

What Critics Say

Critics say that Jesus was a great moral teacher, but He never claimed to be God. The argument is: His followers created the legend of Him being God after His death. That charge raises a serious question: What did Jesus say about Himself? But before we examine this question of what Jesus said about Himself, we must note the implications of one claiming deity.

First, mental hospitals have patients that claim deity, and some street people claim deity, but their lives and character soon reveal otherwise. Jesus' life and character, however, support His claim.

Second, religious charlatans are common, and some of them have claimed deity. However, they're eventually exposed as frauds. But, no evidence could be brought forth to prove that Jesus was a religious charlatan. They could not deny His miracles, His good deeds, and His sacrificial life. The implications are clear: Deity shows itself in life and character. A life that is pure and a character that is flawless – this could only be said of Jesus.

Did Jesus claim deity? Or, are His critics correct in saying that He never claimed to be God?

First, consider His words in John: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). This text alleges more than prior existence. The words “I am” was the special name God gave to identify Himself when talking to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Here in John 8 verse 58, Jesus assumes the same title as that of Exodus 3 verse 14.

Jesus made a direct claim to being God in John 8 verse 58 and the Jews understood this claim – because in verse 59 they took stones to stone Him to death.

Second, consider His words before the Sanhedrin in Luke: “Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am” (Luke 22:70). The Sanhedrin clearly understood the words of Jesus. “And they said, What need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard of his own mouth” (Luke 22:71). They understood that Jesus was claiming to be God.

Third, consider that Jesus: Spoke of Himself as being equal with God, modified the law, said Heaven and earth will pass away, but His words will never pass away, said that He and He alone was the only way into the presence of the Father, forgave sins, claimed to be the final judge of all the universe, and accepted worship from His followers. Did Jesus claim deity?

Yes. Jesus saw Himself as deity because He was God manifest in the flesh.

Scripture: King James Version: Matthew 5:21-22; 14:33; 24:35; Luke 7:48; John 5:17-18, 22; 14:6, 14.

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