

The Real Jesus

He was God before He came into the world, even before the sun, the moon, the stars began to shine. He was God when He invaded the planet from outer space at a place called Bethlehem.

He is God today, gloriously enthroned on high. He is God eternally, forever God, as long as endless ages roll.

When He lived on earth, our Lord was forever asking questions. It was one of His favorite ways of teaching truth. Of all the questions He ever asked, surely these two are most revealing, most soul-searching: "Whom do men say that I am? Who do you say that I am?"

The answer we give to the second question will show at once where we stand in relation to the fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith - the deity of Christ.

It is the clear teaching of both Testaments that God exists in three Persons. This concept of God is contained in embryonic form in the very first mention of God's name in Scripture: "In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heaven and the earth."

The name "Elohim" is a plural noun, but it is always followed by a singular adjective or a singular verb.

Used of anyone else but God, that would be hopelessly bad grammar. When we speak of ourselves collectively in the plural, for instance we say, "We are..."

God says, "We is."

The New Testament carries that concept even further and shows that the three Persons of the Godhead exist as a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit. These are not three gods; there is one God, but He exists in three Persons. Each Person is separate and distinct; each one is God in the absolute sense.

The three primary names for God in the Old Testament--Elohim, Adonai, and Jehovah--are directly ascribed to each of the three Persons of the Godhead.

Before He came into the world by way of human birth in Bethlehem, Jesus existed as God.

The person of the Lord Jesus is unique. Paul tells us that "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2:9) The Lord Jesus did not surrender His deity when He entered Mary's womb. There was a change of position, but no surrender of His essential being.

No such surrender would have been possible. God cannot possibly cease to be God.

At Bethlehem, when the preexistent and eternal Second Person of the Godhead lay in a manger for men to see, He did not surrender His deity. He only gave up the visible manifestation of the glory that had been His from eternity as God.

It is not possible that the Lord's actual deity could be diminished or that He could have surrendered any of His divine attributes for the simple reason that God is immutable, unchangeable. Jesus was "God manifest in flesh." (I Tim. 3:16)

When Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath Day, He defended His action with the words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (John 5:17)

"Therefore," we read, "the Jews sought the more to kill him, because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." (John 5:18)

Yet, for all that, Jesus was really and truly a Man. He prayed and wept and slept and ate and drank and asked questions and grew up as would any other human being. The two natures, the divine and the human, were present; but He was just one Person.

Again and again the New Testament tells us that the Lord Jesus was the Creator of the universe. That means He possesses omnipotent power, omniscient wisdom, and omnipresence of being.

He manifested absolute power over the forces of nature, over sickness, over the tomb.

With the same power, the same authority, the same ease, the same results, Jesus was able to do what the Father was able to do. He fully wielded all the prerogatives of omnipotence. He was able to handle all the laws, forces, and powers of nature with the confidence and ease with which the Father handled them.

"The Father...hath committed all judgment unto the Son," He said, "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." (John 5:22-23) Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, principalities and powers, demons and men, all are under the control of the Son and all must render the same homage to the Son that is rendered to the Father.

The Lord Jesus is the universal Judge. That means, of course, that He must have an intimate, personal, infallible knowledge of all the millions of beings who have existed and do exist in the universe.

Since all judgement has been committed to the Son, then He must have a perfect mastery of all the laws of God to be able to competently judge in all the realms where God rules; and so infallible must be His insight and comprehension that His sentences must be absolutely right, eternal, and beyond all courts of appeal.

Such attributes belong to God alone; and since Jesus is the Judge, Jesus is God.

Life-independent, absolute life - is the Son's to impart when and where He wills. (John 5:21)

He has control over physical life, spiritual life, resurrection life, eternal life. He has authority over the grave, over death and Hades, over the destinies of the saved and the unsaved.

He asserts, "All power - untrammelled, unhindered, unequalled power - is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18) Only God could make a statement like that.

It was necessary for Jesus to enter human life and take possession of a human body so that His blood could be shed as an atonement for sin. Apart from His humanity, no blood could have been shed.

Yet the blood that was shed at Calvary is evaluated by God Himself as "precious," because it was the blood that poured through the human veins of One who was and did not cease to be the second Person of the God-head.

There are sobering implications in this. If the life that Jesus surrendered on the cross was only a human life, then that death would have atoned for just one person. The law of Moses demanded "a life for a life."

His was an infinite life. Therefore, it was a life sufficient to atone for the sin of the world. The Holy Spirit assures us that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." (2 Cor. 5:19)

To the Jews there was no greater person than Abraham.

To the Jews there was no greater prince than Solomon, at least, as far as the magnificence of his kingdom went.

To the Jews there was no greater patriarch than Jacob.

To the Jews there was no greater prophet than Jonah.

To the Jews there was no greater place than the temple.

The Lord Jesus took preeminence over them all. He was greater than their greatest person (John 8:53-58), greater than their greatest patriarch (John 4:12-14), greater than their greatest prince (Luke 11:31), and greater than their greatest prophet (Matt. 12:41), and greater than their greatest place (Matt. 12:6).

This, indeed, is the opening theme of the epistle to the Hebrews. The writer tells his Hebrew readers that Jesus was greater than the angels, greater than Aaron, greater than Moses, greater than Joshua. He talks about the preeminence of Christ over all.

Paul picks up the theme and, having told us something of the person and power of Christ, tells us of His outright preeminence too. He says that Jesus has the preeminence "in all things" for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." (Col. 1:18,19)

God addresses the Son as God. He tells us that the Lord Jesus sits upon God's own throne. He sits there by sovereign right, by virtue of the fact that He Himself is God.

Who indeed but God could sit upon God's throne?

Once, in the history of the universe, a mere creature tried to sit upon that throne. His name was Lucifer, the son of the morning. He was the highest of all created beings.

But when he aspired to sit upon God's throne, to bridge the gap between the creature and the Creator, between a finite being and the infinite God, he was instantly cast out of heaven.

Yet Jesus sits upon God's throne. He sits there because He has every right to sit there, even though He is now clothed with human flesh. He sits there because He always was, never ceased to be, and always will remain God in every sense of the word.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us, in a glorious statement of truth, that our beloved Lord is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."

He is the Jesus of history, the Jesus of yesterday. He is the Jesus of experience, the Jesus of today. He is the Jesus of eternity, Jesus forever.