Is Jesus Really God?
Numbers 23:19
03/11/2020 Wednesday PM

Introduction

- On Wednesdays we will be looking at different thought provoking questions that may be on the hearts and minds of folks.
- Last week we asked, **What is the difference between Islam and Christianity?**
- We surveyed four key areas: the founders of the two religions, the contrasting views of God, the sacred literature, and the means of salvation. We saw that Islam differs from Christianity in each of those four areas significantly.
- One of the main differences is our belief about who Jesus Christ is. They believe he's a good teacher, we believe he is God.
- That brings us to our question for tonight, **Is Jesus Really God?** We will be looking at various Scripture passages, however our question stems primarily from **Numbers 23:19.**
- Of the three Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, this is the biggest issue that separates Christianity from the other two. There are many differences; this is just the most important and the main one.

Numbers 23:19 (NIV - 1984)
"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"

Numbers 23:19 (NLT)
"God is not a man, that he should lie. He is not a human, that he should change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?"

- Because of what this verse appears to say, some claim that the Old Testament proves that Jesus cannot be God.
- The reasoning is that, if God is not a man, then the Christian claim that Jesus, a man, is God is false.
- Those same people say it is an issue that Jesus repeatedly calls Himself the "Son of Man" in the gospels (ex. **Mark 14:21**).
- The Old Testament does indeed teach that God is not a human being, not only in **Numbers 23:19** but here also:
    - **1 Samuel 15:29**, "And he who is the Glory of Israel will not lie, nor will he change his mind, for he is not human that he should change his mind!""
    - **Hosea 11:9**, "No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy."
- However, the New Testament shows us that Jesus made claims to be God—and at the same time He calls Himself the "Son of Man," a title that proclaims His humanity. (**John 10:27-42** and **Matthew 16:13** (NKJV))
- **With all this being true, how can we prove that Jesus is God?**
- Jesus claimed to be both the Son of God and the Son of Man. That is clear.
- He said that He is God, and He said that He, at the same time, is human.
- This was a strange thing to say then and it is a strange thing to say now. It's called the **<u>hypostatic union</u>**.
- No one will ever fully understand the union of Christ's divine and human natures, no matter how much we talk about it, define it, or typify it.
- Therefore, "proof" cannot be obtained. We either believe Jesus, or we do not.

- It is critical to understand at this point that the Bible is true in detail and as a whole—both the Old and New Testaments.
- So, when Jesus began teaching new things, the old things did not become untrue; they became unveiled.
- Remember what He said about the Law in **Matthew 5:17**: ""Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."
- All of Jesus' new revelations work exactly the same way. The old knowledge was shadowy, and, as the Light of the world, Jesus dispelled the shadows (see **Colossians 2:16–17**).
- This process is not destructive of the old knowledge—it is instructive, as Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian shows (**Acts 8:30–35**).

- We must also consider what the Old Testament is really saying about God when it says He is not a human being.
- The point being made in **Numbers 23:19**, **1 Samuel 15:29**, and **Hosea 11:9** is <u>that God does not lie</u>.
- He is not fickle. His emotions do not change His eternal purposes.
- This is unlike fallen humanity, who cannot see the big picture, who often breaks promises, and whose feelings often cloud discernment.

- **In other words, the statements that God is not a man are contrasting one aspect of God's nature with a corresponding part of man's.**
- Saying, "God is not a man," has nothing to do with whether or not God can ever exist in the flesh.
- The Old Testament references to God being unlike man do not apply to Jesus' particular type of humanity.
- All they are telling us is that God is not a man as we think of men. It's a contrast, not a restriction.
- There is nothing that logically prevents God from becoming a man in a whole new way—in fact, redemption requires this, and redemption was God's plan from before the foundation of the world (**Revelation 13:8**).
- Thus, it can be said that God knew He would become a man before **Numbers 23:19** was even penned!

- If we consider the Old Testament in isolation (which is the Jewish perspective), we will not likely "prove" that Jesus Christ was man, God, Messiah, and Savior—although the indicators are all there (see **Isaiah 53**, for example).
- Christians see the foreshadowing of the God-man in the Old Testament because the New Testament revelation helps interpret the Old Testament references (e.g., **Matthew 2:15**; cf. **Hosea 11:1**).
- **This brings up an important fact regarding biblical interpretation: God reveals His truth progressively, over time. He has unfolded His purposes sequentially and as needed over the millennia.**
- For example, Adam and Eve in their innocence had no need to know about redemption, but after they sinned, then the time was appropriate, and God laid it out for them.

Genesis 3:15

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.""

- That bit of revelation was given at a point in time, but its full meaning did not become clear until after Christ came in the flesh—and as the authors of the New Testament were writing under inspiration.
- We understand now that **Genesis 3:15** points directly to Jesus' atoning death—and this revelation is necessary for us today.
- But that information was not necessary for Adam and Eve.

- In like manner God revealed His will progressively to His people in the Old Testament Scriptures, and those people were responsible to behave in obedience according to where they were on revelation's timeline.
- Today, Christians are responsible for all of God's Word, because we live in a time when it is complete.
- Additionally, believers have the indwelling Holy Spirit, so there are no excuses for not acknowledging Jesus Christ as God.
- Since revelation is progressive, a person's response to God depends on where he is on the timeline.
- An Old Testament Jew would have no concept of the God-man, although clues such as **Psalm 110:**1 were present.
- But John the Baptist's prophecies, followed by Jesus' miracles, were further revelation.

John 20:30–31

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- People today still need to respond in faith to Jesus' miracles. Those who do not are spiritually blind.
- To summarize, God's statements that He is not a man and Jesus' statements that He is the Son of God coexist as true; they are not in conflict.
- Revelation is progressive, and Old Testament concepts are more fully developed in the New Testament.
- Finally, God always had it in mind that the Son would become flesh and dwell among men, so God never "changed His mind" about becoming a man.

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- **Hallelujah! God's Word is Truth!**