

Question:
“Has Jesus
changed or did
we change Him?”



**I believe in
letting the
Scriptures
speak for
themselves.**



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I am one who loves to “re-search.” I like to look at things from different angles and search what has already been searched (re-search). In this article, I have used as many different translations of the Scriptures as possible in order to gain a broad, unprejudiced view of this topic.

would the real Jesus please stand up!

**...My God, my God, what have we done to You?
Has the church turned our Lord into some kind of a pop-
cultural idol of sorts? Is His message no longer relevant?**

“ *if you don't come to Jesus
to die, then don't come.*

Jesus isn't something that you “*try out.*” The Gospel is not just “*good advice.*” This is the Gospel: repent, turn from your sins to Christ for forgiveness—by faith, believe in, and trust in Him, and come follow Jesus (*not religion*).

people's religious views about Jesus today

“

I could never follow Jesus: I still want to drink beer.”

“

Why would I like Jesus? He hates gays.”

“

I love Jesus, and Buddha too. I'm a Christian Buddhist. If God is real, then wouldn't he be open to all religions and not be so closed-minded? I believe there are many ways to God—he wouldn't have just one.”

“

I'm not into organ music and harps. Besides, all of my friends will be in hell, so why would I want to go to a place [heaven] where the music sucks and none of my friends are? If you ask me—It all sounds pretty lame.”

“

*My church is against tattoos and piercing—all they do is judge me. Who needs *!@.. [stuff] like that?”*

“

All it [Christianity] is, is a crutch for the weak to stand on.”

“

I could never follow Jesus, because I don't believe in organized religion. It's helped no one. The only thing it's responsible for is starting wars like the crusades; besides—just look how corrupt the Catholic Church is.”

“

When I do good, I feel good. When I do bad, I feel bad. That's my religion.”

Abraham Lincoln

“

No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.”

Buddha

what is truth?

“ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the WAY, and the TRUTH, and the LIFE; no one comes to the Father but through Me.’”

John 14:6 – *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

“ THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent.”

John 17:3 – *GOD’S WORD Translation (GW)*

Eternal life isn’t just something you ‘get’ from God. Eternal life is a **person**—and that person has a name, and His name is ‘Jesus,’ Jesus Christ!

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“ And there is salvation in and through no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by and in which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:12 – *Amplified Bible (AMP)*



Hebrews 9:22

– *Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)*

“In fact, according to the Torah, almost everything is purified with blood; indeed, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

the gospel is Christ,
and Him crucified!

“*For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*”

1 Corinthians 2:2 – *English Standard Version (ESV)*

the gospel is God's
power to save!

“*For I am not the least bit embarrassed about the gospel. I won't shy away from it, because it is God's power to save every person who believes: first to the Jew, and then the non-Jew.*”

Romans 1:16 – *The Voice (VOICE)*

where do these weird ideas come from?

things that both Bible believing Christians and the emerging church have said and done, and why they're not right:



Only read the King James version of the Bible—as all others are fallible.”

- Really? Try telling that to the countless missionaries working for *Wycliffe Bible Translators* who have devoted themselves—and some have even given their very lives—in taking the Gospel message (God’s good news about Jesus and His life) to the millions throughout the world; who don’t even speak English, let alone, *King James* English.



No tattoos, piercing, makeup—dresses must be worn for women and pants for men when attending church. Hair for a man should be like ‘this’ and hair for a woman should be like ‘that.’”

Matthew 15:17-19 – *J.B. Phillips New Testament (PHILLIPS)*

Don’t you see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and then out of the body altogether? But the things that come out of a man’s mouth come from his heart and mind, and it is they that really make a man unclean. For it is from a man’s mind that evil thoughts arise—murder, adultery, lust, theft, perjury and blasphemy. These are the things which make a man unclean, not eating without washing his hands properly!

- There is nothing wrong about dressing up to go to church, however— Salvation in Jesus Christ has absolutely **nothing, nothing, nothing** to do with the kind of clothes you wear nor the music genres you prefer. Just to be clear—I’m not saying hire *KISS* as your worship team.

“ You must be baptized (including water baptism) and/or speaking in tongues to be saved and/or filled with the Holy Spirit.”

- Also, on the other side the ditch is something just as dangerous...

“ Speaking in tongues is of the devil and is wrong, and we’ll prove it to you.”

sounds an awful lot
like religion if you
ask me

All other religions essentially say, “This is what **you have to do** to be in right standing (or “justified”) with God.” But Jesus came and declared that, “This is what **I have freely done** for you to put you in right standing with God.”

“ Religion says: ‘more right behaviour, plus less wrong behaviour = Godliness.’”

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 – New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

- ¹ Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.
- ⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.
- ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that **while we still were sinners Christ died for us.**

what's the difference?

the difference is this:

- Religion declares what we must do, but Jesus has declared what He has already done.
- Religion is man searching for God. Jesus is God searching for man.
- Religion is pursuing God by our moral efforts. Jesus is God pursuing us despite our moral efforts.
- Religion is an *achieving system*: man does it, through external regulations, rules, standards and self-resources—out of duty, guilt, obligation and hard work. Jesus is about *receiving*: Christ has done all that needs to be done for us. It is God's resources and is from an inner heart attitude of freedom, trust, abiding and rest in His finished work on our behalf.
- Religion says: “more right behaviour, plus less wrong behaviour = Godliness.” Jesus says that all of our (self-) righteousness or good works are no better than filthy rags (see Isaiah 64:6). It's not our righteousness that counts but His righteousness and only His. It's not how good (or poor) we perform—not just our bad days, but our extremely good days too!

– Jefferson Bethke | excerpts from: – “*Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus*”

“ Religion is an ‘achieving’ system,
...Jesus is about ‘receiving.’”

All other religions center on people's righteousness—*what we say, do and how good we are*. **Real** Christianity centers on Jesus' righteousness—*what He has done and how good He is*. But the Church has not practiced this as their reality! Quite the opposite is true of most Churches and that is what people have seen.

When we (the Church), perform out of our own, self-righteous efforts, then we're no different than any other false religion; void of truth and life—just plain, dead religion.

what does it take to follow Jesus— *not* religion?

1) Salvation is from the LORD. You must repent of your sins and believe in Jesus. It's not about *trying Him out!*

Ephesians 2:8-10 – *The Message (MSG)*

Saving is all his idea, and all his work.

All we do is trust him enough to let him do it.

It's God's gift from start to finish!

We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing!

No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and the saving.

- It's all His work, not ours.

2) Be willing to forsake everything and follow Him.

Luke 14:25-33 – (MSG)

²⁵ Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, **yes, and even life itself**, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³ **So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.**

- Basically, Jesus is saying: “*Anyone who does not renounce all that he has (including family, possessions, even your own life), cannot be My follower. If you don’t come to die, then don’t come.*”

“ You have to be willing to be hated by the very people you love and are trying to reach.”

Dr. Walter Martin

the problem is, we're too afraid to die

3) Be willing to die, to be crucified with Christ—
you no longer living, but Christ living in you.

John 12:24 – (MSG)

Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.

- Christ's life comes through dying, not hanging on to your own *self-life*.

God's solution—*not* ours

the old testament promise:

“ Behold, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

Isaiah the Prophet – quoting Yahweh (God), – Isaiah 34:19, 25

the new testament fulfillment:

“ When the Messiah was executed on the stake as a criminal, **I was too**; so that my proud ego no longer lives. But the Messiah lives in me, and the life I now live in my body I live by the same trusting faithfulness that the Son of God had, who loved me and gave himself up for me.”

Galatians 2:20 – Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

Give your life, who and what you are—to Jesus Christ. He is the only one who has the authority and power to save you from the wages that your sins demand: death. Only Jesus’ sacrifice counts as being acceptable to God for the payment of your sins. It’s not about you saving yourself. This is about you trusting in Jesus, being united to Messiah (Christ)—repenting and believing in the Gospel of Christ.

“ We have spoken of trying and trusting—and the difference between the two. Believe me, it is the difference between heaven and hell.”

Watchman Nee

“ Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

C.S. Lewis

pray and come to Jesus

It's not the words that matter, but your heart. Pray it like you mean it? If you do, then God will mean it for you too. He loves you and cares enough for you that He made a way for you to come to Him. He never turns a person away who truly seeks Him. **Count the cost, die ...come follow Jesus.**



Dear Abba, Heavenly Father,

I ask You to deliver me from a sin-stained life in Adam and to place me into Christ Jesus who is true life. I repent of my sins, my self-righteousness and self-life and ask You for forgiveness. I confess that I have been trying to live this life on my own strength of which I am a total failure, in and of myself. I have been struggling to live a pure life out of my own resources. I admit that I have been trying to get my need for love and acceptance met through people and not You, through my achievements and material things, and not You. Thank you for shedding Your Son's blood to make full payment for my sin. By faith in what You have provided in Christ, I receive Your forgiveness now. Thank you Father.

I now give up on self-sufficiency and 'my' so-called rights and expectations. I give up on my right to: possessions, a good reputation, acceptance, success, beauty and strength, friends, be heard, offenses, the right to be right, money, see results, to be recognized by others, and the right to life itself.

I believe Your Word, that I have been crucified with Christ, buried with Him, and raised with Him into newness of life. I claim resurrection life through Your Son as my life. I now yield myself totally to the indwelling Christ and Christ as my true identity from now on. Do with me whatever You choose. Manifest Your Son in and through me, for Your Glory, and Your honour. In Jesus' Name, Amen."



*I have a great need for Christ—
I have a great Christ for my need!"*

Charles Spurgeon