

THE HISTORICAL JESUS

LESSON EIGHT

IS JESUS GOD?

BY DR BRUCE WOOLARD

His birth was no ordinary birth. Two parents are needed for conception to produce a child, but this was not the case in Jesus' birth. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of His virgin mother, Mary, without male participation.

Matthew 1:18-25 *"This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus."*

SON OF THE MOST HIGH

Luke 1:26-38 *"In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. "*

His birth produced no ordinary human being. Prior to coming to earth, Jesus was with God and He was God (see John 1:1). Notice that John 1:1 says that there is more than one person in the Godhead (i.e., the Being we call "the one true God"). In time and space He **"became flesh, and dwelt among us"** **John 1:14**. The phrase, "became flesh" or "came into the flesh," implies Jesus' pre-existence as God, which verse 1 declares, see 1 John 4:2 "

Page 2/....

DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS

From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus Christ was different from all His contemporaries. There was something extraordinary about Him. ***The people noted the difference.***

“What is this” they asked. “A new teaching with authority! He command even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him” Mark 1:27.

The disciples noted the difference. Jesus’ use of “*I say to you*” was in marked contrast to the familiar “*Thus saith the Lord*” which permeated the messages of the Old Testament prophets. “*But who do you say that I am?*” Jesus asked, they knew who He was. Simon Peter answered, “*Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” **Matthew 16:15, 16.** *The Jews noted the difference*

Once on a Sabbath, Jesus healed a man. When challenged about his working on the Sabbath, Jesus said that His Father was also working (see **John 5:17**). This so riled the Jews that they “*were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He ... was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God*” **John 5:18.**

John 5:17-18

¹⁷ Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” ¹⁸ 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.

HIS DIVINE CLAIMS

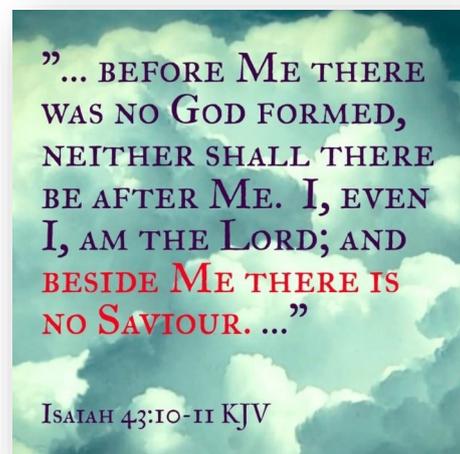
From the very beginning of His ministry Jesus Christ claimed equality with God in very clear and unmistakable statements. The miracles of Jesus validated His claim as Messiah, the second Person of the Trinity.

- In seeing Him, they were seeing God—**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?*”
- In knowing Him, they were knowing God—**John 8:19** “*Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.*”
- In believing in Him, they were believing in God—**John 12:44** “*Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.*”
- In receiving Him, they were receiving God—**Mark 9:37** “*Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.*”
- In honouring Him, they were honouring God—**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.*”
- In hating Him, they were hating God—**John 15:23** “*He that hateth me hateth my Father also.*”

He equated Himself with Jehovah by using the Old Testament title, “*I Am*” (see **Exodus 3:13, 14; Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 43:10**).

The Jews were quite familiar with “*I Am*.” When Jesus claimed this for Himself, they knew what He meant and they reacted strongly, even seeking, an occasion, to kill Him for this. Consider the following:

- When the Jews scorned the thought that Abraham had seen Jesus, Jesus said, **John 8:58** “*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am.*”
- In response to the high priest’s question, “*Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?*” **Mark 14:61-62** “*But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 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.*” The high priest’s response indicates that he understood Jesus’ use of “*I Am*” as a claim to His deity.



HIS DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

From the very beginning of His ministry Christ demonstrated His claim to deity by doing what God can do.

Jesus demonstrated His deity in knowing the thoughts and intents of men:

Matthew 9:4 “*And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Why think you evil in your hearts?*”

Matthew 12:25 “*And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand*”

Jesus demonstrated His deity in forgiving sins, which only God can do:

Mark 2:5, 7 “*When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins be forgiven you.....Why does this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?*”

HE IS THE GREAT “I AM”

Further support for Jesus Christ’s divine claims and attributes is presented throughout the Bible. Whatever is said of Jehovah is said of Jesus. Whatever is claimed for Jehovah is claimed for Jesus. Consider a few of these:

- Both Jesus and Jehovah are the “Mighty God” (cf. Isaiah 10:21; Isaiah 9:6).
- Both Jesus and Jehovah are the “*I Am*” (see Exodus 3:14; cf. John 8:58).
- Both Jesus and Jehovah are the “First and Last” (See Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; cf. Rev. 1:17; 2:8).
- Both Jesus and Jehovah are the Creator (See Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 40:28; cf. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:8-12).
- Both Jesus and Jehovah are the Saviour (See Isaiah 43:3,11; 45:21,22 cf. John 4:42; Acts 4:12)
- Both Jesus and Jehovah are confessed as Lord (See Isaiah 45:24; Joel 2:32; cf. Romans 10:9-13; Philippians 2:10, 11).
- Both Jesus and Jehovah are worshipped (See Genesis 24:26, 52 Psalm 2:11; cf. Matthew 2:2, 11; John 9:38).

Page 4/...

- Both Jesus and Jehovah are the Shepherd (See Psalm 23; 100; Isaiah 40:11; cf. John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4)
- Both Jesus and Jehovah are King (See Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 44:6; Psalm 47:2,6,7; cf. Matthew 2:2; Luke 23:3).

A study of these can only lead us to the same conclusion: The Bible fully supports the fact that Jesus is Jehovah, God as He claimed. He was God in human flesh.

HE IS THE SECOND PERSON OF THE TRINITY

From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus Christ continually spoke of the Father, a separate Person, who obviously is God. He tells us the Father was the one who sent Him and whose will He came to do (See John 5:30; 6:38, 39,40). He even prayed to the Father (See John 17:1, 24, 25). But Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit, interrelating this personal Being with Himself and the Father (See John 14; 16; 17). How, then, do we understand the relationship of Jesus Christ, whom we have already seen is God and is to be worshipped, with the Father and who also is God and is to be worshipped? How does the Holy Spirit fit into this relationship? This brings us to the doctrine of the Trinity.

The word Trinity does not occur in the Bible. It was developed in the early church to express the doctrine of God presented in the Bible. The word trinity is a shortened form for tri-unity, indicating three-in-oneness. There is no finer descriptive term of the one God revealed in the Scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches there is but one God (see Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4). God Himself states, "Is there any God besides Me...? I know of none" (Isaiah 44:8). The apostle Paul tells us that though there are many things which are called gods (See 1 Corinthians 8:5; Galatians 4:8), there is by nature only one true God (See Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4,5; Galatians 4:8).

In the Bible the Father is presented as that one true God (See Galatians 1:1). As we have seen, Jesus Christ is also presented as that one true God (See John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30). The Holy Spirit is presented as that one true God (See Acts 5:3,4). Here we have three distinct persons, each presented as being the one true God of the Bible. Therefore, God is one God and three persons are that one true God. There is both unity and plurality in the Godhead, which can be expressed as three-in-one or tri-unity – Trinity.

"Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). "And God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:27). The "us" and "our" in verse 26 can only be the one God of verse 27.

We also find evidence for the Trinity in the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a good example of this. In **2 Corinthians 4:14**; "God raised the Lord Jesus." In **Galatians 1:1**. "God the Father ...raised Him from the dead." In **John 2:19**, speaking of His body, Jesus said, "In three days I will raise it up." In **John 10:17**, Jesus explained, "I lay down My life that I may take it again."

In **Romans 8:11**. "The Holy Spirit raised Christ Jesus from the dead." Who raised Jesus from the dead? The only sensible answer is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

"My Lord and my God"
John 20:28