

What Child Is This? 2023

A blog post by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

12/12/23

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One of the most beautiful carols sung during the Christmas season is the one written by William Dix. It starts out:

*What Child is this who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?*

We can only imagine that the question asked in this beloved carol must have been uppermost in the minds of the shepherds that were present the night Jesus was born.

One author said,

"We can almost hear the question being asked from one to another as they gazed into the humble manger. How difficult it must have been for them to understand that the babe who lay in such a lowly place was truly the promised Messiah."

Through the centuries people have continued to ponder who Jesus really is. In fact, that question, whether you realize it or not—is the most important question you will ever have to answer.

Who is Jesus Christ?

There are many concepts that people hold to today as to who Jesus really is and what was His purpose and passion in life when He walked the earth.

1. Jesus, the social reformer

Some see Jesus as a **social reformer**.

This was the concept held by those in the *Jesus Seminar*. The *Jesus Seminar* was founded in 1985 and disbanded in 2006. It was made up of 40-50 liberal scholars that met twice a year to sit in judgment on Jesus' words, voting on what they believe He did and did not actually say.

They determined that He only said about 18% of the words attributed to Him in the Gospels. One of the members of the Jesus Seminar was John Dominic Crossan, who wrote the book, *"Who is Jesus?"*

Crossan rejected the biblical Jesus in favor of one that he saw as a social, political activist—a Jesus that went around speaking out against racism, sexism, injustice and the systemic abuse of power in the Roman Empire.

This Jesus preached *social reform*, not repentance from sin.

2. Jesus, the investment banker

Next on the list we have a Jesus that is presented by many of the televangelists—one that we'll call ***Jesus, the investment banker.***

This is a Jesus that has come to make us all rich—even though He Himself had no where to lay His head and when He was crucified all He owned were the clothes on His back. Yet these people contend that it's His desire that Christians all drive BMW's, wear designer clothes, live in palatial mansions, and take extravagant vacations.

All we have to do is invest our money with "Jesus" (which means giving it to the T.V. evangelist's ministry) and we will receive a tremendous return on our investment—a hundred-fold or more.

This Jesus ***isn't*** the Jesus who said, *"Don't lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth..."* or *"Deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Me."* No, this Jesus basically encourages greed and materialism—a Jesus that didn't come to save us from *perdition* but from poverty.

3. Jesus, the environmentalist

Third on the list is ***Jesus, the environmentalist.***

Several years ago, the Wall Street Journal ran an article entitled, *"Religious Leaders Target SUVs."*

"Top executives of the world's two biggest auto makers plan to meet this week with religious leaders who are trying to make the fuel economy of U.S. vehicles a religious as well as environmental issue. Among those leaders is a Christian group that plans to roll out a TV ad campaign arguing that gas-guzzlers are contrary to the moral teachings in the Bible about protecting people and the planet earth. The tagline for the ads is "What Would Jesus Drive."

(A play on the popular Christian motto: *"What Would Jesus Do"* or WWJD)

I think as Christians we should take care of God's creation—it's just that some people have turned the creation into a god and Jesus into an environmentalist.

I think it trivializes who Jesus really is and what He is most passionate about—as He Himself said, *"I have come to seek and to save (not the planet but) those that are lost."*

Somehow, I just can't see the Lord Jesus Christ walking around the Sea of Galilee spearheading a *"Give a hoot, don't pollute"* campaign.

4. Jesus, the psychologist

The fourth misconception of Jesus on our list is one we'll call ***Jesus, the psychologist.***

Today the Church has become glorified group therapy, and Jesus has been turned into a psychologist whose sole purpose for existing is to make people happy. But contrary to what many believe today, the goal of Christianity is to bring glory to God—not a better quality of life for ourselves.

To accomplish this God is at work in our lives, not to make us happy, but to make us holy.

Because of this He often allows trials and tribulations to come our way to grow and mature us—because God is far more concerned about our *eternal* rewards than He is about our *temporal* comforts.

So, who's right?
Will the real Jesus please stand up?!

Some would say it isn't important who He really is as long as we esteem Jesus in our hearts no matter who we perceive Him to be.

Apparently, Jesus didn't feel that way—He wasn't one to allow ambivalence in His disciples when it came to them understanding who He is and what He came to do.

Matthew 16:13-16 (NKJV)

¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" ¹⁴ So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Which brings us back to our hymn, *"What Child is this?"*

The carol goes on to answer triumphantly—*"This, this is Christ the King!"*

You know, many people don't have a problem with the Baby Jesus. They tenderly imagine the Christ-child lying in that manger, so helpless—and might I add *harmless*! As long as He remains—*"the Babe, the Son of Mary"* they will tolerate Him and even feign love for Him.

But when He is proclaimed the Son of God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, Who came the first time to die for sinners and is coming again to judge and send to hell those who reject Him as Savior and Lord—that's the Jesus they will not tolerate, cannot handle and refuse to bow the knee to!

A Baby Jesus is cute and harmless and makes no demands on a person's life—but a full-grown Jesus who demands they get off the throne of their life so that He can take His rightful place as King and Lord—that Jesus is a threat and a danger to them living however they please and so that Jesus must be done away with. → (Relate to King Herod)

Who is Jesus?
He is the Son of God.

Why did He come?
He came to save us from our sins.

Not from depression or poverty or from global warming—or even to give us a better quality of life (unless of course you're referring to the inward joy and peace and love that He fills us with when we get saved). He is the Jesus who is coming again to judge the living and the dead and to establish a Kingdom that will never end.

Someday the Bible says that every knee will bow to this Jesus and proclaim He is Lord—if not now here on earth, then someday on the Day of Judgment.

Jesus will be one of two things to every person who has ever lived—loving Savior or righteous Judge—and what you do with Jesus now will determine what He becomes to you then.

Don't give Jesus lip service, don't just call Him Lord—make Him the Lord of your life by surrendering your life fully to Him!

Luke 6:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?...

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Merry Christmas!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— *you can experience the richest Christmas of your life!*

Please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).