

Date : 9 June 2024
Theme : Evidential Christianity: How to answer?
Topic : Is Jesus God?
Key verse : In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ...
The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the
glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. –
John 1:1, 14

Is Jesus Christ God? Was He merely a man? Many people may be interested in His teachings or healings but fail to see Him as God in the flesh. His humility meant He did not frequently declare His divine identity overtly. Unlike religious leaders who direct followers to god, Jesus points us to Himself.

Let us examine the evidences that show Jesus Christ was God in the flesh.

A) Why is Christ's deity so important?

- The Foundation of our faith.
 - Jesus is not merely a prophet or a moral teacher, but God incarnate.
 - If Jesus was merely a man, then all that we read in the Bible would be fundamentally undermined. How can we put our trust in Him?
 - As God the Son, He is able to reveal the Father to us. He bridges the gap between humanity and God. He is the perfect representation of the Father.
- For the basis of Salvation and Atonement. (*2 Corinthians 5:21 – God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*)
 - As God the Son, He was devoid of the sin nature and through His virgin birth, He could qualify to be our Substitute to pay the penalty of sin.

B) What are the evidences that show Christ's deity? C.A.M.P.E.R

➤ *Question 1: Did Jesus say that He is God?*

1) Claims made by Himself

a) His Direct Claims

- Jesus claimed to be the "I am" – the name God identified Himself with. (*John 8:58 – "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"*)
 - Jesus used a specific title that Jews understood was ascribed only to God. Jesus used the title "I AM," the name God used for Himself when answering Moses in Exodus 3:14. (*God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"*)
 - The reaction of the Pharisees confirmed that they understood precisely what Jesus was claiming because they tried to stone Him for blasphemy. (John 8:59)

- Jesus claimed to be equal with God the Father – showing His divine authority. (*John 10:30 - I and the Father are one.*)
 - Jesus frequently referred to "My Father," and His hearers got the full impact of His words. We are told, "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."
 - On one occasion, the religious authorities wanted to stone Him. Jesus asked them which of His miracles caused them to want to kill Him. They replied, "We are not stoning you for any of these but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."
- Jesus claimed to be the Messiah – the name the prophets used when God would come in the flesh.
 - After His arrest, Jesus was brought before the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. During this pivotal moment, the high priest asked Him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus' response was unequivocal: "I am...and all of you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:61-62).

b) Indirect Claims

- Jesus' Authority to Forgive Sins
 - In Mark 2:5-12. Jesus demonstrates His divine authority by forgiving the sins of a paralysed man. (*Mark 2:5 – Son, your sins are forgiven.*) This act astonishes the onlookers, as forgiving sins is a prerogative reserved for God alone.
 - By claiming the power to forgive sins, Jesus indirectly asserts His divine identity and authority, affirming that He is God and has the ultimate authority to forgive sins.
- Jesus as the Judge of the World
 - Jesus declares in John 5:22, "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son."
 - Claiming the authority to judge the world affirms Jesus' divine nature, as judgment is an attribute of God alone.
- Jesus as the Only Way to God.
 - Jesus makes a profound claim about His unique role in humanity's relationship with God by stating, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6)
 - This declaration means that Jesus is the only path to God, the ultimate source of divine truth, and the giver of eternal life.

➤ *Question 2: What did the disciples and early Christian communities understand about Jesus' identity during His ministry on earth?*

2) Apostles were Eyewitnesses (*1 John 1:1 – We have seen with our eyes ... our hands have touched ... the Word of life...*)

- Unlike other religious accounts, the accounts in the Bible were not written down hundreds of years after Jesus' life by people who didn't know Him. They were written down by His original disciples, or in some cases, by close friends of His earliest disciples.
- In John 1:1, John identified Jesus as the Word. John emphasised Jesus' integral role in creation and His divine nature.
 - This verse states that Jesus, as the Word, was not a created being but existed eternally.

- This profound introduction sets the stage for the rest of John's Gospel, which then elaborates on Jesus' divine identity through His works, teachings, death, and resurrection.
- Before Jesus' crucifixion
 - Peter, James and John saw the glorified Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration talking to Moses and Elijah. (Matthew 17:3) Jesus glorified simply means He took upon Himself His deity form.
 - The Centurion at Jesus' crucifixion saw His behaviour on the cross and concluded: Truly, this was the Son of God. (Matthew 27:54)
 - The disciples, Mary Magdalene and 500 others who saw Jesus testified that He is God the Son.
- After Jesus had returned to Heaven
 - Stephen saw Him at the Father's right hand. (Acts 7:56)
 - John saw Him in heaven. (Revelation 1:17)
- They risked their lives as they stood for the truth of Jesus as God
 - They were threatened with death to stop testifying but they did not. As a result, many were put to a violent death.

➤ *Question 3: How did Jesus' miracles support the claim that He had divine power?*

3) Miracles Performed

God must have the power to perform miracles. There were over 30 miracles recorded.

- His Healing Power
 - Jesus healed a blind man (John 9:7) and the man commented that Jesus must be divine since Jesus could restore his sight (John 9:33). To the blind man, the evidence was obvious.
 - Jesus healed the epileptics, and paralytics (Matthew 4:23–24).
 - Jesus healed the Centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13) without being present, demonstrating His authority over distance and compassion for all people.
 - When Jesus healed the great multitude, "power came out from Him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19).
- Surpassing Power Demonstrated
 - Jesus turned water into wine. (John 2:1-11)
 - Fed a massive crowd of 5000. (John 6:1-14)
 - Calmed a raging storm. (Mark 4:35-41)
 - Walked on water. (Matthew 14:22-33)
- Deliverance from demonic oppression
 - Jesus cast out a legion of demons from a man, demonstrating His authority over the spiritual realm. (Mark 5:1-20) The demons recognised Jesus and begged Him not to torment them, acknowledging His divine power.
- Raise the dead to life
 - Jesus raised the widow's son in the city of Nain (Luke 7:14-15), Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:38-42), and Lazarus (John 11:43-44) from the dead, showing He had divine power over death.
 - Jesus would raise Himself from the dead (Matthew 28:6), witnessed by many.

➤ *Question 4: How do the prophecies in the Old Testament show Jesus' Deity?*

4) Prophecies Revealing Jesus' Deity

- The Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7:14)
 - Isaiah 7:14 states, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel."
 - The name Immanuel means "God with us", indicating that Jesus, born of a virgin, is God in the flesh with us. (Matthew 1:22-23)
- The Eternal Throne of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13)
 - God had promised David that his lineage and throne would endure forever.
 - God answered this prophecy in Jesus. Mary and Joseph were distant cousins who were both in David's lineage. God was making it clear. This child was to be the prophesied Messiah! He is the promised seed of David. In fact, throughout the Gospels, people recognised Jesus as the prophesied Son of David and called Him by that prophetic title (Luke 18:38, Mark 10:47).
- Eternal Ruler from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
 - 700 years earlier, the prophet Micah prophesied that Jesus' birth was to take place in Bethlehem. This prophecy indicates the Ruler's (the Messiah) eternal origins, meaning His pre-existence is eternal and timeless from ancient days.
 - Matthew 2:5-6 gives this fulfilment pointing it to Jesus.
- The Psalmist's Prophecy about Jesus as Lord (Psalm 110:1)
 - The Psalmist prophesied about Jesus' resurrection and wrote – the Lord said to my Lord, addressing Jesus as Lord. This verse shows a conversation within the Godhead, addressing the Messiah (Jesus) as Lord, indicating His divine status.
 - In Matthew 22:44, Jesus cites this Psalm to question the Pharisees about the Messiah's identity. This indicates Jesus' self-identification as the divine Lord.

➤ *Question 5: What did Jesus' enemies say about Him?*

5) Enemies' Testimonies about Jesus

- The demons realised that Jesus had power to destroy them.
 - The unclean spirit possessing a man cried out, "What have You to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).
 - Another demon-possessed man coming out of the tombs said to Jesus, "What have You to do with us, O Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:28–34).

6) Revelation about Jesus

- At Jesus' baptism, God the Father spoke
 - Matthew 3:17 – this is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.

Application:

- 1) How does the deity of Jesus affect your attitude to Him in your worship?
- 2a) Practice this presentation in your cell group.
- 2b) Pray for an opportunity to share C.A.M.P.E.R. with 2 non-Christians this week.