

The Deity of Jesus

Every 2 years Ligonier Ministries surveys Americans to find out what they believe. Ligonier is a ministry that was headed by the late RC Sproul and is an amazing resource for average people who simply want to know theology better. One of the best resources they put out is their daily devotional called Table Talk - well worth anyone's time.

But Ligonier surveys the country and I saw an article that highlighted one interesting point: Almost 30% of evangelicals do not believe that Jesus was God. They would say he is a good teacher, but not God. That is a tragedy of immense proportions. We need to learn a few things from that. (<https://disrn.com/news/one-third-of-evangelicals-believe-jesus-was-a-good-teacher-but-he-was-not-god>)

First, whenever you hear the word "evangelical" you should pause and question what that even means. In conservative circles we tend to think it means someone who is a genuine believer. Evangelical, after all, means someone who has believed the gospel - euangelion is the Greek word for good news.

But for the 100 years or so the word has been used, most people are at a loss to know what it means. There have been definitions that have been set, but rarely do people know what they are. Usually people are simply self-professed evangelicals which means they label themselves as evangelical. They are not Catholic, they're not atheist, they're not Mormon...usually in a survey the only other option is evangelical. Which is a long way of saying that many people say they are evangelical and they have no idea what that means.

How do I know that? Because almost 30% of people who claim to be evangelical don't hold to one of the central pillars of the Christian faith: the deity of Jesus Christ. Deity means divine or God. The deity of a Jesus is the divine status of Jesus. There could not be a more important doctrine in all of the Bible than our Lord and Savior being fully God. Even if you had many other things about Bible/theology right, but you missed it on this one point, you would be wrong.

The Christian faith is uniquely trinitarian. There is only one God, who eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each of those persons is fully God. The eternal Father is all glorious, powerful, wise, loving, omnipresent. We affirm the same thing about the Son: that he is eternal, glorious, all powerful, wise, loving, omnipresent. And the same of the Holy Spirit. Everything that it is to be God exists fully in each person of the Trinity. And to deny any person of the Trinity this reality is to step outside of biblical orthodoxy and ultimately it jeopardizes every other aspect of the faith.

If you deny Jesus is God it means we cannot trust the Bible because the Bible states explicitly that Jesus is God.

If you deny that Jesus is God you reject his goodness because he claimed for himself that he is God. If he's really not God, but he goes around telling people he is God, then he's not a good teacher.

If Jesus is not God then he could not have atoned for sins because no man - certainly not a sinful man - could atone for the sins of others.

If Jesus is not God then our understanding of creation is a lie because the Bible says he created.

If Jesus is not God then our prayers are wasted - especially those to Jesus - because mere men cannot hear or answer prayer.

If Jesus is not God then there is no new covenant, because he cannot be our eternal high priest, our once and future King.

In the game Jenga you try to take out as many non essential blocks as you can without causing the tower to tip over. The blocks that cause a tip over are essential - the deity of Jesus is an essential tenet: pull it out and the faith falls over.

The deity of Jesus is a major doctrine. The difference between a major doctrine and a minor doctrine is that a major doctrine typically impacts many other doctrines and rejecting a major doctrine is considered heresy - a teaching that places you outside the faith. A Minor doctrine typically does not impact other doctrines and has no impact on salvation.

Major doctrines: salvation by grace, the Trinity, the doctrine of creation, resurrection, sinfulness of man, the atoning death of Jesus.

This has always been a major doctrine for the church since the earliest days of the church. In the earliest days of the church the church formulated the Apostles Creed as sort of a short hand doctrinal statement. And it was good because it was brief, but it was insufficient because the section about Jesus was so small that even people who denied his deity could affirm the statement. So the church cranked out another document about 300 years later called the Nicene Creed.

The Nicene Creed made clear what the Apostles' Creed did not: namely, that Jesus is fully divine.

Nicene: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made.

So this is a major doctrine and many people are either unaware of what it is, or it's importance in the life of someone who claims to be a Christian. What I want to do this morning is give us a crash course in Christology. Christology is the study of Christ. And this morning I want to do a fly by of the New Testament focusing in specifically on the passages that point directly to the deity of Jesus. If you have a blank page in the back of your Bible this is a great place to jot some notes if you

But listen, more than just a survey and a study of these passages I want us to be reminded that we worship Jesus. We fall down at his glorious majesty in awe of him. Our Creator, our Savior, our Lord and Master. As much as we worship the Spirit and the Father in truth and holiness and reverence and majesty. We worship the God-man, who was born of a virgin, took our sins upon his body on the tree. Who died, who rose, and who lives forevermore.

Matt 1:18-25. To begin, I just want to focus on the name of Jesus. Sometimes the most obvious facts are staring right at us. Twice in the opening verses of Matthew we see the deity of Jesus. **Read 18-25**

So the child was called two things. Immanuel and then later Jesus. What does verse 23 say Immanuel means? God with us. Now, it doesn't take a lot of deep scholarship or diving into original languages to understand that plainly Jesus is God with us. By name he is also called Jesus, which is a form of the name Joshua which means "God saves." Two different times in this small passage there is explicit reference to his deity.

Does this mean everyone in the Bible who is named Jesus or Joshua is God? Of course not. But for the messiah - who was to be God - to be named "God with us" is a pretty clear implication that he is divine.

Matthew 14:28-33. Remember this is when Jesus came to the disciples who were on the boat. He was walking on the water and Peter wanted to go out to Jesus. **Read 28-33**

They worshipped Jesus. If Jesus were simply a good guy he would have rebuked them for such blasphemy. If someone were to try to worship me I would be appalled. You remember in the book of Acts people try to worship the Apostle Paul and he sets them straight right away: we are just men. Matthew leaves us no doubt that this was the correct thing for the disciples to do.

Matthew 28:16-20. Here we see Jesus, risen from the dead. Notice again the reaction. **Read**

No rebuke. On the contrary, now Jesus has full authority and power. The authority and power that were cloaked for a time during his earthly ministry are now on full display as he sends his disciples into the world to

proclaim his commands and his omnipresence. He is with us - right here, right now - until the end of the age. No mere man can do that.

John 1:1-4, 14. We saw this last week during the homily before the Lord's Supper. If there were a top 3 passages that you should know to have memorized concerning the deity of Jesus, this is one of them. **John 1:1-3.** This is about as solid as it gets. **Read**

There really is no clearer way to say this. The construction in the original really gives the force of "The Word was divine" - that is, every quality that it is to be God that God the Father possesses, the Word possesses. He is eternal, he is co-equal, he is in union with the Father, he is creator, and the creator took on flesh.

Side: the term only begotten. Only begotten can be very confusing because it can sound like Jesus was made at some point. Even ancient creed make this a weird discussion because they will say that Jesus was begotten, not made. Well, what does begotten mean? It sounds a whole lot like made. So and so begot so and so.

Begotten simply means one of a kind or unique. The NIV was really the first translation to push away from the language of begotten used in the KJV, NKJV and helpfully translate the term as "one and only" - and they had a lot of ancient precedent to do this. John is getting across in his gospel is that Jesus is God's Son in a unique way. In John's theology, Christians are children of God, whereas Jesus is the Son of God. Now, obviously in other places we are called the sons of God too. But for John, the title of Son uniquely refers to Jesus because he is divine. The Greek word monogenes bears that out - the word literally means one-of-a-kind.

So **John 1:18** reads: No one has ever seen God; but the unique God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. The uniquely divine Son Jesus has made the Father known to us. Jesus's whole mission was to reveal the Father to those whom the Father had given him.

John 5:18. You ever wonder why the Jewish leaders wanted so badly to kill Jesus? What was it he was doing that got under their skin? John leaves us no doubt. **Read**

Jesus broke the Sabbath - at least in the eyes of the Jewish leaders - because he healed on the Sabbath. They would water their oxen or save their donkey out of a pit or circumcise a son on the Sabbath, but they were enraged when Jesus would heal someone on the Sabbath. The other thing that bothered them was that Jesus had this habit of calling God his own Father. Not just like how we call him Father, Jesus referred to the Father in a very distinct way that didn't bring the Father lower, but brought him higher.

You ever listen to Jesus and he just kind of sounds like he owns the place. As though if you didn't know any better he had a Messiah complex where he owned it all and all authority was his. Yeah, they got that feeling too. And Jesus never cleared that up for them because there was nothing to clear up. The signals he was sending, were exactly what they were receiving.

John 8:48-59. Here Jesus refers to himself specifically by the divine name. **Read**

These were the kinds of things that got Jesus into trouble. Him saying that he had talked to Abraham - that he was older than Abraham. But vs. 58 is especially compelling. As the ESV Study Bible says: Jesus could have simply said "Before Abraham was, I was." But that's not what he says. He says more than that. He changes the verb tense: Before Abraham was, I AM. ego eimi in Greek. He's taking God's divine name.

You remember when Moses was at the burning bush and he asked God for his name? "The Israelites are going to ask who sent me to deliver them out of Egypt - what's your name so I can tell them?" God said his name was Yahweh - I Am that I Am. God is the eternally existing one. Here, Jesus says, Truly, Truly I say to you, before Abraham was - ego eimi - I am Yahweh.

And that wasn't lost on the Jews, was it. They immediately tried to kill him by stoning. And the language of the text is that Jesus didn't just go hide behind some pillar somewhere in the Temple. The Temple was a pretty open place. The language is that Jesus supernaturally hid himself from their sight.

John 20: 24-29. Let me show you one more in John's gospel. This is from the lips of someone who, ironically, is usually known for his doubt. In fact he is the most famous of all doubters: Doubting Thomas. **Read**

Interestingly, we remember his lack of faith rather than his expression of the highest Christology: that Jesus is his Lord and his God. He's not giving some sort of exclamation of surprise like, "Oh my God!" No, this is his realization of just exactly who Jesus is. He says to Jesus: my Lord and my God.

Think about that. We walk solely by faith. We have evidence of God all around us. From the heavens above, to the intricacy of God forming life in the womb, all of creation cries out that there is a God.

But here is Thomas, having put his hands into God's side and into the nail holes of God. Think about how amazing it is that God is patient with Thomas to bolster his faith. He created Thomas, chose Thomas, through the Holy Spirit wrote this account down all so what would be recorded about Thomas is not his doubt - but his divinely given faith expressed in exclaiming Jesus's deity.

Let's keep moving. **Romans 9:1-5.** If **John 1:1-4** was among the top 3 verses to remember concerning Jesus's deity, **Romans 9:5** is the second. Sadly, if you have a NASB, the translators could not have made the verse more confusing. But every other translation nails it. **Read**

So here is Paul, agonizing over the fact that the Jewish people - those to whom God loved for centuries in the OT and gave the law and covenants, and promises - have by and large rejected the Messiah. They've rejected Jesus. He'll go on to explain why in the Rom. 9-11. But here, the great tragedy of rejecting the Messiah is that they are also rejecting of the eternally blessed God. Jesus Christ is the eternally blessed God. He is eternal - an attribute only God has. And more than that he is blessed - that is, he is to be praised.

When someone rejects Christ as Lord, they reject him as God. Think about that: when someone calls Jesus just a good teacher and not God, they are actually not honoring him at all because they are rejecting his rightful authority as God.

An interesting story during 1776 in the revolutionary war is when a British general wanted to send a letter to George Washington. He addressed the letter to Mr. George Washington and sent a courier to deliver it. Washington knew the British might do this and instructed his men carefully not to receive such a letter because it did not acknowledge his rightful position: the General of the Continental armies. The British knew his title and were playing games. They didn't want to acknowledge that the states had declared independence, nor acknowledge Washington's official title. So this was actually an insult to Washington to refuse his position. So the the courier was told that there is no one in all the ranks of the American military by the name "Mr. George Washington." So the British general sent it a second time, this time addressed to Mr. George Washington, Esq., etc. etc." Esquire is a lawyer - so they were basically addressing him by the wrong title, Washington was not a lawyer. And etc. etc. was an off-hand way to say "Lawyer or whatever you call yourself." They still refused to acknowledge his rank and he turned the courier away. The British general then came personally to Washington to deliver the letter - still addressed George Washington, Esq, etc. etc. and Washington refused to accept it because it was still an insult to him and a refusal to accept the independence of the states. We might think that's petty, but in official matters it would be like refusing to acknowledge that Trump is president or that Putin is prime minister or that David was king. Refusing to acknowledge those things is the biggest slight one can give.

Same thing for Jesus. To refuse to acknowledge him as God almighty, the eternally blessed sovereign - even if you acknowledge him as a good teacher or Lord - is actually to insult him at the highest level because it refuses him his highest title which is the eternally blessed God.

Titus 2:11-14. This passage is a great passage because it connects the deity and Lordship of Jesus with how we should live our lives. A lot of people might acknowledge that Jesus is God, but if they do and then just shrug their shoulders and go on with their lives as normal they are missing that Jesus - the God-man - demands complete allegiance to himself. He demands that our lives reflect his holiness and glory. **Read**

So our conduct is lived in light of the return of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. By the way, God and Savior both refer here to Jesus. It's not that we're awaiting the return of the Father and Jesus. That's not what Paul has in mind here.

No, we are specifically awaiting the return of Jesus who is both God and Savior. And we know that because the content affirms that. Everything in this passage is referring to the singular person of the Trinity: Jesus. **Read 14**

He, him, himself, his own...

We also know that both God and Savior refer to Jesus because this follows a grammatical rule known as the Granville Sharpe rule. There's actually several Granville Sharp rules, but the most famous says that when two nouns begin with a singular "the" in the Greek, and are connected by the word "and" they refer to the same thing.

If I had my own company and employed my kids I would be: the dad and boss of my kids. I'm both dad and boss.

There are people in Hollywood who make movies and they are the writer and director of the movie. Same person, two roles.

Jesus is our God and Savior. And we are to live lives of holiness as we await his coming.

By the way, this same construction is used in **2 Pet. 1:1** where he writes "to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The righteousness we have is because Jesus Christ is our God and Savior. He occupies both positions.

The third verse I'd encourage you to memorize is **Hebrews 1:1-13**. I hope you know there are many more passages that show the deity of Jesus. But I've tried to give you the ones that make the case the easiest. So that if you were simply to show someone these passages there is absolutely no way they could talk around it. Hebrews is really one of those. Here we have Jesus being portrayed as God in basically the whole chapter. Let's walk through it. **Read 1-4**

Jesus created the world - something only God could do. He is the radiance of the glory of God. So when I'm sitting outside in the summer get warmed by the sun, am I getting warmed by the sun itself or by the radiance of the glory of the sun? Well, it's really both isn't it? I guess we could make some sort of distinction between the sun and the radiance of the sun, but in the end they are intrinsically connected. The same is true with Jesus and the Father. He is the radiance of the glory of God.

He is also the exact imprint of his nature. Jesus's nature is the exact same as the Father's and the exact same as the Spirit's. When you're at a stamping plant for auto parts, it's essential that every single part be precisely the same. They are all the exact same imprint. That's what he's saying about the divine nature of Jesus. The divine nature of Jesus is the exact same divine imprint, as it were, as the Father.

And Jesus upholds the universe by his powerful word. Can you do that? Can you uphold anything by your word? Can we even get our children to do what we want with our words? Jesus upholds the entire created order simply by his words.

And he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. What's that? It's God's throne. Who sits on God's throne? God. Why's he at the right hand? That's not literal, but the idea is that the person at your right hand shares your power. They have the full authority to do what you do - your right hand man. Jesus is at the right hand of a God the Father not because he's a lesser god, but because he has all the authority of God. **Read 5-7**

The Son is begotten, which if you look up Psalm 2 means that he has been placed on the throne - he was coronated or inaugurated as King over all creation at his ascension.

He is worshipped. Angels are fast like wind, and their powerful like fire, but they're not God. Look at this. **Read 8-9**

It really just doesn't get clearer: the Son is God. And God his God has anointed him with gladness. They're are 2 persons both called God. Two gods? No, there's only one God. Two persons - 3 if you include the Spirit - who are fully God.

When I was first saved I knew that Jesus was God, but I think I viewed him as a lesser version of the Father. Maybe not quite as powerful, not quite as glorious. Sort of "well, we have Jesus but the real authority is with the Father." No, all authority has been given to who? Jesus. He has that authority because he is fully God.

As God he is fully deserving of all our praise because not only has he saved us by what he's done on the cross in dying for our sins, but he he was able to do that because of who he is as eternal God, full of grace and truth.

Pray