

Pentecost 2
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2 Peter 2:1-3
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Fact 1: The Encyclopedia Britannica has more information on Jesus than any on other religious figure or political leader—more than 20,000 words.

Fact 2: A globetrotting basketball player once observed, *“I’ve never been to a country where players respond to a missed shot by cursing Confucius, Buddha, or the Maharshi. The only name I’ve ever heard taken in vain is Jesus Christ.”*

Fact 3: C.S. Lewis, an agnostic intellectual turned Christian wrote in his book, Mere Christianity: *“I am trying to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus: ‘I’m ready to accept him as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.’ That is the sort of thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or he would be the devil of hell. You must make a choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse.”*

Fact 4: The most important question we will ever have to answer in life is this: Who is Jesus Christ? Where we spend eternity hinges on what we believe about his person.

It really shouldn’t surprise us that there are those who deny that Jesus is true God. In our text Peter says that there will be false teachers among us who *“secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them.”* In his book, The Da Vinci Code, Dan Brown contends that Jesus was not divine, that his faults and failings were intentionally covered up by the church, and that he himself never claimed to be true God. That just is not true.

Whenever it comes to the deity of Jesus Christ, I am reminded of a conversation I had with three Jehovah’s Witnesses. [Relate conversation.]

Today, as we continue our sermon series on issues raised by The Da Vinci Code, we go to God’s Word to answer the third of our probing questions:

Is Jesus God?

- 1. The Bible gives to him God’s names.**
- 2. The Bible ascribes to him God’s attributes.**
- 3. The Bible credits to him God’s works.**
- 4. The Bible accords to him God’s honor.**

1. In the first place, the Bible calls Jesus God. Already in the Old Testament that is the case. Isaiah calls Jesus *“Mighty God” (9:6)*. Jeremiah says that the Messiah, who would be born from the line of King David, is *“the Lord Our Righteousness” (23:6)*. Jesus is called Yahweh, a name the Scriptures always use to refer to the one true God. Since the Messiah is called Yahweh, and Jesus is the Messiah, it means that Jesus is true God.

Contrary to what Dan Brown writes, Jesus himself says that he is Yahweh. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush on Mt. Sinai, he said that his name is *“I AM WHO I AM” (Ex 3:14)*—Yahweh in Hebrew. When Jesus was speaking to the Jews who opposed him, he said, *“Before Abraham was born, I am” (Jn 8:58)*. The Jews knew very well that Jesus was claiming

to be Yahweh. That's why they picked up stones to stone him to death for blasphemy. Jesus was claiming to be God.

On another occasion Jesus said, *"I and the Father are one"* (Jn 10:30). In the Old Testament God had directed Moses to proclaim, *"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one"* (Dt 6:4). When Jesus said that he and the Father are one, he was claiming to be God. Again his enemies picked up stones to stone him. Jesus said, *"I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"* They responded, *"We are not stoning you for any of these...but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God"* (Jn 10:32,33). It strikes me that The Da Vinci Code asserts that Jesus never claimed to be God. Yet his enemies wanted to stone him to death precisely because he did assert that he is God.

Finally, the New Testament writers were inspired to proclaim Jesus divine. Just two examples. Paul writes to the Romans, *"[Jesus] was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead"* (1:4). And to the Colossians he writes, *"In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form"* (2:9). My friends, we believe that Jesus is God because, quite simply, the Bible calls him God.

2. We also believe that he is God because the Bible ascribes to him God's attributes, God's characteristics.

- God alone is eternal. Of Jesus Paul writes, *"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen"* (1 Tm 1:17).
- God alone knows what is in our hearts. Peter said to Jesus, *"Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you"* (Jn 21:17).
- God alone is all-powerful. Jesus said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"* (Mt 28:18).
- God alone is present everywhere. Jesus promised, *"Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them"* (Mt 18:20).
- God alone is unchangeable. The Scripture says, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"* (He 13:8).
- God alone has life in himself. Jesus says, *"As the Father has life in himself, so has he granted the Son to have life in himself"* (Jn 5:26).

My friends, we believe that Jesus is God because the Bible ascribes to him the attributes of God.

3. The Bible also says that Jesus does those things that only God can do. The work of creation is a divine work. *"Through [Jesus] all things were made"* (1:3), John writes in his Gospel. It is a work of God to preserve and sustain creation. Hebrews says, *"The Son...sustains all things by his powerful Word. (1:3)."* Jesus changed water into wine, healed the sick and paralyzed, calmed storms, drove out demons, and raised the dead. He even raised himself from the dead. All of these, especially the last—raising himself from the dead—are things that only God can do; they are truly miracles. The fact that Jesus did them demonstrates that he is God.

4. Finally, we believe that Jesus is God because the Bible accords him God's honor and praise. Jesus says, *"He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him"* (Jn 5:23). Paul says of Jesus, *"God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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"* (Php 2:9-11). Since Jesus' name is above every name, he must be God, for there is no name above

God's name. Since every knee must bow down to Jesus, he must be God, for God alone is to be worshiped. Since the Bible accords to Jesus the honor and adoration and worship reserved for God alone, there is no other conclusion that we can reach but that Jesus is God.

I have cited a great number of Scriptures for you today to support the contention that Jesus is God. The list is certainly not exhaustive, but it is sufficient to show that the Bible clearly teaches the divinity of Jesus Christ. Those who would deny his deity either have never read the Bible to see what it says or have approached it with the bias that Jesus is not God. Is Jesus God? We answer yes. The Bible makes this crystal clear.

All of this is not just dead, dry doctrine, my friends. For in the truth of Jesus' divinity lies our salvation. Of himself Jesus said, "*The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*" (Mt 9:6). And he said, "*The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son*" (Jn 5:22). If Jesus is not God, if he is just a man—even a good man, we have no salvation. For Scripture says, "*No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough*" (Ps 49:7,8). No mere human being—even a good one—can pay for his own sins, to say nothing of the sins of others. We need God to pay for our sins.

Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, did just that by offering his life and death as a substitutionary payment for our sins. By living perfectly and suffering innocently and dying sacrificially on Calvary's cross, Jesus paid the ransom that we could never pay. In fact, as Peter tells us in our text, he even paid for the sins of those who reject him as their Savior and God. And then, as proof of his divinity and as confirmation of our justification before God, he raised himself from the dead on the third day.

May we, in faith, always embrace the divinity of Jesus Christ. And may we also, in gratitude and thanksgiving, devote our lives to serving him who lived and died for us. One final thought on this Father's Day 2006. Because Jesus is God, we know the love and forgiveness of a perfect heavenly Father and can be confident and sure of our salvation. Amen.