

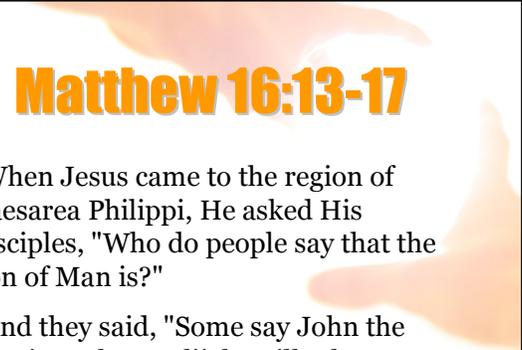


Is Jesus God?

Matthew 16:13-17

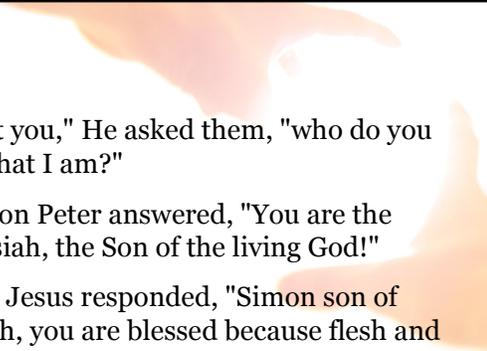
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Matthew 16:13-17

13. When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"
14. And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."



15. "But you," He asked them, "who do you say that I am?"

16. Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"

17. And Jesus responded, "Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven.



Is Jesus God?

Matthew 16:13-17

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From the Da Vinci Code

“My dear,’ Teabing declared, ‘until *that* moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nevertheless. A mortal.”

—The Da Vinci Code p. 233

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C. S. Lewis

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing people often say about Jesus:

‘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.

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He would either be a lunatic on the level with a 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 madman 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 with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

C. S. Lewis >

The Possible Options Concerning Jesus’ Claims

- Jesus’ Claims were False
 - The claims were false, but *he sincerely thought* they were true (He was a nut case)
 - The claims were false and he *knew it* (He was a con man)
- Jesus’ Claims are True

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From the Da Vinci Code

Teabing: "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea... By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity..."

The Da Vinci Code p. 233

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Things That Did Happen at the Council of Nicaea

- Constantine did call the meeting of church leaders at Nicaea in 325
- Constantine had make a profession of faith, that seems somewhat dubious
- Constantine did plea for peace & harmony in the church
- Over the years, Constantine changed sides in the controversy discussed at Nicaea

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Things That Didn't Happen at the Council of Nicaea

- Did not involve the discussion of which Gospels to include in the New Testament.
- Constantine did not manipulate the results
 - The church leaders had suffered persecution before (some had scars; one had been blinded), they would not be bullied now
- Did not propose a new teaching about Jesus. The Creed of Nicaea was a refinement of the Baptismal confession from the church in Jerusalem
- Constantine did not "upgrade Jesus' status" or embellish the Gospels
- Did not involve a question as to whether Jesus is a mere man or the "Son of God"— but exactly what it means to say Jesus is the "Son of God."

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The Issue at Nicaea

- The Heresy of Arius
 - Jesus was more than a man, but less than God
 - Jesus existed before the rest of creation, but Jesus did not share eternal preexistence with the Father
 - "There was a time when he was not"
 - Jesus is inferior to the Father in time, essence, and power
- Those who believed the historic teachings of the church wanted to correct this false teaching
 - "There was not a time when he was not"
- The Creed of Nicaea...

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The Creed of Nicaea

We believe in... one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, *God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father*, through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and those in earth

...And those who say 'there once was when he was not,' and 'before he was begotten he was not,' and that he came to be from things that were not, or from another hypostasis or substance, affirming that the Son of God is subject to change or alteration—these the catholic and apostolic church anathematizes. >

A Close Vote at Nicaea?

- Sophie: "Hold on. You're saying Jesus' divinity was the result of a vote?"
'A relatively close vote at that,' Teabing added."

—The Da Vinci Code p. 233

- How Close Was It?
 - Council met for two months, 250-318 participants
 - Only five protested the creed and, in the end, all but two (2) bishops voted for the Creed of Nicaea – Everyone to 2! .>

Why We Believe Jesus is God

1. Jesus Claimed to be God

- John 5:16-18 "Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus responded to them, 'My Father is still working, and I am working also.' This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill Him: not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, *making Himself equal with God.*" >

Jesus Claimed to be God

- Exodus 3:14 "God replied to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.'"
- John 8:56-59 Jesus: "'Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day; he saw it and rejoiced.' The Jews replied, 'You aren't 50 years old yet, and You've seen Abraham?'" Jesus said to them, 'I assure you: Before Abraham was, **I am.**' At that, they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple complex."

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Jesus Claimed to be God

- Mark 14:61-64 "Again the high priest questioned Him, 'Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' 'I am,' said Jesus, 'and all of you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his robes and said, 'Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy!...'"

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2. Jesus Was Verified as God by His Miracles

- Mark 4:39-41 "He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Silence! Be still!' The wind ceased, and there was a great calm... And they were terrified and asked one another, '**Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!**'"

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Jesus Was Verified as God by His Miracles

- Mark 2:5-12 "...Jesus told the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' But some of the scribes were sitting there, thinking to themselves: 'Why does He speak like this? He's blaspheming! **Who can forgive sins but God alone?**' Right away Jesus understood in His spirit that they were reasoning like this within themselves and said to them, 'Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, *Your sins are forgiven*, or to say, *Get up, pick up your stretcher, and walk?* But **so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,**" He told the paralytic, 'I tell you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go home.'" Immediately he got up..."

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3. Jesus Was Confessed as God

- Matthew 16:15 "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the **Son of the living God!**'"
- If Jesus had considered this blasphemy, He would have told him, but...
- Vs. 17 "Jesus responded, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven.'"

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Jesus Was Confessed as God

- John 20:24-28: Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them, but the other disciples told him that they had seen Jesus alive
- But Thomas told them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in His hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe!"
- Eight days later, the disciples were indoors again. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to Thomas:
 - "Put your finger here and observe My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Don't be an unbeliever, but a believer."
- Thomas responded, "**My Lord and my God!**" . >

4. The Apostles Believed That Jesus is God

- Titus 2:13 "While we wait for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of **our great God** and Savior, **Jesus Christ.**"
- Colossians 2:9 "For in Him the **entire fullness of God's nature** dwells bodily"
- Hebrews 1:8 "But **about the Son:** Your throne, O **God**, is forever and ever..."

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5. The Early Christians Believed Jesus is God

- Ignatius, died 108 AD
 - "Ignatius... to the Church which is at Ephesus, ... united and elected through the true passion by the will of the Father, and **Jesus Christ, our God**" (Proem.)
 - "Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, being **both the Son of man and the Son of God...**" (ch.20)

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The Early Christians Believed Jesus is God

- Polycarp (Writing between 110 & 130)
 - "...to all under heaven who shall believe in **our Lord and God Jesus Christ** and in his Father who raised him from the dead." (*Epistle of Polycarp*, 12:2)
- Justin Martyr (died, 165)
 - "the Father of the universe has **a Son**; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, **is even God**." (Ch. 63)
 - *Dialogue with Trypho*: "...which I wish to do in order to prove that **Christ is called both God and Lord of hosts...**" (Ch. 36) >

The Early Christians Believed Jesus is God

- Irenaeus of Lyons (ca 170-190?)
 - *Against Heresies*: "**But the Son, eternally co-existing with the Father, from of old, yea, from the beginning...**" (II, 30)
 - *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*: "**..this king is Christ, the Son of God, made Son of man...**" (36) >

6. Non-Christian writings state that the Early Christians Worshipped Jesus as God

- Plinius the Younger (wrote in 112 AD)
 - "...They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when **they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god...**"
- Lucian (Lived, 120-180 AD)
 - The Christians "have offended once for all by denying the Greek gods and by **worshipping that crucified sophist himself** and living under his laws." (*The Passing Peregruis*) >

The Question

- Matthew 16:15 "'But you,' He asked them, 'who do you say that I am?'" >

Possible Responses to Jesus' Claims

- If Jesus' Claims were False
 - If his claims were false, but *he sincerely thought* they were true, and he was a nut case, you can dismiss him.
 - If his claims were false and he *knew it* - he was a con man - you can denounce him.
- If Jesus' Claims are True:
 - You can ignore Him to your own peril.
 - You can confess Him and submit.

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The Answer

- The Response of Thomas:
John 20:28: "My Lord and my God!"
- The Response of C. T. Studd, English Missionary to China, India and Africa:
"If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

Bonus Material

The Early Christians Believed Jesus is God

- Ignatius
 - The Church at Rome: "Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church which... is named from Christ, and from the Father, which I also salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father: to those who are united, both according to the flesh and spirit, to every one of His commandments; who are filled inseparably with the grace of God, and are purified from every strange taint, [I wish] abundance of happiness unblameably, **in Jesus Christ our God.**" (Proem)

The Early Christians Believed Jesus is God

- To the Ephesians: "Ignatius... to the Church which is at Ephesus, ... united and elected through the true passion by the will of the Father, and **Jesus Christ, our God**" (Proem.)
- "Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, **being both the Son of man and the Son of God...**" (ch.20)

Just the Son of God?

- Irenaeus of Lyons (ca 170-190?)
 - *Against Heresies*: "That which is begotten of God is God" (I, 8, 5)

"Outlawed Gospels" Recording Jesus' Life as Mere Man?

- Though the "gospels" not included in the NT contain some weird ideas, they do not all describe Jesus as a mere mortal man...
- The Apocalypse of Peter: "The Savior said to me, 'He whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus.'"
- Infancy Gospel of Thomas (3): At age 5, Jesus makes 12 sparrows from clay (working in violation of the Sabbath), but then gives them life and they fly away
- Infancy Gospel of Thomas (8): Jesus raises boy from dead who was pushed off of a roof