

WEEK 3 | THE DEITY OF CHRIST

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. . .

consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead

CREED OF CHALCEDON

We believe. . . in one Lord Jesus Christ. . . God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.

CREED OF NICEA

The doctrine that the early church most often had to defend was the deity of Christ. In lesson one we saw that a host of early heresies—Ebionism, Gnosticism, Arianism, Adoptionism—either rejected or diminished the deity of Christ, so that he was something less than God. This was the central question the Councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD) sought to answer. Their summary statement, the Creed of Nicaea, would ultimately affirm in no uncertain terms the full deity of Christ and set the standard of orthodoxy for the church. Drawing on Scripture, we can identify several lines of evidence for the deity of Christ:

I. DIRECT ASSERTIONS

There are several direct statements in Scripture that Jesus is God.

A. He is “the mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6)

B. He is the eternal Word (John 1:1)

C. He was in the “form of God” (Philippians 2:6)

D. He is “God and Savior” (2 Peter 1:1; Titus 2:13)

1. Granville Sharp Rule: the argument has been made that, in these verses, “God” refers to the Father and only “Savior” refers to Christ. However, there is a rule in Greek grammar, known as the Granville Sharp rule, that says that when two nouns of the same case are connected by the copulative *kai* (“and”), if the former has a definite article and the latter does not, then they refer to the same person. Both these verses follow this construction, meaning both “God” and “Savior” refer to the same person, Jesus Christ.

E. He is called “God” by the Father (Hebrews 1:8)

F. He is Yahweh (Hebrews 1:10-12 with Psalm 102:24-27)

G. He is “God over all” (Romans 9:5)

H. He is “the true God” (1 John 5:20)

I. He is “the Lord God” (Revelation 1:8)

J. He is “God manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16)

II. HIS TITLES

A. Son of God

In John 5:17-18; 10:29-33; Mark 14:61-64 Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God is perceived as a claim to deity by the Jewish leaders. Hence their attempts to kill him: “he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18)

B. Only Begotten – John 1:14, 18

Jesus’ Sonship is unique—he is the “only begotten,” referring to his unique, eternal relationship with Father who eternally generates the Son.

C. Firstborn – Colossians 1:15, 18

The title “firstborn” has the idea not of birth but of preeminence. The Greek word *protokos* is used in the Greek translation Psalm 89:27 where God says “I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.” This describes God’s investment of authority and inheritance to the Davidic king when he ascends the throne; over time it came to be recognized as a Messianic title. As Creator and Head of the church, Christ is preeminent by legal right of his kingship.

D. The Amen – Revelation 3:14

Revelation 3:14 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.’”

E. The Alpha and Omega – Revelation 1:8; 22:12-13

Yahweh claims this title in Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12. Thus, when John applies it to Jesus, he is saying that Jesus is Yahweh Himself. It is a merism that indicates eternity, a transcendence over time without beginning or end.

F. The Beginning – Revelation 3:14; 22:12-13; Colossians 1:18 (see above point)

G. The Radiance of the Glory of God – Hebrews 1:3

Jesus is described as the “radiance” of God’s glory, the shining of His shining. It indicates He is of the same essence as the Father and is the exact representation of the substance of the Father. Jesus possesses all the attributes of the divine essence.

H. The Image of God – 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15

Christ is the exact, perfect likeness of God the Father, implying equally in essence.

I. The Lord – Luke 2:11; John 20:28-29

The NT writers apply several OT passages—which refer to Yahweh as Lord—to Jesus, implying that Jesus is Yahweh the Lord:

1. John 12:37-41 with Isaiah 53:1; 6:1, 10
2. Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13 with Joel 2:32
3. Hebrews 1:10-12 with Psalm 102:24-27
4. Philippians 2:10-11 with Isaiah 45:23

III. HIS ATTRIBUTES

A. Eternity

1. Isaiah 9:6 – His name will be called. . . Everlasting Father
2. John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word.
3. Revelation 1:8; 22:13 – “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End”
4. He is the “I am” – John 4:26; 6:48; 8:58-59; 9:5; 10:11; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:5

B. Immutability

1. He is the same in all phases of time
Hebrews 13:8 – Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
2. He never ages or ends, but always remains the same
Hebrews 1:10-12 – “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

C. Holiness

1. He was the Holy One from birth – Luke 1:35
2. He was recognized as the Holy One – John 6:69; Luke 4:34; Acts 3:14
3. He was the Holy Servant of the Lord – Acts 4:27, 30
4. He did not sin – John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5

D. Omniscience*

1. He could see things without being physically present – John 1:48
2. He completely understood all people – John 2:24-25
3. He knew the times appointed for him – John 13:1; 16:16; 18:4
4. He knew Judas would betray him – John 13:11
5. He knew when the death for sin was completed – John 19:28
6. He knew all things – John 16:30; 21:17
7. He searches minds and hearts – Revelation 2:23

*How do we deal with instances where it appears Jesus has limited knowledge? For example, in Matthew 24:36-37 Jesus says, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” How do explain this in light of divine omniscience? We will address this issue more fully in a later lesson when we deal with the hypostatic union and the relationship between his divine and human natures. For now, we should affirm that his lack of knowledge here is genuine, even if after his resurrection he does appear to know the timing of his second advent (see Acts 1:6); Jesus is not lying to his disciples. There are other instances where he may have had limited knowledge, but it is possible he asked questions about an event to elicit a response from the people around him, not necessarily because he did not know the answer (see Mark 5:30; 9:20-21; 11:12-14; John 11:34).

E. Omnipresence

1. He is in the midst of all people – Matthew 18:20; 28:20; John 14:18, 23
2. He is present with His people as much as He is present with the Father – John 14:20
3. He is with hell – Revelation 14:10

F. Omnipotence

1. He is the “Mighty God” – Isaiah 9:6
2. He exercised sovereignty over the sea – Matthew 8:26-27; 14:24-33
This can be compared to OT passages that ascribed the authority over the seas to Yahweh (Psalm 65:7; 89:9; 107:29)
3. He showed the divine power to create – John 2:1-10; Matthew 1:17-21
4. He held the power over life and death – John 5:25-26; 10:17-18; 11:25-26, 43-44
5. He has the authority to raise and judge the dead – John 3:35-36; 5:25-30
6. He has the authority to give eternal life – John 17:2
7. He has the power to heal – Mark 1:29-34

G. **Immortality** – Hebrews 7:16 tells us Jesus is high priest “by the power of an indestructible life.”

H. Sovereignty

1. He has been given all authority – John 3:35-36; 5:26-27; 17:2; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22; 1 Peter 3:22
2. “But I say to you” – an introductory formula that assumes authority (see Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44)
3. He is Lord– Acts 2:36; Philippians 2:11; Revelation 19:16

I. **Grace** – John 1:14, 17

J. **Truth** – John 1:14, 17; 14:6

K. **Life** – John 1:4; 11:25-26; 14:6

L. **Glory** – John 1:14; 17:5; Revelation 1:12-18

IV. HIS WORKS

A. Creation – John 1:3, 9-10; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2

God alone is the Creator and Giver of life (Genesis 1:1). When the New Testament authors ascribed this work to Christ it was an acknowledgment of His deity.

B. Preservation – Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:17 Hebrews 1:3

C. Revelation – John 1:18; 14:9; Luke 10:21-22

As the Image of God, Jesus Christ the word perfectly reveals the Father to us. That is, the heart of the Father is displayed in the heart of Christ. Jesus so perfectly images the father that he could say to his disciples “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Further, He alone as God the Son can reveal God the Father (Luke 10:22).

D. Resurrection

1. Jesus has authority to raise the dead – John 5:28-29
2. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead – John 11:25-26, 43-44
3. Jesus raised himself from the dead – John 10:17-18
4. Jesus will raise us from the dead – Philippians 3:21

E. Judgment

1. All authority to judge has been given to him – John 5:22, 27
2. He is the Judge of the Church – 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 1:12-16

3. He will judge at his second advent and in the final judgment – Matthew 25:31-32; 2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Revelation 20:11-15

V. HIS PREROGATIVES

- A. He rightly receives worship as God – Matthew 14:33; 15:25; 28:9; John 9:38; 20:28; Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:12-13**
- B. He is to be honored as the Father is honored – John 5:22-23**
- C. He is the object of saving faith – John 1:12; 11:25-26; 20:31**
- D. He forgives sin – Mark 2:10-11; Colossians 3:13**
- E. He gives eternal life – John 17:2; Revelation 22:12-14**
- F. He saves – Hebrews 7:25**
- G. He gives rewards – 2 Corinthians 5:10**
- H. He judges – John 5:27**
- I. He is to be obeyed – John 15:12, 14; Matthew 17:5**
- J. He is to be loved preeminently – Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26**