

D-LIFE BOOT CAMP

Training for a lifestyle
of discipleship.



Keeping it Real
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Pastor Dale L. Crawley Sr.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

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THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHRIST (CHRISTOLOGY)

Orthodox Christianity claims that Jesus of Nazareth was God in human flesh. This doctrine is absolutely essential to true Christianity. If it is true, then Christianity is unique and authoritative. If not, then Christianity does not differ in kind from other religions.

An Examination of the Claims for the Deity of Jesus Christ

We have already shown that the New Testament documents are historically reliable. The New Testament has been confirmed to be accurate not only in its general outline of history but in its specific detail as well. We have noted also that the ear- and eyewitnesses of Christ passed down contemporary accounts of Christ's words and deeds. These words of Jesus were not only memorized but also written down by qualified witnesses (Luke 1: 1– 3). Furthermore, the New Testament writers made a clear distinction between their words and the words of Jesus (Acts 20: 28; 1 Cor. 7: 10, 12; 11: 24– 25). Hence, a red-letter edition of the Bible that distinguishes the words of Jesus from those of the authors of the Gospels is a realistic possibility.

Several lines of evidence prove that Jesus did claim to be God: his claims to be the Yahweh of the Old Testament, his acceptance of the titles of deity, his messianic claims, his acceptance of worship, the implications of many of his actions, the authority of his commands, and the reaction of the first-century monotheistic Jews to his claims and actions.

Jesus's Claim to Be Yahweh.

The most forthright claims of Christ to be God are revealed in his identification with the Yahweh of the Old Testament. "Yahweh" is the spelling given to the tetragrammaton, or designation for God (i.e., YHWH) in the Old Testament. This word for God is spelled with an initial capital and then three small capitals, "LORD," in the English Old Testament of the King James (1611), Revised Standard (1952), and other versions.

The American Standard Version (1901) transliterated it as “**Yahweh**.” In every case these terms refer to deity. Unlike the Hebrew word *adonai* (usually translated “Lord”), which sometimes refers to humans (cf. Gen. 18: 12) and other times to God, the word LORD (Yahweh) always refers to God. For example, “God spoke to Moses and said to him, ***I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD [Yahweh] I did not make myself known to them***” (Exod. 6: 2– 3). So sacred was this name, YHWH, that devout Jews would not even pronounce it. Many take the word to mean “*underived existence*” or “*he who is*” from the “**I AM**” of Exodus 3: 14. Everything else is an idol or false god. Nothing else was to be worshiped or served, nor were sacrifices to be made to them (Exod. 20: 5).

Yahweh was a “jealous God” and would not share either his name or his glory with another. Isaiah wrote, ***Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god***” (Isa. 44: 6). Again, ***I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols***” (Isa. 42: 8; cf. 48: 11).

That the Yahweh of the Jewish Old Testament would not give his name, honor, or glory to another (Isa. 42: 8), it is little wonder that the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth drew stones and cries of “blasphemy” from first-century Jews. The very things that the Yahweh of the Old Testament claimed for himself Jesus of Nazareth also claimed, as the following verses reveal: Jesus said ***I am the good shepherd***” (John 10: 11), but the Old Testament declared, ***The LORD [Yahweh] is my shepherd***” (Ps. 23: 1). Jesus claimed to be judge of all humans and nations (John 5: 27– 29; Matt. 25: 31– 46), but Joel, quoting the LORD, wrote: ***for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations***” (Joel 3: 12). Jesus said, ***I am the light of the world***” (John 8: 12), whereas Isaiah said, ***The LORD [Yahweh] will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory***” (60: 19). Jesus claimed in prayer before the Father to share his eternal glory, saying, ***Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed***” (John 17: 5). But Isaiah quoted Yahweh vowing, ***My glory I give to no other***” (42: 8). Jesus spoke of himself as the coming ***bridegroom***” (Matt. 25: 1), which is exactly how Yahweh is depicted in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 62: 5; Hosea 2: 16). In the book of Revelation Jesus is quoted by John as saying, ***I am the first and the last***” (1: 17), which are precisely the words Yahweh used to declare that there was no other God besides himself (Isa. 42: 8). The Old Testament declares that ***The LORD [Yahweh] is my light***” (Ps. 27: 1), but Jesus said, ***I am the light of the world***” (John 8: 12).

Perhaps the strongest and most direct claim of Jesus to be Yahweh occurs in John 8: 58, where he said to the Jews, ***Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.***” The Jews’ reaction left no doubt as to how they understood his claim. They knew he had claimed not only existence before Abraham but also equality with God. They

promptly prepared to stone him (cf. John 8: 58 and 10: 31– 33). Jesus had clearly claimed that the **“I AM”** of Exodus 3: 14, which refers to Yahweh alone, referred also to him. The claim was either blasphemy or an indication of deity. Jesus left no doubt as to which interpretation he wished them to take. This claim to be “I am” is repeated in Mark 14: 62 and in John 18: 5– 6. In the latter case the effect on those around Christ was dramatic: “they drew back and fell to the ground” (v. 6).

Jesus’s Claim to Be Equal with God.

On numerous occasions Jesus claimed to be equal with God in ways other than assuming the titles of deity. Jesus said to the scribes, **“That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . I say to you [the paralytic], rise, pick up your bed, and go home”** (Mark 2: 10– 11). Jesus had just said to the paralytic, **“Son, your sins are forgiven”** (v. 5), to which the outraged scribes retorted, **“Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** (v. 7). Jesus’s claim to be able to forgive sins, the scribes’ understanding of that claim, and Jesus’s healing of the man are all evidence of his authority, and make it clear that Jesus was claiming a power that God alone possessed (cf. Jer. 31: 34).

Jesus solemnly claimed another power that God alone possessed— namely, the power to raise and judge the dead: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live . . . and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment”** (John 5: 25, 29). Jesus removed all doubt of the intentions of his claim when he added, **“For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will”** (v. 21). According to the Old Testament, however, God alone is the giver of life (1 Sam. 2: 6; Deut. 32: 39) and can raise people from the dead (Ps. 2: 7; cf. Acts 13: 33– 34). *Hence, in the face of orthodox Jewish belief that God alone could resurrect the dead, Jesus boldly proclaimed not only his ability to bring the dead back but also his right to judge them.* The Scriptures, however, reserved for Yahweh the right to judge men (Joel 3: 12; Deut. 32: 35). In this same category, Jesus exhorted his disciples, **“believe in God, believe also in me”** (John 14: 1). The pretensions of this claim to a monotheistic people were evident. The Jews knew well that no man should claim honor and belief with God. They reacted with stones (John 5: 18) and ripping their garments (Mark 14: 62– 63) because they believed this was blasphemous.