

**Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of systematic theology today by continuing to present the biblical case for the deity of Jesus Christ. How do you want to begin today Dr. Spencer?**

Dr. Spencer: Let's take a look at another part of the gospel of John. In Chapter 14 Jesus is speaking to his disciples and he says, in Verse 7, "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."<sup>1</sup>

**Marc Roby: That's a serious claim; if we know Christ, we know the Father, and having seen Christ, we have seen the Father.**

Dr. Spencer: It is an amazing claim. And James Boice mentions this, along with a number of other claims, in his *Foundations of the Christian Faith*.<sup>2</sup> This passage goes on to say more too. The apostle Philip obviously did not fully grasp what Jesus said, because we read in Verse 8 that he said to Christ, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Then, in Verses 9 and 10, Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."

**Marc Roby: I'm confident that was not the answer that Philip was expecting. Don't you wish that we were told how he responded to that?**

Dr. Spencer: That would be very interesting to know, but we aren't told. And it may well be that he had no response. How could you respond to statements like those? Christ equates seeing him with seeing the Father. And he says that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. It is an amazing claim. Then he goes on and says that he is speaking the Father's words. But unlike the Old Testament prophets he doesn't say that God gave him the words to say, he says that the Father is living in him.

**Marc Roby: Which is something we will never completely understand.**

Dr. Spencer: No, we won't. And in John 12:44 Jesus said that "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me." And we know who sent Jesus, we are told in John 17:25 and a number of other places that the Father sent him, so this statement equates faith in Jesus Christ with faith in God the Father. Then, in Mark 9:37, we read that "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." Which equates welcoming Jesus with welcoming the Father. Also, in John 15:23 we read that Jesus said, "He who hates me hates

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® (1984 version). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™.

<sup>2</sup> James Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, Revised in One Volume, InterVarsity Press, 1986, pg. 274

my Father as well.” And in John 5:23 Jesus says that “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”

**Marc Roby: Jesus very clearly claimed a relationship with God the Father that is much closer than would be possible for any created being.**

Dr. Spencer: He most certainly did. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century theologian Louis Berkhof gives a great summary of the scriptural evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ. He states that the biblical evidence for the deity of Christ is so great that it is only “those who disregard the teachings of Scripture”<sup>3</sup> who can deny the doctrine. He summarizes the biblical evidence under five headings.<sup>4</sup> The first of these is Scriptures that explicitly assert the deity of Christ. In that category he lists, along with others, three verses that we have already looked at, John 1:1, John 20:28 and Titus 2:13. The second category he lists is Scriptures that apply divine names to Jesus.

**Marc Roby: What verses does he list in that category?**

Dr. Spencer: He lists Isaiah 40:3, which is the famous prophecy about John the Baptist. It says, “A voice of one calling: ‘In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.’” The word Lord in that verse is the tetragrammaton, Jehovah. This verse is quoted in Matthew 3:3 and we are told there that it was speaking about John the Baptist. So, let’s put those two statements together. Isaiah tells us that the voice that is calling is preparing the way for Jehovah, and then we are told that the voice is John the Baptist, who we know prepared the way for Jesus Christ. The conclusion is inescapable, Jesus Christ is Jehovah, he is God.

**Marc Roby: That is the only possible conclusion. What other verses does Berkhof cite?**

Dr. Spencer: I’ll just mention one more. He cites Jeremiah 23:5-6 where we read, “‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.’” This tells us about a King who will come, who is a descendant of David and who will save Israel, which is clearly Jesus Christ, and it then tells us that the name by which he will be called is the Lord, where that is again Jehovah.

**Marc Roby: That definitely is a clear reference to Jesus Christ. What else does Berkhof have to say?**

Dr. Spencer: His third category is Scriptures that ascribe divine attributes to Christ. For instance, we’ve already looked at John 1:1 and Colossians 1:16-17, both of which speak about his existing before the creation, in other words eternally, which is an incommunicable attribute of God. Also, in Matthew 18:20 we read that Jesus said, “For where two or three come together in my name,

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1938, pg. 94

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp 94-95

there am I with them.” This requires that Jesus be able to be in multiple places at once, in other words that he be omnipresent, which is another incommunicable attribute of God.

**Marc Roby: Of course, that is not speaking about Jesus Christ in his human body being present in multiple places at the same time.**

Dr. Spencer: No, it isn't. In his humanity Jesus was, and is, limited to being in one place at a time, just as we are. But, in his divinity, he is omnipresent, meaning that he is everywhere all at the same time. Also, in Hebrews 13:8 we are told that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Which is the same unchangeable nature as Jehovah, which is called his immutability. We read in Malachi 3:6, “I the LORD do not change.” And Lord in that verse is Jehovah. I think this is sufficient evidence to make the point that divine attributes are ascribed to Jesus Christ.

**Marc Roby: What is Berkhof's fourth category of evidence?**

Dr. Spencer: He mentions Scriptures that speak of Christ doing works that only God can do. For example, we've already discussed verses, like John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16, that speak of Jesus Christ as the Creator. In addition, in Hebrews 1:3 we are told that Jesus sustains all things by his powerful word, but sustaining the creation is also a work that only God can do.

Then, in Mark Chapter 2 a paralytic is brought to Jesus and instead of healing him as people expected, we read in Verse 5 that Jesus said to him, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now this upset some teachers who were present and we are told that they were thinking to themselves that Jesus was blaspheming, because only God has the authority to forgive sins. Then, in Verses 8-11, Jesus says to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’”

**Marc Roby: I'm sure it got their attention very quickly when Jesus told them what they were thinking!**

Dr. Spencer: I'm sure it did. Only God can know our thoughts. In addition, these teachers were correct in thinking that only God has authority to forgive sins, which was precisely Jesus' point in this situation. Notice that he used the miracle of physical healing to validate his authority to forgive the man's sins. In other words, he was acting as only the sovereign Lord of all creation can act.

**Marc Roby: Very well. I believe that you said Berkhof had five categories of evidence, and we've covered four of them. So what is the fifth?**

Dr. Spencer: The fifth category is Scriptures that accord divine honor to Christ. But before we give examples of this, I should point out that in Isaiah 42:8 Jehovah declares, “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.” So, when the Bible ascribes the honor, glory or praise due to God to Jesus Christ, it is affirming his deity.

We've already seen one example of this, although it isn't in Berkhof's list. Remember that in Philippians 2:9-11 it says that "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And while this says it is to the glory of God the Father, we noted before that saying "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" is an allusion to Isaiah 45:23 and gives God's honor to Christ as well.

And now, let me also give one example off of Berkhof's list, he cites John 5, Verses 22-23, which say that "the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."

**Marc Roby: That completes Berkhof's list of five areas of scriptural evidence. What else do you want to look at?**

Dr. Spencer: There is another very compelling type of evidence in the New Testament that we have not yet discussed, and that is that Jesus Christ spoke with the very authority of God. In the Old Testament, the prophets spoke the words of God, but they always prefaced them with a statement something like "This is what the Lord says". In fact, if you look up that exact phrase in the 1984 NIV that we are using, you will see that it occurs 167 times in the Old Testament.

**Marc Roby: And there are also a number of other ways of saying the same thing.**

Dr. Spencer: Yes, there are. But when we look at Jesus we find that he said something altogether different. In the Sermon on the Mount, five times Jesus says "You have heard" and then quotes an Old Testament passage, or in one place the Jews' misunderstanding of an Old Testament passage, and then he follows that by saying "But I tell you" and goes on to expand on what is said in the Old Testament. In other words, he adds to God's words as recorded in Scripture, which is something that only God can do.

**Marc Roby: In other words, Jesus asserted his divine prerogative in those instances.**

Dr. Spencer: That's right. And he did it in other similar ways too. Jonathan Edwards pointed out that when Jesus predicted future events, he also did that in a way that is qualitatively different from the Old Testament prophets.<sup>5</sup> For example, after speaking to the crowds about the signs of the end of the ages and his own second coming, we read in Matthew 24:34-35 that Jesus told the crowd, "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Notice that he didn't say, as an Old Testament prophet would, that the Lord says this, he said "I tell you the truth", and he didn't say that God's words will never pass away, he said "my words will never pass away."

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<sup>5</sup> Edwards, Jonathan, "Jesus's prophecies a proof that he was the Christ, and a divine person", in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, Hendrickson Publishers, 2005, pp 468-470

**Marc Roby: And in saying this, he again assumed to himself a power and privilege that belongs to God alone.**

Dr. Spencer: He does. And Jesus uses this phrase “I tell you the truth”, 78 times in the gospels. And in 72 of those verses it is how our Bible translates the Greek word ἀμῆν (amān), which is where we get our word amen, and it means truly, or so let it be.

**Marc Roby: Jesus used that as a way to sort of wake his listeners up and let them know he was getting ready to say something very important.**

Dr. Spencer: That’s right. And in 24 of those verses we read that Jesus repeated the word for emphasis; he said ἀμῆν ἀμῆν, which the English Standard Version translates as truly, truly. I like that more than the NIV because it retains the emphasis that Christ was putting on the following statements. By repeating the word, he was saying to them essentially, “What I am about to say is incredibly important, so be quiet, listen carefully and pay attention!”

**Marc Roby: One of those statements is in John 5:24, where Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”**

Dr. Spencer: You’re right. In the Greek, that verse begins ἀμῆν ἀμῆν. And that verse is a great example of the point we have been making because Jesus says “whoever hears *my* word ... has eternal life” (emphasis added). And he says that such a person “has crossed over from death to life.” What a great statement to show that Jesus absolutely assumed to himself the privileges that are God’s alone. No Old Testament prophet ever said anything like this unless he prefaced it by saying it was the word of the Lord.

**Marc Roby: That is very clear evidence for the deity of Christ. Is there anything else you want to mention from Jonathan Edwards’ treatment?**

Dr. Spencer: Yes, another verse that he mentions is very important. In John 10:17-18 Jesus declared, “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” In the King James Version it says he has the power to lay down his life and take it up again. The Greek word can mean authority or power, so both translations are fine. The main point is that Jesus not only predicted the future here, he also claimed to have the power, or authority, to raise himself from the dead!

**Marc Roby: OK, I’m quite confident that no mere man can do that. Do you have anything more to say about the Scriptural evidence for the deity of Christ?**

Dr. Spencer: I’d like to finish this topic by mentioning the systematic theology text of Charles Hodge and giving one short quote from the book. He has an absolutely wonderful summary of the biblical evidence for the deity of Christ.<sup>6</sup> His book is even available for free online as a pdf,

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<sup>6</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Eerdmans, 1997, Vol. 1, pp 504-521

the link is in the transcript of this podcast.<sup>7</sup> We have covered many of the points he makes, but he ties it all together very well. The only problem with his presentation is that he often cites words, or even phrases, in the Greek without providing the translation or telling you where they are in the New Testament, so his work is harder for a layperson to follow. Nevertheless, even if you skip over the Greek, and one short passage in Latin, his presentation is excellent.

**Marc Roby: What is the quote you would like to read?**

Dr. Spencer: He makes an overall comment about the Book of Revelation that I think is worth taking note of. He writes that “The Book of Revelation is one continued hymn of praise to Christ, setting forth the glory of his person and the triumph of his kingdom; representing Him as the ground of confidence to his people, and the object of worship to all the inhabitants of heaven.”<sup>8</sup> He then goes on to point out that in Revelation Jesus Christ is declared to be the ruler of the kings of the earth, he is presented to us as the first and the last, he assumes the titles and prerogatives of God, he is the Holy and the True, he has the keys of David, all the inhabitants of heaven lie prostrate at his feet in worship and so on. We have covered some of these points in other passages, but if you read the Book of Revelation with all of this in mind, it bears powerful testimony to the deity of Christ.

**Marc Roby: I agree. And it also presents you with the true Christ, not the effeminate and weak Christ of many modern churches. He is presented as one whose eyes are like blazing fire and who judges the living and the dead and defeats all of his enemies.**

Dr. Spencer: Very true. In fact, in Revelation 6:16 the wrath of God is called the “wrath of the Lamb”. It is Jesus Christ himself who has prepared hell for the devil, his demons, and all who follow him. This is the Christ who is the judge before whom we must appear. We dare not treat him as a buddy. And with that, I think we are finished with our examination of the scriptural evidence for the deity of Christ, although I must say that we have not in any sense given an exhaustive presentation of that evidence.

**Marc Roby: And I would like to once again encourage our listeners to email their questions and comments to [info@whatdoesthewordsay.org](mailto:info@whatdoesthewordsay.org), and to go to our website to order their free copy of Good News for All People.**

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/hodge>

<sup>8</sup> Hodge, op. cit., pg. 510