

Jesus: Lord, Liar, or Lunatic?

This weekend at DNow or theme is “Reign: Awakening a Generation to King Jesus.” Without spoiling anything, we will be focusing on the idea that Jesus is currently reigning and ruling over the universe sitting at the right hand of God and because that is true what does that mean for us. Today, in preparation for what we will talk about DNow, we are going to ask the question, “Is Jesus really who He claimed to be?”

Most people don't have a problem with Jesus and his teachings, even including those that do not believe in him. Almost every other major religion some kind of teaching or stance on what they understand about Jesus. None of the major religions have an overall negative view of Jesus. Even Muslims believe that Jesus was a teacher or prophet sent by Allah. Most people that do not believe in Jesus would still agree that he was a good, or even great, moral teacher.

At a surface level this is convenient view that allows people to give reverence to Jesus and the impact his teaching has had throughout history while also giving them room to not adhere to Christianity themselves. However, when closely looking and what Jesus taught, particularly what He said about Himself, it becomes harder and harder to validate that Jesus was simply a good moral teacher.

C.S. Lewis, a Christian theologian and author, popularized an argument that is useful in understanding what the problem with the view that Jesus was a good moral teacher and not Lord. The argument can be presented and understood this way:

1. Premise: The Bible teaches that Jesus is Lord.
2. Premise: If Jesus is not Lord, he would be a liar or a lunatic.
3. Premise: Jesus is neither a liar nor a lunatic.
4. Conclusion: Therefore, Jesus is Lord.

To examine the validity of this argument we will look at each of premises. If any one of those can be reasonably refuted then the conclusion is invalid.

Does the Bible teach that Jesus is Lord?

In short... yes. The first premise of the argument is easy to validate.

John 10:30-31 pg.523

30 I and the Father are one.”

31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” 33 The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

- Jesus claimed to be one with God
- The Jews listening to Him understood His claim to divinity and accused Him of blasphemy

Colossians 1:15-20 pg.572

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- Paul presents Jesus as the creator and sustainer of all creation
- More than that He asserts that the fullness of God is found in Jesus

Matthew 16:13-15 pg.480

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

- Peter directly answers Jesus’ question
- This is to competing thoughts similar to what we are talking about today, some thought Jesus was a good teacher or prophet

Acts 2:29-36 pg.530

29 “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
35 until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”

36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

- This is the end of Peter’s sermon at Pentecost
- He is clearly teaching that Jesus is Lord
- More than that, Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God

Revelation 1:12-18 pg.595

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

- This is John's vision of Jesus
- Sitting at the right hand of God
- He is depicted as a powerful reigning King of Heaven

If not Lord then what?

Premise 2 of the argument gives room for the possibility that the biblical account of Jesus is inaccurate. However, if the Bible is not true in its claims about Jesus there is still no logical room for Jesus to be considered good. If He is not Lord, then he must be either a liar or a lunatic.

Liar

If Jesus knew He was not Lord yet was knowingly claiming and allowing His followers to say that about Him that make Him a liar. A liar who has schemed one of the greatest delusions in all of human history. Far from good, if Jesus were a liar, He would be more accurately known as greatest narcissist ever.

Lunatic

If Jesus is not Lord, yet He fully believed that He was, then He would be victim to a mental delusion that his followers enabled. Nowhere near good, if Jesus was not God but was convinced He was then He would by definition be crazy and in great need of a mental institution.

Every person who follows Jesus rearranges their life to adhere to His teachings, many have lost their lives because of their belief. If Jesus is not Lord, then he must be either a liar or a lunatic and one should stay as far away as possible from His teachings.

Was Jesus a Liar or a Lunatic?

It is clear that the Bible presents Jesus as Lord. A claim that Jesus himself made multiple times throughout His life. That was premise #1. Premise #2 reasonably claims that Jesus cannot be a good moral teacher if He is not Lord. Premise #3 cause us to answer the important question, what do you believe to be true?

If you do not believe Jesus to be Lord, you cannot reasonably hold that Jesus was still a good moral teacher. However, based on what you know of Jesus and His teachings, do you understand Him or His teachings to come from a person who is knowingly deceiving others or that of a person out of His mind?

This premise could be debated, however by most objective observations Jesus did good things for others, even strangers. He also taught objectively good things about morality and how to treat people. It is not reasonable to believe that Jesus was either a liar or lunatic base of what we see of Him in the Bible. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that it is most reasonable that Jesus is Lord and King.

Conclusion

Since it is most reasonable that Jesus is Lord, it is necessary for us to have a response to who Jesus is regardless of whether we have chosen to follow Him or not. If Jesus is King and you follow him, then that should be reflected in how we live and act everyday. If He is King and you do not follow him, you must reconcile how is not Lord, liar, or a lunatic. We will discuss Jesus' kingship more throughout DNow weekend.

Small Group Questions

- What do you think about the Lord, liar, lunatic argument? Have you heard it before, do you think it is a reasonable argument?
- Think about the scriptures we looked at and others you know about, does the Bible leave any room for Jesus being anything other than Lord and King?
- Why do you think some people believe that Jesus was good person or good teacher but not Lord?
- Playing devil's advocate, could you make up a reasonable argument that Jesus was either a liar or a lunatic? What might that look like?
- If it is not reasonable that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, and it is reasonable that He is Lord, why might some people still not see Him that way or choose to follow Him?
- How might Jesus being Lord and King be problem for people who do believe in Jesus?
- How should Jesus being Lord and King affect those who believe in Him?
- How would increasing our understanding of Jesus' Lordship and Kingship help those who believe in Jesus?