



The Challenger

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Who's This Jesus Everybody's Talking About?

By Executive Director Warren Hunsberger

Have you heard about a new movie that's out: *"The Passion of the Christ?"* Of course you have. Everybody is talking about it. Everybody has an opinion. Here are just a few: "Powerful, awesome, gut-wrenching, gory, exhausting!" (and those are just MY opinions!). Since last summer, we've read articles about *The Passion* in magazines and local newspapers, watched news reports on national TV, and listened to people all over every corner of society give their opinions. Just to name a few: the Anti-Defamation League, various representatives of the Jewish faith, Protestant Christian leaders, the Vatican, politicians, Diane Sawyer, Jack Nicholson, Andy Rooney (by the way, can anybody remember a week in the history of *60 Minutes* when their producers decided to devote all or significant parts of multiple broadcasts to Jesus Christ?). People at home, at school, at the office water cooler are talking about Jesus! And the thought hit me this last week, "As I listen to all of the people weigh in with their opinions of Jesus Christ, do any of them have a clue?" Some of the discussions I've heard remind me of "talk radio." So many talk radio hosts seem to be talking so they can listen to themselves! The callers they invite to be a part of the show seem to be an INTERRUPTION! The hosts talk ALL the time, but never seem to say anything REAL!

So back to all this talk about Jesus—is anybody close?

Does He look anything at all like the pictures that have been painted of Him?

Have our Sunday School lessons gotten close to revealing the true nature of Christ?

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John Eldredge asks in his book, *Wild at Heart*, "Is Jesus more like Mother Teresa or William Wallace from *Braveheart*?"

To those who want to offer their opinions of Mel Gibson's movie, I would ask, "Before you begin to pontificate, have you seen the film yourself?" To those who want to tell me what they think about Jesus, I'd ask, "Do you know Him personally; have you read His book? Have you made an effort to find out if you know anything at all about Christ before you open your mouth?"



I happen to have met Him personally in 1979 and I was immediately taught to regularly study His book – the Bible. I am NOT a scholar, and I have NOT done everything right since that day in September, 1979, but because God is ALL powerful, and infinitely wise, He has gotten SOME things through my thick skull. Here are some things I've come to know about Jesus personally, a few of the things we can learn about Him from the Bible. In the middle of all the talk about Mel Gibson's great movie, here are a couple of truths we can all take to the bank:

1. His reputation doesn't hinge on whether we win the debates on *60 Minutes* or at the office water cooler. He is God, Lord over ALL creation, whether Diane Sawyer acknowledges it or not.

It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." Isaiah 45:23 (NIV)

I can remember when Leonid Brezhnev (former Premier of the FORMER Soviet Union) died. The head of an atheistic world power dies and the next morning I'm in church and my pastor at the time says, "Well folks, there's another believer in the universe today!" WOW, what a sobering truth! EVERY man, woman, and child that ever lives will eventually bow

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SET FREE! — A Testimony of Hope

Howdy, my name is Howard. I am from Vicksburg, Mississippi and a student of five months here at Teen Challenge in Colfax.

I was raised in a warm and loving Christian home with three other siblings. At age four I was baptized in my father's Catholic church and around the age of seven, I acknowledged Jesus Christ as my savior in Sunday School.

Bad decisions and poor choices at an early age led me very quickly to a life of anger, self-hatred, and depression. The pangs of drug addiction had completely taken root by the age of 16 and by the time I reached college I was living from one fix to another. There were near fatal car wrecks, overdoses and arrests, but nothing seemed to deter my spirit from its self-destructive path. I did whatever it took to get the drugs. I lied, stole, and manipulated. I became numb to sin.

Prior to Teen Challenge I had participated in several top-notch treatment centers, and most of them I entered with a sincere desire to get clean and stay sober, yet all my attempts to stay sober fell short within weeks after leaving each treatment center. "I" could not stop using drugs. "I" could not make the pain go away. Little did I know, "I" wasn't the way.

In August, 2003 I was in jail facing two felony counts of grand theft for stealing from my boss and my

parents. I had no hope and had thrown in the towel. Out of right field, an old childhood friend came to see me in jail who had recently graduated from Teen Challenge. He had "peace and joy" all over himself. He told me what Jesus Christ had done in his life and recommended Teen Challenge. We got the necessary information to my attorney and I am now a part of the Teen Challenge family.



My experience here at Teen Challenge just within five months has been nothing short of radical and transforming. I have been blessed with a complete renewal of spirit and mind. I no longer hate myself or experience depression, and my emotions have begun to lose power over me. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (1 Cor. 5:17, NIV)

Jesus Christ has indeed given me new life and is teaching me new things each day. I am learning a lot about self-denial, self-discipline, and a reverent heart. Moreover, I am learning that this new life is a gift that came at no small cost. Jesus Christ endured rejection, shed blood and bore pain beyond my comprehension, all so He could have a relationship with me. It truly is amazing grace! Thank you, Jesus. "Jesus answered, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." (John 14:6, NIV)

Correction

I-80 Storage of Prairie City was inadvertently omitted from the January Update listing of business sponsors for our 2003 Golf Marathon. Sorry Mike!



before Jesus Christ, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. It's cause to celebrate when we're used to help them to their knees in THIS life, prior to Judgment Day! My prayer is that during our discussions at the water cooler, God might use us to point some folks to His truth. Even if a lot of the folks doing the talking these days don't have a clue, isn't it great that even the NEGATIVE attention the media is giving Jesus is causing people to examine the Lord on their own? Isn't it great that some of the same folks who mocked us when we surrendered to Christ and our lives changed, hunt us down and ask important questions in times like these? The only pressure we should feel is to be available, be obedient, take advantage of every divine appointment this movie and all the water cooler discussions bring our way. We don't have to have all the answers; we just need to OBEY and allow God to use us as His ambassadors, according to His plan. Jesus Himself didn't feel pressure to answer every question and defend Himself (or His reputation).

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. Matthew 26:59-63 (NIV)

In spite of all of the lies, trumped up charges, and vicious attacks, in just a few hours Jesus would speak these words from the cross, "IT IS FINISHED!" The work Jesus finished on the cross was dying for the very people who killed Him, and it didn't matter what they thought of Him. What truly mattered to Jesus was ACCOMPLISHING the work the Father had given Him.

2. Jesus is THE ONLY HOPE for salvation for EVERY human being. Even if the New York Times doesn't consider Him politically correct, Jesus Christ is God's answer for ALL of us. Jesus Christ is God's answer for EVERY need. We don't have the option of denying His divinity and the truth of His sinless life, atoning death, resurrection from the dead, and at the same time choose to acknowledge Him as a wise teacher:

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.

From now on, you do know him and have seen him." John 14:5-7 (NIV)

Even though some would try to make Him into somebody or something He is not, no false charge, no human error, or outright rebellion against His authority changes the fact that JESUS IS GOD IN THE FLESH, SON OF GOD, LORD OF LORDS. C.S. Lewis, in his book, "*Mere Christianity*" puts it beautifully: "Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let's not come with any patronizing nonsense about Him being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." Here's how Jesus said it:

Jesus Christ is God's solution to SIN ...

At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your

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Helping People Who Hurt

Who's This Jesus... (continued from Page 3)

forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." John 6:41-58 (NIV)

Jesus is the ONLY answer because in spite of all of our babbling, we ALL have only ONE problem: SIN. Jesus Christ is God's solution to SIN that separates us from Him. Human teaching and philosophy, false religions that deny the deity of Christ and urge us to trust in something other than His blood, idols we create with our hands and hearts, are all DEAD and can never lead to LIFE. Jesus Christ IS LIFE.

3. Jesus died for MY sin and YOURS, and He is ALIVE today.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

Not one of us is good enough to get to heaven on our own, not even Andy Rooney who took it upon himself to pronounce as a "word from the Lord" that Mel Gibson was a mistake that God made. God became flesh in Jesus, lived a sinless life and took ALL of our sin upon Himself, and paid the penalty our sin demands. DYING was His reason for living. He died for you so YOU might live forgiven. And, Jesus is

ALIVE today! Jesus predicted His resurrection multiple times. Here's just once:

When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief. Matthew 17:22-23 (NIV)

Eyewitnesses SAW the resurrected Christ: Jesus was seen alive over a 40-day period after His resurrection by men, women, skeptics, believers, individuals, and simultaneously by a group of over 500 people. History supports the resurrection. Within a generation of Christ's life, documents were written about His death and resurrection. If we study the facts without prejudice, the historical records are more in number and more reliable than any ancient event we know of.

As you finish this article, take a moment and think of each member of your family. Think through the faces in your neighborhood, at your job. As you think of each person, remember this final truth about Jesus: THEY are why He had to die. He lives today and calls each of us to Himself. How will we respond? Will we bow before Jesus in this life, or decide to wait until we bow on Judgment Day?