

The Influence of Jesus—What Did Jesus Claim About Himself?

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We will begin with a concise sampling of declarations made by Jesus Himself. In light of these statements, the ones below are all the more incredible if Jesus really were *not* who He claims. In evaluating the claims of Jesus, readers should understand that even skeptics can't logically deny that the four Gospel biographies of Christ are based on accurate historical reporting and that at least two, Matthew and John, were written by those who knew Christ personally and traveled closely with Him for more than three years. Luke asserts that he "carefully investigated everything from the beginning" in completing his biography (Luke 1:3), and it is generally agreed that Mark got the information for his biography directly from the Apostle Peter. For those and other reasons, we know the Gospels constitute reliable historical reporting.

The kind of scholarly nonsense we find in skeptical endeavors like the "Jesus Seminar" is all too common today, and, despite its consequences in the lives of the uninformed, believer or unbeliever, only serves to discredit the skeptics own credibility and make plain his prejudices. (See, e.g., Michael Wilkins and J.P. Moreland (eds), *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* and Gregory Boyd, *Cynic, Sage or Son of God? Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies* (InterVarsity).) Due to advances in textual criticism and other areas, it is now considered a historic fact that Jesus said and did what the Gospel writers claim He said and did. In other words, when we read the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—we are, in fact, reading what Jesus Himself actually said, taught, and did. ⁴

What Did Jesus Claim?

As you read the words of Jesus, ask yourself, what kind of mere man would say them?

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. (John 11:25)

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. (John 3:13)

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world....I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:33, 35)

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am! (John 8:58)

When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. (John 12:44-45)

You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am. (John 13:13)

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14:3)

I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. (John 7:16-17)

I and the Father are one. (John 10:30)

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)

All that belongs to the Father is mine. (John 16:15)

You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world. (John 8:23)

Now, what did Jesus declare of such brazen assertions? Only that, “My testimony is valid” (John 8:14), and “I am the one I claim to be” (John 8:28), and “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37). Throughout history, untold millions have believed these claims were true. Even those in the first century who either knew Him personally or critically examined His claims believed what Jesus said.

Considering the incredible nature of such claims, perhaps that is the most amazing thing.

The Apostle John—“This is the disciple who testifies to these things [about Jesus] and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.” (John 21:24)

The physician Luke—“I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning...so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught...”

“After his [Jesus] suffering, he showed himself to these men [apostles] and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” (Luke 1:3,4; Acts 1:3)

Former skeptic and Jewish leader, Saul of Tarsus—The Apostle Paul told King Herod Agrippa II that, while he formerly persecuted believers in Christ, condemning them to death (Acts 26:9-11), Jesus had now personally appeared to him, confirming Jesus’ resurrection and messiahship (vs. 12-19). Paul then said, “But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen.... What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.” (Acts 26:22, 25b-26)

The Apostle Peter—“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16)

Significantly, unlike any other religious leader, Jesus frequently appealed to His ability to *prove* His claims by predicting the future or performing dramatic miracles, such as healing those born blind or raising the dead:

I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. (John 13:19)

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. (John 14:11)

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