

## Bible Never Says Jesus is God

Read this site for a Christian refutation of the idea that the Bible holds that Jesus is God  
<http://www.christadelphia.org/wrested1.htm>

If Jesus was God, it is interesting that the first three gospels largely care about him being man. They do not read like they think they are on about God. Mark wrote that Jesus objected to being called a good teacher for nobody was good only God. Notice he was called a good teacher and not a good man.

‘It is striking that none of our first three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—declares that Jesus is God or indicates that Jesus ever called himself God. Jesus’s teaching in the earliest Gospel traditions is not about his personal divinity but about the coming kingdom of God and the need to prepare for it. This should give readers pause. If the earliest followers of Jesus thought Jesus was God, why don’t the earliest Gospels say so? It seems like it would have been a rather important aspect of Christ’s identity to point out. It is true that the Gospels consistently portray Jesus as the Son of God. But that is not the same thing as saying that he was God.’, Ehrman, ‘Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth’, p. 231 (2012).

‘Dunn finds that Jesus held to Jewish monotheism and that although he saw himself as a prophet empowered with God’s Spirit (see Holy Spirit) and as having a close relationship with God, he did not understand himself as a divine figure.’, Evans, ‘Christianity and Judaism: Partings of the Ways’, in Martin & Davids (eds.), ‘Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments’ (electronic ed. 2000).

‘In the LXX it frequently translated “Yahweh,” but nowhere in the letters did Paul call Jesus “God.” 1 Cor. 11:3 makes clear the line of origin that subordinates Jesus to God.’, Roetzel, ‘Paul’, in Freedman (ed.), Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, p. 1020.

The Son of God idea is best seen as a way of making Jesus very high but distinguishing him from God.

## NT HAS NO MAN-GOD

Let us now comb the gospels to see if Jesus thought he was God the Son, God almighty. The Gospel of John is dealt with in my book *John Gospel Denies Jesus is God*. In brief, that gospel says that Jesus was the incarnation of the Word, the message of God and God is his message. But that is not the same as saying that Jesus is God. A saint who is not God can be the incarnation of the love of God even though God is said in Christian belief to be love itself. When Jesus said that before Abraham was I am and I am being the name of God in the Old Testament he didn’t say he meant it in the sense that God meant it. Jesus said that he and the Father are one but that could be a reference to his being the manifestation of the Father for he said he is the image of the Father so that he who sees him sees the Father. He said he wanted his followers to be one in the same way he and the Father are one indicating that he didn’t mean that he was one nature with the Father. Jesus denied he was God when he said his teaching was not his own but the teaching of the Father.

Let us explore the non-Johannite New Testament texts that are cited as evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ.

MATTHEW 11:27. “No one fully knows and accurately understands the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son deliberately wills to make Him known.” The identity of Jesus with God can be proven from this verse for he says that he knows God as well as God knows him. Only God could know God.

God can make infinite things so he could have made Christ infinite in his mind so he would know everything about him. Christ, knowing God, would not necessarily be God. If Jesus did not claim to be God then he might have meant by full understanding the fullest possible understanding. Jesus said that nobody knows God but him and God knows him but he never said he knows God as well as God knows him which would be a claim to be God. The passage can only be taken to say that Jesus and God know one another literally inside out when it presupposed that Jesus was God. Presuppositions should be left aside to let the passage say what it wants.

Besides what about the Holy Spirit?

MATTHEW 12. Jesus says that to insult him is to blaspheme him and you can only blaspheme God therefore Jesus is God.

But a Catholic hymn to Mary goes, "While wicked men blaspheme thee, we'll love and bless thy name." To blaspheme a sacred book would be to indirectly blaspheme God for it is his word. Jesus could have been blasphemed without being God but merely the messenger of God.

ACTS 20:28. God bought the Church at the price of his own blood.

Jesus purchased the Church with his so Jesus is God.

The bit about God gaining the Church by his own blood may be rendered, "God gained the Church by the blood of his own". Read the note about the verse in The Revised Standard Version. God could have replaced Jesus in Jesus' body just as he was about to die so that Jesus was not God but God died on the cross. Jesus need not have been God or need his body always have been the body of God. But the Bible says Jesus died on the cross so perhaps Jesus and God were in the same body which can be done for a short time when both minds are in concord. Perhaps God temporarily incarnated himself in the body of Christ alongside the personality of Jesus so that both died on the cross.

The New Testament never states that Jesus was God all the time and actually states a few times that he was not God.

ROMANS 1:4. Jesus Christ was declared to be Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. Richard Swinburne states in his book, *Is Jesus God?*, that the precise meaning of the original Greek for "declared to be" is vague. It can mean that Jesus was made the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead or it can mean that he was shown to be. Swinburne says that the first meaning is the more normal meaning and admits that the verse denies that Jesus is God in the full sense (page 149). Swinburne says that elsewhere Paul writes as if Jesus is God or divine so he chooses to pay no attention to this one verse. I feel that Paul deliberately used a double meaning word - it means both made Son of God and revealed as Son of God. This Jesus of his did no miracles - for he did nothing to show he was of God - and didn't become an infallible prophet until he rose from the dead. With all the trouble the early Church had from heretics, Paul would not have made a mistake that would encourage those who wanted to believe that Jesus was not divine.

ROMANS 5:1. We enjoy peace through our Lord and God Jesus Christ.

Lane Fox says that there is a textual problem here (page 140, *The Unauthorized Version*). Even the Amplified Bible says it promises peace through God AND our Lord Jesus Christ making a distinction between the two. If Paul had believed in the deity of Jesus he would have said so here. Christians tend to call Jesus God instead of saying God and Jesus and they are right if Jesus is God. If Paul had believed in Jesus as God there was no way he would have got into the Temple at all and Acts 21 says he did.

Also, later in Romans v8 Paul says that God proved his love that in while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Paul infers that God gave up his son for us and not himself for had he meant God gave himself he would have substituted the word Christ with the word God for that would prove the point that God is love far better and more naturally.

ROMANS 9:5 says that Christ is of the flesh of the Jews and is God over all and is blessed (page 31, *Jehovah's Witnesses*).

The New World Translation by the *Jehovah's Witnesses* says that the God is over all and blessed be God bit is a separate sentence which makes it possible for them to say it does not call Jesus God but just blesses God. Scholars admit that this rendering is possible (page 31, *Jehovah's Witnesses*). But it is objected that their version disrupts the flow of the text. But sometimes people do write in a slightly disrupted way. It is hard to keep up the skill of keeping the flow right all the time.

ROMANS 10:13 is supposed to say that anybody who calls on the name of Jesus as Lord will be saved (page 31, *Jehovah's Witnesses*). Catholics say that this means that Jesus is God for verses that speak of God are quoted as back-up for saying that all who call on the Lord will be saved.

First Romans says that if you confess the name of Jesus you will be saved. Then it quotes a verse saying that nobody believing in him will be ashamed. It could be that Paul switched from Jesus to God when he quoted that and the link is that God saves through Jesus. He never says we must call on Jesus but on the Lord. To call on the Lord is to call on Jesus anyway for Jesus is the one appointed to be saviour.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:3. "Jesus is Lord." Jesus was called the Kyrios which is the name of God so Jesus was God.

If a man was the image of God, God might wish to honour him by calling him after himself to show how special and significant he was. If God is a spirit then God is activity. If a man displays God by doing his works then that man can be called God's name for that man is the image of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 11:31. Paul uses the Jewish blessing word that was for God alone in that religion to describe Jesus (page 267, Christianity for the Tough-Minded). It is eulog-etus. But Paul discarded much of Jewish man-made tradition like Jesus did so the fact that the Jews used the word for God and that he used it for Jesus is not support for the fantasy that he regarded Jesus as divine. He was not writing to Jews but Gentiles who would not have understood his expression in the Jewish way.

PHILIPPIANS 2:6. Christians say, "Jesus is described as being in the form of God which means he is God because form of God signifies that Jesus was what God was and had his form (see page 126, Some Modern Faiths for example). Therefore, Jesus has all that constitutes God as God for it says later that Jesus took the form of a servant that he took all that makes a servant a servant. Moreover, it says that he put away his equality with God. So being equal to God and having the nature of God, Jesus must be God. In the form of God does not mean just that Jesus was spiritually like God in his goodness and love because the text says he emptied himself to take the form of a servant meaning that he gave up his divine powers or his powers from God to be like a servant so he was not going to give up his goodness and love to become a servant. He was exalted to a state similar to God's and given supernatural powers and glory. He took on the form of a servant voluntarily. He was still the creature who is next to God and God."

If Jesus was in the form of God and that means he was really God then he was not really a servant and we are told he took the form of a servant. So at least one of the in the form of is not literally saying that Jesus was what he was linked to. If it is the in the form of a servant then Jesus was not a literal servant for if he is God he cannot be a servant even if he just refuses to use his powers – he is still playacting. If it is the in the form of God then Jesus was not literally God. Perhaps both are non-literal? At any rate the passage cannot show that Jesus is definitely God.

So then in his servant state he was still the ruler if he was God or a pre-existent Son of God who was enthroned at God's right hand and enjoying Godlike power before coming to earth. Strictly speaking he was not a servant at all for in helping others he was gaining people to rule. A servant is an inferior and Jesus was never that - but he was just playacting. Paul did not believe that Jesus was a servant in the proper sense for he said that he was the Christ, a king. If the expression "in the form of" which appears twice has the same sense as Christians suppose then Paul did not say that Jesus was literally God just that Jesus was godlike. Paul used in the form of loosely and not strictly so it does not prove that Jesus was God. If he came close to verbally saying that Jesus was God and backed off how could Jesus be really God?

The context is about power and giving up that power so equal to God most probably means that Jesus was given equal power to God. But God would still be the holder of the power and strictly speaking Jesus would have no power of his own for God only uses the power as Jesus wills and Jesus only wills what God wills. The Prime Minister can be equal to the king when the king gives him lots of power but the power is still really the king's. So they are equal and yet the king is superior at the same time.

Paul tells us that Jesus did not take equality with God though it was a thing to be grabbed or grasped. This makes it clear that he was not already God or equal to God.

Jesus put away his glory and power to become a man and in this sense only did he cease to be equal to God. He emptied himself in this way. Jesus could not have been God for God cannot change according to the scriptures which Paul was so familiar with. Christianity says God could take on an additional nature, a human nature, but he would not be laying aside his majesty because in Heaven he would still have it all. In fact since God's majesty is really just love, his becoming man would be adding to the majesty if that were possible. Paul applauded the scriptures so he believed that Jesus could not abandon his glory if he was truly divine. Jesus was not equal to God in the sense that he was God but in the sense that all God's power was his to use. If God has power and gives it to Jesus that makes Jesus his equal even though Jesus is dependant on him.

Some say that the text says nothing about glory but only power. But is there any difference in reality? God's power is his glory. His love is his power and his glory. He is not like a king who needs glitter and paraphernalia to be glorious.

But if Jesus had godlike power he had to have glory and majesty for these things are not just fancy robes and halos but making others awestruck regarding your power. The angels would have had inferior glory to him and been his servants.

The text does not prove Jesus' pre-existence when it says that Jesus laid aside his equality with God to take the form of a servant. Jesus could have been a man with godlike powers who was granted these powers some stage during his life and who never used them but gave them up at the start of his ministry or more probably to be arrested and be executed on a cross.

Some say that since the text says that Jesus received the name of Lord which is the highest name and makes him Lord of Heaven and earth and all that is in them that Paul is declaring that Jesus is God for he has God's own name (page 13, Jehovah's Witnesses). But the context eliminates that interpretation as we have seen. He is the highest under God. What

Paul actually said was that Jesus was exalted to the highest name so that at the name of Jesus every knee in Heaven earth and underneath the earth would bend at his name and confess him as Lord to the glory of the Father. But if Jesus was God he could not be exalted to receive this entitlement for he would already have it. And to imagine that Jesus became God at that point would be inane. Paul has a God who cannot absorb persons to make them become him.

If you reject the possibility that Philippians said Jesus was in the form of God and was a slave are both non-literal then the following would be true. The simplest way to prove that Philippians did not declare Jesus to be God is to realise that when it says that Jesus became a servant, actually a slave according to the original Greek and many translations, he became as all men are. Now how could God be a slave? A slave is a person who works for nothing and who is somebody else's property. Jesus could not be God's property if he is God. And Jesus could not work for nothing if he was God. The sense of the hymn is totally lost if you hold that Jesus was God and was destined to rise again from the dead to have everlasting glory for that is payment. Jesus is a slave in the sense that he worked for God without being sure he would remain faithful enough to get the reward of resurrection and exaltation and everlasting glory.

COLOSSIANS 2:9. The fullness, the totality of God, dwells in Jesus' body. It dwells in him "in bodily form [giving complete expression of the divine nature]". Jesus must have been God.

Christians say that the better you are the more you express the nature of God. The more you show what God is like. If Jesus was sinless then he expressed God completely. Jesus could do this without being God or even being sinless all the time.

If the verse meant Jesus was God then why didn't it say, "God was incarnate and took flesh in Jesus and became Jesus"? Colossians 2:9 says the fullness of God is in Jesus and we share in this fullness. Clearly the verse is just saying God is present in Jesus but that is not the same as saying that God is Jesus and Jesus is God. If it was, it would follow we were at least partly God because he lives in us too.

1 TIMOTHY 3:16. Lane Fox tells us that the most accurate and oldest text of 1 Timothy 3:16 does not say that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh (page 140, The Unauthorized Version).

TITUS 2:13. It calls Jesus "our great God and Savior".

Many ancient authorities contradict this and say it is our great God and our saviour making a distinction between Christ and God. The notes of the Revised Standard Version make it clear that either reading will do. See also page 140 of The Unauthorized Version.

HEBREWS 1:5. This says that God never said to any angel that he was his son but said it to Jesus. It is surmised that Jesus must have been God for he was not an angel.

If Jesus was a man and not an angel that could be why we read this. Angel means messenger and the word itself has no supernatural implications. Angel could be meant in the sense of a spirit servant while Jesus might have been treated as royalty and not a servant despite having the same nature as an angel.

Jesus might not have had the nature of the angels at all but was only an angel in role and function.

HEBREWS 1:8. God said to the Son of God, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever."

This is a citation from the Psalms (45). The writer of Hebrews knew that it referred to a past king of Israel. The king is called the fairest man of all contradicting Isaiah 53 which Christians have always taken as a prophecy of Jesus which speaks of his plain looks. Jesus did not have a palace and did not have a queen whose beauty he lusted after as it is in the Psalm. The writer held that it was a figure of Christ rather than a clear forecast of the future. This means that we don't know if he considered the king to be literally God. It is unlikely that he did. Logically, the verse from the Psalm cannot prove that the son is God.

The passage is also poetry. You cannot take poetic language too literally. The King of Israel sat in the place of God and his throne was the throne of God. The king sits on the throne of God. God promised an everlasting king to Israel, an everlasting throne. The king was not just the representative of God but the symbol of God. God could say then to the king, "Your throne O God will last forever." Or maybe God is simply talking to himself.

2 PETER 1:2. "Our God and Saviour Jesus".

This translation is disputed. The right one may be, "Our God and the Saviour Jesus."

1 JOHN 5:7,8. This says that there are three witnesses the Father Word and Holy Spirit and the three are one God.

This appears only in late manuscripts and its authenticity is universally rejected now. The Church put it in the Bible to get people to believe in the Trinity.

REVELATION 1:17, 18; 22:13. Jesus says that he is the Alpha and the Omega and the beginning and the end. Only God can be these. The Book of Isaiah bestows these titles on God (Isaiah 44:6).

The expressions describe the power to create and destroy. God can give these to creatures. In a sense only God can create and destroy. A creature can only do it when God enables him to. Both can be the beginning and the end at the same time.

REVELATION 22:8-9. Jesus accepted worship but the angel forbade John to do it and asked him to adore God alone so Jesus must have been God.

Wrong. The angel was a messenger and it was not his job to answer prayers and to accept worship. Jesus was made Lord of all and had this job. When we read of people worshipping Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels which say that Jesus was not God this makes the Catholic explanation to be worthless speculation. There is a better explanation which we will see later.

## CONCLUSION

The deity of Jesus is not in the Bible. It must be an invention of the Church under the influence of paganism. We have no evidence whatsoever that Jesus or the earliest Church made this claim that Jesus was God.