



**Thinking About
The Deity Of Jesus Christ**

By

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I am deeply concerned about the errors in teaching about Jesus Christ. I'm not surprised by the errors because they are simply the same lies Satan has been spreading about Jesus for 20 centuries. What concerns me is how Satan's lies about Jesus affect Christians. Believers must know about the truth and not allow anyone to persuade them otherwise.

Errors about Christ's Deity and Eternality

Christ is God! That's the meaning of His Deity. God is Eternal and Christ is God. Therefore, Christ is Eternal. Satan knows Christ is God and Eternal. Satan was one of the angels (Lucifer) Christ created before He created the heavens and the earth. Satan lusted after Christ's throne and glory and fell from his angelic position. He led a revolt against Christ in Heaven and lost. Satan has been fighting God ever since. Satan continued his attacks against the Deity and Eternality of Christ when Jesus was born. Satan did everything he could to destroy the work of God. He is still doing that today. One of Satan's best offensive weapons is the "lie." Satan is the father of lies. He was a liar from the beginning. Jesus spoke clearly about this to the Jews.

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar, and the father of lies." John 8:44

The early leaders of the Kingdom and Grace Dispensations had to deal with the lies of Satan. Satan did his best to convince Jews and Gentiles that Jesus was not God. His lies led to grievous errors that infected the Church. Apostles wrote great letters to believers about the lies. Colossians, Hebrews, 1 & 2 John, and Jude are examples of Apostolic letters dealing with Satan's lies about Christ's Deity and Eternality.

Satan's lies continued after the Apostles passed away. Ignatius of Antioch was an early Christian leader who defended the Deity and Eternality of Christ. Ignatius became Bishop of Antioch in the early part of the second century A.D. Jews and Judaizers of his day were rejecting Christ's Deity and Eternality or were modifying it. In his letter to the Trallians, Ignatius warned them sharply against "any talk that ignores Jesus Christ, of David's lineage, of Mary; who was really born, ate and drank." In his letter to the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius called Jesus "the Christ God" and wrote: "He genuinely suffered, even as he genuinely raised himself...Unbelievers who say the passion was a sham are themselves a sham."

Irenaeus of South Gaul became Bishop of Lyons in 178 A.D. He took on Gnosticism of the late second century that taught angels had created the world and that Christ was not God incarnate. In his extensive work, "Refutation and Overthrow of the Knowledge Falsely Co-Called," Irenaeus quoted the first chapter of John's Gospel as defense of Christ's Deity and Eternality.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 1:1-4

As the second and third centuries developed, the Church struggled greatly with the issue of Christ's Deity and Eternality. Some Jewish Christians tended to think of Christ as subordinate to the Father and even, perhaps, as Son of God by adoption rather than nature or essence. Many Gentile Christians viewed Christ simply as an economic and temporary mode of the one God or they viewed Him as a finite man in whom the eternal but impersonal Word found embodiment and who in virtue of this association could be acknowledged as the Son of God. Docetists insisted on the full Deity of Christ, but because the flesh seemed to be unworthy or an impossible vehicle for God they discounted the humanity as a mere semblance. Subordinationists, on the other hand, accepted the humanity but fell short of an authentic Deity. A young theologian in the church at Alexandria addressed the issue through a small work on the interrelated theme of incarnation and atonement entitled "The Incarnation of the Word." About a year later, in 318 A.D., the Bishop of Alexandria gave an address on the Trinity under the title of "Unity in Trinity." One of the church's elders, Arius, responded to the bishop's address by teaching an outrageous form of subordinationism which plainly denied Christ's essential Deity. Some of the quotes from Arius' teaching are:

- "There was when the Son was not"
- "He had His essence from the non-existent"
- "He is not equal, no, nor one in essence with the Father"

This launched a much heated controversy which lasted more than 60 years. Arianism, as it became known, denied that the Son was the same substance with the Father and reduced Christ to the rank of a creature, though preexistent before the world. No Christological heresy of ancient Christianity was more widely accepted or tenacious. In 320 or 321 A.D., the Bishop of Alexandria convened a synod of about 100 Egyptian and Lybian bishops (pastor-elders). They excommunicated Arius and his followers. The whole Eastern Church became a metaphysical battle field and eventually Emperor Constantine called a massive council of the Church to settle the Arian controversy. The Council of Nicea met in 325 A.D. and consisted of 318 bishops. They discussed the issues and then adopted a creed known as the Nicene Creed.

“We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate, and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven; from thence he cometh to judge the quick and the dead.”

Between the Nicene Council of 325 A.D. and the Constantinople Council of 381 A.D., the Church battled fiercely about the issue. There were other councils, more letters and numerous excommunications. One impartial heathen historian wrote about the time that the highways were filled with “galloping bishops.” The unflinching leader of the Orthodox party during this

period was Athanasius whose theology was at the core of the matter. He became Bishop of Alexandria, but spent many years in exile. He considered the Eternal Divinity of Christ to be the corner-stone of the Christian system (so do I!).

(An interesting sidelight to this was that while Athanasius was in exile, Emperor Constantine demanded that Arius be restored to his position in the Alexandrian church. The day before his intended restoration, Arius suddenly died. Emperor Constantine died the following year. His son, Emperor Constantine II, recalled Athanasius from exile.)

The Council of Constantinople was convened by Emperor Theodosius the Great in 381 A.D. to discuss the Arian Controversy about the Deity of Christ and the *Pneumatomachian* Controversy about the Deity of the Holy Spirit. After the council, both heresies ceased to exist as organized moving forces in theology and church history for many years.

Unfortunately, both errors have raised their heads again. Not surprisingly, since the one behind the errors, Satan, is still alive and telling lies. Satan lied to many people who started pseudo-Christian cults that plague our world to this day. They teach that neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit are God. Some teach that Christ began as a man but reached godhood through mystical methods and good works. These cults teach that their followers can do the same thing. Another of Satan's lies. If people believe they can become gods through mysticism or good works, they won't hear God's Word about Jesus Christ being the "only Way" to salvation.

Truth about Christ's Deity and Eternality

The Truth about Christ's Deity and Eternality is in God's Word, the Holy Bible. It is not in any other writing or teaching of man. Read these verses to see some of what God's Word states about Christ's Deity and Eternality.

- Matthew 4:5-7 & 14:25-33 & 16:13-16
- Mark 5:6-8 & 14:55-65
- Luke 22:66-70
- John 1:1-5, 14-18 & 5:16-24 & 20:31
- Acts 2:36-39
- Colossians 1:15-17
- Philippians 2:5-11
- 1 Timothy 3:14-16
- Titus 2:13
- Hebrews 1:1-14
- 2 Peter 1:1 (according to the strict grammatical construction of the passage, "God" and "Savior" are both predicates of "Jesus Christ.")
- 1 John 2:22-23
- 1 John 4:1-3
- 2 John 7

Here are some thoughts from prominent Christian theologians about what happened between Christ and the Jews in John Chapter 5 and what we should learn from it.

“In the last part of this verse (23) Jesus thrusts a warning at those who accuse Him of blasphemy. He tells them that by hurling abuse at Him they are actually hurling it at God and that it is God who is outraged by their treatment of Jesus.” F. Godet in *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*

“They who profess zeal for the one God do not honor Him aright unless they honor the Son as they honor the Father.” J.C. Ryle in *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*

“All unbiased exegesis of these words must recognize in them a declaration of the essential pre-existence of Christ.” Henry Alford in *The Greek Testament*

“Prefaced by the double Amen — the strongest oath — our Lord claims the incommunicable name of the Divine Being. The Jews recognize His meaning and horrified, they seek to stone Him.” Frederick Spurr in *Jesus is God*

“This crisp statement is the climax of Christ’s claims concerning the relationship between the Father and himself (the Son). They stir the Pharisees to uncontrollable anger.” *A.T. Robertson in Word Pictures in the New Testament*

Conclusions about Christ’s Deity and Eternality

1 Doctrinal

- Jesus Christ has come in the flesh
- Jesus Christ is the Eternal God

2 Practical

- Positive In view of Who Jesus Christ is, we should:
 - 1 Love Him with our whole being
 - 2 Worship Him as God
 - 3 Submit to His Will for our lives
 - 4 Obey His every command and teaching
- Negative In view of the Apostolic teaching concerning false teaching about the Deity and Eternality of Jesus Christ, we should:
 - 1 Deal decisively with anyone who does not teach that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and is the Eternal God

- If they are teaching in your church, they should be warned and disciplined, if necessary
- If the leaders of your church will not do anything about false teaching or are involved in promoting false teaching and you have done all you can to make a difference, separate yourself from that church

2 Warn others not to support any teacher of false doctrine so they don't share in their wicked work

Jesus Christ and the Apostles, especially Paul, emphasized the importance of unity among Believers. However, Christ and the Apostles also emphasized the importance of standing against all heresy and apostasy. Separating yourself from a church and Christians who you love but who promote false teaching, may be the hardest thing you ever do. However, remember Who you live to please: God, not men.

Know what the Bible teaches about Christ. Then, be ready to defend it against all attacks, whether from outside or inside the Church. Remember the warning of Christ to the Jews.

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar, and the father of lies.” John 8:44

Also, remember the warnings of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians and Colossians.

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!” Galatians 1:6-9

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority” Colossians 2:8-10

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