

THE DIVINE JESUS

from
 **FAITH MAKES SENSE**

DID JESUS CLAIM TO BE GOD?

One of the most common objections to Christianity is that Jesus never actually claimed to be God. The divine titles and cosmic declarations now attributed to Him are just theological inventions layered onto a simple Jewish teacher by His devoted followers decades after his death. The gospels tell a different story. Across multiple accounts, in multiple settings, before multiple audiences, Jesus made statements that His audience immediately understood as claims to divine identity. We know they understood it that way because of how they reacted. They reached for stones. They tore their robes. They voted for His death. The four passages below are not the only evidences in Scripture for the divinity of Jesus, but they are among the clearest. In each case, the hostile reaction of the audience removes any argument about what Jesus meant. His enemies are our best witnesses.

FOUR TIMES JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

THE DIVINE NAME

JOHN 8:58

When Jesus says “before Abraham was, I am,” He is not making a grammatical error. He is deliberately using the divine name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. His audience understood this immediately. They did not ask for clarification or accuse Him of poor theology. They picked up stones to kill Him for blasphemy. The reaction of the crowd shows us the initial interpretation. Jesus claimed the name of God and everyone in the room knew it.

AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE

MATTHEW 9:1-8, MARK 2:1-12, LUKE 5:17-26

When Jesus tells a paralyzed man his sins are forgiven, the scribes respond immediately: “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” They are not wrong. Forgiveness of sins was an exclusively divine prerogative in Jewish theology. Jesus does not correct them. He heals the man publicly to prove the authority behind the claim is real. The miracle is not the point. The miracle is the proof that Jesus’s claim to divinity is real.

THE TRIAL

MATTHEW 26:63-65, MARK 14:61-64, LUKE 22:66-71

At His trial, the high priest demands to know if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus affirms it and adds that they will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power. In Matthew and Mark the high priest tears his robes and charges blasphemy. All three accounts record a condemnation. The highest religious court in Judaism understood exactly what Jesus claimed and voted for His death because of it.

ONE WITH THE FATHER

JOHN 10:30

When Jesus declares “I and the Father are one,” the crowd reaches for stones to kill Him. Jesus asks them directly which good work they are preparing to stone Him for. Their answer removes all ambiguity: “You, being a man, make yourself God.” Jesus does not correct them. He does not say they have misunderstood. His enemies understood exactly what Jesus was saying.

These are not isolated scenes from a single author. They are a clearly biblical pattern. Across all four gospels, in multiple settings, with various audiences, Jesus made claims that His audience understood as claims to divinity. They charged Him with blasphemy. They voted for His death. They picked up stones. The hostility of their responses make it clear. Jesus claimed to be God and everyone who heard Him knew it.

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JESUS THE GOD-MAN

The church has wrestled with the question of who Jesus is since the first century. In AD 451 the Council of Chalcedon settled the debate with a definition that has stood for over 1600 years. The theological term for what they defined is the hypostatic union. In plain language, it means Jesus is both fully God and fully human at the same time. Jesus is one person with two complete natures. He is not half God and half human. He is not God wearing a human costume. He is also not a good man whom God promoted. Jesus is fully God and fully human. This is the Jesus of the New Testament and the Jesus the church has confessed from the beginning.

FOUR HERESIES ABOUT THE PERSON OF JESUS

ARIANISM

Arianism teaches that Jesus is a created being, divine in character but not in essence, subordinate to the Father and brought into existence by Him. This is not a dead heresy. It is the Christology of Jehovah's Witnesses and a soft version of it lives in a lot of casual Christianity where Jesus is treated as divine but subtly less than the Father. If Arianism is true, Jesus is the greatest creature who ever lived, but a creature nonetheless. Only God can bear the weight of human sin. A created savior is not enough.

DOCETISM

Docetism teaches that Jesus only appeared to be human. His body was a spiritual projection rather than real flesh. If Docetism is true, Jesus did not really suffer, did not really die, and did not really rise. The incarnation becomes a performance rather than a reality. This error quietly resurfaces whenever people become uncomfortable with a Jesus who gets tired, hungry, or emotionally distressed. A Jesus who did not truly become human cannot redeem humanity. The cross only accomplishes anything if the person on it was real.

NESTORIANISM

Nestorianism effectively splits Jesus into two persons, one human and one divine, loosely cooperating rather than genuinely united in one person. If Nestorianism is true, there is no single unified person who is both the Son of God and the son of Mary. The incarnation becomes a partnership rather than a union. This error surfaces in casual language whenever someone speaks of the human Jesus and the divine Jesus as though they are two different models or modes rather than one person with two complete natures.

ADOPTIONISM

Adoptionism teaches that Jesus was a fully human figure whom God elevated to divine status at some point in His life, usually His baptism or His resurrection. He was not eternally the Son. He became the Son. If Adoptionism is true, the eternal divine Son never actually entered human history and what we have is an inspiring human example rather than a divine redeemer. This is the functional Christology of much of modern theological liberalism and it produces a Jesus who cannot save because He is not God.

Getting Jesus wrong is not a modern problem. Every error listed above is older than your grandmother's grandmother. The church has faced each of them, named them, and rejected them because the stakes are too high. The Jesus of the New Testament is both fully God and fully human simultaneously, in one person. That is the Jesus worth worshipping. That is the Jesus who can actually do what He came to do.

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