

## Without Deity There is No Christmas

John 1:1-5

It wasn't unusual to find Jesus remove Himself to a secluded spot in which to pray. We aren't privileged to know the details of those intimate times of fellowship with the Father, but they were necessary and beneficial. The rigorous demands of ministering to people's physical, emotional and spiritual needs would tax the greatest efforts of any servant of God. It is no different for Jesus. He needed time alone.

On one occasion He and his disciples were traveling north of the Sea of Galilee. Matthew's account tells us they were in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Scholars indicate that this region, though part of Israel, was especially pagan. It is somewhat fitting then given the lack of religious zeal in the area that Jesus asked His disciples a question of utmost importance. We could argue that this question alone may very well determine a person's eternal destiny. We find it recorded in Matthew 6:13. "Who do men say I am?"

It was a question that had followed closely on the heels of asking them who people thought Him to be. People thought Him to be any number of the great Old Testament prophets including John the Baptist who had earlier been beheaded by King Herod. They considered Him a great teacher, a bold speaker, a miracle worker, a holy man.

One day the pastor said to the boys and girls that he wanted to tell them a story about someone who liked to live in the woods. He would give clues and they would have to guess the answer. The first clue was that he liked to climb trees. No one raised their hand. The second clue was that he had a bushy tail. No one raised their hand. The third clue was that they can be black or brown or grey or grey. No one raised their hand. The fourth clue was that he liked to eat nuts.

He was surprised that no one knew the answer after some very obvious clues. Finally little Johnnie raised his hand and said I know the answer should be Jesus, but it sounds like a squirrel to me.

All the clues about Jesus' identity were very obvious but the peoples' responses fell far short of the reality of who they thought Him to be. Their answers weren't even close to the truth. Jesus then asked the disciples who they thought Him to be. Peter, the self-appointed spokesman answered for them all – "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus did not correct Him for faulty theology but commended him not only because he got the answer right, but also acknowledged to the group that it was God who had revealed that truth to him.

As we enter this month to celebrate Christmas, I thought it would be important to go back and visit who Jesus is by talking this week and next about two very important doctrines. Both are essential and foundational to Christianity. Without them there is no hope of eternal life. They are revealed for us in John's gospel chapter 1.

Today we will look at the deity of Jesus from verses 1-5 and next week we will look at the humanity of Jesus from verses 6-14.

If Jesus was not God then Christianity quickly unravels.

If Jesus was not man then Christianity quickly unravels.

Let me begin with a quote from Wayne Grudem in his book on *Systematic Theology*. "*Here it is important to recognize that it is crucially important to insist on the full deity of Christ not only because it is clearly taught in Scripture, but also because (1) only someone who is infinite God could bear the full penalty for all the sins of all those who would believe in Him – any finite creature would have been incapable of bearing that penalty; (2)*

*salvation is from the Lord (Jonah 2:9), and the whole message of Scripture is designed to show that no human being, no creature, could ever save man – only God Himself could; and (3) only someone who was truly and fully God could be the one mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5), both to bring us back to God and also to reveal God most fully to us (John 14:9).*

*“Thus, if Jesus is not fully God, we have no salvation and ultimately no Christianity. It is no accident that throughout history those groups that have given up belief in the full deity of Christ have not remained long within the Christian faith...No one who denies the Son has the Father’ (I John 2:23). ‘Anyone who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son’ (II John 9).”*

You can see from what he says that when we think about Christmas we cannot separate from it the deity of Christ. All that He did in His ministry years were an affirmation of His deity, that Jesus was God in the flesh.

Mark Lowry has written it well in his lyrics:

Mary did you know that your baby boy will someday walk on water?

Mary did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

This child that you've 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 a storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?

And when you kiss your little baby, you have kissed the face of God.

Oh Mary did you know

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?

This sleeping child you're holding is the great I am

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Displayed all over the room today are a number of nativity scenes. Artists throughout history have taken that simple scene and depicted a setting in a stable with animals and shepherds and wise men. Some have an angel hovering over the manger, others a bright star to mark its location. Paintings from medieval times depict the Christ child with a halo around His head depicting His holy nature.

As you see those various renditions of that sacred scene what comes to mind?

Does it remind us that this is God?

Do we see the God who spoke and brought the universe into existence lying in that manger vulnerable to the world?

Do we see the God who parted waters and tumbled down walls and conquered kingdoms?

Do we see the God who delivered Daniel from hungry lions and snatched three men from the heat and fire of a furnace?

This Christmas as you put out your manger scene remember that it is the eternal God, the one who was and is and always will be, He is the one lying in that manger.

This Christmas as you hear of yet another town forced to capitulate with those who want the symbol of Christmas removed, that they are not just removing a symbol, they are rejecting God.

Remember that it is not just a cute decoration, but a representation of what was prophesied by Isaiah 600 years before this birth, that this child is Emmanuel – God with us. He is God in the flesh.

To understand the deity of Christ that He was fully and completely God in every part of His being, let's consider first the evidence for His pre-existence. We see a number of Biblical texts and reasons that support His deity.

## I. THE EVIDENCE OF HIS DEITY – vs. 1-3

Look first at John 20:31. It is here that we find the purpose of why John is writing. What John says here is an affirmation that Jesus is the Son of God, that He was God.

“But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

When we think of the deity of the Word, let's consider the evidence from five different sources.

### A. The Evidence Presented by John – vs. 1-2

As we look at verse 1 we note that John takes us to the very beginning of creation itself. The first two words in this text are the same two words found in Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning”. Now you may think I have lost it when I just read three words, but said there were only two words. Just keep in mind that in the Greek it's only two words – en arxn.

Let's notice a couple other things from this first verse that are important. John is speaking about “the Word”. The Word is as yet not identified, which we will find out in verse 14, but the Word was in the beginning. Now that doesn't mean that when creation began, the Word began as well, that they both had the same beginning point in time. We'll see in verse 3 that the Word created what is seen. Something that is created cannot turn around and create something else. The beginning does not

create the Word, but that Word was already there before the beginning.

The word “was” is in the imperfect tense describing continuous action in the past which reinforces His pre-existence. John wants us to understand that even in the beginning of creation, the Word already existed. That's what he means with the opening statement. The word John uses to describe Jesus will be understood both by the Jews and the Gentiles. Greeks used this term “the word” to refer not only to the spoken word, but also to reason, words still in the mind. One source says that when they applied it to the universe, they meant the rational principle that governs all things. When Jews used the term, they were referring to God.

Note also from verse 1 that the Word is distinct from the Father and yet is also referred to as God. This is an affirmation of Jesus' deity and His equality with God in the fullest sense. He was not only with God in the beginning, but He was God.

But yet we also see the distinct difference between the Word and God, which is a reference to God the Father. The word “with” suggests to be in company with or in close fellowship with. They didn't just exist parallel to each other, but in close relationship with each other.

I can say that I went to college *with* about 600 other students, but that doesn't mean I knew them all. I can say that I roomed *with* a good friend and because of the room we shared we had a companionship.

We can say we went shopping *with* millions of other people on Black Friday or we can say we went shopping *with* a best friend on Black Friday.

“The Word was with God” and we see in verse two that the Word and God have always been in relationship together. John presents evidence to the pre-existence of Jesus.

## B. The Evidence Predicted by the Prophets

Let's not take John's Word only. Let's consider the evidence predicted by Old Testament prophets.

1. Micah 5:2
2. Isaiah 9:6-7
3. Zechariah 2:10-11

Taking a very quick look through Old Testament history we can see that promise narrowing.

In Genesis 3:5 God promised Adam and Eve a redeemer would come, obviously from their family.

In Genesis 12:3 God promised Abraham, the descendant of Adam, that through his family all the nations would be blessed. The promised redeemer would be one of his descendants.

In Genesis 49:10 God promised Judah, the great-grandson of Abraham that the Messiah would come through his family line.

King David was from the family of Judah and in II Samuel 7:16 God promised David that his throne would last forever, a prophecy of the rule of Jesus as King.

And in the gospel accounts we see that fulfillment depicted for us in this manger scene.

These Old Testament prophets narrowed it down further to the place and events surrounding the birth of God to mankind. Every detail foretold by these prophets came true in Jesus, the Word.

## C. The Evidence Portrayed by Jesus

1. John 8:56-58
2. John 17:4-5, 24
3. Revelation 22:13

Not only did Jesus speak of His deity by claiming to be the Son of God, but His miracles confirmed His deity. And on three separate occasions God the Father spoke from heaven affirming that He was pleased with His beloved Son.

In John 5:18 we have the religious leaders seeking to kill Jesus because He claimed that God was His Father, which was a testimony of His equality with God.

Jesus portrayed the evidence of His own deity through what He said and the miracles He performed.

## D. The Evidence Professed by Others

1. Peter – “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” (Matthew 16:16)
2. Thomas looking at the nail prints said “My Lord and my God.” (John 20:26-29)
3. When Jesus arrived at the tomb of Lazarus Martha said “I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God.” (John 11:27)
4. The writer of Hebrews (1:8) speaking of Jesus says “But unto the Son He says, ‘Your throne oh God is forever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.’”
5. Titus 2:13 “Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Others testified to His deity. The evidence is in what they professed about Him by what they saw Him do and heard Him teach.

## E. The Evidence Proved by Creation – v. 3

In this verse we see that Jesus, the Word, was the power in creation. This is affirmed elsewhere in Scripture.

I Corinthians 8:6

Colossians 1:16-17

Hebrews 1:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

I come back to what I said earlier that something created cannot in turn create something else. Christ had to exist before creation, and even exist outside of creation in order to create what we see out of nothing. So when we read that He created “all

things” it means in the Greek that he created each thing separately, every detail.

Think for a moment of the creative power of Christ. We know how big our sun is and yet there is a star called Antares that could hold 64 million suns the size of ours. Yet, there is in the constellation Hercules a star that could contain one hundred million stars the size of Antares.

The Milky Way galaxy is 100,000 million light years in diameter. It is revolving at a speed of 200 miles an hour. It would take two million years to complete one revolution. (We are not spinning out of control.)

Let’s zoom in from something as infinitely large as the universe to as infinitely small as the atom. It is the building block of the universe. One atom is less than one hundred fifty millionth of an inch in diameter. If the molecules of a single drop of water could be converted into grains of sand, there would be enough sand to build a concrete highway half a mile wide and one foot thick all the way from New York to San Francisco.

Jesus made it all and without Him not even one thing was made.

Gaze once more at that tiny infant lying there in the manger and ponder the wonder of that child existing as God the Son in eternity past before anything was created. Jesus, the Word, truly is deity. There are so many things that give evidence to that fact.

If that isn’t enough to convince you let this one verse sum it up for us. Colossians 2:9 “For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.”

So why is the deity of Jesus necessary? Let’s look at the significance of the deity of Christ.

## II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS DEITY –

vs. 4-5

Author Paul Enns writes “*His divine nature made Him fit for the work of Redeemer; His human body allowed Him to shed the blood necessary to redeem. No human being with a sin nature could meet the requirements to become the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.*” (Matthew 26:28; I John 2:1-2)

If he was only a man, He would have had a sin nature and His death and resurrection would have had no effect on sin, no power to save us. As God in the flesh, He alone could pay the debt we owed to God. His victory is ours by faith so that through Him we can become the children of God (John 1:12; I Corinthians 15:3-4, 17).

Now I want to make this abundantly clear, Jesus did not become perfect, He was perfect. There are those like Pastor Creflo Dollar who believe and teach that “*Jesus didn’t show up perfect; He grew into perfection.*” Don’t buy that baloney for a minute. If He had even one sin His sacrifice would have been a waste of time and would save no one. Jesus had to meet all the requirements of a holy God before He could be an acceptable sacrifice for sin.

J. Oswald Chambers writes “*If He was not pre-existent, He cannot be God, and if He is not God, He cannot be Creator and Redeemer.*”

In Luke 1:35 He was announced as the holy child. In John 15:10 He stated that He kept the Father’s commandments.

I Peter 1:19 calls Him the lamb without blemish.

I Peter 2:22 says He committed no sin.

Only someone without sin could be a sacrifice for sin. Only God could be that sacrifice, but He had to be human, and for that we turn to next week.

John offers two reasons for the deity of Jesus.

### A. The Life He Offers – v. 4a

Scripture confirms for us that Jesus is the creator and sustainer of life. The breath we take, the beat of our heart, everything is from His hand. But it is more than physical life He offers. He offers spiritual life.

This little infant came to seek and save those who were lost. Luke 19:10

He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. John 10:10

He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father but through Him. John 14:6

He came that we might have eternal life. John 3:16

If you have the Son of God you have life. If you don't have the Son of God you don't have life.

I John 5:11-12

If we hear His word and believe we have eternal life and won't be condemned. John 5:24

As God, only He is able to offer this life saving gift.

As God, only He can save. There is no other name given among men by which we can be saved.

The significance of His deity is seen in that He offers life.

The significance of His deity is seen in that He offers light.

#### B. The Light He Offers – vs. 4b-5

Matthew 4:16 – “The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

We are living in a world of great spiritual darkness. It's not because there is no light, it's because they refuse to see the light. They choose to stumble around in ignorance. They hurry past Christmas displays to get that next great deal, they sing the traditional Christmas carols that speak of Jesus the Messiah and miss the message, they attend concerts featuring Handel's Messiah because of its beautiful musical score and composition, but fail to recognize the one being sung about is the Savior of the world.

They see with the eyes and hear with their ears, but they refuse and reject the message of Christmas, that God came in the flesh. They sing “joy to the world the Lord is come: let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room...” They prepare their tables and homes with decorations but forget to prepare their hearts to receive Him. Without God becoming man there is no Christmas. Without His deity there is no Christmas. They have ignored the light He offers.

Ephesians 4:17-19 “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”

John 3:19 “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”

Speaking of Himself, Jesus says “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

Jesus offers life and He offers light to point people to salvation. At this most blessed time of the year it is our opportunity to point to that infant in the manger whose birth we celebrate each Christmas as the Son of God, God in the flesh who came to take away the sins of the world. Have you made room for Him in your heart?