

Jesus prayed to as God or is he?

The purpose of this page is to reveal that the doctrine that Jesus is God and should be prayed to or worshipped is a fiction. Jesus was not God and the New Testament does not actually say he is God. When it doesn't say it and especially since it denies it, we can be confident that Jesus is not God for it is the only source we have that is close to Jesus assuming he lived.

"Paul often refers to Jesus as Lord (kyrios)" [1] and God is kyrios [2]. Some think it gives no reason to think anything else but that it is honouring Jesus as it does God. We are even told that we confess Jesus as Lord we will be saved [3]. This is more than just asserting it - it is praising Jesus as Lord.

It is said, "Paul is paraphrasing an Old Testament assertion that whoever calls on the Lord God will be saved and he applies it to Jesus [4]. Thus he is thought to be saying Jesus is God and indicating that Jesus must be prayed to as God." But this ignores the fact that the early Church did lie about what the Old Testament actually said. Matthew misrepresented a verse from Isaiah to make it seem that Jesus' virgin birth was predicted. So Paul may have been making out the verse was about Jesus not God.

However some argue that as Paul quotes Old Testament Scriptures that speak of the Lord God and he applies them to Jesus thus he speaks of Jesus as God [5]. "For the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains" is a paraphrase of Psalm 24:1. The Lord in the context given by Paul is Jesus. The Psalmist had in mind a God who was present in all his creation. Is Paul implying that the same was true of Jesus? As he meant Jesus alive and exalted in Heaven, he could be indicating that as Jesus is not a normal man any more but transformed he is able to be closer to creation and in some way permeate it. Paul may not be applying the text to Jesus in a literal manner but a poetic one. He may be comparing the man who shows us God to God.

Paul never addresses prayers directly to Jesus. Paul believed in preaching the gospel with diplomacy. Those who think he regarded Jesus as God argue that he possibly preferred not to antagonise the Jews who would be very disturbed by Jesus being prayed to the same as God [6]. But we must remember that some of Paul's texts are very offensive to Jews. The diplomacy argument does not hold water. Paul did not believe in praying to Jesus. Jesus was like God to him but not God.

Following scripture, the Church mostly offers prayer to God the Father through the risen and exalted Jesus. The Church says this is not a refusal to worship Jesus for the Father and Jesus the Son are so united in perfect love that to worship one is to worship the other [7]. In Trinitarian doctrine, the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are equal. The Holy Spirit and the Son worship the Father and he them. They are united by infinite love and worship is a form of love. But it is undeniable that the Bible does not have the orthodox Christian Trinity in it.

Paul said the creature must never be worshipped as God the creator is [8]. To some this implies that if Jesus is worshipped then it is because he is God. But does worship always refer to the worship of almighty God? No.

Union with God is the essence of worship. If Jesus was praised and honoured and prayed to in order to help one unite with God then it is being claimed that this worship is not about union with Jesus but union ultimately with God.

Romans says believers are indwelt by Christ [9]. Schreiner tells us that Paul often mentioned this. Paul said this union is possible because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead in which he was glorified and exalted [10]. This level of intimacy with Christ is thought to indicate that Christ is God as Paul sternly banned seeking anybody but God. Paul however has used mystical hyperbole in his writings. For example, he writes as if the Church has been turned into Jesus Christ.

This level of intimacy with Christ and each other through him might not prove that Christ is to be adored as the Father is but it proves he is entitled to reverence and veneration beyond our capacity. Some would say that as scripture forbids seeking any spirit but God's it implies that Jesus is God. But that presupposes that scripture always agrees with itself.

Prayer to Jesus might not necessarily imply he is equal to God the Father. If the New Testament states that he was prayed to, that causes us to wonder if he is - it at least raises the question if he is. Paul wrote in Romans that he wished us grace from Jesus [11]. This seems to be an indirect request to Jesus for grace or a prayer. But if God give the grace through Jesus and is the source of grace it is really just God who is asked. Wishing Jesus will give you grace does not mean you are asking him to give it.

Paul warns that we must serve Christ Jesus and not our selfish appetites [12]. When Paul has Jesus here and not God it is

thought that Jesus must be the same as God. Paul is calling for Jesus to be worshipped by obedient service. But as we have seen, obedient service to Jesus may ultimately be about God so that it is really God who is served. If God commands us to serve Jesus, in reality we are serving only God.

[1] Schreiner, T. R. Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ (IVP, 2001) p. 161

[2] Rom 14:1-15:13 "believers manifest their glad submission to the lordship of God ...the word kyrios osculates between God and Christ."

[3] Rom 10:9

[4] Joel 2:32 "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

[5] 1 Corinthians 10:26,

[6] A thought inspired by "Paul seldom refers to Christ as God as this title could be confusing" -Schreiner, T. R. Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ (IVP, 2001) p. 181

[7] Schreiner, T. R. Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ (IVP, 2001) p. 182, "Those who truly honour God also honour Christ, for God intended that his glory would be magnified in Christ"

[8] Rom 1:25

[9] Rom 8:9, 10

[10] Rom 6:4

[11] Rom 1:7 "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ".

[12] Romans 16:8 "Such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.