

Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?

By Dr. Stan Fleming

Chameleons are really amazing little creatures. They show the wondrous imagination of an awesome Creator. As a child, living in Phoenix, I had one of these strange lizards. It would change color to match its surroundings. If I put it on the sidewalk, it was a milky sort of color. It was brown on brown and yellow on yellow. It did not turn every color, but it did turn many.

For years, I have been studying the cults, the occult, and world religions, and I have discovered an amazing thing—many people treat Jesus like a chameleon. They blend His identity into their own - often misguided or even perverted - worldview. He becomes what they want Him to be, and in the process, for them, He loses His true biblical identity.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION

Today, we look for the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ. But who is this Jesus that will return? Many view Him in different ways. This raises the most important question of our day - the same one Jesus asked His disciples nearly 2,000 years ago. He asked, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). Each one of us must eventually come to terms with this same question.

Simon Peter answered that question by stating, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus acknowledged the accuracy of Peter’s answer and told Him that it was the Heavenly Father who had revealed this truth to Peter.

Who do you say that Jesus is? I hope for your sake that your answer is based on a personal relationship with Jesus and not just a religious view, for there are many religions that will try to sell you a false view of Jesus. The Jesus of the cults and the world religions is not the Jesus revealed in the Bible. They follow “another Jesus” according to the Bible (2 Corinthians 11:4) rather than the true One. Their concept of Jesus does not come from the Heavenly Father. Rather, perverted views were originated by “the father of lies” (John 8:44).

In order to avoid deception and witness to those who have a misunderstanding, it is important for Christians to understand how many of the cults, the occult, and world religions view Jesus. The views are quite different from the original way in which the Bible portrays Jesus as the Son of God. These different perspectives also contrast with each other and are typically based upon a personal subjective point of view of someone within the group that had influence over the belief system of others. The following examples express the

doctrinal or historical stands of the particular group as a whole about Jesus. Of course, individuals within these groups may vary in their views about Jesus but are possibly unaware of the larger doctrinal positions. Consider the following examples:

WHO IS JESUS TO THE CULTS, THE OCCULT, AND WORLD RELIGIONS?

Baha'ism: He was one of nine great world manifestations. There is no Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Jesus is not God. He is a prophet beneath Baha'u'llah.

Buddhism: Most Buddhists have no place for Jesus in their religion, although some might see Him as an enlightened Bodhisattva.

Christian Science: Jesus was merely human and Christ is only a divine idea.

Falun Gong: Jesus has less spiritual authority than founder Li Hongzhi.

Freemasons: Christ was a mystical figure. Jao-bul-on is God, and all men have divine potential.

Hare Krishna: He was an enlightened vegetarian teacher of meditation, maybe Krishna.

Hinduism: Jesus was a teacher, a guru, or even an avatar (incarnation of Vishnu).

Islam: Jesus is but one of many prophets sent by Allah to various cultures, not as great as Muhammad.

Jehovah's Witnesses: He is Michael the Archangel, the first being God created. He came as a man, died and rose as an invisible spirit, and came back invisible in 1914 to Brooklyn to head Watchtower.

Judaism: Jesus was not the Messiah and He did not rise from the dead.

Moon's Unification Church: He was a man who failed: Moon is the second coming of Christ, the new age Messiah.

Mormons: Jesus is the spirit brother of Satan. He is but one god in a pantheon of gods, not born to a Virgin but through physical relationship.

New Age: He is an ascended master, guru, and spiritual guide, but not God and not Savior.

Rosicrucian: He is a manifestation of cosmic consciousness.

Scientology: He is a false memory implanted in people's minds before birth.

Spiritists: He is an advanced medium in the 6th sphere of astral projection.

Theosophy: Jesus is no greater than other religious leaders since all men are Christ.

Transcendental Meditation: He was an enlightened guru who never suffered for anyone.

Unitarians: He was a good man that followers mistakenly deified.

Unity School of Christianity: He was a man who perfected a divine idea.

The Way International: Jesus is the son of God, but not God the Son; they deny the Trinity and the absolute deity of Jesus Christ.

WHO IS JESUS IN THE BIBLE?

So, how does the Bible portray the real Jesus? Well, Peter told us. He is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). As the "only begotten" Son of God, He is Immanuel which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). He is jointly knit together in the personage of the one true Godhead (the Trinity) along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:9 that in the Lord Jesus Christ "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

In light of these scriptures, those who view Jesus as a mere man are not seeing His biblical portrait. The Bible presents Him as fully man but also fully God. As the Apostle Paul told us, "God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16).

Jesus came to set people free from spiritual death and bondage. He came in truth and grace to show people the way to God the Father and to eternal life with Him. The Bible says that He came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. Also, we read in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Anyone can receive the gift of life (John 1:12) and all are welcome, but each one who thirsts must choose to come to the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

So, who do you say Jesus is? Is your Jesus the real thing or is He a chameleon image of the truth? The question is critical. Some think they can come to God without Jesus. However, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No

one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Asking Jesus into your life can be as simple as bowing your heart in prayer and telling Him that you want what He has to offer you; you want relationship with Him. If you ask in sincerity, He will answer in love.