

The Danger of Creating a God and a Gospel in Our Own Image

The essence of idolatry is that we create a god in our image, confusing His nature with ours and thereby conforming Him to our standards. This, in turn, creates a vicious cycle in which we continue to degenerate spiritually and morally as we become like the lifeless idols we create.

As expressed in the Psalms, “Why do the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’ Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them” (Ps. 115:2–8, NIV).

We can do the very same thing with the gospel, lowering it to our standards, thereby creating a new, non-offensive, non-troublesome Jesus who bears little resemblance to the Jesus of the Scriptures.

This is illustrated in a great quote by Natasha Crain from her book *Faithfully Different*. She wrote, “Because progressive Christians ultimately have the same source of authority as secular culture – the self – the way they see the world often dovetails with the way those who consider themselves *irreligious* see the world. Progressive Christians may have an added appreciation or love for Jesus relative to their secular counterparts who dismiss Him entirely, but that doesn’t necessarily play out in significant worldview differences. When the self is in charge, Jesus can start looking an awful lot like what modern culture thinks He should look like.”

This hits the nail on the head.

Today's Jesus is a woke Jesus, and today's gospel is a woke gospel.

In this new version, the Lord didn't come into the world to redeem sinners as much as to fight for social justice.

Consequently, the problem is not our universal sin (from which all of us need to be saved) but rather the dominant power structures in society.

When it comes to LGBTQ issues, because Jesus came to affirm the outcast and marginalized, that means He endorses same-sex "marriage" and encourages transgender identity. Thus, practicing homosexuals do not need to repent. Instead, it is the religious leaders who need to repent for calling homosexual practice a sin.

This is what happens when people interpret the Bible in light of their sexual desires (or romantic attractions or gender confusion) rather than using the Bible to interpret their sexual desires (or romantic attractions or gender confusion).

This is what happens when we read the Bible through the lens of self rather than denying self and taking up our cross, thereby finding a wonderful new identity in the Lord.

But it is not only "progressive" Christians who create their own Jesus and their own gospel.

Just think of the slave traders and slave owners who, in other respects, were good, God-fearing Christians, taking the Bible very seriously in many other areas of life. Yet they participated in this barbaric practice, quoting the Bible to justify their sin. How revolting.

Or consider the antisemitic Christian leaders through the ages who persecuted Jewish people to their death (and I mean that literally, at times offering them baptism or death). And they

did this in the name of Jesus too, as if showing their loyalty to Him. How sickening.

More subtly, consider how we can create a Republican Jesus. Or a Democratic Jesus. Or a super-patriot Jesus.

Then we construct our gospel around the Jesus we project back into the Bible, as if Jesus were a card-carrying member of the NRA who was wrapped in an American flag at burial. Or as if His main ministry themes were environmental activism and open borders.

The truth be told, the Jesus of the Gospels does not fit into any of our earthly or religious categories. Instead, both His words and His example shatter our conventions and challenge our traditions.

As an old Jewish man named Simeon prophesied over Yeshua when He was a baby (speaking to His mother, Miriam/Mary, as well), “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Luke 2:34-35, NIV).

To this day, Jesus reveals the thoughts of our hearts, showing us who we really are. It is uncomfortable, but it is transforming.

May He change us, and may we never attempt to change Him.
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