

A PREZ RELEASE

from AGTS

(Monthly commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)

JESUS: THE ACTION FIGURE

My daughter was visiting a friend in Boston and brought me home a special present. It was Jesus: The Action Figure. This gift was sold right along with the GI Joe, WWF icon Rock and of course Britney Spears. I got a special edition because my Jesus Action Figure has "poseable arms and gliding action."

There is a special warning though: Jesus the action figure is a choking hazard, small parts not suitable for children under 3 years.

On the back panel of the box were some very interesting comments from the Gospel of Thomas ? ? ? ? One of the descriptive comments caught my eye. It said, "Jesus was executed at a very young age as a common criminal. Since then, he has been the topic of many heated theological debates. Although Jesus is understood in many different ways, everyone seems to agree that he was a remarkable man!"

There you have it...a current version of Jesus... described as a remarkable man and marketed along with other current "stars" as a toy! The scenario of Jesus the Action Figure is filled irony. We might discuss whether a Jesus toy is better in a kids toy box than a Pokemon character; but what we also have is a consumer version of Jesus...one we can pose as we desire in an imaginative setting of our own making.

A Jesus who fits our expectation is the kind of "action figure" we seem to defer to today here in the US. Because we have been socialized to believe life's best can only be attained if we design it ourselves. So Jesus becomes one of the current heroes ... an admired and remarkable man, a great spiritual model. The problem with an image of Jesus as an action hero is that He may be "cool" but this "saleable" item has no possibility of dealing with the dysfunction, injustice and evil that impacts our globe. Jesus the action figure can stay in the kids' toybox, but the Jesus who can really make a difference in dealing with the dysfunction, injustice and evil that impacts our globe must be more than a popular version of action figures in vogue.

The Apostle Paul's descriptive words offer a picture of JESUS IN ACTION. THE JESUS IN ACTION opens eyes, turns people from darkness to light and the power of Satan to the power of God. Jesus the Action Figure may have poseable arms and gliding action, but I don't think he's up to standards that Paul described. (Acts 26:18)

The words of the venerable J. Wilbur Chapman hymn describe the bottom line:

Jesus what a friend for sinners, Jesus lover of my soul.
Friends may fail me foes assail me, he my savior makes me whole.

Jesus what a strength in weakness. Let me hide myself in Him
Tempted tried and sometime failing. He my Strength my victory
wins.

Hallelujah what a Savior! Hallelujah what a Friend!
Saving! Helping! Healing! Loving! He is with me to the end!

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