

Defend Your Faith

Lesson 4

IS JESUS THE DIVINE SON OF GOD?

“Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name”
(John 20:30-31)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. We Must Be Ready to Give An Answer (1 Peter 3:15).

B. The Importance of This Question.

1. A few people today do not believe that a man named Jesus actually lived. Others (including the modern religious critic) believe Jesus lived, but the “Christ” of the New Testament was a different figure fabricated by Jesus’ followers. Many religious persons today believe that Jesus lived, but deny his deity as portrayed in the scriptures (Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.).
2. The true identity of Jesus is an old issue (see 2 John 7; early religious movements denied either the humanity of Jesus or the divinity of Jesus; Gnosticism; Cerinthius; Sabellius; Arius; etc.). We must accept Jesus as the divine Son of God (John 8:24)!
3. If Jesus was just an ordinary man, then...
 - a) He is no different than all other religious leaders (Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, etc.)
 - b) He is not an authoritative figure.
 - c) He could have made mistakes.
4. We must answer the question: *“What think ye of the Christ, whose son is he?”* (Matthew 22:42). Jesus was asked the question: *“Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed?”* (Mark 16:61). Jesus answered: *“I am”* (Mark 16:62). Jesus asked his disciples: *“Who do you say that I am?”* (Matthew 15:15-16).

C. Two Facts and Two Alternatives.

1. Two facts admitted by all (even many critics):
 - a) Jesus lived in Palestine in the 1st Century.
 - b) Jesus was a religious teacher.
2. Two alternatives:
 - a) Jesus was not what he claimed, making him a deceiver (a liar or a lunatic).
 - b) Jesus was what he claimed to be, making him the divine Son of God.

D. The Practical Lessons That Come From This Question.

1. Jesus, the divine-human being, reveals God to us (John 1:1,14,18).
2. Jesus, the divine-human being, is the foundation of the church (Matthew 16:16-18).

3. Jesus, the divine-human being, makes Christianity unique (Acts 4:11-12).
4. Jesus, the divine-human being, gives us the supreme example of humility and service (Philippians 2:5ff; 2 Corinthians 8:9).
5. Jesus, the divine-human being, understands us (Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:15-16; 1 Timothy 2:5).
6. Jesus, the divine-human being, can rightly be worshipped (Revelation 5:8-14).

II. PRESENTING YOUR CASE.

A. Biblical Testimony.

1. Jesus *pre-existed* as the divine Son of God (John 1:1,14,18; 8:58; 17:5).
 - a) Old Testament prophecy links two thoughts: the Messiah's work and nature.
 - (1) The Messiah's work was foretold (Isaiah 59:20; 61:1; Luke 4:17ff). The Messiah's nature (person) was also foretold (Isaiah 40:1-3; Micah 3:1; John 11:27).
 - (2) Both the work and nature of Jesus the Messiah are inseparable (Matthew 16:16).
2. Jesus was *born* the divine Son of God (Matthew 1:18-25).
 - a) His virgin birth was foretold (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8-10; 9:6-7; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:32-35).
 - b) His virgin birth was not:
 - (1) A natural event (Matthew 1:18; note the word "before").
 - (2) A supernatural birth involving two parents (1 Samuel 1:1ff; Luke 1:5ff).
 - (3) A result of a physical sex act between God and Mary (Mormon theology).
 - (4) An *ex nihilo* creation of Jesus housed in Mary's body (Genesis 3:15; Luke 1:26ff; Galatians 3:16; Romans 1:3).
 - (5) A joining of two natures (divine and human) at *birth* rather than at *conception* (Matthew 1:18ff).
 - (6) An ordinary birth in any way, rather it was unique in every way (Matthew 1:23; John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14).
 - c) What is the significance of the virgin birth?
 - (1) Jesus was not just an ordinary man like other men. He was fully deity and fully human at the same time.
 - (2) Liberals say his "divinity" was his "ethical oneness" with the Father's will. According to them, Jesus' "divine" nature was no different than ours because we all have the same potential to be just as "divine" as he was.
3. Jesus *lived* as the divine Son of God (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).
 - a) His divine titles.
 - (1) "Son of God" (Matthew 26:63-64; 27:43; Luke 22:70-71; John 3:18; 5:17-18; 10:30-33; 19:7). Jesus is the "Son of God", meaning that he "one" or equal with God in nature (John 5:17,18; 10:30; 14:6-10; 20:17).
 - (2) "Son of Man" (Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 12:8; 13:41; 25:31-33; Mark 2:7,10; 8:38; 13:26; 14:61-64).
 - (3) "Lord" (Luke 1:41ff; John 20:28; Matthew 22:41ff; 1 Corinthians 2:8). Jesus is "Lord," the "Jehovah" (Yahweh of the OT) – Matthew 3:3 (Isaiah 40:3); Hebrews 1:3, 10-12 (Psa.102:25-27); Revelation 7:14; 19:16 (Deuteronomy 10:17); Philippians 2:10 (Isaiah 45:23); Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:8

(Isaiah 8:14); and Acts 2:21,36; Romans 10:9,13 (Joel 2:32). Note: This does not mean that Jesus *alone* is Jehovah / Yahweh, but that Jehovah / Yahweh *includes* Jesus. Jesus is the great “I am” (John 8:24) just as God is the great “I am” (Exodus 3:5).

- b) His divine identification.
 - (1) Jesus is deity (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1,14; 8:24,58-59; [Exodus 3:14]; 14:6-10; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:3,8-9 (Psalm 45:6); Isaiah 9:6-7; Acts 20:28; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Philippians 2:5ff; Colossians 1:15; 2:9; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; Revelation 1:8,17; 22:13 [Isaiah 44:6]).
 - c) His divine prerogatives.
 - (1) His worship. Jesus accepted worship from others (Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 28:9,17; Luke 2:13-14; John 5:23; 9:35-38; 20:26-28; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8ff; Philippians 2:10-11). Not all people can be worshipped by others (Acts 10:25-26; 14:11-15; Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9).
 - (2) His forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:5,7).
 - (3) His changing of names (John 1:42).
 - d) His divine sinlessness (John 8:46; Matthew 21:24; 27:4; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:22).
 - e) His divine knowledge of all things (Mt. 12:25; 24:24-25; Jn. 13:21-26; 16:30; 21:17; Lk. 6:8; 11:17).
 - f) His divine teaching and actions.
 - (1) He was devoid of worldly ambitions (John 6:15).
 - (2) He accepted sinners (Luke 15:1ff) and rejected hypocrites (Matthew 23:1ff).
 - (3) He always spoke with authority and never expressed doubt (Matthew 7:29; 12:48; 24:35; John 7:46).
 - (4) He was free of prejudice and hatred (John 4:9).
 - (5) He loved his enemies and was forgiving (Matthew 5:44; Luke 23:34).
 - (6) He was fearless in his teaching (Matthew 5:1ff; 24:1ff).
 - (7) He was free of egotism and selfishness (Matthew 20:27-28; John 5:30; 11:40-43; 12:48-49).
 - g) His divine admittance (Matthew 26:63-66; Mark 14:60-64).
 - h) His divine life stands upon eyewitness testimony (John 1:34,49; 1 John 1:1-4).
4. Jesus *died* the divine Son of God (1 Peter 3:18).
5. Jesus was *raised* the divine Son of God (Romans 1:4).
- a) Many *received* divine power and were raised from the dead in Bible times. But, Jesus was the *source* of the divine power which raised him from the dead.
 - b) Evidence for the resurrection.
 - (1) The event foretold (Psalm 16:10; Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 20:18-19; Mark 8:31-32; Luke 9:22; John 2:19).
 - (2) The empty tomb (Matthew 27:63; 28:11-15; Acts 2:27).
 - (3) The evidence left behind (Matthew 28:1-7; John 20:5-8).
 - (4) The eyewitness testimony (Matthew 28:1-10,16-20; Mark 16:9-11,12-13,14-18,19; Luke 24:13-35,36-40,50-52; John 20:11-18,19-23,26-28; 21:1-23; Acts 1:3-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

- (5) The honesty, integrity, competency, and courage of the eyewitness (Acts 2:32; 4:18-20; 5:27-32; 2 Corinthians 4:7-15; 6:4-10).
- c) Arguments against the resurrection answered.
- (1) The deliberate lie theory. There were eyewitnesses still alive who could verify if the story was a lie or not (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).
 - (2) The wrong tomb theory. The followers of Jesus saw what tomb he was laid in and Joseph knew where his own tomb was (Matthew 27:60-61; 28:11-15; Luke 24:9ff).
 - (3) The hallucination theory. The followers of Jesus tested with their own senses that the Jesus they saw was the same Jesus they knew (Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:15,36-37; John 20:15,24-30; Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8).
 - (4) The “spiritual resurrection” theory. Those who preached the resurrection, preached a bodily resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:13; Acts 2:24-32; 10:40-41).
 - (5) The swooning body theory. Both the Roman soldiers and the followers of Jesus knew he was dead (Matthew 28:57-61; Mark 15:44-45; John 19:33).
 - (6) The stolen body theory. The followers of Jesus would not have been able to move the sealed stone and get past the guards without being caught (Matthew 27:60,62-66; 28:11-15; Mark 15:46; John 20:5-8).
- d) What are the choices?
- (1) The resurrection was a fraud.
 - (2) The resurrection was a fantasy.
 - (3) The resurrection was a fact. It matters that the resurrection was factual. If there is no resurrection, then our faith is vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-19) and there is no judgment day (Acts 17:31-32).
6. Jesus *commissioned others* as the divine Son of God (Matthew 10:5ff; 28:18-20).
7. Jesus *ascended* and now *reigns* as the divine Son of God (Acts 2:36).
- B. Prophetic Testimony (Luke 24:44-46; see Lesson 3 for details).
- C. Miraculous Testimony.
1. The resurrection of Jesus discussed above was a miracle that gave testimony to his divinity (Romans 1:4).
 2. Additionally, Jesus worked many miracles that demonstrated his claim to be the divine Son of God (Matthew 11:2-6; John 5:36; 10:25; 14:11; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22).
 3. Consider one particular miracle from that standpoint of apologetic evidence: the raising of Lazarus (John 11:39-53; 12:9-10).
 - a) There was *physical evidence* to verify it.
 - b) There was a lack of *natural explanation* to verify it.
 - c) There was a *large crowd* who verified it.
 - d) There were *enemies* of Jesus who verified it (see also Acts 3:6; 4:10,16 and Josephus’ statement that Jesus was a “doer of wonderful works”).
 - e) There was an attempt to *remove and conceal* the evidence (both Jesus and Lazarus) which verified it.

D. Pauline Testimony.

1. Saul of Tarsus (Paul), immediately after his conversion, “*proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God*” (Acts 9:20). What caused this intelligent and prominent man to change dramatically and believe in Jesus as the divine Son of God? The evidence of Paul’s conversion cannot be ignored and stands as testimony for the truthfulness of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-16; 26:1-23).
2. Four possibilities:
 - a) First, Paul was an imposter who lied about his conversion with the intent to deceive. But, what was his motive? Was it wealth, reputation, power, fleshly gratification, or fraud? No. Paul did not set out to be converted. His life was a matter of public record. His life was radically and immediately changed. He went to his death a Christian.
 - b) Second, Paul was a religious fanatic with a healthy imagination. However, he did not possess the characteristics of a religious madman or fanatic (great temper, melancholy, ignorance, credulous, vain self-conceit, etc.). Paul was not swept away with religious fanaticism (seeing what he already wanted to see). He had everything to lose and nothing to gain.
 - c) Third, Paul was himself deceived by the fraud of others. No. He was educated, intelligent, and there were no other Christians around on the road to Damascus to change his mind toward Christ.
 - d) Fourth, Paul was telling the truth about his conversion. He saw the resurrected Jesus and he told the truth about it.

E. Historical Testimony.

1. Jewish historians.
 - a) Flavius Josephus wrote about Jesus Christ and Christians in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (18:3:3; 20:9:1), c. A.D. 94.
2. Roman historians.
 - a) Pliny the Younger, writing c. A.D. 110 to the Emperor Trajan, mentioned Christ and Christians.
 - b) Tacitus, writing about the actions of Emperor Nero, mentioned Christians and Christ who had been executed by Pontius Pilate (*Annals*, c. A.D. 115).
 - c) Seutonius, speaks of Christians being persecuted in Rome because of one “Chrestos” (“Christos” misspelled?) (*Via Claudii*, XXV.4, c. 120 A.D.).
3. Circumstantial evidence.
 - a) Why do we have “A.D.” (*Anno Domini* = year of the Lord), if Jesus did not exist as Lord?
 - b) Why was the day of worship changed from the Sabbath to Sunday or the “Lord’s Day” (Acts 20:7), if Jesus did not exist as the risen Lord?

F. What Are the Choices?

1. Jesus was a liar. However, this was not the case because Jesus was good (contrary to being a liar). He did not possess the character of a liar. Even his enemies on occasion believed he told the truth (John 7:45-46).
2. Jesus was a lunatic. However, this was not the case because Jesus was wise (contrary to being a lunatic). He did not possess the character of a lunatic (paranoia, schizophrenia, immoral acts). Even large crowds were astonished at his teaching (Matthew 7:28).

3. Jesus was Lord. This is the truth: *“Of a truth thou art the son of God”* (Matthew 14:33) and *“Truly this was the Son of God”* (Matthew 27:54).

III. ANSWERING OBJECTIONS.

- A. Objection #1: Jesus Was A Well-Known Religious Leader, But Just An Ordinary Man.
 1. The entire earthly life of Jesus from start to finish was far from ordinary. This was demonstrated in this lesson with evidence from the Bible, miracles, Paul, and external sources (see II. A. – D. above).
- B. Objection #2: Jesus Only *Claimed* to Be the Son of God, But He Was Not *Actually* the Son of God. He Was Made Out To Be Divine By His Followers Which Was A Lie.
 1. If the Gospel writers lied, why did they do so to the point of death? If the Gospel writers lied, why did thousands believe them to the point of death knowing they were liars? If the Gospel writers lied, why did they propagate their lies so soon during the lifetime of the eyewitness of Jesus who could refute their lies?
 2. There are indeed religious movements based upon liars and deceivers (Matthew 24:5,23-24). But, Christianity lacks the three characteristics of false movements: an unproven leader; a relatively small following; an early demise (Acts 5:36-39).
- C. Objection #3: I Don't Have Enough Evidence to Believe That Jesus is The Divine Son of God.
 1. This objection is held, but not for rational reasons. This is a subjective opinion and it is not based upon objective and logical truth.
 2. Often, the unbeliever is not against Christ per se, but against Christians (the Lord's church) and what they stand for and teach.
 3. The reluctance to believe is often moral. To admit that Jesus is the divine Son of God is to admit that he has authority over one's life; something many do not want to admit. Pride and worldliness keep many from accepting Jesus, not a lack of evidence.
 4. Some people are afraid of the spiritual realm. Our world of physical materialism often hides the need for something spiritual and so many do not accept Jesus.
 5. It is not intellectually fashionable to believe in Jesus in our modern society. Since many “scholars” and “scientists” do not accept Jesus, many of the masses do not accept him either.
 6. To admit that Jesus is the divine Son of God is to admit that he is above all other religions; something many do not want to admit in our “politically correct” culture of equality for all religions.

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. Are We Impressed with the Evidence for Jesus As the Son of God (Matthew 27:54)?
- B. Our Eternal Destiny Is Determined by Our Decision About Jesus (John 3:16-18; 8:24; 12:48; 20:30-31; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5,10,12,13,20).
- C. We Must Not Only Accept the Fact of Jesus' Deity, But We Must Also Confess Jesus As the Son of God and Obey Him (John 11:27; Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 4:15).
- D. Do You Have the Will to Believe Today (John 7:17)?