

Who did Jesus say He was?

Jesus Christ fulfilled over 300 prophecies concerning the Messiah found in Genesis to Malachi (written hundreds of years before he was even born). Jesus foretold that he would die (not difficult for a controversial public figure to do) and be raised from the dead (impossible for anyone to do). This helps to verify the authority of Jesus's teachings and his claims to be God.

Jesus was more than a moral teacher. Many non-Christians say things like, "I like Jesus" or "I love the teachings of Jesus", in an effort to be tolerant or seem like they are accepting of all beliefs. Most of these people do not know what Jesus taught – if they did, they would call him a lunatic. In his teachings, Jesus claimed to be God (we will look at this shortly). If we study the life and teachings of Jesus, we can only respond by saying that he was either a fool, a lunatic, or that he is Lord.

C.S. Lewis (1898 – 1963) was a British writer, literary scholar, and theologian. In his book, *Mere Christianity*, he wrote, "(Jesus) would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

On more than one occasion Jesus made clear claims to be God.

It can be very clearly seen in the Bible that Jesus claimed to be God. When Jesus made these claims, no one misunderstood him; they knew the meaning of what he said. Today, because we live in a different time and culture, where certain words and expressions might have a different meaning to when Jesus spoke them, it is easy for us to overlook some of the things that Jesus said. This is where interpreting the Bible according to its correct context becomes important.

The Jews wanted to arrest Jesus. Their reason: "you, being a man, make yourself God" (John 10:33). Jesus did not contradict them. The Jews considered this blasphemy; a serious crime punishable by death under the law of Moses. Eventually, it is exactly this claim of Jesus that leads to His crucifixion. The high priest asked him: "Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63). And Jesus confirmed

it. The high priest called it blasphemy because Jesus was making himself equal with God.

Through his teachings, Jesus had given the Jews and the high priest enough evidence that he claimed to be God.

In John 8:58 Jesus said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” He was not just saying that he existed before Abraham existed (2000 years ago) but he was also calling himself ‘I am’, which is what God called himself in Exodus 3:14. ‘I am’ or ‘Yahweh’ is the name of God and conveys his dominion over all things, the source of his power, and his eternal nature: I AM. He is the self-sufficient, self-sustaining God who was, who is, and who will be.

Jesus said he existed before Abraham (John 8:58). He claimed that he and his Father are one (John 10:30), and that he is equal with the Father (John 5:17-18). Not only did Jesus claim to be God, but he also claimed to have the power of God. He said that he has the authority to judge the nations (Matthew 25:31-46). He claims the authority to raise people from the dead (John 5:25-29) and to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-7)—things that only God can do (1 Samuel 2:6; Isaiah 43:25).

Jesus also said that he has the power to answer prayers (John 14:13-14), and that he will be with his followers always (Matthew 28:20). In John 16:15, Jesus says, “All that belongs to the Father is mine.”

It is fully reasonable to conclude that Jesus is Lord! He Himself proclaimed that He was God! The ultimate proof of His divinity is His resurrection from the dead after His death on the cross.

Deuteronomy 6:4 KJVS

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”

It’s easy to get confused and think that there are three gods (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) but we do not worship multiple gods. It’s important for us to note that there is one true God, and he has revealed himself to us as the Father, God, who took on

flesh (John 1:14) in becoming man (as the Son), and now lives in the believer as the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). Jesus said that he and his Father are one (John 10:30) emphasizing one God, which we see revealed to us in three ways: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In a way, this is like me being a father, a husband and a son – different expressions of the same person.

Something that often comes up for people is the thought that if Jesus is God's Son, does that mean God has a wife? This is also a problem for many Muslims: they believe that Muhammad believed that Christians considered Mary to be part of what some Christians call "the trinity" (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). This is wrong. The Islamic religion wrongly views Mary and Jesus as exceptional human beings.

If we do not understand Biblical terms in their context, we will take them out of context and be left with a lie. Jesus is not the biological son of God. "Son of God" is not referring to a child born in a maternity ward. Historically, many rulers (like Ceasar Augustus) have assumed titles such as the "son of God". In the Old Testament scriptures, the term "the son of God" is used as a way to refer to humans who have a special relationship with God. In Exodus, the nation of Israel is called God's firstborn son (Exodus 4:22). Solomon is also called "son of God" (1 Chronicles 28:6). Angels and the kings of Israel (2 Samuel 7:14, Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 89:27) are also often called "sons of God."

John 3:16 KJVS

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

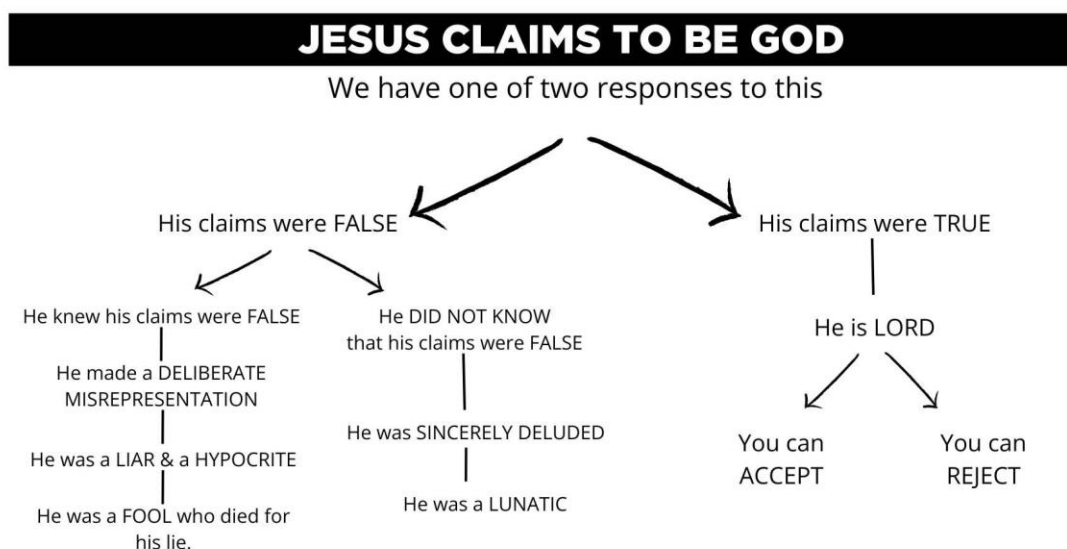
As we've seen, throughout the Old Testament Scriptures people and even the nation of Israel are call "sons of God." In John 3:16, we must pay special attention to "only begotten" - which does not refer to "only" as in numerical, but can be better translated as "only unique" son of God. The Complete Jewish Bible renders this verse,

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only and unique Son, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life, instead of being utterly destroyed."

While the title “Son of God” is referring to the divinity of Jesus, the term does not refer to offspring but rather something closer to the meaning “of God’s family” or “having divine authority and purpose.”

In Acts 2:46, Peter makes a statement that the risen Jesus is both Lord (meaning master, but also a title given to God, the Messiah) and Christ (meaning the Anointed One, the Messiah).

The fact is that Jesus declared Himself to be God, and then proceeded to prove that by rising from the dead. I must either accept Him (and His teachings) or reject Him (and His teachings). The consequences of this decision are eternal.



Picture adapted from Josh McDowell’s Evidence that Demands a Verdict.

Questions for reflection

1. Where would you find yourself on the diagram above?
2. Are you ready to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour?
3. Is anything holding you back from accepting Jesus as God, and if yes, what?