

What is the gospel? Part 2 – The Claims of Christ.
Bible Reading John 8.

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God has spoken and acted in the person of Jesus Christ, so we will spend some time looking firstly at who he is and why he is the central figure and focus of our faith: the most crucial question we can answer is ‘what do you make of Jesus Christ?’

This morning we will start collecting up the pieces of our jigsaw, and look at what he said about himself.

[Christianity as the name suggests is built on the foundation of Christ](#), if we can see that he is who he said he is then some other questions are naturally solved: the existence and character of God are revealed in him, the purpose and destiny of mankind, the authority of scripture and the cross are all tackled because Jesus taught on these things and if he is the Son of God then the questions are answered by him.

Jesus claimed to be the only begotten Son of God, equal with God and revealing him to the world

John Stott in Basic Christianity says “Our purpose is to marshal evidence to prove that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God. We shall not be satisfied with a verdict declaring his vague divinity; it is his unique deity which we mean to establish. We believe him to possess an eternal and essential relation to God possessed by no other person. We regard him neither as God in human disguise, nor as a man with divine qualities; we believe him to be God made man.... Only so could he be worthy not just of our admiration but of our worship.”

His claims were egocentric:

He taught that a person's response to him was the criteria for entry into the kingdom of God

- he accepted Peter's confession
- he accepted the triumphal entry: fulfilment of Messianic prophecy

[other religious leaders say 'here is truth', Jesus said 'I AM truth' Jn 14.6. he didn't say to follow a code of teaching, but to follow him.](#)

He claimed that Abraham, Moses and the teaching of the law & prophets were all about him: Luke 24.27,44

Jn 6.29, 3.36 – it focuses on him, and yet he taught humility, honesty and integrity; this only makes sense if he was who he said.

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Direct claims:

Son of God Mk 14.61-62

Messiah Mk 8.27-29

God as Father, equality with God John 10.30

John 8.51-58 I AM – eternality & deity

John 20.26-29 'My Lord and my God': he rebuked Thomas's unbelief, not his statement of deity or his worship.

Indirect claims:

He **exercised the functions belonging only to God:**

- ability to forgive sins, Mk 2.1-12
- ability to give life John 17.2, Jn 5.21
- ability to teach truth Mk 6.3, John 7.46
- see Matt 7.28 – not the authority of a prophet who would use the formula 'thus says the Lord', but "truly, truly I say to you"
- he also predicted the future, issued absolute moral teaching, made promises to answer prayer, taught his word was eternal and would never pass away
- he claimed he would judge the world Jn 5.28-29
- he would rouse the dead, all nations would be gathered before him and he would judge, he is also the standard for judgement, and the criteria for exclusion from heaven is for Jesus to say 'I never knew you'

'in his own words'

John 10.30 / 14.9 I and the Father are one, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father

Jn 14.6 the only way to God

Matt 28.18 has all authority in heaven and earth.

This can give many people a problem, as they like to think of Jesus as a great moral teacher, but are unwilling to face the claims he makes on their lives

IS JESUS CHRIST GOD?

Jesus claimed to be GOD. He did not leave any other options. His claim to be GOD must be either **true or false**. If Jesus' claims are true, then He is the LORD, and we must either accept or reject His lordship. We are "without excuse."

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First, consider that His claim to be GOD was false. If it was false then we have two and only two alternatives. He either knew it was false or He did not know it was false. We will consider each one separately and examine the evidence.

WAS HE A LIAR?

If, when Jesus made His claims He knew that He was not GOD, then He was lying. But, if He was a liar, then He was also a **hypocrite** because He told others to be honest, whatever the cost, while Himself teaching and living a colossal lie.

And, more than that, He was a demon, because He told others to trust Him for their eternal destiny; he would be **deliberately deceiving people**. If He could not back up His claims and knew it, then He was **unspeakably evil**. It would make this man who taught about truth and simplicity a **liar**.

Last, He would also be a **fool**, because it was His claims to being GOD that led to His crucifixion.

Someone who lived as Jesus lived, taught as Jesus taught and died as Jesus died could not have been a liar. What other alternatives are there?

LUNATIC?

If it is conceivable for Jesus to be a liar, then could not He actually have thought Himself to be GOD, but been mistaken? After all, it is possible to be both sincere and wrong. **Maybe he did not know he wasn't God**

Maybe he was sincerely deluded?

But we must remember that for someone to think that He is GOD, especially in a culture that is fiercely monotheistic, and then to tell others that their eternal destiny depends on believing in Him is no slight flight of fantasy but the thoughts of a **lunatic** in the fullest sense. Was Jesus Christ such a person? Studies done on mental health and **megolamania** show that consistency, personal relationships, ability to handle pressure all go out the window – and yet you look at the consistent demands made upon Jesus through the

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3 years of ministry, the quality of his teaching, example, relationships and compassion – this all points to a balanced and whole individual.

LORD?

The alternative is that his claims are **true**, that he is who he said he is, that far from being liar or lunatic, he is **Lord**. If this is the case then there is one **other thing to consider**: what are we going to do about it? We can either **reject or accept** this conclusion.

This is the first point in understanding the gospel, we need to see that it stands or falls on Jesus – not just his teaching, but about **who he claims to be** – we can have real confidence that, as we so often sing, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and know that it is true. But some people will want to make him less than that, because it reduces the claims he makes on their lives;

The well known Oxford don and scholar, the late C.S. Lewis puts it in this way

"I am trying here to prevent people saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on a 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 as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord. But don't come up with any patronising nonsense about him being a great moral teacher. He hasn't left that alternative open to us."

For us it is the best news of all, the Bible teaches that there is no other name under heaven given to me by which we must be saved, so let us sing our closing hymn ‘How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believers ear’.