

Jesus Is God Bible Verses?

by Servetus the Evangelical

Most Christian Bible scholars claim that the Bible identifies Jesus as “God.” Yet they cannot cite many passages that do so. The word for “God” in the Greek New Testament (NT) is *theos*, and scholars refer to these few christological passages as “the *theos* texts.”

Moderately traditionalist theologian John Macquarrie admits, “it may strike us as rather odd that such an apparently central Christian affirmation as ‘Jesus Christ is God’ is so minimally attested in the Scriptures that we have to hunt around for instances, and when we have found them, argue about what they really mean.” Traditionalist D.A. Fennema observes, “Most of the passages which may call Jesus ‘God’ are plagued by textual variants or syntactical obscurity, either of which permits an entirely different interpretation of the passage.” William Barclay explains, “It is when we begin to examine the evidence that we run into very real difficulties. The evidence is not extensive. But we shall find that on almost every occasion in the New Testament in which Jesus seems to be called God there is a problem either of textual criticism or of translation. In almost every case we have to discuss which of two readings is to be accepted or which of two possible translations is to be accepted.” He adds, “One of the most vexed questions in Christian thought and language is whether or not we can directly and simply call Jesus ‘God.’”

The main reason for this difficulty is that when the Greek NT documents were written, in the 1st century, Greek did not have punctuation, lower case (only had capital uncials), nor even spaces between words. So, it is often uncertain how the grammar of these critical verses should be treated. The disputed text may only be a brief phrase or one word. The question may be whether to place a comma or a period in a certain place, or how to treat an indefinite (anarthrous) noun. These grammatical issues are complex if not incomprehensible for Bible readers who do not know *koine* (“common”) Greek.

This grammatical uncertainty becomes even more evident when perusing these verses in the better NT commentaries. Traditionalist Murray Harris explains, “it is a curious fact that each of the [disputed *theos*=God] texts ... contains an interpretative problem of some description; actually, most contain two or three.” Thus, A.E. Harvey alleges, “The New Testament writers ... show no tendency to describe Jesus in terms of divinity; the few apparent exceptions are either grammatically and textually uncertain or have an explanation which, ... brings them within the constraint of Jewish monotheism.”

It is surprising to discover that, with the exception of perhaps only two of these NT *theos* texts, contemporary traditionalist authorities are about evenly divided as to whether these major *theos* passages call Jesus “God.” For instance, R.T. France adduces, “in many cases the apparent direct attribution of divinity to Jesus melts away in the light of uncertainty about either the text, or the punctuation, or the syntax, leaving us with no undisputed (or almost undisputed!), direct attribution of divinity to Jesus outside the opening and closing declarations of the Gospel of John (Jn. 1:1; 1:18, 20:28).”

Traditionalists cite John 1.1c and 20.28 as incontrovertible evidence Jesus is God. Oscar Cullmann calls them “indisputable;” Murray Harris says they are “incontestable.”

The following table shows all nine major, debated christological texts (arranged in their NT order) which contain the word *theos* and their type(s) of problem(s) and genre. (A difficulty with syntax is herein regarded as a grammatical problem.)

Text	Problem(s)	Genre	Translation (NASB)
Jn 1.1c	punctuation grammatical	hymn (?)	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
Jn 1.18	textual grammatical	hymn (?)	No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.
Jn 20.28	grammatical	confession	Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"
Rom 9.5	punctuation grammatical	doxology	whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.
2 Th 1.12	grammatical	doctrine	according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Tit 2.13	grammatical	prophecy	looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus
Heb 1.8-9	textual grammatical contextual	Old Testament citation	But of the Son He says, THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,... THEREFORE GOD, THY GOD, HATH ANOINTED THEE
2 Pt 1.1	textual grammatical	salutation	by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ
1 Jn 5.20	grammatical	summary	we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Most traditionalists claim the following major, non-*theos* NT texts implicitly identify Jesus as God: John 5.18; 8.24, 28, 58; 10.30-33; Philippians 2.5-11; Colossians 1.19; 2.9; 1 Timothy 2.5; 3.16. Some that the following minor, non-*theos* texts do too: Matthew 1.23; 28.19; Mark 2.5-12; 10.17-18 and parallels; John 3.13; Acts 20.28; Galatians 2.20; Ephesians 5.5; 1 John 5.7; Revelation 1.8.

In my book, *The Restitution of Jesus Christ*, I examine all of these texts extensively.