

## ***IS JESUS CHRIST GOD?***

**2 Peter 1:1**

**By And Manning**

The title of this sermon is “Is Jesus Christ God?”

Turn with me to **2 Peter 1:1**. The apostle Peter begins this letter like this:

“Simeon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ: To those who have received a faith equal to ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

In the very first verse of his letter Peter declares that Jesus is God.

### **Is He?**

That’s certainly what our church believes. Our **statement of beliefs** says that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father.”

Our church is part of the Southern Baptist Convention. The 2,000 edition of the **Baptist Faith and Message** says that Jesus is “fully God, fully man.”

And this is nothing new. The **Nicene Creed**, written in A.D. 381, says, “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

In other words, this is what Christians have always believed.

### **But very recently the deity of Christ has come under attack.**

**Friedrich Schleiermacher**, recognized as the father of Protestant Liberalism, who lived between 1768-1834, wrote this about Jesus: “Jesus was a

prophet who proclaimed great universal truths.” Here are the five truths that Jesus proclaimed: The kingdom of God, the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the infinite value of the soul, the higher righteousness of love.

Our very own **Thomas Jefferson**, the third president of the United States, bought into this liberal theology. He admired Jesus; he thought the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus and the Bible were very important. But he denied the deity of Christ. So he took a razor, glue, and a notebook, and two copies of the Bible. He went through the gospels and cut out what he thought he would like to hear from Jesus, and he pasted it into his book. He went on to write two books about Jesus. In 1804 he wrote a book called *The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth*. And sixteen years later, near the end of his life, in 1820, he wrote a book called *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. He said that Jesus revealed “the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man.” Again, Jefferson admired Jesus, but he denied that Jesus was God.

Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some New Testament scholars embarked upon what they called “The Quest for the Historical Jesus.” The theory was that the gospels, the four accounts of Jesus’ life, were filled with supernatural superstition that made it difficult to see the real Jesus. So these scholars believed they could apply modern historical methods to look beyond the superstition and find the real Jesus, the historical Jesus. But this real Jesus is not God; He did not perform miracles; He was not born of a virgin; He did not rise from the grave. He is a good example and teacher of morality.

Fast forward to the **1980s and 1990s** to what is called “**The Jesus Seminar.**” Led by a man named Robert Funk, he gathered other New Testament scholars together who did not believe that the New Testament was the word of God; but they did believe that within its pages one could find the truth about the real Jesus. Using their intellectual powers, they went through the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and voted on every word of Jesus. They voted on whether the red letters should be red. Did Jesus really say that? So they sat around a table with the words of

Jesus, and they each had four colored marbles. And they would read a research paper about each one of the statements of Jesus, and then they would vote. If you were sure Jesus didn't say it, you put a black marble in the center box on the table. If you thought that it didn't sound like Jesus but you weren't sure, you used a grey marble. If you thought it did sound like Jesus but you weren't sure, you would use a pink marble. And if you were sure that Jesus said it, then you would use a red marble. And then they published a Jesus Seminar New Testament in which you can see the words in the different colors. Apparently there isn't much red, especially not the part about miracles and about Jesus being the Son of God and receiving worship.

So the deity of Christ has come under attack.

But today I want to show you seven reasons why we believe in the deity of Christ.

## **WHY DOES CHRIST'S DEITY MATTER?**

Before we get started, let's answer this question. Why is does Christ's deity matter? Why does it matter whether He is God or not?

Because if Christ is God, then that answers so many other questions.

If Christ is God, then there is a God.

If Christ is God, then we know who God is and what God is like, and what God requires of us.

If Christ is God, then there is an afterlife – an eternal heaven and hell – and we know what to do to go to heaven.

If Christ is God, then the entire Old Testament, including the creation account of Genesis, is true, because Christ affirmed it (see Matthew 19:1-6).

If Christ is God, then we know where we came from – we were created by God; and we know why we are here – to love and serve God.

If Christ is God, then there is such a thing as objective morality, and we can know what it is by reading Scripture.

If Christ is God, then how we live matters, and we will one day be held accountable for our actions.

So this is a crucial issue.

## **7 Reasons We Believe in the Deity of Christ**

### **1. Because of Christ's direct claims.**

Some people, such as Muslims, claim that Jesus never claimed to be God. If they knew the Bible better they wouldn't say that.

In **John 8:50-59**, Jesus was speaking with some Jews, and He told them, "Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am. So they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden and went out the temple."

With these words Jesus made three amazing statements.

First, He claimed to be older than Abraham. Abraham lived almost 2,000 years before Jesus, yet Jesus said He was older than Abraham.

Second, He claimed that He was eternal. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." The words "I am" mean, "I am eternal; self-existent; no beginning; I've always been."

Third, He claimed to be Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3, Moses asked, "If the people ask who sent me, what should I tell them?" God said, "I am who I am. Tell them I AM has sent me to you." When Jesus said, "Before

Abraham was, I am,” He was claiming to be Yahweh, almighty God. And the Jews knew this was what He meant, because they picked up stones to kill Him.

In **John 10:30-33** Jesus said, “30 I and the Father are one.” 31 Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone him. 32 Jesus replied, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these works are you stoning me?” 33 “We aren’t stoning you for a good work,” the Jews answered, “but for blasphemy, because you—being a man—make yourself God.”

Jesus claimed that He and the Father were one and the same. He was claiming to be God. How do we know He wasn’t just claiming to be unified with God the Father? Because the Jews once again picked up stones to throw at Him, and the even explained why – because He was claiming to be God.

**John 14:8-9** 8 “Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that’s enough for us.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

Jesus said to see Him was to see the Father. This is a direct claim to deity. As direct as you can get.

In John 20:26-29, after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples and allowed Thomas to feel His wounds. Thomas replied, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus allowed his disciple to publicly and openly and bluntly declare that He was God. Surely if Jesus did not believe that He was God, He would have sharply rebuked Thomas. Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for saying this, but for his lack of faith.

## **2. Because of Christ’s indirect claims.**

Not only did Jesus directly claim to be God, but He claimed to be God indirectly. How so?

Jesus claimed to do **three things** that only God can do.

**First, Jesus claimed to forgive sins.**

On two occasions, a paralytic man and woman known to be sinful, Jesus publicly forgave their sins.

Let's look at the case of the paralytic man. Four of his friends brought him on a mat to see Jesus.

**Mark 2:5-7** 5 Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 But some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts: 7 "Why does he speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

His critics were right. Only God can forgive sins. We can forgive people when they sin against us. But no man has the authority to forgive another's man's sins against God. But that's what Jesus did. He was indirectly claiming to be God.

**Second, Jesus claimed that He could give people eternal life.** That's something only God can do. Let's look at some examples.

**John 5:21** "And just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom he wants."

**John 6:35** 35 "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again."

**John 11:25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live."

**John 10:28** "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand."

**John 17:2** “since you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him.”

By claiming to be able to bestow eternal life, Jesus was claiming to be God.

**Third, Jesus claimed to be the judge.**

**Matthew 25:31-33** 31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on the left.”

**John 5:22** “The Father, in fact, judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son”

**John 5:27** “And he has granted him the right to pass judgment, because he is the Son of Man.”

This is an amazing statement, because He was speaking to the Jews, and the Jews were well aware that God is the judge. Over and over the Old Testament says that God is the judge.

**Isaiah 33:2** “For the LORD is our judge, The LORD is our lawgiver, The LORD is our king; He will save us”

By claiming to forgive sins, to give eternal life, and to be the judge of all mankind, Jesus was claiming to be God.

**3. Because of Christ’s self-centered claims.**

The great prophets of the Old Testament were always pointing people to God.

They were calling to people to love God, and to return to God, and to serve God, and to walk in God's ways.

They were pointing people away from themselves, and to God.

And that's what all of us should do. Our mission is not to draw attention to ourselves; it is not to get people to worship us and to glorify us and to love us. We want to point people to God.

But Jesus was different. Jesus was always talking about Himself; calling people to Himself; drawing attention to Himself. He didn't point people to God, He pointed people to Himself as the answer to their needs. He said things about Himself that no one should say, unless He is God.

Let me give you some examples of Christ's self-centered claims.

- Jesus claimed to be greater than the temple. Mt 12:6
- He claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath. Lk 6:5
- He claimed that eternal life could only be found through belief in Him. Jn 3:16; Jn 11:5
- He went into a synagogue in Nazareth one Sabbath, stood up and read a passage from the book of Isaiah (61:1-2), and said, "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled." Lk 4:16-21
- He commanded his listeners give up everything and devote themselves wholeheartedly to following Him, no matter the cost. Lk 9:23
- He demanded that His followers love Him more than their own immediate family members. Mt 10:37-38
- He claimed to be greater than the prophet Jonah. Lk 11:31-32
- He claimed to be greater than Solomon. Lk 11:31-32
- He claimed that Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms were about him. Lk 24:27
- He claimed that the Scriptures testified about him. Jn 5:39
- He claimed that Moses had written of him. Jn 5:46
- He claimed to be the bread of life. Jn 6:35

- He claimed to be the light of the world. Jn 8:12
- He said that Abraham rejoiced to see his day. Jn 8:56
- He claimed to be the resurrection and the life. Jn 11:25
- His said that His desire was to draw all people to Himself. Jn 12:32
- He claimed to be the way, the truth, and the life, and the only way to the Father. Jn 14:6
- He invited his listeners to come to him, to take up his yoke, and learn from him, and He would give them rest. Mt 11:28-29
- Jesus claimed a unique relationship with God the Father:
  - To know Him was to know God. Jn 8:19; 14:7
  - To see Him was to see God. Jn 12:45; Jn 14:7
  - To believe in him was to believe in God. Jn 12:44
  - To welcome Him was to welcome God. Mk 9:37
  - To hate Jesus was to hate God. Jn 15:23
  - To dishonor Him was to dishonor God. Jn 5:23

Again, these are just not the claims that a good prophet would make. And that's because Jesus was much more than a prophet. He was God.

#### **4. Because of Christ's divine acts.**

We also believe that Jesus is God because He did things that only God can do.

I already mentioned how He forgave sins on two occasions. That's an act of God.

Jesus also displayed His divinity with His unmatched miracles. The prophets in the Old Testament, such as Moses, Elijah, and Elisha performed miracles, but nothing like Jesus.

- He cleansed lepers. Mt 8:2
- He healed the sick. Mt 8:14, 16; 9:20
- He calmed a storm. Mt 8:23
- He cast out demons. Mt 8:28; Mt 9:32
- He healed paralytics. Mt 8:5; 9:2

- He gave sight to the blind. Mt 9:27; 12:22
- He raised the dead to life. Mt 9:18, 23
- He gave speech to the mute. Mt 9:32
- He fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Mt 14:13
- He walked on water. Mt 14:25
- He fed four thousand people with seven loaves and a few small fish. Mt 15:32
- He made the deaf hear. Mk 7:31
- He turned water into wine. Jn 2:1

A third divine act was accepting people's worship.

If Jesus was just a good prophet, or just a good teacher, then He would never have allowed people to worship Him. He would have quickly rebuked them and pointed them toward God.

But on at least four different occasions He allowed people to worship Him.

- The disciples after a storm (Matthew 14:33). Then those in the boat worshiped him and said, "Truly you are the Son of God."
- A healed blind man (John 9:38). "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him.
- All the disciples after Jesus rose from the grave (Matthew 28:17). "When they saw him, they worshiped."
- Thomas, who said, "My Lord and my God," after touching Jesus's wounds from the cross (John 20:28).

##### **5. Because of Christ's character.**

We also believe in Christ's deity because of His sinless character.

When you read the accounts of Jesus's life, you see a man with impeccable character.

The Bible is not a book that hides the faults of its heroes. It details the faults of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, all the kings, and all the apostles. But Jesus stands apart. It's not that they leave out His faults; there are none to mention.

**John Stott** said, "... although we are told of the temptations of Jesus, we hear nothing of his sins. He never confesses his sins or asks for forgiveness, although he tells his disciples to do so. He shows no consciousness of moral failure. He appears to have no feeling of guilt and no sense of estrangement from God.... He himself seems to have lived in unbroken fellowship with his Father." Basic Christianity

This is why the writers of the New Testament declared that He was sinless.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

**Hebrews 4:15** "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin."

**Hebrews 7:26** "For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens."

**1 Peter 1:19** "but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb."

**1 Peter 2:22** "He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth"

**1 John 3:5** "You know that he was revealed so that he might take away sins, and there is no sin in him."

The most amazing thing about these declarations that some of them are made by Peter and John. These were men who were with Christ at all times for three years, and they claimed that He was sinless.

**John Stott** describes why the testimony of Jesus' disciples to His sinlessness is so convincing. "... they lived in close contact with Jesus for about three years. They ate and slept together. They experienced the cramped neighborliness of the same boat. They even had a common purse. The disciples got on one another's nerves. They quarreled. But they never found in Jesus the sins they found in themselves. Familiarity normally breeds contempt, but not in this case. Indeed, two of the chief witnesses to the sinlessness of Christ are Peter and Joh, and they belonged to that inner group to whom he gave special privileges and a yet more intimate revelation." Basic Christianity

## **6. Because of the testimony of Christ's disciples.**

**John 1:1** says of Jesus, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (ESV)."

In **Romans 9:5** Paul declared that Jesus was "God over all."

**Colossians 1:15-17** "15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and by him all things hold together."

In **Titus 2:13** Paul referred to Jesus as "our great God and Savior."

**Hebrews 1:3** says of Jesus, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature"

## **7. Because of Christ's resurrection.**

Finally, the most convincing proof of Christ's divinity is that He rose from the grave.

The apostle Paul writes about the resurrection in Acts 13:38-31. “28 Though they found no grounds for the death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29 When they had carried out all that had been written about him, they took him down from the tree and put him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and he appeared for many days to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.”

There’s not enough time to go into all the evidence for the resurrection, so let me summarize with **three proofs**.

**First, the first Christians died for their faith in the resurrection, and no one dies for a lie.**

It’s one thing to die for a lie that you think is true; radical Muslims do that all the time.

But it’s another thing to die for something that you know is a lie. And that’s what you would have to accuse the early Christians of doing.

They didn’t just claim to believe in the resurrection, they claimed to have seen the risen Christ. And they were so convinced that they were willing to do for that claim.

No one dies for a lie. They were truly convinced of the resurrection.

**Second, there were many eyewitnesses to the resurrection.** It would not be so convincing if there were just one or two people who claimed to see Jesus alive, but we’re talking about hundreds of eye witnesses. He appeared at least twelve different times to more than five hundred eye witnesses over a period of forty days.

Again, they weren’t lying, because no one dies for a lie if they know it is not true.

And they couldn't have been hallucinating, because hallucinations don't happen to groups of people, only individuals. It would be like multiple people having the same dream – that doesn't happen.

### **Third, the tomb was empty.**

That does not prove that Jesus rose from the grave, but it is important evidence.

If Jesus didn't rise from the grave, then where is His body?

But neither the Romans nor the Jews could produce His body. It was gone. And the tomb was heavily guarded.

Jesus did rise from the grave. And by doing so He proved everything that He said is true. He is Savior, King of kings, Lord of lords, and worthy of all our worship.

### **CONCLUSION**

Peter declared in 2 Peter 1:1 that Jesus is "our God and Savior," and now you can see why.

**John Stott** said, "All other men were lost sheep; he had come as the Good Shepherd to seek and to save them. All other men were sick with the disease of sin; he was the doctor who had come to heal them. All other men were plunged in the darkness of sin and ignorance; he was the light of the world. All other men were sinners; he was born to be their Savior and would shed his blood in death for the forgiveness of their sins. All other men were hungry; he was the bread of life. All other men were dead in trespasses and sins; he could be their life now and their resurrection hereafter." Basic Christianity

Jesus is God. And this is why we worship Him; this is why we serve Him; this is why we devote our lives to Him; this is why we trust in Him; this is why we love Him; this is why we want everyone to know about Him. Do you know Him?