

**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life: (22)
Following Jesus Christ Rightly: #15a. Affirming the Incarnation” (part 1)**

Introduction:

Since this is the morning of Christmas Eve, it is good that we give our attention to the great historic event of the incarnation. In doing so we are not deviating from our series on following Jesus Christ rightly, for certainly, in order to follow Jesus rightly, we must know who He is in truth. There are some who claim to know God who are far astray in their understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. Their claim to faith in “Jesus” is not in the true Jesus Christ as He is presented in the Scriptures. We are referring specifically to the Christian cults, which by definition have heretical views of the identity and nature of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul had warned of some who might come among true Christians who proclaim “another Jesus” (2 Cor. 11:4). Paul was concerned for the Christians in Corinth that they might embrace the teaching of such a heretic.¹

But there are Protestant (mainline) denominations that deny the deity of Christ. They claim that He was only a man, not God. They deny the virgin birth of Christ. They deny the deity of Christ. This can be discovered in many mainline Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, and Baptist denominations. Of course one of the signature doctrines of the Unitarians is their denial of the deity of Jesus Christ.

And yet, even after we set apart from true Christianity those who deny the Jesus Christ set forth in the Holy Scriptures, we would be wrong to assume that all Christians understand rightly and clearly the nature of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Many also do not have a clear and accurate understanding of the relation of Jesus Christ to the Godhood of the Blessed Holy Trinity. This is an important matter. We must have a true understanding of the person of Jesus Christ and the incarnation, if we are to enjoy true fellowship with our Savior and with the triune Godhead.

Knowing Jesus Christ in truth, communing with God through Jesus Christ, is the heart of true life in God’s creation. The Lord Jesus Himself said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). And it is through knowing Jesus Christ Himself that we have life and enjoy that life more abundantly. Our Lord said this in His prayer to His Father, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). **Isaac Ambrose** attempted to describe the wonder of knowing Jesus:

In this knowledge of Christ, there is an excellency above all other knowledge in the world; there is nothing more pleasing and comfortable, more animating and enlivening, more ravishing and soul contenting; only Christ is the sun and center of all divine revealed truths, we can preach nothing else as the object of our faith, as the necessary element of your soul’s salvation, which does not some way or other, either meet in Christ, or refer to Christ; only Christ is the whole of man’s happiness, the Sun to enlighten him, the Physician to heal him, the Wall of fire to defend him, the Friend to comfort him, the Pearl to enrich him, the Ark to support him, the Rock to sustain him under the heaviest pressures, “As a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. 32:2).

Only Christ is that ladder between earth and heaven, the Mediator between God and man, a mystery, which the angels of heaven desire to pry, and peep, and look into (1 Pet. 1:12). Here is a

¹ Interestingly, I heard Senator Orrin Hatch speak this week about “God” in the context of the passing of the new tax bill. He was commended for his comments, even though he is a Mormon. Although he may be a very good Senator in some respects, he is no Christian. Mormons do not believe in the same God that true Christians worship. The Jesus they proclaim and worship does not exist. Mormonism is a Christian cult, as is the Jehovah’s Witnesses. You cannot have salvation if your faith is in the “Jesus” that is promoted by these and other Christian cults.

blessed subject indeed; who would not be glad to pry into it, to be acquainted with it? “This is life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent” (John 17:3). Come then, let us look; on this Sun of righteousness: we cannot receive harm but good by such a look; indeed by looking long on the natural sun, we may have our eyes dazzled, and our faces blackened; but by looking unto Jesus Christ, we shall have our eyes clearer, and our faces fairer; if “the light of the eye rejoice the heart” (Prov. 15:30), how much more, when we have such a blessed object to look upon? As Christ is more excellent than all the world, so this sight transcends all other sights; it is the epitome of a Christian's happiness, the quintessence of evangelical duties, “Looking unto Jesus.”²

We will consider our subject by first describing the doctrine of the incarnation according to historic orthodox Christianity as set forth in John 1. We will then show the New Testament testimony considering the deity of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, we will address the biblical emphasis on the humanity of Jesus Christ, which is a very important truth that many people and groups have denied through history. Lastly, we will rehearse the theological development of the Christian understanding of the person of Jesus Christ in the early centuries of the Christian era. We will not be able to address all of these today, so we will need to begin this morning and then conclude next Lord's Day, Lord willing.

Let us begin with reading a portion of Holy Scripture in which the incarnation of the Son of God is stated forthrightly.

I. The biblical declaration of the incarnation in John 1:1-14.

Here are the first 14 verses of John 1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten (Son) of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

We read in the opening words of John's Gospel his witness to the incarnation. In **verse 1** he identified the preincarnate Christ as the eternal Word of God. The Greek word translated “Word” is *Logos* [Greek: *ὁ λόγος* (*ho logos*)]. We read that in the beginning that the Logos was God and with God. This statement identifies the Word on the one hand to be God Himself, but on the other hand the Word is distinguished from God (the Father), for He is also with God. And so, here, therefore, we have two persons of the Blessed Holy Trinity set before us. The Logos is both God and with God.

In John's statement that the Word was with God, John speaks of the eternal union of Father and Son in intimate fellowship. “The meaning is that the Word existed in the closest possible fellowship with the Father.” “This teaching that the Son of God is a distinct person from the Father, yet is Himself God, is a key component of the doctrine of the Trinity.”³

² Isaac Ambrose, *Looking Unto Jesus* (Sprinkle Publications, 1986), pp. 17f.

³ Joel Beeke, gen. editor, *The Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), p. 1509.

And although there is diverse discussion in stating the precise meaning of “the Word” itself by John, it can be said that when John wrote of the preincarnate Son of God as the *Logos*, or the Word, it is asserting that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is the revelation of God to us. Here are the words of **Leon Morris**:

This at any rate may be said: “the Word” points to the truth that it is of the very nature of God to reveal Himself. A man’s word is the means whereby he reveals what he is thinking. ‘The Word of God is His thought (if we put it so) uttered so that men can understand it.’ God is not to be thought of as aloof and indifferent. He reveals Himself. But He reveals Himself as He chooses. He is sovereign in revelation as in all else.⁴

In **verse 14** the statement is made that “the Word” was made flesh, that is, eternal God became a man. Verse 14 reads, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten (Son) of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” God became a man, or more precisely, the Son of God became a man. Here He is described as “the only begotten of the Father.” Because He is set forth as begotten and that being so is in relation to God “the Father”, it can be said that the Word was the eternally begotten *Son* of the Father. It is important to note here that when the Word is described as having been begotten of God the Father, John was not referring to the human birth of Jesus, but of the eternal relationship between God the Father and God the Son, who is the Word of God. The Word of God was “begotten” of the Father from eternity. There never was a time in which the Word of God was not the Son of God the Father.

Now it is important for us to understand that when we say that the Son of God became a man, we are not saying that the eternal Son of God transitioned into a man and then, after His ministry on earth, He transitioned again into the eternal Son of God. With the incarnation, the eternal Son of God did not cease or even diminish in His Person as eternal God. The incarnation is not the removal of any divine attribute, or the diminishment to any degree of His deity. In the Incarnation, the eternally begotten Son of God took in addition to who He was, a human nature (soul) and body. He therefore became, and will exist in eternity, the God-Man.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He died with respect to His human nature. His divine nature did not die, for God cannot die. His human body died on the cross. His divine and human soul was separated from His body. His divine-human nature went to Paradise, the dwelling place of the souls of the righteous dead, but His human body was entombed in the grave of Nicodemus, until the Day of the Resurrection, on the third day.

At the resurrection the divine-nature with His human nature joined in the one Person of Jesus Christ, reunited with His human body that had been raised in a glorified form. When Jesus Christ ascended into heaven after a 40 day ministry among His disciples, He ascended in His human body into heaven. Upon His entrance into heaven as the God-man, God the Father then glorified His Son, enthroning Jesus Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus Christ is now dwelling in heaven in His glorified human body. But because of His divine nature, through the Holy Spirit, He is able to dwell with us and manifest Himself to us. He could say to His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20).

Simply stated, then, the incarnation is the event in which the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took into union the nature and body of a man, whereby Jesus Christ is true God and true man, two natures in one divine person who will continue in this blessed union for eternity. **Robert Reymond** stated this truth in this way:

Without ceasing to be all that he was and is as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the eternal Son of God took into union with himself in the one divine Person that which he had not possessed

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 74f.

before—even a full complex of human attributes—and became fully and truly man for us men and for our salvation. Jesus of Nazareth was and is that God-man.⁵

The Holy Scriptures show forth abundant evidence that Jesus Christ is both God and man. Let us consider first the biblical evidence of His deity.

II. The biblical case for the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ

That Jesus Christ is God is amply testified in the Scriptures. The Scriptures do so in a number of ways in numerous places.

A. There are direct statements of the deity of Jesus Christ

We read one above in John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Clearly this teaches us that Jesus is God.

In Hebrews 1 we read that Psalm 45: 6 and 7 are applied to Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:8 reads, “But to the Son He says:

‘Your throne, *O God*, is forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.’”

Here he addresses Jesus as “O God.”

One week after the resurrection our Lord appeared to the apostles. Thomas had not yet seen the risen Lord when He had appeared to them in the evening of the resurrection, one week before. Thomas had become “doubting Thomas”, for he had refused to believe the testimony of the apostles that Jesus had rose from the dead. Thomas had said to them, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). But the Lord appeared to Thomas and said to him, “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” (John. 20:27). Thomas’ response is recorded in John 20:28, “And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” If this were not true statement of Thomas, Jesus would have immediately rebuked him.

In Acts 20:28 we read of the Apostle Paul instructing the elders of the church at Ephesus. He said to them, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood.” Here God is referring to Jesus Christ.

In 1 John 3:16 the Apostle John wrote, “Hereby perceive we the love *of God, because he laid down his life for us:* and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” God laid down His life for us. It was not God the Father that laid down His life for us, but Jesus Christ is here identified as “God.”

Later in 1 John 5:20 we read, “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and *we are in Him* who is true, in *His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*” Christians are “in Him”, that is, in God, and this is “in His Son Jesus Christ.” Jesus, too, is God.

Aside from direct statements of Scripture that declare Jesus is God,...

B. There are biblical descriptions of Jesus that can only lead to the conclusion that Jesus is God.

First, there are attributes of Jesus that are only true of God, for they are the incommunicable attributes that only God can possess. Now we alluded to this in our study of 1 Thessalonians last July. We

⁵ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 546.

also addressed these matters almost two years ago in our study of Paul's epistle to the church at Colossae. We then pointed out that some attributes of God are communicable and some are incommunicable. These attributes that are communicable, are those of which we can also be like, in a finite but real manner. But incommunicable attributes can only be true of God. In the Scriptures, Jesus is shown to have incommunicable attributes, therefore Jesus is God.

(1) Jesus is described as *eternal*, which is only true of God. When John described seeing the glorified Lord, Jesus Christ, he wrote, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; *I am the First and the Last*'" (Rev. 1:17). Only God could describe Himself as being the first and the last.

(2) Jesus is *infinite* as only God can be infinite. Jesus gave to His disciples the great commission to make disciples of all nations. Jesus then promised them, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Only God can be with His people everywhere, for only God is infinite.

(3) Jesus is *omniscient* as only God can be. Matthew 9:4, "But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?'"

(4) Jesus is *omnipotent* as only God can be all-powerful. He declared Himself to be all-powerful. He said, "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3:31). In Philippians 3:21 it is said of Jesus that He "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." And Revelation 1:18 declares, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death." Only an omnipotent God has the keys of Hades and Death, and we see here the Lord Jesus has those keys. Jesus Christ is eternal God.

Secondly, there are relations that Jesus has with God the Father that can only lead to the conclusion that Jesus Himself is eternal God. Let me cite several of these.

(1) Jesus is *the only begotten Son* of the Father. "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18).

(2) Jesus is *the very image* of God the Father. Of unbelievers it is said in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "whose minds the god of this age has blinded (a reference to satan blinding them), who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of *Christ, who is the image of God*, should shine on them." And in Colossians 1:15 we read of Christ, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." And there, "firstborn" does not mean that Jesus was the first one created, because Jesus is not a created being; He is the Creator. "Firstborn" in this context speaks of His priority or preeminence within the family of God, as say a first born son would have been in that role in the ancient world.

(3) And then there is Hebrews 1:8, which tells us of Jesus, who is the brightness of His glory and *is the express image of His person*, and is upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). And therefore these relations that Jesus has with God, one can only conclude that Jesus Himself is God; Jesus is divine.

Thirdly, there are acts that Jesus did that can only be done by God, proving Him to be eternal God incarnate. There are a number of these.

(1) He refers to Himself as the author of the believer's election. He told His disciples in John 13:8, "I do not speak concerning all of you. *I know whom I have chosen*; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.'" Commonly the Scriptures attribute the believers' election to God the Father, but here the Lord Jesus speaks of His having elected His own. Again, one must conclude that Jesus is God.

(2) Jesus is shown to have *known* the inner secrets of men's unexpressed thoughts. Matthew 9:4, "But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?'" Only God has the ability to be a discernor of men's thoughts. You don't. I don't. Jesus could. Jesus can. Jesus is God.

(3) Jesus hears *the prayers* of His people. John 14:14, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." Only God can hear and answer prayer.

(4) Jesus will be *the judge* of all human beings. John 5:22, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.” Only a God could judge the entire human race; Jesus is God.

(5) Jesus *creates* as only God can create. John 1:3, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

(6) Jesus *commands* as only God could command. Matthew 8:26, “But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.” That is evidence of His deity.

(7) Jesus *forgives sins* as only God can forgive sins. Matthew 9:6, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’-- then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’” Jesus forgives sins. Only God can forgive sins. Jesus is God.

(8) Jesus *sanctifies* His people as only God can sanctify, as we read in John 1. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” How could Jesus sanctify His people unless He is God?

(9) He *glorifies* as only God can glorify. John 10:28 records, “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” How can Jesus glorify someone unless He is God Himself? And so these acts that Jesus did could only be done by God. Proving that Jesus is God.

Fourthly, it can be shown that Jesus Christ is God by the manner in which His disciples regarded Him and related to Him. This is certainly the case throughout the Gospel accounts. His disciples regarded Him and treated Him as only God would be, showing that they believed Him to be God.

(1) Jesus is *believed* on as God would be believed on. John 3:18, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” And so, we believe on Jesus as we believe on God, for Jesus is God.

(2) Jesus is *loved* as only they would love God. 1 Corinthians 16:22, “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!” Here, we see again, if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus, let him be damned. And so, we see that disciples loved Jesus as they would only love God, because Jesus is God.

(3) Jesus would be *obeyed* as God alone would be obeyed. John 17:5, “While He was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’” That command of the Father to hear His Son means, “Listen to Him teach you and listen to him command you and do what He says.” And so Christians obey Jesus Christ as they would obey God for He is eternal God.

(4) Jesus is *prayed* to as though He were God. Acts 7:59 records, “And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’” Now normally we read in the Scriptures that prayer is offered to God the Father, through the merit of Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is perfectly proper to pray to the Spirit or to pray to Jesus directly, as we see here in Acts 7:59. But the normal order that we should practice is that prayer is offered to the Father through the Lord Jesus.

(5) He is *praised* as God is praised. Revelation 5:13, “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 honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’” Here we see blessing, honor, and glory being ascribed to the Father, but in addition to God the Father, to the Lamb of God as well, which is clearly Jesus Christ, because Jesus is God as the Father is God.

(6) Jesus is *adored* by His people as God is adored. Hebrews 1:6 reads, “But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’” Angels worship Jesus; only God should be worshipped. Angels worship Jesus to how that He is. And then we read in Philippians 2:10, “At the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth and they will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And so, they do obeisance to Him. They humble themselves and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. They glorify Him. They praise Him with a praise that only God deserves and only God should receive, but Jesus receives it, because He is God.

C. Jesus Christ must be God if He is to save us from our sins.

It was necessary for our salvation that Jesus is God. There are several reasons for this.

(1) Only God can save souls from damnation and only God could satisfy for the guilt and debt that is owed to God for our sin, and therefore God must become man. **Psalm 49:7** and **15** record the words of the psalmist, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. ¹⁵But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me.” You see that only God can atone for man’s sin.

(2) Why was it necessary for God to become man? Because the sacrifice for sin that is made must be of infinite value or merit. God’s wrath upon sin is infinite, it would take a sacrifice of infinite worth to make a just atonement. And that is why God Himself become a man to offer an atonement for our sin.

(3) Jesus Christ must be God for a finite human being could not have born the burden of wrath that would be heaped upon a sacrifice for sin. I have taken this from **Isaac Ambrose** who wrote, “Christ must therefore must needs be God, that He might abide the burden, and sustain the manhood by His divine power.” Only the Lord Jesus being eternal God could endure what He endured through all of the guilt and weight, and guilt of sin and punishment of sin heaped upon Him.

(4) Jesus Christ must be God for the enemies of our souls were too powerful for us. It would take God Himself to overcome the devil and defeat him so as to secure our souls for heaven. It would take God to overcome sin, death, and hell, and damnation in order to deliver us from our condemned state and establish us blameless before the throne of God. And therefore it was most necessary that the eternally begotten Son of the Father become man in order to redeem us from our sin.

D. The “I Am” statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John are personal claims to His deity.

Our Lord declared that He was God by identifying Himself with God who appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush. In Exodus 3 we read of Moses’ encounter with the thrice holy God.

¹³Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

¹⁴And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’”

God had identified Himself to Moses as “I Am”, which signifies God’s eternal nature and His everlasting commitment to see that His Word and His promises are fulfilled and that He was ever faithful to His covenant commitments to His people. When our Lord was speaking before a crowd, He identified Himself as the great “I AM”, or the Jehovah (or Yahweh) of the Old Testament. And the meaning of Yahweh or Jehovah translated into English is “I Am. We read in John 8:51ff,

⁵¹“Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

⁵²Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.’ ⁵³Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?”

⁵⁴Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. ⁵⁵Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

⁵⁷Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

⁵⁸Jesus said to them, ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”***

⁵⁹Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:51-58)

Now aside from this one forthright statement in which He identified Himself as “the I AM”, there are a number of other “I AM” sayings of Jesus in John’s Gospel. It has been shown through the Greek construction of the Words that Jesus was asserting the same truth: He is the I AM. These verses include the following assertions, with respect to a number of metaphors. For example...

(1) Jesus as the Bread of life

John 6:35. “And Jesus said to them, ‘*I am* the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’”

John 6:48. “*I am* the bread of life.”

John 6:51. “*I am* the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

(2) Jesus as the Light of the world

John 8:12. “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘*I am* the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”

John 9:5. “As long as I am in the world, *I am* the light of the world.”

(3) Jesus as the Door of the sheep

John 10:7. “Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, *I am* the door of the sheep.’”

John 10:9. “*I am* the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

(4) Jesus as the Good Shepherd

John 10:11. “*I am* the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

John 10:14. “*I am* the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.”

(5) Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:25. “Jesus said to her, ‘*I am* the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.’”

(6) Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:6. “Jesus said to him, ‘*I am* the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

(7) Jesus as the true vine

John 15:1. “*I am* the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”

John 15:5. “*I am* the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

In each of these metaphors our Lord used to describe Himself, He used the Greek pronoun/verb construction, "I AM." Each one of these instances calls the reader back to that great declaration of God to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Jesus Himself is God. Now, there is one more I AM statement which we may examine.

(8) When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He revealed Himself to His captors as the great "I AM."

³Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. ⁴Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?"

⁵They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. ⁶Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

⁷Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

⁸Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," ⁹that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none." (John 18:3-9)

E. The Lord revealed Himself as God to the Jewish leaders.

In the Gospel accounts of our Lord's dealings with unbelieving Jewish leaders. There were occasions when they understood clearly His implying or asserting that He was God incarnate; His opposers clearly understood Jesus to be claiming to be God.

(1) When Jesus asserted clearly His deity, the Jews who did not believe on Him desired to kill Him for the crime of blasphemy.

⁵⁸Jesus said to them, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.*"

⁵⁹Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:51-58)

Here our Lord clearly and forthrightly told the Jewish leaders that He was the eternal God, whom was the object of Abraham's faith and worship. They would kill Jesus for making such an assertion.

(2) Jesus made Himself equal with God when He claimed to be the Son of God before the Jewish leaders.

We read of this encounter of Jesus with the religious leaders in **John 5:15-18**.

¹⁵The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

¹⁶For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

¹⁸Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, *because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.*

(3) At His trial His opposers knew that He was claiming to be God.

We read in Matthew 26:62-68 of our Lord Jesus interacting with the Jewish leadership of Jerusalem.

⁶²And the high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?” ⁶³But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”

⁶⁴Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! ⁶⁶What do you think?”

They answered and said, “He is deserving of death.”

⁶⁷Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁸saying, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?”

Now I wish to set before you another way in which the deity of the Lord Jesus as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and in this case, the Gospels. The Lord Jesus speaks of *four great parallels* between Himself and God the Father. These parallels show both an association and equality between the persons of God the Father and God the Son.

F. Four great parallels between God the Father and His Son that affirm the deity of Jesus Christ

The passage to which I would draw your attention is Matthew 11:25-27, the parallel being in Luke 10:21f). **Gerhardus Vos**, a biblical scholar of a generation ago, described this as “The culminating point of our Lord’s self-disclosure in the Synoptics.”⁶ What he meant by that was that our Lord revealed His divine nature more clearly through what He taught here than at any other time that we have recorded for us in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Let me begin by reading the passage for us. Again, this is **Matthew 11:25-27**:

At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. ²⁶Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. ²⁷All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

(1) The first parallel that Jesus draws between His Father and Himself is the mutual and exclusive knowledge that the Father has of the Son and the Son has of the Father. Jesus said, “No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son” (Matt. 11:27). Jesus emphasizes the exclusive nature of this knowledge. “No one” knows the Father except “the Son.” The Greek word is a heightened form for emphasis; He knows the Father, not just *γινώσκει* (he knows), but *ἐπιγινώσκει*. (He knows intimately or fully). In the same manner the Father knows the Son. There is a mutual knowledge of one another. It speaks of the same kind of knowledge in degree. As the Father knows the Son the Son knows the Father. And it is exclusive knowledge. No one knows either One of these persons, the Father or the Son; they alone know each other. Vos described what this tells us:

The essential rather than acquired knowledge is meant follows... from the correlation of the two clauses; the knowledge of God has of Jesus cannot be acquired knowledge [it must, from the fact that it is God’s knowledge, be direct, intuitive, and immediate—Reymond]; consequently the knowledge Jesus has of God cannot be acquired knowledge either, [it must be direct, intuitive, and immediate—in a word, divine—Reymond] for these two are placed entirely on a line. In other words, if the one is different from human knowledge, then the other must be so like wise.⁷

⁶ Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 218ff.

⁷ *Ibid*, p, 219.

And so, “the only conclusion to be drawn is that God has this exclusive and interpenetrating knowledge of the Son because he is the Father of the Son, and that Jesus has this exclusive and interpenetrating knowledge of God because he is the Son of the Father.”⁸ Thus we see the equality of the persons; we see the divinity of the Lord Jesus asserted by this parallel of mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son.

(2) The second parallel that Jesus draws between His Father and Himself is the mutual necessity to reveal each other if people are going to know either one of them. Jesus thanks the Father for having hidden truth of Him from some but revealed Him to others. Matthew 11:25 reads,

“At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’”

And then later, Jesus declared, “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Matt. 11:27). The Son has infinite knowledge of the Father, He and He alone. Therefore, He alone has the capability to reveal the Father to people. This, too, affirms the divinity of Jesus.

(3) The third parallel that Jesus draws between His Father and Himself is the mutual authority that each possesses. Jesus refers to the Father as “Lord of heaven and earth” (Matt. 11:25). Jesus also says with reference to Himself, “All things have been delivered to Me” (Matt. 11:27). Of course in another place Jesus said, “All authority is given to Me in heaven and earth” (Matt. 28:18). Each one, the Father and the Son is all-powerful. How could the Son have all power and the Father have all power, except they be one God? This is further evidence of the deity of the Lord Jesus, who is equal to the Father in His power.

(4) The fourth parallel that Jesus draws between His Father and Himself is the mutual exercise of sovereign will that each exercises. In the third parallel we spoke of the ability of both the Father and the Son to be equal; they are equal in power. In this fourth parallel we are saying that they are equal in the sovereign exercise of the power to accomplish their will. The Father is sovereign in His ability and His selection of who will come to know of Him and His Son in salvation. In the same way the Son is sovereign in His ability and his selection of who will come to know of the Father and Him in salvation. With respect to the Father’s sovereignty in this matter we read in Matthew 11:25, when Jesus prayed, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.” And then with respect to the Son’s sovereignty in this matter we read in Matthew 11:27, “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

B. B. Warfield wrote of this revelation of the Father and Son in this passage of Matthew 11:25-27:

in it our Lord asserts for Himself a relation of practical equality with the Father, here described in most elevated terms as “the Lord of heaven and earth” (v. 25). As the Father only can know the Son, as the Son only can know the Father: and others may know the Father only as He is revealed by the Son. That is, not merely is the Son the exclusive revealer of God, but the mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son is put on what seems very much a par. The Son can be known only by the Father in all that He is, as if His being were infinite and as such inscrutable to the finite intelligence; and His knowledge alone—again as if he were infinite in His attributes—is competent to compass the depths of the Father’s infinite being. He who holds this relation to the Father cannot conceivably be a creature.⁹

We see in these four parallels between the Father and the Son, that the Lord Jesus clearly asserted His equality with the Father. Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God.

G. The Deity of Jesus Christ can be seen throughout Paul’s epistles

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Reymond, p. 220.

To this point we have shown forth the deity of our Lord Jesus from many places in Scripture, but we have given most attention to the witness of the four Gospels. We do not have the time (or perhaps need) in our study to consider exhaustively what Paul wrote testifying of the deity of the Lord Jesus. The fact is that any fair-minded reader of the New Testament would see the deity of the Lord Jesus asserted and assumed throughout the books of the New Testament. And so, rather than exhaustively treating all that Paul wrote respecting the deity of Christ, we might just summarize the various ways in which Paul asserted and displayed the deity of Jesus Christ before His readers.

First, Paul prayed to Christ, as one would pray only to God. With respect to his thorn in the flesh, Paul prayed to Jesus for relief. **2 Corinthians 12:8-9** read,

Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

“The Lord” was Paul’s reference to the risen and enthroned Jesus.

Second, Paul showed forth the deity of Jesus in that “the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” should be called upon in the church. In other words, not only did he pray to the Lord Jesus but he encouraged churches to do the same.

1 Corinthians 1:2. “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

Romans 10:9-13. “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

Third, Paul uses the name of Jesus in conjunction with God the Father as the source for divine blessing, thus placing them on par with one another.

Galatians 1:3. “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 1:7. “To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Fourth, Paul applied the title of “Lord” to Jesus, which was the Greek word **κύριος** (*kurios*), which was used for Jehovah (or Yahweh) in the LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Fifth, Paul applied to Jesus Christ Old Testament passages that were addressed to God. For example, we read **Isaiah 45:23**, “I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.” This is a reference to Jehovah, or Yahweh in Isaiah. But Paul applies it to Jesus Christ in Philippians 2:10, “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 *sixth, Paul taught, or at least implied Christ's preexistence as God's Son*. Consider that Paul taught Christ's preexistence in these passages:

Romans 8:3. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, *God did by sending His own* Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh..."

2 Corinthians 8:9. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich [This speaks to His preexistence], yet for your sakes He became poor [i.e. His humility in His incarnation], that you through His poverty might become rich" [speaking of our glorification].

Galatians 4:4. "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."

Philippians 2:6. "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."

Christ did not regard equality with God as robbery. He saw it as legitimate, of course. He saw Himself as equal with God the Father.

Colossians 1:15f. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

And so, the Father is the Creator, but Jesus is the agent of creation; it was through the Son that all things were created and it was for the Son that all things were created.

Ephesians 4:8. "Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." ⁹(Now this, "He ascended"-- what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"

Here, "lower parts of the earth" is either a reference to Him coming to the earth, or perhaps it may be a reference to Mary's womb. We can see this from **Psalm 139:15**, "My frame was not hidden from You (speaking of God), when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth", speaking of His development within the womb of His mother.]

Now a *seventh* way the Apostle Paul set forth the truth that Jesus is eternal God is that *there are 7 specific passages in which Jesus Christ is identified or declared to be God*.

(1) **Romans 9:5.** "Of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."

(2) **Titus 2:13.** "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Here Jesus is referred to as both Savior and God.

(3) **Colossians 1:15-20.** "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. [This speaks of His preeminence, of course, not that He was created first. Christ was not created; Christ is the Creator.] ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ¹⁹For it pleased the Father that in Him *all the fullness should dwell*, ²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself,

by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” The fulness of deity dwells in Him.

(4) **Colossians 2:9**. “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily...” A clear declaration of His deity.

(5) **Philippians 2:6-11, ESV**. “Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

(6) **1 Timothy 1:15**. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus *came into the world* to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Again, this speaks of His preexistence.

(7) **1 Timothy 3:16**. Paul wrote to Timothy affirming the deity of Jesus Christ. We read Paul’s words, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

*God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.”*

Clearly the apostle was declaring Jesus Christ to be God.¹⁰

And so, we see that the divine nature of Jesus Christ is taught in many places and in many ways in the Holy Scriptures. This is an essential doctrine to be believed. One cannot have the salvation from sin that God brings unless one believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to believe on Him rightly necessitates that one believes that He is eternal God incarnate; He is God with us. And so, we have shown **that Jesus Christ is God is amply testified in the Scriptures.**

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus,
after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

¹¹To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 5:10f)

¹⁰ There are many other verses that speak directly of the deity of Jesus Christ. Consider these: John 3:13; John 6:38; 6:46; 6:62; 8:23; 8:42; John 16:28.