

22. What did Jesus claim to be?

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Around the time of 1989-1990, my family was attending a home mission church which was located at the Five Point of downtown Tucson. It was a very rough area full of professional homeless people. Many of them were either too drunk, or doped up, or literally possessed by demons to do anything worthwhile.

One evening, the pastor of the church asked me to visit one young man who was at a clinical halfway house on behalf of him. For whatever reasons, the person who greeted me thought that I was a medical doctor. Before I could tell him that I wasn't, he assumed that I was and went ahead to go get the young man. In the meanwhile, another guy showed up from the back of the house and he asked me if I was a pastor. At that time I was not. Before I could answer him, he disappeared to where he came from. Then, another guy came up and saw me and he blurted out, "I am God." Later I found out that this halfway house specialized in handling the people who are not all there in the head.

Just because someone claimed who he or she is, it doesn't mean that what that person said is true.

There are many voices in this world that claim to know the identity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Please allow me to list a few of them:

- 1) **Jehovah's Witnesses** – Jesus is not God. Before he lived on earth, he was Michael, the archangel.
- 2) **Mormonism** – Jesus is a separated god from the Father (Elohim). He was created as a spirit child by the Father and Mother in heaven.
- 3) **New Age** – Jesus is not the one true God. He is not a savior, but a spiritual model, and guru, and now an "ascended master."
- 4) **Islam** – Jesus is one of the most respected of over 124,000 prophets sent by Allah.
- 5) **Scientology** – Jesus is rarely mentioned in this cult. Jesus was not the Creator. He did not die for sins.

But in the Bible where we are going to spend a half hour or so this morning, Jesus systematically explains away what He claims to be in six different ways. We really need to know this well because the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons are well trained to sway many people from their faith because they do not know the Word of God.

A. THE FIRST CLAIM – EQUALITY WITH THE FATHER

John 5:17-20 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." 18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. 19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. 20 For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

I am so glad that the Father in heaven is working and Jesus is working without a day off or a vacation day.

Psalm 121:4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

Can you imagine what could happen if the Lord our God says, "OK, I am bushed. I am going to take a vacation and do nothing"? Since He is the One who keeps everything in order, including the universe, while He does nothing, the planets and the Milky Ways are going to spin out of control like our national debt; crashing into one another. If that is not bad enough, our bodies' DNAs will start to fall apart, because He is the One who holds all of our molecules.

Colossians 3:17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
NIV

Then some will say, "Nay, nay, nay. In Genesis 2:2, God rested on the seventh day." I am glad that you've noticed it. God's rest on the seventh day was given for man's benefit, not for God, demonstrating a pattern of rest necessary for man's well being.

What Jesus said in v17 was not missed by the Pharisees. The Israelites traditionally called God, "our Father," never "My Father." However, Jesus never refers to God as "our Father," but always "My Father." The Jewish religious leaders knew that by claiming God the Father as "My Father," Jesus was claiming to be "the Son of God" and putting Himself equal as God the Father.

Then others will say, "Ah ha, gotcha! You are wrong here, preacher. In the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9, Jesus stated, 'Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name'." I am glad that you said that. But in reality and in context, you are incorrect. Because Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray. The proper title of the Lord's Prayer should have been 'A Pattern of Prayer.'

Some of you may wonder where in the OT it mentions about 'Father and Son' of God head in the same Person. Let me direct you to one of the most famous verses in the Bible:

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

I think that it is clear enough for us, though the Jehovah's Witnesses people don't want to believe this truth to overcome their false doctrines.

Jesus not only claims an equal relationship with God in v17 and 18, but also He claims equality in the work They share in v19 and 20.

Like a man and his shadow, which is neither identical to, nor independent from one another, so God the Son and God the Father are distinct from one another, yet They are dependent on each other.

One more thing I want you to remember this: Jesus is fully submitted to God the Father's will, by His own choice, not by coercion or by an inferior nature.

B. THE SECOND CLAIM – THE GIVER OF LIFE

John 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

To assert His equality, Jesus claims to have the same power the Father does over the spiritually dead. This was mentioned from the beginning of this Book.

John 1:3-4 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

and the Son. Here the Son has the power and authority to raise the dead and give life to them just as the Father does.

Many cult leaders or some of the self-claimed miracle workers of the faith movement say that they heal people's sickness. But nobody claims to raise the dead. And no one has proof to back it up except the Lord Jesus.

C. THE THIRD CLAIM – THE FINAL JUDGE

John 5:22-23 For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, 23 that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Many "religious" people who say that they worship or believe God, but deny the deity of Christ, truly believe neither the Father, nor the Son. Apart from Jesus Christ, we cannot know the Father, worship Him, or serve Him.

Acts 10:42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.

The people who refuse to accept the Son of God as their Savior and Lord to their last breath will stand in front of Him on the Day of the White Throne Judgment that is mentioned in the Book of Revelation ch. 20. If any of you thinks what I just said is a joke and you die as an unbeliever, you will stand in the presence of Jesus the Final Judge on that day. The Bible guarantees you that you will not think that it is a joke on that day and you will be found guilty and will be sent to hell for eternity for your own choice of unbelief.

To the orthodox Jew, Jehovah God was the Judge of all the earth.

Genesis 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

And no one dared to apply this title to himself. But Jesus did! By claiming to be the Judge, He claimed to be God.

D. THE FOURTH CLAIM – GIVING ETERNAL SALVATION

John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

Not only does Jesus claim to be the Final Judge, but He also claims to be the way out of the eternal damnation. Jesus mentions this in chapter 14 of this Book.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Some people would say that they don't agree with what the Bible says about Jesus being the exclusive way of salvation. At the same time, they believe that the Bible is God's Word and it speaks the truth. Then, we have a couple of situations that person must answer:

- 1) Which one is it? Is the Bible lying, or is that person wrong about the Bible speaking the truth?
- 2) If the Bible speaks the truth, but since the person is disagreeing with the Bible, does it mean that the person is wrong?

You cannot say that you have a different opinion than God who always is correct and at the same time your opinion also is correct. Either God is correct or you are correct. This is not a multiple choice to please everybody, since the Bible makes the way of salvation totally exclusive.

Not all roads lead to the same God. The God of the Bible is not Allah, Buddha,

Hare Krishna, or an outer space alien. The Bible does not allow you to be in neutral mode.

Luke 11:23 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

People like Oprah Winfrey would say that Christianity has a narrow mind. Yes, so does the truth. Relative truth is made by the people who want to hide behind lame excuses instead of facing the truth.

E. THE FIFTH CLAIM – GIVING RESURRECTIONS

John 5:25-29 Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27 and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth-- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

Here Jesus gives us some of the Bible's clearest information regarding resurrection:

- 1) There will definitely be life after death.**
- 2) Every person will be affected by it**
- 3) Every person will be in either heaven or hell.**

If you take v29 out of context, it seems to indicate that eternal destiny is based on our deeds – good or evil – rather than on belief or unbelief. But in context of this verse and other verses, it is clear that doing good is a natural outgrowth of the Saving Gospel through Jesus Christ. In other words, the “doing good” emerges through a relationship with Christ, and the “doing evil” permeates through separation from Him.

Keep in mind that resurrection is not reconstruction, nor is resuscitation. It does not imply that God puts human bodies back together again as before. The resurrection body is a brand new body, a glorified body with a completely different molecule, suited to the new heavenly environment. Death is not the end for the believers of Jesus Christ.

However, for those who reject the salvation through Jesus Christ, there will be their own kind of resurrection – the resurrection of condemnation. In other words, they will be resurrected to receive the eternal punishment in hell with all the pain, suffering, and utter isolation from everyone including God. There is no purgatory, because it is never mentioned in the Bible.

F. THE SIXTH CLAIM – DOING THE WILL OF THE FATHER

John 5:30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

As a shadow never moves on its own initiative, so Jesus moves only in sync with God the Father.

Oh, how we need to be more like Jesus to do the will of our God the Father over ours!

G. REMEMBER THIS

Our Triune God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit – is the ONE same God in THREE distinctively different Persons.