

Once I met a certain person who read some books about Jesus and admitted that Jesus had a high standard of morality. He considered Jesus a perfect man, a model for humanity. But he could not believe that Jesus is God. I said, "If you admit that He has a high standard of morality, then He at least is not a liar. If you agree that He is not a liar, then you have to accept His claim of divinity as truth. He repeatedly asserted that He is God. If you admire His morality, you have to recognize His divinity as well. Jesus of Nazareth is God!"

Excerpt from *The Normal Christian Faith* by Watchman Nee

Jesus Christ made two unique claims that distinguish Him from all other men. First, He claimed that He could forgive sins. He did not espouse teachings that could be used to reform one's life but then avoid the problem between God and man due to sins previously committed; rather, He claimed that His death would satisfy God's just condemnation of all our sins. He could shed real blood because He was a man, and His blood can deal with every sin of humankind throughout all the ages because He is the eternal God. He shed human blood, but this blood was also God's own blood (Acts 20:28). Second, He claimed that He would die, resurrect, and then indwell His believers. He did not establish a new set of teachings for us to follow; rather, He passed through death, entered into resurrection, and became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17) to enter into all who believe in Him so that they might live by Him as their very life. This Jesus, who is God and man, is available to you. He shed His blood for the forgiveness of your sins, and He became the Spirit in resurrection to indwell you. Please pray: Lord Jesus, I believe You died for my sins. I believe You have forgiven me. Now I receive You as the Spirit into me. Thank You, Jesus.

For fellowship in your local area, you may contact the person(s) listed below.

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JESUS

THE CLAIM TO BE GOD

How can Jesus of Nazareth claim to be God? We have to pause for a moment to seriously consider the matter. It is not a light thing to claim to be God. A person who makes such a claim falls into one of three categories. He must belong to one of these three categories; he cannot belong to all three. First, if he claims to be God and yet in fact is not, he has to be a madman or a lunatic. Second, if he is neither God nor a lunatic, he has to be a liar, deceiving others by his lie. Third, if he is neither of these, he must be God. You can only choose one of the three possibilities. If you do not believe that he is God, you have to consider him a madman. If you cannot take him for either of the two, you have to take him for a liar. There is no need for us to prove if Jesus of Nazareth is God or not. All we have to do is find out if He is a lunatic or a liar. If He is neither, He must be God. These are our three choices. There is no fourth.

What did Jesus of Nazareth say about Himself? In John 10:30 He said, "I and the Father are one." We need some explanation here. In the Bible the invisible God is called the Father. The Son manifests and expresses the Father. What is hidden is the Father, and what is expressed is the Son. The Son is the one who can be seen and touched. Behind, you have the Father. In front, you have the Son. The two are actually one. They are the two sides of the same reality. When we talk about two, we refer to the fact that one is hidden while the other is revealed. When we talk about one, we say that the revealed One is just the hidden One in manifestation. This is the biblical interpretation of the Father and the Son.

Therefore, when Jesus of Nazareth one day said, "I and the Father are one," it was a statement that no one else could make. This man was saying in reality that He and the invisible God are one entity. He is God, and God is He. God is the invisible Father, and He is the manifested Son. The Father and the Son are one! Who can this One be that made such a claim? Is He a madman? Is He out to deceive us?

After Jesus spoke such a word, what reaction do we see? "The Jews again took up stones that they might stone Him. Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these works are you stoning Me? The Jews answered Him, We are not stoning You for a good work, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, are making Yourself God" (vv. 31-33). The Jews understood very well that Jesus' words meant that He claimed to be God. After hearing these words they wanted to stone Him to death. A claim was made by Jesus, and an accusation was charged by the Jews, both of which concerned His divinity. Was Jesus insane? Did He speak pure nonsense just to cause people to kill Him? Or was He a swindler setting up some kind of a scheme? If so, what was He trying to gain? Was He trying to gain death? Was Jesus of Nazareth a madman, a liar, or God?

John 5:17 says, "But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working." He always put Himself in the same place as the Father. Verse 18 says, "Because of this therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath but also called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." When we read His words now, we may consider them to be ordinary remarks. But the Jews knew what He was saying. They knew that He was making Himself equal with God. The words in fact meant that God is His Father and He came to express God. The invisible One is God, and the visible One is He. Therefore, the Jews sought to kill Him. What should we do about such an unusual person?

The Jews were confused. They were totally bewildered. Who was this man? They boasted of being the descendants of Abraham, and the name Abraham was highly venerated among them. Now they brought out Abraham. Please read John 8:53: "Are You greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died

too. Who are You making Yourself?" How did Jesus answer them? In verse 56 Jesus said, "Your father Abraham exulted that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced." What is this? Even Abraham had to look forward to Jesus! Hence, verse 57: "The Jews then said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Now please pay your attention to Jesus' answer in verse 58: "Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am." Tell me who this man is. The words Jesus spoke made Him either a madman, a liar, or God. There can be no fourth alternative.

Who is Jesus of Nazareth? What would you say? Is He merely the founder of the Christian religion? Is He merely an example of self-sacrifice and humanitarianism? Is He a social reformer? Is He an advocate for universal love, peace, and freedom? Listen to what He said about Himself. He said that He is God. What is your conclusion? Is He a lunatic or a liar? Is He a hoax, or is He God? This is a vital question.

Can He be a madman? If you read His biographies in the Gospels and observe His life and manner, you will realize that not only was He sane and sound; He was very sober and firm. If there was ever a perfectly sound person in this world, He has to be the One. His mind was clear, and His mentality was alert. If you study His deeds and words carefully, you have to confess that His thoughts are very logical and consistent, and His manners are most comely and appropriate. To opposing ones He only needed to reply a few sentences, and their arguments against Him were defeated. He did not have a trace of madness in Him. A madman could never have done what He did.

Then is He a liar? A liar always lies for a profit. If there is no profit to be gained, what is the purpose of lying? Why was Jesus crucified? It was for no other reason than that He claimed to be God. At the last judgment, the hour when His release or crucifixion was to be deliberated, He was examined as to who He was. What was His answer? He said that the Son of Man would be seen sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high, descending on the clouds in glory (Matt. 26:64). Even then He claimed to be God. As a result, He was crucified on the cross. Is there a liar who would sacrifice his life for his lie?