

The Word became flesh
Part 2

The playfulness of Jesus
and the poison of religion
12/11/2011

Is it possible that organized “religion” has kept us from knowing the real Jesus?

I would like to propose to you today that it is not only possible, it is probable.

After all the nonsense that is repeated about Jesus being a gentle peacemaker, reading the Gospels is really quite a shock.

Did you know that Jesus...

- Never had one hostile encounter with a “pagan”

He never dealt harshly with the: sinners, immoral, liars, losers or the messed up. Those who didn’t know God, never heard Jesus speak harshly towards them. In fact, they found exactly the opposite: kindness, forgiveness and restoration.

(With the exception being the last couple of days of his life when the “religious leaders” handed him over to the Roman Troopers)

- Was frequently embroiled in conflict – most of the time which he provoked himself – with the religious leaders
- Only hostile experiences were with the “religious establishment”
- The only name-calling Jesus did was about religious leaders. He called them animal names – “vipers”

Let me show you what I mean. Jesus healed a man on a Sabbath. That pushed his enemies over the edge and they decided to kill him.

“Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath.

Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.” Mark 3:1-6

Really. Because he healed a man on the Sabbath? What do we have here?

After reading the Gospels, a person would have no trouble whatsoever coming to believe that religion is the enemy – or at least in the hands of the enemy. Religion has a way of keeping you FROM Jesus.

How many people use what happened at the Inquisition, the Salem Witch Trails and TV evangelists, to reject Christ?

The devil could not destroy the church, so he joined it and began a deceptive campaign to present a “counterfeit Jesus.” Deception is the devils specialty. (As Adam and Eve about this when you see them).

So the Deceiver deceives by means of distortion, and his favorite tool is to present a distorted Christ.

Consider this one piece of evidence:

Millions of people who have spent years and decades attending church still do NOT have a personal faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. Their heads are filled with stories about him but they have never experienced him that the boys at the beach.

There are millions more who love Jesus but experience him only occasionally.

Can anything be more diabolical?

If you sent someone you loved to school for 10 years, yet they remained illiterate, how would you feel about their education?

If you sent someone you loved to the doctor, yet despite years of treatment, they not only failed to recover from their sore throat but contracted AIDS, cancer and gangrene?

I am not making accusations. I am stating facts. There are noble churches and ministries in this world but they are the exception, not the rule.

Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. His enemies decided to kill him. Do you really think that's over?

The problem with being deceived is this:
You don't know that you have been deceived.

Is it possible that the Jesus we have learned about is not really the Jesus of the Bible? Then that might explain why I do what I do, say what I say and believe the lies that I believe.

Religion gives the IMPRESSION of having Christ, while it inoculates you from experiencing the real thing. Most wicked and sad. How else can we explain Jesus words when he says:

“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly,

‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

Matthew 7:22-24

Another example can be found in the Parable of the Weeds

“Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” Matthew 13:24-30

Knowing Jesus

1. Jesus wants me to know him as a person

When I know Jesus personally, I will see that he is:
Playful, fierce, impatient with all that is religious, kind, creative,
irreverent, humble and funny.

If I don't know Jesus like this – I have been cheated.

2. Jesus wants me to know him intimately, daily, in these very ways.

(Playful, fierce, impatient with all that is religious, kind, creative,
irreverent, humble and funny)

When I know Jesus intimately, I will experience:
The comfort of his presence
The thrill of hearing his voice speaking to me

If I don't know Jesus like this – I have been robbed

3. Jesus wants me to know his indwelling life.

When I experience his life in me, I will see that he can:
Reshape my personality
Heal my brokenness
Enable me to live as he did

If I don't know Jesus like this – I have been plundered.

This is why we pray,

“Jesus, show me who you really are. I pray for the true you. I want the real you. I ask you for you. Spirit of God, free me in every way to know Jesus as he really is. Open my eyes to see him. Deliver me from everything false about Jesus and bring me what is true. Amen.”