

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

Phil O. Waldo
Lead Pastor



1224 Hancock Drive
Boone, Iowa 50036

Phone: 515 432-3329

Website: www.booneopenbible.com

E-mail: office@booneopenbible.com
pastor@booneopenbible.com

SERMON TITLE

Altered Caricature or Actual Christ

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Revelation 1:12-20

SYNOPSIS

If we're not careful, without realizing it, we may be following a caricature of Christ instead of the real Christ.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ **Altered Caricature or Actual Christ?**

Years ago, Naomi and I walked past one of those sidewalk caricature artists. You know the kind... you sit down, they take a few minutes, and they draw your face. Except it doesn't really look like your face. Your nose gets blown up to the size of Texas. Your ears could pick up satellite signals. Your chin could cut glass. We enjoyed the outcome, so we've done it multiple times over the years. (slide) Here's the thing: a caricature is recognizable; it resembles you, but it's distorted.

Now, this is the danger for us as Christians... If we're not careful, without realizing it, we may be following a caricature of Christ instead of the real Christ. We latch onto one feature of Jesus we like such as His kindness or His justice, and we exaggerate that one part while ignoring the rest. And before we know it, we're no longer worshiping Jesus as He is. We're worshiping a cartoon of Him.

We have recently been talking about the importance of context. If we only read a verse without examining the surrounding chapter, we can get some mixed-up ideas about the truth. The same goes with our understanding of Jesus. If we only focus on one or two aspects of His character, we can get a distorted view of who He really is.

☞ **Revelation 1:12-20 describes the Actual Christ**

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. 19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Most people today are okay with a "nice" Jesus, a good teacher, a gentle man, maybe even a spiritual influencer, but nothing more. However, Revelation gives us the actual Jesus... majestic, holy, blazing with glory. Let's walk through this vision together.

v. 13 Like a Son of Man



Our culture likes a Jesus who relates, and this is a part of who Jesus is. Jesus frequently called Himself "The Son of Man." He didn't just drop in for a weekend visit, **He became one of us.** **Philippians 2:7** says He "made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant." And, **Hebrews 4:15** says He's been tempted in every way like us, yet without sin. So, He knows what it feels like to be tired; to be tempted; to feel betrayed. Therefore, when He talks about our sin or struggle, He's not judging from a distance, He's speaking as one who's walked in our shoes.

v. 13 Dressed in a Robe with a Golden Sash

This robe isn't just for looks, it's the robe of a High Priest. And, the golden sash tells us He's also a King. Many want Jesus the servant, but not Jesus the sovereign. A lot of people like Jesus the helper, but not Jesus the ruler. But the Jesus John saw isn't asking for our vote, He already wears the golden sash and the crown.

☞ The world says, "**Jesus gets me.**" True. But Revelation says, **Jesus also governs me.** As, we often say and sing, He's the King of kings and Lord of lords.

v. 14 Head and Hair White Like Wool

This image comes from Daniel 7 when he describes the "Ancient of Days." That's deity language. White hair represents eternal wisdom and purity. People want a Jesus who gives good advice, ☞ but Revelation shows us the **Jesus who gives truth that transforms.** When He speaks, it's not opinion, it's revelation. His wisdom is far above ours. **Isaiah 55:9** says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

v. 14 Eyes Like Blazing Fire

Have you ever been looked at by someone who can see right through you? That's Jesus. He sees everything; nothing hidden, nothing missed. The pop culture Jesus "understands" us; the real Jesus also sees through us. **Hebrews 4:13** says, "Everything is uncovered before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." A.W. Tozer wrote that no skeleton can surprise God; He knew every failure before He called you, and He still said yes.

☞ We love a **Jesus who sees our pain.** But this same **Jesus also sees our pride.** And that's not to shame us, it's to heal us.

Let's linger here for a second. Let Him look at your heart. What does He see? He looks at us with a look of love that burns away everything false.

v. 15 Feet Like Bronze Glowing in a Furnace

Culture often paints Jesus as fragile, kind of like Gandhi, but Revelation shows Him as unshakable. Bronze is solid and doesn't easily buckle under pressure. His feet represent strength and stability. We may tremble on the Rock, but the Rock never trembles under us. The world wants a soft Jesus



☞ who sympathizes, but not always a strong one who sustains. **Jesus carries us** through every fire. **Isaiah 46:4** says, "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."

v. 15 Voice Like Rushing Waters

☞ People like a **Jesus who whispers comfort**, but not always one whose **words command**.

Have you ever stood near a big waterfall? It's not background noise; it fills the air. You feel it in your chest. That's how John describes the voice of Jesus. **Revelation 19:6** says it's like "the sound of many waters." When He speaks, creation listens. Demons flee. Hearts soften. Lives change. ☞ **Jesus doesn't just advise; He authorizes**. His voice brings life and order out of chaos. *He speaks with authority; With a word he simply says his will and things just come to be.*

v. 16 In His Right Hand He Held Seven Stars

Those stars represent the leaders, messengers, the people of God. He's holding them in His hand; not juggling, not dropping... holding. The world preaches self-security or social-security; but Jesus offers supernatural-security.

A trapeze artist once said, "We dare to leap because of the net beneath us." When you know ☞ **God's hand is holding you**, you can dare to step out in faith.

v. 16 Out of His Mouth Came a Double-Edged Sword

The popular Jesus soothes the conscience; the real Jesus cuts to the heart. That sword is His Word. **Hebrews 4:12** says it's "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword." It comforts the broken and cuts the proud. *He proves with just his voice that he is Lord of lords.*

☞ **Our culture wants a Jesus who affirms everything we already believe. But the real Jesus uses His Word to cut away what's killing us.** Each word He speaks divides the false from what is true; His sword of truth still pierces hearts.

v. 16 His Face is Like the Sun Shining in All Its Brilliance

Revelation says Jesus is the **source** of all light. Picture the noonday sun, you can't look straight at it. That's His glory. Everything else... churches, leaders, celebrities, politicians... they're like candles compared to Him. *His glory outshines all the rest even in the darkest hour.* **Hebrews 1:3** reminds us, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory." People say, "All religions have light." No, they have reflections. Jesus *is* the source.

v. 13 & 20 Among the Lampstands

Many believe in a distant Savior; Revelation shows a present Shepherd. John sees Jesus walking among the lampstands... that's His Church. Not above it, not away from it... *among* it. **Ephesians**



1:22–23 says He's the head of the Church, His body. We often hear, "I love Jesus, just not the Church." But **Jesus says, "I'm in the Church. That's where you'll find Me."** In **Matthew 18:20** Jesus says, "where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Even with our flaws, He's still walking among us, tending, trimming, refilling the lamps so that we keep shining.

He is the Alpha and Omega (v. 8)

--from Barnes' Notes... Among the Jewish rabbis it was common to use the first and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet to denote the whole of anything, from beginning to end. It means that he is the beginning and the end of all things; that he was at the commencement, and will be at the close; and it is thus equivalent to saying that he has always existed, and that he will always exist.

***☞ He's the Alpha and Omega the first and the last
He's beyond our comprehension he's the future and the past
He's before time and creation and he'll still be when it's done
He's the one who was, the one who is, and the one who is to come***

When you see Jesus this way, you stop trying to make Him fit into your life and you start to realize your life fits inside Him.

John heard a voice. Are you listening?
He turned to see. Will you turn to Him?
He saw Christ among the lampstands. Do others see Him in you?
He fell at His feet. Have you bowed in awe before Him?

Jesus is not only the meek teacher of culture, but the blazing Son of God. He's not the distant Savior of history, but the present King walking among His people. That's the Jesus we worship. That's the Jesus we reveal.

When Jesus is really revealed, you stop trying to control Him, and you start to worship Him. We don't want an Altered Caricature of the Lord, we want the Actual Christ. He's the one above all and he is worthy of our praise.

I came upon this list that describes Jesus pretty well. It's called Christ in the "C's"



Christ in the “C’s”

- ☞ **Creator** — By Him all things were made, and without Him nothing exists that has been made.
- ☞ **Cornerstone** — He is the foundation we build our lives upon when all else is shifting sand.
- ☞ **Captain** — He leads His people safely through the storms of life.
- ☞ **Comforter** — When your heart is heavy and weary, He whispers peace into your soul.
- ☞ **Companion** — He never leaves us nor forsakes us; He walks beside us through every valley.
- ☞ **Counselor** — He is the Wonderful Counselor who gives wisdom when the path is unclear.
- ☞ **Compassionate-One** — His heart breaks for the lost, the broken, and the overlooked.
- ☞ **Cleanser** — By His blood, our deepest sin-stains are washed whiter than snow.
- ☞ **Covenant-Maker** — His promises cannot be broken.
- ☞ **Changer** — He makes all things new, turning sinners into saints and failures into testimonies.
- ☞ **Chief Shepherd** — He leads His flock faithfully, protecting them until He returns in glory.
- ☞ **Challenger** — He refuses to let us stay the same, calling us to deny ourselves and follow Him.
- ☞ **Consuming Fire** — His holiness burns away sin and purifies His people for His glory.
- ☞ **Conqueror** — He has conquered sin, death, and hell, and in Him we share the victory.
- ☞ **Crown-Bearer** — He once wore a crown of thorns, but now He wears a crown of glory forever.

Closing options:

Revelation Song

He is the King