

Moments for YOU

Volume 51, Number 4

Theme: Deity of Christ



NO MIDDLE GROUND

“Whom say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). That question of our Lord’s has been declared to be life’s most important question. How do you answer it? Who is Jesus?

The Muslim would say, “Jesus was a prophet of Allah, but nothing more.” A Jehovah’s Witness would tell you that He is a created angel. Some say He was a good man, a great teacher, or a wise philosopher. Some say He was a son of God—a man with a spark of divinity. What do you say?

These answers are all inadequate, for they all fail to recognize the deity of the Man Jesus Christ. Jesus is God, and it is that fact that gives His teachings their authority. It is that fact that makes obedience to His commandments imperative. It is that fact that makes faith in Him as Lord and Saviour mandatory.

Some would declare that it really does not matter who Christ is as long as we receive help from His teachings. But wait a minute. It is deadly error to try to dispense with Jesus’ deity as quickly as that. If He is indeed God, He deserves our reverence and our unquestioning obedience. If He is not God, He was either a madman or a fraud. If you are not totally convinced of His deity, you must settle the issue.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God. He exercises the prerogatives of deity. He has the attributes of deity. He bears the titles of deity. And His commandments are the commandments of deity.

Condensed from a message by Dr. George Sweeting. Used by permission of Moody.

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

The keystone truth of the Christian faith is the deity of Christ. Christianity, as the name implies, depends upon Christ. In contrast with other world religions, the faith which bears His Name depends not only on His moral and religious teaching but also on His character. What were the nature and scope of the personal claims of Jesus Christ? They were of the most astonishing height and reach. Let us look at a few of them:

He claims powers which reside in God alone. The power to forgive sins, for instance. On one occasion when His hearers doubted a pronouncement of forgiveness, He demonstrated that His words were no mere pious wish but an effectual conferment of pardon by coupling them with words which conveyed instant physical cure to the man, a paralytic (Luke 5:17-26). Was the cure effective? So, it may be concluded, was the pardon. Was the cure instant? So was the forgiveness. Both were displays of divine power.

He claims a unique relationship to God (Matthew 26:63,64). Here He explicitly claims to be the Son of God. The mode of the use of the names “Son” and “Son of God” as applied to Christ in the Gospels and the Epistles, clearly imply a unique relationship. Matthew 11:27 sets forth this relationship: “All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.”

The closing verse of the prologue to John’s Gospel (1:18) speaks thus

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of Christ: “The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father.” This is a strong affirmation of the uniqueness of the Sonship of Christ. The verdict of the Jewish Sanhedrin was given against Jesus because He made Himself the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-66). This claim, made in the presence of the tribunal, so that its chief member, the High Priest, considered other witnesses unnecessary, was one He had made on previous occasions and was understood by those who heard it as a claim to be equal with God (John 5:18; 10:33). He did nothing to correct this impression, which He would have been bound to do had it been a misapprehension.

He claims universal Judgeship, a task which demands omniscience. God has committed all judgment to the Son because He is a Son of man (John 5:27). No man who shall be judged will be in a position to complain that his Judge was one who had no experience of human conditions and infirmities or that His judgment was lacking in understanding that only such experience can give. Yet that is only one side of the truth; the other is that absolutely nothing is hidden from the Divine omniscience of the Judge, and omniscience is with God alone.

He claims an eternal pre-existence when speaking to the Father of a glory He possessed alongside Him prior to the present creation. “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (John 17:5). These words need no explanation—they claim that the Speaker shared glory alongside the Father, not merely before the Incarnation, but before the present creation was called into being.

“Before Abraham was, I AM” (John

8:58) were words He used in answering a question about whether He had seen Abraham. Note the words: not “I was,” but “I AM,” the name of Him who spoke out of the bush to Moses, “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:1-15). It is a claim to eternal pre-existence, and the quality of eternity of being is God’s attribute and His only.

He accepts worship. When Cornelius fell down to do homage to Peter, the apostle raised him up saying, “Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:26). When John of Patmos fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed him the vision of the New Jerusalem, the angel rebuked him saying, “See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant ... worship God” (Revelation 19:10).

However, when the man who had been born blind said, “Lord, I believe,” and worshipped Jesus (John 9:35-38), there is no record of rebuke or refusal of the worship so offered. Nor was there any rebuke, correction, or remonstrance to Thomas when that disciple uttered his adoration in the words, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). The acceptance of worship expressed in such terms is an emphatic assumption of Deity.

These are some of the claims of Christ: they are only some out of many, but they must suffice for our present purpose. —J.B. Watson

For more direct testimony to the Deity of Jesus Christ, look up and read the following Scriptures: Matthew 1:23; John 1:1-2; John 1:18; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:2; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20.

How many more can you find?

VEILED GLORY

Direct testimonies are the most obvious sources of proof for the supreme Divinity of Christ. However, we are not obliged to build our faith of the Saviour's Divinity on ten, fifty, or even a hundred passages where it is directly affirmed and taught. This is because it runs as a golden thread throughout the entire Scripture.

OBJECT OF SUPREME AFFECTION

"He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37; see also Luke 14:25,26). Behold here a teacher who claims for *Himself* the supreme affection of His disciples. Who is this that commands me to prefer Him, in the love of my innermost soul, before my own wife, child, mother, father—even requires that, when the claims of their love and His come into conflict, I must be ready to cast theirs at once behind my back?

If Christ be none other than the God of whom is commanded in the law, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5), then I can understand it. Then my whole soul assents to the claim as holy and just and good. But if He be *not* the God of the law, the God who made me, and made me for Himself, then who is He?

THE FORGIVER OF SINS

Consider this precious narrative in Luke 7 where Jesus is invited to eat with Simon the Pharisee. Along came a woman weeping—a prostitute—who proceeded to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears. The Pharisee was surprised that Jesus would allow this, and wondered if He knew that the woman was a sinner.

The Lord Jesus meets the thought by the following parable and question: "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged" (Luke 7:41-43). Now everyone sees whom the *debtors* are designed to represent—the woman on the one hand, and Simon on the other. But is it any less certain whom the creditor represents, to whom the debt of sin is owed, who alone can forgive the debt?

Let us continue: "He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? *I* entered into thine house, thou gavest *Me* no water for *My* feet: but she hath washed *My* feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest *Me* no kiss: but this woman since the time *I* came in hath not ceased to kiss *My* feet. *My* head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed *My* feet with ointment. Wherefore *I* say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (vv. 44-47).

Jesus Christ, therefore, is the Creditor—the God to whom the debt of all our sin is owed. It is He alone who can forgive our debt, and who lays claim to the supreme gratitude and love of every forgiven soul!

THE WATER OF LIFE

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink" (John 7:37). Who is this that bids those multitudes, bids a world, to come and draw everlast-

ing refreshment, living water, from His Person? Let His words to the Samaritan woman be called to mind: “Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water ... whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst” (John 4:10,14). This, beyond all doubt, “is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

I have often marvelled at these words of Jesus in the record of the crucifixion, “Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst” (John 19:28). Ah, the very fountain of living waters, athirst! What was that thirst, along with all the other sufferings of the Lord Jesus, but the smiting of the Rock, which caused the living water to flow forth from Him (Exodus 17:6)? And, accordingly, no sooner had Jesus said, “I thirst,” than another word was heard from His lips: “It is finished” (John 19:30).

“Who is a rock save our God?” (Psalm 18:31). It is none other than that very God who cried out in that day, and is still crying in the midst of us, “*If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.*”

Condensed from *The Divine Glory of Christ* by Charles J. Brown. Published by Banner of Truth Trust.

*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.*

—John Newton

THE KENOSIS OF CHRIST

The meaning of Philippians 2:1-11 has been greatly debated in relation to the person of the incarnate Christ. It is the connotation of the Greek verb *kenoo* in verse 7 that is disputed. It is

generally translated as either “made Himself of no reputation” or “emptied Himself.” Simply stated, the question that is raised is, “In His ‘kenosis,’ when He came to earth, did Christ empty Himself of any or all aspects of deity?”

That He possessed the attributes of deity before the incarnation is stated in verse 6. The word “form” does not refer to external appearances, but rather to the essential attributes of deity. He did not merely *appear* as God; He *was* God. “Form of God” must have as much reality as the parallel phrase, “form of a servant” in verse 7. If He was really a servant, as those who deny His deity are quite happy to admit, then He was also really God. According to this passage, you cannot have the reality of one without the reality of the other.

But in what sense does Paul mean that Christ emptied Himself at the incarnation? “Emptied” may be a misleading translation because it connotes Christ’s giving up or losing some of His divine attributes during His earthly life, and that was not the case. Therefore, the *kenosis* should not be understood to mean a subtraction of deity but rather the addition of humanity with its consequent limitations. Indeed, in the passage itself, the verb “emptied” is explained by three participles which follow—taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man. The *kenosis* is further explained in the text by the parallel clause which follows: “He humbled Himself.” The idea is that by taking on humanity with its limitations, there was a humbling which, although real, did not involve the giving up of any divine attributes.

What is included in a proper statement of the true doctrine of the

kenosis? The concept involves the veiling of Christ's preincarnate glory (John 17:5), the condescension of taking on Himself the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), and the voluntary nonuse of some of His attributes of deity during the time of His earthly life (Matthew 24:36). His humanity was not a glorified humanity and was thus subject to temptation, weakness, pain, and sorrow. Choosing not to use His divine attributes is quite different from saying that He gave them up. Nonuse does not mean subtraction.

Condensed from *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* by Charles C. Ryrie. Used by permission of Moody Press.

QUESTION & ANSWER

QUESTION: It is difficult to understand how the Lord Jesus can be God and Man at the same time. What theory do you hold to explain it?

ANSWER: We hold no theory at all, and believe that all theories on this sacred matter should be avoided.

The Lord's own words were, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matthew 11:27), and that being so it shows that there are depths of mystery about Him which the creature can never fathom. There are unfathomable mysteries in creation; is it then a surprise that there are mysteries connected with the Creator becoming Man which transcend our minds?

The truth as to the absolute and essential deity of the Lord Jesus is abundantly stated in Scripture, as is the truth of the reality, fullness, and perfection of His Manhood. To start theorizing as to how both of these things can be true at the same time is unwarranted, and often leads to error. We rather take the place of believing what is revealed, bowing our heads and worshipping.

—F.B. Hole

WHEN GOD BECAME MAN

We can never understand the doctrine of the incarnation, whereby God the Creator became man the creature, for it is beyond the limits of finite comprehension. But we can believe it, for God has "given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Only the Creator of life could defeat death. Buddha is dead and Mohammed is dead, and so are Confucius and Plato and all the great men who ever lived, but the "Word made flesh" who was "put to death in the flesh" (1 Peter 3:18) has been raised from the dead and is able to "save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25).

HOW COULD THE CREATOR BECOME MAN?

His body could not be a body produced by the normal process of human reproduction, for it would have to be a perfect body. In particular, His blood must be "precious blood ... as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19), for that blood must be "offered ... without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14).

Thus the body must be formed directly by God and placed in a virgin's womb. This wonderful body would not grow from a man's seed, as in every other human birth, nor would it grow from a woman's egg, for in either case a sin-carrying and mutation-carrying embryo would necessarily result.

WHEN DID THE CREATOR BECOME MAN?

It has become customary in much of the world to observe the Creator's incarnation on December 25. However, the fact is that no one really knows the date of His birth. Nevertheless, there is one particularly intriguing possibility: on the night Christ was born, shepherds were in

the field watching their sheep (Luke 2:8). Although it is barely possible that this could be in late December, it seems far more likely that it would be sometime in the early fall.

If so, it is significant that there was an ancient Christian feast called Michaelmas, observed on September 29. The name “Michaelmas” means “Michael sent,” just as “Christmas” means “Christ sent.” It is very probable that Michael was the “angel of the Lord” (Luke 2:9) who was sent from heaven to announce the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. However, this was *not* His incarnation. He had already been “made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7) nine months earlier, when He created a body for Himself and took up His residence in Mary’s womb. *That* was the time when “the Word was made flesh!”

And so it may be beautifully significant that the real “Christmas” (i.e., “Christ sent”), would have been nine months earlier than “Michaelmas.” But that brings us back to December 25 again! The actual number of days between the two dates is 278, which is an ideal period of human gestation.

Whether or not these inferences are correct, they at least yield a greater appreciation of His miraculous conception. How appropriate it would be for Him to enter the world right at the season of darkest and longest night, for He would come as “the light of the world” (John 8:12) to bring “life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). Then, at “Christmas” time, we can remember with deep thanksgiving when “God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9).

WHY DID THE CREATOR BECOME MAN?

This greatest of all questions has the most wonderful of all answers!

“For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17).

“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law” (Galatians 4:4,5).

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

How infinitely sad it is that so many today reject or ignore such a gracious, loving, holy, powerful Creator/Redeemer. Not only do they miss all the true meaning and blessing of Christmas now, but, unless they respond to Him in repentance and faith, they will be everlastingly separated from Him in the glorious eternal ages to come.

Condensed from “When God Became Man” by Henry Morris. Used by permission of Institute for Creation Research

CONTRASTS IN CHRIST

When considering the incarnation, two important truths should be realized: (1) Christ became at the same time and in the absolute sense very God and very man, and (2) in becoming flesh He in no sense laid aside His deity. His full deity and complete humanity are essential to His work on the cross. If He were not man, He could not die; if He were not God, His death would not have had infinite value.

The Bible presents many contrasts, but none more striking than that Christ in His person should be at the same time very God and very man. Illustrations of these contrasts from Scripture are many: He was weary,¹ yet He called the weary to Himself for rest.² He was hungry,³ yet

He was “the bread of life.”⁴ He was thirsty,⁵ yet He was the water of life.⁶ He was in agony,⁷ yet He healed all manner of disease and soothed every pain.⁸ He “grew, and waxed strong in spirit,”⁹ yet He was from all eternity.¹⁰ He was tempted,¹¹ yet He, as God, could not be made to sin.¹² He became self-limited in knowledge,¹³ yet He was the wisdom of God.¹⁴ He said (with reference to His humiliation, being made for a little time lower than the angels) “My Father is greater than I,”¹⁵ yet also “he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” and “I and My Father are one.”¹⁶ He prayed,¹⁷ yet He answered prayer.¹⁸ He wept at the tomb,¹⁹ yet He called the dead to arise.²⁰ He asked, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”²¹ yet He “needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man.”²² He said, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”²³ yet it was the very God to whom He cried

who was at that moment “in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.”²⁴ He died, yet He is eternal life. He is God’s ideal man, and man’s ideal God.

From this it may be seen that the Lord Jesus Christ sometimes functioned within the sphere of that which was perfectly human, and sometimes within the sphere of that which was perfectly divine. His divine being was never limited in any degree by the fact of His humanity, nor did He minister to His human need from His divine resources.

¹John 4:6 ²Matthew 11:28 ³Matthew 4:2
⁴John 6:35 ⁵John 19:28 ⁶John 7:37 ⁷Luke 22:44 ⁸Matthew 12:15 ⁹Luke 2:40 ¹⁰John 8:58 ¹¹Matthew 4:1 ¹²James 1:13 ¹³Luke 2:52 ¹⁴1 Corinthians 1:24 ¹⁵Hebrews 2:6-7;
John 14:28 ¹⁶John 14:9; John 10:30 ¹⁷Luke 6:12 ¹⁸Acts 10:31 ¹⁹John 11:35 ²⁰John 11:43
²¹Matthew 16:13 ²²John 2:25 ²³Mark 15:34
²⁴2 Corinthians 5:19

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JESUS IS JEHOVAH

God is revealed in the Old Testament with many names and attributes. Look up these verses to see that Jesus of the NT is in fact Jehovah of the OT!

Name or Attribute	Jehovah	Jesus
Creator	Psa. 95:6; Isaiah 44:24	John 1:3; Col. 1:15
The First and The Last	Isaiah 48:12	Revelation 22:13
Full of Glory	Isaiah 6:1-4; 42:8	John 12:41; James 2:1
Judge	Psa. 50:6; Isa. 33:22	Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1
King Forever	Psalms 10:16; Jer. 10:10	Luke 1:31-33
Light	Psalms 27:1; Isa. 60:19	John 8:12, Rev. 21:23
Lord of Lords	Deuteronomy 10:17	Revelation 17:14
Redeemer	Psalms 19:14; Isa. 47:4	Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:18
Rock	Deut. 32:4; 1 Sam 2:2	1 Corinthians 10:4
Saviour	Isaiah 43:11; 45:22	Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12
Shepherd	Psalms 23:1; 80:1	John 10:11; 1 Pet. 5:4
Stumbling Stone	Isaiah 8:13,14	Romans 9:33