

Is Jesus Really God?

Introduction:

1. New Testament Teaching on the Person of Jesus

- a) He is called _____ (John 1:1; 20:28; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1)
- b) He is given _____ (e.g. Lord – Phil. 2:11 → Isa 45:23; Son of God – John 5:17f)
- c) He does _____ (e.g. creation – Col 1:16; forgiveness – Mark 2:5f)
- d) He possesses _____ (e.g. eternity – John 8:58; omnipresence – Matt 18:20; 28:20)
- e) He is _____ (Matt 28:9, 17; John 20:28; Rev. 5:8-14 [cf. 19:10, 22:9])

2. The “Trilemma” Argument for the Deity of Christ

- Objection: “Jesus was a good teacher, but I don’t believe he was God.”
- Response:
 - a) Jesus knew he really wasn’t God, but claimed to be God → _____
 - b) Jesus mistakenly *thought* he was God, but really wasn’t → _____
 - c) Jesus was really God as he claimed to be → _____

C. S. Lewis: I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He 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 patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. . . . Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.¹

- But does the Bible present us with a **legend** and not the true Jesus of history?

First, it's extremely unlikely that _____ would invent a story where God became man.²

Second, the Gospels do *not* bear the marks of _____.

Lewis: "I have been reading poems, romances, vision-literature, legends, myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know that no one of [the Gospels] is like this."³

3. Is the Story of Jesus Taken from Pagan Myths?

Richard Dawkins: "*All the essential features of the Jesus legend, including the star in the east, the virgin birth, the veneration of the baby by kings, the miracles, the execution, the resurrection and the ascension are borrowed—every last one of them—from other religions already in existence in the Mediterranean and Near East region.*"⁴

- Some of the gods:
 - Egypt – Osiris
 - Greece – Dionysus
 - Syria – Adonis
 - Persia – Mithras

"Virgin Births":

- **Mithras** is born out of a rock on the banks of a river under a sacred tree
- **Adonis** is born out of a myrrh tree
- **Dionysius** is produced from an incestuous relationship between Zeus and his daughter

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952),

² See C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 158.

³ C. S. Lewis, "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 155. Cf. *God in the Dock*, 158-159.

⁴ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 119-120, drawing on Robert Gillooly, "Shedding light on the light of the world," *Free Inquiry* 25:1 (2004), 27-30.

- **Osiris** is the product of an affair between an earth god and a sky goddess⁵

Death Stories:

- Adonis dies while hunting
- Osiris is killed by his brother
- Dionysus is killed by attackers
- Mithras has no recorded death

“Resurrection” Stories:

- One popular account of _____ says that his brother chopped him up into pieces and sent his body part around the world. The goddess Isis tries to put him back together again, and other of the gods performed spells over him. He’s brought back to life, but not in this world – in the underworld and there’s he is king of the dead.
- There are a number of different accounts about _____. One says that he died and lived in the underworld for six months, then was raised to the upper world for the other half of the year – and this continues every year. The myth is designed to explain the crop cycles

- In fact, mystery religions borrowed from *Christianity*

“Only after the rise of Christianity did mystery religions begin to look suspiciously like the Christian faith. Once Christianity became known, many of the mystery cults consciously adopted Christian ideas so that their deities would be perceived to be on a par with Jesus. The shape of the mystery religions prior to the rise of Christianity is vague, ambiguous, and localized. Only by a huge stretch of the imagination, and by playing fast and loose with the historical data, can one see them as having genuine conceptual parallels to the Christian faith of the first century.”⁶

For more, following this link: http://youtu.be/pl4m4tj_A3E

⁵ Mary Jo Sharp, “Is the Story of Jesus Borrowed from Pagan Myths?” In *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture*, ed. Steven B. Cowan and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 193-194.

⁶ J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: What the Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don’t Tell You* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 234.

An Outline of the New Testament Testimony to the Deity of Christ⁷

A. Implicit Christology

1. Divine functions performed by Jesus
 - a. In relation to the universe
 - (1) Creator (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2)
 - (2) Sustainer (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)
 - (3) Author of life (John 1:4; Acts 3:15)
 - (4) Ruler (Matt. 28:18; Rom. 14:9; Rev. 1:5)
 - b. In relation to human beings
 - (1) Healing the sick (Mark 1:32-34; Acts 3:6; 10:38)
 - (2) Teaching authoritatively (Mark 1:21-22; 13:31)
 - (3) Forgiving sins (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31; Col. 3:13)
 - (4) Granting salvation or imparting eternal life (Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:12-14)
 - (5) Raising the dead (Luke 7:11-17; John 5:21; 6:40; 11:25)
 - (6) Exercising judgment (Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:22-29; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1)
2. Divine status claimed by or accorded to Jesus
 - a. In relation to his Father
 - (1) Possessor of divine attributes (Eph. 4:10; Col. 1:19; 2:9)
 - (2) Eternally existent (John 1:1; 8:58; 12:41; 17:5; Phil. 2:6)
 - (3) Equal in dignity (John 5:23; 8:50, 54; 1 John 2:23)
 - (4) Perfect revealer (John 1:18; 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:4,6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1-3)
 - (5) Joint possessor of the kingdom (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 11:15), churches (1 Thess. 1:1), Spirit (Rom. 8:9), divine name (Matt. 28:19; Rev. 14:1); and throne (Rev. 22:1, 3)
 - b. In relation to human beings
 - (1) Recipient of praise (Matt. 21:15-16; Eph. 5:19-20; 1 Tim. 1:12; Rev. 5:8-14)
 - (2) Recipient of prayer (Acts 7:59-60; 9:10-17; 22:17-21; 2 Cor. 12:8)
 - (3) Object of saving faith (Acts 10:43; 16:31; Rom. 10:8-13)
 - (4) Object of worship (Matt. 14:33; 28:9, 17; John 20:28; Phil. 2:10-11; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:8-12)
 - (5) Joint source of blessing (Rom. 1:7, etc.; 1 Thess. 3:11; 2 Thess. 1:12; 2:16)
 - (6) Object of doxologies (2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:5-6; 5:13)

B. Explicit Christology

1. Old Testament passages referring to Yahweh applied to Jesus
 - a. Character of Yahweh (Exod. 3:14 and Isa. 43:11 alluded to in John 5:58; Isa. 44:6 alluded to in Rev. 1:17)
 - b. Descriptions of Yahweh (Ezek. 43:2 and Dan. 10:5-6 alluded to in Rev. 1:13-16)
 - c. Worship of Yahweh (Isa. 45:23 alluded to in Phil. 2:10-11)

⁷ Adapted from Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of *qeo,j* in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 315-317.

- d. Salvation of Yahweh (Joel 2:32 quoted in Rom. 10:13)
 - e. Trustworthiness of Yahweh (Isa. 28:16 quoted in Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6)
 - f. Judgment of Yahweh (Isa. 6:10 alluded to in John 12:41; Isa. 8:14 quoted in Rom. 9:33 and 1 Pet. 2:8)
 - g. Triumph of Yahweh (Ps. 68:18 quoted in Eph. 4:8)
2. Divine titles applied to Jesus
- a. Son of God (Matt. 11:27; Mark 15:39; John 1:34; 20:31; Rom. 1:4; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:2; 1 John 4:15; Rev. 2:18)
 - b. Messiah (Matt. 16:16; Mark 14:61; John 1:41; 20:31; Rom. 9:5)
 - c. Lord (Mark 12:35-37; John 20:28; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 2:8; 8:5-6; 12:3; 16:22; Phil. 2:11; 1 Pet. 2:3; 3:15)
 - d. Alpha and Omega (Rev. 22:13; cf. 1:8; 21:6)
 - e. God (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1)