

Article: The Real Jesus

Should we take a hammer and a chisel to the Jesus of the Bible and shape Him into our own personal Jesus? Of course not! However, this does not stop many from swinging a hammer upon a chisel. Now, I am not referring to a literal hammer and a literal chisel, but I am talking about the way in which people fashion the Jesus of the Bible and Creeds into an image of their choosing. You see, our mind works like a hammer and chisel, forming the real Jesus into a creature of our making – carving out that which is uncomfortable and adding enhancements to please our desires. Remaking Jesus into the image of our choosing results in people having the ability to avoid the real Jesus of the Bible while also avoiding the sometimes difficult decision of entirely rejecting the Lord.

Creating a false christ in the mind's imagination makes sense, though, in our modern day culture. Our culture personalises just about anything—playlists, food, smartphones, and gifts. So why can't we customise a Jesus too? And this is precisely what we do. Going the way of idolatry, we redefine Jesus according to the image, desires, dreams, hopes, and aspirations of our choosing. We typically reshape and reform Jesus into the image of ourselves, for life is easier when Jesus is redefined to fit our personal agendas and dreams. Or, so we think.

While we might believe we are doing ourselves a favour in creating false christ, the reality is that these pseudo-christs are insufficient. They are indeed inadequate, for they are not able to forgive our sins—they have no power to recompense sin. Furthermore, none of these false christ can resurrect us from the dead—they have no power over the jaws of the grave. They crumble and fall at the slightest discomfort. They smash to the ground as we trip and fall into the traps of our own sin and despair. They stare back at us with vacant eyes as we plead for salvation.

The reason why these false christ cannot forgive sin and cannot resurrect dead people from the grave is simply that they are not real. Like a craftsman who cuts down a tree and carves the tree into an idol one day and then the next day decides to use it as firewood for his stove, these false christ are essentially puppets of their creators. In other words, since individuals create these false christ to match their own prevailing presuppositions, they are susceptible to changing presuppositions—an invented saviour one moment and firewood the next. These false christ are frail and will never have more power than those who create them, which means that they cannot overcome sin, death, the devil, and the world. Because these false christ are created by individuals who would rather reinterpret Jesus than reject Him entirely, these false christ may possess qualities of the real Jesus, as described in Scripture, yet fail to capture the full essence of the Almighty One, the Saviour of our body and souls.

So we may ask, "Will the real Jesus please stand up?" This is not only a question but also our desperate plea of wanting the real Jesus to stand up in the midst of all false christ present in our culture. It is a question and a request for the real Jesus to stand up so we can clearly see who He is and hear about what He has done. But here's the incredible news: Jesus is already standing. Yes, the real Jesus is already standing, whereas all the false christ are truly not able to stand on their own. In fact, they are either propped up by our own strivings or dangled as puppets from the strings of our own presuppositions. The real Jesus, however, stood in our place as He became flesh and blood. He walked through the wilderness of depravity on our behalf. He conquered the temptations to which we so easily succumb. He truly stood in our place in every way, drinking the vile cup of our suffering and sin. He stumbled up a lonely hill and was displayed on a cross. His body was pierced, and blood and water poured out for us—for each and every one of us who are desperately holding on to tattered, hollow fake christ. I pray that these idols fall to the ground and smash open, as we hear about the mighty earthquake and believe that the curtain that separated us from a holy and righteous God has been torn in two.

The real Jesus declared from His cross, high above the false idols of our own creations, that "It is finished!" All our sins have been atoned for. Then, after having done what He came to do, dying in our place, He rises up, takes His seat at the right hand of the Father in glory, and makes Himself known through His Word and Sacraments. Indeed, through the Word and Sacraments, we not only hear who Jesus is and what He has done, but we receive Him and His benefits of forgiveness, life, and salvation. And even though our culture and our own lives are like a bunch of reeds blowing in the winds of change, the Word of God does not change. It remains forever. This means that we can meet the real Jesus right here and right now. Through God's Word, we hear that the real Jesus is God of God (John 1:1), Light of Light (1 John 1:5), very God of very God (1 John 5:20), begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father (John 10:30), by whom all things were made (Colossians 1:15–17); who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven (John 6:38) and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man (Matthew 1:18); and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate (Mark 15:15). He suffered and was buried. (Matthew 16:21). And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father (John 20:17). And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead (Acts 1:10-11), whose kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:33).

This is the real Jesus, the real Jesus you and I do not deserve but certainly need. This is the real Jesus who is for you. This is the real Jesus who has drawn near to you in His Word to reveal Himself to you, so you might receive Him by faith and be His own. This is the real Jesus: Christ crucified and resurrected, the only one who forgives sin and grants everlasting life. The real Jesus who is for you.