

THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN THE BIBLE

A DENIAL OF THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

1. Fails to explain fully the disciples' understanding of Jesus.
2. Fails to explain the sense of divine purpose in Jesus.
3. Fails to explain the meaning of God's love.
4. Fails to provide any remedy for the overwhelming failure of mankind—sin.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DIVINE / HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST

1. Salvation requires a human representative (Hebrews 5:7-9).
 - a. He who saves others from bondage must be identified with them in every way. He knows our weaknesses (4:15; 5:2). He was tempted (4:15). He knew pain and anguish (5:7). He experienced fear (5:8). He tasted death for all men (2:9).
 - b. He who wishes to restore others to obedience to God must himself know what obedience is.
2. Salvation must be of God (2 Corinthians 5:19).
 - a. What man could not do, God does; what man cannot give, God gives; what man cannot redeem, God redeems. God himself is involved.
 - b. God enters the action personally. A drastic situation requires a drastic remedy.
 - c. "The disruption of God's world by sin, the helplessness of man to redeem man, the spoiling of human relations through man's greed and evil, the awful separation between God and man, all this drove the Son of God to the cross."
 - d. God provides the victim and thus shows his great love.

THE TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. Plural names and pronouns
 - a. *Elohim*, a plural form signifying power and majesty
 - b. *Adonai*, literally "my lords," indicating God's role as a being high and above all things
 - c. Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8
 - d. Do these passages depict conversation between members of "Godhood" or God and the angel host?
2. Jewish understanding
 - a. Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one [Hebrew, *echad*, a united one]." Compare Genesis 1:5; 2:24.
 - b. Moses Maimonides, a twelfth century Jew who compiled thirteen articles of faith which the Jews commonly use in their liturgy, said, "I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be his name, is an absolute one [Hebrew, *yachid*]." Compare Genesis 22:2; Zechariah 12:10.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

1. Scriptures that indicate human form
 - a. Genesis 16:7-13 (cf. 17:10)
 - b. Genesis 18:1--19:21
 - c. Genesis 22:1, 2, 11-19
 - d. Genesis 28:10-17; 31:11-13; 32:9-12, 24-30 (compare Hosea 12:3-5)
 - e. Genesis 48:15f.
 - f. Exodus 3:2f. (compare 4:1-5)
 - g. Exodus 13:21; 14:19; 23:20-23; 33:14 (compare 1 Corinthians 10:4)
 - h. Numbers 22:21-40; 23:4, 5, 12, 16; 24:13
 - i. Joshua 5:13-15 (compare Revelation 19:10; 22:9)
 - j. Judges 6:11f.
 - k. Judges 13:2f.

2. Scriptures that indicate no form
 - a. Genesis 2:15, 16, 22
 - b. Genesis 3:8, 9-19, 21
 - c. Genesis 4:9-15
 - d. Genesis 5:22
 - e. Exodus 4:24-26
 - f. 1 Samuel 3:10

3. Definition of appearances
 - a. Theophany is any general manifestation of God to man in a manner perceptible to the external senses. These theophanies are in human form. Some prefer the term "Christophany."
 - b. The "Christophany" distinguished from other phenomena
 - 1) Differs from dreams, visions, and anthropomorphisms (see Genesis 15:1; compare Numbers 12:6-8)
 - 2) Differs from the pillar of cloud (Exodus 13:21-22)
 - 3) Differs from the Shekinah glory (Exodus 40:34-35)
 - 4) Differs from the incarnation of Christ (John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-8)
 - c. Characteristics of a "Christophany"
 - 1) Actual, not imaginary
 - 2) Revelatory--to issue promises (Genesis 16), to warn of judgment (Genesis 18), to instruct (Joshua 5)
 - 3) For individuals
 - 4) Irregular
 - 5) Temporal
 - 6) Audible as well as visible
 - 7) Varied in form, although some semblance to human form
 - 8) Old Testament occurrences only (Hebrews 1:1-3)

4. Conclusions

- a. The angel of the Lord not a created angel, but deity
 - 1) "Angel" signifies office not nature
 - 2) Identified as God (see Genesis 16:13; 22:12; 31:11, 13; Exodus 3; 4; 14:19; compare Exodus 13:21; Judges 6:12-16)
 - 3) Attributed to himself divine attributes and divine works
 - *All seeing, Genesis 16:13; Exodus 3:7
 - *Predicts, Genesis 16:10-12; Exodus 3:20
 - *Forgives sins, Exodus 23:21
 - *To be obeyed, Judges 2:1-2
 - *Power over life and death, Genesis 22:12
 - *Redeemer, Genesis 48:16
 - *Performed miracles, Exodus 3:2, 20
 - 4) Received worship (see Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:14; compare Revelation 19:10; 22:9; Acts 10:26; 14:12-15; Matthew 4:10)
- b. Both identification and differentiation exist. This suggests differentiation within the divine nature. See Exodus 23:20-21; Judges 6:12; 13:16. The transition from identification to differentiation often is sudden and seemingly with intentional elusiveness. It appears as a mystery.
- c. See John 8:56; 1 Corinthians 10:4.
- d. A possible conclusion: The angel of the Lord or Jehovah (Yahweh) was a manifestation of the eternally preexistent logos, who was with God and who was God and who later was made flesh.
- e. Even if not identifiable with the preexistent logos, the angel of the Lord incidents at least show that the human form is a fit medium for the manifestation of God's presence. The angel certainly was divine, and he was manifested in human form at times.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO JEHOVAH (YAHWEH; THE LORD) WHICH ARE INTERPRETED AS BEING FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST

1. Deuteronomy 10:17 (Revelation 19:16; 17:14)
2. Psalm 34:8 (1 Peter 2:3)
3. Psalm 68:18 (Ephesians 4:6-8)
4. Psalm 102:25-27 (Hebrews 1:10ff.)
5. Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21; 66:15 (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
6. Isaiah 6:10 (John 12:40)
7. Isaiah 8:12, 13 (1 Peter 3:14, 15)
8. Isaiah 40:3 (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23)
9. Isaiah 45:23 (Philippians 2:10ff.; see Romans 14:11)
10. Jeremiah 9:23, 24 (1 Corinthians 1:31; see 1:10; 2:8)
11. Joel 2:32 (Acts 2:21, 36; see Romans 10:13)
12. Malachi 3:1 (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27)

PASSAGES INDICATING A TRINITARIAN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FATHER, SON, HOLY SPIRIT

1. Matthew 3:16, 17
2. Matthew 28:19
3. Luke 1:35 (see Matthew 1:18-23)
4. John 15:26
5. 1 Corinthians 6:11
6. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6
7. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
8. 2 Corinthians 13:14
9. Ephesians 4:4-6
10. 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 19
11. 1 Peter 1:2
12. 1 John 4:13, 14

THE DEITY OF CHRIST IN THE PROPHETS

1. Isaiah 7:14; compare Matthew 1:23
2. Isaiah 9:6, possibly the strongest witness to the deity of Christ in the Old Testament. The passage contains four titles (two Hebrew words in each title—one word indicating deity and the other word indicating Messianic function).
 - a. "Wonderful Counselor," literally, "a wonder of a counselor."
 - 1) The Hebrew *pele'* indicates deity; it is used in the Old Testament for divine activity.
 - 2) See Exodus 3:20; 15:11; Psalm 72:18; Judges 13:18-19.
 - 3) "Wonder"—We are encountering God himself in the person of this child.
 - 4) "Counselor"—This one needs no court of counsellors and advisors (such as prince or king), because he himself is The Counselor! Such counseling is a characteristic of God.
 - b. "Mighty God," literally "God who is a hero / a divine hero."
 - 1) The Hebrew *'el* consistently refers to deity in the book of Isaiah. Compare Deuteronomy 10:17.
 - 2) "Mighty" (Hebrew *gibbor*) commonly is used of a warrior and seems to have overtones of the Holy War in which Jehovah as leader in battle displays the qualities of a warrior (Psalm 24:8; Isaiah 9:6; 10:21; 42:13)."
 - 3) See Isaiah 10:20-21.
 - 4) The title suggests a hero whose chief characteristic is "Godhood."
 - c. "Everlasting Father," literally "father of eternity."
 - 1) The reign of this child involves the office of fatherhood (for example, of loving-kindness). The Messiah acts toward his people like a father (see Psalm 103:13).
 - 2) Compare Micah 5:2.
 - d. "Prince of Peace."
 - 1) Here deity is mentioned implicitly, not explicitly. The Lord establishes peace, Isaiah 26:3, 12; compare Isaiah 53:5.
 - 2) The dominant concept is peace. The Messiah provides peace for men among men, and for men in relation to God.
3. Jeremiah 23:5-6; "The Branch" / "The Lord Our Righteousness."
4. Micah 5:2-5.
5. Malachi 3:1.
6. Two strands of Old Testament prophecy come together in the Messiah: (1) a Savior will come; and (2) God himself will come. In the Old Testament these two strands are harmonized by passages that indicate the coming Messiah himself will be God. The New Testament proceeds upon this supposition that in the coming of Jesus there is fulfilled the repeated Old Testament promise that God is to visit his people in order to save them.

NEW TESTAMENT TITLES OF JESUS—"LORD" (*KURIOS*)

- I. Greek background of *kurios* ("Lord")
 - A. Four uses or levels of honor indicated
 1. Owner, possessor, master
 2. Polite usage showing respect
 3. Courtly usage, intensification of polite usage
 4. Religious usage
 - a. The slave/lord relationship
 - b. See 1 Corinthians 8:5f.
 - B. In Latin or Roman usage, *kurios* applies to the emperor.
 1. Diversity of usage according to each Caesar and the geographical area.
 2. Took the form—"Caesar is Lord (*kurios*)."
 - C. Pagan usage of *kurios* serves to show an exalted meaning for the word, but it does not give us the origin of its usage for Christians.
- II. Jewish background of *kurios* ("Lord")
 - A. Consistently, manuscripts of the LXX (Septuagint) use *kurios* for the Hebrew *adonai* (which was substituted consistently for the tetragrammaton, YHWH).
 1. The New Testament writers use *kurios* with reference to God as a translation of the Hebrew *adon* and as an equivalent of Jehovah/Yahweh.
 2. The New Testament writers, under the Holy Spirit's guidance and with knowledge of the Septuagint's translating *kurios* for Yahweh, use *kurios* in reference to Jesus.
 - B. The use of *kurios* in reference to Jesus preceded Gentile Christianity and Paul.
 1. See 1 Corinthians 16:22.
 2. The usage of "lord" indicates the practice of the early church.
 - a. Why did the early church attribute "lordship" or "deity" to Jesus?
 - b. "The understanding of him [Jesus] as Teacher and Lord during his ministry was confirmed by the resurrection, which was understood as God's vindication of him; Jesus was recognized as the living one whose power was present in the church and who would one day return as the exalted Son of man. When his career was understood in the light of the Old Testament, his resurrection was understood in terms of Psalm 110:1 as an exaltation to the right hand of God, and the title of Lord was an acknowledgement of a status equal to that of God the Father" (I. Howard Marshall, *Origins of New Testament Christology*, p. 108).

NEW TESTAMENT USAGES OF "LORD" (*KURIOS*)

- I. Use of *kurios* in reference of Jesus before the resurrection
 - A. Polite or courtly use in John (see 4:11; 5:7)
 - B. When people come to Jesus seeking supernatural aid, *kurios* seems to carry exalted significance (see John 4:49; Luke 4:12; 7:6; 18:41).
 - C. Religious reverence and worship (see John 6:68; 9:38; 11:21-27; Luke 5:8; 10:17)
 - D. Claims Jesus makes for himself—
 1. Lord of Sabbath, Mark 2:28
 2. Worker of great things, Mark 5:19 (compare Luke 8:39)
 3. Concerning need, Mark 11:3
 4. Judge of all, Matthew 7:21
- II. Use of *kurios* in reference to Jesus after the resurrection
 - A. Resurrection narratives—
 1. Matthew 28:6
 2. Mark 16:19, 20
 3. Luke 24:3, 34
 4. John 20:2, 13, 15, 18, 20, 25, 28; 21:7, 12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21
 - B. The resurrection is God's decisive declaration to all that Jesus is Lord of all (including death itself).
 - C. Passages—
 1. Matthew 28:18
 2. John 20:28
 3. Acts 2:36
 4. Romans 1:3-4
 5. Philippians 2:9f
 6. 1 Timothy 6:15
 - D. Use of *kurios* in prayer and worship
 1. 1 Corinthians 16:22
 2. Acts 7:59, 60
 3. 2 Corinthians 12:8
 4. 1 Thessalonians 3:11-12
 - E. The good confession—1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:9-11; Romans 10:9

NEW TESTAMENT TITLES OF JESUS—"SON OF MAN"

- I. Significance of the title
 - A. A very old view is that it indicates the humanity of Jesus.
 - B. Recent study shows that "son of man" was a title for an exalted being.

- II. Possibilities for the background of Jesus' use of the title
 - A. Psalm 8:4; compare Hebrews 2:6ff. Here, "son of man" could be a synonym for "man."
 - B. See Ezekiel 2:1 and 3:1. Here the phrase stresses the prophet's status as a creature, that is, his humanity.
 - C. Daniel 7:13-14. Here "son of man" indicates a heavenly being, one who ascends into heaven in majestic glory.
 - D. Compare the nonbiblical book of Enoch that portrays "son of man" as the preexistent and exalted judge. The date of Enoch is problematic though (i.e., variously dated from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD). However, it shows how the Jews in this period regarded the phrase "son of man."

- III. Jesus' use of the title—Jesus claims for himself all the heavenly majesty of this Son of Man. The paradox is that he achieves this majesty through suffering.
 - A. The Son of Man as humble servant—see Mark 2:10; 10:45; Matthew 8:20; 11:19; Luke 17:24-25.
 - B. The Son of Man as suffering servant—see Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:2, 24-25. This extraordinary suffering does not make sense according to the popular Son of Man image. This explains Peter's shock at Jesus' proclamation; see Matthew 16:22.
 - C. The immediate exaltation of the Son of Man—see Matthew 10:23; 16:28; Mark 9:1. This refers to the ascension and exaltation of the Son of Man to God's right hand. See Acts 7:56.
 - D. The coming of the Son of Man in glory and for judgment—see Matthew 16:27; 24:27ff. The Son of Man is the source of judgement and life; see John 1:51; 5:27; 6:27.
 - E. The preexistence of the Son of Man—see John 3:13; 6:62; Revelation 1:13, 17.

- IV. The title "Son of Man" reflects the transcendent and divine glory of Jesus.

NEW TESTAMENT TITLES OF JESUS—"SON OF GOD"

I. Old Testament usage

- A. For Israel; Exodus 4:22-23; Hosea 11:1
- B. For angels; Job 1:6; 2:1
- C. For kings; 2 Samuel 7:14
- D. For Messiah; Psalm 2

II. New Testament usage

A. Uniqueness of the sonship of Jesus

- 1. He is *monogenes* or "only-begotten" son of God. See John 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9. This does not mean that there are no other sons of God (i.e., Galatians 3:26). But it does mean that there is no son of God just like him; he is the only one of his kind. Compare Genesis 22:2, 12.
- 2. He is "God's beloved one." See Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.

B. Supernatural quality of the sonship of Jesus

- 1. He was "virgin-born"; it was not an ordinary birth. See Luke 1:31-35.
- 2. He is not merely "son of David" (Matthew 22:41f.), but he is also "son of God with power" (Romans 1:3-4).
- 3. Note the testimony of the demons in Mark 3:11; 5:6-7; Luke 8:28. This indicates the lordship of Jesus over fallen angels (demonic honesty). Compare the incident in Acts 19 where the demon possessed man acknowledges the power of Jesus and Paul, but not the seven sons of Sceva.

C. Divine quality of the sonship of Jesus

- 1. Passages that show the Jewish understanding of the title "son of God"; see John 5:18; 10:30-39; 14:9.
- 2. Worship of Jesus as son of God; see Matthew 14:33.
- 3. Jesus affirms his own divine sonship at his Sanhedrin trial; see Matthew 26:63-66; Mark 14:61-64; Luke 22:66-71; compare John 19:7.
- 4. Jesus is equal in knowledge, in revealing activity, and in sovereignty with the Father; see Matthew 11:25-30.

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS IN THE WRITINGS OF PAUL

1. Galatians 1:1
 - a. Jesus is distinguished from the category of men.
 - b. Jesus is coordinated fully with God the Father.
2. Romans 9:5
3. Philippians 2:6
 1. "Existing"—"being or continuing to be," that is, eternally preexistent (before the creation of the world and mankind).
 2. "In the form of God"—the word "form" denotes the sum of those characteristics that make a thing precisely what it is. Jesus possesses all the attributes of deity, of God.
 3. "Equality with God"—full equality, no inferiority.
 4. "Not something to be exploited"—the equality of Jesus with God was not a prize that he had to guard jealously as if he could lose it.
 5. The passage vividly states the preexistence of Christ as God.
4. Colossians 2:9
 1. "The fulness of deity" is a strong affirmation of the divinity of Jesus. "Godness" or the qualities possessed by God abide permanently in Jesus (that is, in his bodily or incarnate state).
 2. "Bodily" as suggested above denotes the incarnation, the "fleshly" adornment of God, the son. See also John 1:1 and 1:14.
5. Titus 2:13
 - a. Should this passage be translated "the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ" (KJV, RV mg., NAB, early versions)? Or should it be translated "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (so RSV, NASV, NIV footnote, NEB, Greek fathers)?
 - b. In the New Testament, the Greek work *epiphaneia* ("appearing") always is used of the appearing of Jesus Christ. See 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 8.
 - c. The position of the adjective "our" seems to indicate that God and Savior refer to the same person.
6. Hebrews 1:3

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

1. Is Jesus considered a created being by John (see Revelation 3:14)? There are three possible views of the phrase "the beginning of God's creation."
 - a. "Beginning" means "origin" or "source"; Jesus is the originator of creation.
 - b. Or, "beginning" means "first in rank" (rather than first in time); Jesus is ruler of creation.
 - c. Or, "God's creation" refers to God's new creation or the church; Jesus is the first or beginning (both in rank and in time) of the new creation of God (compare Revelation 1:5 and Colossians 1:18).
2. Jesus is worshipped. Creatures refuse to be worshipped (see Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9). Yet these creatures worship the Lamb in chapter 5:8-14.
3. The works of the Father and the works of the Lamb are coordinate.
 - a. Wrath—6:16-17
 - b. Names written on foreheads—3:12; 14:1
 - c. Temple and light of heaven—21:22, 23
 - d. One throne—22:1, 3
4. The Lamb is eternal.
 - a. He is "the first and the last," "the Alpha and the Omega," 1:17; 2:8; 22:13.
 - b. The Father has the same attribute. See 1:4, 8; 4:8; 10:6; 11:17; 15:7; 21:6.
 - c. See also 22:7, 12-16.