

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Orcutt Christian Church

A Grace Driven Church for Grace Needing People!

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The Divinity of Jesus Christ

Elder Ben Colon II

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Communion: Robert Domingos, Ph.D.

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Introductory story:

I was invited to a dinner recently with a family who I am very close to. The father was making prime rib, while his wife prepared all the fixing (name a few). There were fine wines to drink, for those who chose to. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming. During dinner, everyone enjoyed themselves. We all ate the delicious food and exchanged polite conversation. The evening was most enjoyable.

It was after dinner, while several people continued drinking

that the conversation took a more serious and darker turn. Politics came up. And several of the adults began to hash out their opinions and why things are so bad, and how they could be remedied, if only! I participated in the beginning, but eventually stop, because it became obvious that the conversation was losing substances and was becoming more of a complaint session.

I accepted it, realizing that it was a common behavior associated with drinking while attempting to relieve the stresses of life. Then something very unusual happened. Something that that struck me hard and to my core. Something that saddened me deeply.

The host of the dinner had their sixteen-year-old daughter present during the dinner. The you sixteen-year-old girl was participating in the conversation and seemed to be enjoying herself. When all sudden she tells the group at the dinner table about another young girl from school who believed the Jesus was the Christ, the son of the Living God. That she actually believed that He was God and provided salvation. I was listening to the young girl thinking to myself that I believe the same. Then the young girl ended her comment with “how stupid is she? Right?”

I was thrown back. Did she realize what she was saying. By mocking the young girl from school, she intentionally or unintentionally denied the deity of Jesus. I didn't know what to say. But what she said did not affect me as much than what happened next. Sitting across the table from this young girl, I could see her eyes, and what they were saying. After she made the comment, she became quiet and a look in her eyes was saying, “did I say something wrong?” I could tell that something inside her was making her question herself. She then looked to her parents that were hosting the dinner, then to her aunts, and cousin who give no sign of objection to what she had said. Then the look in her eyes changed from was I wrong to I must be

right. I was appalled.

Then again, I the Christian, a believer in the one true God, one who testified before the church that “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living of God. That Jesus Christ is the first and the last, the beginning and the end; that He is my Lord and my God,” said nothing. I left the dinner shortly after, but that moment did not leave me.

Questions plagued my mind soon afterwards. Should I have said something? What should I have said? Did I have the responsibility to say something? If I said something, what should have it been? Was it my place to speak out as a guest in their home? Who am I to correct my host’s daughter? Did I fail because I didn’t stand up for the gospel?

The dinner was on my mind for days. I thought of what I should have said and why I should have said something. But what! If I told the young girl that the girl from her school was right and she counter with, how is she right? How would I have answered that question? Would I just simply say, because she is just right, or because the bible says so? I remember asking questions like that when I was young and got such answers. The worst was “because I told you so.” That behavior reminds of the nurses in the ER who are speaking to a non-English speaking person. They often just speak a little louder and a little slower thinking such behavior would make understanding easier. But in fact, it just gets blank stares. As Christians we often act in such a way, when we talk to a person who doesn’t believe or understand, we just speak a little louder and a little slower. We think if we affirm certain things, people will believe them, understand them, and accept them. But the truth is, they don’t, and they shouldn’t. Like the nurse speaking to a non-English speaking patient, we are arrogant to believe that we can just keep saying the same thing expecting to engage in meaningful dialogue, and ultimately bringing someone to believe by faith

with our encounter.

What evidently came to me from my internal dialogue was a question. Did Jesus ever claim to be God? Without knowing this information, the conversation if I chose to have engaged with this young girl could have went something like this:

Me: the girl from your school is right.

YG: “I know you say He was God, but did He ever claim to be God?”

Me: Ahh!

YG: “You want Him to be God,”

Me: Ahhh!

YG: “You need Him to be God, because Christians need Him to be God. If He is not God, then He is just one of many on the plane of world religions, and Christianity has lost its dominant role in the world.

Me: Ahhhhhhhhh!

YG: “Thank you very much, you don’t know anything. You are a Christian ignoramus and you are annoying me.

This is smart young lady; I would have had no response.

So instead, I said nothing and chose to leave and go an examine the only evidence we have, the Bible. To be able to answer the question, “does Jesus’ claim to be God?” That’s what I did, and now I am here today to tell you what I found out.

Indirect Claims

Jesus does indeed make such claims in the bible both directly and indirectly. Let’s start with His indirect claims. First, Jesus made staggering claims about His ability to meet the spiritual needs of others. In the gospel of John there is a great succession of “I am” statements made by Jesus. “I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness.” “I am the bread of life.” “I am the door.” “I am the good shepherd.” “I am the

resurrection and the life.” “I am the way, the truth and the life,” and so on. Why are these “I am” statements significant? Because when Jesus makes each of these statements, He is claiming that He and He alone could meet every individual’s need for forgiveness, peace, security, and direction. And He alone could bring them into a living, eternal relationship with God. He is not simply making interesting statements. He is actually affirming certain convictions about who He is. “Follow Me,” He says, “and you’ll never walk in darkness.” “Eat the bread of life and you’ll never hunger again.” “Follow Me, walk with Me, and I’ll take you directly into heaven.” It is difficult to imagine how anyone in their right mind could make even one of these claims without believing himself to be God. Imagine a man walking onto the stage of human history and saying, “I am the way, the truth, the life. Nobody comes to God the Father but through me.” That man is either a bad man telling lies, or a madman totally deluded, or he is the Godman. He is actually who he claims to be. We need to be able to engage people at this level of dialogue. We can say to them, “I know you’ve got a problem with this idea of Jesus being divine but look at what He said. He’s either a liar, a madman, or God. Do you think He’s a liar?” “No,” they’ll probably say. “Do you think He’s crazy?” They might say, “No, I don’t think so. He healed people and welcomed them and talked with them. I don’t think he was crazy.” “Well, then, who do you think He is?” The standard answer is, “I think he was just a good man.” How can you have a good man who tells lies like this? He did not leave us the option of being a good man. He was either who He said He was, or as C. S. Lewis says, “He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse.” The evidence in the Bible is that Jesus made

staggering statements and claims concerning how He alone could address the spiritual needs of others.

Secondly, He made astonishing claims about His teachings. In Matthew 5:18 during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” Jesus was here affirming the authenticity of the **Old Testament**. (This is very important) He was saying what others would say of the Scriptures—they are from God, they are factual, they cannot be tampered with. Then in Matthew 24:35, He says the same thing about His own words: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” He was claiming that His words were like the Old Testament words. “The words that I speak are the very words of God. They will never, ever pass away.” Two thousand years later, we are studying the very words of Jesus, which He said will never pass away, despite the fact that centuries have tried to grind into the dust of oblivion the very truth of the Scriptures.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also takes false interpretations of the Old Testament and corrects them. He says, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. (Matthew 5:21–22a) You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (vv. 27–28) It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife, ...’ But I tell you, ... (vv. 31–32) You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you... (vv. 43–44) And on and on.

What is the point here? If someone else were to take the Bible and say, “You’ve heard what the Bible tells you to do, but I’m

telling you to do this other,” we’d be saying back, “Who in the world do you think you are?” What was Jesus doing? He was clearly making astonishing claims about His teaching. He was putting His teaching on a par with the rest of biblical instruction.

I need to take a moment here and remind you of who he is speaking to. He is speaking to the Jewish people, the Israelites. (make comments)

Another area where Jesus made clear in His indirect claims was in John 14. Jesus has just said He is going away, and He will come back and receive them unto Himself, when Philip steps up and asks a question. You got to love Philip. Philip is that guy in school who was always willing to ask the dumb question you were afraid to ask yourself. Philip says, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (v. 8). Jesus answers him, “Don’t you know me, Philip?” What is Jesus saying here? He is saying, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (v. 9). Some people say Jesus never ever claimed to be God. What is this, if not a claim to be God?

I want to take a moment here to discuss religious groups that say they honor the father but not the son, thus separating the father from the son. I remember going to a church as a child where they said “I am a believer. I believe in God, I honor Jehovah. I just don’t honor Jesus the Son. I don’t believe he is the incarnate Son of God.” These people felt secure in their faith because they honored the father. But let’s take a look at what the bible says. Jesus says in John 5:23 “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.” The bible makes it clear, that no one can honor the Father and not the Son. So, if it is impossible not to honor God the Father except in the righteous honor of the Son, then those who claim to honor the

Father and ignore the Son do not honor the Father. So where is their spiritual power coming from?

John 15:23 says, “He who hates me hates my Father as well.”

Some people say, “I don’t hate God. I just hate anyone who says Jesus is God, because nowhere does the Bible suggest that.” But Jesus says in the Bible, “You say you hate me, then you hate my Father as well.” Why? Jesus says, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

The Jewish people in Jesus’ day could not stomach that, just like some religious groups today claiming to be Christian. The Jews would rebuttal Jesus by saying “Abraham is our father” (John 8:39). “We don’t have to listen to this stuff, Jesus. We are nice, upright, religious people. We have Abraham as our father. We can go to the real source.”

Jesus said to them, hold onto to yours seat “You belong to your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire... He is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Imagining saying that today in our culture. So, did a madman speak these words? Or a bad man? Or the Godman?

Direct Claims

Let’s move on to the direct claims Jesus made in regard to his deity. First let me state that there is nowhere in the New Testament where Jesus uses the words “I am God.” It can’t be found, and many challenge His deity base on this fact. However, He does make the staggering claim using other words.

This is First direct claim of three I am choosing to use for this sermon, there are many more, is found in John 8:56-58. Jesus said to the Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” The Jews said, “Wait a minute. You’re not yet 50 years old and you’ve seen Abraham?”

And Jesus replied, “Before Abraham was born, I am!”

What’s going on here and why are the Jews so upset? They were ready to stone Jesus. We need to take a look at the question which spurred this response which was, “Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you **claim to be?**” (John 8:53). It is a great question because a Jew could conceive of nobody greater than Abraham. Apart from God, Abraham was at the top of the list. They didn’t ask, “Are you older than Abraham?” They asked, “Are you greater?” And the kicker they got back was “Before Abraham was born, I am.”

Why did this hit them so hard? Because they knew that was one of the key names God used in the Old Testament to describe Himself. God told Moses to tell the Israelites, “Tell them I Am has sent you” (Exodus 3:14). So, when Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am,” the Jews picked up stones to stone Him. But why stoning? Because claiming to be God was blasphemy, and the penalty was stoning.

Number two. In John 10, Jesus is speaking of the fact that He has sheep who listen to His voice. In verses 29 and 30, He says of them, “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

The word which is used there for “one” is the neutral pronoun, not masculine or feminine. This is significant in that the claim Jesus was making was simply to be one in substance and essence with God the Father. As a result of making that affirmation, He was met with a quite violent reaction. “The Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, I have shown you many miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” (vv. 31–32). It was almost as if He wanted to elicit from them this response so as to underpin the claim He had so clearly made. They replied, “We are not stoning you for any of these, ... but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, **claim**

to be God” (v. 33). And still people walk the streets telling themselves, “Well, I’m not sure Jesus Himself ever claimed to be God.”

Let me assure you the Jewish mind was in no way misled concerning what Jesus was claiming. That is why they responded the way they did. Stoning was the justifiable reaction to blasphemy, and blasphemy was the claim on the part of any mere man to actually be God.

The third direct claim takes us into John 18, where we have the record by John of the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas came “guiding a detachment of soldiers, some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. **Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him**, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied.” Jesus responds by saying simply, “I am he.” When He does, the group draws back and falls to the ground. What is going on here? This is a detachment of soldiers who come to make a routine arrest, but instead of having to chase after their suspect, He walks up to them and asks who they want. When they say, “We want Jesus of Nazareth,” He answers, “I am.” This was the same declaration which upset the Jews so much before. Jesus says, “I am,” and the soldiers fall to the ground. Why? Let’s take a look at (Exodus 3:13-14) Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites (Jews) and say to them, The God of your fathers (Abraham being one of them) has sent me to you, and they ask me, What is His name? Then what shall I tell them? God said to Moses, “I am who I am, this is what you are to say to the Israelites: **I am** has sent me to you.”

At that very moment when the soldiers fell to the ground, Jesus gave Himself into their care. Something of the divine glory and power and majesty and wonder of who Jesus is emanated from Him even in that moment when they asked a

routine question and He gave His reply, I am, the very name of God. You see, right before he was taken to be judged, beaten, and crucified for our sins, Jesus made it known who He was. I am! (God)

This study was an overwhelming undertaking. There is so much I could have covered but did not due to time restraints. But I am willing to sit down and discuss the deity of Jesus with anyone of you who wishes to study and dig deeper into scripture. And for that young girl, I will see her again. And I will be praying and asking God for the right time to sit down and share with her what I learned in an open and meaningful dialogue.

Let's pray.