

God's Great Sacrifice
January 26, 2020

One of the objections commonly heard against believing in Jesus as the Son of God is the following: **Jesus never said he was God.** This statement is both true and false. It is true in the literal sense. In the Bible we never read where Jesus said the words, "I am God." So in that regard the objection is true.

However, the objection is also false because Jesus DID claim to be God. He did so without using that specific phrase. Look at John 8.

John 8:58-59 (NIV)

**"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"
At this, they picked up stones to stone him...**

That two-word phrase, "I am", is another way of describing God. God told Moses that his divine name was Yahweh, which means "I am that I am." The shortened form of the name is simply "I am." The religious leaders knew this. They understood Jesus to be saying he was God. That is why they picked up stones to kill him. Look at a second example in John 10.

John 10:30-33 (NIV) "I and the Father are one." Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

Jesus was claiming to be God, but without using the sentence, "I am God."

Jesus' disciples understood Jesus to be God. This next passage occurred after the resurrection of Jesus.

**John 20:27-28 (NIV) Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."
Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"**

So...**The Bible reveals Jesus to be God.**

The Bible also reveals Jesus to be human.

Now, there are those who reject one or the other of these biblical truths. Some believe that Jesus was a man, but not God. Others claim that Jesus was God, but not human. Neither of these views is biblically supported. Both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus are revealed to us in the Bible.

Let's look at the evidence of Jesus' humanity. We recently celebrated the birth of Jesus. He was born of a woman like every other baby. The Bible gives no evidence that he was less human than any other baby. He came out of the womb unable to speak. He was not born with the ability to speak Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, English, or any other human language. He talked baby talk. He gurgled. He hollered. He laughed. He cried when he needed to be changed. He had no human words.

He could not walk. He could not crawl. All he could do was lay there. He was limited in time and space to wherever his parents put him.

Like any child, he grew into boyhood, adolescence, and then adulthood. After an incident at age 12, we read...

Luke 2:52 (NIV) And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

At age 12 Jesus was immature. He had a lot of growing to do, physically, mentally, and socially. And he did. He grew in all of these ways like every human being.

As an adult, we see evidence of his humanity. He grew tired, hungry, and thirsty.

John 4:6 (NIV) Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well.

Matthew 4:2 (NIV) After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

John 19:28 (NIV) Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

So the Bible reveals that Jesus was both God and man. But this creates a problem for our limited human understanding. How can Jesus be fully divine and fully human? After all, God is all-knowing. God is all-powerful. God is all-present. How can he be limited in any of these?

The answer is revealed, in part, in Philippians 2. Here, Paul is encouraging the Christians to respond to their salvation with humility. He writes...

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

This is one way of fulfilling Jesus' command that we love each other. And then Paul illustrates his point with the decision that Jesus made in heaven.

Philippians 2:5-7 (NIV) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God (affirming the deity of Jesus), did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (held onto), but made himself nothing (emptied himself), taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

I believe the best understanding of that word grasped is that Jesus did not hold on to all of what made him divine. He was not grasping out for something he did not have. Better is the NLT translation of cling. He did not cling to his divine attributes. He did not hold onto what he already had.

The NIV "made himself nothing" is often translated as "emptied". The origin meaning of the Greek word means "to empty". Somehow...and the how is not explained...somehow God closed off from himself his divine attributes when he became human. He was fully divine, but did not live out of that divinity. The eternal God emptied himself of his divine attributes in order to bring about the incarnation of himself into flesh. But he was no less God when he did so.

One thing he gave up was glory. In John 17, on the night he would be arrested Jesus prayed the following:

John 17:5 (NIV) And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Jesus asked for that glory to be restored. In the Bible we are told that part of the glory of God is light, a light so bright that humans would be blinded to look upon it. Yet, people looked upon Jesus without hurting their eyes. His glory is part of what God the Son laid aside to become flesh.

I believe he also gave up, or walled off his divine attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Why do I believe this? Because this is what the Biblical evidence shows. Look at the following passages.

Luke 4:1-2 (NIV) Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

Luke 4:14 (NIV) Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,

If Jesus, God the Son, still had access to all of his divine attributes, he would not need to be filled with, or led by, the Holy Spirit.

Luke 7:9 (NIV) When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

If Jesus still had access to all of his divine attributes he would not be surprised by anything. And one more, this one concerning the date of Judgment Day.

Matthew 24:36 (NIV) "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

If Jesus still had access to all of his divine attributes at that time He would have known when this would occur. But he did not know. He did not know it before his resurrection.

God, the Son, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be held onto, but emptied himself and took on human flesh. He chose to do so to provide a savior for us. He volunteered to lose, for a time, his divine attributes. Only in this way could he be a true high priest for us, a perfect mediator between God and mankind, to bring us righteous before God.

He did not empty himself of his character. His character did not change. That is why he tells his disciples that if they knew him, they knew God the Father. To know one is to know the other. All the patience, compassion, kindness, mercy, and love they saw exhibited by Jesus is exactly God's attitude towards them. God was not angry with them like the Pharisees taught. God loved them. God wanted to save them.

Now let me draw us two conclusions from what we have seen in God's word this morning.

1. Recognize to what length God went to provide us a savior.

He sacrificed his divine attributes of omni-presence, omniscience, and omnipotence in order to become our Savior. He sacrificed his glory for us.

His death paid for sin, but the act of dying on the cross started in the majesty of his palace in heaven. Seated on a throne he chose to give that up for a time.

See how much God loves you. See the great sacrifice the humble Lord took to bring you salvation. Therefore, praise him, thank him, love him, every day.

2. Recognize the help available from Jesus.

Part of what makes Jesus a perfect mediator is that he could have sinned. Having laid aside his most divine attributes and truly living the life of any human body, He was able to sin. He was genuinely tempted. He knows the pull of sinful temptation like any human.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NIV) Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Jesus genuinely knows the pull of temptation. He knows how strong it can be. And now, as Lord of all the earth, with his attributes restored, he can help you. Learn to go to Jesus for help in resisting temptation.

Invitation

God loves you. God loves every one of us. And each of us can choose to respond to him by entrusting our life and our souls to him.