

Rom 9:5

The Greek of this verse is ambiguous: “ὧν οἱ πατέρες, καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν”. It can legitimately be translated in either of two ways:

- Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. (KJV).
- To them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen. (RSV).

Translators must choose which way they translate this verse, but of course the vast majority of them have been Trinitarians, and have followed the KJV.

2 Pet 1:1

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and [our] Saviour Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:13

Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and [our] Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Greek of both these verses is ambiguous. Do they refer to one person, Jesus? Or do they refer to two persons, God and Jesus? Translators can choose which. They can put in or leave out the word *our*. Trinitarian translators will tend to omit the word *our* and translate both verses as referring to Jesus alone.

It is possible also that some of the above verses were altered by scribes to support the doctrine of the Trinity. This appears to be the case at other places in the New Testament.

**Is Jesus
God
or
Son of God?**

Seeing Jesus as not God, but son of God, makes serious problems for the doctrine of the Trinity? This central doctrine of the traditional church comes into question. I have written about this in [The Doctrine of the Trinity in Church Tradition, History and Scripture](#).

And finally, seeing Yeshua not as God, but as son of God, removes one great obstacle preventing Jewish people from recognising Yeshua as their Messiah.

Notes on Ambiguous Passages

Heb 1:8-9

This passage is an exact quote from Psalm 45:6,7: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

The opening words of Psalm 45 are, “My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king”. It was addressed to the king. The words of verse 6, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness” appear to be addressed to God rather than to the king. The following words “Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions” are again addressed to the king. Jewish readers, to whom this letter was addressed, would know Psalm 45 and not therefore take this to mean that Jesus was God.

An alternative explanation of this passage is that the word God (θεός) is once again being used in the lesser sense of simply an important person.

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Every Jewish person knows the words of Deuteronomy 6:4, “YHWH our God, YHWH is one.”

God also made these three clear statements in Isaiah 45:

- “I am YHWH, and there is no other, besides me there is no God” (v5).
- “There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Saviour” (v21).
- “For I am God, and there is no other” (v22).

If God is God and Jesus is God and they are two separate persons, that is clearly more than one God.

Another thought on this subject, and in some ways the most important thought in this writing: if Jesus is God and we are mere mortals, there is little hope that we will ever be like him; but if he is son of God, and we by new birth become sons and daughters of God, and brothers and sisters of Jesus, then we have the amazing possibility of being transformed into his likeness and living the life that he lived.

Conclusion

For 17 centuries the church has taught us that Jesus is God. Most Christians, myself included, have been taught this from their earliest years. We have believed it without question.

All the declarations of his identity say that he is son of God, rather than God, and none of the three descriptions of him in [Philippians 2:5-11](#), [Colossians 1:14-19](#) and [Hebrews 1](#) say that he is God. In about 40 passages he is referred to as son of God.

Jesus is referred to as God only 4 or 5 times in the New Testament, but none of these are direct descriptions of Jesus and all of them have some level of ambiguity in their meaning.

Greek and Roman gods regularly visited earth and walked around among human beings, and treating Jesus as God would suit the emperor Constantine’s purpose of bringing “Christianity” more into line with heathen religion.

Introduction

For about 17 centuries, since the time of Constantine, the traditional church has taught us that Jesus is God.

Is this what the early church believed?

Is this what the Scriptures teach us?

Let us search the Scriptures and find answers.

God’s Declaration

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the Spirit of God descended like a dove and came to rest on him and a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” ([Matt 3:16,17](#)). God made a clear declaration of the identity of Jesus. He was the son of God. This was his God-given title throughout the New Testament. Absolutely no mention here of Jesus being God.

Jesus went immediately into the desert, and three times Satan questioned his identity with the words, “If you are the son of God ...” ([Matt 4:1-7](#)). Satan could have said, “If you are God”, but he didn’t. Demons also recognised his identity as *son of God* (see [Matt 8:29](#), [Mark 3:11](#)).

Peter’s Confession

A time came when Jesus wanted his disciples to know his identity. He put a question to them, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered with the words, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

How did Jesus react to Peter’s reply? He gave it total, unconditional approval. He told him it was a revelation from God: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” Peter had got it absolutely right! Peter did not say, “You are God” as we would expect if traditional teaching is right. He said, “You are the Son of the living God”.

God's direct declaration and Peter's revelation, fully endorsed by Jesus himself, should be enough to convince us that Jesus is son of God, rather than God; but as we shall see, all the main New Testament writers tell us the same thing.

Three Clear Statements

Three passages of Scripture make clear statements about the identity of Jesus. What do they tell us?

- "... Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself... God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" ([Phil 2:5-11](#)).
- "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation ... And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell..." ([Col 1:15-20](#)).
- "God in these last days has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power" ([Heb 1:1-3](#)).

These passages tell us many wonderful things about Jesus. He was "in the form of God", "the image of the invisible God", "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell", "his Son", "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature"; but they do not say he was God. If traditional teaching is correct, why don't these passages say he was?

Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21).

If being one with God, means that Jesus is God, then it means that all his followers are also God!

God was in Christ

Jesus asked Philip, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" (John 14:10). Paul wrote similar words, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself" (2Cor 5:19). Paul could have written, "*Christ was God*, reconciling the world to himself". He didn't. He wrote, "God was in Christ". Clearly not the same thing. It does not mean that Christ was God. God is also in us if we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and that does not mean that we are God. This difference explains several passages that people use to prove that Jesus is God.

In John 1:1 we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt (literally *tabernacled*) among us". Many people would see this as a clear statement that Jesus is God. In fact, "the Word became flesh" is very similar to Paul's words, "God was in Christ". It does not imply that Christ is God.

The same thing applies to 1Tim 3:16: "He (or God) was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory". Many people also see this verse as proving that Jesus is God, but once again it only tells us that God was **in** Christ. It does not tell us that Christ **was** God.

The fact that God was in Christ may be a further explanation of the words of Thomas, "My Lord and my God". Thomas saw God in Jesus, exactly as Jesus had earlier said in his presence, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

One God

Several Old Testament passages make it clear that there is only one God.

Jesus. There are two problems. The Hebrew verb (יקרא) translated “(his name) *will be called*” is active rather than passive. Literal or interlinear translations (see [Isaiah 9](#)) put “*will call (his name)*”. Also *Eternal Father* is a highly unnatural description for a son, whether it be Hezekiah or Jesus. “*Mighty God*” certainly does not fit Hezekiah. The Hebrew here is ambiguous as to what is the subject and what is the object. In view of this, a possible and more fitting translation could be: “*The mighty God, the Eternal Father will call his name Wonderful Counsellor, Prince of Peace*”. That makes perfect sense.

Ambiguous Passages

Four other less known New Testament passages appear to support the traditional Trinitarian view that Jesus is God. I will list them here with explanations in notes at the end of this writing.

- But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever” (Heb 1:8).
- Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever (Rom 9:5).
- Our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:1).
- Our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11).

I and the Father are One

Many people believe that these words of Jesus prove that he is God. They quote the words of the Pharisees (John 10:33) “you, being a man, *make yourself God*” to explain what Jesus meant by these words. But were the Pharisees right? No one would suggest they were experts at understanding Jesus!

What did Jesus mean by these words? Not an easy question to answer. Maybe he meant that he and his father were of one mind and purpose in everything they thought and did. They were certainly not a clear statement that he was God.

In his last prayer Jesus prayed that he and the Father and his followers would all be one, “*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you,*

Other References

The New Testament refers to Jesus as **son** of God about 40 times. Jesus referred to himself as **son** of God. His followers referred to him as **son** of God. Even demon possessed people referred to him as **son** of God. Here are some examples:

- And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy - the **Son of God**” (Luke 1:35).
- And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the **Son of God** (John 1:34) (John the Baptist).
- But when Jesus heard it he said, “*This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the **Son of God** may be glorified through it*” (John 11:4).
- And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the **Son of God**” (Acts 9:20) (Paul).
- and was declared to be the **Son of God** in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 1:4).
- Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the **Son of God**, let us hold fast our confession (Heb 4:14).
- Whoever confesses that Jesus is the **Son of God**, God abides in him, and he in God (1John 4:15).

Why do all these people, including Jesus himself, refer to Jesus as the **son of God**? If church teaching is correct, surely they would refer to Jesus as **God**. But they don’t. Did none of them see who he really was?

The overwhelming evidence from what we have seen so far is that Jesus is not God, but son of God. No passages in the Bible state directly that Jesus is God, but a few, about five or six, appear to address Jesus as God or refer to Jesus as God. We must now examine these passages carefully to see if they really do show that Jesus is God, but before we do that we must clarify one point.

Elohim and Θεος

אלהים (Elohim), the Hebrew word for God, is not the same as the English word God. It is much wider in meaning. It is a plural word which literally means *supreme ones*. It can also mean rulers, judges, divine ones, angels, gods as well as of course meaning God, the supreme being. (See Elohim - [Blue letter Bible](#).) In the New Testament θεος (theos), the Greek word for God, is used in the same senses as the Hebrew word Elohim.

In English we use the word God with a capital **G** when it refers to God, the supreme being, and a small **g** for other uses of the word. Neither Hebrew nor Greek (in the New Testament) distinguishes upper and lower case.

The following are examples:

- The Lord said to Moses, “I have made you a god (elohim) to Pharaoh” (Ex 7:1).
- “his master must bring him to the judges (elohim)” (Ex 21:6).
- I said, “You are gods (elohim), sons of the Most High, all of you” (Ps 82:6).
- “The gods (θεοι) have come down to us in the likeness of men!” (Acts 14:11).

This means that the translator must choose the appropriate translation in each case where Elohim or θεος is used. When the word θεος refers to Jesus, traditional translators will always translate it as God with a capital G, reinforcing the teaching that Jesus is God.

So, both the Hebrew word Elohim and the Greek word θεος can refer not only to God, the supreme being, but also to angels, gods or human beings. This one fact alone is enough to cast doubt on all Bible passages that appear to show that Jesus is God.

Thomas’s Confession

One New Testament passage stands out and appears to state clearly that Jesus is God. We will now look at it in detail.

In [John 20:27-29](#), when Thomas saw Jesus alive after his resurrection, he exclaimed in amazement, “My Lord and my God”. At first sight this looks similar to Peter’s confession of faith, but there are significant differences. Jesus commended Peter, but surprisingly he rebuked Thomas: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Why the difference? Peter had had a revelation that Jesus was the Messiah and the **Son of God**. Thomas had had no revelation. He was only expressing his surprise at seeing Jesus alive after he had refused to believe what others had told him. His words “My Lord and my God” were an exclamation of amazement rather than a revelation from God.

Some hidden Greek grammar confirms what I am saying. Thomas’s actual words in Greek were, “ὁ κυριος (Lord) μου και ὁ θεος (God) μου”. Greek nouns have different endings depending on whether they are the subject (nominative) or object (accusative) or someone being addressed (vocative). If Thomas were addressing Jesus, we would expect κυριος and θεος to be in the vocative (κυριε and θεε). On the cross Jesus cried out “θεε μου” (my God) in the vocative. People addressed Jesus as κυριε in the vocative. But Thomas’s words κυριος and θεος are both in the nominative, making his words much more like an exclamation of amazement than words directly addressed to Jesus.

In addition to this, the words for God, both in Hebrew (Elohim) and Greek (θεος), can simply mean a great or important person. This may also be an explanation of Thomas’s words.

Mighty God, Eternal Father

One passage in the Old Testament appears to tell us that Jesus is God. In most translations, [Isaiah 9:6](#) says, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace”. Most people believe this is a prophecy of Jesus that tells us he is God.

In fact, it is a prophecy with a double fulfilment. In the short term it referred to the birth of King Hezekiah and in the long term to the birth of