



“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”

Matthew 25:31-33

The Real Jesus

Tenth in a Series

I confess to perhaps an unseemly level of pleasure in pointing out the truth about Jesus' personality during His earthly ministry. Because it is so contrary to the typical (mis)conceptions about Him, it is great fun to play a role in rectifying someone's misguided notions of the earthly Christ.

Today there is a veritable industry built around the ear-tickling line: "What Would Jesus Do?"—more often than not represented by the acronym "WWJD." It can be a laudable injunction when one is faced with a choice, a fork in the decisional road, that one considers how Christ Jesus Himself might decide. The sticky part of this is that for one to make the same decision Jesus would, one must have a working knowledge of what Jesus actually *did*—how He behaved, what He thought, what His decisions were based on—in short, who and what He really was. And if one bases his decision on what the world's culture *tells* him Jesus would do, then he will almost surely be taking the wrong path.



Since His death and resurrection in the first century, the unbelieving world has painted Jesus as a wan milquetoast, a simpering flower child, a well-meaning but ultimately ineffective goody-two-shoes. Those who deny the deity of Christ like to demonstrate their equitableness by acknowledging those

traits of His that reinforce their own societal and political agenda—those traits that make *them* look good, while letting them off the hook for their own bad behavior: Christ's forgiveness, longsuffering, grace, and love. This, they know full well, effectively diminishes Jesus, and thus His gospel. Their position is, since Jesus was just a nice guy who let people walk all over Him, then His followers today—Christians—should shut up and do the same.

The problem with this position is that their picture of the earthly Jesus is so grossly incomplete as to be dead wrong. Anyone striving to emulate Him—anyone wishing to live their life according to what Jesus would do—should be eating their Wheaties and strapping on their work boots, for the Son of Man was no easy pushover.

The true portrait of Christ Jesus from the gospel accounts is that of a complex individual whose purpose in coming to earth was not simplistic but multidimensional. Beyond that, in answering questions about Himself He might speak of His role in the moment—His first coming—or He might speak of His *future* role—His second coming. But Jesus was rarely explicit regarding the time frame in His answers. In fact, He often answered with obtuse parables meant not to clarify, but to intentionally befuddle.

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."

Matthew 13:10-13

The Lord Jesus was unwaveringly patient and gracious toward the sincerely repentant and honestly confused, but He did not suffer fools gladly. Those who were proud or hypocritical He publicly rebuked in a most caustic, colorful manner.

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.' You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold?"

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Matthew 23:16-17, 27-28

This world also likes to use Jesus as an example of a great *uniter*, someone who wraps his loving arms around everyone, no matter who they are, what they do, or what they believe. He is often cited by those who would meet dissension with “Can’t we all just get along?” But Jesus did not “just get along.” He declared outright that in fact He was *not* a uniter, but a divider, for some would believe and some would not, even those in the same family.

“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Luke 12:49-53

Even to one of His principal disciples, Simon Peter, Jesus did not hesitate to vent His anger when faced with Peter’s persistent ignorance.

From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Matthew 16:21-23



If the unsaved prefer to filter out Jesus' more energetic traits, they utterly ignore who and what He will be when He returns to earth as Judge and King. Here is no insipid milquetoast; those who deny His deity in the here and now will be in for a rude shock when the Son of Man returns—not as a sweet and gracious hippy, but a fierce warrior determined to dispense the frightening wrath of a holy God.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword,

so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Revelation 19:11-16



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