

When God Became a Man

Superheroes capture our imagination with their superhuman abilities. Wolverine can rapidly heal from injury. Superman can fly. Aquaman can breathe underwater. Spiderman can climb walls.

Many have imagined what it would be like for a human being to have superhuman abilities. Yet Christian theology proclaims something even more amazing because, unlike imaginary superheroes, this “superhero” truly lived, and his powers exceed those of comic book lore.

Beyond superheroes

The eternal second person of the Trinity—God the Son—entered into history 2000 years ago as the God-man Jesus Christ. He was unique, born to a virgin. And just as Old Testament books of the Bible had promised hundreds of years before that, Christ suffered and died in the place of sinners, though he was sinless. Then he came back from death to make it possible for us—unrighteous sinners—to become righteous (Isaiah 52:13– 53:12)!

Jesus is nearly universally recognized as a great moral example, insightful teacher, defender of the poor and marginalized, and unprecedented champion who overturns injustice with nonviolence. However, the divinity of Jesus Christ, his nature as God, is frequently and heatedly debated. This question divides Christianity from all other religions.

How can we know that Jesus is God?

We know that Jesus is God because of the testimony of several key witnesses. They establish a strong case that Jesus is who he claimed to be.

Witness #1: God the Father

In Hebrews 1:8 we see God the Father's witness: "*Of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.'*"

Witness #2: The Bible

The New Testament of the Bible often refers to Jesus Christ as God. Titus 2:13 refers to "*our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*" and Titus 3:4 calls him "*God our Savior.*" First John 5:20 says that Jesus Christ is "*the true God.*"

Witness #3: Jesus himself

Jesus' own claims to be God were clearly heard and understood by his enemies, and Jesus never retracted those claims (Mark 14:61–64).

Witness #4: Divine abilities

According to the Bible, during Jesus' life on earth, he exhibited divine attributes—abilities and characteristics that belong to God alone. That included being present everywhere (Psalm 139:7–12, Matthew 28:20), being all-powerful (Matthew 28:18), knowing everything (Matthew 11:27; John 2:25, 4:18, 16:30), and being the creator and sustainer of all (Isaiah 37:16, 44:24; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16–17; Hebrews 1:2–3). The fact that Jesus possessed those abilities is compelling evidence that he really is God.

Jesus' claim to deity also included declaring himself to be without sin in thought, word or action, and therefore morally perfect. In John 8:46 Jesus openly invited his enemies to recall any sin he ever committed. Those who testified to the sinlessness of Jesus include those who knew him most intimately, such as his friends—his disciples— Peter (Acts 3:14; 1 Peter 1:19, 2:22, 3:18), John (1 John 3:5) and his half-brother James (James 5:6), and even his former enemy, Paul (2 Corinthians 5:21). Judas, who betrayed him, admitted that Jesus was without sin (Matthew 27:3–4), as did the Roman ruler Pilate, who oversaw the execution of Jesus (Luke 23:22).

Jesus also forgave sin (Luke 7:48). The Bible is clear that our sin is ultimately committed against God (Psalm 51:4), and that God alone can forgive sin (Psalm 130:4, Isaiah 43:25, Jeremiah 31:34). Therefore Jesus is God.

Jesus also claimed the power to raise the dead (John 6:39–44), judge our eternal destiny (John 5:22–23), and grant eternal life (John 10:28).

What difference does it make?

Jesus Christ lovingly and humbly identified with the frailty of our humanity by enduring temptation, weakness, pain, and sorrow. *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one [Jesus] who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:15–16). Jesus sympathizes with us in our suffering, sickness, brokenness, and sadness. He didn’t refrain from entering our fallen and crooked world. Instead he humbly came into this world to feel what we feel and face what we face...while remaining sinless. His sinlessness qualified him to deliver us from the consequences of our sins. The Bible tells us that Jesus *“suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh”* (1 Peter 3:18). Then *“he was raised [from the dead] on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:4).

If you have never asked Jesus to be your Savior, to forgive you for all your sins, won’t you call out to him today? The Bible promises, *“to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”* (John 1:12).

Jesus is alive today and goes beyond any superhero that we could imagine. He came to earth, lived a perfect life among us, then died for us and rose again. He continues to offer salvation and eternal life to all who will place their trust exclusively in him... that’s an offer no “superhero” could ever make!

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