

Jesus denied he was specially good

Sin is an offence against the law of God.

Christianity is founded on the notion that Jesus Christ never sinned and was the Son of God - the person who enjoyed a unique relationship with God his father. The sinlessness of Jesus is extremely important for Christians. If Jesus was a sinner then we can assume he sometimes made errors and mistakes in his teachings and that he could not have been the same person as the sinless God.

Jesus said in the gospel of John 8:50 that if he were to seek his own glory, that would be no glory at all. Notice how it is not good to do this at all. Most things are a bit good if not mostly good! This stresses that there is no goodness at all unless you are all for God and all about what God wants.

MARK 10:18

In theology, there are two kinds of goodness. One is the goodness we have or can have. It is limited in value for we cannot do infinite good. The other sort is the goodness of God which is infinite and priceless. It is unlimited and infinite. God's goodness sets the standard. Ours does not for it is flawed.

This argument is inspired by a something that Jesus said rather than by logic for being as good as you can be is priceless for it is not your fault you don't have infinite power to be good.

The rule is that the gossellers were not trained in theological distinctions so we have to be careful what theology we read into the text.

From Mark 10

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

When called good teacher by a rich man Jesus insolently asked him why he said that he was good for nobody was good, except God (Mark 10:18).

Main rule of interpretation is to put the story in its social context.

Attempts to avoid admitting Jesus denied he was sinless or perfect centre around unjustifiably accusing the man of being a boot-licker. It was very tame boot-licking then! It was and is normal for people to call somebody a good teacher and that is not flattery. There is no hint of flattery in the text. Thus we need read no more. Jesus told the man he had only one sin and that was liking his wealth. The sin of flattery can be safely excluded.

It is said that Jesus was simply trying to get the man to have a more godly idea of good, to think about what good actually means in the proper sense. This does not fit how he did except for his love of money. The logic is the man is supposed to think, "I thought this was a good man but only good is really good and is this man's goodness the goodness of God?" That is assuming anybody thought of equating Jesus with God then. It an anachronism. And it makes the words too elastic.

Some say that the man was asked to give away his money for he had embezzled it from others. But the text is clear the man

was keeping the commandment not to steal.

Jesus may have been called a good teacher but he is clear it is more personal than that and is about his inner goodness. That is why he does not say, "Why do you call me a good teacher?" Its, "Why do you call me good?"

If Jesus were called a good teacher then what? Jesus being called a good teacher is a reflection of the thoughts they had at the time about you being identical with your role and vocation. As the Jews claimed to be the chosen people of God, and this had a legal aspect, they created a massive identity politics culture. So Jesus being called a good teacher for this reason is additional proof that it was the same as calling him a good man. Jews did not believe in original sin so the possibility of God helping a man to live without sin was not a problem. Jesus clearly was rejecting the notion that he was sinless. The gospel does not tell us why he was so sensitive about being called good but it makes sense in a culture where leaders and prophets at times especially if they were celebrated tended to be seen as miniatures of a perfect God.

Take Psalm 17. There the writer claims to be virtually unaware of having any sin. God is told that if he probes him day and night he will find no sin.

Jesus was expressing humility - like Paul the apostle who said he was a bad speaker he did not consider himself the best moral or religious teacher. Jesus was saying even his teaching must be tested against the only real teacher - God. Jesus was denying he should be treated as infallible or perfect teacher. The idea that Jesus was God is a total contradiction of what Jesus was trying to say.

That is fatal to the Christian doctrine that Jesus is the ideal role model and wiser than Solomon and even God in human form. So they can't let the text just speak and have to smother it with far-fetched "clarifications". The believers say there are only two ways you might take the assertion that nobody is good only God and Jesus asking why anybody would refer to him as good or good teacher.

Jesus was denying he was either sinless or God.

NOW WE KNOW JESUS SIMPLY DID DENY HE WAS GOOD SO NOW WHAT?

There are two interpretations if Jesus said why call me good when only God is good?

One: is Jesus not good? If he is not then he is not God.

Two: Jesus is good in the real sense and as only God is really good Jesus is God.

Two is too far fetched and this was an ordinary man talking to Jesus not somebody who would think of two.

The Christians point out that Jesus does not deny that he is good but only asks why the man is calling him good. That does not change the fact that it could be a denial and the man would have taken it to be one. Nobody at that time regarded Jesus as sinless.

Some say he is not rejecting what the man said but only asking him why he says that and advising him to remember that only God is good. In this view, Jesus could have been God and hinting that he wants the man to see the goodness of God in him or even see that Jesus' goodness is the goodness of God because Jesus is God!!

That interpretation is far-fetched for nothing in Mark indicates that Jesus was thought to be God. The man would not have suspected Jesus to have been God. Nobody did.

Nobody even suspected then that Jesus was sinless and the idea was unknown. Mark does not say Jesus was free from sin. He gives no hint. This is vital for context. The historical context is that the text can only refer to Jesus being a sinner. Mark would have seen how the text could be read as saying Jesus was denying he was sinless. That he said nothing to avert that interpretation speaks volumes.

Jesus is rejecting the view that he was good for crafty Matthew 19 changes the story to, "Teacher what good do I have to do to have life eternal?" To which Jesus replies, "Why do you ask me about good? There is only one who is good. If you want life, keep the commandments." Jesus never comments on his own goodness here and is not called a good teacher. These changes are significant and shows how Matthew interpreted Mark. Matthew would accept our conclusions about Mark. So by "fixing" Mark he was rejecting his gospel as wholly reliable.

So in Matthew, Jesus simply says that God alone is good and does not comment on his own goodness. Matthew changes "good teacher" to simply "teacher" for he knows that Mark's gospel shows that Jesus did not regard himself as a good or

infallible teacher and thus as a perfect person.

Luke 18 keeps the story as Mark has it.

Back to Mark. Mark's gospel comes first in historical terms for it is the tamest gospel and the oldest.

It may look like that the man didn't call Jesus a good person but a good teacher. Jesus perhaps was a good teacher. Jesus could not bear to be called good teacher which shows he admitted he was not a good person.

Matthew's account has it that nobody needs Jesus to teach them when they have the Jewish Bible. This may not be relevant. But it is obvious that Jesus did not know what good was at all for his Bible was full of violence and endorsed a violent God.

SO?

Jesus tells a man that only God is good when the man tells him he is a good teacher.

It is argued that Jesus is rejecting the man for what he meant by good did not please Jesus.

But Jesus implies the man had no sin but a fondness for money so the man was not flattering him or insulting him in any way. The man had a better idea than most what good meant in terms of God!

If we cannot call Jesus a good teacher, then how much less can we call him a good person?

So Jesus rejected being called a good teacher. And he was rude too in doing that! If that is not a sin what is?

The text shows that in this world where everybody seeks material things nobody really wants God. Jesus is clear that wealth is a sin and its not about where it came from. Having it divides the heart.

Do not forget that though Mark has no resurrection appearances it claims to be not a gospel but THE gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). Thus we can and should try to interpret what it says about Jesus declining to be called a good teacher literally and simply and not be making a scripture out of our imagination. Despite the lies of false Christianity, the real Christian believes that Jesus was not perfect and who was sinful.

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