

WHO IS JESUS: THE TRILEMA ARGUMENT ON JESUS' CLAIM TO BE GOD

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, CS Lewis presents an interesting argument – known as **THE TRILEMA ARGUMENT** – on how we are to understand Jesus' claim to be God.

First, we begin with Jesus' claim to be God – we see this throughout scripture.

- I. He claims to have the authority to forgive sins
 - a. In **Mark 2.1-12**, Jesus heals a paralyzed man and forgives him of his sins.
 - b. *“Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ‘Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’” (vv. 6-7)*
- II. Jesus made claims that he always existed
 - a. *“**Very truly I tell you...before Abraham was born, I am!**” (John 8.58)*
- III. Jesus spoke of his intent to come back to judge the world at the end of time.
 - a. *“**For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.**” (Matthew 16.27-28)*

With these claims, as Lewis points out, we either believe that Jesus was telling the truth or he was not telling the truth

- I. If he knew he was not telling the truth, then he was a liar
 - a. But remember earlier we said that Jesus is believed by many to be a great moral teacher
 - i. Could a great moral teacher be a liar?
 - b. Would the disciples – those closest to him during his earthly ministry – be willing to die for a liar?
 - i. What does it say about a moral teacher who allows others to die for a lie?
- II. If he did not know he was not telling the truth, then he was a lunatic
 - a. Lewis claims this would be the equivalent of someone claiming to be a poached egg.
 - b. But remember, Jesus' teachings have been utilized and referenced for centuries by others – including great teachers and world leaders.
 - i. Why would we follow and repeat the ramblings of a lunatic?
- III. CS Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*:
 - a. *“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I don’t really accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 52)*