

WE BELIEVE IN THE DEITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

When we meet someone for the first time, we introduce ourselves usually by giving our name. And depending on the context, we may also include what we do, our occupation or perhaps our title or position. And these can provide a great deal of information.

They can also enhance what otherwise might seem like an insignificant role or position. For example, we no longer have garbage men; they are “sanitation engineers.” Housewives are “domestic engineers.” Paperboys are “media distributors.” When I worked in the prisons we preferred being called “correctional officers” rather than “prison guards” (but we preferred “prison guards” to some of the terms the inmates or “cons” called us!).

My favorite, however, is what one wife referred to herself as. Well-known Christian author and speaker Tony Campolo tells a story from the days when his wife, Peggy, was at home full-time with their children.

When someone would ask her, "And what is it that you do, dear?" Instead of simply saying, "I'm a housewife," or "homemaker," Peggy would reply, "I am socializing two homo sapiens into the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition in order that they might be instruments for the transformation of the social order into the kind of eschatological utopia that God willed from the beginning of creation."

Then Peggy would ask the other person, "And what is it you do?"

At a certain time in His ministry, . . .

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the SON OF MAN is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the CHRIST, the SON OF THE LIVING GOD." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-17 NIV)

Did you hear the titles used to refer to Jesus in this passage? *Son of Man*, *Christ*, and *Son of the Living God*. What is the significance of these titles, and what, if any, distinction should we make among them?

SON OF MAN - Jesus was fully a man

Son of Man was the title Jesus used most often to refer to Himself. But what was He implying in the term?

One time, 23 **Jesus** [said], "***The hour has come for the SON OF MAN to be glorified.*** 32 [And] ***I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.***" 34 ***The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the CHRIST will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The SON OF MAN must be lifted up'? WHO IS THIS 'SON OF MAN'?"*** John 12:23,32,34 (NIV)

The crowd asked the question we're asking: *Who is the Son of Man?*

Now the crowd may have been questioning the distinction between the titles *Christ* and *Son of Man*. But Jesus was revealing who the *Christ* was by referring to Himself as the *Son of Man*. And in doing this, He was identifying Himself—the Christ—with mankind.

Paul addresses this issue in several places, including Philippians 2. In verse 7, Paul explained that Jesus took on ***the very nature of a servant*** and was ***made in human likeness*** (Philip. 2:7).

John expressed it this way in his gospel: Jesus ***became flesh*** [or, a physical being] ***and made his dwelling among us.*** (Jn. 1:14) And the writer of Hebrews said, ***Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity*** [same Greek word as Jn. 1:14 - *sarx*] . . . (Hebrews 2:14 NIV)

Jesus was fully a human being. And in His humanity he experienced life just as we do. Indeed, the Bible says He was ***tempted in every way, just as we are*** (Heb. 4:15). In other words, Jesus experienced the same weaknesses, the same troubles, the same temptations, even the same joys that we do. He got hungry; He got tired; He got angry; He experienced pain and pleasure. He cried, and I'm sure He laughed.

He was a human being just like us. He was truly and fully the *Son of Man*.

And in this title Jesus was also identifying Himself with the prophecies made in the Scripture about the Christ. For example, in Psalm 80:17 it says of God, ***Let your hand rest on THE MAN at your right hand, the SON OF MAN you have raised up for yourself.*** This is a clear reference to the Christ, whom God would raise up as the *Shepherd of Israel* and who would ***lead Joseph like a flock*** (v.1).

And in Daniel's vision of the Christ, he wrote,

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a SON OF MAN, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His

dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14 NIV)

Again, a clear reference to the Christ, called *One like the Son of Man*.

And it was probably this identity that Peter recognized when he responded to Jesus' question about who His disciples thought He was. Peter responded with conviction, ***You are the Christ, the Son of THE LIVING GOD.*** (Mt. 16:16)

But why did Peter use the title *Son of the Living God* instead of *Son of Man*?

SON OF THE LIVING GOD - Jesus was fully God

In our last message, we said that we believe in one God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

When we think of a father and a son, we know, of course, that they are the same in the sense that they are of the same species. But they are distinct. The son comes from the father; the father exists before the son.

But though there are some similarities, the relationship between God the Father and God the Son is not entirely the same as the relationship between an earthly father and son.

With God the Father and God the Son, they are both eternal and equal; the One does not exist before the Other, though the Son does *proceed* from the Father. And they are both omniscient or all-knowing and all-wise.

So implied in the title *Son of God* is the fact that He is fully God. And the Bible is clear on this.

- It's clear in it's prediction and confirmation of who Christ would be. We're told . . .

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, MIGHTY GOD, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NIV)

As John said, ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and THE WORD WAS GOD. He was with God in the beginning.*** [And] ***THE WORD BECAME FLESH and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*** (John 1:1-2, 14 NIV)

- The Bible further affirms the deity of Christ in His birth.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18 NIV)

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel [who had informed her of her pregnancy], "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:34-35 NIV)

And this was in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, ***Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*** (Isaiah 7:14 NIV), which means "God with us."

- The Bible further affirms the deity of Christ in His life, including especially His miracles. We're told . . .

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. (Matthew 4:23 NIV)

Nicodemus, a leading Pharisee of Jesus' time, . . . ***came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."*** (John 3:2 NIV)

- And the greatest miraculous sign that affirms the deity of Christ was His resurrection.

As Paul said, Jesus ***was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead*** (Rom. 1:4).

When Thomas saw Him after His resurrection, he reached out and touched Him, and said, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28)

- And the Bible is abundantly clear in its declaration of the deity of Christ when it says . . .

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, (Colossians 2:9 NIV)

So Jesus was fully man and fully God; the "God-man." We believe that because of what the Bible says.

But the question for us is:

WHO DO PEOPLE SAY JESUS IS TODAY?

- Some say He's just a myth; a legend, what His disciples made Him out to be
- Some would say—if He actually existed—He was a blasphemer; a deceiver, a charlatan
- Many might say He was a great teacher; a major religious leader, perhaps even a prophet
- But we believe Jesus Christ was deity, or God manifested in the flesh.

But how important is this specific belief? Do we have to believe that Jesus was God? Isn't it enough to believe He was a good man, a great teacher, even a prophet of God?

We must believe Jesus is God because the Bible says He is. We must believe in the deity of Christ because only if Jesus was God can we truly know God.

Philip [one of Jesus' disciples] **said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "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.**
(John 14:8-9 NIV)

We must believe in the deity of Christ because only if Jesus was God can we be saved, because the Bible says, . . . ***to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.***
(John 1:12-13 NIV)

And Jesus said, ***"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*** (John 3:3 NIV) ***"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*** (John 14:6 NIV)

CONCLUSION

So it's not enough to believe Jesus was only a good man, a great teacher, or even a prophet of God. He is whom the Bible says He was and whom He said He was. Or He was crazy or He was a liar or the Bible is untrue. You must accept Him, or you must reject Him; there is no middle ground!

Who do you say Jesus Christ is?

I'm reminded of the story of the college professor who announced that the final exam would be given at the next class meeting. But he warned the students that

anyone who was late for the class would not be allowed to turn in their exam.

Well, as you might guess, one student came late. And when he went to turn in his exam, the professor told him, "I warned you that if you were late, I would not accept your exam." The student asked the professor, "Do you know who I am?" "It doesn't matter who you are," the professor responded. Again, the student asked, "Do you know who I am?" "No, I don't know who you are, and I don't care. I won't accept your exam!" the professor exclaimed.

With that, the student reached into the pile of exams, lifted the top half and quickly shoved his into the middle of the stack, then walked away.

There are those who don't know who Jesus is, and they really don't care. But when it comes to the "final exam" they'll realize Jesus was the One with the answers, and He is the One who will judge our lives!

I love the song, "**Mary Did You Know**" (by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene)

Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy would one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know
that your Baby Boy has come to make you new?
This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy will calm the storm with His hand?
Did you know
that your Baby Boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little Baby you kissed the face of God?

The blind will see.
The deaf will hear.
The dead will live again.
The lame will leap.
The dumb will speak
The praises of The Lamb.

Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy would one day rule the nations?
Did you know

that your Baby Boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
The sleeping Child you're holding is the Great, I Am.

Do you know Him!? I pray to God that you do, or that you will come to know Him!