



# QUEST 52

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## Jesus and Deity

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### *Ground Rules:*

- A. We will bracket off John for this discussion because he was so obviously later than the other evangelists and some would accuse him of being biased by Hellenism. Obviously, we will not engage the Epistles either since they are post-resurrection views about Jesus, not claims he made of himself. This eliminates from the discussion such texts as John 1:18; 12:41; Rom. 9:5; 2 Thess. 1:12; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20. Furthermore, testimony from demons will be barred because of the potential mythological nature of the texts.
- B. We will look at both words and deeds under the following assumption. If Jesus did want to present himself as God in a Jewish environment, it would need to be proved before it could be claimed. To reverse this order would wind up in a stoning for blasphemy.
- C. If one can give any credence to the birth narratives, then it is a likely assumption that Jesus would have heard these stories from his mother which helped shape his self-identity. However, a miraculous birth does not necessarily lead to the assumption of divinity...but it doesn't hurt. In other words, one could be born miraculously without being God, but one could not be God without a miraculous birth—at least not in the literature and lore of the ancient Mediterranean.

### *Arguments for Jesus' self-identity as God's functional equal:*

1. (a) He made claims to fulfill every major hero and institution of Israel (save Abraham). He was greater than *Solomon* and *David* and made authoritative claims in contradistinction to *Moses*. (b) He asserted himself as the *Sabbath* (Mark 2:28/Matt 12:8/Luke 6:5), *Passover lamb* (Mark 14:22–25/Matt 26:26–29/Luke 22:17–20), *Torah* (Matt 7:24–28), and even the embodiment of *wisdom* (Mark 6:2, etc.). Jesus is, in fact, the very embodiment of *Israel*.
2. He claimed the authority of final judgment (Matt 7:22-23; 16:27; 25:34-41; cf. John 5:24-30).
3. He forgave sins (Mark 2:1–12/Matt 9:1–8/Luke 5:17–26; Luke 7:47–50).
4. His most prominent (and exclusive) self-designation was *son of man* which could only come from Daniel 7:13–14. Here the son of man shares the throne of God, is worshipped by humanity, and leads and everlasting kingdom.
5. In his definitive self-identification with his opponents, he claimed Psalm 110:1 about himself! (Mark 12:36/Matt 22:44/Luke 20:42–43).
6. Matthew 11:27, “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”
7. Jesus was apparently most deeply moved by Isaiah of all the OT scrolls. His engagement with Isaiah 9:6–7 must have had some impact on his self-awareness.
8. Jesus allowed people to bow down before him (Mark 1:40/Matt 8:2/Luke 5:12; Mark 10:17; Matt 9:18/Luke 8:41; Matt 15:25; 17:14; 26:6–13; Luke 5:8–9; 7:36–50; 19:35–40). While this reverence does not necessarily imply worship, Peter shows how inappropriate that was for a Jew (Acts 10:25–26). Even an angel knew better than to allow this (Rev 19:10; 22:8–9).