

Is Jesus God or sent by God? (part 1 of 2)

Description: The first of a two-part article discussing the true role of Jesus. Part 1: Discusses whether Jesus called himself God, Jesus referred to as Lord and the nature of Jesus.

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Jesus is a figure who is loved and revered by billions of people the world over. Yet there is so much confusion surrounding the status of this colossal personality. Muslims and Christians both hold Jesus in high regard but view him in very different ways.



The questions raised in this article aim to get to the heart of the issues surrounding Jesus: Is Jesus God? Or was he sent by God? Who was the real historical Jesus?

Some ambiguous verses of the Bible can be applied erroneously to show that Jesus is in some way divine. But if we look at the clear, direct verses of the Bible, we see again and again that Jesus is being referred to as an extraordinary human being and nothing more. What emerges, when we consider the historical and logical facts about Jesus' life, is conclusive proof not only that Jesus cannot be God, but that he never claimed to be either.

What follows are five lines of reasoning which clarify this subject for us through the Bible itself and thereby allow us to discover the real Jesus.

1. Jesus Never Calls Himself God

The Bible (in spite of being changed and adulterated over time) contains many verses in which Jesus speaks of God as a separate person to himself. Here are just a few of them:

When a man addressed Jesus as "Good Teacher", he replied **"Why do you call me good? No one is good except the one God."** [Mark 10:18]

In another instance he says: **"I can't do anything by myself. Whatever I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just. I don't seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me."** [John 5:30]

Jesus speaks of God as a separate being to himself: I'm going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. [John 20:17]

In this verse he affirms that he was sent by God: This is eternal life: to know you, the only true

God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. [John 17:3]

If Jesus was God he would have told people to worship him, but he did the opposite and disapproved anyone worshipping him: And in vain they worship Me [Matthew 15:9]

If Jesus claimed to be God than there should be hundreds of verses in the Bible which would have mentioned it. But there is not a single verse in the entire Bible in which Jesus says I am God, worship me.

2. Jesus as Son and Lord?

Jesus is sometimes referred to as 'Lord' in the Bible and at other times as 'Son of God'. God is called the 'Father', so putting these names together it could be claimed that Jesus is the son of God. But if we look at each of these titles in context we will find that they are symbolic and not to be taken literally.

'Son of God' is a term used in ancient Hebrew for a righteous person. God calls Israel his 'son': This is what the LORD says: Israel is my oldest son.[Exodus 4:22]. Also, David is called the 'Son of God': The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' [Psalm 2:7]. In fact anyone who is righteous is referred to as God's 'son': All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. [Romans 8:14].

In the same way, when the word 'Father' is used to refer to God it shouldn't be taken literally. Instead it's a way of saying God is the creator, sustainer, cherisher etc. There are many verses for us to understand this symbolic meaning of the word 'Father', for example: one God and Father of all. [Ephesians 4:6].

Jesus is sometimes called 'Lord' by the disciples. 'Lord' is a term used for God and also for people who are held in high esteem. There are many examples of the word 'Lord' being used for people in the Bible: So they (Joseph's brothers) went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. **oeWe beg your pardon, our lord," they said. [Genesis 43:19-20].** Also, in other parts of the Bible, Jesus is even called a 'servant' of God by the disciples: the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. [Acts 3:13]. This clearly shows that when 'Lord' is used to refer to Jesus, it is a title of respect not of divinity.

3. The Nature of Jesus

The nature of Jesus was totally different to that of God. There are many parts of the Bible that highlight this difference in nature:

God is All-Knowing but Jesus by his own admission was not All-Knowing. This can be seen in the following passage when Jesus says **oeBut nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the heavenly angels and not the Son. Only the Father knows."** [Matthew 24:36]

God is independent and he doesn't need sleep, food or water. Jesus however ate, drank, slept and depended on God: As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father. [John 6:57]. Another sign of Jesus' dependence on God is that he prayed to God:

Going a little farther, he (Jesus) fell with his face to the ground and prayed [Matthew 26:39]. This shows that Jesus himself sought help from God. God, being the one who answers prayers does not need to pray to anyone. Also, Jesus said: **I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than me. [John 14:28].**

The Bible is clear that God is unseen and is not a man: for no one may see me and live. [Exodus 33:20], God is not a man [Numbers 23:19]. Jesus on the other hand was a man who was seen by thousands of people, so he could not be God. Furthermore, the Bible makes it clear that God is too great to be inside his creation: But how could God possibly live on earth with people? If heaven, even the highest heaven, can't contain you [2 Chronicles 6:18]. According to this verse Jesus cannot be God living on the earth.

Also the Bible calls Jesus a Prophet [Matthew 21:10-11], so how could Jesus be God and be God's Prophet at the same time? That wouldn't make sense.

Additionally the Bible informs us that God does not change: I the Lord do not change. [Malachi 3:6:]. Jesus however went through many changes in his life such as age, height, weight etc.

These are just some of the proofs within the Bible, which make it clear that the nature of Jesus and God is completely different. Some people may claim that Jesus had both a human and a divine nature. This is a claim that Jesus never made, and is in clear contradiction to the Bible which maintains that God has one nature.

Is Jesus God or sent by God? (part 2 of 2)

Description: The second of a two-part article discussing the true role of Jesus. Part 2: Discusses the message of Jesus, belief of the early Christians and Islam's view of Jesus.

By onereason.org

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4. The Message of Jesus

The Prophets of the Old Testament such as Abraham, Noah and Jonah never preached that God is part of a Trinity, and did not believe in Jesus as their saviour. Their message was simple: there is one God and He alone deserves your worship. It doesn't make sense that God sent Prophets for thousands of years with the same essential message, and then all of a sudden he says he is in a Trinity and that you must believe in Jesus to be saved.

The truth is that Jesus preached the same message that the Prophets in the Old Testament preached. There is a passage in the Bible which really emphasizes his core message. A man came to Jesus and asked "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus answered, "**The first of all the commandments is Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God,**

the Lord is one.” [Mark 12:28-29]. So the greatest commandment, the most important belief according to Jesus is that God is one. If Jesus was God he would have said ‘I am God, worship me’, but he didn’t. He merely repeated a verse from the Old Testament confirming that God is One.

Some people claim that Jesus came to die for the sins of the world. But consider the following statement of Jesus: This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. [John 17:3-4]. Jesus said this before he was caught and taken to be crucified. It is clear from this verse that Jesus did not come to die for the sins of the world, as he finished the work God gave him before he was taken to be crucified.

Also Jesus said "salvation is of the Jews" [John 4:22]. So according to this we don't need to believe in the Trinity or that Jesus died for our sins to attain salvation since the Jews don't have these beliefs.

5. The Early Christians

Historically there were many sects in early Christianity who had a range of beliefs regarding Jesus[1]. Some believed Jesus was God, others believed Jesus was not God but partly divine, and yet others believed he was a human being and nothing more. Trinitarian Christianity which is the belief that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one in three persons became the dominant sect of Christianity, once it was formalized as the state religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th Century. Christians who denied Jesus being God were persecuted by the Roman Authorities[2]. From this point onwards the Trinitarian belief became widespread amongst Christians. There were various movements in early Christianity which denied the Trinity, among the more well known of them is Adoptionism and Arianism.

Dr Jerald Dirks who is an expert on early Christianity had this to say on the subject: Early Christianity was quite conflicted about the issue of the nature of Jesus. The various Adoptionist positions within early Christianity were numerous and at times dominate. One can even speculate that Arian and Nestorian Christianity might well be an extremely sizable source within Christianity today, if it were not for the fact that these two branches of Christianity, which were located primarily in the middle east and in North Africa were so similar to the Islamic teaching regarding the nature of Jesus that they quite naturally were absorbed into Islam at the beginning of the seventh century." [3]

Since there were so many sects in early Christianity, each with different beliefs about Jesus and with their own versions of the Bible, which one can we say was following the true teachings of Jesus?

It doesn't make sense that God sends countless Prophets like Noah, Abraham and Moses to tell people to believe in one God, and then suddenly sends a radically different message of the Trinity which contradicts his previous Prophets teachings. It is clear that the sect of Christianity who believed Jesus to be a human Prophet and nothing more, were following the true teachings of Jesus. This is because their concept of God is the same as

that which was taught by the Prophets in the Old Testament.

Jesus in Islam

The Islamic belief about Jesus demystifies for us who the real Jesus was. Jesus in Islam was an extraordinary individual, chosen by God as a Prophet and sent to the Jewish people. He never preached that he himself was God or the actual son of God. He was miraculously born without a father, and he performed many amazing miracles such as healing the blind and the lepers and raising the dead " all by God's permission. Muslims believe that Jesus will return before the day of Judgement to bring justice and peace to the world. This Islamic belief about Jesus is similar to the belief of some of the early Christians. In the Quran, God addresses the Christians about Jesus in the following way:

O People of the Book, do not commit excesses in your religion, and do not say anything about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God, His word, directed to Mary and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers and do not speak of a "Trinity" stop [this], that is better for you" God is only one God, He is far above having a son, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him and He is the best one to trust. [4:171]

Islam is not just another religion. It is the same message preached by Moses, Jesus and Abraham. Islam literally means 'submission to God' and it teaches us to have a direct relationship with God. It reminds us that since God created us, no one should be worshipped except God alone. It also teaches that God is nothing like a human being or like anything that we can imagine. The concept of God is summarized in the Quran as:

"Say, He is God, the One. God, the Absolute. He does not give birth, nor was He born, and there is nothing like Him." (Quran 112:1-4)[4]

Becoming a Muslim is not turning your back to Jesus. Rather it's going back to the original teachings of Jesus and obeying him.

Endnotes:

[1] John Evans, History of All Christian Sects and Denominations, ISBN: 0559228791

[2] C.N. Kolitsas, The Life and Times of Constantine the Great, ISBN: 1419660411

[3] Excerpt from 'Islamic Trajectories in Early Christianity' by Dr Jerald Dirks

[4] God is not male or female, the word 'Him' when used for God does not refer to gender.

The web address of this article:

<http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/5232/viewall/>

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