

## CHAPTER 3

### THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

The issue here, is really a simple one; either Jesus is fully equal to God, or He is not. If He came to earth as God in the flesh, then His suffering and death take on a special significance. But if He was just a 'regular' man, then it becomes difficult to understand the sense in which He sacrificed Himself in payment for the sins of all mankind.

Relatively few groups teach that Jesus is not equal to God. Those groups however, seem to have the most energetic and vocal evangelists teaching their message. Therefore, it's important to show what scriptures they use in an attempt to prove their point. In this way, we can understand how they have made errors in their interpretation of those scriptures.

#### VISITOR:

Today let's spend some time studying the nature of Jesus Christ. Some say Jesus is the same as God. Since the Bible so often calls him the Son of God, then he cannot be the same as God. Here are some verses that show Jesus is a lesser being than God:

*John 14:28 (KJV)*

*Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

Here's a verse showing us that Jesus did not know the same thing that God knew- even though it was about the important matter of the coming kingdom;

*Mark 13:32 (KJV)*

*But of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, no,*

*not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son,  
but the Father.*

And what about John's convincing quote of Jesus? In this verse, Jesus made clear the physical separation between himself and God;

*John 20:17 (KJV)*

*Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet  
ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say  
unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father;  
and to my God, and your God.*

These verses prove that Jesus is a separate entity from God, and is a lesser being than God. Furthermore, I've been told that some other verses have a major translation error that bears directly on this issue. Look at these two verses in the KJV. They imply a point that I am sure you will want to discuss later on;

*John 1:1 (KJV)*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with  
God, and the Word was God.*

*John 1:14 (KJV)*

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,  
(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only  
begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

It's been explained to me that in John 1:1, "the Word was God" is more correctly translated as, "the Word was a god." Look at this;

*John 1:1 (NWT)*

*In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was*

*with God, and the Word was a god.*

Therefore, Jesus was like a god (godlike) but he couldn't be God. I agree that John 1:14 associates the Word, with Jesus. But John 1:1 also reveals that "the Word was with God." Here again, Jesus and God are identified as separate persons.

ME:

You've shown me some powerful verses on this subject. It's an important issue and we must be sure to get it right. After all, the acceptance of Jesus Christ for who He really is, and for what He accomplished for us, is the only basis for our hope beyond this life;

*John 14:6 (NIV)*

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

So, let's first start with the scriptures you quoted, and study them carefully. You made a point about a translation error in John 1:1. Let's set that question aside for a moment, and consider the other scriptures you quoted.

The first thing I'd observe is that even this last verse (John 14:6) shows a distinction between Jesus and God. The verse teaches that one must recognize Jesus (distinctly from God) in order to attain an ultimate presence with God. The reason for this distinction in John 14:6 is that Jesus (apart from God) came to earth and received the punishment for all the sins of all mankind.

A common thread however, runs through all the verses you previously mentioned. In each case, Jesus is mentioned as a man; a man made of flesh and blood- just like any of us. He had a humanity in those verses. But God is Spirit;

*John 4:24 (NIV)*

*God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*

The human form of Jesus is necessarily lesser than Spirit- especially God's Spirit. The common thread in those verses is the humanity of Jesus in His walk on the earth. It is only in this sense that Jesus admits being disconnected from God. There is an enormous amount of scripture demonstrating that Jesus took this lesser human form, even though He was in every way equivalent to God.

VISITOR:

But your argument makes no real sense to me. How can God be in two places at one time? Things must be realistic.

ME:

Remember that we too, are flesh and blood- not spirit. There are things that we cannot understand because of the restrictions of our limited human form.

VISITOR:

That sounds like the old mysterious argument to me. All you can say is that it is a mystery, and leave it at that.

ME:

No, not quite. Before I discuss other scriptures that bear on the equivalence of Jesus and God, I need to point out that much about God is not known to us, and perhaps never will be known. That is where our *faith* comes into the matter. God doesn't talk directly to us like He did in the Old Testament times. Now, He requires that we accept His word on faith. He even took the trouble to define faith;

*Heb. 11:1 (NIV)*

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

For example, we know almost nothing about the Creation. How did God make all the matter and energy in this huge universe? The Bible doesn't tell us. God only tells us that He 'spoke' these things into existence. The details are a mystery to us, just as is God's omniscience.

Just because we cannot reason our way through a difficult concept, doesn't mean that we should deny its existence.

### **Example: Our Limited Thinking**

Let's take a physical example of how our thinking 'reasonably' about an idea can lead to problems.

We live in a three dimensional spatial universe. That means, we can move left & right, back & forth, and up & down, as we go from one place to another. If we are walking along and approach a barrier, we can go around it to the left, or to the right, or we can even climb over it. If that barrier is infinitely long, we can never go around it to the left or to the right; but we can still climb over it.

Now, just assume that you lived in a *TWO*-dimensional universe. It would be like being constrained to exist in an infinitely long and wide plane. In this world, you can only go left & right, and forward & back. So, now you come along to an infinitely long barrier. The third dimension (up & down) is not available to you..... in fact, you're not even aware of its existence. Since you cannot go around the barrier by going left or right, you are hopelessly stuck.

I'm not trying to say that the difference between the spirit realm and our material universe of flesh & blood is the result of differences in the number of dimensions. I expect it's much more complicated than that. Whatever the differences though, there are bound to be some things that we cannot understand- and must then accept on faith as we've been told to do in the scriptures.

So then, let's go on to your other point about a translation problem associated with John 1:1. If I understand you correctly, you feel that the rendering "the Word was God" should more accurately be, "the Word was a

god." I know the Bible translation that your group uses (Reference-8), translates it that way;

*John 1:1 (NWT)*

*In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.*

First, notice that none of the commonly used translations other than yours, renders this verse the way you quoted it (John 1:1; my underlining):

*(KJV): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*(NKJ): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*(AS): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*(LB): Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God. He has always been alive and is himself God.*

*(NIV): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*

*(RS): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*(SE): In the beginning, there was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was deity.*

*(GNB): Before the world was created, the Word already existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God.*

*(Interlinear): In the beginning was the Word, and the*

*Word was with God, and  
God was the Word.*

*(LT): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word  
was with God, and deity was the Word.*

Neither the common translations, nor the two transliterations concur with the language in the NWT. But all these translations do agree with one another..... that the Word was indeed, God. I think it's of special interest that the (LT) transliteration precludes the meaning, 'a god.'

Next, let's see what Thayer's Greek Lexicon (Reference-12) says about the meaning of 'Word' as it is used specifically in John 1:1 and John 1:14. I've noticed that some of your pamphlets quote Thayer's work, so you might accept what he has to say about this use of 'Word';

"..... denotes the essential Word of God, i.e., the personal (hypostatic) wisdom and power in union with God, his minister in the creation and government of the universe, the cause of all the world's life both physical and ethical, which for the procurement of man's salvation put on human nature in the person of Jesus the Messiah and shone forth conspicuously from his words and deeds: John 1:1 and John 1:14.

The scriptural evidence is therefore overwhelming that Jesus and God are one in the same. The independent English translations and the two transliterations establish it, and Thayer's Lexicon further supports that conclusion.

#### VISITOR:

I've saved a very strong point for last. Read the following verse, and especially see how Jesus is described;

*Col. 1:15 (KJV)*

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

The paragraph containing this verse leaves no doubt that Paul is referring to Jesus. And here, Paul describes Jesus as the 'firstborn' - a created being. As such, there cannot be any divine nature about him.

Also, in the Revelation, John describes Jesus as the beginning of the creation. Here again, Jesus as a created being made by God, cannot simultaneously be God.

*Rev. 3:14 (KJV)*

*.....These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;.....*

ME:

Check the English translations (that I listed in the Introduction). Most of them also use the word 'firstborn' in Col. 1:15 to describe Jesus. But the (LT) identifies Him as the 'Source of creation' rather than the 'firstborn of creation' :

*(KJV): Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

*(NKJ): He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

*(AS): ... Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;*

*(LB): Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, .....*

*(NIV): He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

(RS): *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;*

(SE): *Christ is the image of God who cannot be seen, Christ is superior to everything that was made.*

(LT): *.... Who is the image of God the invisible, the Source of all creation.....*

The (LB) and the (SE) are more consistent with the reliable transliteration of the (LT). The LT's use of 'Source' is to indicate Jesus as the *originator* of the creation. That usage is well supported by other Greek scholars. For example Vine's New Testament Dictionary (Reference-15) provides this insight into 'firstborn' as used in Col. 1:15;

"..... in His relationship to the Father, expressing His priority to, and pre-eminence over, creation, not in the sense of being the 'first' to be born; ...the clause means both that He was 'Firstborn' before all creation and that He Himself produced creation (the genitive case being objective, as [verse] 16 makes clear);"

And here's how Thayer (Reference-12; #4416) deals with this description of Jesus as the 'firstborn';

"...who came into being through God prior to the entire universe of created beings..... this passage [Col. 1:15] does not with certainty prove that Paul reckoned the 'logos' in the number of created beings (as among others, Usteri, Paulin....)"

Finally, here's how Elwell's Evangelical Dictionary (Reference-19) details the contextual meaning of 'firstborn' in Col. 1:15;

"... In Col. 1:15 he [Jesus] is said to be the 'firstborn of all creation,' and Heb. 1:6 also describes him by this

word. The Arians used these passages as evidence that our Lord was a created being, but the proper understanding is implied by the context in Colossians, viz., that it refers to the preincarnate Christ. Moreover, the term declares Christ to be Lord of creation, for as the firstborn, he is the heir of the created order.....”

Concerning Rev. 3:14 the commonly used English translations are divided in their handling of the phrases;

“beginning of the creation of God”

and

“the source of God’s creation.”

Here are their descriptions of Jesus in Rev. 3:14;

*(KJV): ... the beginning of the creation of God;*

*(NKJ): ... the beginning of the creation of God;*

*(AS): ... the beginning of the creation of God;*

*(LB): ... the primeval source of God’s creation:*

*(NIV): ... the ruler of God’s creation.*

*(RS): ... the beginning of God’s creation.*

*(SE): ... the source of God’s creation*

*(GNB):... the origin [ruler] of all that God has created.*

*(Interlinear): ... the chief of the creation of God.*

*(LT): ... the Source of the creation of God.*

So, just more than half of the translations are consistent with the two reliable transliterations. The LT's use of 'Source' instead of 'firstborn' is consistent with what was seen in the discussion of Col. 1:15. So, 'firstborn' is used to emphasize Jesus' role as the originator of the creation.

There's one more indicator that 'firstborn' does not refer to the first of God's created beings. We can take a look at Thayer's contribution to the definition of 'firstborn' (Reference-12; #747);

"That by which anything begins to be, the origin, active cause."

Thayer also leaves no doubt that the description of Jesus as the 'beginning of creation' actually refers to His having originated, or created all things. Look at Gen. 1:26. There, God, in continuing the creation, uses the *plural* rather than the singular pronoun to bring things into existence. The point is that Jesus was indeed present at the creation of all things (as also declared in Hebrews, Chapter-1), and therefore is not Himself a created being;

*Gen. 1:26 (NIV; my underlining)*

*Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds, .....*

Above all else, these two passages (Col. 1:15 and Rev. 3:14) must be consistent with the many scriptural examples that unequivocally demonstrate the equality of God and Jesus Christ.

## **SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST**

We've inspected the scriptures that you've presented. Now let's identify the scriptural evidence that Jesus is God; one and the same who came to earth to die for our sins. First consider the appearance of Jesus to the apostles, after the crucifixion (in John Chapter-20). In particular look at the response of Thomas. He initially had doubts that Jesus was standing among them- but changed his mind when he realized that it was indeed Jesus. In John 20:28 (my underlining);

*(KJV): And Thomas answered and said unto him, "My Lord and my God."*

*(NKJ): And Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God."*

*(AS): Thomas answered and said unto him, ... My Lord and my God.*

*(LB): "My Lord and my God!" Thomas said.*

*(NIV): Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

*(RS): Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"*

*(SE): Thomas answered Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"*

*(GNB): Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"*

*(Interlinear): ... and said to him, The Lord of me and the God of me!*

*(LT): ... and said to him: The Lord of me and the God of me.*

All the common translations agree. Thomas was identifying Jesus as his God, not as a god. The two transliterations consistently and even more emphatically express it.

Thomas initially doubted it was Jesus. He was, however, easily convinced in His presence. It's no accident that the article 'the' is specifically used as a prefix to 'God' in the transliterations of verse 20:28. Also, it's no accident that the apostles made no attempt to correct Thomas' identification of Jesus as his God.

Now, let's take a second example from the scriptures. It's found in Col. 2:9;

*(KJV): For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

*(NKJ): For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead  
bodily.*

*(AS): for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead  
bodily,*

*(LB): For in Christ there is all of God in a human body;*

*(NIV): For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily  
form,*

*(RS): For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily,*

*(SE): The totality of divinity lives embodied in Christ.*

*(GNB): For the full content of divine nature lives in Christ, in  
his humanity.*

*(Interlinear): For in him dwells all the fullness of the  
Godhead bodily.*

*(LT) ... because in him dwells all the fulness of the  
Godhead bodily.*

Here, the agreement among the translations and with the (LT) is remarkable. It seems the only way to challenge the import of this verse is to challenge the meaning of 'Godhead.'

Thayer (Reference-12, #2320) has this definition of 'Godhead' as it specifically applies to Col. 2:9;

*"....deity i.e., the state of being God, Godhead, Col. 2:9"*

This identification of Jesus as God, is unmistakable.

Another direct statement on this subject is in Paul's letter to Titus. Paul is discussing our wait for Jesus Christ, and he identifies Jesus as our God and our Savior. In Titus 2:13, Paul writes;

*(KJV): Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious*

*appearing of the great God and our Savior  
Jesus Christ*

*(NKJ): Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing  
of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*

*(AS): Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the  
glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*

*(LB): looking forward to that wonderful time we've been  
expecting, when his glory shall be seen- the glory  
of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*

*(NIV): while we wait for the blessed hope- the glorious  
appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*

*(RS): awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory  
of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*

*(SE): We are waiting for the blessed hope and the glorious  
appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*

*(GNB): as we wait for the blessed Day we hope for, when the  
glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ  
will appear*

*(Interlinear): expecting the blessed hope and appearance of  
the glory of the great God and Savior of us,  
Christ Jesus*

*(LT): expecting the blessed hope and appearance of the  
glory of the great God and Savior of us,  
Jesus Christ*

In the two reliable transliterations, there is no ambiguity in meaning of this verse. It's unquestionable that Jesus is identified as our God and Savior.

A very careful reading of the translations however, leads us to wonder which one of the following Paul is saying;

- We await our great God, and also, we await our Savior Jesus Christ.

OR,

- We are waiting for Jesus, who is our God and Savior.

As I've indicated, the Interlinear and the (LT) clear the matter up. It's the latter of these two options. But as further proof of what is meant, look at what Vine's New Testament Dictionary (Reference-15) has to say;

*"..... where the pronoun 'our' coming immediately in connection with 'God' involves the inclusion of both titles as referring to Christ, just as in the parallel in v.11, 'our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ' (KJV and RV); these passages are therefore a testimony to his deity; II Peter 2:20; 3:2; 3:18; I John 4:14."*

A thorough study of these scriptures therefore leaves no doubt as to the deity of Jesus Christ.

#### VISITOR:

But my translation has a subtle difference that changes the meaning of that whole verse- at least as it affects your conclusion. Here's how Titus 2:13 reads in my (NWT);

*"....while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us..."*

From this reading, it's clear that God and Jesus are two separate entities being awaited !

ME:

Individual words do indeed, have meaning. A simple, tiny change can totally alter the intent of a verse. Here, I wonder why the NWT translators felt the need to place the word 'of' between the words 'God' and 'Savior.' If the insertion of that word were a correct thing to do, then your conclusion would indeed be the correct one. However, the discussion I just completed, shows that the transliteration of the Greek to the English (in the Interlinear *and* in the LT), absolutely preclude the insertion of that word 'of'. The insertion of that word is not only inappropriate, but it is incorrect.

I have one more scriptural basis for accepting Jesus as God. Compare these two verses in the Revelation (my underlining):

*Rev. 1:8 (NIV)*

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the **Lord God**, who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*

*Rev. 22:12-16 (NIV)*

*"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their Robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and May go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, Those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the Murderers, the idolators, and everyone who loves and Practices falsehood. **I, Jesus** have sent my angel to give you This testimony for the churches."*

In Rev. 1:8, God the Father is talking, and He describes Himself as the 'Alpha and the Omega.'

In Rev. Chapter 22, it's clear even from the beginning, that Jesus is talking. But it's nearer the end of the quote that He declares, 'I ,Jesus' after earlier declaring Himself as the 'Alpha and the Omega.'

So, early in the Revelation, *God* describes Himself in all-encompassing terms; and late in the Revelation *Jesus Christ* describes Himself in the identical terms. These verses can only be self-consistent and non-contradictory if indeed, Jesus is one and the same as God.

As a final check, I looked at these verses in your NWT and in the KJV and the Interlinear transliteration. All of these sources (even the NWT) render the same content and intent of these scriptures.

While more can be shown from both the New and Old Testament, it hardly seems necessary. The scriptures discussed here, easily validate the deity of Jesus Christ.