

Transcript 151

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. Today, we're going to be diving into a question, maybe starting a little series of what are the super, like, really important questions we call on the website, the crucial questions? And today we'll be discussing the question of is Jesus God, and does the Scriptures teach that Jesus God? What does the Bible say about the deity of Christ? And probably in the coming weeks, we're going to be jumping into the second most common division between biblical Christianity and the cult which would be salvation by grace alone, through faith alone and Christ alone. If you deny either the deity of Christ or salvation by faith alone through grace alone, Christ alone, you're denying an essential of the faith that basically is the dividing line between a division or denomination of Christianity and what we'd call a a cult.

Shea Houdmann

Today, the deity of Christ is going to be our topic of conversation, and this is one that was debated very early on in church history. A lot of the very early church fathers were writing about this a lot. Some early church councils this is the major item of debate. Because this granted it's difficult to understand, how could Jesus, who was truly a human being, also be God. But today our focus is going to be primarily be what does the Bible say? What are the scriptures that deal with issue both on the positive side, the ones that clearly state that Jesus is God and then some other ones that people point to, are we this verse that kind of sounds like saying Jesus is not God? So join me today is Jeff the Administrator of BibleRef.com and Kevin, the Managing Editor for Got Questions Ministries. So Kevin, why don't you go first, what do you think is the strongest Biblical argument for the deity of Christ?

Kevin Stone

Well, there are several strong ones. I'll just I'll share the one that I normally go to first. Now this is my go to passage. It's actually 2 passages that we have to compare. That we start in Isaiah Chapter 6, this famous passage where the Prophet Isaiah is called and commissioned by God. And in this passage, Isaiah sees a vision of the Lord, high and lifted up and the train of his robe fills the temple, and it's a very majestic, powerful scene as God is sitting on his throne. And the angels are are flying about worshipping him. And the the pillars of the the temple are shaking and smoke fills the temple. It's a quite awe inducing sight. In fact, Isaiah is scared for his life. I'm I'm undone. I'm ruined. Because my eyes have seen the Lord Almighty, he says. And he calls the Lord by his covenant name Yahweh. That I have seen Yahweh. And he's he's terrified. And then God, in the same passage, God forgives Isaiah's sin. And then he commissions the Prophet, sends him out for a lifetime of service. And so we've got this very splendid and majestic scene of God on his throne, worshipped by the angels, forgiving sin and commissioning prophets. And so here's the Lord God Almighty on his throne.

Kevin Stone

Now we keep our bookmark there and we go to the New Testament and in John chapter 12, Jesus is going through his ministry and there are some people who are persisting in unbelief. They just will not believe Jesus's message. They will not believe who Jesus says he is even after all the miracles that they've seen. And so John as he records this incident, this particular conversation that he's having with

the people, he quotes from Isaiah 6, that place where we just put the bookmark, John quotes Isaiah 6 to explain why the people are persisting in their unbelief. And then in verse 41, John 12:41, John writes this, Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus glory and spoke about him. This is mind boggling to me because as John quotes Isaiah 6, which is obviously about Yahweh on his throne, John then says that person that Isaiah saw sitting on the throne worshipped by the angels, forgiving sin, and commissioning the prophet, that person was Jesus. Specifically Jesus. And so you've got Yahweh equals Jesus. The God of the Old Testament, the one true God of Israel, that is Jesus. Jesus is God in the flesh. And I just love thee, how scripture fits together and how the New Testament is helping to explain the old. And and how we have Jesus being the Incarnate God. I just I love that passage.

Jeff Laird

For me, I like the idea of looking at the Bible as a whole context, something that's very important looking at everything that the Bible has to say. And for me, it really comes down to that idea that there are some verses in scripture that you can look at like the one you just mentioned Kevin, that's got a lot of weight behind it for what it implies. But we also talk about how there are times when we look at things in Scripture and we can say, yeah, but if you just take that one thing by itself and you don't look at the whole context. One of the things that I see is that there is this constant, consistent theme in Scripture that just it's a drum beat that's constantly in there over and over and over. Such that you see this brought up either implicitly or explicitly over and over again. There's these themes that we keep seeing in scripture, these ideas, and I wanted to bring up just a couple of scriptures. I'm only going to mention one for each of these categories, just for the sake of time. But in each of these we can come up with many examples that the Bible affirms that Jesus is God in places like John 1:1-2. It implies something like that in places like Matthew 1:23.

Jeff Laird

The Old Testament makes some hints about that. I don't think the Old Testament explicitly presents the concept as much as some people think, but it's in there. And that's places like Isaiah 9:6 talks about Jesus being unified with the Father. Matthew 28:19, John 14:16, Jesus being eternal and Colossians 1:17. Jesus being everlasting, John 8:58. Existing before anything else existed or was created, John 3:13,31. Jesus claiming to be God, John 5:17 and 18. Places where Jesus says and does things that, as we've said, other people recognized as blasphemy. When he said it, it wasn't like people just went, Oh, that's nice. They recognize that what he was saying had implications that they didn't appreciate. Using I am terminology. Jesus says that very often. He claims to forgive sins in Luke chapter 5. People recognize Jesus as God in John 20. People worship Jesus as God in Luke 24. People pray to Jesus in Acts chapter 7.

Jeff Laird

We just see all of these things over and over and over as this consistent theme. And this is where if we want to look at the Bible and say, OK, let me take scriptures that I could take out fortune cookie style and say that they support the idea that Jesus was not God. And then I'm going to do the same thing with all these that say he is God. You have this mountain of evidence on the side of Jesus being divine so. And that doesn't even get into theological consistency and necessity for salvation and all these other things. So for me, the thing that I find the most compelling when I'm looking at that is just that this undercurrent of Jesus being literally God is found in so much of scripture in so many places and so

consistently that you you basically cannot read the Bible without encountering and being faced with that idea.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent points, Jeff and Kevin. Typically when I go to the deity of Christ, I'll go with some verses in John. And Jeff, I know you mentioned at least in passing and to me it's like John 8:58 where Jesus says before Abraham was born, I am. This is Jesus using the both the Old Testament name for God from Exodus 3:14 also claiming eternity or at least pre existence. And the reaction of the Jews indicates what exactly Jesus was saying. They take up stones to stone him. Similarly, in John 10:30 Jesus says I and the father are one. So people will point to this, ohh Jesus wasn't saying he's God. He's saying that he and God were united as and they were on the same page. Well, again, in this passage, the Jews take up stones to stone him. And they say because you, a mere man, claim to be God. So here, Jesus very clearly making these claims. And something that people will often point to is like, I don't see anywhere in the Bible of Jesus saying the precise words I am God. And that that's the correct statement. There is no exact quote of Jesus in those three words, but in these two passages, Jesus making statements that everyone around him knew exactly what he was saying. He was saying, he's claiming to be God.

Kevin Stone

Right.

Shea Houdmann

And to me, another passage that really stands out is in Hebrews chapter one, verse 8. Here's the God the Father speaking says about the son, referring to Jesus, God says your throne oh God will last forever and ever. The Sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your Kingdom. Then it goes on, here is God the father referring to Jesus the Son, referring to him as God. This is the clear, explicit statement of Jesus deity here in with the Hebrews. And with the especially the beginning chapters of Hebrews talking about Jesus superiority over everything else in creation, because he is not part of creation, he is the creator. So now there are many many scriptures in the New Testament that explicitly say that Jesus is God if you understand them in the proper context and based on the reactions of the people around him. So what about Jeff and Kevin, what are some other ones that stand out to you two or that you have found to be particularly convincing to you in studying the deity of Christ?

Kevin Stone

Well, one of them that has already been alluded to is John chapter one. How John starts off his gospel with a declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ. And that's a theme that we see carried through the whole of the Gospel of John. But the the first first words are in the beginning was the word the word was with God, and the word was God. So in the statement John's revealing at least three things about the word, the logos. The word of God here is in the beginning. So when the world was created, I mean there are echoes here of Genesis 1:1. And in the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth. And John starts off with in the beginning was the word. So when the world was created, there is the word and he is already existing. He existed with God, John says. He was there on a level with God. And he was in fact God. Very clear statement. The word was God. So eternally with God, distinct somehow from the father. And yet equal to the father. And then a little bit later on, in this same passage in John Chapter one, the word, the logos is very clearly identified as Jesus Christ. The word became flesh, verse 14 and dwelt

among us. We beheld his glory. The glory is of the only begotten of the father. That special relationship, that special son of God. That makes him equal with God. So we have a shades of the Trinity being presented here as we have somehow a distinction between the father and the son. That we have equality among the members of the Trinity as well as Jesus is God. The word is God, the word was made flesh and that of course the incarnation as Jesus, the God man walked among us.

Jeff Laird

Kevin, I appreciate that one. I also like the idea that in I think verse three, there's also a statement there where the Bible explicitly says that nothing was made that was made without him. Which is a very curious distinction to make. To explicitly sort of make a mention of saying everything that was created, was not created without him. Which is a a very sophisticated way of saying that Jesus is identical with God. He is not a created thing. He's not a created being. Everything that was created was created through or with him.

Jeff Laird

So I I do like that one a lot. I I also like looking at some of the statements that Jesus makes that I think as somebody who who appreciates rhetorical type questions, the Socratic method, things like that, some of the things that Jesus says that people sometimes take as a counter to his divinity, I think helped to prove it. When he's challenged at one point to give an answer to somebody about being saved and the person refers to him as good master or good teacher, and Jesus makes the comment where he says, why do you call me good? There's no one good but God. Some people think that's a way of Jesus saying, but I'm not God. But in the context of the conversation, it's actually exactly the opposite. It's it's Jesus saying you realize there's no one good but God, are you? Do you realize exactly what it is that you're saying? And then as he goes through the conversation, he gives this person an indication of something that he particularly needs to do in order to demonstrate saving faith. And that person doesn't want to do it. So the answer actually from that person is, well, no, I I really don't. So in moments like that, even Jesus is saying and doing things that represent who he is and what it means.

Jeff Laird

Another thing that I think for me is really important is the idea of how Jesus divinity fits into salvation and what it means. And again, this is not the kind of thing that necessarily just leaps off of the page when we're reading the Bible. But as we look at what salvation is and what salvation means. Book of Hebrews talks about this idea that in order for the plan of salvation to work, to make any sense, you have to have the sacrifice that is absolutely perfect. You have to have a sacrifice that is infinitely valuable. But you also have to have a sacrifice that is truly representative of humanity. And the only way for that to happen is for that sacrifice, that example to be fully human and fully divine. And then that also opens up the idea that it does create a sacrifice that really does pay the penalty. It does remove the question of God subjecting people to things that are unfair or unreasonable, or that he doesn't understand, or that He's just allowing us to suffer. All these other things come together in this sort of Venn diagram that just meets at one point between these two circles where Jesus is fully God and fully human. And I think seeing that and understanding that is another thing that's really potent in us grasping what that means for the divinity of Christ.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely. And we'll dive a little bit more into the why the deity of Christ is important before we close today because that. We always want to get practical. I mean, trust me, the three of us love discussing the theology of the deity of Christ, but we also wanted to get to the the why does it matter? But maybe one last little piece of biblical evidence. There are two verses that aren't always brought into the debate that to me are powerful arguments. That's Titus 2:13 and also Second Peter 1:1, where in both of these verses Paul or and Peter write and they say our God and savior Jesus Christ. And the construction in the Greek indicates that both God and Savior are referring to Jesus Christ. It's not our great God and our savior. No, it's our great God and savior, Jesus Christ. Two very clear statements there as well that point to Jesus being God.

Shea Houdmann

And and Jeff, you made a great point in the importance of it. I've heard it explained to me that Jesus had to be fully human so that he could die. Had to be fully God, so that death would be of infinite value to cover the sins of the whole world. First John 2:2, says that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice not just for ours only, but for the sins of the entire world. So the only way that Jesus death could be sufficient to atone for the sins of the entire world is if he was God. No human being, no angel, no created being could possibly pay that infinite debt. God could do it. So it's the for salvation of the deity of Christ is vitally important. And a lot of people don't understand that, they view the deity of the Christ as like a theological point to argue but don't realize is how crucially important it is that we would not have salvation if Jesus were not God Incarnate.

Jeff Laird

That is an important thing to remember because when we talk about the importance of the doctrine, the statements that Jesus makes and the way people respond to them, if they are responding to him because they're offended at what he says, it's clear that he's making statements that don't leave room for a whole lot of misinterpretation. This this is something that's important enough that it needs to be understood. It's also good to remember that when we we talk about whether or not this is important. This particular issue was the subject of most of the early controversies of the church. And this was the thing that most of your big arguments and councils and so on and so forth were discussing. Now, some people will look at that and say, see, it was a new idea and people didn't really believe it. But it's the opposite. In these councils, basically, people were not arguing about whether or not Jesus was God. And there were some people who argued that and that was part of some of the conversations. But for the most part, the discussion was about how do we actually understand Jesus divinity. It was not saying well, it was Jesus God or was Jesus not God. No, it was all a question of did he become God? Did he always serve as God? Was he half and half? Was he one sometimes and the other? There was just no question about him being divine. And it was just a question of trying to untangle exactly what that meant. How do we talk about it? How do we discuss it?

Jeff Laird

So it is extremely important and on a popular level, we've heard people who've brought up ideas that suggest that. That you you don't really have a reasonable option when it comes to this. The the way that the the concept of salvation and sin and Jesus and his own statements come together, he kind of forced into a corner where you can either say, OK, he was a megalomaniac who maybe had some good ideas, but he was crazy enough that I don't really have to listen. Or he was a liar. So I don't have to listen to

him. Or he was telling the truth. And something in there about him being sane and moral but not being God, despite the things that he said, just doesn't make a whole lot of sense. And some of that works for some people, some of it, it doesn't. But it's very much an important idea. If we don't understand precisely what it means that Jesus is God and God incarnate, then all the things that he said, all the things that he did, everything we understand about salvation becomes really difficult to understand.

Shea Houdmann

Another point that to me I'd introduced at the beginning how the deity of Christ is probably in addition to salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone is the dividing point between historical biblical Christianity and what we referred to as cults. Every major cult out there, whether it's the Jehovah witnesses, or the Mormons, or countless others. They all deny the historical doctrine of the deity of Christ. And then from that, if you deny that Jesus is God, therefore you do not have an infinite and eternal payment for sin. Therefore it is not sufficient to cover sin. Therefore, you have to do your own good works to essentially add to or complement Christ sacrifice. So that's when you throw out the deity of Christ. It has implications for your entire view of salvation. That Christ isn't God therefore I have to do my own works to add to what he did in order to be saved. So that the two go hand in hand. If Jesus was God, which we firmly, absolutely believe Scripture teaches, then his death was absolutely sufficient, paid for all of our sins. And for all we must do is receive that in faith. And then all works are not something we contribute to salvation, or rather something we do out of gratitude for the salvation that Christ has already accomplished. That if Christ isn't God then we must do good works in order to earn salvation, because Christ death would not be sufficient to pay for our or to send debt. So no, the deity of Christ is not just a theological conversation for theologians to kupal over. No, this is goes to the very heart of the gospel. How Christ saved us and whether we can truly trust that that sacrifice was sufficient to pay for the penalty penalties for not only our sins, but for the sins of the entire world.

Kevin Stone

So the fact of the matter is that Jesus had to be God in order for us to have salvation. There's only one person who can provide that perfect sacrifice. There's only one perfect Lamb of God, and that is Jesus Christ. When they were doing the Old Testament sacrifices all through the Old Testament period, it was very is very specific that the lamb had to be without blemish, without spot, had to be a perfect lamb, had to be the best. And when Jesus shows up in the New Testament, John the Baptist, the forerunner to the Messiah, he points to Jesus and says, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And so right there, we've got that connection to that perfect, unblemished sacrifice of the Old Testament, but now being fulfilled in the ultimate sacrifice, the final sacrifice for sin. The only sacrifice for sin that was going to be permanent and lasting. And that is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He had to be perfect. And because we are all tainted by sin, Jesus has to be that perfect sacrifice.

Kevin Stone

If I die, then I'm simply, you know, that's the consequence of my own sin. And that's true for every single human being who's ever lived or will live. When we die, we are simply suffering the consequences for our own sin. But Jesus had no sin. Because he is God in the flesh, he had no sin of his own, and so when he died, when he was murdered on that cross, he was paying not for his sin, he had no sin to pay for he was paying for our sin. And it is the deity of Christ and his perfection, His Holiness that allows his sacrifice to cover the sins of all of us who trust in him. We just praise the Lord. One of these days every

knee will bow. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father. Jesus is God in the flesh, and we praise him eternally for his salvation that he provided.

Jeff Laird

Kevin, I like that you bring up that idea that in the end, everyone's going to acknowledge. Everyone's going to know. Everyone's going to see. Because this this idea of Christ and his divinity is something that it just gets down to that absolute sovereignty, this, this authority that God really has. And I think that that is one of the reasons why people tend towards wanting to push back on Jesus's divinity. And sometimes I don't think it's even deliberate. There's a lot of well meaning people who I think want to resist the idea of Jesus being divine for sincere theological reasons. But I also know that if we can push back at the idea of Jesus literally being God, it gives us more room to be able to say, well, then the things he said are just the statements of a man. You know, then I can, I can put them on the par with any other great thinker. Where I can say great, that person may have been the greatest moral philosopher in history, but he was still just a man. He was just a person. But if Jesus is really God, then that means everything he said is absolutely truth and absolutely perfect. And everything that he expects of me, I'm expected to do. And it means that everything I am, everything that I can do is ode to God and to what he says and to what he expects. And that's a big, that's a big deal. That does not sit well with our human philosophy and the way we like to approach things. So it's it's not just important because of what it suggests for the theology of salvation in the biblical sense, but on a personal level, it confronts us with something that really does matter. How a person interprets the deity of Jesus Christ has personal meaning. That's got a lot at stake behind it.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely the the stakes couldn't be higher on a on a question like this. In this recording, this episode, we mentioned kind of in passing some that there are some verses in the Bible that seem to teach otherwise that Jesus is not God. Most of those are in the gospels. An example of Jesus being displaying his full humanity, or Jesus praying to God the father. Those type of things where Jesus saying something to God that went well this, how could he be God and yet be praying to God? Those type of things, or even you mentioned earlier the the rich young ruler who comes to Jesus and says why do you call me good? Only God is good. Those type of things. But you also have to look at these from the perspective of the Trinity and that yes, Jesus is God. Yes, the father is God. And yes, the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there's only one God. So there's, we can't perfectly explain just the mystery of the Trinity, and that how can Jesus be God and the father be God? That doesn't mean that those truths cannot both be true. That Jesus having a relationship with the father does not contradict the fact that Jesus is also God.

Jeff Laird

Right.

Shea Houdmann

Jesus relying on the power of the Holy Spirit does not contradict him being God. The incarnation was a unique period in which Jesus became fully human and he remains eternally fully human. So in his humility and his humanity, like Philippians 2, talk about Christ emptying himself, that there are some differences between how Christ was during his humanity during his incarnation then he is for was, for all eternity before that and afterwards. And that some unique things happen in that time period that don't

happen now. Christ is again in perfect fellowship with God the Father and God the holy spirit. God is. Jesus did not have to pray to him to set an example for so, there's lots of different ways you can understand those, but don't look at those verses as contradictions to the fact that Jesus is God. And the multitude of scriptures that point to Jesus deity. It's understand that this is Jesus relating to God the father in his humanity. Set an example for us and how to pray. How do we rely on God those type of things.

Shea Houdmann

Maybe we can do another episode in the future, kind of dealing specifically some of these passages, but yes there are some Bible verses, some scriptures that do seem, if taken out of context taken out of the overall overarching theme of scripture, do seem to teach that Jesus is not God. But as Jeff said earlier, against the overwhelming weight of the countless scriptures that point to Jesus deity, it's important to understand these verses in light of each other. So not a easy topic to discuss, but crucially important. Again, to summarize, let me just say Scripture is explicitly clear in teaching the deity of Christ. Jesus is fully God, he is the Word of God that that was God was with God from eternity, who became flesh. He is the great God and savior. He is the God whose throne lasts forever and ever. So Jesus is God, and that has tremendous implications for our salvation.

Kevin Stone

Amen.

Jeff Laird

Amen.

Shea Houdmann

If Jesus were not God, he could not be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. You placing your faith in him, us placing our faith in him would not be sufficient for salvation if Jesus were not God. So theological importance, it's fascinating to to discuss, to study. It's interesting to even try to figure out like the early church councils, how could Jesus fully be God? How exactly did that work? But perhaps not to say more important, but equally as important, Jesus had to be God in terms of our salvation. Only the perfect Lamb of God, only an infinite being, could pay the penalties for the sins of the whole world. So the deity of Christ is something we are too study but it's also something we are to embrace. Something we're to rejoice over because it is the deity of Christ that means that Jesus death on the cross and resurrection are the perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins, providing for our forgiveness and granting us entrance into heaven if we receive that payment by grace through faith.

Shea Houdmann

This has been the Got Questions podcast on one of our most frequent questions, but also one of the most important questions on is Jesus God. Got Questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.