

# Deity of Christ

## By Arthur Whiting

Arthur Whiting:

--n teens. We welcome you once again to Dr. Talbot's Bible study hour, and trust that the Ministry of the Word of God in this hour may be a blessing to each one of you. Now before we turn to the Word of God for our study today, as we are going to deal with the deity of Christ, let us pause for a moment as we look to the God of the word, in just a word of prayer. We bow before Thee, our Father, with thankful hearts, with hearts that rejoice in Thy mighty salvation and our majestic Savior. As we consider Him today in the dazzling light that streams from the Bible, that book which is the lamp of eternal truth, cause that our spiritual eyes may be opened wide to behold Him, in His resplendent glory. Lord, make our hearts to burn within us, as we are brought face to face with Him who is our Savior. May our unsaved listeners be convicted of their sin and be moved to place their confidence in the infinite values of His precious blood. For we ask these mercies in our Savior's dear name, amen.

Now friends we come to the message of the day, as we speak to you on the deity of Jesus Christ. Near the close of our Lord's ministry on Earth, we find the Lord Jesus abandoning His reserve and asking for the opinion of others concerning His identity. He had already elicited a reply from his apostles at Caesarea, Philippi, you remember. But later at Jerusalem, He accosts the Pharisees with a penetrating question, "What think ye of Christ?" It is a question that is central and vital. What more important question can be put to anyone in any age than that which concerns the person of Christ? All basic heresies can be traced to error at this particular point. Wrong views of Christ are going to lead to wrong views on a host of other subjects. I think John Newton has

expressed it very well indeed, as he writes "What think ye of Christ is the test to try both your state and your scheme."

You cannot be right in the rest, unless you think rightly of Him. And from Christ's day to this, men have attempted to classify Him with mere man. Such admiration as they may have for Him as an outstanding character in history, rests upon a false concept of His true person. Let Emerson the poet speak for them, as he writes, "I am the owner of the sphere, of the seven stars of the solar year. Of Caesar's hand and Plato's brain, of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain." This shows us what some men think of Him, just a mere man like Caesar, like Plato, like Shakespeare. My friends it is no compliment to Jesus Christ to classify Him with genius. Rather, it is degrading to put Him on the same level with man. On the other hand, however, there are those who claim that Christ was more than man, that He stands in solitary splendor apart from man, as the true God brought into visibility. Let Charles Lamb speak for them as he says, "If Shakespeare should come into this room, we should stand to greet him. But if that person--" and of course he was referring to Jesus Christ when he said that-- "but if that person should enter the room, we should fall on our knees and kiss the hem of His garment."

So, opinions concerning Christ are reducible to two: that which regards Him as natural, a mere man, and that which says He is supernatural, God manifest in the flesh. In attempting to arrive at the truth, let us be sure of one thing: human wisdom is inadequate to evaluate in any accurate way the true character of Christ. You remember that Christ Himself made that very plain, when He referred to what Peter had said at Caesarea, Philippi. He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barr Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee. But my Father which is in heaven." In

other words, divine revelation was responsible for Peter's true understanding of Christ. So friends, if we are going to get an accurate portrait of Christ, we too must secure it by divine revelation. And thank God that revelation is here in the Bible before us. That revelation alone can give us the authoritative answer to the question: is Christ merely good, or is He God? Is He dust, or is He deity?

Before the dawn of the 20th century, it would have been safe to have used the word "divinity", even as Canon Liddon did in his famous Oxford University lectures in eighteen hundred and sixty six, as he spoke on the great subject the divinity of our Lord. But today, thanks to modernistic corruption, that word divinity has come to mean nothing more than exalted humanity. All men are considered to have the quality of divinity, since it is claimed that a spark of the divine resides in every heart. Christ is thus said to be divine as we are divine. Therefore, to avoid any confusion whatsoever, we use the strong term deity with reference to Christ. It is not a question of His being divine. Rather, is He actually God?

Lest someone should think that this is merely an academic question, let us hear the testimony of John Chapter 20 verse 31, "These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His name." This revelation should make it clear that we are dealing not with an idle theory, but with practical and personal salvation. I want you to recognize that our salvation is linked with this question. That is why we must secure the right answer. We are not left in any doubt as we turn to examine the testimony of the Bible, for all through the book, the evidence is so abundant as to be overwhelming. There are four great highways of truth to travel in this connection. First I want to remind you that Jesus Christ is

called God. No less than 77 times is Christ referred to as "Lord", and at least 15 times He is called "God".

Take for instance that passage in Isaiah, chapter 9 verse 6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." In Hebrews 1:8, we read, "But unto the Son he saith "Thy throne O God is forever and ever." Jesus Christ the Son, here being addressed as God. And in Romans 9:5, we read, "Whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever." In Titus 2 verse 13 we read, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." And then that testimony from the little fellowship letter of the New Testament first John, chapter 5 verse 20, "And we know that the Son of God has come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ." This is the true God and eternal life. Friends, this could not be put more plainly. Jesus Christ is the true God.

Secondly, I want you to notice that He is presented as possessing the perfections of God. There are certain qualities which belong to God alone. Yet these are definitely ascribed to Christ. Eternity belongs to God, and yet in Isaiah 9:6, Jesus Christ is called "The Everlasting Father". In John 1:1 we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In Micah 5:2 we read, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." All power belongs to God, and yet this is ascribed to Christ. For in Matthew 28:18, we read "And Jesus came and spake unto them saying 'all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. I am

alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending' saith the Lord, 'which is, and which was, and which is to come. The Almighty.'" Thus it is plainly evident that the God of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New Testament. And because He is all powerful, He is able to uphold all things by the word of His power. He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

We notice that the God quality of unchangability is ascribed to the Lord Jesus. In Hebrews 13 verse 8, we read "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." And I want you, friends, to notice that this is a reference to the person of Christ, rather than to His program. And without equivocation, it asserts of Christ what never can be said of any created being, or any created person. Thirdly, will you notice that He is portrayed in the Bible as performing what only God can do: Jesus Christ can create. John 1:3 says "All things were made by Him," referring to the Lord Jesus, "and without Him was not anything made that was made." In Colossians 1:16, the same truth is brought out, "All things were created by Him and for Him." What a statement this is in the light of Christ's visit to this earth. All things were created by Him and for Him. Why friends, the very ground on which His feet trod was the very ground which He had called into being, the very wood on which man put Him in death was the very wood He Himself had created. All things were created by Him and for Him.

He can control, so says Hebrews 1 verse 3, "Upholding all things by the Word of His power." Here, the Originator of all things is seen to sustain and order all things. It is good to know that this material universe is in the care and control of the One who created it. This is a vast universe indeed. But friends I remind you that it is in the care of the great upholder, Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:17 says "By Him all things consist." All things hold together. He is in control. We

notice thirdly, that He can forgive sins. In Mark 2:5, we read "When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, 'Son, thy sins be forgiven.'" Now you know of course that only God can forgive sins, that is His prerogative. Even the scribe sitting nearby recognized that, as they reasoned in their hearts "why doth this man speak blasphemous? Who can forgive sins but God only?" Christ knew their hearts, and turning to them asked if it were "easier to say to a sick man 'thy sins be forgiven thee' or to say 'arise, take up thy bed and walk.' But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," He sayeth to the sick of the palsy, "I say unto thee, arise. Take up thy bed. Go thy way into thine house." And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all.

Is it any wonder then in the light of all this evidence, that we find our Lord Jesus Christ claiming to be God? Yes, He claimed to be God. Some who deny He is anything more than man say that He never claimed to be God. But to make such a statement as to reveal a lamentable ignorance of the Bible, so abysmal is their ignorance, that they even claim He disavowed deity when He said to the rich young ruler "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is God." The truth is, friends, that instead of disclaiming deity, our Lord here was strongly affirming it. The whole thought of the passage is the tremendous difference between human goodness and divine goodness. The young ruler had called Christ "good master". Now good is an adjective, an adjective that belongs to God and God alone. The word master is a noun, a noun that very properly belongs to man. Because the word master here really means teacher. And I'm sure you remember that one of the fundamentals in grammar is that there must be agreement in gender between noun and adjective. And friends I want to remind you that it is so in spiritual things, as well as in things grammatical.

Christ rebuked this man because this man was getting things mixed somewhat. He was getting things all confused. In effect, our Lord was saying to him "You should address Me as bad master, or good God. But not good master, for good Master belongs to God, and that is who I am." "There is none that doeth good, no not one" says Romans 3:12. But Christ is good because He is God. There is no goodness that is worth having that is apart from God. Rightly understood then, this passage is teaching that Christ is God, and that He so claimed deity. We see Him claiming deity also in His great declarations. He claims deity in the declaration of identification with God. In John 10:30, we hear Him say "I and My Father are one." Now this could only mean one thing: that Christ is God. That is how the Jews interpreted it, for we read then, the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. And when Christ asked for an explanation, they replied "for a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest Thyself God."

A similar situation is found in the eighth chapter of John versus 56 to 59, where our Lord said that Abraham rejoiced to see his day. The Jews replied that He was not yet fifty years of age, and had He seen Abraham? Jesus saith unto them "Verily verily I say unto you, before Abraham was I am." Then, took they up stones to cast at Him. Those Jews knew what He meant even if we don't. They knew that "I am" was God's name, the name of the One who spoke from the burning bush. The One who instructed Moses to tell the Israelites "I am hath sent me." They took up stones to throw at Him because He claimed to be the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In His claims to deity, there is the declaration of domination to be reckoned with. Christ constantly assumed the position of domination, as becomes a superior. For instance, He asserted His

domination of the Sabbath. In Matthew 12:8, He said "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." Now sovereignty over the Sabbath is vested only in the one who instituted it. Thus, in claiming this sovereignty, our Lord affirmed His deity in an unmistakable fashion.

Secondly, we notice He assumed the position of Lord over even his friends. In John 13:3, we read "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am." And it is this assumption of domination that finds satisfactory explanation only in the truth that Christ is actually God. In His claim to deity, there is the declaration of separation from man. That Christ placed Himself in a category alone, is evident from His statements to His enemies and to His disciples. To His enemies, He said "Ye are from beneath, I am from above. Ye are of this world, I am not of this world." We find that in John 8 verse twenty three. to his disciples He said, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." Matthew 6:8. But He Himself always referred to God as "My Father." To Mary in the garden, He said "I ascend unto your Father and to My Father." Is it not clear that Christ put Himself in a class alone, in a class separate from man? Add to all of this testimony concerning Christ's deity, the remarkable claims He made in the seven great "I am" statements, and my friends you know you are not facing any mere man.

He said I am the Bread of Life. I am the light of the world. I am the door. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the true vine. If Christ is not what He said, then we are faced with a tragic alternative: either Christ is God or He was a liar and an impostor. A famous American Baptist preacher of the 19th century by the name of Richard Fuller, was one preaching on this subject that now occupies our attention, when he suddenly stopped, looked up to heaven for a moment, and then very solemnly,

yet dramatically, said "O Savior, forgive me if in order to expose the wickedness which seeks to tarnish Thy name, I stain my lips with language which my soul hates." Then turning to the people once again, he said, "If Jesus Christ was only a mortal, He was not the purest and best, but He was the worst of men. He was the most presumptuous of impostors. He was a systematic blasphemer, and since God has made blasphemy a capital crime, the Jews did right to condemn and crucify Him."

So said Fuller, Richard Fuller of the 19th century. And believe me Richard Fuller was right. The conclusion is inescapable. Either Christ is God, or He is a proud, boastful, egotist. A self-deceived fool. The world's biggest fraud, a person for whom we can have no respect. And friends if we have no supernatural Christ, we have no supernatural Christianity. But thank God, all the evidence points to the tremendous truth that Christ is truly and actually God. What others said about Him, what others said to Him, what He said about Himself, what He did, what He was, all point to one blessed conclusion: He is God manifest in the flesh. This then is the glorious fact. What shall we do in the light of it? Well we can reject it. We can paint out these sublime features of the supernatural Christ. We can reduce-reduce him to the level of a mere man. We can call it all a hoax, a figment of exciting imagination.

But if we do this, we shall dispense with our only hope of sinners. We shall get rid of our only Savior, and we shall remain in our sins. On the other hand, we can receive this truth. We can take the testimony of the book just as it stands. We can take Christ at His word, as did those early Christians, and we can find Him to be what they found Him to be. We can honor Him as they honored Him. We can trust Him as they trusted Him. We can worship Him as they worshipped

Him. And He will heal the hurt of our souls as He healed theirs. He will deliver us, even as He delivered them. He is God, and God is what we need. We do not need a man, a mere man cannot help us. Friends, one of the glories of Christianity is that it invites examination. Christ challenges man to try Him, to test Him, to trust Him. He challenges us to try Him, not as a mere example, an ethical teacher, but as the supernatural Christ who alone can impart supernatural life and power. The supernatural Christ who is God Himself, in the garb of man, is the only answer to a sinning, suffering, sobbing man. The Lord from heaven is the one solution for the sobs of the man of Earth.

Trust Him now, so that living you may rejoice in Him. Dying, you may rest in Him. And in heaven, you will join in the worship of Him who sits on the throne. Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God. And if Jesus Christ is a God, and the only God, "I swear," says Richard Watson Gilder, "I swear I will follow Him through heaven and hell, the earth, the sea, and the air." Yes, Thou oh Christ, art all I want, more than all in thee I find. Let us pray. Lord, we can only bow before Him, and cry out with Thomas of old, "my Lord, and my God." Let this, Thy word linger long with us, that we may ponder in our hearts these glorious truths concerning our blessed Savior, the One who loved us, and gave Himself up in death for us. We ask it in His peerless name, amen. Now friends, we bid you goodbye for the present, and may the joy of the Lord always be your strength as you keep looking up.

[Shuffling]