

# Jesus – Mere Man or God Incarnate?

**Dub McClish**

Was Jesus Christ merely a “good man” or was he more than man? The second century Gnostics and their modern counterparts (e.g., the Jehovah's Witnesses) say he was merely a created being. Unitarians opine that he was a son of God, but that anyone could be such as He was if they desired strongly enough. Such opinions are blasphemy to those who know and respect the teaching of the Bible. To say that Jesus is Deity is to say that He is possessed of the fullest Godhood, the very eternal nature and existence, and the same Divinity as the Father.

The claims of Jesus' Deity begin long before His birth in Bethlehem. The Son born of a virgin was to be “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us” (Isa. 7:14). By inspiration, Matthew applied these words to Jesus (Mat. 1:23). Again, prophesying the coming of the Prince of Peace, Isaiah called Him “Mighty God,” and “Everlasting Father” seven hundred years before He was born (Isa. 9:6). Either Isaiah was guilty of blasphemy for applying these names and titles to Christ, or those who deny Christ His true Deity are blasphemers. Which shall it be?

John's Gospel account opens with a declaration of Jesus' Deity: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John. 1:1). He then identifies the Word as the incarnate Son of God: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (v.14). During the course of His work on earth, Jesus claimed to be Deity in such passages as “I and the Father are one” (John. 10:30) and “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John. 14:9). His Deity is proclaimed in the New Testament epistles: “For in him were all things created in the Heavens and upon the earth... and he is before all things and in him all things consist” (Col, 1:16–17). He is said to be the “effulgence of his [God's] glory, and the very image of his substance” (Heb. 1:3). Such is only the beginning of the Biblical claims for the Deity of Christ.

## **Evidence of Jesus' Deity**

“Why is the Deity of Jesus important,” one may ask. “Isn't the Sermon on the Mount just as powerful and beautiful, even if He weren't the Son of God?” That may be so, but if He is not the Son of God then He was Himself deceived about His own nature because He claimed to be such. If he were not the Son of God, He deceived others by His claim. The Jewish leaders had no trouble understanding His claim of Deity, although most of them disbelieved it. (Mat. 26:63–65). Further, Jesus allowed others to make this claim about Him (Mat. 16:18). Now, if He were merely a man or even a created angelic being in the form of a man, as some modern unbelievers

allege, then He is not what He claimed to be. These facts would reveal His complete lack of integrity and prove that He was not even a good man, but a liar. Such a misguided person could not qualify as the Savior of **one** man, much less of the whole world. But, If we disallow Jesus' Deity, we must discard the entire Bible. The Bible provides both the claims, and the evidence to support the claims, of His Deity. Consider some of this evidence:

1. **Prophetic Fulfillment.** Over 300 prophecies are fulfilled in the events of His ancestry, birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. These were not mere vague predictions, lucky guesses, or trends of events that might come in a few weeks or months. They were specific statements of events, many of them centuries removed from the prophets who spoke them (e.g., Deu. 18:15-19; Isa. 53, etc.). No one else has been so much the subject of God's prophets as Jesus of Nazareth.
2. **Virgin Conception and Birth.** "The word became flesh and dwelt among us," declared John (John. 1:14), but how could this be? Seven centuries before the New Testament began, Isaiah said that God would give a "sign" to Israel, consisting of a virgin's conceiving and bearing a son whose name would be "Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). A tender, moving account of the fulfillment of this prophesy is found among the first words of the New Testament (Mat. 1:18-25). A virgin named Mary conceived a son before she had been sexually intimate with any man. The seed was implanted by the Holy Spirit. This unique occurrence fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. The fact that Jesus was born of a virgin, begotten of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 1:20-23) is the means by which Deity entered and dwelt in the human Person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1,14).
3. **Miraculous Activity.** The New Testament records 35 miracles (works of God which override natural laws, clearly demonstrating superhuman power) performed by Jesus. They were all miracles of blessing or teaching. None was for His own benefit. His miracles overpowered energies in the physical, psychic, natural, and spiritual realms. He never failed. He did many other miracles, but the ones recorded are sufficient evidence of His Deity (John. 20:30-31; 21:25).
4. **Authoritative Teaching.** At the close of the Sermon on the Mount the multitudes marveled at the authority of His words (Mat. 7:28-29). On one occasion, officers sent to arrest Him returned empty handed, saying, "Never man so spake" (John 7:46). The authority of Deity is behind the immortal "Come unto me..." (Mat. 11:28-30). Christ claimed, "authority over all flesh" (John 17:2). Before He sent the apostles into all the world, He claimed that God had given Him, "All authority... in heaven and on earth" (Mat. 28:18). Either He was the Divine Son of God, or he was a megalomaniac.
5. **Sacrificial Death.** He did not die because of His own sins, but because of the sins of others (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Tim. 2:6). His death was not suddenly contrived but planned before Creation (1 Pet. 1:19-20). He dreaded Calvary but knew there was no human redemption without it (Mat. 26:39). His life was not taken, but freely given (Mat. 26:53; John 10:18). Only God's Son was equal to this awful task.

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