

***DID JESUS CLAIM TO BE GOD?*****Mark 2:5-12****by Andy Manning**

For two thousand years Christians have believed in the deity of Jesus Christ. That He is not a mere man, a great teacher or prophet. That He is God.

This is what the writers of the New Testament taught.

- The apostle John began his book, The Gospel of John, by saying, “In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God (**John 1:1**).”<sup>1</sup>
- In **Romans 9:5** Paul says of Jesus, “And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.”
- **Colossians 1:15** says, “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation.”
- And **Colossians 2:9** says, “For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.”
- Peter said of Jesus in **1 Peter 1:1**, “I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.” So the writers of the New Testament said that Jesus was God. And this is what Christians have believed ever since the beginning.

The **Nicene Creed**, written by church leaders in A.D. 325 says, “I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made.”

The **Chalcedonian Creed** is an ancient statement of faith written in A.D. 451. It reads, “We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man.”

Our church’s **statement of faith** reads like this. “God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three

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are co-equal and are one God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all men by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again to earth to reign as King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Christians have always believed in the deity of Jesus Christ. That He is God. But there are many who don't believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. And some of those, people you will likely encounter in person, in school, at work, or on the TV, argue that Jesus can't be God because He never even claimed to be God Himself. He didn't even believe that He was God.

How would you respond to that argument? Did He claim to be God? Did He believe that He was God?

This is a very important question. Did Jesus claim to be God? If He didn't, then why do we believe He is God? Where did that idea come from in the first place? Why did His disciples teach that? And if He didn't claim to be God, then maybe He wasn't God. And if Jesus is not God, if He is just another man, then what are we doing here? Our religion is destroyed. It is pointless.

In this article I want to give you some evidence that proves not only that Jesus is God, but that He claimed to be God and believed Himself to be God. I want to show you some evidence that you may have overlooked in your personal reading of the Bible.

Before we continue, I want to point your attention to two books that I have been very helpful to me, and that I heavily relied upon for this article. "Basic Christianity," by John Stott, and "I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist," by Norman Geisler and Frank Turek. Go buy these books! They are awesome.

My primary text for this article is **Mark 2:5-12**. Let me set it up. Jesus is in Capernaum, a city in the region of Galilee, which is believed to be Jesus' home town. This is also where His apostles Peter and Andrew were from. Jesus is preaching, teaching, and performing miracles in a house, and it is a full house. It is jam-packed. Four men come along, carrying their crippled friend on a mat to be healed by Jesus. We don't know too much about the man's illness, but we know he couldn't walk. But the men couldn't get their friend to Jesus because the house was so full. So they carried their friend up to the roof, dug a hole through the ceiling, and lowered their friend right in front of Jesus. Let's pick up with verse 5.

5 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “My child, your sins are forgiven.”

6 But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, 7 “What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!”

8 Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts?”

When the man is lowered down from the roof in front of Jesus, Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven.” Why did He say that? I’m not sure. Here’s my theory. I think the crippled man was ashamed of his sin. He saw himself as so sinful that God wouldn’t be willing to heal him. And when he encountered Jesus, the one question on his mind was, “Would you heal someone as sinful as me?”

But he also believed in Jesus. He didn’t yet understand everything about Jesus, but he believed in Jesus. He believed that Jesus was the real deal. He believed Jesus’ words. And that’s why Jesus said to the man, “My child (my son), your sins are forgiven.” For we know that the forgiveness of sins is available to those who put their faith in Jesus.

Have you ever felt like that? Like you are too sinful for Jesus to help you? Sometimes people are so ashamed of their sin that they don’t even ask God for help. They just assume it’s too late. That it’s hopeless. That God is angry with them and has disowned them. But let me tell you the truth. You may have given up on God, but He never gave up on you. You may have turned your back on God, but He never left your side. And anyone who puts their faith in Jesus and turns to Him for help will receive it. No matter how far you’ve fallen, no matter how big your sins, if you will run to Jesus with your whole heart and ask for help, He’s ready to forgive you, and clean you up, and give you help in your time of need. Jesus is ready to say to you, “My child, your sins are forgiven.”

But then Jesus is interrupted. He is probably just about to heal the crippled man when some scribes, or teachers of religious law intruded. They didn’t interrupt with their words, but with their thoughts. Jesus could read their thoughts.

**Verse 6** says they “thought to themselves, ‘What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!’”

By the way, that is another proof of Jesus deity – He could read people’s thoughts. Only God.

**Verse 8** says, “Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking....”

Who were these teachers of religious law? They were called scribes. The scribes were the official teachers and lawyers in Israel. They knew the Old Testament backwards and forwards. They were experts at the Bible. And they were on to something here. They knew that only God has the authority and the ability to forgive sins. I can forgive you for sinning against me, but I can't say, “And God forgives you for your sins, too.” I can't say that. I don't have that authority. Jesus didn't say, “God forgives you.” He said, “Your sins are forgiven.” So the scribes accused Jesus of blasphemy, of saying something very disrespectful about God. Essentially, Jesus was claiming to have God's authority; He was claiming to do what only God had the right to do. He was acting like God. He was taking the place of God. He was claiming to be God. And unless Jesus actually is God, that was indeed blasphemy.

Now notice what happens next. Jesus knew what they were thinking. He knew they were criticizing Him for claiming to be God. But Jesus didn't back down. He didn't clarify or qualify His statement. He didn't defend Himself. He didn't say, “Hey guys, I know what this looks like, and I know what you're thinking. I'm not saying that I'm God, and I'm not claiming to be God.” Look at what Jesus does.

8 Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? 9 Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk’? 10 So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, 11 “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

12 And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, “We've never seen anything like this before!”

Instead of backtracking and saying, “I'm not claiming to be God!” Jesus says, “I'll prove to you that I am God and that I have the authority to forgive sins.” And he healed the man right there in front of everyone.

So back to the original question? Is Jesus God? Or more specifically, did Jesus claim to be God? Did He believe to be God. Here's what we learn from this passage:

**Jesus forgave sins, something only God has the authority to do, thus proving His deity.**

Here's another way to put it. Only God has the authority to forgive sins. Jesus had the authority to forgive sins. Therefore, Jesus is God.

By forgiving this man's sin, Jesus was performing a divine action. He was doing what only God has the ability and authority to do. At the same time, Jesus knew what this looked like. It looked like He was claiming to be God. That's why He was accused of blasphemy. But instead of denying that He was claiming to be God, He performed a miracle to prove His divine authority. What we have here is a great example of Jesus claiming to be God, and believing Himself to be God, and then proving it!

Now, the good thing is that this is not the only piece of evidence we have. To answer the question, Did Jesus claim to be God? the evidence is four-fold.<sup>2</sup> We're not going to go into too much detail here, but I just want to expose you to the evidence.

### **Did Jesus Claim to be God?**

#### **1. He made many self-centered claims.**

If Jesus were merely a prophet, just a man, then He would speak much of God and point people to God. What did Jesus do? Jesus spoke much of Himself, and He commanded people to follow and love Him above everyone else. Jesus said things that no mere man has any right to say. He said...

- "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35
- "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." John 8:12
- "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying." John 11:25
- "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." John 14:6
- "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Again, no mere man is allowed to talk like this. Can you imagine if your friend said these things to you, or if a preacher stood up and said these things? These are claims only God can make.

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<sup>2</sup> For this message I relied on the books "Basic Christianity," by John Stott, and "I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist," by Norman Geisler and Frank Turek.

## 2. He directly claimed to be God.

On several occasions and with different words Jesus directly claimed to be God. Let me just give you one example. Look at **John 8:51-53, 58-59**. Jesus said,

“51 I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!”

52 The people said, “Now we know you are possessed by a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died, but you say, ‘Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!’ 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”

58 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I am!” 59 At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.

The people asked Jesus if He was greater than their founder, Abraham. Jesus said, “Before Abraham, I am.” So they picked up stones to throw at Him. Why? Because Jesus was claiming to be God. In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush as “I am.” And here, Jesus refers to Himself in the same way. That’s why they wanted to kill Him. He was directly claiming to be God.

## 3. He indirectly claimed to be God.

Not only did Jesus directly claim to be God, but He made many statements that indirectly implied His deity.

For example, in **Revelation 1:17** Jesus said, “I am the First and the Last.” That’s exactly what God said of Himself in the Old Testament in **Isaiah 44:6**. He said, “I am the First and the Last; there is no other God.”

Jesus claimed to be the judge of all people (Matthew 25:31; John 5:27), but the Old Testament says that God is the judge (Joel 3:12).

In John 10:11 Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd.” In the Old Testament “The LORD is my shepherd.” And there are many other examples of indirect claims to deity.

#### **4. He performed divine actions.**

Finally, there is evidence that Jesus claimed to be God and believed Himself to be God by His divine actions. For example, both Testaments forbid worshiping anyone other than God. But in the New Testament, Jesus accepted people's worship on at least nine different occasions.

- A healed leper (Matthew 8:2).
- A ruler whose son Jesus had healed (Matthew 9:18).
- The disciples after a storm (Matthew 14:33).
- A Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:25).
- The mother of James and John (Matthew 20:20).
- A Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:6).
- A healed blind man (John 9:38).
- All the disciples (Matthew 28:17).
- Thomas, who said, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

And not only did Jesus accept people's worship, which is something only God has the authority to do, but Jesus forgave sins. Forgiving sins is a divine action. It's something only God can do. Jesus did, and by healing the paralyzed man He proved that He had the right to do it. It's one of the many evidences that Christ claimed to be God and believed that He was God.

#### **Jesus forgave sins, something only God has the authority to do, thus proving His deity.**

So the next time you hear someone argue that Jesus didn't claim to be God, you know otherwise. He did claim to be God. He did believe that He was God.

Now the question is do we believe that He is God? Because if we do, then that means we must trust in Him and obey His word. And if He is God, then that means that His words are true, and that if we will turn from our sins and trust in Him, we will have eternal life.

I want to ask you something. Have you invited Jesus into your life to be your Savior and King? It's one thing to believe in Him, but it's another thing to give Him your life. Have you given your life to Jesus? If He is God, then that's what He deserves. Not merely your belief, but your heart; your life; your everything. Jesus is not just a concept to believe; He is God, and He wants you to love Him, and to know Him and to serve Him. Have you invited Jesus to be Your Savior and King? If you would like to give your life to Christ, and invite Him into your life to save you then pray a prayer like this. "Jesus, I know I am a sinner, and I want to turn from my sins and follow You. I believe that You died for my sins and rose again, and I accept You as my Savior

and King. Come into my life, Lord Jesus, give me new life, and help me to follow and obey You from this day forward. Amen.”

If this article has been helpful to you, I'd love to know about it. Email me at [andy@churchacadiana.com](mailto:andy@churchacadiana.com).