

## **Jesus: His Divinity Defended and Asserted**

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### **Introduction**

Over the years, the subject of the real nature and identity of Jesus has come into sharp focus, with many claiming that the real Jesus has been enshrouded in mystery or at best lost to history. Others have claimed that the Jesus presented in the gospel narratives is a fake, insane or confused fellow with wild claims. Still others purport that the gospel narratives portray different people rather than the same person. What is one to believe about this matter? In this relatively short paper, we investigate this matter and squarely answer it from the scriptures. This paper assumes that the scriptures are a correct narrative given the abundant verifiable external evidences (over 24,500 complete or part complete Greek manuscripts). Let us approach this enquiry with as objective a mind, allowing the scriptures to speak and tell their story.

### **What Jesus Claimed**

Jesus claimed to be God directly or indirectly. The evidence in scripture is abundant. Some external sources such as Josephus, a contemporary Jew of Jesus' day, suggests that Jesus claimed or was thought to be God. In this section however, we highlight the internal Biblical evidence which point to the fact that Jesus claimed to be God.

First, Jesus claimed to be from God, where no man had ever been.

Second, Jesus claimed to have existed with the Father before the world was.

Third, Jesus claimed to be one with, of the same nature with God.

Fourth, Jesus asserted that he preceded Abraham or any of the Patriarchs, making himself greater than them.

Fifth, Jesus claimed to be the Great '*I AM*' found in Exodus 3 and attributable to God alone (John 8:58).

Sixth, Jesus claimed to be the son of man, therefore human. He had a hypostatic nature, God and Man at the same time.

Finally, Jesus claims to be the first and the last, the beginning and the end in the book of Revelation.

### **The Biblical Evidence for His Divinity**

The Biblical evidence pours out at every point. We highlight some of the scriptural evidence to support the fact that Jesus is for a fact God:

1. Jesus is said to be God (John 1:1)
2. Jesus is said to be the creator of all things (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16).
3. Jesus is said to be the only begotten son of God. Eternal generation is His pedigree (John 3:16).
4. Jesus claimed to be the son of God (John 5:17).
5. Jesus is said to know all things and yet at the same time said to be fully human. He is at the same time the Son of God and the son of man.

### **Objections**

Some people object to the fact of the divinity of Christ. Arius was one of the earliest proponents of heretical views claiming that was not of the same essence with the father but was of similar essence. Arius also claimed that Jesus was a creation of God and thus could not be God himself. As a result, this bishop marshalled a following within the early fourth century Church but was only checked by the determined Athanasius who championed the Trinitarian doctrine and thus saved the Church from heresy. Arius however still has a following even today who blatantly reject the truth of Scripture. Among these are the present day Jehovah's witnesses, The Way International and a whole host of Unitarian churches. Others, like Muslims reject the divinity of Christ but accept him as a mere human Prophet.

### **What Others have Said or Written About the Divinity of Jesus**

Many Christian writers have undertaken to establish and defend the true identity, nature and person of Jesus Christ. Right down from the first century, the Church has espoused and treasured the deity of Jesus Christ, except for a few epochs when some rejected these stubborn facts. Often, those rejecting the divinity of

Christ equally reject the record of scripture and its inspiration. There is a fair share of those that reject the humanity of Christ claiming that he only appeared to be a human when in fact he was not. The Christological Trinitarian controversy that raged in the early centuries, in many senses, is still with us today. We need people with the Spirit of Athanasius to rise to the occasion once again. Among those that God has raised have been Zacharias Ravi, Josh McDowell, John Montgomery, FF Bruce and a whole host of others that have devoted their lives to research demonstrating that Jesus is for a fact divine. For instance, McDowell has written extensively from different perspectives to prove that Jesus is God. One perspective is to argue from internal scripture evidence, having demonstrated that the scriptures are trust worthy and accurate, therefore giving an objective picture of who Jesus was as well as his claims to divinity. If we agree that the gospel record is authentic, then we can safely accept Jesus' claims to divinity. His claims were not irrational, wild, out of lunacy, a complex or a strong desire to be noticed. No! these were words from the King of Kings that walked the earth in time with a view to redeem the elect. Ravi, on the other hand, demonstrates clearly in his book *Jesus among other Gods* that although many deities exist and claim to be the way to God, only Jesus is the true way to the father given his nature, mission and claims. Hailing from a non-Christian, Hindu syncretic background, Ravi proves that Jesus is unique and worth believing in. Further, it is important to note that some writers such as John Brown spent a lot of time investigating this great question, proving from scripture that Jesus was divine. Brown's investigation reveals very interesting facts often overlooked in the scriptures, from page to page. In Church history, we have champions like Athanasius contending for the divinity of Christ using words from the original languages. However, we have a fair share of those that object to the truth of the divine glory of Christ. The best examples are the Jehovah's witnesses (JW.org) that vehemently deny that Jesus Christ could be divine in the same sense the father is. Unitarians, Islam and to some extent, Judaism reject the divinity of Christ as well claiming that God is one, impersonal , far removed and cannot have Jesus ascend to the same status as the Father

### **Potent Lessons Gleaned from this Consideration**

Many lessons can be adduced from different sources apart from the gospel narratives or holy scripture. Being closely bound to the historical context, the Christian faith can be proved from archaeological findings, ancient manuscripts, scientific scrutiny and a whole host of other methods that are objective and willing to establish the truth. The Christian should not be afraid to face the facts. In this paper, we synthesize some lessons harvested from diverse reading materials, sources referred to in our research. We do so in point form for brevity's sake:

1. Jesus is indeed God because he claimed divinity, was called by others and did not protest when they so called him e.g. John 5:26.

2. Jesus possesses all the exclusive names, titles and nature of God.
3. The name Christ refers to the anointed one that was expected from the Old Testament prophecies to redeem God's people.
4. In this paper, we assume that the scriptures are the actual word of God and thus reliable (I Thessalonians 2:13ff).
5. Certain Greek and Hebrew renderings and words used in the scriptures about Jesus are attributed to God alone. For example, the title "Lord" is *Adonai* in Hebrew and *Kurios* in Greek. Both these are attributed to Jesus. The other is "*I AM*" found in exodus 3:14 refers to God or "*ego eim*" is attributed to Jesus as well.
6. As stated elsewhere, we all commence our discussions from a given presupposition, whether scientist, religious or not.
7. In some parts of scripture, Jesus is referred to as "God and saviour" to denote his divinity e.g. Titus 2:13b). In other places, he is called "Mighty God"<sup>1</sup>, "Everlasting father," "Prince of Peace," "*Emmanuel*," etc. All these point to God alone. (Isaiah 9:6)
8. In some scriptures such as in Revelation 7:10-12, Jesus is said to sit on the throne that God alone does sit on. This is proof positive that God is Trinitarian in nature and essence.
9. Many people who have initially set out to discredit the Christian faith have ended up getting convinced and converted by the fact of Christianity. John McDowell is one of such people who are now strong advocates for the truth of Christianity.
10. Christianity is a relationship with a person, Jesus Christ not mere allegiance to facts, rituals, prescriptions, slavish ceremonial washings or blind obedience to an impersonal deity.
11. Only God can fully reveal Himself as He truly is. All others cannot although once God reveals himself in Revelation; someone can then have an appreciation of Him as well as experience the love that comes out of divine placental blessings.
12. God has indeed revealed himself and this fact can be verified through different means including scriptural assertions found in the pages of scripture. Additionally, the Bible claims to be the very word of God and thus reveals who

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<sup>1</sup> Or '*El Gibbor*' in Hebrew

He is. Thus, every claim must be tested against the touch stone of scripture and the person of Jesus.

13. The scriptures (i.e. Holy Bible) are so well attested by historical records and over 24,600 full or partial original languages manuscripts. This by far outweighs the next best historical works by Homer (Odyssey) with a paltry 634 manuscripts! The Bible can thus be relied upon, because of their veracity. The 1947 Dead Sea scroll finds add a further dimension to the strong evidence of the Bible's claims. In short, the Bible has immense supporting evidence, short only of eleven verses from the church and apostolic father's writings alone!

14. In the incarnation, Jesus humbled himself and stepped into time to be our saviour. He thus revealed the father and worthy of our worship.

15. Though some scriptures apparently appear to support the idea that Jesus is not divine on face value, this can be proved otherwise when considered in the wider context of scripture. For instance, Jesus has all the attributes and titles ascribed to God alone.

16. God has general and moral attributes that distinguish Him from all other purported deities. God is also Trinitarian in nature and a panorama of scriptures teach these truths. Some of these scriptures include the following: John 1:1; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 1:1-3; Romans 15:16,30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 etc

17. When dealing with the mystery of the Trinity, care must be taken not to veer into unwarranted extremes such as Sabellianism, Arianism, Socinianism or any heretical or erroneous positions. The Trinity doctrine needs to be deductively derived from the scriptures and remain in that framework. The Westminster Confession and other credible ones dub the Trinity as a very "High mystery" that mortal minds feeble attempt to pry into.

18. The Lord Jesus was incarnated so that we might be saved, bring about a bridge between a thrice holy God and a sinful people etc.

19. Jesus has always existed, never was created either in time or eternity.

20. One of the evidences of Jesus' divinity was how the Jews violently reacted when Jesus claimed to be divine (*ego eimi*). Hostile reactions are strong evidence to a given case.

21. The name "*I AM*" found in Exodus 3 and "*Jehovah*" in Genesis are not strictly the same but both etymologically derived from the name "to be" meaning that both are aspects of who God is exactly.

22. The Greek word "*theos*" is the equivalent of "*Elohim*" in the Hebrew text.

23. John 1:1 is one of the clearest passages in the entire scriptural campus that proves that Jesus is divine.

### **Necessity of this Consideration**

This subject is a very critical and important one. It needs to be grasped by every believer so that they avoid heresy or extremes such as sabbellianism, Arianism or any other such heretical view that demeans the nature of Christ or improperly represents him. In an increasingly syncretic world, it is all too easy to veer to one extreme, imbibe or reject some aspects of the divinity of Christ.

### **Conclusion**

From the evidence thus far adduced from scripture and basic reasoning, we can safely conclude that Jesus is indeed who he claimed to be-God. His claims to and acceptance of exclusive divine titles prove that He was for a fact, the eternal God. Opposing claims fail to face up to the facts at hand.

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