

Who Is Jesus?

Crucial Questions

R. C. SPROUL

Who Is Jesus?

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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Chapter One

The Christ of the Bible

There are vast numbers of portraits of Jesus in the art galleries of this world. These images are often conflicting and offer different impressions of what Christ might have looked like during His incarnation. There were no cameras back then, of course, and we have no images of Him from His time, so any idea about Jesus' physical form is pure conjecture.

This multiplicity of images of Christ in art galleries parallels the widespread confusion about Jesus' identity that

exists in the world today. The many theories about Christ's identity in circulation are attempts to answer a question that Jesus Himself once asked His disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" This question is so important that one's eternal fate hinges upon the answer one gives.

Unfortunately, most ideas about Christ's identity today are born of empty speculation or created to squeeze into a philosopher's pattern rather than drawn from Scripture. The "Christs" that are born this way simply won't do. A recycled Christ, a Christ of compromise, or an imaginary Christ can redeem no one. A Christ who is watered down, stripped of power, debased of glory, reduced to a symbol, or made impotent by scholarly surgery is not Christ but anti-christ—because to supplant the real Jesus with a substitute is to work against Christ. To change or distort the real Christ is to oppose Him with a false Christ. To be redeemed, and to have assurance of our salvation, we must rid ourselves of these imitations. We need Christ—the *real* Christ.

The Depth of Christ

It is significant that our faith is called "Christianity," for our attention is rightly focused on the One who has redeemed

us. And the place we must go to learn about Christ is His holy Word, for it alone speaks utterly truthfully about our Savior. But, because the portrait of Jesus in Scripture is so deep, because it defies human ability to grasp it exhaustively, any study of the person of Christ can only scratch the surface.

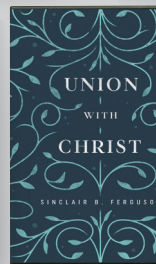
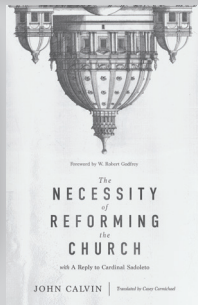
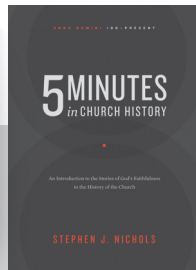
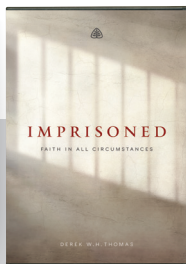
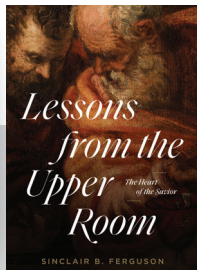
Consider the Apostle John's portrait of Christ in the book of Revelation. John sets the stage for Christ's appearance by presenting a conundrum:

Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. (Rev. 5:1-3)

In John's vision of heaven, he is filled with anticipation as he waits to see who will step up, who will be declared worthy to open the scroll. He continues:

I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one

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