

WHO IS JESUS?

A Bible Study by Paul E. Brown

According to the Bible, Jesus is God. People sometimes ask, “But is he not called the Son of God?”--and of course he is, yet he is also identified as God. Because of our limited, finite minds we are unable to understand how both statements can be true--yet the Bible teaches that both are true. Following are some Scripture passages that substantiate the statement that Jesus is God.

Isaiah 7:14, clearly a prophecy regarding Jesus, said that he would be called “Immanuel”--and Matthew 1:23, harking back to that prophecy, reminds us that Immanuel means “God with us.” According to Luke 1:35 the angel Gabriel told Mary that her virgin-born child would be called “the Son of God.” So both names are given to Jesus: “Immanuel” (which means “God with us”) and “the Son of God.” Our inability to “figure out” how both can be true does not alter the fact that both *are* true according to the Bible.

Isaiah 9:6, another prophecy clearly pointing to Jesus, refers to him--among other things--as “Mighty God, Everlasting Father” (NIV). Isaiah 10:20-21, speaking of the one to whom a remnant of Jacob will return, refers to that one as “the Lord [literally, YHWH, or Jehovah] the Holy One of Israel” and “the Mighty God.” So, when Isaiah 9:6 refers to Jesus as “Mighty God” it is describing him in the same way that Isaiah 10:20-21 describes “the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah], the Holy One of Israel.” Although it defies our limited powers of comprehension, the fact is that Jesus and “the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah]” are one and the same.

Further, the fact that Isaiah 9:6 identifies Jesus as “Everlasting Father” makes it clear that when Jesus said, in John 10:30 (NIV), “I and the Father are one,” he meant one in actual essence, not merely one in purpose. It would be irresponsible to interpret John 10:30 apart from the plain declaration of Isaiah 9:6. In John 14:9 (NIV) Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

Jesus is not “another God” or “a lesser God,” or “a God come lately.” Isaiah 43:10-11: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah], and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah]; and beside me there is no savior.” Isaiah 45:21-22: “Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord [JHWH, or Jehovah]? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” In John 4:42, many who had recently become believers said concerning Jesus, “we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” [Jesus was fully man, while at the same time fully God.] Acts 4:12 says of Jesus: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Isaiah 44:6 (NIV): “This is what the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah] says--Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah] Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.” Isaiah 48:12 (NIV): “Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I

am he; I am the first and I am the last.” Jesus is also identified as “the first and the last” in the following verses: Revelation 1:11 and 17, Revelation 2:8, and Revelation 22:13.

Isaiah 42:8 (NIV): “I am the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah]; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.” In John 17:5 Jesus prayed, “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

Psalms 23:1: “The Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah] is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” In John 10:11 Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Joel 3:12: “Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side.” In Matthew 25:31-32 we read: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he shall separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” In John 5:22-23 Jesus said, “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”

The author of Psalm 27:1 says, “The Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah] is my light....” In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world....”

In Mark 2:5 (NIV) Jesus said to a certain paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Some onlookers thought to themselves, according to verse 7, “...Who can forgive sins but God alone?”--and although they misunderstood Jesus they were, of course, correct in thinking that only God can forgive sins. Jesus knew their thoughts, and we read of his response in verse 10-11: “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....’ He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’” So, by that miracle he proved that his claim to forgive sins was valid.

In Deuteronomy 32:39 (NIV) the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah] said, “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life....” In John 5:21 Jesus said, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.”

After Jesus had performed a miracle of healing, we read in John 5:18 (NIV): “For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”

In Hebrews 1:8 (NIV) reference is made to a statement by God the Father, as follows: “But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.’” In that verse, God the Father refers to his Son as God.

In John 20 we are told of how the resurrected Jesus appeared to certain disciples. Verse 28 says, “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God”--and Jesus did not rebuke Thomas, but instead commended him.

Colossians 2:9 declares, “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead [*theotetos*, literally *divine nature*, or *divine essence*, or *deity*] bodily.”

Deuteronomy 10:17 (NIV) says, “For the Lord [YHWH, or Jehovah] your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.” (The reference to God as “God of gods” does not mean that there are other *true* deities, it simply acknowledges that there are other *gods*--but of course the Scriptures make it clear that those others are *false* gods.) In Revelation 19:13-16 “The Word of God” [clearly referring to Jesus] is identified as “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” So, Jehovah is spoken of as “Lord of lords,” and Jesus also is spoken of as “Lord of lords,” again emphasizing the Biblical teaching that YHWH [or Jehovah] is God, and Jesus is God.

Acts 10:36 (NIV) speaks of Jesus Christ as “Lord of all.”

Romans 9:5 (NIV) refers to “Christ, who is God over all.”

Titus 2:13 (NIV) says, “while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ....” In the Greek, the grammatical construction of that verse makes it clear that the reference is to one person who is both God and Savior. That same thing is true of 2 Peter 1:1, which refers to “the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Peter is referring to one person, and that one person is both God and Savior.

Colossians 1:17 (NIV) states, concerning Jesus, “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Philippians 2:9 (NIV) declares, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.”

John 8:58 (NIV) states: “I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, before Abraham was born, I am!” This is absolute proof that Jesus claimed to be God, for he was applying to himself the name by which God identified himself in Exodus 3:14 (NIV): “God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” The words “I am” in John 8:58 are *ego eimi* in the Greek text. The Greek verb *eimi* is the first person singular, present, active, indicative form of *einai*, “to be,” and therefore is properly translated “I am.”

Even if we didn’t have all of these other Scriptural declarations, John 1:1-3 settles the issue of who Jesus is: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.”

John 1:10 says, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”

John 1:18 says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” That verse is saying that no one has ever seen God

as a Spirit, because a spirit is not visible to the human eye; but, as the verse goes on to explain, Jesus took on a human body and thus revealed God to us.

When Jesus said, in John 14:28, “the Father is greater than I,” he clearly was referring to his self-emptied state, which he assumed for the 33 years that he lived on earth in the form of a man. Philippians 2:5-7 (NIV) says, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” During that 33 year period Jesus temporarily laid aside certain of his divine prerogatives (such the ability to be everywhere at one time, and the ability to know everything ahead of time), but he was still God during those 33 years--just as he always had been, just as he is now, and just as he always will be.

Jesus often spoke of himself as being under the authority of the Father. When we consider his statements in the context of the plain Biblical teaching that he and the Father are one, and that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and that Jesus is God, we realize that his being under the authority of the Father had to do--and still has to do--with their respective *roles* or *functions* in the divine system of operation, and not to any lack of equality between Father and Son.

A verse that is sometimes misunderstood is Colossians 1:15 (NIV), which states: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” In Paul’s day the term “firstborn” was used to refer to the first child born into a family. But the fact that the firstborn occupied a position of special honor led to a second meaning of the term: holding a position of supremacy. The fact that Paul, in Colossians 1:15, intended the second meaning is certain from verse 16: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.” Christ was not the first *product* of creation; he was the *cause*, the *creator of all things*.

Still another verse that is sometimes misunderstood is Revelation 3:14, in which John speaks of Christ as the “beginning of the creation of God.” This does not mean that Christ was the first created being--he was not created, he has always been. The meaning is that Christ is the “Beginner”--the one who began the process of creation--and of course he completed it, too. The same Greek word for “beginning” is used in Revelation 21:6-7, a passage that apparently refers to God the Father.

One of the most profound truths declared in the Bible is that God in Christ took on the form of a man, entered the stream of human history, lived a perfect, sinless life, died on a cross to take the punishment for man’s sins, rose from the grave on the third day, and ever lives to save all who come unto God by him in repentance and faith. John 3:16, probably the best known and best loved verse in the Bible, sums it all up: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Dr. Herschel Ford said, “Christ was human so that he could understand us. He was divine so that he could help us.”

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