

One God

Is Jesus Both God and Man?

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"...How in the world could Jesus be omnipresent if he couldn't be in two places at once?" I asked. "How could he be omniscient when he says, 'Not even the Son of Man knows the hour of his return?' How could he be omnipotent when the gospels plainly tell us that he was unable to do many miracles in his hometown?" –Lee Strobel, *Case for Christ*, p. 158.

In the foyer of our church, is a tract that says on its cover "Did Jesus Think He Was God?" Below, I have reproduced the chart found in it, enumerating 11 points as to why Jesus could not be God.

If Jesus is God then...

1. How could he have a **beginning** (Matthew 1:18; Romans 1:3), since God has always existed (Isaiah 43:13)?
2. How could he keep **"increasing in wisdom"** (Luke 2:52), since God's "understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5)?
3. Why did he say, **"I can do nothing on my own**

initiative" (John 5:30), whereas God "can do all things" (Job 42:2)?

4. Why did he spend "the whole night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12), as there is **never** a time when God prays, but only receives prayer from others?
5. How could he **learn obedience** and **become perfect** (Hebrews 5:8 and 9), since God invented obedience and is already perfect (Matthew 5:48)?
6. Why **doesn't he know the day and hour** when he will return, and yet his Father, God, does know (Matthew 24:36)?
7. Why **didn't he know** who touched him (Mark 5:30), whereas God knows everything (Isaiah 46:10)?
8. How could he be **tempted** by the devil (Matthew 4:1), yet "God cannot be tempted by evil" (James 1:13)?
9. How could he **die** (Philippians 2:8), if God "alone possesses immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16)?
10. How could he be in **subjection** to the Father [if he were the Father] for all eternity, (1 Corinthians 15:28)?
11. Why was he **asleep** on the cushion (Mark 4:38), yet God never sleeps or slumbers (Psalms 12:14)?

Though these reasons may appear very conclusive to most unitarians and non-Christians, they are not by most mainstream Christians. When I speak to orthodox Christians along these lines, the person often responds

"You misunderstand the dual nature of Christ." Their reasoning continues, "In his divinity, he is God; but in his humanity, he is man. When he performs miracles, that is a manifestation of his deity. When he suffers or is limited in any way, that is a manifestation of his humanity." Thus, a dual nature proposition is given as the explanation as to why Jesus did not exactly match the attributes recorded of God.

But why is this doctrine necessary? Why do people believe that Jesus is God? The main reason given for why Jesus would be God is that he did things that only God can do—he raised the dead, walked on water, exorcised demons, forgave sins, and lived perfectly. Each of these will be taken in its turn.

Jesus raised the dead. Jesus raised Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and the widow's son. If raising the dead makes Jesus God, then Elijah, Elisha, and Peter are also God, because they also raised the dead.

Jesus walked on water. Jesus confessed the source of his miracles when he said, "the Father abiding in me does His works" (John 10:25, 32, 37; 14:10) and, "the son can do nothing of himself" (John 5:19). Jesus walked on the water because God empowered him to do so. (And Peter walked on the water also.)

Jesus exorcised demons. Often, Jesus came face to face with the spiritual forces of wickedness. He never struggled but cast them

out with a few words. However, he is not unique here either, the 12 also cast out demons, as well as the 70. Besides, Jesus clearly stated, "I cast out demons by the spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28). God empowered His Messiah to do these things.

Jesus forgave sins. When the paralyzed man was brought to Jesus, he said, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:2). It is alleged that since all sins are ultimately an affront to God (Psalms 51:4), that only God can forgive sins. This reasoning is logical, but what if God conferred His right to forgive sins onto His earthly agent—the Messiah. "But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God who had given such authority to men" (Matthew 9:8). Similarly, the disciples of Christ are authorized to forgive or retain sins (cf. John 20:23).

Jesus lived perfectly. Adam was made in God's image—perfect. God's plan was for him to stay sinless, live forever, cultivate the garden of Eden, rule over the earth, and produce many children. Jesus also was made in the image of God (Colossians 3:10). He was divinely created [begotten] (Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20) in the womb of his mother, Mary; Adam was also divinely made (Genesis 2:7). Thus, Jesus falls in the category of one who began as perfect and who needed to maintain his perfection (i.e. the second Adam), rather than one who had inherited the fallen sin nature. Because of what Christ has done, we can now mortify the deeds of our old man and live as he lived (Romans 8:10, 13).

One other argument that often surfaces is that if Jesus was not God, then his sacrifice would not have been sufficient to redeem all of humanity. This assertion seems logical on its surface, but there are four problems with it.

- Nowhere in the Bible is this stated.
- God cannot die (I Timothy 1:17 says He is immortal).
- A sacrifice is sufficient because God accepts it, not because its value equals the offense.
- According to their view, only the body (the humanity) of Jesus died; his spirit (the deity) continued to live. Thus, the God portion of Jesus did not die.

Besides, is it fair to split Jesus in any way? If Jesus were fully God and fully man, then everything Jesus experienced, both his divine and human natures also experienced. For example, if I could ask them, "How can Jesus be God if he doesn't know everything?" They would respond, "In his humanity he didn't know, but in his divinity he is omniscient." However, this is impossible. One cannot both know everything and not know everything at the same time! If Jesus had claimed ignorance about his second coming when he was really omniscient, would this not be deceptive? To illustrate this, consider the analogy below.

Fred asked Laura for \$5, and she responded, "I don't have \$5." But then 10 minutes later, Fred noticed that she was holding \$5 in her hand and questioned her why

she had lied. Laura replied, "When I said I didn't have \$5, I meant in my right hand I did not have it; although it is true that in my left hand I do have \$5." Would this not be immediately exposed as deception? Either the person has the \$5 or not. One cannot both have and not have \$5 at the same time.

Jesus always spoke the truth. If he said he did not know something, then all of Jesus did not know it. If he died, then he was not immortal. If he slept on the boat, then he cannot claim to be the God Who never sleeps, etc. All of this confusion can be avoided if we understand Jesus as a human—a sinless man who, like Adam, was directly made by God but, unlike Adam, did not

grasp at equality with God. There is nothing complicated about that. **Jesus is a real human** who really died for our sins. Our entire faith depends on this truth. It is a simple fact: if the whole Jesus did not *really* die, then the whole of our sins are not *really* paid for. Thanks be to God who would not leave us in such a predicament.