

The Divinity of Jesus Christ

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I. Introductory Remarks.

In this lesson we will be looking at the divinity of Jesus from two different perspectives—from the Gospel of John and from the book of Hebrews.

This section addresses the issue of the Deity of Jesus from the perspective of John's gospel. The other books of the gospel tell the story of Jesus. But we find John focusing on distinct theological themes, which contrast such terms as life and death, light and darkness, belief and unbelief, truth and falsehood, love and hate.

II. The Divinity of Jesus from John's Perspective.

In this gospel we have the deepest spiritual and theological teachings of Jesus.

- John's gospel emphasizes Christ's deity to a greater extent than the others.
- John began not with Jesus' birth, but with a statement of Christ's pre-existence as God.
- John's purpose in writing this book was to unveil the Man, Jesus, and to reveal Him as God.

John 20:31 ...but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

This is the purpose of this message as well -- that we may come to a greater level of faith and belief in who Jesus Christ is so that we may experience more of the abundant life He has to offer us.

Special Marks of Jesus' Divinity – John 1:1-18.

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

John starts out by showing and proclaiming that Jesus was God from the beginning. He then goes on to show us how to respond, from the heart, to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The other Gospels begin with the birth of Jesus or with an account of His human ancestry. Matthew and Luke emphasized that a man, a human being, was actually born in the normal way to a young woman named Mary. John, on the other hand, tells us immediately that the Child born was the eternal God! He begins to point us very vividly to special marks of His deity. In these first few verses we have some powerful statements as to who Christ is.

1. Jesus Is Revealed as Being Pre-existent with the Father.

The first mark of divinity that John draws us to is the fact that Jesus was eternally existent with the Father. John takes us back to eternity by identifying Jesus as "The Word" who was in the beginning.

John 1:1-2 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*

There are other passages of scripture throughout the Bible that identify Jesus as being pre-existent with the Father as well.

Micah 5:2 *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel, **Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.**"*

Hebrews 7:1 *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him... without father, without mother, without genealogy, **having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God**, remains a priest continually.*

John 8:58 *Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."*

Revelation 22:13 *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."*

2. He Is Shown and Revealed as the Creator of the Universe.

John 1:3 *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

Again, we see this in other passages of Scripture as well. It is not an isolated thought. It is in agreement with what other writers of the New Testament had to

say as well.

Colossians 1:16 *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*

Hebrews 1:8-10 *But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." **And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands;***

3. He is Proclaimed as Life.

John 1:4 *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

No one but God the Father, unbegotten and uncreated, inherently possesses life-in-himself. He is in His very being 'the living God'. Human beings, in common with all other living things, do not possess life-in-themselves; their life is derived from God, the source and stay of all life. To the Son alone, begotten but not created, has the Father imparted His own prerogative to have life-in-Himself. – *F.F. Bruce.*

This was not something that began with the incarnation; but is an eternal act, part and parcel of the unique Father – Son relationship which existed already in the beginning.

John 5:26-27 *"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, "and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.*

In the eternal order of the Father, as Father, imparts to the Son, as Son, that life-in-himself, the Son reveals that life to men and women.

Jesus has come to impart His life giving spirit into each of our lives through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Because He is the resurrection of Life He imparts the eternal spirit of life into our beings.

John 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

4. Jesus is Proclaimed as the Light of the World.

Another term that is used to describe Jesus' deity is that of light. Light and darkness are often moral terms. Light represents moral purity, holiness, righteousness, and goodness. In contrast, darkness as a moral term represents evil, all those warped and twisted ways in which sin had perverted the good in man, and brought pain to individuals and society.

The moral light is one of the most powerful and pervasive evidences of God's existence. eg. of Peter after catching the fish.

Luke 5:8 *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"*

The deep-seated conviction that there is a moral order to things is present in every human society. But society is in darkness; even though some sense of moral order and rightness exists. People in every society choose to do what they themselves believe is wrong.

This moral awareness in a world running madly after darkness is another testimony to us that light comes from the pre-existent Word. Light, like creation and life itself, shouts out the presence of God behind the world we see.

– Lawrence O. Richards.

John 8:12 *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

5. Jesus is Proclaimed as being Full of Grace and Truth.

Finally we see Jesus portrayed as the Word becoming flesh being full of grace and truth

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

When the Word became flesh we were given new light – a revelation that the divine morality is "grace and truth". In Jesus we see a morality that goes beyond law and can only be identified as grace.

In verses 9-13 we see grace portrayed when the Creator entered the world He had made. He came to His own people, to whom He had given life. But His own people would not receive Him. He was rejected, scorned, and ultimately

crucified. In spite of this, He reached out to individuals who would receive Him and He gave the right to become children of God.

As you study and meditate in the Gospel of John, the theme of Jesus, the Living Word, dominates the Gospel of John. Jesus, full of grace and truth, revealed to us the relationship which God the Father had always yearned to have with humankind. As His sons and daughters, a way of life is revealed to us by the splendor of grace rather than by human devices.

We must see Jesus as He is, God's ultimate Word of revelation. We must hear His Word, come to understand and believe in Him. When we trust ourselves to Jesus, forever, and daily, we will learn what it means to "have eternal life in Him."

III. The Divinity of Jesus from the Book of Hebrews' Perspective.

The Book of Hebrews was written in response to legalistic Jews who traveled to young churches, arguing that an Old Testament lifestyle must be maintained by believers in Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews shows that Christ is the reality which Old Testament institutions only foreshadowed.

It points out that in Christ there is far more than an Old Testament faith offered. There is a maturity, an experience with God, a full and complete salvation that through history had awaited Jesus' coming. It is this full salvation that the Book of Hebrews explains.

The Book of Hebrews begins with Jesus because total confidence in Him must be the basis of our new life, and of our identity as Christians.

***Hebrews 1:1-2** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ²has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

In this section we will focus on the following areas concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

- The Superiority of Jesus
- Jesus, the Living Word
- Jesus, Our High Priest

1. The Superiority of Jesus.

The clearest evidence of Jesus' position as a full Member of the Godhead is given in these first few verses in Hebrews. We see who Jesus is, all He accomplished, and all that will be His.

Hebrews 1:3-4 *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 at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

The Godhead or the Trinity was never explicitly taught in the Old Testament, although it was glimpsed in the plurals of Genesis 1 as God said, *"let Us make man in Our image."*

It was also detected in the very terms by which the unity of God was affirmed: *"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One."* "One" in the original speaks of a compound unity, such as that of a single bunch of grapes which is composed of numerous units. Other glimpses of the Godhead are seen in the many Old Testament references to the Spirit of God as distinct from God Himself.

In the New Testament, however, we find Jesus teaching, *"I and the Father are One"* (John 10:30), *"No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6).

It also became important to realize that all there is of salvation for us is to be found in Jesus. There is nothing higher or greater than knowing Jesus.

Acts 4:12 *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

There is nothing beyond knowing Jesus that is key to a supposedly "higher" spiritual experience. The Bible says of the Holy Spirit, *"He will bring glory to Me [Jesus]"*

John 16:14 *"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."*

In everything in our Christian lives, God has determined that the focus should be on Jesus. Our understanding of who Jesus is should leave no doubts that Jesus is God. The verses in Hebrews 1 above show this so clearly.

- **Sonship Belongs To Jesus** – *Hebrews 1:2 (spoken to us by His Son).*

This term has been used by some to question the full deity of Jesus. But the term "son" is designed to emphasize relationships between the Persons of the Godhead, not to suggest that Jesus is a created being.

The term *firstborn* in verse 6 (...*when He again brings the firstborn into the world*), is used to describe Jesus as the One coming forth from God to found the New Testament Church.

Romans 8:29 *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Revelation 1:5 *and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,*

- **The Coming Kingdom Belongs To Jesus** – *Hebrews 1:2*

Jesus has been appointed "*Heir of all things.*" He will inherit and purify this world at His coming, and then create a new heaven and a new earth. He is Heir to all, and this constitutes a promise that one day all will be fully God's.

John 3:35 "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

- **Creative Power Belongs To Jesus** – *Hebrews 1:2 (through whom also He made the worlds)*

Jesus is the one who spoke, and in speaking caused our whole vast universe to appear. Jesus is the One who acted to shape stars so distant that astronomers can only guess at their existence.

John 1:3 *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

- **The Original Glory of God Belongs to Jesus** – *Hebrews 1:3 (who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person).*

The phrases "*brightness of His glory and the express image of His person*" are both strong assertions. Brightness, the light shining forth from a luminary, is all that the human eye can see. Similarly, all that we can see of God shines through Jesus! Express image assures us that there is a total and complete correspondence between the eternal God and the Man, Jesus. When we look at Jesus, we see exactly what God is like, for Jesus is God, and reveals Him exactly.

John 14:8-9 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

- **Sustaining Power Belongs To Jesus** – Hebrews 1:3 (upholding all things by the word of His power).

The entire universe and the natural laws are energized and held together by the sustaining power that belongs to Jesus.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Luke 8:25 But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

- **Redemptive Work Belongs To Jesus** – Hebrews 1:3 (when He had by Himself purged our sins).

As a man, Jesus walked our earth and knew our nature and weaknesses. But now, He has returned to *"the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."* His work has been accomplished through the Blood that was poured out for us. He has provided salvation to make us whole.

1 Peter 1:18-19 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

2. Jesus, the Living Word.

In Israel's past God communicated to His people in many ways. The writer of Hebrews identifies some in the first verses of this book—and then goes on to say that now God *"has spoken to us by His Son"*

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ²has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

1. The Living Word of God Became Flesh.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

1 Timothy 3:16 *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.*

3. Jesus, the Living Word, Is Superior to the Angels.

Hebrews 1:4-6 *having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. ⁵For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? ⁶But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."*

The writer of Hebrews now begins an extended argument to prove that Jesus is superior to the angels. Why is this important? The answer is seen in Hebrews 2:2.

Hebrews 2:2 *For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,*

The message spoken by angels was referred to as being binding in that the Jews believed that their Old Testament had been mediated through angelic messengers. The Word of God was deeply respected in part because of this supernatural mediation.

Now the writer is saying, *the Spokesman is greater than the angels!* The Messenger is God Himself, exalted above the ancient messengers, for He is the very Father of eternity.

Because of the temptation on the part of the early church to think of Jesus as a "high" angel, the writer of Hebrews makes it clear at the outset that Jesus is superior to all angels.

- **Superior Relationship** – Hebrews 1:5 Jesus stands beside God the Father

as His Son, not below Him as a creature.

- **Superior as Deity** – Hebrews 1:6-9 None of the angels is called God, and no angel is worshiped by his fellows. Yet Jesus is given the name of God, and the angelic hosts worship Him. (*"Let all the angels of God worship Him."*)
- **Superior as Creator** – Hebrews 1:10-12 Unlike angels, Jesus was there *"in the beginning"* when He laid the foundations of Creation. Angels change and grow in knowledge as the centuries unfold God's plan, but Jesus remains the same; as God He knows all.
- **Superior in Destiny** – Hebrews 1:13) No angel was ever invited to share the rule of the universe as God's equal. But for God to picture Jesus *"at My right hand"* indicates that Jesus shares God's rule even now.

In every way Jesus is superior – thus it must be that the revelation He brings, and the salvation He offers is superior to the fragments offered in the Old Testament.

What should be our response to the presentation of Jesus as the ultimate spokesman? *"We must pay more careful attention therefore, to what we have heard."*

Hebrews 2:1-3 *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. ²For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,*

3. Jesus, Our High Priest.

In this section, we will be discussing Jesus, as our High Priest. In the Old Testament the High Priest was the man appointed to represent the people before God. He was the man who dealt with sins and weaknesses by offering the necessary sacrifices for sins.

Hebrews 5:1-3 *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. ³Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins.*

As a link between God and man, the Old Testament priest was never

enough. He was a shadow representing the coming perfect Priest.

Romans 8:3 *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,*

Because Jesus is both God and Man, He is an **adequate** link between us and the Father. So the Scripture says, *"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).*

When we fail and are ashamed, or when we are overwhelmed and need help desperately, we need never draw back, because Jesus is able to understand and sympathize with our **weaknesses** having dwelt in human flesh himself.

It is important, when we have heard the voice of God calling us to act, and still feel inadequate, that we turn to Jesus as High Priest and realize all that He is able to do for us. In this lesson we should be able to get a greater understanding of Jesus as our High Priest so that we can rely on Him whatever the situation calls for.

- **Priestly Ministry Function and Qualifications - Hebrews 5:1-3.**

Hebrews 5:1-3 *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. ³Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins.*

The priest represented other men *"in **matters** related to God"* and offered "gifts and sacrifices for sins."

Jesus of course offered Himself, and by that one sacrifice, opened the door to permanent **relationship** with God. Jesus fulfills everything that the Old Testament hinted at concerning relationship with God.

The high priest of the Old Testament had to be *"selected among men"* and be "able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness."

Jesus was chosen from among men, for He became a Man. But what about "subject to weakness"?

Hebrews 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Weakness does not refer to our human tendency to give in to temptation, but to our capacity to feel it! Our weakness is **human frailty** itself: the hungers, the desires, the pains to which we are subject and which push and pull against our wills. Jesus, in taking on human nature, took on our weaknesses as well. At every point in every way, Jesus was tested as we are. In fact, He was tempted beyond the point at which we give in!

Because Jesus was tempted beyond what we are, He knows more about human frailty than we do. He really understands how terrible it is to be weak.

In Gethsemane Jesus knew a desperate **extremity** which drove Him to pray "with loud cries and tears"

Hebrews 5:7 *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.*

Luke 22:42-44 *saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." ⁴³Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like **great drops of blood** falling down to the ground.*

Q: Why was Jesus in such agony that He was sweating great drops of blood?

This full and total **identification** with us enables Jesus to "deal gently" with us when we go astray. The Greek word, *metriopatheia*, suggests a balanced involvement and suggests both feeling with the injured, yet being detached enough to react and to act for the other's good.

Hebrews 5:7 also says Jesus met His dying with "*reverent submission*," which enabled Him to learn obedience through the things He suffered.

Hebrews 5:7b-8 *...who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*

Meeting life with reverent submission frees us from being overwhelmed, and

helps us grow in our own ability to feel with those who are hurt without becoming so "sympathetic" that we are unable to help.

- **Jesus was made perfect through His suffering.**

Hebrews 5:9 *And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,*

The phrase does not suggest that Jesus fell short, as God or as a human being. The Greek word, *teleios*, speaks of a perfection that is related to the purpose or function for which a thing or person is designed.

5048. *teleioo, tel-i-o'-o; from G5046; to complete, i.e. (lit.) accomplish, or (fig.) consummate (in character):--consecrate, finish, fulfil, (make) perfect.*

In the task of being fitted to be our High Priest, Jesus learned the pain of being human and the **cost** of obedience when suffering is involved. As a result He became a truly qualified Person appointed by God, who alone has the right to determine who will be High Priest to His people.

Hebrews 5:4-6 *And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." ⁶As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek";*

II. Concluding Remarks.

We have now seen conclusive evidence through the Scriptures that Jesus is as much God as God the Father. He has fulfilled all Scriptures pertaining to the coming Messiah and is now our faithful high priest who continually makes intercession on our behalf before the Father. Trust in Him and you will be blessed throughout all eternity.