

Jesus: Yahweh, Son of God, Son of Man

Doy Moyer

NOTE: The following is a brief sketch of biblical evidence underscoring the deity of Jesus. Four titles of Jesus are sketched, along with evidence of His connection with Yahweh (Jehovah).

Jesus is Yahweh

Isaiah 9:6 refers to the Messiah as “Mighty God” (*El Gibbor*). In Jeremiah 32:18, the name of “Mighty God” is identified as “Yahweh of hosts.”

“Yahweh” is used over 6,800 times in the Old Testament. It is the most precious name for God. “Jesus,” short for Jehoshua, means “Jehovah the Savior.” To His earthly parents, the message was given that their son should be named “Jesus” (Matt. 1:21). This was no accident. The Bible does teach that Jesus was Yahweh come in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). Consider the following biblical connections:

1. Isaiah 8:13-14 refers to Yahweh as the one who would become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. The New Testament applies this to Jesus in 1 Peter 2:8.
2. Isaiah 40:3 speaks of the one who would come before “Yahweh” in the wilderness. This is applied to John the Immerser as he prepared the way for Jesus the Christ (Matt. 3:3; Luke 1:76; John 3:28).
3. In Isaiah 42:8, Yahweh speaks of glory that belongs only to Himself, and that it would not be given to another. Jesus prayed about the glory that He shared with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). In Isaiah 6, a vision is related in which Isaiah saw Yahweh sitting on his throne. John 12:36-41 records that statements spoken by Isaiah were uttered “because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.” In context, this is a reference to Jesus. Isaiah saw “His” glory and spoke of “Him” — Jesus. This connects Jesus to Yahweh.
4. Isaiah 44:6 makes a clear statement concerning Yahweh: “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.” Anyone who claimed this would either have to be God, or he would have to be a liar. The New Testament attributes this very phrase, “the first and the last,” to Jesus (Rev. 1:17-18; 2:8; 22:13-16). What should this tell us?
5. Psalm 102 begins a prayer to Yahweh. A section of this very prayer is applied to Jesus in Hebrews 1:10-12. It would be difficult to reconcile how a prayer (or even a part of one) made to Yahweh could be thus applied to one who is not God.

Titles of Jesus

Jesus refers to Himself by various titles (as do other writers refer to Him). They show both Jesus’ own conception of Himself, and the views of others toward Him. This section will discuss four of the important titles and descriptions that were used of Jesus, both in the Gospel accounts and the epistles.

1. *Son of God*. He was the Son of God (cf. John 5:17-19). Some have taken the phrase “Son of God” to mean that Jesus was the “offspring” of God. It is then used to say that the Bible teaches that Jesus was a created being. The phrase “son of” can mean “offspring,” but not necessarily in every context. It may also have the meaning of “sameness,” one who shares the same nature, or exhibits the same characteristics as another.

Concerning Jesus, Son of God means “one who has the essential characteristics and nature of God” (Louw and Nida 141). When Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, He was claiming to have a unique relationship with the Father. The Jews understood Jesus to mean that He was “equal with God” (John 5:17-18; 10:30-38). In affirming Jesus to be the Son of God, one is affirming that Jesus shared the same nature as the Father. He is, in essence, “God the Son.” Jesus is the Son of God in that very unique sense that He is one with the Father.

2. *Son of Man*. Jesus often referred to Himself as the “Son of Man.” It is used about 82 times in the Gospels. The first impression one has from the use of this title is that it identifies Jesus with humanity. The Bible teaches that Jesus was a real human. “Son of Man” would certainly imply that Jesus shared in the nature and character of mankind. This, however, does not adequately explain the phrase by itself. The evidence would indicate that the phrase “Son of Man” was also Messianic in

nature. The best case for this can be made from the Messianic statements in Daniel 7:13-14, where the Messiah is pictured as a “Son of Man,” or man-like figure, who is given “dominion, glory and a kingdom.” This sets the background for Jesus’ use of the title.

Jesus used the phrase “Son of Man” in different situations. First, He used it to speak of Himself as he carried out his ministry on the earth (e.g., Matt. 8:20; 11:19). Second, He used the phrase to speak of Himself as suffering at the hands of men, who mistreated and executed him (e.g., Mark 9:12, 31; Luke 24:7). Third, He used it to refer to His appearing in glory as the supreme judge (e.g., Matt. 16:27; 25:31; John 5:27). Jesus is both the “suffering Servant” and the judge of all the earth. One noted:

There can be no doubt, then, that all four Evangelists, when interpreted correctly, intend their readers to understand that Jesus is the Son of Man in the roles both of suffering Servant, who came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10) and “not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28), and of coming judge and eschatological King.” (Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah*, 57)

3. *Firstborn*. The Bible refers to Jesus as the “firstborn” (Col. 1:15-18; Rom. 8:29). This term could mean firstborn in time (Gen. 27:19; Exod. 11:5; Luke 2:7). In this sense, it refers to the first child born into a family. Some have taken this meaning and concluded that the use of the phrase “firstborn,” with reference to Jesus, means that He was the first created being; this doesn’t work. The term “firstborn” also is used of superior position. For example, the Bible speaks of the “firstborn of death,” meaning the most fatal and deadly disease (Job 18:13). Isaiah 14:30 speaks of the “firstborn of the helpless,” meaning those who need help the most. Other passages use the term this way (Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9; Psa. 89:27). In these cases, it means “preeminence.”

Regarding Jesus, “firstborn” means that He is first and preeminent over all. Jesus existed before creation, and He is superior to creation (Louw and Nida 117). He is called the “firstborn among many brethren,” which refers to position, not time (Rom. 8:29). He is also called the “firstborn of the dead,” meaning that He was first to be raised never to die again (Rev. 1:5). Colossians 1:15 should be understood to mean that Jesus is preeminent over all creation because He Himself is the Creator. “The word emphasizes the preexistence and uniqueness of Christ as well as His superiority over creation. The term does not indicate that Christ was a creation or a created being” (Reinecker 567).

4. *Only Begotten*. The phrase “only begotten” (*monogenes*) appears five times with reference to Jesus (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). It is another statement of the unique position held by Jesus. It means “unique” or “only”: “pertaining to what is unique in the sense of being the only one of the same kind or class” (Louw and Nida 591). The same term is used of Isaac as Abraham’s “only begotten” or “one and only” son (Heb. 11:17). This sheds light on the meaning of the term. Isaac was not Abraham’s “only begotten” son in the strict, literal sense. Neither was Isaac the “firstborn” son in time. However, Isaac occupied a singular and superior position as Abraham’s “unique” son of promise. For this reason, Isaac was the only son of his kind, and the term may be properly used of him. This is what the term means with reference to Jesus. Jesus was the unique Son of God, the only one of His kind. It is a title of position, not origin.

There are other terms applied to Jesus that are significant. For example, Jesus is called the “radiance” of God’s glory and the “exact representation of His nature” (Heb. 1:3). Jesus was not just a reflection of God; the glory of God radiated through Him in such a way that when one saw Jesus, one saw God (cf. John 14:9-11). These terms could not be correctly applied to one who was an ordinary man. If they are properly applied, then they imply that Jesus is Himself God. All such terms taken together demonstrate the high Christology of Scripture. The uniform teaching is that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh.

Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989.

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