

Did Jesus Ever Claim to Be God?

(Edited transcription of Program 3 from the series Islam vs. Christianity, produced by The John Ankerberg Show)

With Dr. Hussein Morsi, Dr. Jamal Badawi, Dr. Anis Shorrosh, Dr. Gleason Archer and Dr. John Ankerberg

Ankerberg: We have been comparing Islam and Christianity in our debate during these weeks, and we have four gentlemen that are doing an excellent job. Tonight we are going to continue with the topic: Did Jesus ever claim to be God? We will begin with Dr. Gleason Archer.

Dr. Gleason Archer: In the first place, we ought to realize that the Bible teaches that Jesus was composed of two distinct natures in one person. He was the eternal God the Son and He became for our salvation a true human being taking unto Himself a human nature in order that He might live the perfect life of the keeper of the law of God and the righteous standards of the Godhead, and then that He might offer Himself as the substitute for our guilty life upon the cross of Calvary. Well, in the Old Testament Moses stood before God at the burning bush and asked, "What is your name?" God replied, "The name by which I want to be remembered forever is the I Am."

In John 8:58 Jesus told the Jewish leaders that He was that very one, the I am when He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." The Jewish leaders clearly understood Jesus was equating Himself with God in Exodus 3:14. So, they picked up stones to kill him for blasphemy. On another occasion Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). In both of these passages, then, Jesus identifies Himself with the same words that the Greek Septuagint used to identify God's name in the Old Testament. Jesus taught that to know Him was to know God.

In John 14:9 "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." So, to see Him was to see God. To believe in Him was to believe in God. To receive Him was to receive God. To hate Him was to hate God. We find in Isaiah 48:11 God stating, "I will not give my glory unto another." But in John 17:5, the high priestly prayer of Jesus, He prayed, "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Of course, in Psalm 23 the Scriptures say, "The Lord [or Yahweh] is my shepherd."

But Jesus in John 10:11 said, "I am the good shepherd." In the Old Testament God claimed that He will be the only one who will judge all the surrounding nations. Jesus, in Matthew 25, claimed that He would be the judge of all men at the end of the world. When Jesus claimed that He was the Messiah, He was also claiming to be God. How do we know that? Because Isaiah 9:6 calls the Messiah the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, El Gabor. And the term El Gabor which occurs several times elsewhere in the Old Testament unquestionably refers to Yahweh. Jesus' messianic claims are clearly seen when He was on trial for His life and was asked by the high priest, "Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." And Jesus responded, "Yes, it is as you say. And I say to all of you in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." This was a direct reference to Daniel 7:13-14 where the Son of Man approaches God, the ancient of days, and is given authority, glory and power over all nations and peoples. Men of every language will worship Him. What did the apostles

teach about Jesus? After all, it is one thing to claim you are God; it's another thing to get other monotheistic Jews to believe it.

But in John 1:3 the apostle said Jesus was the one who created the universe. In Colossians 1:16 Paul adds that at this moment Jesus sustains the universe in existence by the power of His word. Jesus Himself said in Matthew 28, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." In Titus 2:13 Paul calls Jesus "our great God and Savior."

Ankerberg: Thank you very much. Representing Islam will be Dr. Hussein Morsi.

Dr. Hussein Morsi: Thank you, John. I take refuge in God Almighty from Satan, the despicable. As I stand here before you, I seek the protection, the guidance and mercy of the one and only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the God of Adam, of Noah, of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.

To me, as a Muslim, Jesus, may the peace, mercy and blessings of God be with Him, is not a stranger at all. Islam makes it a mandatory article of faith to believe in Jesus. In the Koran, Jesus is described as a prophet from God, a messenger from God, a miracle from God, a sign from God, a spirit from God and mercy unto my God. As a matter of fact, He is the only Messiah that is mentioned in the Koran.

But the word Messiah does not mean God at all. To come to mankind as the only Messiah, His virgin birth and His miracles are well documented in the Koran. His mother, the virgin Mary, is highly honored, highly respected by the Muslims. The Koran explains that God had selected Mary, purified Mary, it shows Mary of a woman of all nations, of a woman of all times.

The Koran also gives the proper and correct explanation of what is meant that Jesus is a word from God. You see, God Almighty creates by His free will, but He does not beget. He does not incarnate. The Old Testament, in black and white, in the book of Job, "tell us how then can man be justified with God? And could he be holy that is born of a woman?" Jesus was born of a woman? By the creative word of God, the word be, Jesus came to existence in the womb of Mary miraculously just like the creation of Adam, no father, no mother. Jesus devoted all His life to witness to the fact there is one and only one God. The same exact deity, the same exact God that was witnessed to by Adam, by Noah, by Abraham, by Moses and by Muhammad.

As a Muslim, I am also intrigued to read in the current versions of the gospels that this is how Jesus viewed Himself and how He did teach about Himself. In the gospel according to Matthew in chapter 6 when the disciple asked of Him, "To whom shall we pray?" He didn't say pray to me. He didn't say pray to the trinity. He said you only pray to our Father who art in heaven. This is Islam. When asked about the Day of Judgment he said, "I don't know, the angels don't know, only God knows." Jesus spoke of God Almighty as "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." But the real and crucial acid test came when He was asked, "What is the first of all the commandments?" He said, "The first of all the commandments is Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Therefore, you shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy spirit and with all thy strength." This is Islam.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prostrated Himself, fell to the ground, put His forehead on the ground and He prayed to God. That is how Muslims pray to God. The core expression of faith in Islam is : "No deity to be worshiped, but the Creator of heaven of

earth, the one and only God.” Jesus, peace be upon Him, not only taught, not only believed, but He practiced an identical doctrine. In black and white, in the book of John 17:3 we are told that Jesus said, “And this is eternal life, that they may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou have sent.” As a Muslim, I’m assured that my belief in Jesus is not the bi-product of theologians. It is not the bi-product of man-made theological doctrines or councils. As a Muslim, I am comforted and assured that my belief in Jesus is the correct belief. Not only from the teachings of the Koran, not only from the teachings of Muhammad, but from the lips of Jesus, the man that is highly respected, highly honored by the Muslims and by the Christians. Thank you.

Ankerberg: Okay, thank you very much. We are talking about the comparison between Islam and Christianity concerning the person of Jesus Christ. Christianity says that He claimed He was God and then gave proof that He was God by the resurrection. We are going to talk about the resurrection next week, but this week we are talking about the claims. Islam says He did not claim to be God; He wasn’t God. He was just a prophet, a revered prophet, but a prophet only.

Dr. Archer, what can you point to as evidence in the Scripture that Almighty God took on the form of a man and was both God and man? Where does it say that in the Scriptures?

Archer: The passage that comes to my mind foremost is in Philippians chapter 2 where we read beginning in verse 5: “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

And this, ladies and gentlemen, is the only hope of the world. This is the only solution how God could be just and the justifier of the ungodly. It had to be a substitute who could suffer the penalty in our place. And it had to be an adequate substitute because being God as well as man He was a sacrifice of infinite value.

Ankerberg: I would like to come to the Islamic scholars and say this. With the clear references that Gleason gave, and he could give others, especially the “I Am,” which is a direct reference to Yahweh. Adonai and Elohim were other words used for God that were applied to men in the Old Testament, but Yahweh, the “I Am” of Exodus 3, is never, ever used of anybody but God. And Jesus took that title and applied it to himself at least four times in John 8. What do you do with that clear-cut reference?

Morsi: If I may add here to what you said, John. There are two kinds of “I Am” in the Greek. There is one that means “existence,” and this one you find in the Old Testament in which God Almighty referred to Himself. There is one which means “I Am” like “I am tired.”

Ankerberg: Dr. Archer, you have said in your book that you think Muhammad got close in terms of talking about Jesus, but he really missed the main essence. Why do you say that?

Archer: Because Muhammad did not realize the necessity of a mediator between God and man if God is to remain just and the justifier of the ungodly. You see, the problem in the Koranic concept is that God can simply forgive anybody He pleases no matter what his crimes may have been. And all of the sanctions of the moral law can be disregarded. Well, suppose you had a judge like that in criminal court, and rapists and robbers and all kinds of criminals would be brought before him, and suppose the criminal said, "Well, yeah, I'm sorry I did it and especially am sorry I got caught." Then, the judge would say, "Well that's alright then. I forgive you." That judge would be the most valuable ally that organized crime could possibly find in all of society. I'm saying that until you have an adequate punishment for sin, you are undermining and destroying the sanctity of the moral law.

Ankerberg: Let's answer the question: How can Allah be just, which you say that he is, and holy? But how can he be merciful and just at the same time?

Morsi: We will cover that on the subject of salvation.

Ankerberg: Give me a brief answer right now, if you would.

Badawi: I'll answer you right now. No problem at all. We don't believe that Jesus claimed to be God. Many scholars indicated that the words were put in the mouth of Jesus. Even the new Catholic encyclopedia says that Jesus—of course, you do not agree with them because they are so-called liberal scholars—a80% of the words attributed to Jesus they concluded are not likely to have been said by Jesus. So, there is a big dispute within the Christian community as to whether the word was put in the mouth of Jesus.

Dr. Anis Shorrosh: The problem is you say 40 times a day "Allah Akbar," and your God is too small to do what he wants to do. Why do you limit him? You say he is almighty and that the dilemma is he cannot be man. If I am your friend, I may write you, I may talk to you. He comes in the person of a man because he loves you.