



A



B



C

What Do You See? Three
Different Images of “Jesus” A,
B, C?

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” (Colossians 1:15)

When someone says “picture Jesus Christ” what image “pops” into your mind? When you see these images - all of which are intended to represent Jesus Christ - what do they make you think? Perhaps “A” makes you think of traditional religious iconography/experiences centered in western culture. “B” may remind you of the prophet Isaiah, when he said of Jesus *“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”* (Isaiah 53:2) Lastly, “C” may cause you to think of common false doctrines and

the “watering-down” of christian conviction. In any case, Jesus Christ demands us to answer the question “Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 15:16)

Clarity on Who/What Jesus Is

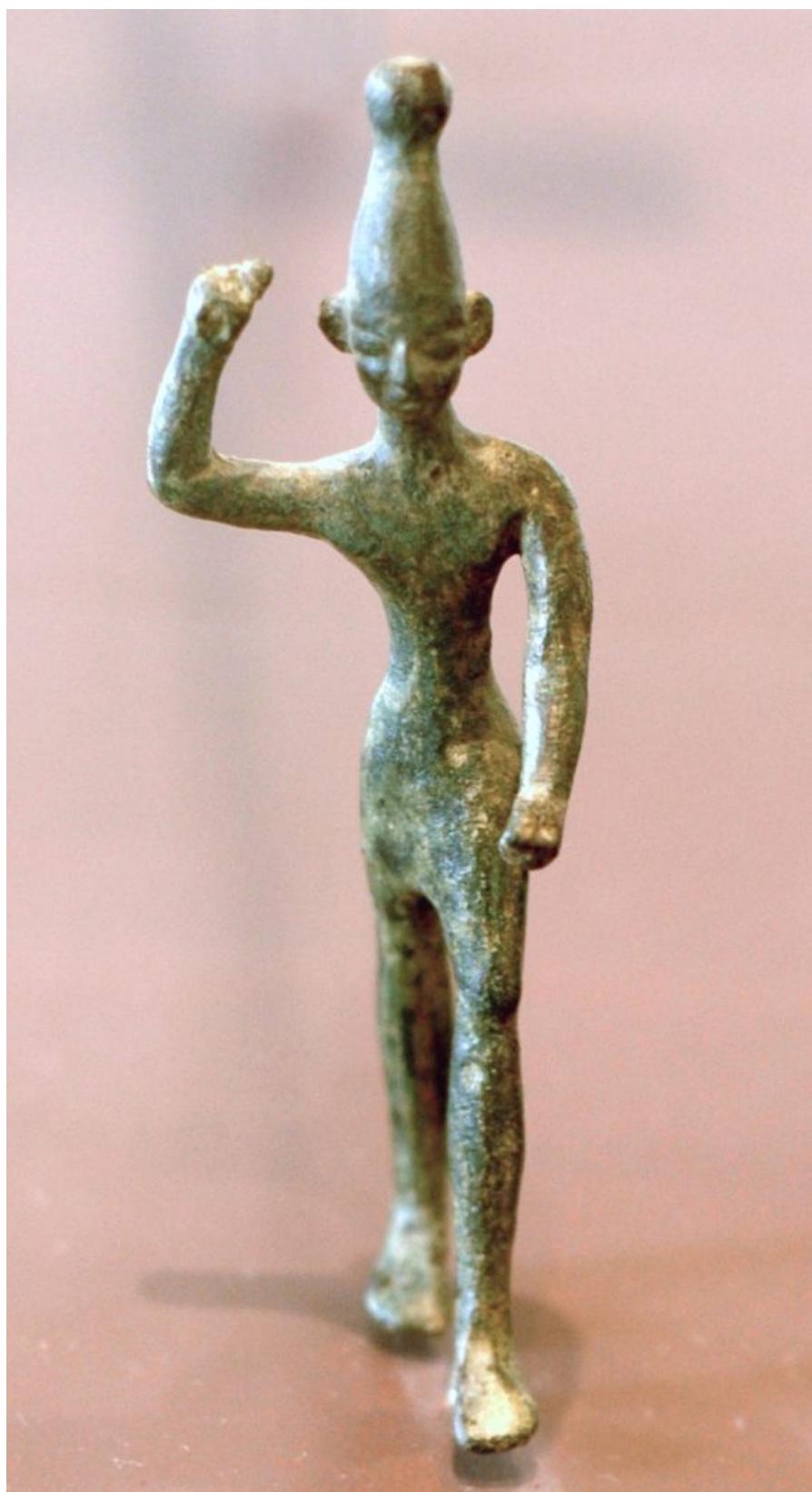
Paul brings clarity about Jesus Christ in the letter to the Colossians. Many different versions of Jesus have surfaced since the beginning of Christianity. We must choose where we will get our ideas about who – and what – Jesus is. It is our nature to craft our own version of Jesus that we are comfortable with. We want a Jesus that is agreeable to us and accepts our sensibilities, life, and notions. The scriptures say that we are created in God’s own image. We must not create God (or “gods”) in our own image! We must see Jesus according to Jesus in his Word! The Word will give us clarity to see the true Jesus!

Clarity on Who/What Jesus Is Not

Idolatry, in the Old Testament, is the act of creating some kind of statuette or image of a god (or gods) and worshipping that image. Today, this kind of “idolatry” in worshipping a statue and/or created image(s) is not as commonplace nor clear in “Western” cultures. However, this practice of idolatry is the norm throughout India, Asia, and Southeast Asia and many parts of the “Eastern” world. However, *spiritual* idolatry – creating “God” in our image – is the norm in “Christianity” today.



Ancient household fertility figures ("household gods") common in Israel. ***When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods.*** (Genesis 31:19)



Bronze figurine of a Baal, 14th-12th century BC, found at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) near the Phoenician coast. ***No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, 'Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?"*** (Isaiah

44:19)

Today traditions, experiences, culture, and social norms define and influence what many “see” when they “picture Jesus Christ.” When I was growing up, I had a myriad of traditional experiences of Jesus, many of them contradictory as well as eurocentric. I was a freshman in college taking “A History of World Religions” before it was clear in my mind that Jesus was in fact *not a white person at all*. I was taught that the experience of “speaking in tongues” and “praying Jesus into your heart” was a measure of my relationship with God and salvation. These are all things family, friends, and church-groups believed in the mid-western “culture” I grew up in.

Clarity On How To Define Jesus

I recall before studying the bible, numerous contradictions within the varying churches I’d attended growing up in the nature, tone, and teachings of “Jesus.” We learn from Colossians 1:18 that Jesus *“is the head of the body, the church.”* This means that the members of the church *“body”* represent the *“head”* in their *“life and doctrine.”* There are many “churches” claiming to be “Christian” but they do not practice what Jesus practiced nor do they preach what Jesus preached. This is *“spiritual idolatry”* – crafting a “Jesus” from traditions, sentiments, feelings, and experiences instead of letting God speak for himself through his Word.

Who Do You Say Jesus Is By Your Example?

The point here is not to become critical of “Christianity” or to deconstruct denominationalism. The Apostle Paul drives the point home in Colossians demanding clarity on who – and what – Jesus actually is *to the Colossians*. Our focus then becomes how have we created an inaccurate and idolatrous image of Jesus *in our own view* instead of focusing on

falsehoods in other churches. Where have *I personally* warped Jesus? Do presume to speak for him and/or put words in his mouth? Where is *my* “*life and doctrine*” personally and does *my* example accurately reflect the “*head*”, who is Jesus? Does my life show that I’m following the true Jesus of the bible or am I following “*my own*” version of Jesus? (John 8:31-32)

Am I An Alienated Enemy Or Faithful And Reconciled?

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel...” (Colossians 1:21-23)

When we are alienated and God’s enemy it is not merely by our actions! Our actions demonstrate our mindset, and it is in our mind where God is our enemy! In actuality, we make him our enemy, even though he does not want to be our enemy! When we are in sin and/or when we continually sin, our evil behavior alienates us from God in our minds. The Greek word for “repent” is “μετανοέω (metanoeō).” When you break it into its two parts, they mean Meta (μετά) = *after* or *change* and Noeō (νοέω) = *to think* or *to perceive*. Therefore, to “repent” means “*To change one’s mind*” or “*to think differently afterward*.” This means it is on us to change our minds and think differently about God and our actions!

What Does Jesus See?

In fact, God so deeply *does not want* to be “my enemy” that he “reconciled me completely” by sacrificing his Son Jesus! That is not someone who wants to see me as an enemy no matter what I think! On one hand, I am not God’s friend if I continue in my sin regardless of what *I* think! (John 15:14) I’m going to see an enemy and be seen as an enemy unless I repent! What do you see when you picture Jesus Christ? What does Jesus Christ see when he pictures you? Friend or foe? (Hebrews 10:26-31)

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ

is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-3)

In Conclusion

In conclusion, we want to see the real Jesus as defined by Jesus in the scriptures. We must allow God's word tell us who God truly is. Our traditions, experiences, opinions, culture, or anything else cannot be the basis of our image of Jesus Christ. We must picture “*the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6) when we “picture Jesus Christ.” And finally, we must change *our* minds about God and *our* behavior, and follow the bible’s *actual* picture of Jesus Christ closely.

“This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls...” (Jeremiah 6:16a)

Amen!