

TOPIC 3.2**CHRIST NEVER CLAIMED TO BE GOD.
FACT OR FICTION?****Conversation Points**

- ★ You can tell whether someone is caring by whether they care for a pet.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ You can't learn anything by reading a book. **AGREE or DISAGREE?**
- ★ History becomes clearer with the passage of time further past the event.
AGREE or DISAGREE?

Reflection

In 2009, Beckett Cook's world changed. Prior to this, Beckett grew up as a confused young boy. He wasn't like other boys. He wasn't interested in climbing trees, playing contact sport, or tinkering with cars. Instead, he gravitated toward theatre, poetry, books, fashion, and make-up. While attending the *Jesuit College Preparatory School of Dallas*, a Roman Catholic private school, Beckett was unable to reveal to everyone how he really felt. But all this time his godly mother was praying for her son.

After Beckett graduated from College, he left Texas and moved to Los Angeles to pursue his dream of working in Hollywood as an actor and screenwriter. It was at this time that he "found a new sense of freedom". In addition to his demand as an actor and writer, he was asked to be a set-designer for fashion photographers. This opened up a whole new world for Beckett. He began travelling the world for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* magazines, *L'Oréal of Paris*, and *Nike*. He said, "*I attended award shows and parties at the homes of Paris Hilton and Prince. I spent summers swimming in Drew Barrymore's pool.*"

“It was a moment in Paris six months earlier. I was at a fashion party and just felt empty: I had done everything in Hollywood, met everyone, traveled everywhere. Yet I was overwhelmed with emptiness at this party. It was one of the most intense ‘is that all there is?’ moments in my life. I had already been wrestling with questions about the meaning of life, searching for it in all sorts of ways. But I knew God was never an option, because I was gay. It was off the table. I wasn’t confused about what the Bible had to say about homosexuality. I knew it was clear. But I was still searching for meaning.”

BECKETT COOK, TGC INTERVIEW

During this time it also afforded him a new identity, as a gay man. Over the fifteen years that he worked in the film and fashion industries, he had a series of relationships with a number of men. To all the world he looked like a successful, happy, fulfilled man. But the truth was different. By 2009 he no longer wanted to attend the award ceremonies or the after parties. He felt empty. He felt alone. He knew something was missing.



But he didn’t know why he was feeling this way. An old boyfriend asked him out for a coffee at *Intelligentsia* “in L.A.’s notorious Silver Lake neighbourhood.” While there, they noticed a small group of young people having what seemed to be a Bible study at their table. Beckett’s friend turned to their table and asked them what they were doing. They confidently replied and then brought Beckett into their conversation and invited him to join them at the church *Reality L.A.*

“So when I came to this coffee shop six months later and saw that group of young people with their Bibles open, I started asking them questions. They explained the gospel, what they believed. I asked what their church believed about homosexuality, and they explained that they believed it is a sin. I appreciated their honesty and that they didn’t beat around the bush. But the reason I was able to accept their answer was because I had that moment in Paris. Five years earlier I would have been like, ‘You guys are insane. You’re in the dark ages.’ But instead I was like, ‘Maybe I could be wrong. Maybe this actually is a sin.’”

The next Sunday Beckett turned up at the church where a pastor, Tim Chaddick, was preaching through a series on Paul's Epistle to the Romans. On this particular Sunday he was preaching on Romans chapter 7. As the preacher expounded Romans 7, Beckett said, "It was if he was describing me and how I felt!" He also said that as Pastor Chaddick began his sermon, "I heard a voice that said: *listen to this man, he is telling you the truth.*" The pastor then concluded his message with an invitation to receive prayer.

"Everything he was saying basically turned what I knew about religion upside down. I grew up in Catholic schools, and I honestly thought religion was just being a good person, doing good things. I don't think the priests in my high school once explained what the gospel was. Not once. So when Tim was preaching all these things that were the exact opposite of what I thought religion was, I was like, 'Whoa!' It all really resonated, and it prompted me to go forward at the end of the service to receive prayer."

When Beckett went forward for prayer he described it as a moment when he was overwhelmed with continual waves of love that physically effected him. He was driven to tears - not tears of *sadness* - but tears of happy relief. He surrendered his life to Christ and became a Christian on September 28, 2009. Tim Chaddick met with him the next day for coffee as they discussed God, the Bible, and Christianity. They then met for coffee every week as Tim disciplined him.

During his twenty-years in Hollywood, and whenever he returned home to Dallas, his sister-in-law, Kim Cook, always took every opportunity to catch up with him (when she was in L.A. or he visited Dallas) and find out how he was going. Beckett knew that Kim was a '*born again Christian*' who, although she disagreed with his lifestyle, she never brought it up and never showed him anything other than non-judgmental love. What he found out *after* his own conversion was all through his twenty years in Hollywood *she prayed everyday for him and his salvation.*

Beckett has now told his story in his book, *A Change of Affection: A Gay Man's Incredible Story of Redemption*. He is now a graduate of BIOLA and has earned a Masters' of Arts degree in Theology. He is now in demand internationally as a conference and church speaker.

Beckett later discovered that there were many people who had been continually praying for him over many years. **What do you think the relationship between people's prayers and how some of these people, such as his sister-in-law, Kim, interacted with him after he moved to Hollywood?**

But of the many things [Jesus] did, one of the most striking to me is His forgiving of sin...The only person who can say [I forgive you] that sort of thing meaningfully is God Himself, because sin, even if it is against other people, is first and foremost a defiance of God and His laws...So along comes Jesus and says to sinners, 'I forgive you.' The Jews immediately recognize the blasphemy of this. They react by saying, 'Who can forgive sins but God alone?' To my mind, that is one of the most striking things Jesus did.

LEE STROBEL'S INTERVIEW WITH DR. DON CARSON

The Case for Christ, p. 211-212

One of the things that makes Jesus Christ unique among all other founders of religions is His claim to be the eternal God Almighty

There have many several religious (and even geo-political) figures who have claimed to be either God or a god. But only Jesus of Nazareth completely satisfied the demands of providing the necessary e _ _ _ _ _ s to supply the proof supporting His claim to be God. God necessarily has several unique attributes and exclusive prerogatives (authoritative powers) which qualify Him to be the one and true God. In contra-distinction to this, those who have claimed to be God or a god, possessed *none* of these attributes and could not exhibit any of these divine prerogatives. The most obvious of these is *death*. God is Lord over death. When Jesus declared that He would be killed by being "lifted up" but that three days later He would rise from the dead, He was in effect declaring that He was God because He would demonstrate that He was Lord over death!

From the Bible

1. What did Christ's original audience understand that Jesus was asserting in John 5:18?
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Only God is eternal. In the interaction between God and Moses (Exodus 3) God declared to Moses that His name reflected His eternal nature when He told Moses that His name was *I am*.

2. Knowing this, what is the significance of what Jesus declared to the Jews in John 8:58? (Note also John 18:5-6, and notice what happened as a result.)
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Only God is morally perfect (without sin).

3. Note Christ's statement about Himself in John 8:46 - a claim which no-one was about rebut What is the significance of this for Christ's identity?
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Only God can forgive sins - because He is the one who is directly offended by sin.

4. What are the implications then of what Jesus did in Mark 2:5-10?
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Only God is omniscient (all-knowing).

5. How is what Christ demonstrated in John 6:64; 13:10-11 an act of deity?
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Additional References

Horton, Stanley M. ed. 2007. *Systematic Theology*. Springfield, MO: Logion Press. David R. Nichols, chapter 9, *The Lord Jesus Christ*.

Strobel, Lee. 1998. *The Case For Christ. A journalist's personal investigation of the evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Wallace, J. Warner. 2021. *Person of Interest. Why Jesus still matters in a world that rejects the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Every attribute of God, says the New Testament, is found in Jesus Christ:

- *Omniscience? In John 16:30 the apostle John affirms of Jesus, “Now we can see that you know all things.”*
- *Omnipresence? Jesus said in Matthew 28:20, “Surely I am with you always, to the end of the age” and in Matthew 18:20, “Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”*
- *Omnipotence? “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,” Jesus said in Matthew 28:18.*
- *Eternality? John 1:1 declares of Jesus, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*
- *Immutability? Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever.”*

Also, the Old Testament paints a portrait of God by using such titles and descriptions as Alpha and Omega, Lord, Saviour, King, Judge, Light, Rock, Redeemer, Shepherd, Creator, giver of life, forgiver of sin, and speaker with divine authority. It’s fascinating to note that in the New Testament each and every one is applied to Jesus.

LEE STROBEL

The Case for Christ, p. 228