The Lofty Claims of Jesus: Equality with God

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**Foundational Scripture:** Jn. 5:17-18

**Intro**:

* The Gospel of John stands out when compared with the other three NT gospels. It is unique because it is widely believed it was written some 20-30 years later than Matthew, Mark and Luke. Unlike the synoptics, John contains no genealogy of Christ whatsoever and neither does it contain the parables of Jesus. It limits the count of Jesus’ miracles to only seven and spends more time than the other three on Jesus’ final 24 hours leading up to His death. The fact is John writes from a different perspective with a different purpose in mind and it is largely for those reasons the gospel is attractive but also controversial. John’s overarching theme is the deity of Jesus and thus the gospel contains numerous instances of a historical Jesus claiming to be God, like God or as powerful as God the Father. Are these claims legitimate or are they fraudulent? What does the evidence show?

**Jesus claimed to be Equal with God:**

1. **Jesus’ equality claims in John’s Gospel**
   1. John 5:17-19, 22-23
      1. This particular claim to equality with God (vv. 17-19), in the context, deals with working on the Sabbath. Jesus claims not only to be equal with God but also the ruler and founder of the Sabbath law.
      2. In addition, in vv. 22-23, Jesus unequivocally claims absolute authority for Himself by stating He has the right of sovereign judgment. If that wasn’t bad enough He continues by saying that if He is not being honored then neither is YHWH.
   2. John 8:16, 18-19, 25-29, 58-59
      1. The entire context here centers around a sizzling debate concerning the identity of Jesus. In the back and forth between Jesus and the Pharisees, He claims to be the righteous judge who is sent by the Father to testify about Him and that He explicitly has His seal of approval (vv. 16, 18-19, 25-29)
      2. The climax of this discussion is seen in vv. 58-59 where Jesus tells them plainly He is the great *“I AM.”* They understood this as an attachment to YHWH and divinity considering it blasphemous and ludicrous.
   3. John 10:22-33, 37-38
      1. Jesus asserts equality with God in this section by stating He is a worker of divine signs and the Good Shepherd capable of giving eternal life to His sheep. He climaxes this claim by stating He and the Father are one and the same.
      2. He additionally affirms that He has sovereign power over His sheep and no one is able to fight against His power, let alone take control of His sheep. This power is explicitly divine and reserved for the Almighty God alone. That Jesus ties Himself to such power is a declaration of being one with God.
   4. John 14:7-12
      1. In the final 24 hours spent with the chosen 12, Jesus spends a considerable amount of that time speaking to them about His mission and His identity. In response to a question asked by Thomas Jesus states that those who have seen Him, they have also seen the Father.
      2. Philip’s additional request provides Jesus yet another opportunity to sum up His identity by categorically declaring the Father abides in Him and He in the Father. The miracles have been brought about by the power of YHWH Himself which Jesus has access to and clearly has used throughout His ministry.
2. **How did Jesus support His claims?**
   1. John 5:17-19, 22-23: **Heals sick man at Bethesda (Ch. 5); Feeding of 5,000 (Ch. 6)**
   2. John 8:16, 18-19, 25-29, 58-59: **Heals man born blind (Ch. 9)**
   3. John 10:22-33, 37-38: **Raises Lazarus from the dead (Ch. 11)**
   4. John 14:7-12: **Willingly dies on the cross and rises from the dead (Chs. 19-21)**

**Sources:**

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