



# Seriously?

Isaiah 53:2 NIV

**He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.**

## What Do You Make of Jesus?

I feel like I am often in the minority. Somewhere around eighty percent of Americans have bought a lottery ticket, but I never have. According to Consumer's Research magazine, lotteries have the worst odds of any form of legalized gambling. Only eight out of One Hundred million who play the lottery ever win a million dollars. The odds of hitting the jackpot in California is one in fourteen million. What is worse, if you were to win, a million dollars, the IRS takes twenty percent off the top. After state and local governments take their part, you are only left with \$560,000. It gets worse. The state pays only the first \$50,000 in cash and then pays the rest over twenty years, saving itself \$100,000. In the end, the one-million-dollar prize is only worth about \$468,000. It doesn't always go well for lottery winners either. In 1985, Donna Sobb won \$100 in the California lottery, which qualified her for a 2 million-dollar jackpot. But when her picture showed up in the local newspaper, a police officer recognized Sobb and she was arrested on an eight-month-old shoplifting warrant. In 1986, the California lottery winner Terry Garret was arrested only months after winning one-million dollars. He was caught selling cocaine out of the sports car he bought with the winnings.

The other day I was told in a conversation that my view of Christianity was fine for me but not hers in such a way that it seemed this person could not stomach it like a vegetarian looking at my hamburger or a MAC owner complaining having to put up with my PC. What must be realized is that this person has the majority view of most people, at least here in California. Many no longer take Christ seriously...certainly not the totality of Him. They respect much of what Christianity has accomplished but reject the Lordship of Christ and the need for salvation. There is no comprehension of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is devalued and disregarded and the goodness of a life lived in Christ is disdained.

The Bible predicted this low view of Jesus nearly three thousand years ago. **He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.** (Isaiah 53:2 NIV) The root coming out of dry ground is worthless; has no future, no hope in it. Jesus, the Bible said, would not be taken seriously, have no intrinsic value, nothing to draw people to Him. The miracles, the teaching, and most importantly the Cross would go unnoticed and disregarded. The Bible admits that those who should have been most likely to embrace Jesus, the crowds of Jerusalem, screamed for His crucifixion. The Pharisees and Sadducees and other religious leaders of His time tried to poke holes in His logic. The Roman soldiers who took charge of Him when the Jewish authorities wanted Him killed mocked Jesus and cruelly abused Him. Even today, the major religions of our time have not taken seriously what is said of Him in the Bible. The Mormons claim He was the brother of Lucifer and never God in flesh. The Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe He was God

and deny that He actually died on the Cross. Hinduism, Iglesia Ni Cristo and Islam all reject the premise that He is God and the only source of Eternal Life. Jesus is not “good enough” to most of the people of this world and we cannot count on this turning around.

So, what should we do about the reaction of the world to Jesus Christ? How should you respond to a great crowd of skeptics who work with you, go to school with you, go to the same parties, are at family gatherings you attend and work on your hair? Make it clear that each person’s sins are monstrous and must be forgiven, that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world and the one source of eternal life, that God can transform anyone into a new Creation who has the Spirit of the Lord living within, that every person must be born-again and given a new life through Jesus Christ. What benefit is there to saying these kinds of things if the people hearing it have no respect for Jesus and don’t really believe in Him? Consider the Scripture’s take on what is possible when God gets involved in a person’s life.

In Luke 13: 18 is a most provocative and critical statement made by Jesus. He said that the Kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed. **Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches."** (Luke 13:18-19 NIV) A mustard seed is the most insignificant and inadequate little package of life you will ever encounter. It holds absolutely no promise when you gaze upon it yet the most wondrous and glorious of flowering beacons of splendor rise up out of it. You may tell a completely disinterested and self-satisfied soul that she needs Jesus to put her life together and it could seem like a waste of time and effort on your part, but it won’t be. Immediately, God will plant a little tiny seed of doubt in that heart. A slight, imperceptible crack in the self confidence of that person will develop. No one may see it. No human eye will spot it but the doubt will begin to take root that everything is “fine with me”. “It is not well with my soul” will begin to develop.

It is this planted Gospel mustard seed that will trigger a chain of events that can be devastating for the soul clinging to the lie that salvation is not needed and sin inconsequential. God will bring circumstances that make unbelief illogical and untenable. Questions will arise about eternity and life after death and relationships and purpose and direction. Christ will become the elephant in the room; always lurking in the mind but avoided like the plague. Something will happen though that will force a decision about Jesus; turn to Him for help or reject Him and hide from salvation. It will be a great battle in the soul, a spiritual crisis of epic proportions. What will come of it, we cannot say, but this will be true. Jesus will be faced and given serious thought. If He is received as Savior, all of Heaven’s power will come and join those souls and what seemed so meaningless and small will become the greatest force of good found anywhere in the universe. When Christ becomes a part of them and He begins to transform them into mighty children of God, the amazement they will have as they look back on what they once were and how beautiful their lives are now with Jesus, they will wonder how they ever thought they could get along without Him. If someone would try to convince them once they have Christ that salvation is unnecessary and the putting away of sins inconsequential, they would shake their heads and have this one response, “Seriously?”