

The Deity of Christ (2007)

One way of exposing a religious cult is on the question of who Jesus is. They rarely believe that Jesus was God. Even some Christians have problems in understanding how three distinct persons can be one and how one can be three? The purpose of this paper is to try and explain just one part of this puzzle. That Jesus is God, coming to earth to redeem and save humankind.

The coming to earth of Christ was the unique event in human history. The Incarnation (God taking on flesh) is the most significant happening in the historical events shaping this world of ours. It made such an impact on the known world that it changed time as they knew and altered the calendar mark this event. Hence dates are now estimated from either before Christ (B.C.) or after Christ (A.D.). Anno Domini (Latin for "In the year of Our Lord" There is a new idea swallowed hook, line and sinker by several theologians is that the terms should be changed to BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era)" so as to cause as little offence as possible to other faiths." In so doing they attempt to re-write history in much the same as the European Union has done by ordering the exclusion of any mention of Christianity from its history of Europe! When I suggested in a theological College in the late 1990's that we could call it 'Before Christ's Era' and 'Christ's Era,' they were not amused.

Pre-existence of Christ particularly in creation

The Book of Hebrews is significant in pointing to the pre-existence of Christ and also to his status.

"God... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten you"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of your kingdom." Heb 1:2-9

The word 'sceptre' in verse 8 refers to Christ holding the 'sceptre of legitimate divine government.' It will be noted too that Christ is shown in his pre-existent form as creator of the worlds. He also upholds the worlds (plural) by the word of his power. This indicates that Christ maintains the universe not just this earth. That of course is the God function not that of some subordinate. In particular match these words with Genesis 1:1 which clearly indicates that God created the worlds. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Yet in 1 John 1 we are told that the Jesus created the world.

"In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word (Logos) was with God (Theos), and The Word (Logos) was God (Theos). He was in the beginning with God (Theos). All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." John 1:1-5

The Word (Logos) can be interpreted as 'to speak' or a 'verbal echo' which in this situation is the echo of God. Part of the text 'was with God' the word 'God' here is the Greek word Theos. When the Word is called God the same word is used (Theos). Otherwise if we interpret this part of the text as 'a god' as only the Jehovah Witnesses do. It then it breaks the law of God which says in both Exodus 20:3 & Deuteronomy 5:7 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

The work the Christ undertook at creation is beautifully illustrated in the Book of Job.

"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? "Or who shut in the sea with doors, When it burst forth and issued from the womb; When I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band; When I fixed My limit for it, And set bars and doors; When I said, 'This far you may come, but no farther, And here your proud waves must stop!' Job 38:4-11

Proverbs seems to me the most unlikely Book to find a statement about the pre-existent Christ. Yet the verses shown below are some of the most delightful words ever written about the beginning of the world.

"Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primal dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, When He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep, When He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, Rejoicing in His inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men. Proverbs 8:25-31

It is clear from these texts that the creator of the heavens and earth were Jesus Christ therefore where in these texts we read God we can transpose it with Jesus Christ. The plural in creation is found in Gen 1:26

'Then God said, "Let Us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

I

In this first chapter we have an example of the Trinity at work. God and Christ made man and the Spirit of God was hovering above the face of the waters. In the Hebrew text "But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of your kingdom." God Speaks about Christ and calls him God. God calls Jesus Theos in the Greek, meaning the supreme Divinity. Therefore God Addresses Jesus as O God. Earlier in this same text God said that he ordered the Angels to worship him. Worship in the Judean/Christian context can only be given to God otherwise the scriptures are inconsistent in That they demand that only God is worshipped. I will come back to that theme later. The Old Testament is clear about the coming Messiah who would bring salvation to the world. Isaiah under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote,

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”
Isaiah 6:9-10

The titles of the coming Messiah are all the attributes of God himself.

Wonderful. - In this context refers to the Acts of God. Many signs and wonders undertaken by Jesus brought wonderment to the crowds. In Judges 13:18 God appears in the form of the Angel of the Lord and says to Manoah upon receiving a request of his name replies, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?"

Counsellor. - Who else is called Counsellor? The Book of Romans reminds us that God has no other counsellor. "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counsellor?" (Rom 11:34). He can be the counsel for all those who put their trust in him. Isaiah asks the question, "Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counsellor has taught Him?" Nobody is in a position to offer advice the almighty God and Jesus is identified with this title (Isa 40:13).

Mighty God. - The word 'Eel' from the root word 'Eloeah and Eloehîm means 'mighty God' or chief among gods. This statement relates to the warrior king who triumphs over his enemies. At the last day all will bow the knee at the last day when Jesus reigns supreme over all the earth and heaven. This is the ultimate triumph of a mighty God.

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil 2:10-12

Everlasting Father. - Used in respect of God being everlasting. There was not a time when he was not or a time when he will not be. Jesus is therefore called everlasting and father. Head of the worlds and heavens.

Prince of Peace. - Wrapped up in this word 'Prince' are the thoughts relating to "official; leader; commander; captain; chief; prince; ruler." In his life upon earth Jesus was the very essence of peace. He spoke peace to the elements and they were stilled. Mark 4:39. To those who he healed he said they were to go in peace (See Mk 5:34, Lk 8:48). After the resurrection he said "Peace to you" (Luke 7:50, 24:36). John records specifically the peace that Jesus offers his believers.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" John 14:27.

Therefore, in Isaiah 6:9 who could be described in terms of deity other than Jesus? The child to be born was to have the characteristics of Might God and Everlasting Father. He was to establish judgment and justice but who can do that apart from God? In the New Testament Peter indicated the pre-existence of Christ when he

wrote, 'He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.' 1 Peter 1:20

Old Testament Prophets were moved upon by Christ

Peter makes it clear that the Old Testament prophets had the Spirit of Christ in them in showing in their writings the coming of Christ into the world (1 Pet 1:10-11).

Identifying the deity of Christ in the New Testament

1. Emmanuel

At the birth of Jesus Matthew when describing it refers to Isaiah 7:14 as he says "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Emmanuel meaning "God with us." Notice it is not that Jesus will bring the presence of God with him when he is born but the great cry at the birth of Jesus from Matthew is "God with us." He has come into our midst.

2. Worship of Jesus in the Gospels.

When the wise men eventually arrived to see the child Jesus the scripture declares that when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down *and worshipped Him*. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Worship is to be reserved to God alone. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness his answer was "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Luke 4:8. Unless Jesus is God is it not incompatible with what Jesus said to Satan and what happened in his life subsequently?

Matthew gives us several accounts of people worshipping Jesus and he never once stopped them. See the leper in Mat 8:2, a girl restored to life, 9:18 (repeated in Mk 5:21 & Lk 7:40). A ruler worships Jesus while seeing him to raise his daughter from the dead 14:33, After Jesus quelled the storm those in the boat worshipped him, 14:33. A woman from Canaan worshipped him pleading for her daughter's healing, 15:25. When seeing the resurrected Christ many worshipped him 28:17. In Mark 5:6 the demonic man on seeing Jesus ran and worshipped him. Luke records that at Bethany as Jesus ascended into heaven the disciples worshipped him. In John 9:38 the man born blind was healed and Jesus met him privately and revealed himself to him and he shouted Lord, I believe! And he worshipped him.

3. Event with Thomas

Perhaps the most telling text comes after Christ had risen from the dead. Thomas not being present when Jesus presents himself to the others said that unless he could see the nail prints in the hands of Jesus and put his hand into the hole in the side of Jesus he would not believe. A few days later Jesus appears and knows the conversation Thomas had had previously because Jesus then invites Thomas to "Reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." (See John 20:27-29). Thomas's reply confirms the deity of Christ. He exclaims "My Lord and my God." Lord (kurios) meaning, supremacy; supreme in authority, while God (Theos) means 'supreme

divinity.' Thomas the doubting one recognises that Jesus is both Lord and God. Notice that Jesus only mildly rebukes him for his unbelief not his blasphemy of calling the Son of Man, God!

4. Jesus forgave sins

It was acknowledged by the Jews that only God could forgive sins and challenged Jesus on this very statement in Mark 2:5-12

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" — He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

In reviewing this text it is very clear that the challenge of the Jews is that if Jesus forgives sins then he is a blasphemer and worthy of death. Jesus proves that he has the power to forgive sins. An authority that can only be exercised by God! He proves it by healing the paralytic man that he has power to forgive sins and thereby takes on one of the attributes of God.

5. Jesus takes for himself one of the titles of God

One statement made by Jesus is very significant. Being challenged by the Jews about his age he pronounces in John 8:56-58 “

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

In so doing he uses that name God gave Moses when he asked him who is was. Jesus indicates that he is that person. Adam Clarke makes this comment in his commentary on John and I repeat it here as it sums up all that Jesus claimed to be.

“The following is a literal translation of Calmet's note on this passage:-"I am from all eternity. I have existed before all ages. You consider in me only the person who speaks to you, and who has appeared to you within a particular time. But besides this human nature, which ye think ye know, there is in me a divine and eternal nature. Both, united, subsist together in my person. Abraham knew how to distinguish them. He adored me as his God; and desired me as his Saviour. He has seen me in my eternity, and he predicted my coming into the world."

Jesus said on one occasion 'I and My Father are one. "Jn 10:30 and Jesus showed his oneness with God when he challenged Thomas and said, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? John 14:9

John's Gospel is full of indirect references to the deity of Christ if it is read with eyes open to receive it.

After the resurrection of the dead

Finally, John had a revelation of heaven in the last days and he saw the throne of God inhabited by the Lamb

"So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth." Rev 5:4-6

The Lamb slain is what we shall see when looking at the throne of God. Further this Lamb will receive the worship of heaven.

The Adoration of the Lamb

"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honour and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honour and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever. Rev 5:8-14

I repeat here what has already been explained that if the Lamb is not God then the whole of heaven is in a state of rebellion because they are worshipping the Lamb.

Conclusion

Jesus was either truly God or he was misleading all his disciples and the believers who followed on after them. In fact we have all been deceived for 2000 years. The scriptures shown in this paper indicate that God took on human flesh, living among us and died to take away our sins and forever to be seated in heaven until the end times. The extraordinary thing is that when we join the redeemed in heaven and look for God we shall see a Lamb as he had been slain from the foundation of the world and in unison we will fall down and say My Lord and My God.