

A White-Skinned Jesus? Theologians Say Not So Fast

Thanks to the Bible and countless records, Christians throughout history have known that Jesus was a Jew.

But one of the biggest arguments about our Lord and Savior has been about the color of His skin, and that issue is still being debated today.

The subject came up once again in a story by Fox News Digital which speaks of a stained-glass window depicting Jesus as a person of color, a window that adorns St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Warren, Rhode Island.

The 12-foot tall, five-feet wide window shows Jesus with dark skin as he speaks to a dark-skinned Samaritan woman at the well. In another scene on the window, a dark-skinned Jesus is shown speaking with Martha and Mary before the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

The story explains that the window was installed in 1878 "while the U.S. was still reeling from the aftermath of the Civil War."

Many articles on the subject have been written including one Baptist News Global in 2019 that refutes the popular notion of a white Jesus, which is seen in many photographs throughout history. The article notes that by the sixth century, many Byzantine artists "began picturing Jesus with white skin, a beard and light hair parted down the middle."

The image became the standard.

Senior Minister of Covenant Church Laura Mayo wrote, "While shades of brown are debated, it is clear that Jesus was not white. The earliest depictions of an adult Jesus showed him

with a brown complexion.”

But, in his book “The Historical Jesus: An Essential Guide” from 2008, Princeton biblical scholar James Charlesworth notes that Jesus was “most likely dark brown and sun tanned.”

In her 2018 book, “What Did Jesus Look Like?”, Joan Taylor, professor of Christian origins and second temple Judaism at King’s College London, used archaeological remains, historical texts and ancient Egyptian funerary to make the conclusion that, like most people in Judea and Egypt around his time, Jesus most likely “had brown eyes, dark brown to black hair and olive-brown skin.” Taylor also says Jesus may have stood about 5’7”, which was the average man’s height at the time.”

Late theologian James Cone wrote in “Black Theology and Black Power,” first published in 1969, “The ‘raceless’ American Christ has light skin, wavy brown hair and sometimes—wonder of wonders—blue eyes. For whites to find Him with big lips and kinky hair is as offensive as it was for the Pharisees to find Him partying with tax collectors. But whether whites want to hear it or not, Christ is Black, with all the features which are so detestable to white society.”

An expert on stained-glass art, Virginia Raguin noted that the window in the Rhode Island church was the only stained-glass depiction of a dark-skinned Jesus from that era of which she is aware. But the window was mostly forgotten until it was rediscovered by a woman named Hadley Arnold and her family, who transformed the church it into a home after the church closed down in 2010 after 180 years.

“The skin tones were nothing like the white Christ you usually see,” Arnold told Fox News Digital.

Scholars are reportedly studying the potential intentions of the artist, Henry E. Sharp and Mary P. Carr, the woman who commissioned the window in memory of her aunts who married into families involved with the slaved trade. The intention of

the artist, Arnold said, remains unclear. {eoa}

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