

BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

is a series of leaflets dealing with controversial issues of the Christian faith where Christians have differed. What the leaflets teach is from the Bible and not relying on any church tradition or human authority. It is for you, it is your responsibility before God, to have a Berean spirit, and search the Scriptures to know the truth (Acts 17:11).

What has been written is from the perspective of the historical Protestant and Reformed Faith as found in the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, which in turn is largely the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646, and the Congregationalist Savoy Declaration of 1658. These are time honoured views from a wide Christian perspective.

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So when He says He does not know when He will return, that is according to His manhood. The Father was greater than the incarnate Son who humbled Himself and lived a life of submission to the Father. Now our Lord sits on the throne of God (Matt. 25:31)! It is because He is truly a man that He was tempted. Hebrews makes it very clear that He became “flesh and blood” that He might die (2:14-15).

He must be God otherwise He cannot save us. No mere man could ‘take up His life again’ after having been crucified (John 10:17), and then never die again. And if He did not rise from the dead then we have no Saviour from our sins (so 1 Corinthians 15:17). No mere man could live a sinless life, a life of perfect obedience to the law of God, in thought, word and deed, from beginning to end (Hebrews 4:15, 7:26). He had to be sinless in order to offer up for us an acceptable sacrifice. As the infinite God His sacrifice could avail for countless others. So it is God Himself who came to redeem us. What love that “surpasses knowledge”!

COMMON QUESTION NO. 18

IS JESUS GOD?

“We believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father as only begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of the same essence (*ousia*) as the Father ...” (The Creed of Nicea, 325 A.D.)

From the time of the apostles the Christian Church has confessed Jesus is God, because it is what the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament clearly teach.

(1) The Old Testament. There are many prophecies about the coming of the Saviour.

- Psalm 110:1 is often quoted in the New Testament, even by Jesus Himself about Himself (Matthew 22:43-44, see Hebrews 5:6, 7:17). The LORD (Jehovah) speaks to one who is David’s Lord. ‘Lord’ (Adonai) here only ever used of God. This One sits at God’s right hand, being both God and yet separate from Him.
- Isaiah (9:6-7) spoke of a child to be born, one of whose names was to be **Mighty God**. He had to be God as well as man because of the nature and everlasting character of His kingdom.
- Jeremiah (23:6) sees Him as the LORD (Jehovah) our righteousness.

(2) The Gospels.

- Matthew 1:23. Jesus’ name is Immanuel, “**God** with us.”
- John 1:1. The opening of the Gospel of John clearly states that the Word (= Jesus, who became man, verse 14), is both “with God” and is “**God**”. This reflects the doctrine of the Trinity which states that there are three Persons in the Godhead.
- John 5:18. The Jews accuse Jesus of “making Himself **equal with God**” because He called God His own Father (see verse 17). To the Jew to claim to be the son of someone is to claim to be equal with him. Jesus does not dispute this implication but goes on to assert His doing divine works, raising the dead and judging all, so that He is to receive the very same honour as the Father (verses 19-29).

- John 8:58. Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, **I am.**” The Jews are about to stone Him because I AM is the name of God (see Exodus 3:14).
- John 10:33. The Jews again accuse Jesus of blasphemy, because “you, being a man, make yourself **God**”, having stated “I and the Father are one” (verse 30). Although they are about to put Him to death, He does not tell them they are wrong, but defends Himself from Scripture (verses 34-36).
- John 20:28. When Thomas is finally convinced that Jesus is risen from the dead, he exclaims, “My Lord and my **God.**” Jesus does not rebuke him for blasphemy but pronounces a blessing on those who believe this without having seeing Him (verse 29).

(3) The New Testament Letters.

- Romans 9:5. “... the Christ, who is **God** over all, blessed for ever” (ESV).
- There are many quotations from the Old Testament that refer to God (Jehovah, LORD), but which are applied to Jesus – Matthew 11:10, John 12:41, Hebrews 1:10, for example.
- Philippians 2:6. “... though He was in the **form of God**, did not count **equality with God** a thing to be grasped, ...” The words “form of God” imply His equality with God. He did not grasp at this exalted position, but humbled Himself by coming into the world.
- Colossians 2:9. “For in Him the whole **fullness of the deity** dwells bodily.” The undivided being of God in its whole fullness dwells in the incarnate Lord.
- Titus 2:13. “... the appearing of our **great God** and Saviour Jesus Christ.” This person, Jesus Christ, is both God and Saviour.
- Hebrews 1:8. “Your throne, **O God**, is for ever and ever, ...” From verse 5 the author is showing how much greater the Son is than the angels. He is the Son (5), worshipped by angels (6), on an everlasting throne (8), called God’s throne, creator of earth and heavens (10). Sitting at God’s right hand (13).
- 2 Peter 1:1. “... our **God** and Saviour Jesus Christ.”
- 1 John 5:20. “He is the **true God** and eternal life.”

(4) Other Evidence of His Deity.

He possesses **divine names**. The predominant use of ‘Lord’ (LORD in the Old Testament) identifies Him as Jehovah/Yahweh, the name of God in covenant relationship with His people. ‘God’ is a more general term, so calling Jesus Lord is actually a stronger word for His deity.

He has **divine attributes**. Jesus is eternal (Revelation 22:13), unchangeable (Heb. 13:8), glorious (James 2:1), etc.

He performs **divine works**. He created everything (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16-17), He upholds everything He has made (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3), He has authority to forgive (Mark 2:5-7), He is the final judge (John 5:25-29)

Divine worship is given to Him. Angels worship Him (Hebrews 1:6), all will honour the Son as they do the Father (John 5:23), in heaven He receives worship with the Father (Revelation 5:11-14), the saints call upon His name (Acts 1:24, 1 Corinthians 1:2), and He is the object of our complete trust (John 14:1).

(5) Problems.

He said He does not know when He will return the second time (Matthew 24:36).

He said the Father is greater than He is (John 14:28).

He was tempted, but God cannot be tempted (James 1:13).

He died, but God is immortal (1 Timothy 6:16).

We must remember that God the Son became flesh as we are. He united a true human nature to Himself, so we say that He is one person with two natures, the divine and the human. Sometimes He did things that only God does (forgiveness, resurrection); at other times things that only man does (prayer in dependence on His Father). Yet, all are acts of the one Person, Jesus Christ. An example is Acts 20:28, ‘God obtained the church with His own blood’. It is Jesus the man who shed His blood, yet it is God whose blood was shed! Both are true of the one person. Whatever is done in either nature is the action of the person. Other examples are 1 Corinthians 2:8, Colossians 1:13-14, John 3:13, 6:62.