



K n o w W h a t Y o u B e l i e v e

Apologetics Study - Evidence for the Christian Faith

[What Is This?](#) | [Contents Page](#) | [Summary](#)

[Overview](#) → [Why Apologetics?](#) → [Did Jesus Exist?](#) → [Is The Bible Reliable?](#) → [Jesus' Claims](#) → [Was Jesus God?](#) → [Conclusion](#)

[Overview](#) > [Did Jesus Claim to be God?](#)

Did Jesus Claim To Be God?

Summary

1. Evidence in addition to his claims in the New Testament

- The concept of Jesus as divine existed within at least 10 to 20 years of his crucifixion, and therefore likely to have been asserted by Jesus himself.
- The claims of Jesus to be God make sense of his trial and crucifixion i.e. blasphemy
- The early enemies of Christ would have declared that Jesus never made such claim
- A parallel movement, that claimed Jesus as merely a good teacher, would have emerged alongside Christianity

2. Jesus' use of Divine Titles

- Yahweh - claiming the sacred Old Testament name for God. Yahweh means "He who is" or "I am"
- Son of God - claiming to be of the same nature as God, co-equal and co-eternal with God
- Son of Man - claiming to be the Messiah / King / Deliverer of the Jews. Used to proclaim his divine identity
- Lord - claiming to be "Adonai" - a term applied to God in the Old Testament
- Abba - referred to God as father - uniquely using the familiar word of closest intimacy
- People responded to these claims by wanting to kill Jesus as this was the punishment required for blasphemy

3. Additional claims to be God

- To be pre-existent "before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:58
- To be omnipresent "and surely I am with you always" Matthew 28:20
- To be omniscient "you know all things ... You believe at last!" John 16:30
- To be omnipotent "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" Matthew 28:18
- Should be worshipped "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin..." Mark 9:42
- Divine authority To forgive sins , To have authority over the laws of the Sabbath, That the elect and angels are his, To be able to give authority over evil to others, To have authority over all people
- Word will outlast time "my words will never pass away" Mark 13:31
- To be sinless "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" John 8:46
- That all God has is his "All I have is yours, and all you have is mine" - said praying to God - John 17:10
- To give freedom "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" John 8:36
- To send prophets "Therefore I am sending you prophets" Matthew 23:34
- To deserve highest loyalty "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" Mt 10:37
- To be equal with God that a response to him is the same as a response to God. John 15:23
that he is to be honoured to the same extent as God is honoured. John 5:22
that to see him is to see God. John 14:9
that to know him is to know God. John 8:19
that him coming to the Jewish people was the same as God being there. Luke 19:43
that he operates with and to the same extent as God. John 5:17
that he is directly equal with God. John 10:30-39

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>· To be able to raise himself from the dead</p> <p>That people's eternal destiny depends on their response to him.</p> | <p>"I lay down my life -- only to take it up again... I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again" John 10:17,18</p> <p>Mathew 7:21-23, John 8:24</p> |
|---|---|

The Importance Of The Issue

This issue is crucially important for at least five reasons

1. The divinity of Christ is the most distinctively Christian belief or doctrine of them all. A Christian is most essentially defined as one who believes that Jesus was God. And no other religion has a doctrine that is even similar. Buddhists do not believe that Buddha was God and Muslims do not believe that Muhammad was God. [\[1 p. 151\]](#)
2. This doctrine works like a skeleton key, unlocking all the other doctrinal doors of Christianity. Christians believe each of their many doctrines not because they have reasoned their own way to them, but on the divine authority of the One who taught them, as recorded in the Bible and transmitted by the church. If Jesus Christ was only human, he could have made mistakes. Thus, anyone who wants to dissent from any of Christ's unpopular teachings will want to deny his divinity. And there are bound to be things in his teachings that each of us finds offensive - if we look at the totality of those teachings rather than confining ourselves to comfortable and familiar ones. [\[1 p. 152\]](#)
3. If Christ is divine, then the incarnation (God taking on human form) is the most important event in history. It is the hinge of history. It changes everything. If Jesus Christ is God, then when he died on the cross, he provided a means for God and humans to be reconciled. No event in history could be more important to every person on earth than that. [\[1 p. 152\]](#)
4. It has tremendous implications for us now. For if Jesus Christ is God, then, since he is omnipotent and present right now, he can transform you and your life right now as nothing and no one else possibly can. [\[1 p. 152\]](#)
5. If Christ is divine, he has right to our entire lives, including our inner life and out thoughts. If Christ is divine, our absolute obligation is to believe everything he says and obey everything he commands. [\[1 p. 152\]](#)

The Difficulty Of This Issue

Christians ought to realise how difficult, how scandalous, how objectionable, how apparently unbelievable and absurd this doctrine is bound to appear to others. [\[1\]](#)

The difficulty is a double one. First, there is the immediate, instinctive, intuitive shock. Second, on the reflective, rational level this claim seems absurd. It is the claim of a man who came from a woman's womb, grew from a baby, got hungry and tired and angry, suffered and died – to be divine! It is not only intuitively shocking, but it also seems logically self-contradictory. [\[1 p. 153\]](#)

Before we attempt to address these difficulties and the validity of Christ's claim to be God, we need to establish that he did indeed make such a claim. Many suggest that Jesus either never made any claims to deity; that His claims were altered by His biased followers; or, that His claims were misunderstood by His ignorant followers. [\[15\]](#)

Did Jesus Make Any Claims To Deity?

When we examine the New Testament documents, we find that Jesus makes numerous claims to deity - to be God. The sceptics who doubt this, generally doubt the accuracy and credibility of the documents themselves, but as we have shown in the previous sections, the New Testament documents are historical reliable. They more than satisfactorily pass each of the tests of historicity and are therefore reliable in their accounts of the life of Jesus.

It may also be worth noting a few additional points that support the fact that Jesus did make claims to deity.

- There is ample indication that the early church based its doctrine on things Jesus said and did, including His claims to divinity, rather than inventing what He said and did after formulating the doctrines. [\[15\]](#)

Those that deny Jesus made any extraordinary personal claims face the very severe problem of explaining how it is that the worship of Jesus as Lord and God came about at all in the early church. [\[16\]](#) This is even more problematic when we realize that within twenty years of the crucifixion a full-blown Christology (theory/doctrine) proclaiming Jesus as God incarnate (God in human form) existed. How does one explain this worship by monotheistic Jews of one of their countrymen as God incarnate, apart from the claims of Jesus himself? [\[15\]](#)

The oldest liturgical prayer recorded, in 1 Corinthians 16:22, is dated at around 55 AD. It refers to Jesus as Lord - a divine title reserved

for God. Paul's letters, written between 49 and 65 AD exhibit the same fully evolved Christology; logically, he must have gotten it from sometime earlier than 49 AD. Paul cites creeds, hymns and sayings of Jesus that must have been come from earlier (Romans 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 11:23; Colossians. 1:15-16; Philippians. 2:6-11; 1 Timothy. 3:16; 2 Timothy. 2:8). These items translate easily into Aramaic and show features of Hebrew poetry and thought-forms, which allows us to trace their origins to Jesus' first followers in Judea, between 33 and 48 AD. [15]

The oldest Christian document shows Paul repeatedly calling Jesus 'Christ' (the title "Christ" is a Greek equivalent to the Jewish term "Messiah" - the king and deliverer / saviour expected by the Jewish people). He does this in a way that suggests that, within twenty years of Jesus' death and resurrection, this comprehensive title for Jesus' identity and powers was simply taken for granted by Paul and his readers. The title had almost become Jesus' second (personal) name (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 3; 5:23, 28). In his letters Paul uses 'Christ' 270 times but never considers it necessary to argue explicitly that Jesus is 'the Christ' whom Israel expected. [15]

All of this leads to the inevitable conclusion that the concept of Jesus as divine quite definitely existed within, at the very least, a decade of the crucifixion, and therefore, was likely to have been asserted before His death by Jesus Himself, as is recorded in the Gospels. [15]

- The claims of Jesus to be God make sense of his trial and crucifixion. [1 p. 163]

The Jewish sensitivity to blasphemy was unique; no one else would so fanatically insist on death as punishment for claiming divinity. Throughout the Roman world, the prevailing attitude towards the gods was "the more, the merrier". [1 p. 163]

The political excuse that he was Caesar's rival was a lie trumped up to justify his execution, since Roman law did not recognize blasphemy as ground for execution and the Jews had no legal power to enforce their own religious laws of capital punishment under Roman rule. [1 p. 164]

- The enemies of Christianity would have declared that Jesus never made such claims [15]

If Jesus never claimed to be divine, and never claimed it in the sense that is indicated in the Gospels, it is reasonable to expect that the enemies of Christianity and the early church would have declared that Jesus never made such claims, or that he was misunderstood. Some did indeed do this, but wrote quite some time after the fact. There is no record contemporary or closely contemporary with Jesus (first century AD) that indicates that He never made any special claims for Himself, or that the church invented the claims. Even after that time, however, the major sceptics of the first several centuries never argued this point. The Jesus-never-claimed-divinity argument had not been advanced by sceptics of the time, and if it was used, perhaps by some sceptic whose works we have totally lost, it was so easily dismissed or so lacked adequate credibility that it could not be used by the best anti-Christian sceptics. [15]

- A parallel movement, that acclaimed Jesus as merely a good teacher, would have emerged alongside Christianity. [15]

As it is, there are no existing texts from the first century, or even from the century thereafter, that represent Jesus as claiming to be only human or only a prophet. He is always portrayed as making exalted claims to a super-human status. [15]

Was Jesus Misunderstood?

What about the idea that Jesus did say some or all of the things the Gospels attribute to Him, but that He was misunderstood by his followers. Regrettably, with this objection often comes either some outrageous interpretation of the claims of Jesus that would never have held water in Judaism - or nothing at all but the suggestion itself without alternative. (One must, of course, when making this suggestion, should actually name some alternative interpretations of the claims of Jesus and show that these "alternative interpretations" would hold water within the social and historical context of the New Testament records). [15]

It may be objected that Jesus spoke rather cryptically at times, so that perhaps He truly was misunderstood. But as we will see, it is hardly plausible that Jesus' claims were misunderstood; they are too clear-cut when understood in the context of the time and place they were made. [15]

We are also told that Jesus did explain things to His disciples privately after the crowds were gone: "He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything." (Mark 4:34). This was standard practice for an inner circle of disciple. For a practical example of this, see the 'Parable of the Sower' in Matthew 13. These disciples, of course, represent the people who wrote (Matthew, John) or else supplied information (Mark, Luke) for the Gospels. [15]

This argument is best defeated by examining the actual claims attributed to Jesus in the New Testament. [15]

Evidence For Jesus' Deity

Not one recognized religious leader, not Moses, Paul, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucious, etc., has ever claimed to be God; that is, with the exception of Jesus Christ. Christ is the only religious leader who has ever claimed to be deity and the only individual ever who has convinced a great portion of the world that He is God. [5 p.89]

Jesus' Use Of Divine Titles / Names

YHWH - Lord

In the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), the sacred name for God was YHWH, likely pronounced Yahweh. Yahweh (see Exodus 3:14) basically means "He who is", or "I am who I am". [31 p. 78] The Jewish people out of sheer reverence refused even to pronounce this name. [5 p. 99] Jesus, however, used this name when referring to himself!

John 8.24: "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be [or 'I am he'], you will indeed die in your sins."

John 8.28: "... then you will know that I am the one I claim to be [or 'I am he']..."

John 8.58-59: "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this, they picked up stones to stone him...

Notice how, in the last reference, the listeners immediately understood his claim. They picked up stones to execute him - the punishment for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16). [16]

Buy using this title to refer to himself, Jesus was making an explicit claim to be YHWH, to be God!

Son of God

A son is of the same nature, the same species, the same essence, as his father. Jesus called God his Father, thereby saying that he is of the same nature as God. [1 p. 150]

Jesus makes it clear that he is not just 'a son of God' or one of the 'sons of God' but 'the son of God' (the phrase 'sons of God' is sometimes used to refer to men or angels in the Old Testament). In every instance where Jesus refers to himself as 'God's Son', or to God as 'my Father', he implies that he is the one and only Son of God; co-equal and co-eternal with God. [5 p. 100]

Matthew 16.15-17: "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

Mark 14.62: Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus.

John 5.17-23: Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."

Notice several things about this important passage: [16]

1. Jesus claim to be the Son is understood by the audience as blasphemy--a claim to deity!
2. Jesus response is NOT to say 'hey, but I am using sonship differently than that-I am NOT claiming to be God'--instead He simply continues describing the incredible unity between Himself and the Father (the Father's works are the Son's works, the Son knows everything the Father does, the Son gives life just like the Father does, the Father entrusts all judgment to the Son, the Son is supposed to be honored 'just as' the Father is honored, dishonoring the Son is equivalent to dishonoring the Father).

These are incredible claims. Jesus' disciples and his enemies clearly understood from their Jewish backgrounds that by Jesus applying the term 'Son of God' to himself, he was claiming to be equal to God. [5 p. 101]

Son of Man

Jesus often used the title "Son of man" to refer to himself. This title occurs in the Old Testament (Daniel 7: 13,14), and by the time of Jesus had tremendous messianic significance.

Daniel 7.13,14: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away,

and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

Notice too the many divine qualities that are associated with the 'Son of Man'. By using this title, Jesus clearly believed himself to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah - the King and deliverer / saviour expected by the Jews. [5 p. 102] It is also worth noting there was a belief that the Messiah was to be divine [31 p. 83]

Matthew 11.6,7: "... But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take our mat and go home." And the man got up and went home.

Matthew 16:13-17 "When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven"

Mark 14.62-64: Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven". The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

Notice too the response of the High. Jesus' claims to be the Danielic messiah and to be the Son of God were understood by the 1st century Palestinian Jew to be claims to deity! [16]

Once one takes together, the 80+ passages in which Jesus makes use of the title "Son of Man", we see indisputable evidence that Jesus proclaimed His divine identity through the title "Son of Man." [15]

Abba - Father

Jesus asserted that He had a relationship with God, which no one had ever claimed before. It comes out of the Aramaic word Abba which He often used, especially in prayer. Nobody before Him in all the history of Israel had addressed God by this word.

The Jews were accustomed to praying to God the Father: but the word they used was Abhinu, a form of address which was essentially an appeal to God for mercy and forgiveness. There is no appeal for mercy in Jesus' mode of address, Abba. It is the familiar word of closest intimacy. By using it, he differentiated between His own relationship with God as Father and that of other people. [5 p. 102]

The Jewish leaders of the day, immediately, realized the implications of the word Abba, and charged Him with blasphemy. [5 p. 102]

John 5.17-18: Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus' Claims To Be God

The New Testament reveals that Jesus claimed to have attributes that only God could possess.

Jesus' claims to pre-existence

Jesus claimed to have been pre-existent before his birth--he was around before Abraham. [16]

John 8.58-59: "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this, they picked up stones to stone him--Notice: This statement actually goes beyond pre-existence--it is an explicit claim to be YHWH. [16]

Jesus claimed to have been pre-existent in heaven with glory before His incarnation (God taking on human form) [16]

John 3.13: No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven -- the Son of Man

John 6.38: For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me

John 8.23: But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world"

Jesus' claims to be omnipresent

Jesus makes claims to be omnipresent - everywhere present at the same time. [31 p. 76]

Matthew 18.20: For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Matthew 28.20: "... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus' claims to be omniscient

Jesus makes claims to be omniscient - to have infinite knowledge. [\[31 p. 77\]](#)

John 16.30: "Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God." "You believe at last!" Jesus answered.

John 13.21,26: "After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me... It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon."

Matthew 12.25: "Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them..."

Matthew 24.25: "... See, I have told you ahead of time"

Luke 22.31: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat"

Jesus' claims to be omnipotent

Jesus makes claims to be omnipotent - to be all powerful. [\[31 p. 77\]](#)

Matthew 28.18: Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

John 5.227: "And he [God] has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man."

John 10.17,18: "... I lay down my life... I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again"

John 6.37,39: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away... I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day"

John 1.3: Through him [Jesus] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Luke 4.38-40: Jesus ... rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

Mark 4.41: They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Luke 4.36: All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!"

Jesus asks for and accepts worship as God

In the Jewish culture worship is reserved for God. [\[5 p. 95\]](#)

Jeremiah 17.5: This is what the Lord says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man..."

Matthew 4.10: Jesus said to him... "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only"

However, Jesus makes claims pertaining to the worship of himself! He holds himself out as a legitimate object of religious faith. [\[16\]](#)

Mark 9.42: "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin..."

John 9.35-38: Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.

Notice: In this passage Jesus affirms himself as both a legitimate object of religious faith and as a legitimate object of worship! (No rebuke is given to the man at all for worshipping Jesus--even in the presence of the Pharisees!) [\[16\]](#)

It is important to note that Jesus never corrects those who accuse him of making himself equal to God, or those who called him "God".

[16]

John 5.17: See the previous note in the discussion of Jesus' "Son of God" title

John 8.58-59: See the previous note in the discussion of Jesus' "YHWH" title

John 20.28-29: Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus' claims to authority - authority that only God has

- Jesus claimed to be able to forgive sins. [16]

Luke 7.48-49: Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Mark 2.5-10: When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...."

A rather strong statement of divine authority, and the context shows that it was a blasphemous assertion if He was not God! Notice that He does not answer their charges with a "Hold on now! I am not claiming to be God! I am claiming something less!" [16]

- Jesus had authority over the laws of the Sabbath - laws created by God. [16]

Mark 2.28: So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

- Jesus claims that the elect, and that the angels are his. [16]

Mark 13.26-27: "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

Notice: Jesus identifies himself with the Divine figure in Daniel 7.13, talks of his coming with 'great glory', calls the angels 'HIS angels', calls the elect "HIS elect", and somehow is able to gather them together from all places on the globe. There are quite a few strong deity claims in this little passage! [16]

- Jesus implied that he had the ability/authority to abolish the law. [16]

Matthew 5.17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them..."

- Jesus implied a divine authority. [16]

Matthew 5: The "you have heard...but I say to you" passages are generally considered to be statements of divine authority [16]

- Jesus had the authority to give authority over evil to others. [16]

Luke 10.19: I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you

- Jesus claims to have universal authority. [16]

John 17.2: For you granted him authority over all people. [16]

- Jesus has authority to confer a kingdom in the same manner that the God does. [16]

Luke 22.29: And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me

Jesus makes claims that make no sense if he is not God

- His claims that his words will outlast time itself. [16]

Mark 13.31: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away

- His claims that the eternal destiny of people depend on their response to Him. [16]

Matthew 7:21-23: Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Notice that Jesus makes people's eternal destiny contingent upon HIS approval of them! What an incredible claim! [16]

- His claims to be absolutely perfect / sinless. [16]

John 8.46: Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?

Would a normal human being, with ethical standards as high as Jesus, ever claim to be sinless? [16]

- Other claims that are ludicrous if Jesus is not God.

John 15.5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Note: this is another passage that makes no sense without a divine Jesus. How could the phrase 'apart from me you can do nothing' make any sense--if Jesus were not God--omnipotent, omnipresent deity? [16]

John 17.10: All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. -- Note that Jesus is praying to God in this verse

Unless Jesus is truly God, this statement is ridiculous. [16]

Additional claims about his nature and powers

- Jesus is often linked to the word 'Lord'.

Mark 11.3: If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'

Mark 5.19: Jesus... said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him."

He even states he will be addressed as "Lord" (Mt 7.21-22a). This word is equitable with the title "Adonai" applied to God in the Old Testament, which logically means that Jesus thought of Himself as being God, or worthy of God's divine title - which amounts to the same thing! [15]

- Jesus claimed to be greater than the Temple, than the prophet Jonah, and than King Solomon. [16]

Matthew 12.6: I tell you that one greater than the temple is here

Matthew 12.41-42: The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here

- Jesus claims to be able to give freedom.

John 8.36: So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed

- Jesus claims to be able to raise himself from the dead.

John 10.17,18: The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life -- only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

This incredible passage has Jesus affirming that He can 'raise Himself from the dead' [16]

- Jesus claims that he is responsible for sending prophets. [15]

Matthew 23.34: Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town

In Jewish belief, it is God who is responsible for sending prophets. In saying that He will send prophets, Jesus is equating Himself with God - assuming a role reserved for God alone. [15]

- Jesus claims loyalty greater than all human loyalties. [16]

Matthew 10.37: "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"

Notice that Jesus claims allegiance and loyalty greater than the strongest of relationships--the family. Only a relationship with God supersedes those relationships! [16]

Jesus' claims to equality with God

- He claims to be, and is repeatedly called, the potentially blasphemous title "Son of God".

See the previous discussion on the title "Son of God"

- Jesus claims that one's response to Him is equated to one's response to God. [16]

John 15.23: He who hates me hates my Father as well.

This passage is preposterous if Jesus is not 'identical' in both character and action with God the Father

- Jesus claims that he should be honoured to the same extent as God is honoured. [16]

John 5.22: Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him

- Jesus claims that to see Him is to see God. [16]

John 14.9: Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

John 12.44, 45: When a man... looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.

- Jesus claims that to believe in Him is to believe in God. [16]

John 12.44: When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.

- Jesus claims that to know Him is to know God. [31 p. 82]

John 8.19: If you knew me, you would know my Father also.

- He never corrects those who accuse him of making himself equal to nor those who called him "GOD". [16]

See the previous discussion on this point

- He claims that his coming to the Jewish people was the same as God's coming. [16]

Luke 19.43,44: The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

- He claims to operate with, and to the same extent as God [16]

John 5.17: Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

- He claims direct equality with God [16]

John 10.30-39: I and the Father are one." 31 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, 32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" 33 "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." 34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? 35 If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came -- and the Scripture cannot be broken -- 36 what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? 37 Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. 38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." 39 Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

This passage is so very clear as to the intent and content of Jesus' claims--they were explicitly claims to being God! His affirmation of unity (30) is understood immediately as being a claim to deity (33). Jesus defends his affirmation with a technical argument in Rabbinic style. The general argument type is like this: "If it is okay to use the term X in a limited sense on Y, then it is certainly okay to use it in an expanded sense on a Z that is so much more than Y". In this passage, He thus argues that if it was okay in the psalms to call the Israelite leaders 'elohim' once, then it was certainly appropriate to call the pre-existent One, special of the Father, perfect image of the Father's character and actions, "GOD". And, once again, they understand that claim to real deity and try to seize him! His claims were quite clear - He was claiming to be fully God. [16]

How Those Around Jesus Christ Responded To Him [16]

- God calls him "Son" and declares that He is "pleased" with Jesus (Matthew 3.16)
- God tells some of the disciples to pay attention to Jesus (Matthew 17.5)
- Evil spirits knew he was the Son of God (Matthew 8.28-29; 3.11) and the Holy One of God (Matthew 1.23)
- His enemies knew he was claiming to be God (Matthew 9.3; 26.63; John 5.18; 10.33)--and accused him of blasphemy.
- Some of the general populace called/considered him God (Luke 7.16; 8.39-40)
- John the Baptist recognized Jesus' radical superiority to himself (Matthew 3.13; John 1.26-30,34)
- The disciples and those whose lives He touched worshipped Him (Matthew 14.33; John 9.35)
- He was repeatedly called the Son of God (Matthew 14.33; 16.16; John 1.26-30,34; John 1.49; 11.27)
- He was called "God" directly (John 20.27)
- Later Rabbinical writings 'remember' some of these exorbitant claims of Jesus.

If we step back from the data at this point, and look at it in its entirety, we cannot but be overwhelmed by the massiveness of it! We might be able to argue away a little here, and a little there, but the sheer bulk of this cannot be moved. One cannot stop an avalanche 'one rock at a time'. We come face to face with the reality that the Jesus shared all of the attributes, glory, and status of God. The claims above are simply too numerous and too consistently understood as being claims to deity. [16]

Conclusion

The argument that Jesus never claimed to be divine is in fact nothing more than an unsupportable conjecture, an argument from silence competing against the scream of the available data. Each of the above claims, and every known document of the church, even the heretical ones, acknowledge that Jesus claimed divinity. There is absolutely no evidence to the contrary that can be cited. [15]

Jesus claimed to be God. No matter how hard we try to dissect it or explain it away, the evidence points directly to that most special claim made by Jesus. One must now answer His question: "Who do you say that I am?" [15] We now look at the truth of Jesus' claims.

Additional Note

For a detailed examination on the concept of God (Father, Son and Spirit), please see the Trinity series by Glen Miller [16]. The data in Scripture is very, very clear: there are three 'individuals' in the Bible who may be called God without error and without blasphemy, who interact with one another and with us. These three individuals affirm, however, that there is only one God. As one can imagine from the above, this belief has been a source of much controversy, much discussion, much polemic, much error, much confusion, and

many sceptical attacks. In simplest terms, the concept of the Trinity is that there are three Persons who can accurately be called 'the One God'. Some feel a little uncomfortable with the notions of 'being' and 'essence' so they prefer the notion of 'unit'. So they get "three Persons in one ultimate unit". [16]

While the relationship between God the Father, Son and Spirit may be difficult one to grasp, the most important, undeniable point is this: Jesus claimed to be God

(c) 1999 - 2014 Richard Helsby

Comments and suggestions are welcome

This Free Apologetic Study is available in a small group study format