

Who was Jesus?

We all agree Jesus was extraordinary, or most of us do anyway. But we don't all agree regarding who He was. We've come up with are seven possible choices. He was either:

1. an extraordinarily good, holy, and powerful human being;
2. a lunatic or one with perhaps demonic or magical powers;
3. an alien creature from another planet with extraordinary powers;
4. a fallen angel originally created by God;
5. a good angel created by God to carry out His purposes;
6. a theophany of God Himself;
7. the only begotten Son of God, the God-Man.

Let's look at each of these possibilities individually.

1. An extraordinary earthly human

This option fails to convince us because we do not have other examples of human beings who could walk on water, control the weather by their mere words, multiply physical objects, disassociate and re-associate their own bodies at will, raise the dead (after four days), heal the eyes of those born blind, and teach incredible truths which virtually everyone recognizes as having come from heaven, etc. Clearly there have been brilliant, capable humans of superior strength, prowess, courage, wisdom, etc. But none have captured our hearts, minds and wills so completely that we are willing to die for them, as the apostles and so many others have done for Christ. Nor do extraordinarily good earthly humans claim deity or accept worship. These behaviors belong to the extraordinarily bad among us. These facts cause us to reject this option.

2. A lunatic or one with extraordinary magical or demonic powers

This was, essentially, the Pharisaic explanation. "He does these things by demonic power." This is inconsistent with prophecies related to the coming of Messiah, which describe Him as performing the very sort of marvelous works that Jesus did. If Jesus was a lunatic or demon-possessed person whose goal was to lead the human race astray, away from the true God, then He failed miserably. He is responsible for more good than any other creature who has ever lived (including charitable acts and institutions, transformation of sinful lives, inspiration of art, literature and music, etc.). People have, throughout the common era, given their lives in pursuit of Jesus' brand of holiness despite the persecution and sometimes death that attends such a pursuit. Evil people or devils do not lead us *to* God, but away from Him. *Insane* people are not consistently able to perform in ways that not only defy their insanity, but qualify them for deity as well.

3. An alien creature with extraordinary powers

Besides the objection that, at this point, we know of no other life forms in the universe, let alone any approaching humanity in complexity, there are a couple of other points. An alien would not only have to possess extraordinary powers, but he would have to be intimately acquainted with our Scriptures and have the capacity to fulfill all prophecy, including entering the body of a human woman as an embryo and determining his own birthplace. This is so impossibly far-fetched as to be ludicrous and not worthy of consideration.

4. A fallen angel originally created by God

This merits some of the same objections as #2 and #3. If a fallen angel could both fulfill prophecy and imitate God to such an extent that he could pull off, in opposition to God and without God being able (or willing) to control or stop him, such miracles as those which have led us to deify him (mistakenly call this fallen angel "God"), then the word "God" has essentially no meaning and the Word of God is completely untrustworthy. Now what we have are a variety of beings capable of God-like behavior without reference to their moral character and without any claim to uniqueness or supremacy. We have no grounds for deifying anyone and a complete collapse of "truth" as presented in Scripture. That is, there is then no possible way to discern between truth and error or reality and fiction in both the physical and spiritual realms. Besides this, the strategy of the demonic realm is to adulterate truth and error to such a subtle extent as to make error appear true and truth appear unpalatable. To have foisted on the world such a complete deception would not further their goals, but would, in fact, merely accomplish God's own ends in both exposing people's hearts and turning individuals to Himself. (God does use the demonic realm to accomplish this purpose, but that is clearly not *their* intent.) We consider this option to be entirely without merit.

5. A good angel created by God and carrying out His purposes

This option gives rise to a number of objections. We will address the most obvious ones. If this is true:

- There is, then, an inherent contradiction in the Scriptures, which says in Colossians 2:18: "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head (1 Cor.11:3: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man ... and God is the head of Christ." And Eph.1:22: "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all"), from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God."
- A companion verse might be Exodus 34:14: "for you shall not worship any other god (small "g"), for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." If you accept that Jesus is an angel, you cannot worship him. And yet He is worshiped by His own disciples, and He does

not correct them. This puts Him in conflict with His Father's expressed will, and thus makes Him a sinner.

- Good angels do not accept worship. Rev. 19:10: "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, 'Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'" And Rev. 22:8-9: "And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, 'Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God.'"
- The description of the being in Daniel 10:5-6 ("...and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightening, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult") is not the same individual described in the following verses in Daniel 10 ff. The first individual appears to approximate the description of Christ in Revelation, Ch. 1 ("one like the Son of Man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters."). The individual who subsequently touches Daniel on the hand is clearly an angel and not God, as he is not able to easily withstand the assault of the demon prince over the kingdom of Persia, and in fact needed the help of another angel (Michael) to defeat him. Together they fight against the various demonic principalities mentioned (Greece, Persia). If there are demonic spirits (princes) who rule various localities, clearly there are angelic princes who do the same, and Israel's prince is Michael. Messiah, on the other hand, single-handedly defeats His enemies ("And the rest were killed with the sword which came from mouth of Him who sat upon the horse...")
- The descriptions given to angels are different in quality from that given to these visions of the Lord (Transfiguration, Daniel 10 and Revelations 1 and 19). They are variously described as appearing as men, or in white garments, and only very rarely are called "dazzling" or as appearing "like lightening."
- We are commanded not to worship angels, and yet Jesus accepts worship on numerous occasions: from Thomas ("My Lord and My God"); from Peter and the other disciples after He walks on water ("And those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"); from Mary and the other Mary ("And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him") among others.
- Angels are creatures of God. We not to worship created beings: "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever."

6. A theophany of God Himself

We would suggest that this is one way to describe Jesus Christ, although not entirely accurately. Just as God appeared in the Old Testament on many occasions and in various forms (pillar of cloud/fire, the burning bush, the Shekinah Glory in the Temple, as various men (i.e., to Abraham, Jacob), and perhaps even as Melchizedek), so He has appeared to us now and forever more as the incarnate Son of God, ever to be embodied in flesh and bone. He is, in one sense, a permanent theophany of Yahweh Himself.

7. The only begotten Son of God, the God-Man

This is the biblical position, in our opinion: that Jesus is Yahweh come to save us.

According to God's economy, our sin (that is, rebellion against the commander in chief of the universe in all its forms) condemns us to death, and only a perfect offering can satisfy God's judgment against us. Thus, this offering must be without fault (sinless, spotless) and also of supreme value in order to counteract such supreme evil. The best must pay for the worst. Life is the most supreme value we humans have to offer. We must surrender it for sin. This is, in fact, why death came into the world. Our death is the consequence of sin, but unfortunately, it is not the solution to our sin. We humans cannot atone for our own sin by our own death because the very thing we have to offer is itself sinful and limited. Only God Himself, in perfect human form and substance and yet infinite in nature, can satisfy, through His own shed blood, the requirement of God's economy. Perfect life utterly surrendered in sacrificial offering satisfies God for ultimate evil. This is not because God is a blood-thirsty tyrant. He is perfect righteousness requiring complete parity between the offense (sin) and the restitution, or the debt and the payment. The latter must cancel completely the former.

But God, richly merciful, devised a way to extricate us from the hopelessness of our situation. By becoming a human, and surrendering His own life for our sins, He satisfied His own perfect justice and offered us a second chance to choose Him and, in a sense, redeem ourselves (one by one) from our own rebellion.

Jesus said in John 8:24: "unless you believe that I AM, you shall die in your sins." Was He merely saying that unless they believed He existed, they would die in their sins? In our opinion, He was making a claim to deity by alluding to Yahweh's name revealed to Moses in Exodus at the burning bush. Unless they believed that He was the only and true God (I AM WHO I AM), they would not be saved. Clearly the Jews understood this claim, and they accused Him of blasphemy, of making Himself equal with God. This was their premise for crucifying Him. Again, He says in John 8:58: "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.' Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him" because they understood His intended meaning.