

Did Jesus Claim To Be God?

Those who contend that Jesus is not God or is not God in the fullest, highest sense, try to support this argument by asserting that Jesus Himself never claimed to be God. While it is true that Jesus never explicitly stated, "I am God," there are a number of instances in the Gospels and in Revelation where Jesus is depicted as making claims to divinity or acting in ways that can only be understood in the context of the Jewish religion and culture as a claim to equality with God. His enemies certainly understood these claims to divinity as judged by their reaction.

I AM That I AM

When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Moses asked God what His name was. God said:

Exodus 3:14,15 And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM**: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The **LORD God** of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

The Old Testament Hebrew word for Lord is *Yehôvâh* (also commonly pronounced as *Yahweh*). This word means self-existent, eternally existent. The root word for *Yehôvâh* is *hâyâh*, which simply means "to exist". This is the word that is translated "I AM" in Exodus 3:14,15.

If translated literally, these verses would say:

"And God said unto Moses, **I Am He Who Exists**...Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **The Self-Existent God** of your fathers...hath sent me unto you."

"I AM" signifies an eternal presence. "I AM" means that God is eternal, without beginning or ending.

Inspiration tells us that this was actually Christ Himself.

"It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, 'I AM THAT I AM.... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.'" - E.G. White, *Desire of Ages*, pg. 24.3

Several thousand years later, when Jesus stood on earth as a man, the Jews challenged His divinity with the question, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" (John 8:57) Jesus replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (verse 58). The Jews' reaction shows they fully understood what Jesus meant: "Then they took up stones to cast at him." (verse 59). Jesus used the words that to the Jews meant the Self-Existent One, which equated to God alone, thus calling Himself God.

Commenting on this verse, Ellen White says:

"'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.' (John 8:53-58) Silence fell upon the vast

assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the **eternal presence**, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the **self-existent One**, He who had been promised to Israel, 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.' Micah 5:2, margin." - E.G. White, *Desire of Ages*, pg. 469

Jesus' application of these verses to Himself offers compelling evidence of His full divinity. Christ was plainly appropriating to Himself the very expressions used by the God of the Old Testament to identify Himself to Moses and to the enslaved children of Israel. Furthermore, Jesus is presenting Himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," the one who is "The Lord God of your fathers" (verse 15). Jesus is claiming to be none other than Jehovah God of the great founding patriarchs of the nation of Israel.

He Forgave Sins

Mark 2:5-11 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, **Son, thy sins be forgiven thee**. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, **Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?** And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that **the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins**, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

When the scribes reacted to Jesus forgiving the paralytic of his sins by saying, "None can forgive sins but God only", they reasoned correctly. In Isaiah 43:25 God says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions" (see also Isaiah 44:22; Psalm 51:9; Jeremiah 50:20; Micah 7:18-19).

To the Jews, blasphemy meant to attempt to do or say a thing which belongs to God alone, which only He can do. Christ was charged with attempting to do a thing which properly belonged to God.

Though the Jews did not express their accusation of blasphemy out loud, Jesus read their thoughts. All things are open only to God who searches the heart of every man (1 Kings 8:39; Psalm 139:1; Hebrews 4:13).

By forgiving the sins of the paralytic Jesus was understood to affirm that He was divine. And as He proved this by working a miracle expressly to confirm the claim, it follows that He is divine and equal with the Father.

Lord of the Sabbath

Matthew 12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day

If Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath then this means that He was the original institutor of the Sabbath. And as the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments, Jesus is the author of the Moral Law itself.

The Ten Commandments begin with this prologue:

Exodus 20:1,2 And God spake all these words, saying, I am the **LORD thy God**, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

The name "LORD God" in the KJV is in the Hebrew *Yehôvâh 'ĕlôhîym*, which means the Self-Existent, Eternal God. This is the God who created the heavens and the earth and all that in them is (Genesis 2:4-5; Exodus 20:11).

By claiming to be the "Lord of the Sabbath" Jesus was unequivocally stating that He is the Self-Existent, Eternal Creator of the universe.

Son of God

John 10:36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou **blasphemest**; because I said, I **am the Son of God**?

To the Jews, the name Son of God, implied equality with God. The Jews were the best interpreters of their own language, and as Jesus did not deny the correctness of their interpretations, it follows that He meant it for them to understand it this way.

Here is another instance in which the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy and attempted to kill Him:

John 10:30-33 **I and my Father are one.** Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for **blasphemy**; and because that **thou, being a man, makest thyself God.**

Stoning was the punishment of a blasphemer according to Leviticus 24:14-16. The Jews considered Jesus guilty of blasphemy because He made Himself equal with God.

John 10:36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou **blasphemest**; because I said, I **am the Son of God**?

An expression that had the same meaning as Son of God was Jesus' referral to God as His Father, which the Jews also interpreted as meaning equality with God.

John 5:17,18 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that **God was his Father, making himself equal with God.**

The Jews understood equality with the Father as pertaining to His very nature, His eternal pre-existence, and His power. If the Jews had misunderstood Jesus on this point, it would have been a perfect opportunity for Jesus to clear up the misapprehension. This is precisely what Jesus did not do.

One With the Father

John 10:30-33 **I and my Father are one.** Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for **blasphemy**; and because that **thou, being a man, makest thyself God.**

Stoning was the punishment of a blasphemer according to Leviticus 24:14-16. The Jews considered Jesus guilty of blasphemy because He made Himself equal with God.

An expression that had the same meaning as Son of God was Jesus' referral to God as His Father, which the Jews also interpreted as meaning equality with God.

John 5:17,18 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that **God was his Father, making himself equal with God.**

The Jews understood equality with the Father as pertaining to His very nature, His eternal pre-existence, and His power. If the Jews had misunderstood Jesus on this point, it would have been a perfect opportunity for Jesus to clear up the misapprehension. This is precisely what Jesus did not do.

Jesus stated that faith in God and faith in Himself are not two, but one:

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

The belief in the Son is identical with the belief in the Father. This cannot be true unless Christ is as much God as the Father is. The words are a full proof of the true deity of Christ, since He is represented as equally the object of faith with God the Father.

Jesus further stated that He is the revelation of the Father:

John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father;** and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

By this declaration Jesus was stating that He is the very image of the Father and is possessed of the same nature, attributes, and glory of the Father, so that he that sees the one sees the other. In other words, Christ declared Himself to His disciples to be the everlasting God.

This is borne out in the testimony of the New Testament writers. Jesus is the wisdom of God, and the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24; Ephesians 3:9-10; Colossians 2:3); the holiness of God, and the justice of God (Romans 3:25); the love of God, and the faithfulness of God (1 John 4:9-10; Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 John 1:9). In short, all that is communicable of God and his glory, can only be seen, and is seen in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form (Colossians 2:9). He is the perfect representation of God (Hebrews 1:1-2). He is God manifest in the flesh (Matthew 1:23; John 1:14; Romans 1:3,4; 1 Timothy 3:16).

Jesus claimed that any honor due the Father, was also due to Himself:

John 5:23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Jesus' statement is so very plain that only those intent on diminishing Christ's inherent divinity can deny its full import. Jesus claims here the same right to worship from men that the Father has. These words of Jesus are a clear statement of equality with the Father. If Jesus were God only by office, or if the

prerogatives of divinity had merely been delegated to Him, and Christ was not in all respects equal in Godhead with the Father, He could not be honored even as the Father is honored. But if the Father and the Son are eternally equal in nature and existence, then in honoring one the other is equally honored, and whatever dishonor is done to one, reflects on the other.

Those who do not believe in the proper deity of Christ - take note of Christ's warning: anyone who denies Christ's divinity, either by asserting that He is not God at all or that He is a derived deity and thus by nature a lesser God, also denies God the Father who sent Him. In fact, those who do not honor the Son as God do not worship God at all. The Father will accept no homage which is not also accorded to the Son. Denying that Christ is inherently fully God and equal with the Father means that it would be idolatry to honor the Father as God even as it would be idolatry to honor the Son as God.

See also Matthew 10:40; John 8:49; John 12:26; John 15:23; 1 John 2:23; Luke 10:16; Hebrews 1:3.

He Received Worship

In Revelation an angel instructed the apostle John to only worship God.

Revelation 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: **worship God**: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Revelation 22:8,9 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: **worship God**.

Multiple times in Scripture Jesus received worship, and He accepted it.

Matthew 2:11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worshipped him**: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came and **worshipped him**, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Matthew 15:25 Then came she and **worshipped him**, saying, Lord, help me.

Matthew 28:9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and **worshipped him**.

Matthew 28:17 And when they saw him, they **worshipped him**: but some doubted.

Luke 24:52 And they **worshipped him**, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

John 9:38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he **worshipped him**.

That Jesus received worship is proof that He is truly and properly God, and an implicit claim to divinity by Jesus.

Son of Man

During Jesus' trial as He was being interrogated by Caiaphas the high priest He was asked this question in Mark 14:61:

"Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

At this question Jesus broke the silence that up to this point He had maintained. Such a question must be answered and must be liable to no misinterpretation. Peter had previously declared that He was the King Messiah, "the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16) and Jesus had not denied this title. But as yet He had not openly declared Himself as the divine Son of God.

Jesus' answer to the high priest's question was not only a positive affirmation that He was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, but Jesus went further in affirming His deity by referring to Himself as the "Son of Man":

"And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (verse 62)

The title "Son of Man" was a clear reference to a passage of Daniel that was always considered by the Jews as a description of the Messiah:

Daniel 7:13,14 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the **Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The Savior, now in His lowest state of humiliation, asserts His claims as the Messiah, who shall appear in the clouds of heaven as the judge of the world.

Not only was this a claim to being the Messiah, this was a claim to be God. Clouds are a symbol of divinity (see Exodus 19:16-19; Psalm 18:11,12; 97:2; 104:30; Isaiah 19:1;), and Jesus spoke of Himself as coming with "the clouds of heaven" to judge the world (Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; c.f. Revelation 1:7; 14:14).

The Jews well understood the claim to divinity that Jesus was making, both in His acknowledgment of being the Christ, "the Son of the Blessed", but also in His claim to being the Son of Man, the divine King, whose dominion is everlasting. On the basis of these claims the whole assembly present decided that He was guilty of blasphemy.

See also Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Mark 13:26; Mark

First and the Last

In Revelation 1:12-17 we have a vision of Jesus as the glorified high priest in the heavenly sanctuary. In verse 17 Jesus says to the fearful prophet, "Fear not; I am the first and the last."

When we look at the cross references for this statement, we see that it is three times ascribed to Jehovah ("LORD") by Isaiah (Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12).

Isaiah 44:6 declares: "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; **I am the first, and I am the last**; and beside me there is no God."

In His vision to John, Jesus is claiming to be none other than the *Yahweh* ("the Self-Existent, Eternally-Existent One") of the Old Testament!

Furthermore, it is interesting that this designation of Christ as the "First and the Last" echoes a similar title clearly applied to God the Father in this very same opening of the book. Revelation 1:4 describes Him as "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come" and in verse 8 has Him proclaiming Himself as "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending ... which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

The fact that such similar titles referring to *Yahweh* in the Old Testament apply to both the Father and the Son is strong evidence that the Son is equal to the Father in divine nature.

In Revelation 22:12,13 we find John reporting the following declaration:

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am **Alpha and Omega**, the **beginning and the end**, the **first and the last**.

It's clear from the context (see verses 16 and 20) that these are the words of Jesus. Up to this point in the book of Revelation the titles "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End" have been applied only to the Father. This is clear evidence that whatever is common to the divine nature of the Father the divine Son also possesses.

Jesus employs "Alpha and Omega" and "Beginning and the End" as self-descriptive titles at the end of Revelation because it is here that Revelation describes both "God and the Lamb" as fully sharing "the throne" (22:1,3). Up to this point in the book the throne has been described as God's throne (3:21; 4:5) and the Lamb is pictured as "before the throne of God" (5:6,7,13; 7:10,11,17). He now sits on the one throne with the Father as a fully equal co-ruler over the redeemed universe.

These expressions in the book of Revelation are some of the most powerful ways the Bible uses to express the eternal pre-existence of both the Father and the Son.