

RESISTING THE POLITICISED JESUS

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Today's Gospel reading from John 8 is full of conflict and name-calling.

Jesus is in a tense exchange with the religious leaders and claims to be speaking the very words of God. But they are not listening.

He tells them plainly, "The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (v.47).

Their response is to lash out.

They accuse him of being a Samaritan—a heretic.

- They say he has a demon.
- They even call him a liar, asking, "Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" (v.53).

Jesus, undeterred, replies, "If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you."

The exchange grows so hostile that the crowd picks up stones to kill him, and Jesus slips away from the temple.

His opponents called him many things, but what do we call Jesus?

That question is just as pressing today as it was then. Across cultures and generations, people have tried to name and define Jesus in ways that reflect their own values, struggles, and expectations.

Some see Him as a wise teacher. Others as a prophet. Some call Him Savior and Lord, while others reduce Him to a symbol for their cause.

The names we give to Jesus often reveal more about us than about Him—and in our time, the temptation to reshape Jesus in our own image remains as strong as ever.

One especially prominent image in today's culture is Jesus the Political Messiah.

To see Jesus as a political messiah is to misunderstand his mission by reducing his kingdom to earthly power and national agendas, usually associated with a particular political philosophy.

Messianic Politics so closely identifies the teachings of Jesus with a particular political system that the system itself becomes sacred, to the extent that rejecting the politics is tantamount to rejecting Jesus.

Depending on who you ask, this political Jesus looks very different.

On one side, He is viewed as a champion of the poor and the oppressed.

This interpretation, especially shaped by Liberation Theology in the 20th century, sometimes draws from Marxist themes such as class struggle, critiques of capitalism, and the idea that religion either suppresses or empowers people.

In this view, Jesus is no longer meek and mild—He's radical, a revolutionary figure of resistance.

There is some truth in this portrait.

- Jesus did care for the poor.
- He did challenge injustice.
- He preached a kingdom where the last would be first.

But taken too far, this view can reduce Him to a political activist—someone who died for a cause, but not for sin. The cross becomes sidelined in the pursuit of justice.

On the other side, Jesus is portrayed as a guardian of tradition and moral order—and for some, even a restorer of national greatness.

Those who view Jesus in this way might say that He wants us to return to our Christian roots, to preserve our heritage, and to stand firm against moral decline. There is often a deep concern that the nation has drifted and that dark forces—cultural, moral, or political—are eroding its foundation. In this vision, Jesus becomes the divine endorsement behind efforts to reclaim the nation’s soul.

Again, there is truth here.

- Jesus does care about righteousness.
- He does call nations to account.
- He does bless those who hunger and thirst for justice.

But this view can also become distorted when Jesus is turned into a symbol of national pride rather than the crucified Lamb. The cross becomes a banner for cultural dominance instead of sacrificial love. Faith becomes fused with power.

In both versions—whether left or right—Jesus is reduced.

He becomes a tool to promote a cause, rather than the Lord who calls us to submit to His cause. The danger in both directions is the same: when we reshape Jesus to fit our politics, we stop listening to what He is actually saying.

And what He says in John 8 is startling. In the middle of all the accusations and chaos, Jesus declares, “Before Abraham was, I am.”

With these words, He isn’t merely claiming to be old or wise—He’s claiming to be God. He uses the divine name God gave to Moses at the burning bush: “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14).

- This isn’t metaphor.
- It’s not poetic flourish.
- It’s a direct, unmistakable revelation of His divine identity.

And this is the moment everything shifts.

The crowd understood what He was saying. That's why they picked up stones. Not because Jesus made a political statement, but because He made a divine one.

- He wasn't presenting a new policy.
- He wasn't aligning with one side or the other.

He was revealing the mystery of who He truly is: the eternal Son, one with the Father, present before Abraham, and Lord over all.

This is what gets lost when we reduce Jesus to a political figure.

When we bind Jesus to a particular political system to the point of making the system itself sacred, we will miss his true agenda.

We turn the great "I AM" into a mouthpiece for our agendas.

- There is no emperor who can save us.
- There is no king with power enough to heal the nations.
- There is no president, no prime minister, no ruler of this age—no matter how eloquent their speech or sweeping their vision—who can bring lasting peace and true prosperity to the earth.

We must not place our ultimate hope in any earthly leader or political philosophy, for no system of man, no party platform, no human agenda will ever usher in the paradise we all long for.

At best, they offer glimpses—fleeting shadows of justice, temporary tastes of order, momentary flashes of hope. But they cannot deliver what our hearts truly crave.

Only one can bring paradise to earth. Only King Jesus.

Only when He returns in glory to establish His eternal kingdom will the swords be beaten into plowshares, the tears wiped from every eye, and the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Until then, we live as citizens of heaven, not placing our faith in the kingdoms of men, but in the King of kings and Lord of lords—who was, and is, and is to come.

The Jesus of John 8 isn't someone we can use.

He is someone we must worship.

Before Abraham was, before our ideologies were, before our nations and movements rose or fell—*He is*.

And that changes everything.