

## Episode 1: *"Did Jesus Really Think He Was God?"*

[Intro music fades in]

**Host:**

Welcome back to *Cross Examination*, the show where skeptics and scholars square off over the biggest questions in history. I'm your host, "-----" —the resident skeptic with too many questions and not enough answers.

Today we're asking: Did Jesus *actually* believe He was the Son of God, or is that something the Church cooked up later?

To help us dive into the psychology and history behind this question, we're joined by Dr. Expert1, an expert in biblical history and psychological profiling with a doctorate in psychology. Welcome, Doctor.

**Expert1:**

Thanks, Host. Always a pleasure to dig into these fascinating questions.

**Host:**

Yeah for sure and I'm excited to be diving into this question with you specifically because of your background.

*[turns to audience]*

For those who don't know, psychological profiling is such a neat trick. Expert1 here can look at a crime scene and tell you details on the suspect that you wouldn't even think of without having ever met the person.

So we're going to use Expert1's expertise today to answer a question that has been the source of many conversations among many. [pause]

Alright. Let me just get straight into it: Jesus never literally said, "Hey, everyone, I'm God." If you read the gospels, it seems like He always shied away from actually ever saying that He's the messiah.

Almost as if He never thought He was God and others after His death took Him as such which is something Jesus probably wouldn't even agree with today.

**Expert1:**

You gotta look at the time period and all that was going on.

To answer this question, one must look back at the time period. The Jews, at the time, did not have a clear understanding or really *any* concept of the Trinity. They only knew of God the Father– whom they called “Yahweh”. So if someone at the time stood and said “I am God” this would be clear-cut blasphemy. There would’ve been no time for miracles or preaching after Jesus made *that* statement.

Plus, Everyone at the time had expectations of what the Messiah would look like, and Christ did not want to be restricted to anyone’s specific categories. And we know that He was more forthcoming in private with His disciples.

But if you really want to see who Jesus thought He was, then you have to evaluate His relationships with others.

**Host:**

What do you mean?

**Expert1:**

Well, take Jesus’s relationship with His disciples for example: 12 disciples like the 12 tribes. It can be seen that the 12 represent a renewed Israel. But Jesus here isn’t one of the 12 – like He’s not part of the renewed - redeemed- group but rather the One that formed the group. Just like God in the OT chose His people.

And then take Jesus with the religious leaders: Christ makes what seems to be radical statements that set aside huge portions of the OT book of Leviticus with its meticulous rules concerning purity when He says: “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

The Pharisees did not like this. But Christ here is saying God has further plans, He’s doing something new. And with this we have to ask: What kind of person thinks he has the authority to set aside the divinely inspired Jewish Scriptures and supplant them with his own teaching?

**Host:**

[nodding] Someone who thinks They’re God.

**Expert1:**

Exactly! And even thinking about the Roman authorities.

Why would they agree to crucifying Jesus? If He hadn't made such claims about being God and simply walked about telling parables, why would He be crucified by the Romans at the Passover season, when no Jew wants any Jew to be executed? Why would He have a sign above His head saying "This is the King of the Jews"?

John's Gospel says:

Either Christ had made this verbal claim, or someone clearly thought He did.

**Host:**

Okay but Jesus was always called Rabbi or Rabbouni by His followers. which I know just means "teacher". So wouldn't this mean that He just thought of Himself to be another Rabbi like any of the other teachers of His day?

**Expert1:**

No because of His "radical new way" of teaching. Like we mentioned earlier, part of Jesus' teachings were things the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, hadn't heard before and some weren't comfortable with that change.

Like when Jesus starts His teaching with the phrase "Amen, I say to you"

Sounds like a simple statement, right? Actually no. not for the time period.

What seems to be a simple statement is absolutely revolutionary when you consider the time period and culture.

In Judaism, the testimony of 2 witnesses is needed. But here, Christ witnesses the truth of His own sayings. Instead of basing His teaching on the authority of others, He speaks on His own authority.

So in studying the identity of Christ and who He believed Himself to be, this statement gives great insight as He is understood to be someone who considers Himself to have authority above and beyond what the OT prophets had. He believed He possessed not only divine inspiration but also divine authority and the power of direct divine utterance.

And my personal favorite is the use of the word "Abba".

**Host:**

Abba? Like Father?

**Expert1:**

Yes! The term “Abba” connotes intimacy in a relationship between a child and his father. And it is the term used in early Judaism with a beloved teacher and his disciples. And here we see that Christ used this term and taught His disciples to use the same when praying to God. This may seem simple to us as we have grown up thinking of God as our Father. But considering the time period, this was far from common.

For the Jews at that time, it was customary to work around having to say the name of God. If they were going to address God, they might say something like “the Holy One, blessed be He” instead of using His personal name. And “Abba” is a very personal term. It is a form of endearment.

**Host:**

Well Jesus told the disciples to use the word too. And nowadays all Christians call God their Father. So that doesn’t mean He thought of Himself as God.

Almost makes me think He just felt like He was close enough to God to call Him His Father and that’s that.

**Expert1:**

Yeah but the significance of Abba here is that Christ was the initiator of an intimate relationship that was previously unavailable. So it begs the question: What kind of person can change the terms of relating to God? What kind of person can initiate a new relationship with God?

This means Christ had a degree of intimacy with God that is unlike anything in the Judaism of His day.

Christ here is saying that only through having a relationship with Him does this kind of prayer language and this kind of “Abba” relationship with God is possible— this speaks volumes of how He regarded Himself.

St. Paul says in His epistle to Timothy: “**5** For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus”

**Host:**

Do you think there’s any evidence of Jesus having an identity crisis?

**Expert1:**

Quite the opposite actually. He had many moments in the gospels of identity confirmation: take baptism when the Father’s voice from heaven said : This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Transfiguration too that was a clear identity revelation and then the Garden of Gethesemane before crucifixion was a clear mission revelation.

And with asking the disciples who do men say that I am, Peter said: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

He wasn’t surprised, He didn’t deny, He blessed Simon for his declaration of His divinity.

He knew who He was and He knew what His mission was– very clear identity.

**Host:**

Alright so Jesus thought he was the person appointed by God to bring in the climactic saving act of God in human history.

Did He believe he was the Son of God, the anointed one of God? yes. Did He see Himself as the Son of Man? yes. Did he see himself as the final Messiah? Yes, that's the way He viewed Himself.

**Expert1:**

Right! And we have to ask ourselves: "Why is there no other first-century Jew who has millions of followers today? Why isn't there a John the Baptist movement? Why, of all first-century figures, including the Roman emperors, is Jesus still worshiped today, while the others have crumbled into the dust of history?"

**Host:**

Yeah right! Well... I guess this brings us to our next question that needs answer: If He really believed He was God, were His claims true or was He just mad?

And to answer that question for us we have Dr. Expert2 who’s eager to dive in with you all on the question of Jesus’ Sanity.

**[Outro music fades in]**

Thank you so much Dr. Expert1 you’ve been a huge help so far in our journey to building a case for Christ.

**Expert1:**

Thanks for having me!

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## Episode 2: "Was Jesus Mad?"

[Intro music fades in]

**Host:**

Welcome back to *Cross Examination*. Earlier, Dr. Expert1 made the case that Jesus *believed* He was the Son of God. But here's the elephant in the room: If someone today claimed that, we'd assume they were either lying—or unwell.

So we're joined by clinical psychologist and theologian Dr. Expert2. Doctor, can someone truly believe they're God and uh... still be mentally stable?

**Expert2:**

Well, Sam, it's a fair question. Delusional individuals often make grand claims. But psychologists don't just look at claims—they look at emotional balance, relational ability, coherence of thought.

And by every measure, Jesus shows emotional and psychological health.

**Host:**

Even when He was flipping tables and calling people vipers?

**Expert2:**

Actually, yes. That was righteous anger—measured, purposeful. When His friend Lazarus died, He wept. That's a textbook example of emotionally healthy grief.

Contrast that with actual delusion: paranoia, erratic speech, inappropriate behavior. Jesus doesn't fit any of it. His conversations were profound and logical—even at age twelve and teaching in the temple.

Luke's Gospel says: "**46** Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. **47** And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. **48** So when they saw Him, they were amazed"

Overall: Christ was loving but didn't let his compassion immobilize him; he didn't have a bloated ego, even though he was often surrounded by adoring crowds; he maintained balance despite an often demanding lifestyle; he always knew what he was doing and where he was going; he cared deeply about people, including women and children, who weren't seen as being important back then; he was able to accept people while not merely winking at their sin; he responded to individuals based on where they were at and what they uniquely needed.

**Host:**

Okay, so He wasn't your average crazy person. But people *did* say He had a demon.

**Expert2:**

They did—but look at *why*. It was a reaction to His claims. His assertions about Himself were so far beyond their understanding of the norm, not because Jesus was truly mentally unbalanced. And immediately, others pushed back: “These aren’t the words of a mad man.” Plus, He didn’t just speak boldly—He backed it up with miracles.

**Host:**

Ah yes, the miracles. Couldn’t those be psychosomatic healings or... hypnosis?

**Expert2:**

Let’s assume some were psychosomatic.

Let’s go with this for a while, might Jesus have sometimes healed by suggestion? I have no problem with that. Sometimes people can have a psychologically induced illness, and if they get a new purpose for living, a new direction, they don’t need the illness anymore.

But also keep in mind that psychosomatic healing takes time, while Christ’s healings were spontaneous. Also those who are healed psychologically have their symptoms return a few days later, but this was not the case.

That doesn’t explain the blind seeing, lepers healed, storms calmed—or Lazarus walking out of a tomb. Hypnosis doesn’t cure lifelong illnesses or raise the dead.

**Host:**

Alright well what about hypnosis? It could account for the exorcisms Jesus performed, His “transfiguration”, even Lazarus being raised from the dead honestly. Couldn’t he have been in a deathlike trance induced by hypnosis? Honestly, even for the Resurrection – couldn’t Jesus have conditioned the disciples to hallucinate His appearances in response to pre-arranged cues.

And I feel like this even explains the fact referenced in the gospels that Jesus couldn’t do miracles in His hometown of Nazareth. He failed as a hypnotist there, among those who knew Him best, those who had seen Him grow up as an ordinary child.

**Expert2:**

Not everyone is equally susceptible to hypnosis. Even with stage hypnotists they’ll talk in certain soothing tones and watch for people in the audience who seem to be responding and pick on those as their volunteers.

And if this were all suggestive illusion, how do you explain skeptics?

How did He hypnotize Saul of Tarsus, the opponent of Christianity who never even met Jesus until he saw him after his resurrection? How did he hypnotize Thomas, who was so skeptical he wouldn't believe in the Resurrection until he put his fingers in the nail holes in Jesus' hands?

They weren't exactly primed for hypnosis.

And look at the miracle of turning water into wine. Jesus never addressed the wedding guests. He didn't even suggest to the servants that the water had been turned into wine—he merely told them to take some water to the master of the banquet. He's the one who tasted it and said it was wine, with no prior prompting.

As for the Resurrection, hypnosis wouldn't explain the empty tomb.

**Host:**

Well, like I was saying the disciples could have been hypnotized to imagine the tomb as empty.

**Expert2:**

Well sure but Jesus certainly couldn't have hypnotized the Pharisees and Roman authorities, and they would have gladly produced his body if it had remained in the tomb. The fact that they didn't tells us the tomb was really empty.

**Host:**

So, He's sane, persuasive, and working miracles. Doesn't that just make Him a *really good con man*?

**Expert2:**

A con man seeks power or wealth. Jesus was practically homeless, crucified, and forgave His executioners. That's not a profile of manipulation—it's one of mission.

**Host:**

Alright. So He believed it, lived it, and was mentally stable. Which leaves us with only one cliffhanger: *Was He right?*

**Expert2:**

Exactly. That's the next question: *Did Jesus truly embody the attributes of God?* And that's where our investigation continues.

**[Outro music fades in]**

**Host:**

Thanks for joining us on *Cross Examination*. If you liked the episode, subscribe, share it with a friend, and get ready for Part 3: *"Could He Actually Be God?"*

Until then—keep asking the hard questions.