

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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Who Do Men Say That I Am

People have always been confused about Jesus. Even while Jesus was in the flesh, here on earth, people misunderstood who He was. Jesus once asked His disciples, *"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"* Their response was, *"Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."* It is sad that all these years later Jesus still has a mistaken identity.

Some Believe Jesus Is a Myth

There are those who claim that Jesus was simply a mythological person. That this is a mistaken view of Christ is made clear from many facts. First, Jesus doesn't fit the description of a myth. Mythological beings usually have certain characteristics. They are usually revealed as having some sort of exaggerated bodily form. This is not the case with Jesus. He is revealed to us as a person with the same physical characteristics as the rest of us. Also, mythological persons almost always defy chronology and topology. In other words, they are not limited to specific dates or places in history, but instead span generations of time and are believed to have lived in many different places at the same time. Such doesn't fit the description of our Lord. Jesus was born at a specific time and in a specific place. He is a man of history, born in Bethlehem during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, and at a time when Herod was king and Pilate was governor of Judea. We have historical references to Jesus as a real person in each century going back to when he was born. There is as much reason for us to believe in Jesus as a historical person as there is for us to believe in George Washington. This is why all writers, enemies and friends, Jewish, Romans, and Greeks, treat Jesus as an historical person. Jesus was a real man who cried tears (John 11:35), sweated (Luke 22:4), and ate food (Matthew 26:20). Jesus was no myth.

Some Believe Jesus Was Just a Man

While some do not dare suggest that Jesus was simply a myth, because of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, they credit Jesus with being nothing more than a man. Jesus was indeed a man, but He was more than that. He was God manifested in the flesh. We may not be able to completely comprehend the nature of Christ while He was here on earth, but our faith in the written Word of God demands a belief in both the humanity and deity of Christ. That Jesus was God in the flesh is established by several Biblical facts.

- Jesus is called God (John 1:1; Acts 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrew 1:8).
- Angels were commanded to worship Christ (Hebrews 1:5-6).
- Jesus claimed equality with the Father (John 5:17-18).
- Jesus is called Yahweh in Old Testament passages (Isaiah 40:3 and Matthew 3:1-3; Joel 2:32 and Romans 10:11-13; Isaiah 8:13-14 and 1 Peter 2:8).

To claim that Jesus was nothing more than a man here on earth is to misidentify the Christ. Jesus never stopped being God. He never gave up his deity. Perhaps Jesus didn't always choose to use His divine attributes when He was on earth, but He always had them at His disposal. Thus, Jesus could walk on water, change water into wine, and even calm a raging storm by merely speaking to the sea, because, as God, He had control over nature (Matthew 8:26-27; Matthew 14:25; John 2:1-11). Jesus could read the minds of man (John 2:24-25). He could forgive man of sin (Luke 5:17-26). Since only God can forgive sins, and since Jesus forgave sins, He must be God.

Some Believe Jesus and the Father Are the Same Person

Saying that Jesus is deity does not mean that Jesus and the Father are the same person. While Jesus is deity, He is a separate person from the Father. How do we know this? First, it is said in John 1:1 that the Word (Christ before His incarnation - John 1:14) was with God. I can be with my wife or with my children but it would be improper to say that I am with myself. The language of John 1:1 clearly shows that two persons are under consideration in the text.

Second, we have biblical texts that show Jesus and the Father in different places at the same time. For example, when Jesus was baptized on earth the Father spoke from heaven (Matthew 3:16-17). Furthermore, in John 17 we find Jesus praying to the Father. Was Jesus praying to Himself?

Yes, the Father and the Son are one (John 17:22), but that does not mean that they are the same being. Jesus prayed for His disciples that they might be one just like He was one with the Father (John 17:2-21). If Jesus and the Father are one person, then Jesus was praying for all of his disciples to be one person. Who could believe such a ridiculous conclusion? The Father and the Son are one in that they share perfect unity. That is what Jesus was praying for on behalf of His disciples in John 17.

Isaiah 9:6 has been used by some oneness preachers. In that passage we find a reference to the Messiah as "*the Everlasting Father.*" Does this prove that Jesus and the Father are one and the same person? No! Why is the Messiah referred to as Father in that passage? First, the title, "*Everlasting Father*" is more accurately translated, "*Father of Eternity,*" as both Young's Literal Translation and the Complete Jewish Bible have it. Such a description of Jesus is fitting when we remember that He existed long before his incarnation. We have already seen that Jesus is deity, and we know that deity is eternal. Jesus is an eternal Being without beginning or end. Long before Jesus was made flesh, He had a part in the creation of the world. Two passages in the New Testament clearly teach this. In John 1 we read that the Word was not only with the Father in the beginning, but that all things were made by Him (John 1:1-2). Paul wrote of this in Colossians 1:16: "*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth....*" Since Christ had a part in the creation of all things, it is appropriate for Him to be called Father. The Hebrew word translated Father in Isaiah 9:6 is Ab and means "source or begetter." Indeed Christ is the source of all things as the passages we considered proves.

Who is Jesus? He is no myth! Jesus was a real person who had a beginning and an end from a physical standpoint. However, Jesus was never just an ordinary man. He is the Son of God, as even the demons recognized (Mark 5:7). Jesus is God manifested in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus was a prophet, but not an ordinary prophet. He was the greatest prophet of all times (Hebrews 1:1-14). Let's never deny the true identity of Christ. To do so is to be numbered with the thousands of people who are wrong about who Jesus is.