

Jesus and Christianity:

Jesus During His Earthly Ministry

To understand the position of Jesus as related to Christianity, one must recognize WHO He is. Most Western religious leaders of the past three centuries have accepted as fact the historical existence of a Jewish carpenter named Jesus who lived in Palestine approximately two thousand years ago. These thinkers might be labeled as “modernists,” or “liberals,” or even “infidels,” because they do not visualize the Nazarene prophet as being truly the divine Son of God. They think of Him as being, at best, one of the world’s great leaders of religious and ethical thought.

If we grant the accuracy of just a few of the historical accounts in the Bible, this view that “Jesus was good but not God” is not with much merit. There is scriptural proof that Jesus, the man of Galilee, is the Father’s own divine Son.

Apostles’ Attitude Toward Being Worshipped

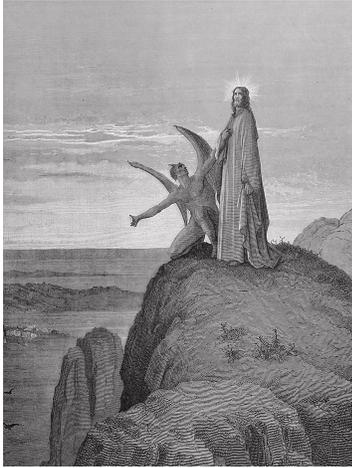
Several years after Peter had begun to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom, he was called to the home of a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Cornelius was a devout, God-fearing, benevolent individual. An angel of God had appeared in a vision to this man and had instructed him to send to Joppa for Peter. This experience resulted in Cornelius’ issuing the invitation to Peter. Two days later, this is what happened: *“Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I too am just a man’”* (Acts 10:25-26). Simply note here that Peter chose to reject the reverence offered to him by Cornelius on the basis that he was a man—not God. Peter admits to the truth of the following principle: only God deserves to be worshipped.

Paul and Barnabas preached in the region known as Asia Minor. They visited a number of cities, one of which was Lystra. While they were there, Paul healed a man who had been crippled from birth. *“When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, ‘The gods have become like men and have come down to us’ ... The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM’ ... Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them”* (Acts 14:11,13-15,18). Notice how frantic the efforts of Paul and Barnabas to prevent worship of themselves. Again note that Paul refuses the worship on the grounds that he is a man—not God. Just as Peter, Paul demonstrates the principle: only God deserves to be worshipped.

An Angel’s Attitude Toward Being Worshipped

At first thought it might seem reasonable that one who lives in the very presence of God and whose duty is to carry out special ministrations for God such as is the case for the angels would certainly deserve the homage of mere mortal man. However, this is not the case. Consider the case of the encounter of a heavenly being with the apostle John: “Then I fell at his feet to worship

him. But he said to me, *“Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God ...”* (**Revelation 19:10**). A similar event is recorded in **Revelation 22:8-9**. John again attempts to worship an angel but is forbidden on the grounds that God only should be worshipped.



The Attitude of Others Toward Being Worshipped

Not all share the attitude of Peter or Paul or the angels. There have been (and still are) some who, in order to feed their pride or to enhance their power or to further their political ends, have allowed themselves to be worshipped. The Roman emperors were notorious for this practice. The scriptures record the fact that Herod Agrippa I was eaten by worms following a speech which he gave when he pridefully accepted the shout of the people: *“The voice of a god and not of a man!”* (**Acts 12:20-23**).

In the unseen world there are those who seek to receive worship but who do so because of their wickedness. The devil himself is a case in point. *“Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me’”* (**Matthew 4:8-9**).

The Attitude of Jesus Toward Being Worshipped

Finally, we come to Jesus Himself. On numerous occasions among His fellow Jews, Jesus was approached and worshipped. A leper (**Matthew 8:2**), a ruler (**Matthew 9:18**), His disciples (**Matthew 14:33**), a woman of Canaan (**Matthew 15:25**), the mother of James and John (**Matthew 20:20**), a man with an unclean spirit (**Mark 5:6-7**), and a man born blind (**John 9:35-38**). All worshipped Jesus. What was Jesus’ reaction? As you read the above texts, you see that Jesus never expressed any dismay nor offered any objection or word of censure. He accepted it.

We are forced to conclude that either Jesus is in the same category as those vile heathen emperors and Satan himself, or else He is truly the Son of God. If He were not the Son of God, the charge of blasphemy leveled at Him by the Jews was accurate and He thus deserved the death that He died. There is no middle ground; either Jesus was a wicked imposter or else the Son of God.

Even the “liberal” theologians have never harbored the thought that Jesus was wicked but have always respected Him as a great and good man. But this position is untenable; to admit this much is to admit even more, like it or not—that Jesus is deity.

Do you confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?