

Jesus the Son of God
A Series on Who Do I Worship – God or Jesus: Part 1

There is considerable confusion in answering the question, “who do I worship – God or Jesus?” With careful study of the Jesus’ own words, one can begin to develop an understanding of the position of God the Son and God the Father within God’s unfolding plan of salvation and an answer to this perplexing question.

Most approaches to this question focus on Jesus’ ontological unity with God His Father, which even the good unfallen angels expressed with reverence (Matt 1:20-23); however, Jesus never once called Himself God. Instead, Jesus describes Himself as the image of God; when you see Jesus, you see the invisible God His Father.

“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. (John 14:7-11)

Despite being known as the Son of God among fallen evil angelic beings (Matt 8:29; Mark 3:11; 5:7; Luke 4:41; 8:28), Jesus never equates Himself with the preeminence of God. A good example is examining His response to Satan at the beginning of His ministry (Matt 4:1-10; Luke 4:1-8). As Satan tempts Jesus to: a) prove that He is the Son of God or b) worship him, Jesus responds by quoting the Old Testament emphasizing the primacy of God and the power of God’s word. Jesus refrains from asserting His authority as the Son of God, and keeps the focus of worship upon His Father, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only” (Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8).

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus never called Himself “the Son of God”. Instead, He esteems His invisible Father and places a greater emphasis on His relationship by frequently referring to Him as “My Father” (i.e. Matt 16:17; 18:19; Luke 23:46; etc.).

It is in this relationship context, Father King to Son Prince, that Jesus explicitly refers to the absolute rights and privileges given to Him when He says, “all that the Father gives Me” (John 6:37, 39; John 13:3; 17:2) or the similar phrase “all things have been handed over to me by My Father” (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 3:35).

The phrase “all things,” or something similar, is everything belonging to God and the authority over everything including judgment and salvation (John 5:21-23; 9:39; Rev 20:11-15) “in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father” (John 5:23).

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:11-15)

For example, Jesus demonstrated that He was Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5), forgave sin (Matt 9:5-6; Mark 2:9-10; Luke 5:23-24), and received worship (Matt 2:11-12; John 9:35-38, etc.).

And while Jesus did not mention it, this included the people of God’s own possession (Ex 19:5-6), which the apostles recognize and teach – Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

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He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. (Col 1:18)

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. (Col 2:9-15)

When Jesus was crucified and glorified, despite possessing all the rights and privileges of God, He did not sit on the throne of God; He sat on His Father's right hand (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Luke 22:69; Acts 7:55-56; Heb 1:3).

It is apparent that there is more than one reason for worshiping Jesus, as equivalent to worshiping God, than just His ontological unity with His Father.

God the Father abides in His Son so that Jesus is the human image of His invisible Father.

God the Father gave His Son, while in human form on earth, the rights and privileges of the Father.