Is Jesus Lord, Liar or Lunatic?

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**Foundational Scripture:**

**Intro**:

* After carefully considering some of the lofty claims of Jesus, we come to the conclusion that Jesus wasn’t seeking to garner the attention of man for some selfish, egotistical reason. Jesus’ bold claims are evidence of His divine position but more than that, it is evidence that He sought to persuade mankind He was indeed God (deity). He said what He said and did what He did for the overarching purpose of showing us He was the fulfillment of all the OT prophecies and that He was God Himself. Now, from the layman’s standpoint, what are we to do with these claims?
* World renowned writer, C.S. Lewis, proposed the argument that on the basis of Jesus’ claims there are only two options: **They are either false or they are true.** If they are false then that would make Jesus one of two things: **A liar** or a **lunatic**. But if the claims be true, then that signifies that He is in fact **Lord.**

**The Trilemma:**

1. **Is Jesus a Liar?**
   1. The fact that Jesus claimed to be equal with God, having His authority and His blessing is a statement worthy of further investigation at the very least. The question then is: Were the claims of Jesus false and did He know they were false?
   2. If He knowingly made such false claims then He was probably the biggest hypocrite who ever lived considering that He preached a high sense of morality and righteousness (Matt. 5:3-12). Beyond this Jesus would be showing Himself to be a demon and of the devil proving the claims of the religious leaders to be true (cf. Matt. 12:24; Mk. 3:22; Jn. 8:44, 48).
   3. If Jesus was in fact knowingly leading people astray by His lies then not only was He a hypocrite and a demon, but He also got the death He deserved. But stories recorded at the time show nothing to prove that Jesus was in fact lying (Jn. 8:46; 1 Pet. 2:22). So, why would a man go through such extents to lie if He knew it was only going to lead to mass hatred and a cruel death?
   4. Someone who manufactures claims usually does so for some kind of gain. In his book, *“Cold Case Christianity”* James Warner Wallace proposes three motives that are at the heart of lying or any extreme misbehavior:
      1. **Financial Greed**: There is nothing in the scriptures to show that Jesus was a man who desired wealth or who lived to gain money at the costs of others (cf. Matt. 6:19-21; 12:32-24; 19:16-24).
      2. **Sexual Desire**: Jesus was followed by numerous women and He had various opportunities to take advantage of them if He desired to (cf. Lk. 7:36-50; 8:2-3; 10:38-42; Jn. 4).
      3. **Pursuit of Power**: One could argue Jesus’ claims were no more than a power play to seize a large following for Himself since He was just a poor nobody from Nazareth who wanted to stand on the big stage. But the bible shows nothing of this nature occurring (cf. Matt. 20:28; Jn. 13:1-16).
2. **Is Jesus a Lunatic?**
   1. If Jesus was not a liar, unaware of making ludicrous illegitimate claims, then the other alternative would be that He was crazy. Philosopher, Peter Kreeft argues against this consideration on this basis:
      1. *“A measure of your insanity is the size of the gap between what you think you are and what you really are. If I think I am the greatest philosopher in America, I am only an arrogant fool; If I think I am Napoleon, I am probably over the edge; If I think I am a butterfly, I am fully embarked from the sunny shores of sanity. But if I think I am God, I am even more insane because the gap between anything finite and the infinite God is even greater than the gap between any two finite things, even a man and a butterfly. Well, then, why not [view Jesus as a] liar or lunatic? But almost no one who has read the Gospels can honestly and seriously consider that option. The savviness, the canniness, the human wisdom, the attractiveness of Jesus emerge from the Gospels with unavoidable force to any but the most hardened and prejudiced reader. . . . Jesus has in abundance precisely those three qualities that liars and lunatics most conspicuously lack: (1) his practical wisdom, his ability to read human hearts . . .; (2) his deep and winning love, his passionate compassion, his ability to attract people and make them feel at home and forgiven, his authority, “not as the scribes”; and above all (3) his ability to astonish, his unpredictability, his creativity. Liars and lunatics are all so dull and predictable! No one who knows both the Gospels and human beings can seriously entertain the possibility that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, a bad man”* (Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith*).
   2. There is no conceivable way of reading the NT gospels and walking away with the conclusion that Jesus is mentally incapacitated or a lunatic in some fashion, shape or form. It is true that early in His ministry, His family considered the notion that He had lost His senses (Mk. 3:21) but that did not hold up in the long run (cf. Jn. 7:45-46).
   3. The only reason that Jesus would be conceived a lunatic is because the argument that He is a liar doesn’t hold up. And since both these propositions for why Jesus made the claims He did fall flat on their face, it leaves us with only one other option.
3. **Is Jesus Lord?**
   1. If Jesus cannot be considered a liar and neither a lunatic, then His claims must be in fact legitimate pointing to the reality and He is both Lord and God. Many of His own followers struggled with His identity early on but later came to the realization of who He was (Matt. 8:23-27; 16:13-17; Jn. 11:25-27; 20:28).
   2. There is no other alternative Jesus’ claims leaves us with. Either we say He is a liar or a lunatic but if He is neither of those then He must be Lord. We cannot assert that He was no more than a great moral teacher because that wasn’t what Jesus was claiming to be.
   3. He is Lord (Jn. 20:31) which leaves us then with two options: We can either accept that or reject that. We know He cannot be a liar or a lunatic but He is Lord. But if we aren’t willing to confess Him and face that realization then by all means we can deny Him and face the consequences thereof.

**Sources:**

Kreeft, Peter. *Fundamentals of the Faith: Essays in Christian Apologetics*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988.

McDowell, J. *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999.

Wallace, J. Warner. *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels.* Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2013.