



FIRST STEPS

STUDIES TO BEGIN YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST
By Marlon Furtado

“Deity of Christ”

What do we mean by the *Deity of Christ*?

When we speak of the *Deity* of Christ we are referring to the fact that Jesus is God, that He has always existed, and that He was miraculously conceived and born into this world by a virgin. He was not the product of the normal biological act of a husband and wife. Jesus is, was, and will always be, fully God. And through His incarnation He also became fully man.

Why is the doctrine of the *Deity of Christ* so important to understand and believe?

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, the teaching regarding Christ's nature most impacts our salvation. If Jesus was merely a man, regardless of how spiritual He was, then He would have been under the wrath and judgment of God for His own sin. He never could have qualified as a worthy sacrifice for our sins as well. If Jesus were not God, your sins were never removed. If Jesus were not God, you are still guilty and have no hope of eternal life.

On the other hand, because Jesus is both fully God and fully man, He alone could bridge the gap of our sin and bring us back to God. In a sense, He is able to hold God's hand in one of His and hold mankind's hand in His other and bring us together. That's what **1 Timothy 2:5-6** says,

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all mankind."

Because it is true that Jesus Christ was fully God, our salvation is sure and secure. Read **John 10:27-30** below.

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

When you are speaking to non-Christians, many will concede that Jesus was a good man, a brilliant teacher, a miracle worker. But they will quickly qualify this with a statement such as, "But you know, Jesus never claimed to be God." They are simply parroting what they have heard from other non-believers.

The truth of the matter is that the Bible is very clear to teach that Jesus is God, and that Jesus affirmed that on numerous occasions. In the pages that follow, you will study some of these clear teachings. You will also look at the direct statements and responses of Jesus.

• **THE BIBLE PRESENTS JESUS AS GOD**

Match the references on the left to the proper Scripture on the right.

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| Isaiah 9:6 | All the fullness of God dwelled in Him. |
| Colossians 1:15-17 | He is the exact representation of God's being. |
| Philippians 2:5-7 | Jesus Christ is both our great God and Savior. |
| Hebrews 1:1-3 | A child will be born who is Almighty God. |
| John 1:1-3, 14 | He is the image of the invisible God. |
| Colossians 1:19 | All the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. |
| Colossians 2:9-10 | The Word was God. The Word became flesh. |
| Titus 2:11-13 | In very nature God, He was made in human likeness. |

• **JESUS OPENLY CLAIMED TO BE GOD AND ACCEPTED WORSHIP AS GOD**

Underline the portions of these verses that confirm that Jesus made clear claims to being equal to God.

John 5:16-18	So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. 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 5:22-23	"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 10:30-33	"I and the Father are one." Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."
John 8:58-59	"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am! " At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. NOTE: They picked up stones to stone Him because Jesus called Himself by the same name that God used when He revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:13-14 as the eternally present I AM .
John 20:28	Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" NOTE: Jesus never corrected him.

Liar, Lunatic, or Lord

Josh McDowell wrote a book, *More Than a Carpenter*, that you will find to be a great resource. I'm not sure that I am presenting his argument accurately here, so I encourage you to read it yourself. Josh writes that there are only three possible choices we have when it comes to deciding who Jesus is. Either Jesus was a liar or He was a lunatic or He was who He said, Lord God. There are no other choices.

- **CHOICE #1 - JESUS WAS A LIAR**

Throughout history there have been many people who lied about their birth to hide incriminating details or to seek selfish advantage. Some have pretended to be war heroes. Others have claimed a wealthy family name as their own. Many lie about their situation in hopes of receiving money. We call these people frauds, charlatans, scam artists, and liars.

If Jesus *knew* all along that He wasn't God, and yet claimed that He was, then He lied and purposely misled the masses. In that case, He certainly should not be called a good teacher or good example. But as you observe the life of Christ in the Bible, you never see the characteristics of deception, fraud, or selfishness.

- **CHOICE #2 - JESUS WAS A LUNATIC**

I've met a few people who claimed they were God or Jesus. They displayed characteristics of mental instability, delusional fantasies of power, and unpredictability. They were clearly out of touch with reality.

If Jesus *thought* He was God, but actually wasn't, then He should never be followed, and certainly not worshipped. Yet Jesus showed absolutely **NO SIGNS** of being mentally unstable or delusional. On the contrary He faced people and situations with a clarity of thought, wisdom, and self-control.

- **CHOICE #3 - JESUS WAS LORD**

Since Jesus doesn't have any of the characteristics of liars or lunatics, He can be trusted when He says that He is God-in-the-flesh, the Lord of all creation, and that He has authority over all things.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

C.S. Lewis --- *Mere Christianity*

Questions that arise

You have seen that the Scriptures are very clear that Jesus knew He was God. Below are some of the common questions that have been raised over the centuries.

1. How could Jesus be God, when He got tired and thirsty?

This is the result of Him being fully man. He did not use His powers as God to make life easier for Himself. He limited those powers to show submission to His Heavenly Father. He experienced life with all the limitations that we have.

2. Why, then, did Jesus choose to limit Himself and become a man?

Hebrews 2:14-17 gives us the answer...to be an adequate sacrifice for our sins and to be a faithful high priest who could represent us before God.

"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people."

3. When Jesus prayed to the Father, was He talking to Himself?

The Bible is very clear that there is only ONE God. But He has revealed through the scripture that He exists as a **TRINITY**, a perfect unity of THREE Persons. God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all comprise ONE, singular God. But all THREE Persons are each God. None of them are less than God, and yet each of the THREE are very distinct. So, when Jesus was on earth praying, God the Father was in heaven, listening and responding.

4. Why is the virgin-birth of Jesus so important?

If Jesus had an earthly father like the rest of us, He would have inherited a sin nature. Then He would have had the propensity to sin like us. But because Mary miraculously became pregnant without a man, Jesus did not have a sin nature. He was tempted by the devil, but He withstood every time. Had Jesus sinned, He would have been disqualified as a Substitute for all of us. But because He was sinless He was able to die in our place. Had Jesus any sin in Him, there would be NO SALVATION.

Isaiah 53:6

*"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has **laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all.**"*

1 Peter 3:18

*"For Christ died for sins once for all, the **righteous for the unrighteous**, to bring you to God."*

2 Corinthians 5:21

*"God made him **[Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

5. Why did Jesus say in John 14:28, "The Father is greater than I"?

When Jesus became a man, He placed Himself in total submission to God the Father. Adam and Eve were the first humans and they did not submit to God's commands. Jesus wanted to show that, as a man, He would fully obey the Father. So, in terms of **roles** Jesus submitted Himself to the Father. In terms of **nature** Jesus is equal to the Father. As you saw in Philippians 2:5-7, Jesus willingly submitted Himself to the Father. In a similar way, children are told to submit to their parents. That doesn't mean that a child is less valuable or less of a person than his parents, but in terms of **roles** the parents are greater than the child. This is why Jesus referred to Himself as the **Son** of God.

Cults

CHRISTianity centers around Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, there would be no Christianity. We refer to religious groups that claim to be Christian, but who deny the divine nature of Christ as *CULTS*. The followers of these cults may be fine people and upstanding citizens, but their religious teachings about Jesus are in direct conflict with the Bible. Two such cults that you will run into are Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons (Latter Day Saints). Islam does not claim to be Christian, but since their influence is growing, it is good to understand their view of Jesus.

Here's a short synopsis of what these religious organizations teach about the Person or Nature of Jesus.

- **Jehovah's Witnesses**

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that God's first creation was Michael the archangel and through him God created all the universe. When it came time for the savior to be born, Michael the Archangel became a human, and was known as Jesus. Jesus died on a stake (not a cross) and was resurrected only in spirit. His body was destroyed. Jesus is not returning visibly and bodily. *

- **Mormons**

In Mormon theology God the Father was once a man who "progressed" spiritually until he became God. He also has a spirit wife (Heavenly Mother). Jesus was created as a spirit child by the Heavenly Father and Mother. Jesus is the "elder brother" of all men and spirit beings, including Lucifer (who later became the devil). Jesus, the man, had a body that was created through sexual union between Father God and Mary. Jesus' plan of redemption was accepted instead of Lucifer's, giving rise to Jesus being our Redeemer. Instead of being Deity, Mormons teach that Jesus is a *creation of God*, and therefore, *less than God*. Jesus' death on the cross does not provide full atonement for all sin, but does provide everyone with resurrection. *

- **Islam**

Islam acknowledges that Jesus is an authentic prophet of God, but He was only one of many. On the other hand, they teach that Mohammed is a **greater** prophet who supercedes Jesus. Jesus was born of a virgin, but is not the Son of God, not divine, and not God Himself. Jesus did not die on the cross. Someone else died in His place. Jesus ascended to heaven without dying and will return in the future to live and die. In addition, they do not accept the God of the Bible, but worship Allah as being the God of the universe. Allah is very different from the God we worship. *

* Some of this information was taken from the tract *Christianity, Cults & Religions*, by Rose Publishing.