

1 Is Jesus God?

William MacDonald

William MacDonald was brought up in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts College, Harvard University, and in the United States Navy. He served as instructor and president of Emmaus Bible School, Oak Park, Illinois, for many years. He has travelled widely ministering the Word of God and has written dozens of books, booklets and correspondence courses. Mr. MacDonald now resides in California.

The question before us is, "Is Jesus God?" I have purposely worded the question that way. If I had asked, "Is Jesus the Son of God", there are many who would readily say "yes". But what they are saying is that He is "a son of God in the same way everyone else is." They do not believe that He is the Son of God in a unique way; in other words, they do not believe He is equal with God the Father.

In this study I would like to show that Jesus is God, first of all by producing Scriptures that say so directly. Then I wish to show that there is a large body of Scriptures that imply His deity. Finally, I would like to examine verses that are used to disprove His deity, and show that they actually prove what they are alleged to disprove.

Here then are some Scriptures where the deity of the Lord Jesus is directly stated. The one that first comes to the minds of most believers is John 1.1,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Word is clearly identified in verse 14 as the One who was made flesh and dwelt among us. In other words, the Word is the Lord Jesus Christ. The verse we have quoted above teaches us three things about Him. First, He was in the beginning. He Himself never did have a beginning. In what we might call the beginningless beginning, He already was. The second thing is that He was with God, that is, He was a distinct Person, living with God the Father. Then thirdly, we read that the Word was God. This puts the absolute deity of Christ beyond reasonable question.

Of course I realize that a certain false cult has issued a version of the Bible in which the last part of verse 1 reads, "and the Word was a god." But this translation is fraudulent; there is nothing in the original language of the New Testament to support it.

As second strong proof text for the full deity of Jesus is John 5.23.

That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honour-eth not the Father which hath sent Him.

Here is a divine decree that equal worship and honour should be accorded to the Son as to the Father. The honour of Jesus and of God the Father are so inextricably bound together that failure to honour the former is counted as failure to honour the latter. If Jesus were not God, such language would be preposterous.

When false cultists come to my door to peddle their pernicious doctrines, I like to ask them, "Do you honour the Son as you honour the Father?" Usually they try to change the subject but I won't let them. There's no use talking about any other subject if they are wrong on this one.

What think ye of Christ is the test
To try both your state and your scheme.
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him.

The third verse I would like to bring before you is John

10.30, where Jesus said,

I and my Father are one.

Those who are opposed to the doctrine of the deity of Christ try to explain this away by saying that He and His Father were one in spirit, one in outlook, or one in purpose. But the Jews of Jesus' day knew better. They knew that Jesus was claiming equality with God, vs.31,32. If the Jews were wrong, Jesus could have easily escaped their malice by saying that it was all a misunderstanding. But He did not, because they understood perfectly what He meant.

Now turn to John 14.8,9,

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long 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?

If Jesus were only a man it would be the height of impertinence and blasphemy for Him to say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But the sober truth is that as the only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus fully declared the Father, Jn. 1.18. When men looked upon the Lord Jesus Christ, they looked upon God manifest in the flesh.

Next we should consider Romans 9.5,

Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

This passage describes the great privileges that were entrusted to Israel as a nation. To them were given the adoption (as God's own people), the glory (the cloud that signified God's presence), the covenants, the law of Moses, the temple service, the promises and the patriarchs. But greatest of all, it was from this nation that the Messiah came "who is over all, God blessed for ever." A wonderful verse in which the humanity and deity of the Saviour are inseparably combined!

If the opposition is still unconvinced, I wonder what they will do with Colossians 2.9,

*For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of
the Godhead bodily.*

Notice the care with which the Spirit of God sets forth and guards the deity of Christ. All the fulness of the Godhead resides in Him bodily. There is a pyramiding of evidence here:

the Godhead bodily
the fulness of the Godhead bodily
all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

If words mean anything, then these words teach that the Lord Jesus is God in a body of flesh.

A further convincing verse is Hebrews 1.8: there God the Father is quoted as saying to the Son,

*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of
righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

God the Father addresses the Son as *God*. Those who quibble with the verse and who come up with alternate translations still have to contend with verses 10-12 where God the Father acknowledges the Son as the Creator and as the changeless and eternal One.

Finally we should mention 1 John 5.20,

*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath
given us an understanding, that we may know him that is
true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus
Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*

At the time John wrote, there was a false sect of people called Gnostics who denied, among other truths, the deity of Christ. In this verse, John warns his readers to steer clear of any conception of Christ that denies His absolute deity. Referring to God's Son, he says, "This is the true God, and eternal life."

In addition to these verses which clearly state the deity of Christ, there is a great body of texts where that truth is implied in one way or another.

Ephesians 1.2 for example. There grace and peace are said to come from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be absurd to suggest that both Persons are the fountainhead of grace and peace if they were not equal. See also Phil. 1.2; 2 Thess. 1.2; 1 Tim. 1.2.

In Ephesians 1.3 God is described as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. As to His humanity, Jesus recognized God as His God. As to His deity, the Lord Jesus acknowledged God as His Father in a unique way that is not true of any other. See also 1 Thess. 3.11; 2 Thess. 2.16,17.

In John 15.24 Jesus puts Himself on the same level as God the Father, "... now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." See also Matt. 28.19; Jn. 5.17,18; 16.15.

In Titus 2.13, the correct translation is "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (RSV). There are not two Persons here. The same One who is our great God is also our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Jesus received worship as God, Matt. 14.33; 28.9,17; Luke 24.52; Jn. 20.28,29. If He were not God, this would be a violation of the law, Ex. 20.3; Luke 4.8. But the New Testament teaches that Jesus should be worshipped, 1 Cor. 1.2; Phil. 2.9-11; Heb. 1.6; Rev. 1.5,6,12-14.

There are numerous verses where the attributes of God are ascribed to Jesus. For instance, we have His omnipresence in John 1.18,

*The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom
of the Father..."*

Jesus was on earth when John spoke these words, yet He was also in the bosom of the Father. See also Matt. 18.20 and 28.20.

We have His omnipotence in Matt. 8.26 where Jesus rebuked the storm and there was a great calm. See also Matt. 28.18 and Phil. 3.21.

Then we have the omniscience of Christ in numerous passages where He knew what others were thinking before they uttered a

word. In Luke 5.22 for example, He perceived the thoughts of the Pharisees. In Matt. 16.8 He read the minds of His disciples. See also John 11.13,14; 16.30; 21.17.

The eternity of the Lord Jesus is clearly set forth in John 1.1; Col. 1.17a; Heb. 1.8-12; Rev. 1.8.

Then you have the miracles of the Lord Jesus. He performed miracles that no one else had ever done, Jn. 15.24, and not only so, He conferred the power to perform miracles on others, Matt. 10.8. But a word of caution is necessary here. The fact that Jesus performed miracles is not in itself a proof of deity. Miracles are only a proof of some supernatural power at work. That power may be God - or it may be the devil. The two reasons why the miracles of Jesus attest Him are:

- (1) They were the miracles prophesied of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and those same Old Testament Scriptures predicted that the Messiah would be divine (Isa. 9.6 - "His name shall be called ... Mighty God").
- (2) The nature of His miracles was such that only God would perform them. If the devil had performed them, he would have been consistently defeating his own purposes.

The works of God are said to be done by Jesus -

Creating, Jn. 1.3,10; Col. 1.16; Heb. 1.2

Sustaining, Col. 1.17; Heb. 1.3

Forgiving sins, Mk. 2.5-7

Raising the dead, Jn. 5.21; 6.40,54

Raising Himself from the dead, Jn. 2.19,21; 10.18

Saving, compare Isa. 43.11 with Matt. 1.21; 1 Tim. 1.15

Then there is another line of proof pointing to the deity of Jesus, namely, some verses that refer to God in the Old Testament refer to Christ in the New. In Isa. 44.6, for example, Jehovah speaks of Himself as the first and the last; in Rev. 1.17, the Lord Jesus takes the same title to Himself. In Isa. 6, the prophet saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the temple. In verse 3 a seraph says, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord

(Jehovah) of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.” The Apostle John tells us that this Person is Jesus: “These things said Esaias (Isaiah) when he saw His (Christ’s) glory, and spoke of Him”, Jn.12.41. Also compare Isa. 8.13,14 with 1 Pet. 2.8; 3.14,15; Isa. 40.3 with Matt. 3.3; Isa.48.12 with Rev. 22.13; Mal. 3.1 with Mk. 1.2.

Jesus applies one of the Old Testament names of God, the I AM, to Himself several times in John’s gospel: see 4.26; 6.20; 8.24,28,58; 13.19; and 18.5-8.

Finally we want to examine some of the verses that are used by the false cults to deny the deity of Christ. One of their favorites is John 5.19, *The Son can do nothing of himself*. They say, “See! That proves Jesus is not omnipotent. He admits He can do nothing of Himself. He is just a man like the rest of us.” But the verse backfires on those who use it this way. First of all, none of *us* can truthfully say that we can do nothing of ourselves. We can wander away from God, we can disobey Him, we can act in self-will and we can even deny Him. But Jesus couldn’t. He was so morally perfect and so yielded to the will of God that He could do nothing apart from the instructions He received from His Father. Then the verse goes on to emphasize His deity by saying, “... for what things soever He (God) doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” So that this turns out to be one of the strong statements in the Bible that Jesus is equal with God the Father.

John 5.30 is another verse used by the opposition. Jesus said, *I can of mine own self do nothing*. Does this prove that He is not God? No, it proves that He is an absolutely perfect Person, utterly incapable of sin, of wilfulness, of independence of His Father’s will. All His judgments and decisions were based on what He heard from His Father.

Then there is John 14.28 where Jesus said, *My Father is greater than I*. The cultists pounce on this verse as incontrovertible evidence that Jesus is not God. But they wrench these words from the context and thus miss the true meaning.

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

When Jesus spoke these words He was on earth and subject to the abuse of sinful men. The Father, on the other hand, was in heaven where no creature could ever spit upon Him or crucify Him. If the disciples loved Jesus, they would rejoice at the thought that He was soon going back to heaven where men would never be able to buffet Him again. As long as Jesus was on earth, the Father was greater than He - that is, greater as to His *position*, but not greater as to His *Person*. When Jesus went back to heaven, the Father was no longer greater than He.

Another controversial passage is John 10.32-36.

Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Here the Lord Jesus takes His enemies back to Psalm 82.6 where God addressed the judges of Israel as gods or mighty ones. Jesus picks up that use of the word "gods" and argues from the lesser to the greater. The judges were only men, and the best that could be said of them was that the word of God came to them. Yet God called them gods. Much more could be said of the Son. The Father sanctified Him and sent Him into the world. This implies His pre-existence with God the Father and His incarnation. Now if God called judges by the name of gods, how much more worthy is Jesus to be called God!

A favorite verse of those who deny that Jesus is God is Colossians 1.15 where our Lord is called "the firstborn of every creature." They take this to mean that Jesus was a created being like the rest of us. How do we answer them? First of all, the phrase should probably be translated "the firstborn of all creation" (RSV). Now that word "firstborn" is used in two different ways in the Bible. It is used to indicate first in time; thus, Jesus was the firstborn child of Mary, Matt. 1.25. Or it is used to indicate first in rank; God said of David, *I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth*, Ps. 89.27. David was the lastborn son of Jesse, not the firstborn. But God decreed to make him His firstborn and immediately explains what He means - "higher than the kings of the earth." Now it is in this latter sense that Jesus is the firstborn of all creation. He has been given a place over all creation. But that He Himself is not a part of that creation is clear from verse 16 of Colossians 1 where He is described as the Architect, the Active Agent and the Object of all creation.

The cultists also use Revelation 3.14 where the Saviour speaks of Himself as "the beginning of the creation of God." Those who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction use this verse to show that Jesus was the first created Being. But they forget that "beginning" can also mean that He is the One who initiated creation, the One who brought the worlds into being. Jesus is the Originator or Active Cause of creation.

Conclusion

The evidence for the deity of Christ is mountainous. Those who seek to deny it are in a terrible position. They have to change the translations to suit their own whims, they have to take verses out of their context and they have to misinterpret the Word all along the line. They face this terrible choice - either the Bible is true and Jesus is God or the Bible is a fraud and Jesus is an imposter.

The consistent testimony of the Word of God is that the Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and that as such He

is equal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Faith bows adoringly and sings:

*Thou art the Everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son,
God manifestly seen and heard,
And heaven's beloved One.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow!*

*In Thee, most perfectly expressed,
The Father's glories shine,
Fulness of Godhead, too: the Blest,
Eternally Divine!
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow!*

*True image of the Infinite,
Whose essence is concealed;
Brightness of uncreated light,
The heart of God revealed.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow.*

*But the high myst'ries of His Name
The creature's grasp transcend;
The Father only (glorious claim!)
The Son can comprehend.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow!*

*Throughout the universe of bliss,
The centre Thou, and Sun,
Th'eternal theme of praise is this,
To heaven's beloved One.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow.*