

was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end..."

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE RESURRECTED CHRIST? -- On the day of Pentecost, three thousand people believed in the risen Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and the inheritance of eternal life (Acts 2:37-47). These people were deeply pricked in their hearts when Peter informed them that the Jesus whom they wanted to crucify was the risen Lord and Christ (deity)! Realizing, what they had done, they bowed themselves in humble repentance to receive the gift of God's salvation through Christ. (Acts 2:37-40). God invites each of us to do the same today. It was our sins that drove the nails into the hands of the sinless Lamb of God. It was our sins that put Him to death, and caused Him to suffer the wrath and judgment of God. (2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:24) The Bible says that the "...wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23). Men die because of sin! But Jesus Christ never sinned. Therefore, we understand it was not the Roman nails that took His life; it was His own willingness to lay down His life on the behalf of every sinner in the world (John 10:18). It was truly God's love for sinners manifested at Calvary. Will you realize today that it was your sins that caused the death of Christ? Will you receive the pardon of your sins that He offers to you? He gave His life for you; what will you do with Him? The Bible records, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved... Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:9,13).

The Cornerstone Booklet Ministry: Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues

Copies of this booklet and many others on Biblical answers to contemporary issues are available upon request by writing to the address on the front cover, or via the Internet:

<http://greenwichbaptistchurch.org>

(Rev 3/20/2000)

The CORNERSTONE

BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT

THE DEITY OF CHRIST



Cornerstone Booklets

PO BOX 52
GREENWICH, NJ 08323

DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

"...Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matt. 16:17,18). Jesus gives us here THE TEST OF A TRUE CHURCH -- Do they acknowledge, as Peter, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ? If they don't, they are religious institutions with no real knowledge or understanding of God or salvation and are deceiving many to walk down the path that leads to hell! (Matt. 7:21-23; 23:15). Any religion or religious teacher that refuses to give Jesus the same honor (of deity) as God the Father is not to be followed (John 5:23,24). We are warned not to invite these false religious teachers into our homes (2 John 9-10).

THE ONE INDISPUTABLE SIGN -- that Christianity is unique when compared with all the other religions of the world. The founders of all other religions are dead and remained dead, but Jesus Christ, founder of Christianity, is alive! His resurrection is verified by "many infallible proofs" and confronts every person with the reality of the Christian faith as the only way to obtain salvation and be made right with God (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:1-8). Jesus Christ made two claims that greatly disturbed the religious leaders of His day. First, He claimed to be equal with God the Father, thus affirming His Deity (John 10:22-38). Second, He declared himself THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION whereby men could be made right with God (John 3:14-21, 14:6). The religious leaders challenged Jesus' unique assertions by demanding a supernatural "sign" from God. God had verified Moses' teaching by signs; they were asking Jesus to do the same (Numbers 16,17). Jesus did many miracles throughout His ministry that validated His claim to deity (John 14:7-12, Matt. 9:1-8). In addition to these miracles, Jesus answered these religious leaders with one irrefutable sign of His claims. He said "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:18-25, Matt. 12:38-41). The temple Jesus referred to was His body. He was boldly foretelling His own resurrection! The Bible tells us that it was this miraculous event that proved the Deity of the Son of God. He was "...declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD" (Romans 1:4). Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, was crucified and rose again to make salvation possible to all who believe (1 Peter 1:18-25, 1 Cor. 15:1-19).

THE SINLESS SACRIFICIAL LAMB OF GOD -- The only suitable sacrifice that could atone for the sins of mankind had to be "without blemish" (1 Peter 1:19). All men die because all men are sinners (Rom. 3:23; 5:12; 6:23a). Therefore, no mere man could die for the sins of other men, because he justly dies because of his own sin. Jesus Christ is the only man that has ever lived that was born in this world without a human father – a

official in Alexandria, Egypt. The bishops who met at Nicea to judge the teachings of this priest, Arius, produced a memorable confession of the Christian faith. This confession, expanded by later additions is known as the Nicene Creed, a creed which was not only the first formal definition of the Trinity against heretical teaching, but also the first Christian creed to gain universal acceptance in the Church. The importance of the Creed lies in its forceful and unambiguous testimony of the unique nature of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. The doctrines which Arius taught illustrate the common tendency present throughout all of Christian history to subject the facts of God's revelation of himself in Christ and in Scripture to current conceptions of logic or "the reasonable." The following explain the key points of the creed: (1) Christ was very God of very God. Jesus himself was God in the same sense in which the Father was God; any differentiation between Father and Son must refer to the respective task each does or to the relationship in which each stands to the other--but Father, Son and Spirit are all truly God. (2) Christ was of one substance with the Father. The Greek word used in this phrase, homoousios (homo="same", ousios="substance"), led to great controversy but it was chosen simply as a means of reinforcing as unequivocally as possible the fact that Christ was truly "very God of very God". It sought to summarize Jesus' own teaching: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). (3) Christ was begotten, not made. That is, Christ was not created at any single point in time but was from eternity the Son of God.

If, Arius argued, God (the Father) is absolutely perfect, absolutely transcendent, and absolutely without change, and if he is the originator of all things--without himself being derived from anything else-- then it is obvious that everything and everyone else in the world is set apart from God. And, added Arius, if everything is set apart from God, then Jesus too must be set apart from God. According to Arius, Jesus did display a special role in the creation and redemption of the physical world, but he was not himself God. There could only be one God; therefore, Christ must have been created at some time or another, Christ (like all the creation) must be subject to change and sin, and Christ (again, like all created beings) does not have real knowledge of the mind of God. The council of Nicea, realizing how grave the threat was which Arius's teaching posed to the Christian faith and how plausible its thin veneer of logic made it appear, constructed the following crucial assertions against Arius's thought:

WORDS OF THE NICENE CREED -- "...I believe in one God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and

SCRIPTURES WHERE JESUS CHRIST IS CALLED GOD -- "But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Heb. 1:8). "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. {28} And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:27-28). "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). "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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh [Jesus' incarnation], and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father)..." (John 1:1,14).

SCRIPTURES WHERE JESUS CHRIST IS CREATOR OF ALL THINGS -- "The same [Jesus] was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:2,3). "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:10). "For by him [Jesus] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: {17} And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. {18} And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:16-18). "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, {2} Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; {3} Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:1-3). And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands" (Heb. 1:10).

THE NICENE CREED OF 325 A.D. -- The following account is recorded in the words of Mark Noll: In A.D. 325 the Roman emperor, Constantine the Great, summoned leaders of the church to a little town across the Sea of Marmara from his new capital Constantinople (modern Istanbul). Constantine was troubled by the religious dissension threatening the unity of his empire. The controversy focused on the teachings of a minor church

virgin birth (Matt. 1:23). Sin entered the world by a man and is passed on by men (Rom. 5:12). Because God was Jesus' father (Matt. 1:20), He entered this world as the spotless Lamb of God without sin. He lived His entire life in perfect obedience to His father, never once committing sin (John 8:29 Heb. 4:15). He declared: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. {18} No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17,18). Because Jesus was without sin, nothing or no one could take His life from Him. It wasn't the Roman soldiers that killed Jesus; it wasn't Pilate who killed Jesus; it wasn't the Jewish crowd that killed Jesus; it wasn't the nails in His hands that killed Jesus. It was our sins that killed Him! Listen to the following Scriptures: "Who his own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. {5} But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:4,5). "For He hath made Him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

JESUS CHRIST, THE GOD MAN -- Jesus Christ was fully God (deity) and fully man (humanity)! IN HIS HUMANITY He experienced all the same temptations and pressures of life that you face, and yet never once did He sin (Hebrews 4:15). He understands your deepest woe, your greatest trial, He can sympathize with you and knows how to help you (Hebrews 4:15,16). He was a "man of sorrows acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3). He experienced normal physical growth like any other man (Luke 2:52). He slept (Matt. 8:24). He got thirsty (John 4:7). He ate (Luke 5:30). IN HIS DEITY He became the only acceptable sacrifice that was sufficient to atone for the sins of men. It was His "precious blood" shed for men that made salvation possible (1 Peter 1:19; Heb. 9:22; 10:19 Eph. 1:7). The Bible records that the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). Christ's blood was "precious" because it was undefiled by sin. It was the shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary that allows God to forgive us of all our sin (Heb. 9:22,28;10:10-18). It is faith in His atoning sacrifice that brings salvation (Romans 3:24,25). Please note here that it is not His teachings that save; it is not His example that saves; it is not His miracles that save; it is His blood atonement on the cross of Calvary that saves! It is the preaching of the cross that brings salvation (1 Cor. 1:18).

BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR THE DEITY OF CHRIST -- The clear unmistakable message of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ is God. In Christ "all the fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). **DIVINE WORKS OF JESUS** -- Jesus Christ upholds all things (John 1:3, Col. 1:17, Heb. 1:3). He is the giver of eternal life (John 10:28, 1 John 5:10). He will one day resurrect every single human being (John 11:25, John 5:21,28,29). He will one day be the judge of all men in final judgment (John 5:22,27; Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10). **DEMONSTRATIONS OF DIVINE POWER** -- He had the power to control the forces of nature (Mark 4:35-41). He had the power to bring people back from the dead (Luke 7:11-17; Mark 5:21-43, John 11:43-44). He had the power over the worst kinds of demonic powers (Mark 5:1-20; Matt. 17:14-21). He had the power to heal the worst kinds of diseases and sickness (John 9:32-34; 3:1,2; 14:11,12)

INCARNATION OF JESUS CHRIST -- The New Testament teaches that God has been seen in time and history in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus said that to see Him was the same as seeing God (John 12:45; 14:5-9). In the letter to the Colossians, Christ is described as the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). In Hebrews, Jesus Christ is called the "brightness of His [the Father's] glory and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). The Greek word for "express image" means an exact reproduction. According to Thayer's lexicon it was used for the impression produced by a seal or a die stamp in wax or metal, i.e. an exact impression, a precise reproduction in every respect. Philippians 2:6 reveals to us that Jesus Christ is "equal with God." The Greek word for equal in this verse comes from the root *isos* used in geometry to describe the isosceles triangle with its two equal sides. This same Jesus who was equal with God and shared the glory of God "...made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). Jesus through his incarnation manifested God to men in the fullest sense possible in our earthly capacities. This is what John 1:18 means when John declares, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." When Jesus came to earth in the form of man, he did not give up His deity; He gave up the independent use of His deity. Jesus explained his behavior in the following way, "And he that sent me is with me: the **Father** hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that **please** him" (John 8:29). His perfect submission to the Father demonstrated to all men everywhere how to be a faithful and wise steward and servant of God (1 Cor. 4:1,2; Matt. 24:45) As He said to His disciples in the upper room after washing their feet, "For I have given you an **example**, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). "God the Son, in submission (by rank, not by nature) to God the Father, became man, took on a second nature, a human nature, and then voluntarily performed the ultimate act of submission: sacrifice of Himself for

the sins of the world" (Josh McDowell). "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

HIS CLAIM TO THE NAMES OF DEITY -- "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:57,58). God the Father used the name "I am" when He sent Moses to help the Jewish people in Egypt. The Jews understood this name to refer to deity. Notice their response when Jesus uses this name of himself: "Then they took up stones to cast at him..." (John 8:59). Why? Because Jesus was claiming equality with the God of the Old Testament. F.F. Bruce points out: "Had he (Jesus) been merely a pre-existent being then He would have had to say, 'Before Abraham was I was.'" William Barclay summarizes: "Jesus is timeless. There never was a time when He came into being; there never will be a time when He is not in being. We cannot say of Jesus, He was. We must always say, 'He is.' ... In Jesus we see the timeless God, who was the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, who was before time and who will be after time, who always is."

HIS CLAIM THAT HE AND GOD ARE ONE -- "I and *my* Father are one. {31} Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. {32} Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? {33} The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:30-33). Later in John 14 when talking to His disciples Jesus told them: "...He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" (John 14:9).

HIS CLAIM TO FORGIVE SINS -- "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. {6} But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, {7} Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? {8} And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? {9} Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? {10} But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) {11} I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house" (Mark 2:5-11).