

## **Did Jesus Christ Claim To Be God?**

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## Introduction

Who is this man Jesus Christ of Nazareth? Many people disagree about who Jesus Christ really was or is. Was He just a great teacher? Was He just one of the prophets of God? Is He actually the God of all creation? There has been much debate on this topic for centuries. People have sacrificed their lives for their belief on this subject.

The issue over whether Jesus Christ claimed to be God was the key reason for His rejection by the Jewish religious establishment of His day. This rejection led to His suffering and death. It is also true that there are those today who think Jesus was a great man, great teacher, and great prophet, but they think He was not God. However, how could Jesus be a great man, great teacher, or great prophet of God, and claim to be God if He weren't?

Some have said that Jesus Christ never claimed to be God. Therefore, the belief that He is God is not warranted. This book is written to testify that not only is Jesus Christ God but that He Himself testified that He is God. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6) He would never be deceptive about this or any other issue as He is the Truth. The Holy Scriptures also testify that Jesus is God.

The divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is essential to our understanding of God and His Christ, the Anointed One. How important is this doctrine? As we will see, it is fundamental to the Christian faith. This is not something that we can treat lightly and believe or not believe. It goes to the very core of Christianity and whether we truly believe in Jesus Christ. This, of course, has ramifications regarding our salvation.

So, it is very important that we are clear regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we must know the truth and then teach the truth as Christ is the "Truth". We will therefore examine the Word of God in this book to determine the truth about Jesus and whether He is who He claimed to be. We need to remember that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God. Jesus is the Author of the Holy Bible.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)*

Therefore what is said in both the Old and New Testaments is authored by Christ Himself.

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

Let us be blessed by the Lord as we study His Word on this all important topic.

## **Chapter 1**

### **First Things First**

As I start this book, I would like to offer the reader something of immense value. Perhaps you are not a Christian but have decided to read this book out of curiosity. If that is the case, I would like to make a plea for you to consider the man called Jesus of Nazareth who is the Christ or Anointed One of God. Consider the following historical facts about Him:

He was born some 2,000 years ago in poverty.

He was trained as a common carpenter.

He was never educated.

He never wrote a book.

He never traveled more than about 150 miles from His birth place.

He owned no possessions other than the clothes He wore.

He was executed on a cross between two thieves as a common criminal.

He had twelve disciples most of whom were murdered because of their belief and witness of who He claimed to be.

Yet this man is proclaimed by the largest religion in the world to be God who came in the flesh. He is without a doubt the most famous and influential person who has ever lived. The dates we use are either before his birth (BC) or after it (AD). This ought to make everyone, whether a Christian or not, pause and reflect upon this man and give great credence to the biblical account of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Savior of the world.

*<sup>42</sup> Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." (John 4:42)*

Jesus gave us the greatest sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7) He taught us the Golden Rule to treat others the way we want to be treated. (Matt. 7:12) He taught us the two greatest commandments. We should love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love others as ourselves. (Matt. 22:37-40) He has been called a great prophet and teacher of God. This much is universally accepted. However, is He God?

We have only three possibilities to consider in answering this question. First, He lied about who He was. Second, He was insane. Third, He is who He claimed to be, the Son of God and equal with God.

Let's examine the first two possibilities. How could a man who taught such lofty and godly principles of love toward God and man be a deceiver or insane? Why would He have gone to the cross and died a tortuous death by scourging and crucifixion for a cause He knew to be false? Why would His disciples sacrifice their lives for a cause they knew was false? Neither the first nor second options make sense and therefore are not credible possibilities.

This leaves us only with option three: that He was who He claimed to be, very God come in the flesh. Here is what I would like you to consider about this man whom the Bible testifies of.

*<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)*

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, it is my hope and prayer that after reading this book you would become His disciple and follower. There is nothing more important in this life than to become a child of God. There is only one way to the Father and that one and only way is to have saving faith in Jesus Christ.

<sup>6</sup> *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)*

Part of believing in Jesus (John 3:16) is to believe in who He was and is. We will be looking at that in greater detail in this book.

## Chapter 2

### Did Jesus Deny that He Was God?

As stated before, there are many who have said that Jesus never claimed to be God therefore He is not the Almighty One. They refer to some of His words that seem to them to indicate that He is actually denying His divinity.

Let us look at some of those verses that seem to indicate that Jesus said He was not God. Remember that Jesus is the eternal Word of God (John 1:1-2) so whatever Scripture says is what Jesus is testifying to.

#### **The First Born**

*He is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation.*  
(Col. 1:15)

*And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.* (Col. 1:18)

At issue with these verses are the words, "...*the first born...*" These few words seem to imply that Jesus had a beginning, when He was born, and therefore was not the eternal God. However, what is often missed is that these words refer to Jesus as being the first person to have received a glorified body after death. He was the first person to be resurrected into a glorified body therefore He is "the first born from the dead". Later, at the return of Christ to Earth, all Christians who have died will receive their glorified bodies as will all Christians who are living. However, Jesus was the first one born into a glorified body. Those who have received their glorified bodies will never die again.

Other people in Scripture were raised from the dead. Most notable of those was Jesus' good friend Lazarus whom He raised from the dead.

On all these occasions, the people came back to life but in their same flesh-and-blood bodies; they later died again. Jesus is the first and only One who was raised from the dead and received His glorified, eternal body.

All we have to do is to look at the verses between these two to see Jesus' deity.

*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. (Col. 1:16-17)*

This is referring to Jesus who is the Creator of all things, and "He is before all things". He created all things in heaven and Earth. He holds all things together by His wise Providence. Only God could have done this. Jesus Christ is clearly God.

### **If Jesus is God Why Didn't He Know the Time of His Return?**

One day Jesus' disciples came to Him for answers to some important questions.

<sup>3</sup> *Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3)*

Jesus responded to their question about when He would return as follows:

*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Mark 13:32)*

If Jesus is God and all-knowing, how could He not have known when He would be returning to Earth for Christians?

To explain this, I would like to borrow a passage from my previous book, Free Grace or Free Will? God's Free Salvation Plan, p.86.

"Jesus Christ possessed two natures. One was His human nature and one was His divine nature. We see His human nature when He "wept" at Lazarus' funeral, when He asked his Father to remove the cup at the Garden of Gethsemane, and when He tired, was thirsty, and needed rest and sleep. In the garden, His divine side knew it was the Father's will for Him to suffer the cross, yet His human side requested that this cup be removed. (Matt. 26:39) We see also that Christ's human side did not know the time of His return in power and glory to the Earth after His resurrection (Mark 13:32), yet His divine side, of course, did know this fact."

Although Jesus was all-knowing, He supernaturally had this one piece of information blocked out of His mind. We are not told why in Scripture. He thought it was good not to know this date in His humanity. This does not negate His divinity. It just shows His humility while in the flesh. Jesus was all-knowing as He knew the very thoughts of men.

Once when a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus to be healed, He told the man his sins were forgiven.

*<sup>3</sup> And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" <sup>4</sup> But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? <sup>5</sup> For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? <sup>6</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." <sup>7</sup> And he arose and departed to his house. (Matt. 9:3-7)*

Only God, who is omniscient, can know the very thoughts of men. This proves Jesus was God.

### **Only God is Good**

Once a young man approached Jesus with a very important question regarding how one could obtain eternal life.

*Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? So He said to Him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. 19:16-17)*

After a casual reading of these two verses, we are left with the impression that Jesus is denying that He is God. What Jesus says here about no one being good agrees with the Scriptures.

*"...there is none who does good, no, not one." (Rom. 3:12)*

Jesus is not denying His divinity. His question to this one who came to Him is to teach him and us something very important. He is teaching us that if you call Him good, you must also call Him God for no one is good other than God. Jesus is saying here that He is God because He is good.

Jesus also called Himself "good" which proves He considered Himself God.

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." (John 10:11)*

## **The Father is Greater than Jesus**

<sup>28</sup> *You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. (John 14:28)*

When Jesus states that the Father is greater than He is, He is not denying His own deity. As I have already written in this book, while on earth Jesus possessed two natures, one divine and one human. It was in His humanity that the Father was greater than Jesus. Our Lord humbled Himself and became a lowly man. Jesus subordinated Himself to the Father when He came to Earth to serve and not be served. In His humility and humanity, He voluntarily for a short time gave up His glory that He had with the Father in eternity past. His glory did break through once in His humanity in His transfiguration on the mount which was witnessed by His disciples, Peter, James, and John.

<sup>1</sup> Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; <sup>2</sup> and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup> And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. (Matt. 17:1-3)

In this episode, we see the glory of His deity break forth. Although He gave up His glory for a brief time in His humanity, this revelation of His glory before these three disciples was proof that He was God.

### **Made a Little Lower than the Angels**

<sup>9</sup> But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. (Heb. 2:9)

In His humanity, Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. As a man, He needed rest and sleep, became hungry and thirsty, and could suffer pain and death. His body could be at only one place at a time. Angels are far more powerful than mankind. In his birth as a man, He was made a little lower than the angels. Yet, He was still God in the flesh. Only God could do the miracles that He did such as raising people from the dead.

### **Was John the Baptist Greater than Jesus?**

<sup>11</sup> "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matt. 11:11)

Does the fact that Jesus was also born of a woman mean that John the Baptist is greater than He was and thus Jesus could not be God? Jesus was not including Himself in those born of a woman. Except Christ, everyone who was born of a woman had an earthly father. Jesus' conception took place by the power of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>34</sup> Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"<sup>35</sup> And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:34,35)

John the Baptist answered this issue himself about who was greater when he said the following about Jesus:

<sup>30</sup> He must increase, but I must decrease. <sup>31</sup> He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. (John 3:30,31)

<sup>11</sup> I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matt. 3:11)

### **Is Jesus Saying Only the Father is God?**

<sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3)

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" (John 20:17)

Jesus Christ, as God the Son, is co-equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. More will be said about this later in this book. Again, in His humanity Jesus subordinated Himself to His Father as the Son. Therefore it is entirely appropriate that Jesus, as God the Son, talk about His Father as His God.

## Chapter 3

### "I AM"

#### **Moses Talks to God at the Burning Bush**

In Genesis chapter 46, we read that Jacob and his family of 70 left Palestine because of famine and traveled to Egypt and lived in the land of Goshen. Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, was the Prime Minister of Egypt. However, after Joseph died and was buried, the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites in fear of their rapidly growing population. After some 400 years, it was time for God to send them a deliverer.

When Moses stood before God at the burning bush, the Lord told him He was sending him to Pharaoh to bring the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. Moses asked God what name he should call Him when talking to the Israelites.

<sup>14</sup> *And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Ex. 3:14)*

God was referring to Himself as the eternal I AM. He is the eternal present. He has always existed and will always exist. Only God can make that claim. For a mere human to falsely make that claim would be blasphemy.

#### **"Before Abraham was, I AM"**

Now let us fast forward to the New Testament during Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus had many disagreements with the Jews and the Jewish religious leaders consisting of the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. During one such disagreement, Jesus said the following:

<sup>51</sup> *Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."* <sup>52</sup> *Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that*

*You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.'* <sup>53</sup> *Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?"* (John 8:51-53)

The Jews here misunderstood Jesus. He was saying that whoever keeps or believes in His word has eternal life and will never taste spiritual death in hell and the lake of fire. He was not referring to physical death. Then the Jews focused on the central issue of their conflict with Jesus. They asked Him if He were greater than Abraham or the prophets. Abraham was revered by the Jews. He was called Father Abraham for he was the first Jew. Probably the most revered and respected persons for the Jews were Abraham, Moses, and Elijah.

The Jews directly asked Jesus if He was greater than their father Abraham or the prophets that would include Moses and Elijah. Then they asked the really key question. "Who do You make Yourself out to be?" Jesus is about to answer that question for them. His reply also answers the question in the title of this book.

<sup>56</sup> *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*" <sup>57</sup> *Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"* <sup>58</sup> *Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."* <sup>59</sup> *Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.* (John 8:56-59)

Since the Jews had so much reverence for their father Abraham, Jesus answered their question by telling them He was greater than Abraham. He told them that Abraham rejoiced to see His day and was glad. The Jews, after hearing Jesus, felt they had trapped Him in His own words since only a crazy man with a demon would make such a preposterous statement. Jesus was not yet fifty years old in His physical body so there was no way Jesus could have personally known Abraham.

Jesus explains to them how He could make that statement. He told them "... before Abraham was, I AM." Jesus used the very same name for Himself that God told Moses to call Him. These Jews understood

that Jesus was telling them that He was God because they took up stones to kill Him for what they perceived was blasphemy. It wasn't blasphemy because, in the case of Jesus, it was the truth. Jesus is the eternal God, the great "I AM".

### **Other "I Am" Sayings of Jesus**

There are other verses in the Bible when Jesus speaks of Himself as being the "I am" of the Bible. Note the following verses:

<sup>51</sup> *I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*" (John 6:51)

Jesus is the "I am" that came down from heaven which speaks to His deity. Jesus is alive and well; He is the Living Bread who came down from heaven, the abode of God. How is Jesus the Living Bread? As we read of Him in the Scriptures, pray to Him, believe in His atoning sacrificial death for us, and live our lives in obedience to Him we partake of Him and thus eat of His Bread or Flesh.

<sup>9</sup> *I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.* (John 10:9)

Jesus is the "I am" that is the only Door through which a person can enter paradise or heaven. Salvation can only happen if a person enters through Him. We must have saving faith in Jesus who is the Door of salvation.

<sup>11</sup> *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.* (John 10:11)

Jesus is the "I am" who is the Good Shepherd. Jesus died for His sheep. His deity is attested to by the fact that He claimed that He is the Good Shepherd and there is no one good but God. (Matt. 19:17)

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