

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You quoted Mark 10:18 (also Matthew 19:17) in which Jesus says, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." You asked if he was not saying by default that he is divine because, as sinless, he was certainly "good."

The context of the above scriptures tells of a rich young man who asked Jesus in the preceding verse what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. When speaking to Jesus, the young man addressed him as "good master." When Jesus answered him by asking why he called him "good," he was bringing out the fact that there is only one standard of goodness, which is represented by God. And if the young man believed Jesus to be good, then he must also have believed that Jesus was a teacher sent by God, since everything Jesus did was in accordance with God's standards.

Jesus in several scriptures brings out the separateness of himself and his Father. He says, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me." (John 7:16) This statement verifies the father-son relationship. In the next verse, Jesus says, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." This statement clarifies the separateness between him and his Father. God and Jesus have separate wills, and Jesus does the will of God. "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." (John 6:38) Jesus says that he and his Father are separate beings and that his Father is greater than he. "If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." (John 14:28)

We can see that Jesus was separate from his Father, but was he divine? If you believe that he was, there is a problem because divinity implies immortality, and, therefore, inability to die. Was his death on the cross an act, or pretense? We think not. In Revelation 1:18 Jesus says, "I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" If Jesus was divine, what did Paul mean when he stated: "By one [man] shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19), "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:21). "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). If you believe that Jesus was divine prior to his crucifixion, his death is minimized. Since Adam was a perfect man who sinned, only another perfect man who did not sin could redeem not only him, but also his entire race. God knew that Jesus would need to actually die in order to redeem the fallen human race. After Jesus fulfilled his mission, he was resurrected divine. So, now Jesus sits at the right hand of God and is truly like God. He is immortal and cannot die.

Therefore, we can see from the above scriptures that Jesus was not divine when he walked the earth. He was like Adam, a perfect human created in God's image. Wherein Adam willingly sinned, Jesus remained sinless and was, thereby, able to pay the ransom price. It was not until after his resurrection that Jesus attained divinity. We hope we have answered your question. Please write us again.