

## Who Was Jesus?

In the last lesson we took a look at what the historical record has to say about Jesus. We saw that there is a lot of evidence *outside* the Bible that proves that Jesus Christ really existed. He is *not* a myth or a fairy tale, but is every bit as real as Julius Caesar or Socrates. There cannot be any doubt that Jesus Christ is real.

However, that brings up another question: just who was Jesus? Was He merely a good teacher, as many people have claimed, or was He more than that? This is a question that each person must face:

“The challenge posed to every succeeding generation by the New Testament witness to Jesus is not so much, 'What did he teach?' but 'Who is he? And what is his relevance for us?’” (McGarth, *Understanding Jesus*, p16)

The significance of Jesus is impossible to overstate. He is by far the most important person who has ever lived. The impact He has had on the world is absolutely staggering. No one else even comes close:

“This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.” (Philip Schaff, *The Person of Christ*, 1913)

But who was this man? Many people have claimed that Christ was just a good man who gave wise advice and who helped the poor. But that is *not* what Jesus claimed. He never said that He was simply a good teacher; instead He claimed to be God. This stands in stark contrast to all other religious figures. No other leader of any major religion has ever claimed to be God, or has managed to convince so many people that He actually *was* God:

“Not one *recognized* religious leader, not Moses, Paul, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, etc., has ever claimed to be God; that is, with the exception of Jesus Christ. Christ is the only religious leader who has ever claimed to be deity and the only individual ever who has convinced a great portion of the world that He is God.” (Schultz, *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, p209)

Some people teach that Jesus never claimed to be God. They say that although His followers revered Him as God, Jesus never took that step. In this lesson we are going to take a look at the evidence and discover that Jesus really *did* claim to be God. In fact, that is the very claim that resulted in His crucifixion.

## **The Teachings**

One of the things that often gets overlooked is that His teachings were given from a godlike perspective. This is easy to miss if you're not looking for it, but Jesus did not teach the way that others do. When Jesus finished giving the Sermon on the Mount, the crowd who heard him was astonished. Matthew explains why:

**Matthew 7:28:** “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:  
29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

The reason Jesus' teachings were so astonishing is because He taught *as if He was in charge*. He acted as if everything that He said was final and beyond question:

“His teachings were ultimate, final – above those of Moses and the prophets. He never added any afterthoughts or revisions; He never retracted or changed; He never guessed, 'supposed,' or spoke with any uncertainty. This is all so contrary to human teachers and teachings.” (Meldau, *101 Proofs of the Deity of Christ from the Gospels*, p5)

For example, no other teacher would dare to put their own teachings above that of the Mosaic Law. Jesus, however, did exactly that:

**Matthew 5:21:** “Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:  
22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”

**Matthew 5:27:** “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:  
28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

**Matthew 5:31:** “It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:  
32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”

It's no wonder that the crowd was astonished! No other teacher would even consider saying “Yes, that's what the Law says, but I have something even greater to tell you.” Jesus didn't teach the way a scribe would; instead He taught as if He was in charge. He put Himself on a different level – and that is exactly what led to His crucifixion.

## The Trial

When Jesus was arrested and brought before the High Priest, He was asked a question. Christ's response to this question led to His execution:

**Mark 14:60:** "And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?"

61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?"

64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death."

As you can see, Jesus was sentenced to death for blasphemy, and that charge was leveled against Him *because He claimed to be God*. Jesus' claim to divinity is what resulted in His death. In fact, that is what this trial was all about. The court wasn't really that concerned about anything Jesus had done. The real question that faced the religious leadership was the *identity* of Jesus:

"Unique among criminal trials is this one in which not the actions but the identity of the accused is the issue. The criminal charge laid against Christ, the confession or testimony or, rather, act in presence of the court, on which He was convicted, the interrogation by the Roman governor and the inscription and proclamation on His cross at the time of execution are all concerned with the one question of Christ's real identity and dignity. 'What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?' (Linton, *The Sanhedrin Verdict*, p7)

Even Pilate was concerned about the identity of the man who stood before him:

**Luke 23:3:** "And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it."

In our day it may sound like Jesus is being evasive in His answer to Pilate, but that's actually not the case. In ancient times that was actually the polite way to respond to a very serious question:

"These answers are really identical. The formulae 'Thou hast said' or 'Ye say that I am,' which to modern ears sound evasive, had no such connotation to the contemporary Jewish mind. 'Thou sayest' was the traditional form in which a cultivated Jew replied to a question of grave or sad import. Courtesy forbade a direct 'yes' or 'no'." (Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?*, p26)

Looking back at the passage, we can see that the High Priest was very upset with the answer

that Jesus gave. In order to understand why His assertion was considered to be blasphemy, we need to take a look at the Old Testament. Jesus' response was actually a reference to two different Old Testament passages:

**Psalm 110:1:** "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

**Daniel 7:13:** "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

In other words, Jesus claimed that He was the one who would sit at the right hand of God, that God would give Him an eternal kingdom, and that all people and nations would worship Him for the rest of time. By doing this He was claiming to be far more than just a man. He was making a clear and unmistakable claim to divinity:

"Jesus may even be indicting his interrogators by this way of phrasing things. But he does not stop here. He goes on to add, "and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62b). This reply combines allusions to Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1. In this context, "Son of man" means far more than a simple human being. Jesus is describing himself as the "one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven" who "approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence" and given authority and power over all humanity, leading to universal worship and everlasting dominion (Daniel 7:13-4). This claim to be far more than a mere mortal is probably what elicited the verdict of blasphemy from the Jewish high court." (Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, p341-43)

Moreover, the way that Jesus made this claim was very clever. By handling the questioning as He did, He got the court to admit who He was before they sentenced Him to death:

"The Sanhedrin caught all three points. They summed them up in one question. "Art thou then the Son of God?" Their question invited an affirmative answer. It was the equivalent of a declarative statement on their part. So Jesus simply replied, "Ye say that I am." Therefore, He made them admit to His identity before they formally found Him guilty of death. It was a clever strategy on Jesus' part. He would die not merely upon His own admission to deity but also upon theirs. . . According to them there was no need for other testimony. For they had heard Him themselves. So they condemned Him by the words "of his own mouth." But He also condemned them by their words. They could not say that they did not proclaim the Son of God guilty of death." (Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*, p322)

The point that I want to draw out of this is that Jesus really *did* claim to be God. In fact, *that is*

*why He was crucified!* Not only do we have His own testimony for that, but we also have the testimony of the court that sentenced Him to death:

“But since they condemn the Savior as a blasphemer by reason of his own confession, the judges prove officially and on oath that Jesus confessed not only that he was the theocratical Messiah King and human son of God, but also that he was the divine Messiah and the essential Son of God, and that He on account of this confession was put to death.” (Felder, *Christ and the Critics*, vol. 1, p306)

The Bible could not be more clear about this point:

**John 19:7:** “The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”

Of course, this is not the first time Jesus made this claim. Jesus made that same claim all throughout His ministry.

## ***Equality With God***

One of the many astonishing things that Jesus said was that He was equal to God:

**John 10:25:** “Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”

The claim to divinity in verse 30 was so clear that the Jews immediately tried to kill Jesus. They understood exactly what He was saying. Jesus claimed to be equal with God, to be on the same level as God, and to be the same sort of being as God. That is why they immediately tried to stone Him:

“The Jews could regard Jesus' word only as blasphemy, and they proceeded to take the judgment into their own hands. It was laid down in the Law that blasphemy was to be punished by stoning (Lev. 24:16). But these men were not allowing the due process of law to take their course. They were not preparing an indictment so that

the authorities could take the requisite action. In their fury they were preparing to be judges and executioners in one. 'Again' will refer back to their previous attempt at stoning (John 8:59)." (Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p524)

There was no doubt in *anyone's* mind that Jesus had just claimed to be God – and Jesus did not try to say that they had misunderstood Him. Christ said exactly what He meant to say.

On top of that, Jesus kept referring to God as “*my* Father”. When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He commanded them to call God “*our* Father”. But Jesus Himself never did that. Instead He acted as if His relationship to God was very different from everyone else's:

**John 5:17:** “But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.  
18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”

Not only did Jesus claim to have a special and unique relationship with God, but He also put His works on the same level as the works of God:

“Jesus distinctly says, 'My Father'. Not 'our Father;” a claim to a peculiar relation to the Father. . . Jesus put himself on par with God's activity and thus justifies His healing on the Sabbath.” (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p82-83)

As we can see, the Jews were not pleased. They understood what Jesus was claiming, and on the basis of His claim to divinity they sought to kill Him:

“The Jews were angry because of Jesus' violation of the Sabbath, but they were furious when he was so presumptuous as to claim equality with the Father. This claim of Jesus widened the breach between his critics and himself, for they understood that by it he was asserting his deity. His explanation shows that he did not claim identity with the Father as one person, but he asserted his unity with the Father in a relationship that could be described as sonship.” (Tenney, *The Gospel According to John*, p64)

But Jesus went even further. He even claimed that the holy name of God belonged to Him, and that He was the great I AM of the Old Testament:

**John 8:58:** “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.  
59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

Jesus could not have been any more clear. Not only did He claim to be an eternal being who existed long before the patriarch Abraham was ever born, but He even claimed to be God. On top of that, He said these things with an oath:

“He said unto them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you...' Prefaced by a double Amen – the

strongest oath – our Lord claims the incommunicable name of the Divine Being. The Jews recognize His meaning, and, horrified, they seek to stone Him.” (Spurr, *Jesus is God*, p54)

To those not familiar with the Old Testament, what Jesus said may not seem that startling. However, Jesus was doing nothing less than claiming the holy name of God for Himself. In the Old Testament, when Moses asked God for His name, this is what God said:

**Exodus 3:13:** “And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?  
14 And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you.”

God told Moses that His name was I AM – and Jesus claimed to be the eternally existent I AM. This was as clear a claim to divinity as any Jew could possibly make. Nor is there any question that the crowd had simply misunderstood Him:

“That we must also understand the expression 'I am' as intended to declare the full deity of Christ is clear from the fact that Jesus did not attempt an explanation. He did not try to convince the Jews that they had misunderstood Him, but rather He repeated the statement several times on various occasions.” (Campbell, *The Greek Terminology for the Deity of Christ*, p12-13)

But Jesus didn't stop there. He even told the Jews that He was due the same honor as God Himself:

**John 5:23:** “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”

Jesus was very clear about this: He said that people should honor Him *just as they honor God*. Not only that, but those who dishonored Him were actually dishonoring God! Claiming that you deserve the same treatment as God is *no different from claiming to be God*.

Jesus even said that knowing Him was the same thing as knowing God:

**John 8:19:** “Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”

**John 14:8:** “Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.  
9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”

All of these statements are clear claims to divinity. Jesus taught that knowing Him was the same thing as knowing God, and seeing Him was the same thing as seeing God. Jesus was very clear about

who He claimed to be.

## **Worship**

When Cornelius tried to worship Peter, the apostle immediately stopped him:

**Acts 10:25:** “And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.”

Likewise, when John tried to worship an angel, the angel immediately stopped him:

**Revelation 19:10:** “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

The reason they were so quick to stop themselves from being worshiped is because God is the only one who may be worshiped. The Lord was very clear about this. God is a jealous God, and He outlaws all worship of anyone or anything except Himself:

**Exodus 20:3:** “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

**Isaiah 42:8:** “I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

Even Jesus taught that only God was worthy of worship:

**Matthew 4:10:** “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

It is therefore amazing to see that all sorts of people worshiped Jesus, and Jesus *never tried to stop any of them*. Instead He accepted their worship:

**Matthew 8:2:** “And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

**John 9:35:** “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”

36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.”

**Matthew 14:33:** “Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”

**John 20:28:** “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”

Even though worship is reserved for God alone, Jesus never rebuked anyone for worshipping Him. Even though Thomas actually called Him God, Jesus never rebuked him for it. Not only did Jesus claim to be God, but He also *accepted worship from men*. That is another clear claim to divinity.

## **Forgiveness**

As if all of these other claims were not enough, Jesus also forgave people's sins:

**Mark 2:5:** “When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.”

The reason this is a claim to divinity is because the scribes were right – God is the only one who can forgive sins. You see, sins are offenses against God, and the only person who can forgive an offense is the one who has been injured. If Bob hits Frank, the only person who can forgive Bob is Frank. Sally can't come along and forgive Bob because Sally isn't the injured party. *Only the injured party can offer forgiveness*. When Jesus forgave sins, He was claiming a divine prerogative. He was acting as God and claiming to be God:

“None on earth has either authority or right to forgive sin. None could forgive sin save the One against whom all have sinned. When Christ forgave sin, as He certainly did, He was not exercising a human prerogative. Since none but God can forgive sins, it is conclusively demonstrated that Christ, since He forgave sins, is God, and being God, is from everlasting.” (Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 5, p21)

But Jesus didn't stop there. He went on to claim that He was the one who would judge all of mankind for their actions:

**John 5:26:** “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;  
27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”

That is a truly remarkable thing to say. Jesus claimed that He was the Judge of men, and that their eternal destinies would depend on their treatment of Him and their acceptance of His words! Those who believed on Him would be saved, and those who rejected Him would be condemned. Only God could say such a thing:

“Not only will Jesus be the judge, but the criterion of judgment will be men's attitude to him as shown in their treatment of his 'brethren' or their response to his word . . . It is hard to exaggerate the magnitude of this claim. Imagine a minister addressing his congregation in these terms today: 'Listen attentively to my words. Your eternal destiny depends on it. I shall return at the end of the world to judge you, and your fate will be settled according to your obedience to me.' Such a preacher would not long escape the attention of the police or the psychiatrists.”  
(Stott, *Basic Christianity*, p31-32)

Telling people that He would return at the end of time to judge all of mankind for their actions, and that their eternal destinies depended on their treatment of Him, was a very clear claim to divinity.

## ***The Olivet Discourse***

On top of all of that, Jesus made these claims *while facing death*. When Jesus was on the way to be arrested by an angry mob, He told His disciples this:

**John 14:1:** “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.  
2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.  
3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Even though Jesus was about to be executed, He *still* told His disciples to believe on Him. Even though Jesus was about to die, He claimed that He would *come back for them*. That is a truly remarkable thing to do:

“He was doomed to death, the death that overtakes all men. Nevertheless, He had the audacity to demand that they make Him an object of faith. He made Himself the key to the question of destiny, and clearly stated that their future depended on His

work. He promised to prepare a place for them, and to return to claim them.”  
(Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief*, p213)

It is an astounding thing to say “Yes, I’m about to die, but don’t worry – I’ll return from death and will be back for you.” Anyone who says something like that is claiming to be far more than a mere mortal.

## ***The Son of God***

There is another claim to divinity that doesn’t get nearly as much attention. Throughout Jesus’ ministry He often claimed to be the Son of God:

**Luke 22:70:** “Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.”

**John 3:18:** “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

**John 9:35:** “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”

**John 10:36:** “Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?”

To us this claim may seem unclear or uncertain, but there was nothing uncertain about it. The claim to be the Son of God was nothing less than a claim to be divine:

“Though the phrase ‘son of’ can mean ‘offspring of,’ it also carries the meaning, ‘of the order of.’ Thus in the Old Testament ‘sons of the prophets’ meant of the order of prophets (I Kings 20:35), and ‘sons of the singers’ meant of the order of the singers (Neh. 12:28). The designation ‘Son of God’ when used of our Lord means of the order of God and is a strong and clear claim to full Deity.” (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p248)

By claiming to be the Son of God, Jesus could not have been any clearer if He had said, “Yes, I am God Himself”.

## ***Who Was Jesus?***

As we can see, Jesus claimed to be God many times during His ministry, and He made that

claim in many different ways. In fact, His persistent claim to divinity is the very reason He was condemned to death at His trial. There can be no doubt about it: *Jesus claimed to be God.*

Now, there are many people who reject the idea that Jesus was God but accept Him as a good man or a great teacher. The problem is that it is impossible to be a great teacher *and* claim to be God at the same time. Claiming to be divine is a very serious thing to do:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be either a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a mad man or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p40-41)

Anyone who claims to be God is either a liar, a lunatic, or God Himself. Those are your only three choices. Now, there are some who may say that Jesus was just a liar, but that creates its own set of problems. If Jesus was a liar, then not only did He mislead millions of people (many of them to terrible deaths), but His foolish lie cost Him His own life:

“If, when Jesus made His claims, He knew He was not God, then He was lying. But if He was a liar, then He was also a hypocrite, because He told others to be honest, whatever the cost, while He, at the same time, was teaching and living a colossal lie.

“More than that, He was a demon, because He deliberately told others to trust Him for their eternal destiny. If He could not back up His claims and knew they were false, then He was unspeakably evil in deliberately misleading so many followers down through the centuries.

“Last, He would also be a fool, because it was His claims to deity that led to His crucifixion. . .

“If Jesus was a liar, a con man, and therefore an evil, foolish man, then how can we explain the fact that He left us with the most profound moral instruction and powerful moral example that anyone has ever left? Could a deceiver – an imposter of monstrous proportions – teach such unselfish ethical truths and live such a morally exemplary life as Jesus did? The very notion is incredible.” (*Evidence for Christianity*, p380)

Is it reasonable to believe that a depraved liar could lead the most amazingly moral and selfless life that the world was ever seen? Is it likely that anyone could exhibit the incredible integrity of Christ while proclaiming such a terrible lie, and then to continue lying even when it meant a terrible and painful death? How could a depraved liar – a true demon from Hell – possibly demonstrate such incredible integrity and love?

“It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice . . . The simple record of these three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.” (Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, p8; Grounds, *The Reason for Our Hope*, p34)

It is simply *impossible* to look at the life of Christ and believe that He was a demonic liar. Yet, it's also obvious that He was not a madman who mistakenly believed that He was God. Jesus simply does not display any of the characteristics of the insane:

“This testimony, if not true, must be down right blasphemy or madness. The former hypothesis cannot stand a moment before the moral purity and dignity of Jesus, revealed in His every word and work, and acknowledged by universal consent. Self-deception in a matter so momentous, and with an intellect in all respects so clear and so sound, is equally out of the question. How could He be an enthusiast or a madman who never lost the even balance of His mind, who sailed serenely over all the troubles and persecutions, as the sun above the clouds, who always returned the wisest answer to tempting questions, who calmly and deliberately predicted His death on the cross, His resurrection on the third day, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the founding of His Church, the destruction of Jerusalem – predictions which have been literally fulfilled? A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect, so human and yet so high above all human greatness, can be neither a fraud nor a fiction.” (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, p109)

There is no doubt that Jesus claimed to be God. However, it is also clear that Jesus was not a liar, a madman, or an imposter. None of those characteristics fit the bill:

“The hypothesis of imposture is so revolting to moral as well as common sense, that its mere statement is its condemnation . . . No scholar of any decency and any self-respect would now dare to profess it openly. How, in the name of logic, common sense, and experience, could an imposter – that is a deceitful, selfish, depraved man – have invented, and consistently maintained from the beginning to end, the purest and noblest character known in history with the most perfect air of truth and reality? How could he have conceived and successfully carried out a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude, and sublimity, and sacrificed his own life for it, in the face of the strongest prejudices of his people and ages?” (Schaff, *The Person of Christ*, p94-95)

The evidence is clear. Jesus was not a liar or a lunatic:

“A measure of your insanity is the size of the gap between what you think you are and what you really are. If I think I am the greatest philosopher in America, I am

only an arrogant fool; if I think I am Napoleon, I am probably over the edge; if I think I am a butterfly, I am fully embarked from the sunny shores of sanity. But if I think I am God, I am even more insane because the gap between anything finite and the infinite God is even greater than the gap between any two finite things, even a man and a butterfly . . .

“Well, then, why [was not Jesus a] liar or lunatic? . . . Almost no one who has read the Gospels can honestly and seriously consider that option. The savviness, the canniness, the human wisdom, the attractiveness of Jesus emerges from the Gospels with unavoidable force to any but the most hardened and prejudiced reader . . . Compare Jesus with liars . . . or lunatics like the dying Nietzsche. Jesus has in abundance precisely those three qualities that liars and lunatics most conspicuously lack: (1) his practical wisdom, his ability to read human hearts; (2) his deep and winning love, his passionate compassion, his ability to attract people and make them feel at home and forgiven, his authority, “not as the scribes”; (3) his ability to astonish, his unpredictability, his creativity. Liars and lunatics are all so dull and predictable! No one who knows both the Gospel and human beings can seriously entertain the possibility that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, a bad man.”  
(Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, p60-61)

This leaves only one choice. If Jesus was not a liar, and if He was not insane, then *He must be God*. That is the only option that is left to us. It's worth noting that those who knew Jesus best believed that He was indeed exactly who He said He was:

**John 11:27:** “She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

**John 20:28:** “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”

**John 20:31:** “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Jesus did indeed claim to be God – and the reason He made that claim is because *that is exactly who He is*.