS

The real Jesus becomes for true believers a Treasure Chest² of holy joy—a crucified Savior who pardons all our sins, provides all our righteousness and becomes in his own fellowship our greatest pleasure. Once we had no delight in God, and Christ was just a vague historical figure... perhaps the Jesus of Easter and Christmas. What we enjoyed was the things of this world... but neither God nor Christ were the center of our happiness... they were not a "treasure of delight."

Then something miraculous happens... conversion and regeneration by the Spirit of God, and then faith—the confidence that Christ has made a way for a sinner, to live in his glorious fellowship forever.

Colossians 3:1-4 speaks to us, *"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."*

We can be confident that **if** we come to God through Christ, he will give us the desire of our heart... to share his holiness and behold his glory. It is "in believing" in the real Jesus that we are filled with joy, with peace, with hope!

In John 20:26-29 we read that Jesus appeared to Thomas—one who had doubted Jesus' resurrection... *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

- Just as Jesus asked his disciples... he is also saying to each of us, *"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"*³

Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."* [John 11:25-26]

- He also said, *"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."*⁴

God has said, *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*⁵ **Now that's very real!**

P.S. The way you can know the real Jesus is to ask the Lord to reveal him as you read the gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the first four books of the New Testament.

² Matthew 13:44-46

³ Matthew 16:15

⁴ John 15:11

⁵ Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5b

Personal Study Questions from the Gospel of John⁶

A. Pray, ask for wisdom⁷ and then write out brief answers as best you can. **B.** Then look up the verse for each question. **C.** See next page for correct answers.

- 1. Who is Jesus Christ? **John 20:31**
- 2. What did Jesus come into the world to do? **John 1:29**
- 3. How did Jesus take away the sin of the world? **John 19:16-18**
- 4. What did Jesus say about you? **John 20:29**
- 5. There are two categories of people... who are they, what is their destiny? **Jn 3:36**

Category	Who are they?	What is their eternal destiny?
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____

- 6. What did Jesus say you must do to have eternal life? **John 6:47**
- 7. How can you demonstrate your love for Christ? **John 14:15**
- 8. What is Christ's promise for you today? **John 14:18**
- 9. If you are troubled, what does Jesus promise to give you? **John 14:27**
- 10. What are Jesus' promises for you? **John 14:1-3**
 - Promise...
 - Promise...
 - Promise...
- 11. What must happen to the person who wants to go to heaven? **John 3:3**
- 12. If you have received Jesus as your Savior by believing, what have you become? **Jn 1:12**
- 13. How does Jesus want you to relate to other believers? **John 15:12**

⁶ From Evangelism Explosion Internationals booklet "Partners in Growing."
⁷ James 1:5

Answers to above questions:

1. Who is Jesus Christ? **John 20:31** *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
2. What did Jesus come into the world to do? **John 1:29** *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*
3. How did Jesus take away the sin of the world? **John 19:16-18** *Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸ Here they crucified him, and with him two others-- one on each side and Jesus in the middle.*
4. What did Jesus say about you? **John 20:29** *Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*
5. There are two categories of people in this world: **John 3:36** *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*

Category Who are they?

What is their eternal destiny?

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. believers | eternal life |
| 2. whoever rejects Jesus (unbelievers) | not to have eternal life (eternal damnation) |
6. What did Jesus say you must do to have eternal life? **John 6:47** *I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.*
 7. How can you demonstrate your love for Christ? **John 14:15** *If you love me, you will obey what I command.*
 8. What is Christ's promise for you today? **John 14:18** *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*
 9. If you are troubled, what does Jesus promise to give you? **John 14:27** *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*
 10. What are Jesus' promises for you? **John 14:1-3** *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*
Promise... many rooms in God the Father's house.
Promise... Jesus has prepared a place for me.
Promise... Jesus will return and take me to be with him so that I may be where he is.
 11. What must happen to the person who wants to go to heaven? **John 3:3** *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*
 12. If you have received Jesus as your Savior by believing, what have you become? **John 1:12** *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...*
 13. How does Jesus want you to relate to other believers? **John 15:12** *My command is this: "Love each other as I have loved you."*