

## 2. Was Christ Divine?

### Clues in the Qur'an

Last Easter, I found myself reading the Qur'an. I was struck by the way it maintains that Jesus ('Isa') was created by God – specifically, by His word being implanted into the Virgin Mary ('Maryam'). So Jesus is at least a *divine creation* and a messenger of God, according to the Qur'an, whereas Muhammad is said to be *not divine* but a messenger of God born to human parents. To a non-Muslim this would appear to put Jesus in a superior position to Muhammad – which, of course, is not what Muslims believe.

The Islamic insistence that Jesus is not divine sharpened my views and forced me to study the actual words of Jesus carefully, to see whether He did say He was divine or not. To the secular world – at best indifferent – this is all mumbo-jumbo. But for those who do arrive at a rational belief in God, the next question you might ask is: which of the Abrahamic faiths makes the most convincing claims? Should one choose the God believed in by the Jews, Christians or Muslims?

In discussing the case for Jesus, the purpose of this book, I am not going to pursue this question but focus instead on the God Christians worship. If we have good grounds to believe the witness testimonies of the four Gospel writers and the letter-writers who were direct witnesses, then surely Jesus might be our earthly manifestation of the God we should worship.

The subject of Islam cannot be avoided, however. We live in a time when the gap provided by the secular void is being filled by creeping Islamisation in parts of the West. So this chapter is intended to help people who don't want to be Islamified but, instead, to bolster their knowledge of Christ and His divinity.

We'll be looking in closer detail at the central Islamic claim that Christ – although born of the Virgin Mary and the Messiah of the prophecies of the Old Testament, born of God's very word and spirit – is not divine.

At this point it is worth noting what the Qur'an tells us is 'divine scripture'. We see this first in Surah 3 where, after pronouncing on the Virgin Birth of Jesus to Mary in verse 48, it comments:

And He [Allah] will teach him [Jesus] the Book and Al-Hikmah [the Sunnah, the faultless speech of the Prophets, wisdom, etc.], the Taurat [Jewish Torah] and the Injeel [Christian Gospel].

So the Qur'an acknowledges that what we read in the Old Testament *and* the New is divinely given. (As an aside, it's also interesting to note that the claim of Islam that the Qur'an is the word of God stands on shaky foundations right from its formative verses. This instructional verse about what Muslims take as Holy Books refers to Allah as 'He' – which is hard to reconcile with the Islamic teaching that God dictated the Qur'an.)

Pass over the Gospel reports of miracles and other supernatural workings – which, if accurate, show that Jesus was at least gifted with Godly powers – in order to focus on what He was reported as saying about Himself.

A general point to mention is that the name 'Jesus' itself is loaded with divine significance. Joseph, in Matthew 1:21, is told by the Archangel Gabriel to name the baby Ἰησοῦς or Yeshua.

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

Yeshua, which we translate in English as Jesus, is a version of the Hebrew name Yahoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) or Joshua, which means 'the Lord [Yahweh] saves'. The Arabic word for Jesus, Isa, carries no such meaning: it is a corruption of His name that is divorced from its divine connotations.

The Messiah 'Iesa, son of Maryam, was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word, ('Be!' – and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam and a spirit (Ruh) created by Him; so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not: 'Three (trinity)!' Cease! (it is) better for you. For Allah is (the only) One Ilah (God), Glory be to Him (Far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is All-Sufficient as a Disposer of affairs.

The problem here is that 'His Word' is God himself: the Qur'an makes clear that the two are identical, so the Messiah is expressly implied as God in this Surah. Also, God impregnates Mary via His Spirit ('breath' is the literal translation) –

meaning that Christ is of God *in essence*. Yet this understanding of Jesus's divinity, which is basically Christian, is followed by a passage (Surah 5:116) where Jesus, speaking on the day of Resurrection, denies that he ever claimed that He or his Mother were gods. This last detail is puzzling. There are numerous instances in the Bible where Jesus *does* describe His divinity, which I shall spell out in this chapter. But nowhere does the New Testament claim that Mary should be worshipped (and indeed no Christians do so, since worship is reserved for God alone). So the Muhammeden understanding of Jesus is confused – but, contrary to Islamic interpretations of it, the Qur'an does acknowledge that He is divine.

## **Evidence from the Bible**

### *The Messiah figure*

Before we consider Jesus' use of the phrase 'I am', which is central to any discussion of His divinity, it is important to bear in mind that the use of the phrase 'I am' in the Old Testament signifies the pre-existent creator of the universe and all that is contained within it. It manifests itself in Exodus 3:14, Deuteronomy 32:39, and Isaiah 41:4 and 43:10. These are the words *only used by God, for God*.

The establishment of the Covenant with David, God says in 2 Samuel 7:14:

I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.

So God stipulates that a Davidic heir will be His son. Therefore, what we shall be looking for is a person who uses these kinds of words to describe himself, someone who is also sired from the Davidic line to become the God-like Messiah of various prophecies.

We should also remember that these Biblical passages were in the Hebrew history from 1400 BC, in the case of Moses' recordings, and up to 800 BC in the case of Isaiah, with the Davidic passages set around 1100–1000 BC. The Greek renditions of the Hebrew Bible go back to as early as 200 BC. There is one complete scroll of what we know as the Book of Isaiah among the Dead Sea

Scrolls. Even taking the most sceptical view, these must have been believed to be prophetic in 200 BC at the latest. And, more important, not tampered with. We can say this with confidence as the Isaiah Scroll tallies very well with modern Bible translations. Prior to this, there is no hint of anyone claiming that these parts of the Bible had been tampered with.

As we consider what to expect regarding a Messiah figure, we must not forget Psalm 110, which opens with words:

The Lord said to my Lord,  
'Sit at My right hand,  
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'

Since King David is speaking here, 'my Lord' must be someone greater than him, descended from this Davidic line as co-equal, and thus the same in essence as God. Christians believe that the only man who fits the bill is Jesus, who is of the Davidic line and uses the words 'I am' to describe Himself. Significantly, Jesus reminds his audience (who included doubting Pharisees) of this Psalm passage in three Gospel writings. They are: Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:42-43.

Here is Mark's account:

Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit:

"The Lord said to my Lord,  
'Sit at My right hand,  
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' "

Therefore David himself calls Him "Lord"; how is He then his Son?

And the common people heard Him gladly

Here – and in the other two Gospels where Jesus quotes this Psalm – we can see Jesus gloriously proclaiming His Deity in all three passages.

### *The use of the words 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God'*

The Book of Jeremiah uses the words 'son of man' in a very non-specific way to mean humans in general. The author was writing in the late 500s BC. The

Book of Ezekiel uses it 93 times to signify a mortal prophet that God is addressing. He was writing in the late 500s. The Book of Daniel used it to proclaim the arrival of the Messiah who would have worldly dominion. Daniel was writing concerning events happening in the 70 years of Babylonian captivity from 605 BC to 536 BC. So he could have written this in the 530s. We have some fragments of Daniel in the Dead Sea Scrolls, dated from 200 to 150 BC. It is clear that this new, Messianic usage of 'The Son of Man' was well established many generations before Christ came to use it when speaking of Himself.

Luke took direct witness evidence from Mary, the mother of Christ. This is documented in Luke 2:19 and 2:51, so we can presume that she is also the source of the first known words of Christ reported in the Gospels, following his parents' discovery of Him in the Temple in Jerusalem as a 12-year-old who has been missing for three days (Luke 2:48-52):

So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.'

And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

It is clear that the young Jesus is indicating that he is the Son of God. There is no other way of reading this passage.

We then move to Jesus' Baptism and the intervention of God:

And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."  
(Luke 3:22)

This cannot be interpreted as anything other than God telling us that this man is His son.

During Satan's Temptation of Christ, recorded in Luke 4:12, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16:

And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It has been said, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'

It seems certain that Christ is saying He is the Lord, as it was the Lord who was speaking in Deuteronomy.

The next piece of evidence comes from the adult Jesus speaking at the Temple, in John 2:16-17:

And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!' Then His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up'.

The Temple was God's house, so once again the inference that Jesus is the Son of God is there for all to see. Jesus' disciples also quote Psalm 69:9, the backdrop to which is the persecution of David, from whose line the Messiah would come, for defending the sanctity of the Temple.

This next passage in John records Christ's words to the Jewish dignitary Nicodemus (3:12-18):

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Jesus makes clear that, as He has said many things and performed many miracles, and Nicodemus has not believed, why should he expect speaking of heavenly matters is any different? As only He has been in heaven, as it is His abode, and no others have been there, they surely can't speak with any authority on the matter – only He has authority to do so. This is a divinity revelation if ever there was one, I suggest.

What is more, Jesus refers to the Book of Numbers 21:5-9, in which people are cured when they witness the serpent's head on Moses's staff rise up. This is his suggestion to Nicodemus: that He, too, would be lifted up, and that the people who believed in him would be healed. This wonderful passage finishes with the reminder that you can't just intellectually believe; you have to trust in Jesus.

Jesus visits Sychar, a city in Samaria. The Samaritans, although descendants of Israelites, rejected Judaism and did not recognise the Jerusalem Temple. In Sychar, Jesus has a dialogue with a Samaritan woman, even though Jews were not meant to have any contact with members of this religion. In doing so, He rises above the Law: this story has been placed in the Gospel as an illustration of Jesus's divine status:

The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, He will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He.' (John 4:25-26)

The Jews never wanted to understand the Messiah to be a Godly incarnation. But we know – right from Genesis 1:26, 3:15 where we see that the Messiah is implied in God who would crush Satan – that you can't distinguish the two: they are forever connected. So I can only conclude Christ is asserting His divinity here.

The next events took place at the Pool of Bethesda, where Jesus performs another healing miracle. It was on the Sabbath and since no one was allowed to work on this day the Jews took offence. In John 5:17-23 Jesus answers his Jewish interlocutors with clarity and confidence:

But Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.' Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him.

Embedded in this passage are no fewer than five revelations of Jesus' divinity.

First, His Father is of the same in essence as Him. Also, as Jews would have known from Isaiah 40:28, God is never weary, so He works the Sabbath just as Jesus is doing here – He works always, and sustains always.

Second, Father and Son have been co-working and are thus equal in terms of their divine work.

Third, it is impossible for the Son to do anything other than that which the Father does; they have the same sovereign abilities in their work, including the raising of the dead, which in the Old Testament was done only by God (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37 and 5:7).

Fourth, He shares equally, and thus is ‘the same’ in God’s judgment.

Fifth, in honour, Father and Son are the same.

These declarations of divinity led to the charge of blasphemy. The Jews were in no doubt about Jesus’ claims to be God. As we know, they did not believe Him, but they certainly understood what He was describing. For Jesus, however, it was the Jews who were blaspheming:

‘Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.’ (John 5:24-30)

‘Him’, referring to God, and ‘Me’ are clearly one and the same, as the ‘Me’ has everlasting life and shall not be judged; that is, Jesus can only be viewed in a certain sense *as* God. Jesus can’t be viewed as separate from God otherwise He could not administer the general resurrection of the good who possess the capacity to hear Him.

In a further dialogue from John’s Gospel we read more divinity sayings:

'I do not receive honour from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honour from one another, and do not seek the honour that comes from the only God? Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you – Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My word?' (John 5:41-47)

We move now to Nazareth, where Jesus stands up to read to the assembled synagogue attendees:

So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' (Luke 4:16-21)

Jesus is here reading from Isaiah 61:1-2. God has anointed the Messiah, and He reveals that it is himself, Jesus of Nazareth. These verses from Isaiah come at the end of prophecies predicting the work, suffering and triumph of Christ, and the coming of His Church. Jesus then *sits down*, which was the opposite of what the reader would normally do. He was sitting to teach. The revelation here is that Jesus is fulfilling the prophecy. The message is surely that the Messiah was predetermined at the point of creation and *is* God; as in those Genesis extracts quoted earlier, Jesus is focussing our attention on His arrival as a divine being.

In Capernaum, Jesus does not deny His own divinity when it is acknowledged by a demon exiting the body of a man with an unclean spirit:

In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 'Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of

God!' 'Be quiet!' Jesus said sternly. 'Come out of him!' Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. (Luke 4:33-38)

In the Sermon on the Mount, we find Jesus yet again revealing His divinity:.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.' (Matthew 5:17-19)

Jesus fulfilled the law by having a morally perfect life. He lived through, and obeyed, both the ceremonial and judicial law of the time. As for God's Law, He could *only* fulfil it, and perfectly.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:21-23)

Here Jesus sets himself up as the ultimate judge, a role only considered as belonging to God, implicitly revealing His divinity. We now move to Lake Gennesaret in Galilee, where Jesus heals a paralytic, and we observe the following:

And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, 'Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, 'Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven you", or to say, "Rise up and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'. He said to the man who was paralysed, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house'. Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, 'We have seen strange things today!' (Luke 5:21-26)

The first point to note here is that the Pharisees were under no doubt that the healings and the sayings of Christ were blasphemous because clearly He was making a declaration of His divinity. Secondly, the forgiveness of sins is

ultimately in the control of God, so Jesus is amplifying, to make very clear, His divine status.

Remaining in the Capernaum area, we have the altercation with the Pharisees concerning work on the Sabbath. Deuteronomy 23:25 had expressly allowed picking of seeds at the side of a field if you were hungry, even on the Sabbath. The disciples were being accused of this. But, interestingly, Jesus does not answer by reminding them of the law – instead, he asks them to recall how David had been hungry and gone into the Temple to eat:

But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:3-8)

He then points out that He is greater than the Temple, that He is indeed Lord over both the Temple and the Sabbath. The only thing that He could be revealing was Himself as God.

Later in this section Jesus, having demonstrated to the Pharisees His divinity by performing various miracles, is accused of having Satanic powers:

Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons'. But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad'. (Matthew 12:24-30)

He clearly states that the Kingdom of God has arrived through Him, a divine being:

Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.’  
(Matthew 12:31-32)

Here, Jesus is saying that if you have not seen His divine power and you reject Him in ignorance, then fine, you can be forgiven. But, when you to reject the man Christ, you are actually rejecting the Holy Spirit, and this is blasphemy. The clear implication is that Jesus is pointing out His divine status. Here is another example from Matthew:

All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:27-28)

Jesus is stating his unequivocal unity with God. In Isaiah 45:22, God says ‘Look to Me, and be saved’. The Jews at the time would have known what Jesus was describing. The scribes and the Pharisees, still in disbelief following the Sabbath healings, ask for a physical sign, a sign of astronomical proportions, from heaven only, not from Jesus Himself, as witnessing spectacular miracles was clearly not enough for them.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.’ (Matthew 12:38-42)

Threaded into Jesus’ rejection is a prophecy of His coming resurrection. He reminds His listeners that a lesser person, Jonah, emerged from a whale on the

third day (the Talmud confirms that any part of the day counts as a full day) and subsequently converted the whole of Nineveh whose people, after one generation, had reverted to their pagan ways. At the very least, you can only interpret this as Jesus saying that He is greater than a God-chosen prophet – and after what we know about the resurrection it amounts to a divinity revelation if ever there was one. And, just for good measure, Jesus mentions that He is greater than Solomon with all his wisdom.

The family and followers of Jesus come to feed him, as they are worried that He is not eating. In front of them, and the multitude who have come to listen to Him, He expresses not bodily and worldly union with them, but spiritual unity with all people:

Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'

(Matthew 12:47-50)

Jesus then spends some time explaining some of his parables. Some 1,000 years earlier, Psalm 78 announced that God would speak through parables. Now Jesus tells the story of the tares:

'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practise lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!' (Matthew 13:37-43)

The seeds are the lives of mankind, and to work with them is God's responsibility and no one else's. Therefore, I suggest that we can only conclude that once more Jesus is revealing that He is the same, in essence, as God. He, Jesus, commands angels, which only God does. He also passes judgment, which is the sole preserve of God.

Jesus removes a demon from a possessed man. The demon inside the man – like the demon Jesus exorcised in Capernaum – was in no doubt that He was God:

And he cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me’. (Mark 5:7-8)

Cured, the man seeks to stay with Jesus:

However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, ‘Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you’. (Mark 5:19)

As we can see, Jesus has just described His unity with God with no hesitation whatsoever.

Jesus sends His Apostles away with some of His most powerful and challenging statements. They still make for uncomfortable reading today:

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to “set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law”; and “a man’s enemies will be those of his own household”. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.’ (Matthew 10:32-39)

How do we square this with the prophecy in Isaiah 9:6 of a Messiah who will be ‘Prince of Peace’? The answer is that Jesus knows that this will be His role; but in the short term His arrival will cause disputes among people who don’t believe in Him. That is why, in the passage above, He refers to the Book of Micah (7:6)<sup>1</sup>, which speaks of family discord caused by disobedience to the will of the Lord. He also makes clear that He requires lifelong devotion to Him – we

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<sup>1</sup>For son dishonors father, Daughter rises against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man’s enemies are the men of his own household’.

must take His cross, He says, predicting His death and placing Himself in direct alignment with God.

John's Gospel contains some truly remarkable clues as to the identity of the divine Messiah. Consider, for example, Jesus' words to the multitude who were looking for Him after the feeding of the 5,000:

Jesus answered them and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.' Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.' (John 6:26-29)

Jesus is giving out *spiritual* food, the spiritual food of everlasting life that only God can give. The message to His listeners is that those who do not believe that He possesses this authority do not have belief in God. In the next passage Jesus adds to this revelation:

Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' (John 6:32-33)

Moses may have received the manna from heaven, but he did not 'give' it to the Israelites: it came from God. Jesus, in contrast, is not only 'the true bread from heaven' but, in coming down from heaven, gives life to the world. In using this image, Jesus is not hinting at His divinity but directly revealing it.

And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'. And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you".'

These words, 'I AM', reserved to God alone, are now taken up by Jesus in what are known as the 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel. Jesus says:

I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father

who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.' (John 6:35-40)

Challenged by the Pharisees, Jesus is even more explicit:

Jesus therefore answered and said to them, 'Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God". Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.' (John 6: 43-51)

When Jesus says that it is written that 'they shall all be taught by God', He is quoting Isaiah 54:13 – 'all your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children'. But He goes further: he teaches the Jews to recognise God in Him. He declares that He is God – 'the bread of life' that offers eternal life; there is a clear reference here to the Eucharist, which of course had yet to be instituted at the Last Supper.

We're told that many disciples left Jesus at this point: those that thought of Him as primarily a miracle-worker, who wanted to profit from His Miracles, could not comprehend these teachings and especially the mysterious notion that the bread of heaven was Jesus' flesh. But the twelve Apostles stayed with Him. And here we find the leader of the Apostles, Peter, affirming Jesus' Godlike status by saying:

'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' (John 6:68-69)

This is not the only occasion when Peter used these words; he said the same at Capernaum when Jesus challenged his disciples:

He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.' (Matthew 16:15-18)

The most dramatic of all the affirmations of Jesus as God the Son is to be found in the Transfiguration – the occasion, described by Matthew, Mark and Luke and alluded to by John, when Jesus ascends a mountain (unnamed, but believed to be Mount Tabor) and appears in radiant glory alongside Moses and Elijah. Peter suggests making 'tabernacles' for the three of them, thus falsely equating Jesus with Moses and Elijah. It is God the Father Himself who reveals the truth:

While he [Peter] was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead'. (Matthew 17:5-9)

Back in Capernaum, the disciples enter a dispute about who will be the greatest among them after Jesus's death – which He has by now mentioned several times. In one of the most sublimely beautiful passages of the Bible, Jesus reminds them all that unless you embrace Him like a young child, you will be right at the end of the line. Surely His own example of leading by taking the role of servant should have already have taught them this.

As Luke records, the disciples were responding to Jesus' statement that the Son of Man was about to be betrayed into the hands of men:

But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying. Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, 'Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.' (Luke 9:44-48)

As his conflict with the Pharisees intensifies, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to attend the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles. Here He reveals himself even more clearly, and in the place that is most sacred to all Jews. John's Gospel tells us that He kept his plans to attend the feast secret – but, once in Jerusalem, He took the extraordinary step of revealing the source of His authority in the Temple itself. The Jews asked him how he was able to teach, 'having never studied':

Jesus answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.' (John 7:16-18)

Later in John Chapter 7, Jesus' response to further questions leaves no doubt whatsoever: He is in God – and He declares this in the Temple for all to hear, once again using the unambiguous words 'I am'.

Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, 'You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.' (John 7:28-29)

At the Temple Jesus deals with the issue of a woman's adultery by challenging anyone who considered himself without sin to go ahead and stone her – at which they all dropped their stones. He then announces himself to the crowd. It is hard to say whether this passage was in John's Gospel at the time of writing it, as there are various manuscript discrepancies. However, the authenticity of what follows after the adultery incident is not disputed, which would suggest that Jesus was responding to something serious – we just can't know for sure what it was. The description of His divine status, though, is clear.

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. (John 8:12)

Again, we hear the very words that God uses in Exodus 3:14 to say who He is. The Tabernacle Feast was in the evening and illuminated with candles – hence the metaphor of light. This metaphor is rich with Old Testament history. It especially calls to mind the prophecy in Isaiah 60:19-20 of a Messiah who shall be the light for His people and the whole gentile world:

The sun shall no longer be your light by day,  
Nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you;  
But the Lord will be to you an everlasting light,  
And your God your glory.

Your sun shall no longer go down,  
Nor shall your moon withdraw itself;  
For the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
And the days of your mourning shall be ended.

By this stage in John's Gospel, Jesus is emphasising His unity with God with tremendous force:

You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.' (John 8:15-18)

The law to which Jesus refers is from Deuteronomy 17:6, which requires two witnesses for death. He judges only the spirit, the role reserved for the Father, and no one can judge Him as He is one with the Father.

The crowd are confused, so Jesus explains more:

Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?' And Jesus said to them, 'Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.' They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. Then Jesus said to them, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.' As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. (John 8:25-29)

Jesus once again predicts His death and resurrection. His words cannot be distinguished from those of the Father. He is one with the Father, a part of the Godhead. But this does not satisfy the assembled Temple audience, so He continues:

'If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.' (John 8:42-43)

He tells his audience that, although they are God-created and thus God is the Father of them all, He is not their true spiritual Father if they do not believe in Jesus. The message to the Jews is: do not reject Christ, for in doing so you will be rejecting true belief in God. Jesus reveals that although He comes from God, He is not separate from God. When He speaks of 'Myself' he does not refer to Jesus alone.

Jesus then talks about Abraham, of whom He speaks with special knowledge and authority. This astounds the doubting crowd, to whom Jesus replies:

'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' (John 8:58)

This is a profoundly important revelation. Not only does Jesus establish that He existed before Abraham, but he uses the present-tense 'I AM', which comes only from the voice of God.

Jesus cures a blind man, whom the Pharisees reject from their community. Jesus tells this man that He is God, and addresses the nature of spiritual blindness at the same time:

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' He answered and said, 'Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?' And Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.' Then he said, 'Lord, I believe!' And he worshipped Him. And Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.' Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, 'Are we blind also?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.' (John 9:35-41)

In Chapter 10 of John's Gospel, Jesus reveals yet more dimensions of His divinity:

Then Jesus said to them again, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not

hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.’(John 10:7-9)

By proclaiming that ‘I am the door of the sheep’, Jesus signifies that He is the entrance to heaven. Moreover, it is through Him that we are saved, and such salvation is, of course, the product of divine judgment. Jesus is allowing no distinction between Himself and God.

Jesus once more proclaims His identity by opening with the ‘I am’ formula that establishes His equality with God the Father. He predicts His death in atonement for the sins of His Jewish followers – and makes clear that He has come also for Gentiles outside the Jewish fold. He also foresees His resurrection.

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.’ (John 10:11-18)

Confronted by more opposition from the Pharisees – a sect of Jews who believed that they alone interpreted the Torah correctly – Jesus states plainly that He and the Father are one. This is the most explicit of all His declarations of His divinity – and, in the eyes of unconverted Pharisees and their rivals the Sadducees, therefore the most blasphemous. He knew that by making this statement. He was, in effect, signing His death warrant:

Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is

greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. **I and My Father are one.**'(John 10:25-30)

After an attempt to stone Him, Jesus elaborates on His relationship to God the Father. The Son and the Father are indivisible:

Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law "I said, "You are gods"'? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming," because I said, "I am the Son of God"? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe[d] that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.' Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. (John 10:34-39)

However, although Jesus makes clear that He, as the Son, shares the divinity of the Father, He does not teach that Father and Son constitute the whole of the Godhead. In Luke's Gospel He refers to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit – 'blasphemy' being a sin that can be committed only by denying the divinity of God:

Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. (Luke 12:8-10)

Jesus is saying: deny Me spiritually and you are denying the Holy Spirit, who is also God. His divinity statements therefore include a revelation of the divine Trinity. They make sense only if we grasp the truth that God is manifested as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Undoubtedly the 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel's are the richest source of revelation of Jesus' identity as the Messiah – not the messianic but mortal figure expected by the Jews but a *divine* Messiah. One of the most striking of these sayings is contained in the account of Jesus' raising of Lazarus. Jesus tells an astonished Martha:

'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe

this?' She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.' (John 11:25-27)

As I've pointed out several times, the use of the words 'I am' is associated only with the Godhead of old. Jesus has just resurrected a man; He is about to experience death and resurrection Himself; and, as he tells us here, He *is* resurrection in the sense that He has total dominion over who will attain eternal life. He is describing His Godly status.

After an interaction with a rich man seeking advice, Jesus is questioned by the disciples, who want to know what benefits await them. His response is transcendentally powerful:

So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.' (John 19: 28-30)

This is a description of the heavenly Christ the King, who dispenses judgment to Israel and determines the reward awaiting those who have followed Him – but according to His own criteria, so that those who are the last in the eyes of the world shall be first. The enthroned Son of Man can only be God Himself; therefore Jesus has clarified for all time that the title 'Son of Man' refers to the divine Messiah, not only sent by God but part of the eternal Godhead.

Towards His last days, Jesus asks His disciples to obtain for him a specific mode of transport into Jerusalem, saying that when questioned they are to make it clear that they are under the instruction of the Lord:

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them," and immediately he will send them.' (Matthew 21:1-3)

It is in these last days that Jesus again enters the Temple. At the beginning of His ministry, we learn in Luke 2:49, He had referred to this most sacred of all

buildings – exclusively dedicated to the worship of God – as His Father’s House (or, depending on which translation you use, the place of His Father’s business).

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a “den of thieves”.’ (Matthew 21:12-13)<sup>2</sup>

Jesus is here quoting from Jeremiah 7:11 – ‘Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes?’. However, when He calls the Temple ‘My house’, he is not merely invoking scripture: He is asserting His divinity, the source of His authority to cleanse the Temple.

Then Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.’ (John 12:44-50)

In the Temple once more, Jesus is very clearly saying that belief in Him is actually belief in God. Reject Him and you reject God-given life itself. Jesus, as the Word of God, will judge those who have rejected Him in the last days. Only God does the final judging, as we know, so this, again, has to be a clear revelation of Jesus’ divinity: He speaks as one with the Father. But we can’t leave this passage without noting that this is the one instance I can find when Jesus compromises His authority by saying that He does not know the date of the last day – only the Father does. This suggests that the physical manifestation of God, Jesus, was limited (by Himself) in terms of His omniscience at this time. So long as we

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 7:11 “Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it”, says the Lord’.

understand that the limitation is imposed by Jesus, this is consistent with His sovereignty.

At the washing of His disciples' feet, we see Jesus describe His divinity as follows:

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.' (John 13:12-17)

Towards the end of His life, Jesus also confirms He is not *greater* than the Father who sent Him or *bigger* than Him; rather, He is co-equal with the Father, and if you knew that, you were blessed. At the Last Supper, after the departure of Judas as reported by John, we have the following simple two lines which have the deepest theological significance:

So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.' (John 13:31-33)

The moment had come when Jesus would be glorified at the Crucifixion and, in turn, glorified in God, with God now being glorified in the Crucifixion and in the Son of Man. The equality or affinity between them cannot be ignored.

Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on, you do know Him and have seen Him.' Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him: 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that **I am in the Father, and the Father in Me**? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father **who dwells in Me**, who does the works. Believe me **that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else** believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most

assuredly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than this he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.' (John 14:5-14)

Jesus here announces that He is the way, the truth and the life – and, moreover, the *only* way, not one way out of many towards God. He tells us twice that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. As the Nicene Creed affirms, Jesus is 'consubstantial' or 'of one being' with the Father.

Later in this chapter of John, Jesus tries to prepare His followers for His departure – that is, His death, resurrection and ascension:

You have heard Me say to you, "I am going away and coming back to you". If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, "I am going to the Father," for My Father is greater than I". (John 14:28)

The traditional interpretation of this passage is that Jesus is celebrating His departure (as a man) from a lesser place, earth, to a better or greater place, heaven, which is to the Father. This is an advancement from his earthly status to that of a *greater* heavenly status, where He is rendered not in humility but in glory.

There follows the parable in which Jesus describes Himself as the vine of life. The Father will prune all those who do not believe – but, although God the Father is presented as the judge, the test of righteousness is belief in Jesus. This only makes sense if we accept that Jesus is not just Son of God but God the Son. Also, as we might expect, the story begins with the familiar divine formula:

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what

you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.(John 15:1-8)

He acknowledges that He has spoken in parables regarding His death and resurrection but that all would become clear; He would always be there to intercede with the Father on their behalf after His departure from earth. He describes His divinity in the following section of the Last Supper monologue as being *from* the Father, and *going back* to the Father:

These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.' John 16:25-28)

In the closing stages of the Last Supper we have Jesus describing how His death will glorify God, as God's redemptive plan would now be revealed to the subsequent billions of His followers who are yet to occupy the planet. 'Glorify Me as I glorify You' – only Jesus reveals His unity with the Godhead in this way. 'You as You' shows the oneness of Jesus and God, and both aspects of God are brought together at this moment, as Jesus describes His divinity. With Jesus' task complete on earth, He knows He is going back to the role He had before the world was born – as Wisdom itself:

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.' (John 17:1-5)

Moving on, when offering an intercessionary prayer to God for His disciples, He says:

‘For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.’ (John 17:8)

Jesus then prays for all those who believe in Him and the Father as one. ‘I in them and You in Me’ can’t, surely, be read any other way than as an affirmation of co-equality:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.’

These radiantly beautiful words of Christ contain a statement of extraordinary importance. The Father has loved the Son since *before the foundation of the world*. Jesus is not the exclusively human Messiah of Jewish expectations; He is part of what Christians would later come to recognise as the Holy Trinity.

Now to the Garden of Gethsemane. This passage from Mark would appear to contain a conflict between the two beings in the Godhead, Christ and the Father – Jesus asks his Father to spare Him His coming ordeal:

And He said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will’ (Mark 14:36)

A closer reading, however, shows that Christ is affirming his unity with God the Father. What we are witnessing is Jesus reacting to His humanity – He was fully human – but in the same breath proclaiming His willingness to take the bitter cup of painful death to stay in union with the Father.

At His trial, we have the following recorded in which Jesus’ own words, *as understood by the Jews*, condemn Him to death for being a blasphemer. The High

Priest tore his robes – which he was allowed to do only in the presence of a blasphemer – in disgust. Therefore they assumed, correctly, that He was describing His divinity. What they did not understand that, far from being blasphemy, this was the very opposite: an authentic revelation of God by God:

Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, “This fellow said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.”” And the high priest arose and said to Him, ‘Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?’ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?’ They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of death.’ (Matthew 26:60-66)

On the Cross, it is recorded that Jesus says:

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ (Matthew 27:46)

Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1, in fulfilment of scripture.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Once again, we have Jesus completely overriding his human person and keeping to the wishes of the other part of the Godhead, the Father. ‘My God’ are the words describing this inseparable unity. The outpouring of God’s wrath towards humanity on the physical person of Jesus as the sin-bearer for all was truly immense. Let us be clear: *the bodily, human-only pain He suffered was dwarfed by this*. Then, in verse 50, Jesus chooses to ‘yield up His spirit’, which does suggest that He is nonetheless in control of this situation. Later, at the time of His Ascension, Jesus reminds his disciples:

‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’ (Matthew 28:18)

These words are both magnificent and plain-speaking. *All* authority, meaning the total sovereignty exercised by God alone, has been granted to *Me*, meaning Jesus

of Nazareth, who could only possess this authority if, in addition to being fully human, He was fully divine. And it is authority that he possesses *in heaven and on earth*, an inconceivable claim if Jesus were merely the Messiah for whom the Jews thought they were waiting. This one sentence encompasses everything we have discussed in this chapter. Spoken just as He prepared to return to His Father, these words are the ultimate declaration of divinity, and they leave Christians in no doubt that Jesus is co-equal in the Godhead.