

# An Incredible Claim; A Vicious Rejection

*A Provocative Claim to Deity*

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John 10.31-42

## A Mere Man?

*Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."*

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*"I and the Father are one."*

*Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him . . . "because you, a mere man, claim to be God."*

- ❖ This is one of the most significant moments in John's gospel regarding the deity of Christ, and it occurs as first-person Christology—the words of Jesus himself about his union with God.
- ❖ Jesus expresses his unity with the Father in three aspects—
  - ▶ unity of work (cf. 5.18-30)
  - ▶ unity of purpose (cf. 17.11)
  - ▶ unity of essence - "I and the Father are one."
- ❖ Jesus does not use the masculine gender in stating, "I and the Father are one"—which would have indicated *one person*. He used the neutral gender which indicated *substance* or *essence*. The Jews recognized and understood this as a claim to deity.

*“In theological terms, this is the same as saying that the Son is one in substance with the Father and that they are equal in power and glory.”*

*—James Montgomery Boice*

- ❖ All that Jesus did was in accordance with the Father’s will and in correlation with the activity of the Father; yet these sign-miracles that pointed to the unity between the Father and the Son were irrelevant to the Jews.
- ❖ The central issue is (and always is): the identity of Jesus; the determination of that identity then determines the theology about him.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (P<sup>1</sup>)*

*Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. (P<sup>3</sup>)*

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (P<sup>14</sup>)*

- ❖ This definition of the essence of Jesus determines his credibility; to the Jews, Jesus was simply a “mere man”—one who was making an impossible and provocative claim to deity.

- ▶ **Gnosticism:** denied that Jesus came in the flesh. The apostles Paul and John addressed this heresy in their letters.
- ▶ **Arianism:** Jesus was a divine being, but not eternal and self-existent; a created being. This led to the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 and the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. Astoundingly, the majority of American evangelicals (78%) agree with this belief. (*Ligonier Ministries, The State of Theology in the United States*)
- ▶ **Christian Science:** Jesus is a “Way-shower”—there is no such thing as sin
- ▶ **Hindu:** Jesus is one of the many paths that lead to God
- ▶ **Scientology:** Jesus, no Christ; he died for his own sins
- ▶ **Yoga:** Jesus was a fully accomplished master, and thus, established in his true self and in union with God
- ▶ **Jehovah’s Witnesses:** Jesus is the first of God’s creations; although he died for sins, he is not deity
- ▶ **Mormonism:** Jesus is a created being – the first of God’s spirit children; Jesus took upon himself all the sins of the world achieving resurrection for all; full eternal life, however, is only achieved by complying with the remaining conditions for salvation
- ▶ **Liberal Protestantism:** Christology is reinterpreted, the humanity of Jesus is emphasized, original sin is rejected and the accounts of Jesus’ miracles are metaphorical narratives

## Standing On the Word

*Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"'? If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?"*

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- ❖ Jesus responded with a rabbinic debate tactic, challenging their understanding and application of the law, exposing their inability to “correctly handle the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2.15).
- ❖ Jesus quoted Psalm 82.6. Commentators differ on whether those who are addressed as “gods” are the nation of Israel or those appointed as judges whose authority and word is final. What is obvious is that they stand judged by God because of their failure to judge justly (82.1-2). Jesus argues from the perspective of lesser to greater—

*“If **powerful persons** are called ‘gods’ in the Psalm because of the Word of God coming to them, what then should we call the person most especially sent **from** God to them? Indeed, what should we call **the Messiah** when he comes? Doesn’t this absolutely unique emissary of God deserve the title “**God’s Son**” as much as any earthly potentate? And doesn’t Scripture often call the Messiah ‘God’s Son’?” (F. D. Bruner)*

- ❖ Jesus premises his entire argument on one word in a single psalm; in doing so, he affirms *the authority of every single word in the Bible as being inspired by God himself*” (cf. Matthew 5.17-20).

## You Must Understand this Relationship

*Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.*

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❖ Jesus gave a challenge to his opponents : *“Are my works the works of the Father? Don’t believe me unless they are.”* He followed that challenge by graciously giving them further opportunity to believe: *“If you won’t believe me, at least believe the works so that you will not miss the truth.”*

❖ *“The Father is in me and I am in the Father”*— Jesus will emphasize this concept of “in” as he is with his disciples before his death (chapters 14, 15, 17); “in” is the paramount and defining paradigm for the relationship of believers with Jesus and the Father and with one another—

*Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.*

*Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. (15.4)*

*I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (17.22-23)*

- ❖ At the heart of true faith is the knowledge and understanding of this union. We can't understand the Godhead or experience true spiritual life without an understanding of the mutual union and complete intimacy contained in this "in" dynamic.
- ❖ Theologically, this is known as "mutual co-inherence" and is foundational in understanding and defining the Godhead as seen in the teaching of the church fathers—

*There are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and each is God and at the same time all are one God; and each of them is a full substance, and at the same time all are one substance.*

AUGUSTINE, *On Christian Doctrine*

*Because of this unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Ghost, The Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.*

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE, A.D. 1441

*Nor is any of the three persons a part of God or of the divine essence, because each of them is truly and fully God and is the whole and full divine essence and so none of these persons is a part of the Trinity.*

PETER LOMBARD (12TH CENTURY), BISHOP OF PARIS, *Libri Quatuor Sententiarum*

## Those Who Have Eyes to See

*Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true." And in that place many believed in Jesus.*

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- ❖ *"John never performed a sign."* Jewish sources did not invest effort in praising significant men unless some miracle was attributed to them (D. A. Carson), yet the "word-ministry" of John the Baptizer was noteworthy to people and led them to faith in Jesus.
- ❖ *"All that John said about this man was true."* The gospel accounts only give us highlights of John's proclamation about Jesus, but people saw the works of Jesus, and unlike the Jewish leaders, matched what they saw with the word-ministry of John and were convinced that Jesus was to be believed as the Sent-One from the Father. Why could they see the truth about Jesus while the Jewish leaders were blind?

*"I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep." (10.25-26)*

- ❖ There is no greater success in life than that our lives cause others to believe in Jesus.