

Who Is Jesus?

Jesus Is the Eternal God

“Do not free a camel of the burden of his hump; you may be freeing him from being a camel.”
G.K. Chesterton

Jesus Christ is often accepted as an influential historical figure and a great moral teacher. But, why must Christians insist that He is more than a significant human being? Jesus of Nazareth is God because He claimed the very attributes of God throughout the course of His life.

Jesus proclaims he has the ability to forgive my sins (Luke 7:46-50). In the Old Testament (1 Kings 8:33-34), the power to forgive was accredited to God, and God alone. If Jesus also has the power to absolve, then he must be equal in authority with God. Jesus also advocates for me before God (Matthew 10:32-33). No ordinary moral teacher would suggest that he or she was equal in wisdom with God, but Jesus makes it very clear to his disciples that He is indeed “Teacher and Lord” (John 13:13). Christ also sustains my life here on earth (John 6:48-51). Furthermore, Jesus claims to be an eternal figure (John 8:57-58). A mere sampling of the Gospels reveals Jesus claims equality with God in regard to absolution of sin, authority, wisdom, and many other things. And yet Christ also knows that God is omniscient, omnipotent, ultimately just, and eternal. These are considerable boasts if Jesus is merely a wise prophet.

Even the basic moral teachings of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be taken seriously if Christ is not God. Any great moral teacher should advocate for humility and honesty, as Christ often did. But, how can Jesus be both humble and simultaneously claim status as God? Only if He is God. And, if this indeed is true, then we must understand Jesus’ entire ministry in a completely new light. No longer is it enough to emulate the aspects of Christ’s morality that we find appealing (“do unto others...”). We must also accept Christ as the Son of God, equal in power, wisdom, glory, strength, and authority as God the Father and God the Spirit (John 8:12-20).

There is no doubt that even the enemies and doubters of Jesus understood the significance of His teaching. It was these very people who found Christ guilty of blasphemy, the act of claiming for oneself the attributes of God, and sentenced Him to die as punishment. Even in the face of this persecution, Jesus does not hesitate to make absolutely clear who He really is, the Son of God:

“Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ ‘I am,’ said Jesus, ‘And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ At that the high priest tore his garments and said, ‘What further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?’ They all condemned him as deserving to die.” Mark 14:61-64

These leaders were unwilling to believe that Jesus was truly the Son of God. They were also unwilling, however, to consider the many positive things Jesus taught during his ministry, ultimately because of the serious claims Jesus made regarding his status as God. Certainly, we cannot make the mistake of brushing Christ aside as a moral teacher either. One author makes our options in approaching Jesus very clear:

“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 patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” C.S. Lewis

If you have never considered Christ’s teachings in the light of the truth that He is the God of the Universe, I urge you to reexamine (or, perhaps, examine for the first time) the Gospels. As four accounts of Christ’s life on Earth, these books have been transformative in my understanding of Christ and my faith. To comprehend that my God and Savior was willing to humble Himself by becoming man in order to redeem mankind is the single greatest truth I have ever learned. If you are interested in learning more about the life of Christ and His Divinity, please also consider joining a group Bible study—many different groups around campus offer them weekly. We cannot simply throw Jesus Christ into the “nice guy” box any longer.

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, Upon whom I have put my Spirit; He shall bring forth justice to the nations.” Isaiah 42:1

Jack Squiers ’12