

Why Jesus?

Although other verses can be cited that portray Jesus in a different light, they do not erase the disturbing side of his character. The conflicting passages, however, prove that the New Testament is contradictory.

The "Golden Rule" had been said many times by earlier religious leaders. (Confucius: "Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you.") "Turn the other cheek" encourages victims to invite further violence. "Love thy neighbor" applied only to fellow believers. (Neither the Jews nor Jesus showed much love to foreign religions). A few of the Beatitudes ("Blessed are the peacemakers") are acceptable, but they are all conditions of future reward, not based on respect for human life or values.

On the whole, Jesus said little that was worthwhile. He introduced nothing new to ethics (except hell). He instituted no social programs. Being "omniscient," he could have shared some useful science or medicine, but he appeared ignorant of such things (as if his character were merely the invention of writers stuck in the first century).

Many scholars are doubtful of the historical existence of Jesus. Albert Schweitzer said, "The historical Jesus will be to our time a stranger and an enigma." No first-century writer confirms the Jesus story. The New Testament is internally contradictory and contains historical errors. The story is filled with miracles and other outrageous claims. Consisting mostly of material borrowed from pagan religions, the Jesus story appears to be cut from the same fabric as all other myths and fables.

Why is Jesus so special? It would be more reasonable and productive to emulate real, flesh-and-blood human beings who have contributed to humanity--mothers who have given birth, scientists who have alleviated suffering, social reformers who have fought injustice--than to worship a character of such dubious qualities as Jesus.



Nontract #12.

© Copyright 1993 by Dan Barker. All rights reserved.

More copies of this nontract may be ordered for \$2.50 per dozen, or 10¢ each for 100 or more copies.
Order from:

Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.
PO Box 750
Madison WI 53701

<http://www.ffrf.org>

Please visit OklahomaAtheists.info

Why Jesus?



(FFRF nontract #12)

Jesus has been held in high regard by Christians and non-Christians alike. Regardless of whether he existed in history, or whether he was divine, many have asserted that the New Testament Christ character was the highest example of moral living. Many believe that his teachings, if truly understood and followed, would make this a better world.

Is this true? Does Jesus merit the widespread adoration he has received? Let's look at what he said and did.

Was Jesus Peaceable And Compassionate?

The birth of Jesus was heralded with "Peace on Earth," yet Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace: I came not to send peace but a sword." (Matthew 10:34) "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." (Luke 22:36) "But those

mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." (Luke 19:27. In a parable, but spoken of favorably.)

The burning of unbelievers during the Inquisition was based on the words of Jesus: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth . . . and men gather them into the fire, and they are burned." (John 15:6)

Jesus looked at his disciples "with anger" (Mark 3:5), and attacked merchants with a whip (John 2:15). He showed his respect for life by drowning innocent animals (Matthew 8:32). He refused to heal a sick child until he was pressured by the mother (Matthew 15:22-28).

The most revealing aspect of his character was his promotion of eternal torment. "The Son of man [Jesus himself] shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:41-42) "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." (Mark 9:43)

Is this nice? Is it exemplary to make your point with threats of violence? Is hell a kind, peaceful idea?

Did Jesus Promote "Family Values"?

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26)

"I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matthew 10:35-36)

When one of his disciples requested time off for his father's funeral, Jesus rebuked him: "Let the dead bury their dead." (Matthew 8:22)

Jesus never used the word "family." He never married or fathered children. To his own mother, he said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4)

What Were His Views On Equality And Social Justice?

Jesus encouraged the beating of slaves: "And that servant [slave], which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke 12:47) He never denounced servitude, incorporating the master-slave relationship into many of his parables.

He did nothing to alleviate poverty. Rather than sell some expensive ointment to help the poor, Jesus wasted it on himself, saying, "Ye have the poor with you always." (Mark 14:3-7)

No women were chosen as disciples or invited to the Last Supper.

What Moral Advice Did Jesus Give?

"There be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." (Matthew 19:12) Some believers, including church father Origen, took this verse literally and castrated themselves. Even metaphorically, this advice is in poor taste.

If you do something wrong with your eye or hand, cut/pluck it off (Matthew 5:29-30, in a sexual context).

Marrying a divorced woman is adultery. (Matthew 5:32)

Don't plan for the future. (Matthew 6:34)

Don't save money. (Matthew 6:19-20)

Don't become wealthy. (Mark 10:21-25)

Sell everything and give it to the poor. (Luke 12:33)

Don't work to obtain food. (John 6:27)

Don't have sexual urges. (Matthew 5:28)

Make people want to persecute you. (Matthew 5:11)

Let everyone know you are better than the rest. (Matthew 5:13-16)

Take money from those who have no savings and give it to rich investors. (Luke 19:23-26)

If someone steals from you, don't try to get it back. (Luke 6:30)

If someone hits you, invite them to do it again. (Matthew 5:39)

If you lose a lawsuit, give more than the judgment. (Matthew 5:40)

If someone forces you to walk a mile, walk two miles. (Matthew 5:41)

If anyone asks you for anything, give it to them without question. (Matthew 5:42).

Is this wise? Is this what you would teach your children?

Was Jesus Reliable?

Jesus told his disciples that they would not die before his second coming: "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). "Behold, I come quickly." (Revelation 3:11) It's been 2,000 years, and believers are still waiting for his "quick" return.

He mistakenly claimed that the mustard seed is "the least of all seeds" (Matt. 13:32), and that salt could "lose its savour" (Matthew 5:13).

Jesus said that whoever calls somebody a "fool" shall be in danger of hell fire (Matthew 5:22), yet he called people "fools" himself (Matthew 23:17).

Regarding his own truthfulness, Jesus gave two conflicting opinions: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (John 5:31), and "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true" (John 8:14).

Was Jesus A Good Example?

He irrationally cursed a fig tree for being fruitless out of season (Matthew 21:18-19, and Mark 11:13-14). He broke the law by stealing corn on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23), and he encouraged his disciples to take a horse without asking permission (Matthew 21).

The "humble" Jesus said that he was "greater than the temple" (Matt 12:6), "greater than Jonah" (Matthew 12:41), and "greater than Solomon" (Matthew 12:42). He appeared to suffer from a dictator's "paranoia" when he said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30).