

Who is Jesus?



Jesus said the following about Himself:

“He who believes in Me shall not die.”

“I am the bread of life.”

“I am the good shepherd.”

“Before Abraham existed I existed.”

“Unless you believe in Me, you will die in your sins.”

“I am from above.”

“I came down from heaven.”

“If I make you free, you will be free indeed.”

“Which one of you convicts Me of sin?”

“I give them eternal life and they shall never perish.”

“Unless you partake of Me you have no life.”

“I am the way the truth and the life.”

Some people have become so accustomed to these Biblical quotes that they miss the uniqueness of Jesus’ claims. Jesus was not engaging in some sort of religious exaggeration for shock value; He was truly claiming to be the answer to everything. Even today,

we would never accept a politician or an educator claiming to give people eternal life or alleging to be from heaven. Such statements would be the height of egotism or insanity. If it were not for Jesus’ miracles, it would be no surprise that the unbelieving authorities put Jesus to death for blasphemy and treason.

The great Oxford scholar C.S. Lewis wrote that given His claims, “Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic or Lord of all.” You cannot say Jesus is a good man unless He is God in the flesh, for a man could not be a good man and claim these things about Himself unless they were true.

But what if the one who made these claims walked into the local hospital and healed everyone, miraculously multiplied food, walked on the water, or was able to command a storm to cease? It was the miracles of Jesus that substantiated His claim. Since there are so many false religions and prophets in this world, Jesus taught his audience never to believe unsubstantiated claims. Jesus said,

If I do not do the miraculous works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the miraculous works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.

(John 10:36-38)

I told you, and you do not believe; the miraculous works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.”

(John 10:25)

If Jesus had not done miracles, He would not have expected the people to believe in Him. But since they did not believe after seeing proof, it was evident that their unbelief was motivated by an underlying animosity toward God.

“If I had not done among them the miraculous works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

(John 15:24)

But do we have a first-hand verification of the miracles of Jesus today? No, we learn of them secondhand through the eyewitness accounts of

Jesus’ disciples. Nevertheless, second-hand verification is not to be dismissed since everything we know of history comes to us secondhand. Still, we do have firsthand evidence of fulfilled prophecy. Hundreds of years before Jesus arrived, the prophet Daniel prophesied that in AD 26 the Messiah would present Himself to Israel (Daniel 9:24-25), which is exactly what Jesus did. Because of the prophecies, the Jews were already expecting the Messiah when Jesus arrived. Even the magi who traveled from Persia to give gifts to the infant Jesus were guided by Biblical prophecy.

Bethlehem, the place of Jesus’ birth, was also prophesied (Micah 5:2); Jesus’ Davidic family line was prophesied (Genesis 49:10; Psalm 89:3-4); the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus were prophesied (Daniel 9:26; Isaiah 52:13-15, 53:1-12), in addition to many other prophecies of His life. It would have been impossible for a mere mortal to arrange all of these events concerning his life, but, then again, Jesus was no mere mortal.

Understand that the coming of the Messiah was not some new event. Since the Garden of Eden, the people of God held onto the promise that God would send a special descendant who would deliver mankind from the curse of sin (Genesis 3:15). As time went on, the prophets revealed more details about when this man would come, what He would do, and whom He would be. These prophecies were given so that when the Messiah arrived He would be correctly identified.

Who then is Jesus?

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God who took upon Himself a human body and soul.

* Jesus’ miracles were a sign that He is the Almighty God.

This man (Nicodemus) came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

(John 3:2)

Then He (Jesus) got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”
(Matthew 8:25-27)

* The Old Testament prophets foretold that the Messiah would be the Almighty God.

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (which translated means, “God with us.”)

(Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23)

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. *(Isaiah 9:6)*

* The New Testament apostles taught that Jesus is God come in the flesh.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being... and the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us.”

(John 1:1-3, 14)

For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth... all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. *(Colossians 1:16-17)*

A Popular Criticism Answered

The academic response that often comes from unbelievers is that Jesus did not claim to be God, but His followers embellished the words of Jesus to help sell the Christian religion. However, there is no real proof that the disciples of Christ changed the story. This criticism is based on a prior assumption that Jesus could not possibly have claimed to be God because God could not possibly have come to earth.

Faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ is founded upon (1) the very existence and nature of God. We sense that God, who created the world, would reveal Himself to this world and would provide a salvation from sin and death. This message especially rings true with those who love God and thirst for righteousness; and (2) the coming of the Messiah and His divine nature was already prophesied and expected. The disciples were not making up something new. Jesus was fulfilling the prophetic description and mission of the Messiah.

The Significance of the Incarnation

The amazing thing is that God, the creator of man, came into this world as a man. This is called the “incarnation”, meaning “the coming in the flesh.” The ancient Greek philosopher Plato said that if we were ever to know God, He would have to become a man. That is exactly what God did for us. He entered into our world so that we would know Him, but, even more important, He came into our world to die a substitutionary death for our sins.

At first, the necessity of God having to die for our sins is difficult to understand, but the Bible explains that God, in His holiness, demands justice – a penalty must be paid for sin. Out of love, God chose to take that penalty upon Himself. The same God who condemns us for our sin also loves us enough to provide a way for us to be forgiven. Furthermore, God did not create a special angel or man to do this for Him. He Himself came to earth to suffer, die, and rise again.

What would happen when God arrived? Given man’s sin and rebellion, it is no surprise that the people put Him to death. As the Scriptures teach, “**They hated Him without a cause** (John 15:25).” It has always been true that if mankind and Satan could get their hands on God, they would put Him to death. Freedom from God is the goal. Even today, people are still crucifying God through their daily rejection of His Law and His person. Through the crucifixion, God not only showed the evil of humanity, but He used the evil to accomplish His substitutionary death for man’s sin.

But isn’t Jesus the *Son of God*, not God?

Although there are many texts in the Bible that directly refer to Jesus as God, we also read that Jesus called Himself the “Son of God” and the “Son of Man.” Jesus also referred to God as His Father. Now this presents a problem – how can Jesus be God and, at the same time, talk to God? The first verse in the Gospel of John states that Jesus “was God” and Jesus was “with God.”

The answer is found in the Bible itself. God is revealed as three persons in one – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In Genesis 1:26 we read that God speaks in the plural, “Let Us make man in Our own image.” Throughout the Old Testament the tri-unity of the Godhead was subtly revealed. After the Son of God arrived, the truth was fully revealed in the New Testament.

Jesus is called the “Son of God” not because He is any less than God the Father, but because He was the member of the Godhead who took the submissive role and came to earth. He took the title of “Son” to describe His human birth.

The angel answered and said to her (Mary), “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35)

By being born into this world, Jesus took the title “the only begotten Son of God” – begotten not made (see John 3:16). Before His incarnation, Jesus’ title was the “Jehovah God” of the Old Testament (see John 12:41).

A small minority of so-called Christian sects and cults deny that Jesus is God. These groups appeal to texts about Christ’s humanity and leave off texts about His Deity. They do not appreciate the mystery that Jesus was both God and man. Historical Christianity has always maintained the Biblical teaching that Jesus is God come in human flesh. This is the only option if one is to be true to the Biblical record.

If Jesus is God, what does this mean?

If Jesus Christ is God, then He is Lord over all, and His truth is exclusive. As Jesus and the Apostles claimed, He is the only way to Heaven.

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)

Therefore I (Jesus) said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins. (John 8:24)

There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

The famous talk show host Larry King was once asked whom he would most want to interview from history. He said, “Jesus Christ; I would like to ask Him if He was indeed virgin-born. The answer to that question would define history for me.” Mr. King understood the ramifications of Christ’s deity.

If Jesus Christ is God, that means every other religion in the world is, at worst, error and, at best, unnecessary. This does not mean that other religions do not contain some remnant of moral truth, but it does mean that the true thread of religion running throughout human history is the Biblical message of salvation through the person and work of the Messiah. This also does not mean Christians are arrogant or the persecutors of non-Christians. Debate is not hate. One can hold to a truth while lovingly hoping that others come to the Light. Christians are to show their faith by their love.

God has determined that Jesus is the only way. Truth is exclusive because God is exclusive. Relativism and religious pluralism may make some people feel good, but everyone intuitively knows it is indefensible. One religion believes in killing infidels; another religion condemns such actions. Both cannot be right.

In the Biblical story of Cain and Abel, Cain wanted to do religion his own way by approaching God through his own labors. Abel obeyed God by offering a substitutionary blood sacrifice which represented

the future sacrifice of the Messiah. Abel was accepted while God admonished Cain to offer the obedient sacrifice (see Genesis 4:1-10; Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22).

God has a standard of religious truth. Jesus said there is a broad gate that leads to destruction and a narrow gate that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). There are not many roads to heaven, but only one road through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus is the only way because Jesus is our only hope. No other religious leader in the world solved man’s ultimate problem – sin and death. And only Jesus proved victory over both by His resurrection from the grave.

. . . concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1:3-4)

Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of Germany following World War II, having seen the cruelty and hopelessness of man following the reign of Nazism, said, “Outside the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I don’t know of any other hope for this world.”

Jesus Christ is not only God come in human flesh, but He offers salvation to all who will receive Him as Lord and Savior. That is the Good News!

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11)

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