

What Every Christian Should Know
Lesson 6 - God the Son: His Deity & Eternity

Christianity is Christ. The very existence of Christianity rests upon the person and work of its founder, Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a way of thinking, or a system of moral values and actions, it is a relationship with a Person. At the center of the Christian faith is a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. John Stott explains,

There are two principle reasons why our enquiry into Christianity should begin with the person of Christ. The first is that essentially Christianity is Christ. The person and work of Christ are the rock upon which the Christian religion is built. If he is not who he said he was, and if he did not do what he said he had come to do, the foundation is undermined and the whole superstructure will collapse. Take Christ from Christianity, and you disembowel it; there is practically nothing left. Christ is the center of Christianity; all else is circumference.

Second, if Jesus Christ can be shown to have been a uniquely divine person, many other problems begin naturally to be solved. The existence of God is proved and the character of God revealed if Jesus was divine. Again questions about man's duty and destiny, life after death, the purpose and authority of the Old Testament and the meaning of the cross begin to be answered because Jesus taught about these things, and his teaching must be true if his person is divine. (*Basic Christianity*, p. 21)

A careful examination of the biblical data combined with a study of the historical debate and theological statements regarding the person of Jesus Christ leads inescapably to these conclusions:

Biblical affirmation:

Jesus is God
Jesus is man
Jesus is one person

Theological affirmation:

Jesus is full, undiminished deity
Jesus is perfect, complete humanity
Both natures are eternally united in one person, without separating, compromising, or commingling His deity or His humanity.

If the biblical documents are accepted as a divine revelation and therefore reliable the uniqueness and centrality of Jesus Christ will be firmly established. That Jesus is the God-man is clearly taught in Scripture. To quote Stott again,

Our purpose is to marshal the evidence to prove Jesus was the Son of God. We shall not be satisfied with a verdict declaring his vague divinity; it is his deity which we mean to establish. We believe him to possess an eternal and essential relation to God possessed by no other person. We regard him neither as God in human disguise, nor as a man with divine qualities, but as the God-man. We are persuaded that Jesus was a historic person possessed of two distinct and perfect natures, Godhead and manhood, and in this to be absolutely and forever unique. Only so could he be worthy not just of our admiration but of our worship. (*Basic Christianity*, p. 22)

The New Testament begins with a declaration that Jesus is God. Nowhere is this more evident than in John's Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. ...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-2, 14.

Opponents of Jesus clearly understood that he was claiming to be God (John 5:18). Jesus' opponents never questioned his humanity though they did doubt the legitimacy of his birth. Consequently, the New Testament does not dwell on or feel compelled to defend the humanity of Jesus. It was his deity that was given priority and prominence. The claims of His deity can first be found in the Old Testament with connecting support in New Testament passages.

The Old Testament: The Coming One is the Eternal God.

1. He will be called God.

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah identifies the coming Messiah as *el gibbor*, the Mighty God. Since Isaiah only uses *el* in reference to God, he clearly identifies Christ as God. New Testament writers associate Christ with the titles given here in Isaiah (Luke 2:11; John 3:16; 14:27; Romans 5:1; 16:20; Rev. 1:4). Several other passages could be cited where the Old Testament predicts and the New Testament confirms that Jesus is God (Is. 40:3/Luke 3:4; Ps. 2:7/Acts 13:32-33; Ps. 82:6/John 10:32-36).

2. He is *Yahweh*, the Sovereign Lord.

Old Testament passages that use the reverential term *Yahweh* are ascribed to Christ in the New Testament (Ps. 68:18/Eph. 4:8-10; Ps. 102:12, 25-27/Heb. 1:10-12; Is. 6:5/John 12:41; Mal. 3:1/Matt. 12:6; 21:12-13). The New Testament follows the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, 250 B.C.) in rendering *Yahweh* as the Greek *Kurios*, Lord. The full name assigned to Christ in the New Testament is, Lord Jesus Christ. Many times he is simply addressed as, "Lord." The New Testament is thus referring to Christ as the *Yahweh* of the Old Testament.

The LORD says to my Lord: "sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Psalm 110:1

Christ quotes this passage before the Pharisees and claims to be none other than *Yahweh* himself (Matt. 22:41-46). Peter likewise quotes Psalm 110:1 as evidence that Jesus is the *Yahweh* of the Old Testament (Acts 2:34-36).

3. He is the Holy One.

You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
Psalm 16:10

The term, “*Holy One*” is used in the Old Testament as a reference to God himself (Is. 1:4; 5:19, 24). Paul cites this passage as proof of the resurrection of Christ, who is truly, the “*Holy One*” (Acts 13:35-37).

4. As God, He sends the Holy Spirit.

Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Joel 2:27-28

Peter quotes Joel on the Day of Pentecost and says it is the risen, exalted Christ who has poured out the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:32-33). Thus, Peter is identifying Christ as God and as associated with the Father and the Spirit.

5. He is the eternally existing God.

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Micah 5:2 (NASB).

This is one of many passages affirming the eternity of Christ. Bethlehem was the place of His incarnation, but Christ, as God, was eternally preexistent.

6. He is the unchanging (immutable) God.

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end. Psalm 102:25-27.

God alone is not subject to change (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). But immutability that is ascribed to God by the Psalmist, is attributed to Christ by the author of Hebrews (13:8) and by John in Revelation (1:8).

7. He is the One and Only Son of God.

I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: he said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” Psalm 2:7

At the announcement of his birth (Luke 1:32), again by the announcement of the Father at his baptism (Matt. 3:17) and at his transfiguration (Matt. 7:5), Jesus was identified as the Son of God. John wrote his Gospel to prove that Jesus was the Son of God (20:31). The uniqueness of Jesus’ Sonship is evident in the term, “*Only begotten*” and is demonstrated in both Testaments. John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 38-44, Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, pp. 71-107.

Jesus' claims and self-awareness as God

Claiming to be God cost Jesus his life. A mob tried unsuccessfully to stone him to death for blasphemy (John 10:31-33). They launched a conspiracy to have him executed and it culminated in his death by crucifixion for blasphemy "*We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.*" (John 19:7). All Jesus had to do to escape death was renounce his claim to be God. But, he would not, indeed could not recant, because his claim to deity was true. Stott emphasizes this often-overlooked fact.

The most striking feature of the teaching of Jesus is that he was constantly talking about himself. It is true that he spoke much about the fatherhood of God and the kingdom of God. But then he added that he was the Father's "Son", and that he had come to inaugurate the kingdom. Entry into the kingdom depended on men's response to him. He even did not hesitate to call the kingdom of God "my kingdom."

This self-centeredness of the teaching of Jesus immediately sets him apart from the other great religious teachers of the world. They were self-effacing. He was self-advancing. They pointed men away from themselves, saying, "this is the truth, so far as I perceive it; follow that." Jesus said, "I am the truth; follow me." The founder of none of the ethnic religions ever dared to say such a thing.

Jesus clearly believed himself to be the Messiah the Old Testament predicted. He had come to establish the kingdom of God foretold by generations of prophets. John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*, pp. 23, 26

1. He claimed to be the Son of God.

What about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, "I am God's Son?" Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. John 10:36-38.

2. He claimed to be *Yahweh*, the eternal Lord.

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:58. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 685-686

Jesus appeared to be invoking the "I AM" formula of Exodus 3:14-15 and his hearers understood it as such. They immediately took up stones to stone him, believing he had committed the blasphemy of claiming to be *Yahweh*.

3. He claimed to be one with the Father.

I and the Father are one. John 10:30.

The neuter form of "one" rules out the meaning that He and the Father were one Person. It means that they are in perfect unity in natures and actions, a fact that

could only be true if He were as much Deity as the Father. The people who heard this claim understood it that way, for they immediately tried to stone Him for blasphemy because He made Himself out to be God (v. 33). Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, pp. 248-249

4. He claimed to be the object of Abraham's faith and the subject of Moses writing.

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad. John 8:56

But do not think that I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. John 5:45-46

5. He eternally shared the Father's glory.

And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. John 17:5

6. He came from and belonged to, heaven.

You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ...If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own but he sent me. John 8:23, 42

7. He claimed to be working in league with God the Father.

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. John 5:17-18

8. He claimed the divine prerogative of forgiving sin.

Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, "your sins are forgiven," or to say, "get up, take your mat and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... he said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Mark 2:9-11

9. He claimed to possess God's power to raise the dead and give life.

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ...For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. John 5:21, 26

10. He claimed the right to judge all things.

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. John 5:22-23

11. He called for people to believe in and follow him for eternal life.

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. John 8:12

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. John 11:25-26

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

Jesus did not abandon his claim to be God, even when faced with the choice between that claim and the cross.

In some respects, the clearest indication of Jesus' self-understanding is found in connection with his trial and condemnation. The charge, according to John's account, was that "he has made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). ...Jesus had an ideal opportunity here to correct any misconception which may have been involved. This he did not do. He could have avoided execution simply by denying that he was the Son of God, but he did not do that. Either he desired to die, albeit on a false charge, or he did not respond because the charge brought against him was correct. The Jews reaction is instructive. When the high priest said, "he has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They replied, "he deserves death" (Matt. 26:65-66). The crime was that Jesus claimed what only God has the right to claim. Here we have Jesus in effect asserting, through acquiescence, his equality with the Father. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 686-687.

Affirmation and Confession of others:

1. Affirmed by God the Father.

At Jesus' baptism and again at his transfiguration, the Father authenticated the Son (Matt. 3:17).

This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!
Matt. 17:5

2. Peter's confession.

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matt. 16:16

3. Thomas' confession.

Thomas said to him, "my Lord and my God!" John 20:28

4. Even demons confessed his deity.

Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ. Luke 4:41

Jesus possessed the attributes of God:

1. Eternality.

Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One! I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and forever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Revelation 1:17-18

2. Immutability.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Heb. 13:8

3. Omnipresence.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Eph. 1:22-23

4. Omnipotence.

But our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:20-21

5. Omniscience.

He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man. John 2:25

"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" John 4:29

6. Self-existence (life).

*In him was life, and that life was the light of men. John 1:4
For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. John 5:26*

Jesus performed works only God can do:

1. Creation.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. John 1:3

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. Col. 1:16

2. Sustaining.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Heb. 1:3

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Col. 1:17

3. He commanded nature.

Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" Matt. 7:26-27

4. Forgiving sin.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark 1:5-7

5. Raising the dead.

Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "young man, I say to you get up!" The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Luke 7:14-15

He merits and receives worship:

Worship is God's exclusive right (Deut. 6:13; Matt. 4:10). God forbade the worship of any object, creature, idol, or other person (Ex. 20:4-6). The apostles reacted with alarm when people tried to worship them (Acts 10:25-26; 14:11-15). Even unfallen angels refuse the worship of men (Rev. 22:8-9). But, Jesus received worship and even called for it, something only God could do.

1. He is worthy of honor as is the Father.

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. John 5:23

2. Jesus accepted the worship of men.

Jesus said, "You have now seen him! In fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him. John 9:37-38

3. His worthiness and praises are proclaimed in heaven.

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! ...To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and forever! The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshipped. Rev. 5:12-14.

4. Jesus will one day be worshipped by all heaven and earth.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2:9-11

5. Christians have worshipped the risen Lord from the beginning.

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God. Luke 24:50-53

The Scriptural evidence for the deity of Christ is overwhelming. If the witness of the New Testament is accepted, the conclusion is inescapable. Jesus is God!

How complete, then, is the evidence which establishes Christ's Divinity! It has been demonstrated that He existed from all eternity in the form of God, that He bears the titles of Deity, that the attributes of Deity are predicated of Him, and that He functions in all the prerogatives of Deity-He is Creator and Preserver of the universe, the Pardoner of Sin, the One who raises the dead, who bestows eternal life and eternal rewards, who judges the world, and who receives the worship of angels and of men. No more is declared of the Father or the Spirit than is declared of the Son. To question this body of evidence is to reject proof altogether, which path leads logically to the rejection of God and to atheism. Either the Lord Jesus Christ is God in the fullest sense or there is no God at all. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 344-345.

CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST!