

## Biblical Myths

The Bible does not contain myths in the sense that the Word of God contains anything less than absolute truth. However, there are numerous places in Scripture, which lend themselves to misinterpretations and false conclusions, unless one pays close attention to context, expositional constancy, and translational accuracy, including the very grammar of the original language. Lack of attention to these matters has led to some commonly held beliefs, which are contrary to what the Bible really says. The following are a few of those I've been privileged to discover in the works of others whom the Holy Spirit has blessed with His tutorage.

Myth #1 Peter is the founding head of the Christian church.

This myth seems to be mostly limited to the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church and to those who believe in this precept. The basis for this belief comes from Matthew 16:18 where Jesus says to Peter, "...*That thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church....*" On the surface, this might suggest that Peter is the rock on which Jesus will build His church. But think for a moment. Does it make sense that God would build a church, a whole religious belief system, on a mere man, no matter how brilliant and honorable he might be? Or on any man, especially the "ready, fire, aim" impulsive Peter? Jesus is the Rock, Jesus is the head of the church; it is all about and by Jesus our Lord and Savior. There are many belief systems with some now-deceased humans as their founders and heads, such a Jehovah Witness, Mormons, Mohammedans, Christian Scientists, etc. But the head of Christianity is Christ Jesus, the eternal God who became Man in order to suffer and die for all mankind and who lives again throughout eternity as God/Man. No one less than God Himself could be the head of His own church. But that bit of logic was not enough for those who chose to conclude otherwise. However, the Greek words and grammar clearly and undisputedly attest to that fact. Substituting a couple of Greek words in the above quote, along with one aspect of its grammar, will totally clarify and nail down the fact of the matter. Jesus said, "*Thou are Peter* (that is petros = a little rock) *and upon this rock* (that is Petra = a huge rock) *I will build my*

*church.*” Obviously, Jesus is not speaking of the little rock or stone becoming a huge rock, because petros is a masculine noun and petra is feminine; and in Greek grammar, a masculine noun cannot be used to modify a feminine one or vice versa. Therefore, while Jesus is speaking to Peter, He is speaking of Himself as the one on whom He will build His church. Backing up to verse Matthew 16:15, Jesus asks the apostles who they believe He is. Then Peter (who has not yet been named Peter, but is still called Simon) answers for them by claiming Him to be “The Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus then tells Peter that the only way he could know this was that God the Father had told him. It is this marvelous, supernaturally derived confession, which precedes Simon’s being honored with the name Peter, a “little rock.” Perhaps it might be said that he became a “chip off the old rock.” This symbolism might have been quite graphic to Peter and the other apostles if we can imagine them at the “coast of Caesarea Philippi” (verse 13). At that place, there is a gigantic rock escarpment with a stream flowing out of it. Can we not see Jesus pointing to a small rock in the stream and saying to Peter that he is that rock which is but broken, a chip off the tremendous rock cliff? Perhaps Jesus then pointed to the huge rock cliff for comparison and then to Himself when He said, “...upon this rock I will build my church.” Surely He didn’t mean He would build it on that physical rock. We know that the “Church” of which He spoke is the whole church body of saved souls, not any edifice at Caesarea or anywhere else. The “Rock” on which the church was, and will continue to be built until the moment of the Rapture, is Jesus Himself and no other. Finally, it should be noted that throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the rock has been used to symbolize Jesus. It is difficult to understand that such a myth should have ever been formed, and the whole of Catholicism centered on it, when surely there must have been many in those days who would have known the truth.

Myth #2 Because Peter was given the keys to the Kingdom; he now stands at the pearly gates of Heaven controlling who gets in.

First, there are no pearly gates to Heaven. The gates of pearl are only mentioned in Revelation 21:21 in reference to the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem. These gates will

each be made of a single pearl. After the millennium reign of Jesus here on earth, the present Heaven and earth will pass away (Revelation 21). There will be a new earth on which the New Jerusalem will be established. Peter has nothing to do with this, other than the fact that the twelve foundations of the city will each have the name of one of the apostles.

This idea that Peter has the keys from Matthew 16:19 where Jesus tells him “*And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever shalt those bind on earth shall bind in heaven; and whatsoever than shall be loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” First, it must be recognized that these are not keys to Heaven, but to the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is the here and now on earth, and extends from its beginning at Pentecost to its ending with the Rapture. Keys are used for the unlocking and opening of doors. Prior to Pentecost, certain doors were locked and only Jesus had the keys to open them. Here Jesus gives these keys of authority to Peter. But what exists behind these doors, and for whom will they be opened? As the world-class, Spirit-led biblical scholar Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum has determined, the answers are found mainly in the Book of Acts, Chapters 2, 8 and 10. In Acts 2:1-4, we find the Holy Spirit entering the hearts of the apostles. Then we read in verse 38, after Peter had lectured about Jesus to a number of Jews, he said to them, “*...repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” These other Jews were the very first in the kingdom of Heaven to receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It was Peter alone, at that moment and by the authority of Jesus and through His gift of the keys, who opened the door to the Kingdom of Heaven to all Jews. After that, the door has remained open to the Jews, to all who would believe and repent.

Then in Chapter 8, we find Philip preaching in Samaria where many believed and were baptized with water. But none did, nor could, receive the Holy Ghost yet. Only after Peter went there, accompanied by John, and prayed for them (verses 15-17), did they all receive the Holy Ghost. So here it was Peter who, using another one of the keys, opened the door of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Samaritans. Finally in Chapter 10, we find a

Roman Centurion, a Gentile, “...*a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house.*” (Verse 2). In praying to God, he had received a vision, which told him to seek out Peter. Because Peter was a Jew and had not yet understood that salvation was also for the Gentiles, God also gave Peter a vision through which he came to understand this. Thus it was Peter, when he visited the house of Cornelius the centurion and used the last of the keys, opened the door to the Gentiles and, at which time, “...*the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.*” Prior to this, we find Saul, later to be called Paul; an apostle who received the Holy Spirit directly from God as the other apostles had (Acts 9:17). However, when he tried to preach the Word (Acts 9: 20-29), he convinced no one. Only after Peter had opened the door was it possible for Paul or anyone else to be effective among the Gentiles. Thus, only through the keys given to Peter was it possible for the three groups, Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles, which include everyone else on earth – to receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that after He left this earth, He would send the Comforter who is the Holy Spirit to be available to dwell in the hearts of all genuine believers. Jesus’ method of initiating this blessing was through this special gift of the “keys” given to His chosen apostle, Peter. Only after these three keys were applied for the benefits of the three categories of mankind, was it possible for the rest of the apostles and the disciples to be effective in teaching the way to salvation.

Now, let’s regard that other very strange gift which Jesus gave Peter as recorded in Matthew 16:19. Peter was given the power to “bind” and to “loose” whatever he chose here on earth, and this would be honored in Heaven. Apparently the rabbis could understand this power and others well versed in the Hebrew laws and traditions. It had nothing to do with binding and loosing Satan or anything of that nature. Rabbis used the power of binding and loosening in two ways: in the judicial and legislative senses. Legislatively, they could bind (prevent) or loose (permit certain things). The Pharisees, who by definition were also rabbis, took this authority as meaning to forbid (bind) what the law allowed, and permit (loose) what the law forbade. Judicially, to “bind” meant to be punished and to “loose” meant to excuse from punishment.

What Jesus gave to Peter and to all the apostles was a unique authority that was not transferable to anyone else. They had authority both legislatively and judicially to prohibit or allow (bind or loose) the then-current laws as they deemed appropriate, to Heaven. Until that event, none of these souls could ascend to Heaven because Jesus had not yet paid the price, which allowed for the cleaning away of their sins. That included the souls of all believers, all those who lived faithfully, who followed the Old Testament laws, and who had their sins course always under the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Neither the church nor anyone else since the passing away of the apostles has such power, even though the Catholic Church, through the Papacy, has unscripturally assumed many such powers. The church has only one binding or loosing power and that is to discipline or not discipline, and this is only through excommunication or restoration of church membership.

Myth #3 The saved will spend eternity in Heaven while the unsaved will spend eternity in Hell.

Hell in English is known as Hades in Greek and Sheol in Hebrew. Scripture tells us that Hell is in the belly or heart of the earth. In Matthew 12:40, Jesus tells us that He will spend three days and three nights there. In John 16:19, we learn that Hell has two compartments separated by an abyss, one for saved souls and the other for unsaved souls. When Jesus spoke to the thief from the cross, He told him in Luke 23:43 that he would, that very day, be with Him in the side of Hell with the saved souls, which He called paradise. On the third day when Jesus rose from the dead, He closed down the paradise compartment of Hell and brought all of the saved souls with Him covered through the God-ordained ritual of animal sacrifice. But their sins had not yet been forgiven and so they were waiting for His arrival and His divine cleansing of their previously covered sins. However, all unsaved souls remained on the tormenting side of Sheol and still wait there with all of the currently unsaved who go there when they die. So, as it stands today, all unsaved souls are in Hell, and all saved souls from all times are in Heaven. However, this is not a permanent condition. At the Rapture, all those living who are saved will be translated alive, directly to Heaven in their bodies, which will then become eternally

incorruptible. All of the saints, whose souls are in Heaven and who died after Jesus rose from the dead up to the time of the Rapture, will also at that same moment receive their incorruptible bodies in Heaven. The “Old Testament Saints” whose souls are now in Heaven will receive their eternal bodies along with the tribulation saints, after the tribulation and before the millennium kingdom begins. All unsaved souls from all times will be resurrected, body and soul, and after the millennium and the white throne judgment, will be sent to their eternal abode in the lake of fire which is in the outer darkness.

Thus we see that Hell is not an eternal abode for anyone. The unsaved will spend eternity in the lake of fire, somewhere in the outer darkness. But what about the saved?

Revelation 21 tells us of a new Heaven and new earth. During the millennium, Jesus will reign here on this present earth, which He will restore to a near-Eden quality right after the tribulation. However, after this, the present earth will “pass away” and a new one will be created. On this new earth, God will place a New Jerusalem where all of the redeemed will spend eternity. This will also be the eternal home of the entire Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God will be seen and served by His chosen (Revelation 22:3, 4). Therefore, Scripture tells us that the redeemed will not spend eternity in Heaven, but in the New Jerusalem, which will be on an entirely new earth.

Myth #4 It was through His suffering at the hands of the Romans who severely beat Him and then placed Him on the cross to suffer further and to die, that Jesus paid the price for the sins of the world.

As we all know, Jesus was no ordinary man who suffered and died; nor could it be any man-conceived punishment that would allow for the accomplishment of what He completed on the cross. Much of this world has viewed this event as a great tragedy, but it was instead the greatest achievement ever to have taken place, even greater than God’s creation of the universe. This man Jesus was also God, who greatly humbled Himself to become man and therefore to be a kinsman of man. Only in this personage as man could He become the Kinsmen Redeemer of all mankind, for no mere man could provide

redemption from sin. He needed to be both sinless and to be God to have power over sin. The problem is, God's justice demanded eternal punishment for sin. However, God's love and mercy required some way to save man from this eternal punishment, while at the same time satisfying His demand for justice. The only way God's justice and mercy could be mutually satisfied was for a substitutionary punishment and death of someone qualified for the job. Only the sinless God/Man Jesus was qualified, but there was no earthly punishment painful enough to satisfy God's justice. No mere man could possibly absorb the type and magnitude of suffering required before the cleansing of the sins of the world could be achieved, and no man-inflicted punishment could be great enough for that purpose. Therefore, it was not the human aspect of Jesus that could satisfy justice. Only Jesus' godliness was capable of sustaining and surviving the ordeal, which God's justice demanded. It is from this perspective that we may conclude that the incredible brutality inflicted on the body of Jesus by men, was far and away not enough to accomplish the task of satisfying God's justice. Jesus took all the punishment man was capable of applying to Him in silence and with the manly dignity of a true martyr. History records many who have suffered martyrs' deaths, which were considerably more gruesome, painful and long lasting than what the God/Man Jesus suffered from other men. He always knew exactly what was to occur, and why. It was not about what Man was going to do to Him that caused Him to pray and sweat blood in Gethsemane. It was what God the Father would do which caused Him such great anguish.

It's far beyond our comprehension to grasp even a small measure of what transpired behind the scene on the cross. The slight inkling we do get is merely hinted at in Psalms 22, Isaiah 53, and Jesus' own words from the cross as recorded in the Gospels.

Isaiah 53, recorded 700 years before the event, tells us how and why Jesus suffered as He did. This chapter deserves many volumes of study and explanation, and many have been written. But for the purpose at hand, only the last part of verse 5 will be briefly discussed. Verse 5 tells us, "*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.*"

With His stripes we are healed. This is where the myth comes in. The quote is from the King James Version (KJV), which is in error as to the use of the word “stripes.” In the original Greek, the word is singular. It should read, “and with his stripe we are healed.” Later translations have recorded it correctly, but the monumental significance of this seemingly slight difference does not seem to have been fully recognized. The corrected translation is not speaking of the stripes the Romans inflicted on Him, unless we take the ridiculous stand that there was a single, particular stripe that caused all of believing mankind to be healed of sin. No! This one stripe was the God-inflicted, real substitutionary punishment, the only sufficiently horrible punishment that could satisfy God’s justice. Also in the Hebrew, the word for “stripe” can mean wound, hurt or bruise. Therefore, the word “stripe” need not be taken literally as a mark resulting from the application of a whip. Dropping down to verse 10, we read there, “*Yet it pleases the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief...*” In the original Hebrew, the word “pleased” can also mean, “inclined to.” While the word “pleased” used here could denote “pleasure” to us, one cannot possibly justify a belief that God the Father found pleasure or was pleased to inflict a terrible pain on His Son. This was a momentous and horrible experience for both Father and Son, but out of their unconditional love for their creation, it had to be done. They were in unison as to the procedure and its result.

When I say it had to be done, I am only expressing the conviction that God is sovereign and makes whatever rules He pleases, both for His creation as well as for Himself. We must always remember that His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8). His love, His mercy and His justice are not just words, which a fickle, capricious and whimsical god may or may not honor. Our God is a God of integrity and honor, One who is reliable and delights in keeping His promises. Of course, it was evident to Him from the beginning that mankind would falter and sin. God’s love and purpose for mankind was to make for Himself an eternal family of those He made in His own image. Because of His unwavering and faultless demand for justice, He required that sin be punished. This punishment, by His decree, requires that the sinner spend eternity in the lake of fire, and no measure of repentance, suffering or compensatory goodness by man could ever



remove even the slightest portion of sin, or reduce its consequences. Therefore, if God were ever to have His family, he had a God-sized dilemma to resolve. This He did most readily by proclaiming that His justice would be satisfied by the substitutionary suffering and death of God Himself, in the person of His Son, the God/Man Jesus.

But what was it that God the Father actually did to Jesus, which was so ultimately horrible that it could fully satisfy God's definition of justice and thereby propitiate all sin? We find the clue in one of Jesus' last utterances from the cross as recorded in Matthew 27:46 and foreshadowed in Psalm 22. Jesus cried out, "*My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?*" There is great significance in this solemn cry from the Son of God, far more than any mere human could ever comprehend. We can only point to it and cry for Him in His anguish, knowing that something far more painful was happening than we can ever appreciate. Throughout the Scriptures, Jesus had always called Him "Father," never "God." Because of the Son aspect of the triune Godhead, Jesus was equal in every way to the Father, and would, therefore, rightly refer to Him in a manner, which would never suggest that He were less than an equal. But here we can sense, from the change in salutation, a loss of equality, a separation, a rupture of the Godhead by the greatest and most painful of all supernatural forces. Jesus, for that moment or moments, was separated from the Godhead of which He had always been an integral part. This was the Hell, the lake of fire, the absence from the presence of God and all other forms of suffering all rolled into one unbearable pain that all of fallen Man was collectively doomed to suffer. Jesus suffered all of these and more, so that we who believe could be spared. It was this separation from the Father that the Father inflicted on His Son, which produced the ultimate and only acceptable suffering which could satisfy God's self-imposed decree that God's justice had to be served, and make sufficient payment for the sins of the whole world.

Myth #5 Just one more Peter story. Peter, in his irrational manner, put his foot in his mouth when at the transfiguration (Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9); he spoke rather ridiculously about making three tabernacles, one each for Jesus and His visitors, Moses and Elijah.

This is hardly in the category of a myth, but rather a widely misunderstood response by Peter to this very strange event. Because most biblical scholars and students of the Bible have chosen to view Peter as shallow-minded and impetuous, his participation in this event is not generally analyzed. As such, Peter's utterances here and elsewhere are taken as more amusing than meaningful. But the more his words and actions are seriously examined and studied; this view of him should change considerably. Just as Jacob's character has been falsely maligned through less than adequate examination of what Scripture really tells us about him (see my paper titled *In the Defense of Jacob*), so has inadequate scholarship underestimated the depth of Peter's character and purpose. Anyway, thanks to Dr. Fruchtenbaum's blessed insights and biblical knowledge, we again benefit from a deeper understanding of Scripture and of what Peter had in mind.

Just before this transfiguration event, Peter had had his highest moment when he told Jesus that he believed Him to be "*the Christ the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16). Then after giving Peter the keys to the kingdom of God, Jesus foretold how He must suffer at the hands of His enemies and be killed. In response, Peter said, in effect, that he would fight to prevent it. Jesus severely rebuked Peter for saying this and for having yielded to things of Man rather than things of God. It is evident that this death thing was yet beyond the comprehension of any of the apostles. Next, Jesus spoke of the need for self denial (Matthew 16:24-26) and for taking up the cross with which to follow Him as being the way to salvation. After this, Jesus predicted that He would come "*in the glory of His Father*" (verse 27). Then He said, "*Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*" This verse is also very widely misunderstood, especially by those who don't want to understand but prefer to find ways to scoff at, and discredit, the true Word of God. They say that Jesus was predicting that His second coming would be soon, clearly within the generation of those standing there; yet it never happened. What Jesus predicted was just what did happen next, the transfiguration, that specific event which He described and which was witnessed by Peter, James and John.

Of the three descriptions of this event, Luke 9 is the most complete. (Incidentally, many scholars have concluded that the whole Gospel accordingly to Luke might more correctly be called the Gospel according to Peter, because they believe that the bulk of it came from Peter. This could explain why this and some other events, in which Peter was involved, are more detailed in Luke than elsewhere.) So now, what is this “tabernacles” business all about? What caused Peter to conclude that tabernacles (little dwellings) should be built for Jesus and His visiting friends? Did Peter think that they were going to camp there for a while and would need shelter? After all, they were on top of a high mountain where it was probably very cold, especially at night. Perhaps he was simply eager to prove himself to be an alert servant, anxious to please and to serve. As it turns out, a much more meaningful and learned reasoning seems to be behind his actions. Let us reconstruct the situation as Peter may have seen it:

- Peter knew that Jesus was God, the Son of God. Just prior to the transfiguration, Jesus had said that those then living, would see the kingdom of God. Who among us, prior to learning of the millennium kingdom, would not have assumed that Jesus was speaking of His predicted rule from the throne of David as had been predicted in so many scriptural passages?
- Jesus’ transfiguration, His true state as God and the state in which He will exist throughout eternity, had taken place right before Peter’s eyes.
- Did not the presence of two of the Old Testament’s most revered saints, who had already “come down” to earth, indicate that they were the vanguard of all the returning saints to be participants in Jesus’ reign?

Peter, from his viewpoint, had good cause to believe that Jesus had finally decided to assume His rightful place as the predicted ruling Messiah King. Having suddenly brought forth His elite vanguard from Heaven, Peter believed that this was the beginning of that time. We, in retrospect and with much hindsight from the New Testament, which Peter didn’t have, can look on with all-knowing smugness, and simply smile at Peter’s ignorance. But read on, and perhaps you’ll find that Peter was quite biblically literate, even with comparatively less knowledge available to him than to us. What Peter knew, and which many people including me didn’t realize, may be found in Zachariah 14, in

which God through his prophet, has most graphically described portions of the tribulation period, as well as offered a glimpse of one aspect of the millennium period, when Jesus will rule as King on David's earthly throne. Verse 16 tells us that on that day, "... *it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*" So it wasn't that foolish after all, that Peter offered to build the three tabernacles. It seemed to him consistent with Scripture, as he understood it. It was Peter's timing that was off. Luke 9:32 tells us that Peter and the other apostles were in a deep sleep when Jesus, Moses and Elijah were discussing Jesus' "...*decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.*" None of the apostles had yet comprehended that Jesus must first fulfill the role of the Passover Lamb and die before the reign of His kingdom could take place. Peter dealt with what he saw and knew logically. I trust that this bit of insight will help us all to see Peter a little more clearly and respectfully.

Myth # 6 Jesus never said He was God. This is a hot button for those who prefer to dismiss Scripture and, at the very least, to view Jesus as a mere man with some good ideas. The strength of their argument lies in the fact that there is no place in Scripture that one could point to where Jesus says, "I am God" in those words. Nevertheless, Scripture does most certainly allude to that admission quite a few times. These claims to be God and the Son of God were very clear to those hearing Jesus at the time and in the culture in which He spoke. It seems that a good way to clear this up is to quote His own words, explain their context, and then show how these words were understood by those who heard Him or heard the words would have indicted to them that He was claiming to be God.

First, however, we must understand the father-son relationships as it applied in the Hebrew culture at that time and earlier, as well as what the Old Testament says regarding the Son of God. An only son or a first-born son, who had reached maturity and was in good standing, was viewed as the father's equal or equivalent. While there may have been a hierarchal relationship functioning while the father lived, positionally, the son was equal to the father. Therefore, if God has a Son, the Son is also God. In Genesis 6 and

Job 1 and 2 and elsewhere, the term “sons of God” is used. But it refers to angels who are the direct creations of God. Of these, there are many. But the “Son of God” is a singular, one-of-a-kind being not a created being but the One who is an integral part of the eternal triune Godhead.

In Psalm 2, we find the triune Godhead speaking among themselves with the Father saying in verses 6-7, *“Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.”* Then the Son says, *I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”*

“Begotten” in Hebrew can mean “brought forth” or “a declared pedigree.” This has nothing to do with angels or any other created beings. It is the “God the Father” personage of the triune God declaring that God the Son will take on a specific time-related role in the Godhead’s dealing with mankind. This role, of course, is amplified and detailed as the primary subject of the New Testament. Notice also Proverbs 30:4 as evidence of Old Testament reference of the singular Son of God. This verse first describes the powers of God and asks *“... What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?”* Another such reference to the Son of God is Isaiah 9 verse 6, where we are told that:

*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever”.*

Looking back at this and hundreds of other prophecies from the perspective of the New Testament, there is no doubt that these verses are speaking of Jesus the eternal Son of God. At any rate, these verses should make it clear that Old Testament Scripture establishes the fact that there is a singular, one-of-a-kind, genuine and eternal Son of God. Having determined this, where does Jesus claim that He, that is God, is the Son of

God? Let us examine a few New Testament verses where, one way or another, Jesus alludes to that fact. We will only use His directly quoted words from which to make this case, not the statement of His followers.

1. Right at the beginning, even before He began His ministry, Jesus claimed to be God. We find in Matthew Chapter 4, after Jesus had fasted 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, that Satan came to tempt Him. After Satan's second temptation, Jesus responded by saying *It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*" (Verse 7). Who is there in this wilderness scene? Only Jesus and Satan. Satan is tempting Jesus, and Jesus reminds him that Scripture commands that no one should tempt God. Who is Satan tempting? Jesus. Therefore it is crystal clear that Satan is here tempting God in violation of Scripture! Jesus is claiming to be God!
2. As Jesus began His ministry, His first ministerial words were spoken in the synagogue of Nazareth where He read from Isaiah 61:1, 2 the following:

*"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,---"*

Then He closed the book, sat down and told them, *"This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears"* (Luke 4:21). By saying that this prophecy had been fulfilled, Jesus made it evident that He was the one of whom it had been written. We may not comprehend the full impact of His assertion, but those who heard Him did, for the Scripture continues on to say, *"they were filled with wrath and sought to throw Him over a cliff as punishment for blasphemy."* He had proclaimed Himself to be the anointed one, which means the Messiah, the Christ, the One sent to fulfill this prophecy. What is particularly provocative, although we may not appreciate the significance to the extent that those who heard Jesus'

responses did, is that He put a period where Isaiah had put a comma. The continuance of the Isaiah passage reads “...and the day of vengeance of our God...” Thus by His admission, He was the One that Isaiah had written about and He had come at this time to fulfill the first part of the prophecy, as the Son of Man as He often called Himself, while the second, the vengeance part, was yet to be addressed sometime in the future when He would return as the Avenger and Judge. From this one event, one cannot yet make the case that Jesus claimed to be God, but He was certainly claiming to be the One sent by God for this supernatural purpose.

3. After lecturing on the Beatitudes and a number of other principles of the Kingdom of God, Jesus makes the following statement as recorded in Matthew 7:21-23.
 

*“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

Notice the confident Godly authority with which He is speaking, as well as the clear future time frame of the events of which He speaks. He is speaking of those who professed to be among His chosen, and were not, because they didn't do the will of His Father. Notice that Jesus said “My Father,” not “the Father” or “our Father.” It was His Father, God, of whom He spoke as only the actual Son of that Father could so speak. Then He goes on to assert, “...*Many will say to me in that day...*” Which day? He was here on earth in His ministry for only about three-and-a-half years. “In that day,” as all or most who heard Him would have known, referred to the Day of Judgment, the day He would return as alluded to in number One above, when all would come before Him as the divinely appointed Judge of all who ever lived. If you examine this passage carefully, it will take a mountain of rationalization to conclude anything other than here Jesus is speaking of Himself as the eternal Judge who will preside over the spiritual fate of all

mankind. Who but God Himself could possibly be the eternal judge? This is a profound message that we should take seriously as we examine the quality of our faith and the works that accompany it.

4. In Matthew 16:15-17, we have a strong admission by Jesus that He is the Son of God. These verses read as follows:

*“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”*

When Jesus asks Peter to tell Him who it was that they believed Him to be, Peter readily replied that Jesus was the Son of the living God. Had it not been so in Jesus’ own mind, He couldn’t have responded as He did by saying that it could only be God the Father Himself who could have supernaturally revealed this to Peter. Notice again that Jesus referred to “my Father” as the one who told them this profound fact. So once again, Jesus is conveying the fact that He is the Son of God.

5. We find that in Matthew 23:37-39, Jesus is making an incredibly profound observation and prophecy, the full impact of which seems to be missed by many scholars. This passage reads as follows:

*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”.*



First Jesus makes note of how, throughout the ages, these people of Israel stoned the prophets who were sent to them. Why? Scripture tells us that the main theme of what God told them through the prophets was essentially to repent, obey and worship Him as He had carefully directed them, or else! But they would not. Now here is the salient point regarding our subject. Jesus says, *“...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”* What is Jesus saying with that statement? He is claiming to be the eternal God who spoke to the prophets and who witnessed from Heaven all of their transgressions and unfaithfulness. Could He make it any more plain that He is claiming to be the eternal God? Then He prophesied their fate that their house, their temple, would be desolate, and it was destroyed 40 years later in 70 AD. Once again, Jesus alludes to His eternal existence when He tells them that they will not see Him again until they finally recognize Him for Who He is. By this statement, Jesus was speaking of His second coming at the end of the tribulation. Thus, He left the nation with the promise that He would one day return. If it were not presumed deity speaking, it would certainly be someone who considered Himself to have supernatural powers which included not only prophecy, but such control of His eternal existence that He could promise His own return from physical death at the particular moment when they would be willing to accept Him for Who He really is.

Dr. Chuck Missler has made a very astute observation regarding these passages. He observes that in these verses, Jesus reveals the purpose, the tragedy, and the triumph of all history. The purpose of all history is indicated by God’s desire to gather His children together (Jerusalem being a synecdoche for, or used to represent, all of Israel); the tragedy of all history is revealed in His words, *“...and they would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate”*; and the triumph of all history is contained in His promise that He will return!

6. There is a verse in Chapter 8 of the Gospel according to John, which well relates our purpose here. After a rather heated exchange with the Pharisees regarding His parents and their lineage (John 8: 56-58), we read, “*Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad. The Jews said unto Him thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, verily verily I say unto you, before Abraham was I am.*” This is a powerful claim by Jesus as to His deity. He is claiming that 1500 years earlier, Abraham knew of His coming (His day) and rejoiced. We get a glimpse of this in Genesis 22 when Abraham is taking Isaac up Mt. Moriah to be sacrificed in accordance with God’s directive. In response to Isaac’s innocent question as to where the sacrificial lamb was, Abraham told him “*God will provide himself a lamb.*” If Abraham had not seen the ram caught in the brush, there seems to be no doubt that Abraham would have carried out the God-ordered sacrifice of Isaac. But of course, this never was God’s intent. It was only to demonstrate to Abraham, and to all who would learn of this event, the absolute trust Abraham had in God. Abraham knew that God had promised that, through Isaac, a multitude of people would grow. Therefore, God had to somehow spare Isaac or restore him back to life, because Abraham knew that God would keep His promise. That is the great faith for which Abraham has been remembered and revered. He called the place Jehovah-jireh, which means, “in the mount of the lord it shall be seen.” In so naming it, Abraham reveals an insight, a divine prediction that something great will one day occur and be seen there. It was on this mountain, at probably the same spot, where another Father really did sacrifice His only Son for the salvation of mankind. It is very likely that this first event on Mt. Moriah, and what God revealed to Abraham there, that Jesus may be referring to when He speaks of Abraham seeing the future event and being glad of what it signified. The big kicker here, however, is when He claimed to have existed before Abraham. This is so certain a claim of deity that those who listened to Jesus sought to stone Him to death for this horrible blasphemy.

7. As quoted above, Jesus claimed, “...*before Abraham was, I am.*” The words “*I am*” were enough to accuse Jesus of claiming deity. He was claiming to be the “*I am*” of the burning bush of Exodus 3:14, when God answers Moses’ question as to who was speaking to him by saying, “I AM, THAT I AM.” From then on, God was known as the great I AM, but a name, which, out of fear, the Israelites never spoke but instead invented other ways of referring to God. Here Jesus is claiming to be the I AM. While this clear claim to deity can go completely unrecognized by the rest of the world, to the Jews it was unheard of blasphemy to the highest degree, even worthy of death. From our perspective, in the instance and under the circumstances of Luke 18:5 where the multitudes fell backwards to the ground upon His saying, I AM, these words are nothing special. But because of the strange response from those who heard this from Jesus, we are forced to conclude that He said something very provocative. Again, here is a most subtle claim of deity from our perspective, but clearly a most profound one in the minds of those who heard Him and understood.
  
8. In John 6:40, we read “*And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*” Here Jesus is saying that everyone who believes on Him, Jesus Himself shall raise Him up to heaven to everlasting life on the last day, the day that a saved person physically dies. Who but God Himself has or could possibly have such power? It’s His particular power as part of the Godhead! The Jews knew as He said these things who He claiming to be. They then murmured and later sought punishment by death for the blasphemy of claiming to be God and having come down from heaven. Over and over again Jesus states most clearly that those who believe in Him as the Son of God, that is His divine equality within the Godhead, He will raise up again the last day and give eternal life.
  
9. In John chapter 9 we read of how Jesus healed the man who was born blind, a healing that all believed could only be done by someone direct from God. Later

Jesus asked the man “dost thou believe on the Son of God.” (John9:35). The man didn’t know who this could be so he asked Jesus, “Who is he Lord that I might believe on Him (John 9:36) Then Jesus answered “*Thou hast both seen Him and it is he that talketh with the.*” (John 9:37). That’s about as clear as it can be that He considered Himself of the Deity as the Son of God.

10. Just before Jesus performed the miracle of bring back to life, the four-day-dead Lazarus, Jesus said to Lazarus’ sister Martha, “*I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me, though he was dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die...*” (John 11:25, 26) Jesus said that He had the power to resurrect the dead and to give eternal life. Sounds like God to me. Who else could possibly have such authority and power?
  
11. Jesus and the heavenly Father are one and same as the Triune Godhead, which includes the Holy Spirit. In John 12:45, Jesus says, “*And he that seeth me seeth Him that sent me.*” That is pretty clear. If you’ve seen One you’ve seen the other, they are all One. In John 14:7, He adds, “*If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and henceforth ye know Him and has seen Him.*” Then in John 14:9-11, in answer to Philip’s inquiry, Jesus says, “*...have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father and how sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very works’ sake.*” Here again Jesus makes it clear, if you understand the fact, the significance, and the structure of the Triune Godhead, that Jesus is saying that He is an integral part of that Triune Being.
  
12. In Mark 2 we find Jesus preaching in the upper room of a house in Capernaum when some friends of a person sick with palsy cut a hole in the roof, and lower him down to present him to Jesus for healing. In verse five Jesus said to him.

“*..Son thy sins be forgiven thee.*” The witnesses immediately recognizing the great significance of Jesus’ statement and called it blasphemy, because they knew that only God himself has the power to forgive sins. Here Jesus was, by this statement, unmistakably claiming that power as only God Himself has the right to do. A similar situation is recorded in Luke 7:37-48 where a sin-filled woman comes to Jesus as He sat eating in the house of a Pharisee. She washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair and anointed Him with expensive ointment. During the ensuing conversation Jesus gives the Pharisee a lesson in humility, and effective sincere worship culminating in His assertions to the woman in verse 48, “*Thy sins are forgiven.*” Again this decree was one that no human being had any authority to pronounce. Only God has such authority. Jesus was claiming that authority as the Incarnate God Himself!

13. During the time of Jesus’ arrest and trials before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate, and while suffering their interrogations, there is additional evidence of Jesus’ claim of deity. In Matthew 26:53, as Jesus was being apprehended, Peter took out his sword and struck one of the arresting officers and cut off his ear. Jesus immediately and miraculously restored the ear and told Peter to back off, saying, “*...thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*” This may not be totally convicting evidence that He was claiming to be God, but it certainly attests to His belief that His relationship with God was so very close that, at His calling God would intervene on His behalf with such a compelling force as to send twelve legions of angels to take Him out of harm’s way. Who but the actual Son of God could have such persuasive power available for the asking? Surely this was infinitely beyond any claims that the great men of God, such as Abraham, Moses or David, would have expressed.
  
14. In Matthew 26, the high priest Caiaphas cannot find any witness who can agree to the charge brought against Jesus, and Jesus refuses to speak in His own

defense. Then the priest, in accordance with the authority of his position, says to Jesus, *“I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.”* “Adjure” is a translation from the Greek word “exorkizo” which means to extract an oath. In Leviticus 5:1 and 1 Kings 8:31, we find the basis for this demand and for Jesus’ being obliged to speak and to speak truthfully. Therefore, Jesus testified under oath, in effect, in Matthew 26:64 saying, *“Thou hast said: nevertheless (better translated as “moreover”) I say unto you hereafter, shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.”* These words, neither in the King James Version in English nor in contemporary English, are able to convey the full meaning or impact of what Jesus said. But the priest found Jesus’ reply very clear. Jesus had admitted to be God, the Son of God, and it was by this admission that they had, from their perspective, a blasphemy punishable by death. He not only agreed with their accusation, but also further confirmed it by identifying His exalted position in heaven. It was on this evidence that they could legally call for His execution. The admission of His deity comes from His first three words, *“Thou hast said.”* In our way of speaking, this is hardly a convicting statement or admission. But notice that it is a direct response to the priest who was asking Him whether He was the Son of God. Several other times, Scripture records that Jesus responded to such questions in a similar manner and it is taken each time to be an affirmation of the truth that generated the question. If you came in drenched and someone asked you if it were raining hard, you could very well answer “Man is it ever!” or “You said it!” These would be understood as affirmations, even though they were not direct answers to the question asked. So it was with Jesus’ response to the big question. At the time Jesus makes this statement, Jesus is yet man even though He’s God Himself. *“but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in*

*earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:7-11)* Jesus had temporarily relinquished the fullness of His godly power, which always had been His. Of the Triune Godhead, consisting of Spirit Father God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, He was the One to create, and will judge the physical space/time realm. This was not “given” in the sense of someone of higher authority having so provided. It was the “task assignment” given in unison by the Godhead, to Jesus. The equality and unity of the Triune God is expressed in quite subtle ways throughout Scripture as we read of the various tasks They/He have/has chosen to perform being attributed in a seeming random way to One or Another of the Trio. John in 6:25-27 again expresses this power as we read *“And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”* Notice He refers to Himself as Son of God and man Son of man. It is because that He is also the Son of man that He has the power of judgment over men.

15. In Matthew 28:18, 19, Jesus, after His resurrection and speaking for the last time before His ascension to Heaven said, *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”* No further comment or statement is necessary as to this admission of His deity. Parenthetically, however, it should be noted how meticulous is His statement of the facts regarding His power in Heaven and in earth. The more one studies God’s Book, the more astounding it is to discover the attention to detail it contains. The more one delves into the Bible, the more evident it becomes that the Bible has been supernaturally authored. Finding an apparent incorrectness in the Bible is a cause for excitement for the ardent student of His Word, because it provides an opportunity to search deeper

into that particular passage. For those who know His Word to be inerrant, they also know that, through patience and perseverance, the Holy Spirit will guide them to a resolution of the issue. This is a most gratifying experience.

But here we see no error, only an observance of detailed accuracy. In having paid the full price on the cross, Jesus has redeemed and bought back the earth and all who believe in Him. The earth, since the fall, has belonged to the usurper Satan. We know this from Matthew 4 when Satan offered Jesus the whole world in exchange for His worship of him. Although Jesus had bought back the world through His blood, He was not yet ready to take authority of all that was on earth. Satan, the prince of the Air, was and is yet in subordinate authority. But in earth is a different matter. In the earth is Hell, Hades, Shoel or whatever you choose to call it. This is where condemned souls still exist and where we find the bottomless pit where some of the fallen angels are bound. With His resurrection, Jesus emptied the paradise side of Shoel where the Old Testament saints were waiting for Him. Therefore, we can see that His last words confirm what other parts of Scripture reveal, that in His position, Jesus has power over the entire universe, functionally however, He has not yet asserted His authority over the things on this earth. This He will do at His second coming, immediately after the tribulation.

There is much more evidence in Scripture that attests to Jesus' claim to deity, as well as to the fact of His deity. However, the above will be sufficient evidence to dispel the myth that "Jesus never said He was God."

The list of "Biblical Myths" could go on and on for there are many more. However, what have been here mentioned have I pray, been as informative and interesting to you as they have been to me as I searched them out. If they stimulated you to dig deeper and be more discerning as you study Scripture and the commentaries of others, I will consider myself to have been twice blessed!



