

## THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

### WE BELIEVE

that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified, died, and bodily rose from the dead to eternally redeem those who would believe in Him and confess Him as the Lord. He lived a sinless life on earth fully man and fully God, and He is the only mediator between man and God. The work of the cross of Christ was God's complete work, upon which no improvement can be made by man (Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 9:12; 1 Tim. 2:5; Jn. 19:30; Col. 2:9-10; Heb. 10:14; Gal. 3:3).

The statement that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh is one of the most amazing claims of any world religion. Moses and others claimed only to be prophets. Imagine the indignation felt by the adherents to world religions when Christians claim that Jesus was more than a prophet; that He was God. How can a man claim to be God? It just doesn't make sense to our human mind.

Whether someone believes this statement or not, it is necessary to investigate this claim. Were there visible signs that Jesus is God? Did others think He was God? Did He Himself claim to be God? What does Scripture have to say about who He was?

### Jesus Performed Miracles

The fact that Jesus did miracles should get our attention. He began by turning water into wine. He went from there to healing blind eyes, opening the ears of the deaf, giving voice to the mute, cleansing leprosy, and even raising the dead! It is easy to see that the people would be amazed by what they witnessed or heard had happened. How could someone who was only a man do such miracles? He gave the same authority to his disciples, and they went out and healed the sick. Jesus also did other amazing miracles. He had authority to cast out demons. He fed thousands with only some bread and fish, He walked on water, and he commanded the wind and the sea, and they obeyed Him.

Probably the most controversial miracle that Jesus claimed to do which pointed to His deity was to forgive sins. This is not referring to our normal ability to forgive someone for doing something against us. This was the ability to declare someone innocent before God.

There is a story in Luke in which a woman was washing Jesus' feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. The host was not pleased at this spectacle because he knew her to be a sinner. Jesus pointed out that the woman loved much because she had been forgiven much. Then Jesus said to the woman, "Woman, your sins are forgiven," (Luke 7:48).

To emphasize how radical this comment was, let us look at another occasion. A large crowd gathered to be healed by Jesus. Some men came to the house carrying their paralyzed friend to see Jesus. It was so crowded, the only way they could get in was to open the roof and lower their friend down into the interior of the house. Then Jesus said something that stunned the religious leaders of that day!

***Luke 5:20-21***

*Jesus said to the man, "Your sins are forgiven you."  
And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason,  
saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? **Who can  
forgive sins but God alone?"***

The Jews rightly believed that only God could forgive sins. Jesus told them that it was just as easy for him to heal someone as it was to forgive them. Then he told the man again that his sins were forgiven; and to pick up his bed and walk. The man was healed and forgiven.

Another famous story of Jesus forgiving sins is the one in which he forgave the thief dying next to him on the cross. One of the criminals had reviled Jesus, but this man asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) Jesus, as God, had authority to offer forgiveness and take the man to Paradise.

## **Jesus Accepted Worship**

In the book of Revelation we see that John was given an amazing vision of things to come. At the end of the vision, John was overwhelmed and was going to bow down and worship the angel who shared the vision with him.

***Revelations 22:8-9***

*Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. **Worship God.**"*

To bow down and worship another human being as God was strictly forbidden, but receiving worship as God was even worse. We read in this account of the fate of someone who received worship as God.

**Acts 12:21-23**

*So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. <sup>22</sup> And the people kept shouting, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” <sup>23</sup> Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.*

Yet, Jesus received worship while on earth.

**Matthew 2:11**

*And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and **worshiped Him**. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

**Matthew 8:2-3**

*And behold, a leper came and **worshiped Him**, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” <sup>3</sup> Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

**Matthew 9:18**

*He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and **worshiped Him**, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.”*

**Matthew 14:33**

*Then those who were in the boat came and **worshiped Him**, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”*

**Matthew 15:25**

*Then she came and **worshiped Him**, saying, “Lord, help me!”*

**Matthew 28:9**

*And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and **worshiped Him**.*

**Matthew 28:17**

*When they saw Him, they **worshiped Him**; but some doubted.*

**Luke 24:52**

*And they **worshiped Him**, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,*

**John 9:35-38**

*He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” <sup>36</sup> He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” <sup>37</sup> And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.” <sup>38</sup> Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he **worshiped Him**.*

It is reasonable that people who experienced miracles at the hand of Jesus might become confused and thought He was God. They had never seen people healed like that. They had never seen someone calm the storm or cast out a demon with His word. So, when these things happened, they might have worshiped Him in error. However, Jesus RECEIVED this worship. If He were just a man or an angel, He would have told the person to get up and worship God only, just as the angel in the book of Revelations, but He didn't. He received this worship. By doing so, He was either the most blasphemous person to ever walk the planet, or He was acknowledging His right to be worshiped as God.

## **Jesus Claimed to Be God**

This leads us to an important question. Did Jesus actually *claim* to be God? It would seem that by accepting worship, He was indicating that He was God, but did He ever come right out and say it?

Let's take a look at an exchange of words between Jesus and the religious leaders recorded below in which they asked him directly who He was

### **John 8:52-58**

*Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.'<sup>53</sup> Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?"*

*<sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God.<sup>55</sup> Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.<sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."*

*<sup>57</sup> Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"*

*<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, **I AM**."<sup>59</sup> Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

What did Jesus mean when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM,"?

To answer this question, let us look at an event in the book of Exodus. Moses, who had been in exile for forty years, while in the fields one day, saw a bush that was burning, but not being consumed by the fire. This obviously caught his attention. When Moses approached the bush, God spoke to him from the bush. God told Moses that He was going to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. Moses was not sure the Children of Israel would listen to him.

### **Exodus 3:13-14**

*Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"*

*<sup>14</sup> And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, '**I AM** has sent me to you.'" <sup>15</sup> Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.'*

When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," He was clearly stating His claim to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The religious leaders knew exactly what he was saying; that is precisely why they were getting ready to stone him to death—for blasphemy.

Another account recording Jesus' claim to deity is found in John 5. Jesus healed a man, and when the Jews saw that he was healed, they asked him who healed him. Instead of being amazed that the man was healed, they were outraged that this had been done on the Sabbath. When they complained to Jesus about this, here is what transpired next.

**John 5:17**

*But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."<sup>18</sup> Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself **equal with God**.*

In John 10:23-33, there is an amazing portion of Scripture in which Jesus speaks about being our Shepherd. In it He reveals that He indeed claimed to be God.

*Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter.<sup>23</sup> And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch.*

*<sup>24</sup> Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."*

*<sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.<sup>26</sup> But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.<sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.<sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.<sup>30</sup> **I and My Father are one.**"*

*<sup>31</sup> Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.*

*<sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"*

*<sup>33</sup> The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, **but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.**"*

It is important to notice, that Jesus not only claims that He and the Father are One, but when the religious leaders accuse Him of making Himself God, He does not deny it.

## Scripture Declares Jesus to Be God

There was no question in the minds of the writers of the New Testament books that Jesus was indeed God. These amazing verses declare clearly that the disciples understood Jesus' deity.

### **John 1:1-3; 14**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word **was God**.<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.<sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.<sup>14</sup> And the **Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

### **Philippians 2:5-7 (NASB)**

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, although **He existed in the form of God**, did not regard **equality with God** a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant.*

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

While it is important to understand who Jesus is, it is even more valuable to realize how this applies to our lives. Dozens of books have been written on this very topic. We could not possibly discuss every reason in this lesson. It will take a lifetime to take it all in. However, let us discuss a few.

## Jesus Came Because He Loved Us

Why did Jesus come to earth? What would motivate God, to take on the form of a man; to live on earth as a human being; to suffer the difficulties on earth; to be rejected by His own; to be accused of blaspheming His own name? The answer is not complicated. In John 3:16, we read, "For God so *loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The words "so loved" do not refer to how *much* He loved us. Rather, the words mean, "In this way" God loved the world. No one can possibly understand this love completely, but perhaps you also show your love for others or your children in certain ways, even sacrificial ways. Or maybe you have been blessed to know someone who sacrificed for you. God knows everything there is to know about you, and yet He still loves you.

God not only came to forgive our sins, but so that we would not perish. We will study this topic more in future chapters, however, here is a summary.

When Adam surrendered himself to Satan by eating of the tree God had forbidden him to eat, he turned over all of mankind to death. Each person is born spiritually dead because of Adam's transgression. Man was heading toward destruction. The only way that man could be freed from this spiritual death was through a perfect sacrifice. Jesus was the only perfect man, and when He gave His life, He purchased life for all who would believe. Those who would have certainly perished, will not, if they believe in Him.

Another reason Jesus gave His life, was so that we could have *everlasting* life. This means that after we receive Jesus, we are His forever, without end. We have passed from death unto life. We died with Him, and we are resurrected with Him. Every single day, we have His life. One day He will return, and those who have died believing in Him, and those who believe in Him who are still alive will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and we will forever be with the Lord.

All of this was done for us out of a motive of pure love. It was love we did not deserve. We can imagine that someone on earth would die to save the life of a loved one, but it is difficult for us to even consider that someone would die for an enemy. Yet in Romans 5:8 we read:

*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

When we were living the complete opposite of what He wanted for us, He died for us. Why? Because He loves us. If He loved us even when we were going against Him, how much more does He love us now?

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW**

1. Why types of miracles did Jesus do while on earth? How might these indicate to us that he was God in the flesh?
2. Jesus accepted worship from those whom He had healed. Why does the fact He accepted worship point out that He was claiming to be God?

3. Give one example of how Jesus stated clearly that He was equal to God.
  
4. Take one of the Scriptures that declares Jesus is God and tell how you would explain this to someone who does not yet believe.
  
5. What does it mean to you personally that the God of the Universe would leave the glories of heaven to come and live as a human and die to set you free?