

Is Jesus God?

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The first coming of Jesus posed a problem for those being confronted with Him. The question was: Who is this Jesus? Is He only human or is He also divine as He claimed? And, if so, how are we to understand God? Is God one, are there several Gods or do we find a plurality of divine persons in one God? This third view is suggested by Scripture. It is essential to have a clear understanding of who Jesus is, in order to have a proper relationship with him. This is not just an academic question but a very practical issue having to do with our salvation.

I. The Divinity of Jesus

1. *Jesus Is Called God*

John 1:1-3, 14

John 20:28

Heb 1:8-9

Col 2:9

Mark 2:5-11

Jesus, “the Word,” is God and Human

Jesus is called “My God”

Jesus is God and anointed by God

Jesus is the fullness of the Deity

Like God, Jesus Forgives Sins

2. *Jesus Is Eternal*

Rev 1:8 (Father); 1:17-18 (Son); 21:6 (Father); 22:12, 13, 20 (Son)

John 8:58-59; Isa 43:10-13; Exod 3:14

Mic 5:2

Isa 9:6

Heb 1:8

Both Father and Son are “Alpha and Omega”

Jesus is the I Am

Like the Father, Jesus is Eternal (Ps 90:2, 13)

Jesus is called the everlasting Father

Jesus’ throne is everlasting

3. *Jesus Is Yahweh*

Matt 3:1, 3; Isa 40:3

1 Cor 10:4; Exod 13:21

John 12:37-41; Isa 6:1-3

John 6:46; Gen 17:1, 22; 35:9-13; Exod 6:2-3

John 19:37; Zech 12:10, 1, 8

Preparing the way for Jesus/Yahweh

The spiritual rock is Jesus/Yahweh

The glory of Jesus is the glory of Yahweh

Abraham, Jacob, and Moses saw Jesus

Jesus/Yahweh is pierced

4. *Jesus Is Worshiped*

Matt 28:9

Heb 1:6; Rev 5:8-9, 12-14

1 Cor 1:2

John 14:14

Acts 7:58-59

Like God, Jesus is worshiped on earth

Jesus is worshiped by angels and in heaven

Christians call on the name of Jesus

Christians are to pray in the name of Jesus

Stephen prays to Jesus

II. Problematic Texts

1. Rev 3:14–Jesus, “the Beginning of God’s Creation”

It is claimed that Jesus was God’s first work of creation.

- The Greek word (*archē*) can be translated “beginning,” “origin,” “first cause” or “ruler.” The Father himself is called the “beginning” in Rev 21:6. The same title is used for Jesus in Rev 22:13. Jesus is *not* the first created being but is Himself the Creator.

2. Col 1:15–Jesus, “the Firstborn of All Creation”

Since Jesus is called the “firstborn,” it is argued that he was born.

- According to v. 16 everything is created by Jesus. Therefore, He cannot Himself be a created being.
- The Bible writers sometimes use “firstborn” in a special way. David, though youngest, is called the firstborn—Ps 89:20, 27. The second line of the parallelism tells us that this title means “most exalted king.” The firstborn was the leader of a group or tribe, the priest of the family, and received twice the inheritance of his brothers. Sometimes, the idea of being born first did not play a role. Jacob (Gen 25:25-26 and Exod 4:22) and Ephraim (Gen 41:50-52 and Jer 31:9), though not born first, are also “firstborn.” More crucial than birth order was the special rank and dignity of the person given the title “firstborn.” Jesus, is called firstborn not because He was the firstborn of Mary but because of all creation, His is *the* birth that matters most and because He holds the exalted position of King of kings over all creation.

3. John 1:1-3–Jesus as God

It is claimed that there is a distinction in quality between God the Father, who is the Almighty God, and Jesus, who is only *a* god. John 1:1 reads: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with *ho theos*, and the Word was *theos*.”

- The Greek term for God—*theos*—is found with the article (*ho theos*—“the God”) or without the article (*theos*—“a god” or “God”). In John 1:1-3 the Father is named *ho theos* whereas the son is called *theos*. Is it justified to claim, based on this observation, that the Father is God Almighty whereas the Son is only *a* god?
- When the term *theos* is used for the Father, it is not only used with the article but oftentimes also without the article—*theos* (even in the very same chapter: John 1:6, 13, 18; see also Luke 2:14; Acts 5:39; 1 Thess 2:5; 1 John 4:12; and 2 John 1:9). Jesus is also *the* God, *theos* with the article (Heb 1:8-9; John 20:28). In other words, whether “God” has the article or not has nothing to do with their nature as deity.
- Had John always used the definite article with *theos*, it would mean that there is only one divine person: the Father would be the Son. In John 1:1, in order to talk about two separate persons of the Godhead, John had no other choice than to use *ho theos* (God with the article) and the next time to employ *theos* without the article. The absence of the article is not a valid argument against the equality and unity of the Father and the Son.

4. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9–Jesus, the One and Only Son

It is suggested that the word *monogenēs* points to a literal begetting of Jesus and should be translated “only begotten.” Like “firstborn,” it is important to see the word’s range of meaning.

- The same term occurs also in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38 and points to an only child.
- Isaac is called Abraham’s *monogenēs* son in Heb 11:17. While Isaac was not Abraham’s only son, he was unique as Abraham’s “son of promise.” In light of these verses, together with the references in John and 1 John (the only other verses in the NT that use the Greek term), we conclude that “only” or “unique” is better than “only begotten” as a translation of *monogenēs*.
- The normal term for begotten, *gegennēka*, is found in Heb 1:5 and points either to Christ’s resurrection or incarnation.
- Perhaps the other evangelists did not use *monogenēs* because *agapētos* “beloved” is another way to translate the same Hebrew word (see Mark 1:11 in connection with Christ’s baptism). The two words may sometimes be close in meaning.

III. Conclusion

Jesus is God as the Father is God. We understand Him to be equal with the Father in quality but not in function. The Son is to be honored as the Father is honored—John 5:23. A wrong understanding of the Son can lead to misunderstanding the way of salvation (see 1 John 4:1-3). Had God offered even his best created being as a sacrifice for lost humanity yet not offered Himself, humans, angels, and the inhabitants of the universe might question His love and misunderstand the real motivation for obedience. In giving His Son, the Father also gave Himself because Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are eternally one. Understanding the nature of Jesus helps us to understand the how we are saved and why we must accept Him as our Savior and Lord.

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