

## White Horse Inn

0:00:02 **David Zahl:** So when we think about consumerism and Jesus or the great play on this came in that movie, *Talladega Nights*, the classic scene is of Will Ferrell who's a NASCAR driver and he's saying grace to tiny baby Jesus, dear tiny baby Jesus and his wife interrupts him and says, "You know Jesus grew up." And he says, "Well that's my favorite Jesus, the Jesus I like to imagine him is a tiny baby," the Christmas Jesus. It acknowledges that we view Jesus as someone that we can select what we like and what we don't like and conforms to our self-image.

00:00:40 **Narrator:** Five centuries ago in taverns and public houses across Europe, the masses would gather for discussion and debate over the latest ideas sweeping the land. From one such meeting place, a small Cambridge inn called the White Horse, the Reformation came to the English speaking world. Carrying on the tradition, welcome to the *White Horse Inn*.

00:01:05 **Michael Horton:** Several years ago, a book by Stephen Prothero garnered significant attention, it's titled *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*. The Boston University professor showed how Jesus had been lifted from his 1st century Jewish context and made into an icon not only of America's civil religion but of particular social groups and movements in our history. So for him, there's the Jesus of Thomas Jefferson without the miracles, divinity, and doctrines of original sin, substitutionary atonement, the resurrection – basically the Unitarian or Protestant liberal Jesus. Then there's the sweet savior of American Protestantism with its pietistic and revivalistic emphasis. In an attempt to get men to man up, there was the manly Jesus of the evangelists D.L. Moody and Billy Sunday, not to mention the Promised Keeper's movement of the 1990s. There is Jesus Christ Superstar of the Jesus Movement or the Mormon elder brother, the good Jewish rabbi or the black Jesus, as well as the more Anglo-oriented surfer Jesus or the Jesus of the social gospel, with various permutations depending on whether he's made the mascot of women, gays, or other special interests.

At a crucial point in his ministry, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Evidently, there were also various answers that people had in their daily lives about Jesus' identity. Peter stepped up to the plate, "Some say that you're John the Baptist recently martyred, Elijah, or one of the prophets." "Yes," Jesus continued, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Well at least the Jewish public was thinking about the biblical story and not their own. The characters they threw out were actually from the Bible. How about us? How about the ways in which we shape Jesus to the subjective whims of our individual lives and our social groups? With us to discuss this important topic are your usual hosts, Kim Riddlebarger and Rod Rosenblatt, and joining the panel for this broadcast are two good friends, David Zahl. David is the director of Mockingbird Ministries and editor-in-chief of the *Mockingbird Blog*. He also currently serves on the Staff of Christ Episcopal Church in Charlottesville, Virginia. David, thank you for being with us.

00:03:20 **David Zahl:** So glad to be here.

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00:03:22 **Michael Horton:** And also Jim Gilmore. Jim Gilmore is coauthor of *Authenticity* as well as *The Experienced Economy* and these two books are published by Harvard Business School Press. It's always good to have you on, Jim.

00:03:33 **Jim Gilmore:** Thanks for having me back.

00:03:35 **Michael Horton:** This is an interesting subject because we don't usually talk about the intersection of Jesus and pop culture. What does it mean first of all when a central figure, someone like Jesus migrates from historical existence to pop cultural icon?

00:03:53 **David Zahl:** Well, it means that I think first and foremost that he's got some real gravitas and some staying power that people are familiar with Jesus to some extent and that familiarity can be a real liability as we know because there's varying degrees of familiarity. But what we see in that migration and a lot of people have said this but the Jesus that we invent really do tell us a lot about what we're preoccupied with, what we're afraid of, what we are interested in and this tells us both about what Christians are dealing with as well as sort of the culture at large and so I think that the culture is so fast-paced right now and there are so many different images of -- if you're just trying to track the images of Jesus that are being promulgated out there, it's virtually impossible because it changes so quickly and there's so much information, so much pop culture that's being produced.

00:04:45 **Michael Horton:** So if you're trying to make him relevant for some subgroup in order to attract followers, you're going to find that it's pretty ephemeral and it's going to move on pretty quickly to some other icon because it's always changing?

00:04:58 **David Zahl:** That's correct, or some different iteration of Jesus himself. I mean you could see -- a number of the Jesus's you mentioned in the prologue about sort of more sentimental Jesus, sort of the pietistic Jesus meek and mild who just a closer walk with the kind of Jesus.

00:05:17 **Michael Horton:** Our Sunday school portrait.

00:05:18 **David Zahl:** Yeah the velvet Jesus you might even say. There's still an element of that but that's been I would say co-opted by almost a more socially progressive Jesus or a hipster Jesus.

00:05:31 **Michael Horton:** Let's talk about some of these examples. First of all, the super Jesus, who's the super Jesus?

00:05:36 **David Zahl:** I think super Jesus is the very understandable progression of Jesus being portrayed as a superhero as sort of the proto-superhero, the original empowerment myth, Jesus with powers who's coming to sort of defeat the bad guys. And I happen to be a big superhero fan. I love comic books. I generally enjoy a lot of the movies that are at the multiplex but anyone in America can see that we're sort of flooded with this stuff at this point. In 2015, there are more movies made about superheroes than are not made about

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superheroes, and that's an overstatement but you know what I mean. So the fact that Jesus would then be sort of dragged into this, there was a well-known children's song called "Jesus Is My Superhero" that was put out and you could find it very easily but that's a pretty transparent plea I think to get kids interested in Jesus with Jesus with the cape and things like that and muscles. This is the man of steel, not the man of sorrows. And the *History Channel* that did the Bible miniseries which was an enormous hit, I think it was a surprisingly large hit. People weren't expecting it to be such a big hit but this guy, Mark Burnett who is so -- he kind of controls the airwaves almost with every reality TV show under the sun, he created a Jesus that if you watch it, there's a lot of -- Jesus is sort of a -- maybe not a superhero but the miracles are kind of grandiose and the waters, the effects... the amount of budget they have.

00:07:06 **Michael Horton:** Cecil B. Demille to the nth power?

00:07:07 **David Zahl:** To the nth power because it's sort of on steroids or on CGI.

00:07:13 **Michael Horton:** And that's an important point, isn't it that the way Jesus is portrayed as Superman really takes away from the fact that first of all he's God. It's not that he has super human powers, he's God and secondly, that he laid aside his prerogative to use that divine power and in weakness made himself of no reputation to bear our sins.

00:07:39 **David Zahl:** There's none of that.

00:07:40 **Jim Gilmore:** That's the thing that strikes me is that a distortion of the incarnation, that rather God becoming man, it's something or anything incarnating with Jesus. So pick your anything, you take your self-image and integrate it with Jesus. My business book on *Authenticity* contends that we live in a time when people are purchasing based on authenticity which we define as purchasing on a basis of conforming to self-image. And I think people are buying a Jesus, if you are not monetarily buying into in terms of ascending to or proposition, they take their self-image, appropriate it from culture and incarnate that with Jesus and that's there alternate Jesus.

00:08:19 **Michael Horton:** So it's Depeche Mode, "Your Own Personal Jesus."

00:08:21 **Jim Gilmore:** That's right, exactly.

00:08:22 **Michael Horton:** How much of this is just really consumerism? That we are looking for products that we can use for our own life projects and Jesus just happens to be one of those products you can find on the aisle?

00:08:39 **David Zahl:** I think that there's a lot of validity to that. I mean Jesus also plays into sort of certain childhood associations. So when we think about consumerism and Jesus or the great example or the great play on this came in that movie *Talladega Nights* with Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly and the classic scene is of Will Ferrell who's a NASCAR driver and he's saying grace over a smorgasbord of fast-food with his family and he keeps praying the grace to tiny baby Jesus, dear tiny baby Jesus. And at one point his wife interrupts him and

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says, "You know Jesus grew up, that he wasn't just a baby," and he says, "Well that's my favorite Jesus, the Jesus I like to imagine him as is tiny baby," the Christmas Jesus. You know hey, I love Christmas Jesus too but it acknowledges that we view Jesus as someone that we can select what we like and what we don't like and pray to that. And not only that but the Jesus that he's praying to is a Jesus that's concerned explicitly with blessing his racing, his career, and certain products. I mean it's all a play on product placement but this is a Jesus that is deeply consumerist. However, it's also a very American Jesus and a Jesus that is ideologically invested in a certain kind of system that we wanted that conforms to our self-image.

00:10:06 **Kim Riddlebarger:** I think the reason that works is if you grew up in Protestant mainline Christianity, you were introduced to the baby Jesus in your Sunday school curriculum and you were given the Jesus meek and mild. The moralistic Jesus, he's malleable already when you even have the category. It's not the Jesus of the New Testament. The second thing is we talked earlier, I was raised in the Christian bookstore industry and I remember the big shock when the Christian publishing industry switched from Warner Sallman's *Head of Christ* to Francis Hook's *Rugged Jesus*. So this has been going a long time and I think now social media just has accelerated and you get the Ricky Bobby Jesus.

00:10:45 **Michael Horton:** Yeah how much of this is cycles? So you go back to the days of D.L. Moody and Billy Sunday muscular Christianity and reacting against Christianity basically becoming within mainline American Protestantism a sentimental, moralistic, feminized kind of religion, and then Billy Sunday baseball player turned evangelist is going to hit the devil with his baseball bat. Everything becomes a kind of trite macho saying and Jesus is very much your coach, leading your team to the victory. And then after a while, you have this era in evangelicalism that was so sappy, so sentimental, sort of Jesus is my girlfriend and then men reacting against that and saying, "Maybe it would be good to try to focus again on Jesus' beating up your god."

00:11:44 **David Zahl:** Exactly. I mean it gets hard to not get too cynical about this because it really does flow in cycles that telegraph themselves, because this macho Jesus was more ascendant in the last decade and then with all of the crises around sort of various figures in Reformed Christianity, that's become transparently non-serious. So what used to be serious has now become a joke and there's lots of plays on that. You look at the Stephen Sawyer portraits with Jesus with a big father shaped tattoo and looking like a long-haired Bruce Springsteen, or more like a country music Jesus like Billy Ray Cyrus. But on the other hand you used to have hipster Jesus which would be the sort of the bluer state response to what was perceived as the red state macho Jesus. You have a much more sort of sensitive, non-threatening, environmentally conscious Jesus. He's a hipster Jesus. Now he used to be nothing but a joke. He used to go and get "Jesus is my homeboy" T-shirts at Urban Outfitters. I remember when those came out and Jesus bobble head dolls at Urban Outfitters. But what's happened is these become the more serious Jesus as you see Jesus becoming cool and hipster Christianity sort of a thing. Jesus with skinny jeans and the Jesus who tweets and says "Follow me" but not just on Twitter or when I said follow me, I didn't mean -- because some of this stuff is pretty clever but I find that it's hard not to roll

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your eyes at a little bit of, okay, it used to be macho Jesus that was taken seriously, now it's nothing but ironic. It used to be hipster Jesus which was an ironic gesture and now it's sort of more serious. You look at the profiles of Hillsong in the *New York Times* and they're all talking about Jesus being hip and cool again. And these are just different distortions of equal measure but they're just on different sides of the ideological coin.

00:13:34 **Jim Gilmore:** Just to link back to how you set this up moments ago, Mike. It's something other than consumerism I would argue. Alvin Toffler coined the term I think in *Future Perfect* of the prosumer, the blending of producer and consumer and I think it's the digital tools today that enable this acceleration of these different Jesus's in digital form, and so one posts it to their Facebook page. Well what if some others somebody else appropriates and say, okay, you put 12 cereal box characters in the last supper scene, I'm going to put 12 rock stars and I'll make Yoko Ono Judas. And then somebody else takes this version and there's just this instantaneous explosion. But it's not just consuming Jesus is participating in his presumption and I think within Christianity we've so long railed out of consumerism, we should grab this Toffler word and we're in the times when we talk about we're presuming, we're participating in the consumption as a sort of hybrid kind of activity.

00:14:31 **Michael Horton:** So it's like Build a Bear Jesus.

00:14:32 **Jim Gilmore:** Build a Jesus.

00:14:34 **Michael Horton:** Let's go to some of those other examples, first of all define the Urban Jesus.

00:14:39 **David Zahl:** So Urban Jesus I would say is the black expression of Jesus which of course we know is an extremely large Christian culture in this country and that the apogee of urban Jesus at least in our 2015 moment is linked inextricably to Kanye West, the rapper. I mean hip-hop is an enormous industry and it's extremely persuasive with young people. It's ascendant to the extreme but rappers like Tupac Shakur, Nas, they've always flirted with messianic imagery. Tupac Shakur appears on a cross, not only on his first posthumous record but also in one of his videos he's rapping from the cross. And rappers have tended not just to sort of venerate Jesus but to actively identify with Jesus, both majesty and the martyrdom. There's a lot of sort of I've been down. I've come from lowly origins. I've come from Nazareth but nothing is going to keep me down from spreading the word. Words are the currency of hip-hop. And we sell these guys short at our own peril. Kanye West is an extremely intelligent guy who knows exactly what he's doing and so when he releases not just a song called "Jesus Walks" which does extremely well, his challenging taboos about being able to talk about Jesus in hip-hop, but he releases a record in 2013 called *Yeezus* in which he compares himself to Jesus, where he acknowledges that he is not Jesus himself but he is close. He's a close second.

And then on his tour he has a Jesus impersonator come up on stage. Now we could write that off as simple shock value but if you listen to what Kanye -- explains it in his own words, he's saying, "Well I want people to sort of deal with Jesus. I want them to think of him as someone that you can talk to, have a relationship with," and maybe that's disingenuous, I

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don't know but I know that the Jesus presented in the hip-hop world, yes there's a health and wealth thing, yes Jesus wants to bless you with commercial success but there's also a Jesus who is found in suffering who is interested in redemption, reconciliation who is a Lord that you can possibly be on par with. So it's not a humble version of Jesus but I found it to be the more robust presentation of Jesus in pop culture. It's got its major blind spots as well.

00:17:03 **Michael Horton:** But the only place where you find Jesus remotely associated with death, blood, pain, weakness.

00:17:09 **David Zahl:** Yes, I think that that's true. Jesus wants to lift you out of those things but he is interested in redemption and redemption from the truly harsh realities of the world which includes the grave. Maybe that's too generous of a statement but that's what I find sort of leading the way in that respect.

00:17:28 **Michael Horton:** How does the hipster Jesus serve as an alternative let's say to the macho Jesus?

00:17:35 **David Zahl:** Well I think hipster Jesus is exactly what you think at certain months produced. Hipster is a very elastic term and it's almost always pejorative. It's what yuppie used to be actually but by and large when they talk about hipster Christianity and there's editorials in the *Wall Street Journal*, you're referring to Jesus conforming to the image of sort of post-liberal arts grads living in Brooklyn and Portland. It makes sense because in that exact same demographic, men have started to grow long beards and to get really into carpentry. So to not make the jump to Jesus would seem like they would have been really asleep at the wheel if certain Christians hadn't made that jump because these already come back in fashion. It's not always going to be in fashion for us to be woodworkers, but it is right now because people want to work with their hands after being so digital.

But hipster Jesus tends to be much more interested in community than in personal morality. Hipster Jesus is sensitive.

00:18:39 **Michael Horton:** He doesn't go to church, so the community must be online somewhere.

00:18:42 **David Zahl:** Yeah the community -- all of this Jesus's actually tend to be pretty anti-church. Even the American Jesus is more of the sort of individual Jesus, the church is to be left behind.

00:18:54 **Michael Horton:** John Wayne, "I loved God until he gets under a roof."

00:18:57 **David Zahl:** Yeah. I think that that's a very American statement and the hipster Jesus is forging his own way. Again, he's just another form of the same Jesus we can sort of marshal to our cause.

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00:19:10 **Michael Horton:** It doesn't sound like you're talking about these different Jesus's being heretical Jesus's as much as them being trivial Jesus. Is that fair?

00:19:21 **David Zahl:** That's my take on it. I don't find them terribly threatening. I think that these Jesus's are not people you would ever see yourself as needing. The American Jesus or the hipster Jesus or the other ones that we talked about, they're not Jesus's that are involved in death, not Jesus's that are involved -- there's no blood.

00:19:43 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Forgiveness of sin.

00:19:44 **David Zahl:** The forgiveness of sins. The things that really I think matter not only in the Bible but in our lives which are when the rubber hits the road, these Jesus's are absent.

00:19:55 **Michael Horton:** These Jesus's are people you'd like to hang out with.

00:19:58 **David Zahl:** Yes. They're people you like to hang out with but they're not a mediator. They're not going to advocate for you. One of the things I think is interesting is that these Jesus's all have enemies but it's sort of those other people whether it's ISIS is this Jesus' enemy or it's the macho Jesus', the hipster Jesus' enemy but it's never -- we're not this Jesus' enemy.

00:20:20 **Michael Horton:** I'm always on the side of this Jesus.

00:20:22 **David Zahl:** We're always on the side of this Jesus. Even when Jesus had hard things to say, he's on my side.

00:20:27 **Michael Horton:** The presentation that you gave for the White Horse Weekend, you had a lot of images and that makes sense because we're such an iconic culture, everything is an image and whatever words that are present are part of the image and tweetable and everything has to be within the frame of that image. Is it significant that in Luke 24, Jesus appears in the Emmaus Road to his disciples, he keeps them from recognizing him iconically, visually, long enough for them to hear him almost as a third party proclaiming the gospel from the whole scripture then the Old Testament and then as it were takes away the veil when he is distributing communion, takes the bread, breaks it and gives it to his disciples and now they recognize him for who he is? To what extent is that important for Christianity that Christ be -- his identity be conveyed primarily through the ear and not through the eye, and then he's recognized in his being broken and giving himself for us in the Lord's Supper?

00:21:51 **David Zahl:** I think it's incredibly important and I think it's a real opportunity because the visual imagery that just flows in and out of us that we take for granted, the amount of barrage, of what we are barraged with every day. So you have a Christ which is the Christ that we do see in the road to Emmaus. I think that is rooted in something beyond just another image that we can forget or that can easily be distorted. We've just talked about the -- the gospel is heard and that's Paul constantly talking about the ears. The eyes

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aren't unimportant but there's the ears we're talking about and then the mouth, I think that's going to be appealing to people who are a little bit burnt out on the non-stop visual input.

00:22:38 **Michael Horton:** It doesn't mean anything.

00:22:39 **David Zahl:** It doesn't mean anything. This is a Christ who's concretized who is for us and with us.

00:22:45 **Michael Horton:** And in the midst of us.

00:22:46 **David Zahl:** In the midst of us... even in the midst of our distraction and our bingeing on every possible visual image we can get. I think there's something deeply appealing. And Jesus is still a focus of our attention to whatever -- however you want to say it. And a lot of these images are genuinely offensive and we all know what the cost of distorting Christ can be and Christians are just as guilty of it as the culture. But if there's any power there and it leads them to the New Testament or into a good church, what they're going to find is some figure who far surpasses anything, any of these trivialities that we've discussed. And I think we might even find a Jesus who just not beholden into the way that he is often portrayed.

00:23:33 **Rod Rosenblatt:** From what you are saying, the importance of the local pastor or priest, being dependent on the Scriptural description of Jesus and simply laying that out. I think of John R.W. Stott doing it Sunday after Sunday after Sunday and not being super creative but knowing that everything is on the line in doing this with the least amount of distortion I can possibly do is more important I think than we ever imagined.

00:24:06 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Yeah and it's the best corrective to the stuff they're describing.

00:24:09 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Yes.

00:24:10 **David Zahl:** And there's no way to avoid some distortion. We are all bringing our own presuppositions. However, to let Jesus speak for himself which I think with -- at least what we're presumably doing when we read the Bible or invoke our liturgies, I think that there's real hope there because the words Jesus himself which he presented in the Scriptures is such a compelling and real and living figure.

00:24:34 **Michael Horton:** Precisely at the points where he is the strangest.

00:24:38 **David Zahl:** That's true.

00:24:39 **Michael Horton:** When you go back and look at the times, the turning points, those were the very points where I was either angry, confused, flummoxed. I didn't know what to do with that Jesus and yet at those very points, those very moments are strangeness that he became most significant. If we don't allow those odd encounters, we'll



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never really meet the real Jesus, right? Isn't that a sign in other words that we met the real Jesus, that we're not always happy with what we meet?

00:25:12 **David Zahl:** The singer and great artist Nick Cave who's an Australian who's constantly talking about Jesus in his songs, he was asked who his favorite character in the New Testament was and he said Jesus without a doubt. He is always keeping me guessing. There's no end to how strange and interesting he is if you actually look to the Bible. And I think that that's 100% true and Jesus and our strangeness, I mean ultimately if we're going to be saved, it's going to be from something that is not our natural default inclination. There's got to be something that is above what we would invent for ourselves which of course is a God who is not just above the cross but hanging from the cross.

00:26:02 **Kim Riddlebarger:** You preach the Gospels and you pretty quickly become aware that the Jesus of the New Testament is -- I don't want to say a frightening figure but a disturbing figure, in the things that he says, the things that he does and the Jews and the Romans are all taken aback by everything that he does. You did what with what passage? How can you do this? And then the question of course arises, who is this who can do this?

00:26:27 **Michael Horton:** Yeah. And we should be even thrown back on our heels more than 1st century Jews because it's even stranger to Gentiles living in the 21st century. Let's turn just briefly to television how Jesus is represented in pop culture via television, *TLC*, *Discovery*, the *History Channel*, the Bible miniseries. Every time -- I've heard this, I don't know if it's true, every time *Newsweek* or *Time* or other national periodicals runs a cover story on Jesus, it far and away outsells every other issue that year. Why is it that obviously TV miniseries on almost every cable channel about Jesus in the last year wouldn't be there, wouldn't be produced if there wasn't a voracious market for him. Why especially as Americans, almost uniquely as Americans, are we so fascinated with the story of Jesus and remaking movies based on Jesus' life?

00:27:38 **David Zahl:** Well I think that probably the superficial answer is to say that it's in our DNA. We're a deeply religious country and so each of us has some enormous amounts of personal history with religion. And so we're trying to reconcile that and this is --

00:27:52 **Michael Horton:** Still haunted by it?

00:27:52 **David Zahl:** Still haunted by it whether we like it or not and so we're trying to work that out and we're going to work it out on a national platform or that kind of canvas. On a deeper level, I think that the DNA of the American spirit of the sort of bootstrapping, I can do it, what you've talked about many times in terms of the moral therapeutic deism of the founding fathers, even the moral therapeutic deism, he sells and he seems to be -- they say sex sells, well it turns out Jesus sells to and if you can do a sexy Jesus like you got in the Bible miniseries, well then you've really hit upon something potent. But of course I think that the Jesus of the Scriptures is larger and more awe-inspiring and more powerful than any of these other -- I have to believe that, otherwise I would just despair.

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00:28:47 **Michael Horton:** Why do you think that he is more real, more powerful, more authentic in the New Testament than the other Jesus's that have been brought to us by Hollywood?

00:28:59 **David Zahl:** Because he's clearly not the Jesus we would make up. He is counter to almost every one of our scorekeeping inclinations to our self-aggrandizement. I mean this is the God who empties himself. This is the Jesus who remains silent when he's accused. This is the Christ who goes to the cross willingly who asks for forgiveness for those who are putting him there. I mean this is not the natural inclination for revenge, empowerment, glory. I mean this is something that is anathema to the human spirit, to the sinners who are obsessed with their own sense of control. So the Christ that I see presented to me in the Scriptures is one that is a source and the author of not just salvation but of real hope because he's not like me and he is the God who is not a proto-superhero. One of the things that's remarkable about that Bible miniseries, and there are some good moments. When he heals the paralytic, it's very powerful and he says, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" There's some real faithfulness there however, there is alongside that an enormous amount of American nonsense, kind of when Jesus calls Peter and he says, "I will make you a fisher of men," and Peter is so taken aback and he says, "Well, what will we do?" And Jesus which is not -- this is apocryphal and then he says -- there's a long dramatic pause and he says, "Change the world." Now whatever shape you want to change it into, that's up to you but he is here to change the world which sounds like a reality TV show.

00:30:43 **Michael Horton:** And he's going to make my life meaningful because I get to change the world with him.

00:30:47 **David Zahl:** I get to change the world with him. It's not sort of, "Follow me to the cross, where you're going to be crucified and raised up in me," there's none of that. It's really about making -- being a good leader who can overturn the oppressive structures which these things are important but they're not what Jesus was talking about the repentance for the forgiveness of sins. I mean that's just not -- that's a harder message to get across and it's not the changing of the world, it's the saving of the world and there's a big difference between what that looks like.

00:31:21 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Night and day. You know it scares me about the Jesus is here to change the world motif is how many churches and pastors the next Sunday the sermons were aping that line and showing their congregations how to change their worlds. You just know that's where it's going to go.

00:31:44 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Well, ultimately, I think David you might agree, if we keep indulging in this, we will finally manage to trivialize Jesus by going from one fad to another fad to another fad to another fad and the really foreign thing is, as Lewis said, there are only three characters on all the history of literature that you can say that you really come to know through the writing, the Jesus of the gospels, Boswell's Johnson, and Socrates. We have a generation now who's not used to reading in that kind of way. But the churches got to be committed to it some way or another to presenting somebody who saves by dying not

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the way we would expect and who can be known because the text allows it and that anything else is off-kilter. Does that make sense?

00:32:51 **David Zahl:** The thing I'd say about us, we could succeed in fully trivializing Jesus but we haven't yet. And we tried a lot of things and there's hope in that statement. I also want to say that I'm not sure we want to place ourselves too far outside of this diagnosis, and not that we're doing that but the reason The Bible miniseries did so well was because there's an appetite for it. It's not like those guys invented -- they did their research, what would sell to these people? And you know I'm actually not outside of this culture, I'm a part of it whether I like it or not. And so we're implicated I think and there's a sense of repentance as well that we are not outside of it.

00:33:31 **Michael Horton:** And then part of it is I want, we want there to not be a moment in our history where the lights are turned off and Jesus is irrelevant, not just because others won't hear the gospel, but also because it's comfortable for me to live in a culture that still at least respects Jesus because if they still respect Jesus, maybe they'll still respect me.

00:33:58 **David Zahl:** That's really profound.

00:33:59 **Michael Horton:** And it won't be hard to be a Christian in this country.

00:34:02 **Jim Gilmore:** I think the fear is not that he's trivialized but he's unknown. It's like Paul going into Athens and seeing a city full of idols. It's walking the culture and seeing a culture full of Jesus's. But the one that Paul highlights, the unknown God, if this more trivial Jesus is fine because he can point people to no Jesus but it's when he's just unknown Jesus, it seems to me that's the one among all the others that is to be avoided.

00:34:34 **Michael Horton:** And this Jesus whom we worship as unknown I proclaim to you, great opportunity for us to do that, right?

00:34:41 **David Zahl:** I think so.

00:34:42 **Michael Horton:** To show people the nail-scarred hands and point to his resurrection and say, "Here is life," not in what he can lead you to do but what he did for you because you fled with the disciples from the scene of the crime. Thank you for your insights both of you, David Zahl and Jim Gilmore along with your regular hosts, Kim Riddlebarger, Rod Rosenblatt. I'm Mike Horton. We look forward to being with you again next time on the *White Horse Inn*.

00:35:12 **Narrator:** The *White Horse Inn* is a listener supported broadcast. For more information about this program, visit us online at [whitehorseinn.org](http://whitehorseinn.org). If you sign up as an innkeeper, architect or reformer, not only will you get a complimentary subscription to our magazine *Modern Reformation*, but you'll also get longer editions of every *White Horse Inn* broadcast. To find out how to join one of these support programs, click on the support tab of our website, [whitehorseinn.org](http://whitehorseinn.org). You can also give us a call at 1-800-890-7556. That's 1-800-890-7556. We'll see you next time at the *White Horse Inn*.