

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

CHRISTOLOGY

The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ

UNIT 3: THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD

Lesson 9

The Full Deity of Christ

Very God of Very God — The Son Who Is Equal with the Father

He Is the Radiance of the Glory of God and the Exact Imprint of His Nature

Key Texts: John 1:1; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3, 8

“My Lord and My God!”

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SERIES VERSE

*“For we do not preach ourselves
but Christ Jesus as Lord,
and ourselves as your bond-servants
on account of Jesus.”*
2 CORINTHIANS 4:5, NASB 1995

INTRODUCTION

We have spent the last two lessons establishing the genuine, complete, and permanent humanity of Jesus Christ, the truth that the one who came in the flesh was truly, messily, vulnerably human in every respect short of sin. Now we turn to the other side of the great christological affirmation, the side that is, if anything, even more contested and even more consequential: the full, unqualified, undiminished deity of Jesus Christ. Not a divine-like quality. Not a degree of divinity beyond that of ordinary human beings. Not an elevation to semi-divine status as a reward for extraordinary obedience. But the full, complete, unreduced deity of the one, true, eternal God, the God who made the heavens and the earth, before whom every creature must bow, whose glory fills the universe and whose holiness consumes the unrighteous.

The claim that Jesus of Nazareth is fully, truly, essentially God is the most audacious claim in the history of human thought. It is also the claim on which the entire gospel stands or falls. If Jesus is not truly God, if He is merely the greatest of human teachers, the most devoted of divine servants, the highest point of religious achievement in human history, then His death is the death of a martyr, not the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. His resurrection, if it occurred at all, is the restoration of a human life, not the vindication of the Lord of glory. His intercession, if it continues, is the prayer of a human advocate, not the perpetual presentation of an infinite atonement before the throne of infinite holiness. The deity of Christ is not one Christian doctrine among many; it is the doctrine that gives every other doctrine its weight, its certainty, and its saving power.

This lesson works through the biblical evidence for the full deity of Christ under four headings: the explicit affirmations of deity in the New Testament, the divine attributes the Son possesses, the divine works He performs, and the divine worship He receives. It then addresses the major contemporary denials of Christ's deity and the christological and soteriological stakes of those denials. And it closes, as every genuine engagement with the glory of Christ must, in adoration. The case for the full deity of Christ is not merely an argument to be won; it is a reality to be worshipped.

I. THE EXPLICIT AFFIRMATIONS: THE NEW TESTAMENT'S DIRECT DECLARATIONS OF CHRIST'S DEITY

The Texts That Call Jesus God Without Qualification or Apology

A. John 1:1, "And the Word Was God"

The foundation of the New Testament's witness to the deity of Christ is the third clause of John 1:1, examined in detail in Lesson 3: "And the Word was God" (NASB 1995). The Greek καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ

λόγος (kai theos en ho logos) predicates full deity of the pre-incarnate Word with no qualification, no gradation, and no subordination. The absence of the definite article before θεός (theos) in the predicate position is a grammatical feature that reflects the qualitative force of the predicate, not a diminishment of the deity predicated: the Word is fully, essentially, qualitatively God. The Jehovah's Witnesses' translation ("the Word was a god") introduces a polytheism that is alien to the thoroughgoing Jewish monotheism of John's Gospel and that the context of the entire prologue explicitly refuses.

John 1:18 extends the explicit deity claim with the remarkable designation "the only begotten God" (μονογενῆς θεός, monogenēs theos), the only begotten one is not merely divine-like or divinely favored; he is θεός, God. The combination of monogenēs (only begotten) and theos (God) in a single designation captures with maximum compression both the unique personal relationship of the Son to the Father (only begotten) and the full divine nature of the Son (God). This is not a subordinate deity; this is God the Son, uniquely and eternally generated by God the Father, and fully sharing the divine nature.

B. John 20:28, Thomas's Confession: "My Lord and My God"

The confession of Thomas in John 20:28 is the christological climax of the entire Fourth Gospel. The narrative has been building toward this moment from the opening declaration of 1:1; and when it comes, it comes with the force of an eyewitness encounter with the risen Christ, addressed directly to Jesus Himself: "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (NASB 1995). The double address, "My Lord" (ὁ κύριός μου, ho kyrios mou) and "My God" (ὁ θεός μου, ho theos mou), is the most direct and the most personal declaration of Christ's full deity in the entire New Testament. Thomas is not offering a metaphor or an expression of religious enthusiasm; he is making a theological identification of the risen Jesus with the one, true God of Israel.

Jesus' response to Thomas's confession is equally significant for what it does not say. In every other instance in the New Testament in which a human being or an angel receives worship or divine address inappropriately, the response is immediate correction: Peter corrects Cornelius ("Stand up; I too am just a man," Acts 10:26, NASB 1995), the angel corrects John ("Do not do that; I am a fellow servant," Revelation 22:9, NASB 1995). Jesus does not correct Thomas. He does not say "Do not call me your God; I am merely a servant of the Father." He receives the confession, and He pronounces a beatitude on those who will believe without seeing, a beatitude that presupposes the truth of the confession. The silence of Jesus in the face of Thomas's declaration is itself a powerful affirmation of the deity being confessed.

C. Romans 9:5, "Christ Who Is Over All, God Blessed Forever"

Paul's doxological parenthesis in Romans 9:5 provides one of the most explicit Pauline affirmations of Christ's full deity: "whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen" (NASB 1995). The Greek is ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητός

εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας (ho ōn epi pantōn theos eulogētos eis tous aiōnas). The grammatical debate over whether “God blessed forever” is a predicate applied to Christ or a separate doxological address to the Father has been extensive, but the most natural reading of the Greek, supported by the majority of New Testament scholars across the theological spectrum, is the christological reading: Paul identifies Christ as the one who is “over all, God blessed forever.” The phrase “over all” (ἐπὶ πάντων) affirms the sovereign lordship of Christ over all things, and the designation “God blessed forever” affirms His full divine nature.

D. Titus 2:13, “Our Great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”

Titus 2:13 provides another unambiguous Pauline affirmation: “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (NASB 1995). The Greek construction, τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (tou megalou theou kai sōtēros hēmōn Iēsou Christou), is governed by what scholars call the Granville Sharp Rule: when two nouns in the same case are joined by the Greek καί (kai) and the first noun has a definite article but the second does not, both nouns refer to the same person. The single article before “great God” governs both “God” and “Savior,” identifying them as a single referent, Jesus Christ. Paul is declaring that the one appearing in glory is “our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”, applying both “God” and “Savior” to the single person of Jesus.

“Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” | “In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”

JOHN 20:28; COLOSSIANS 2:9, NASB 1995

II. THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES: THE SON POSSESSES EVERY DIVINE PERFECTION

Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Immutability, and Eternity in Christ

A. Omniscience

The divine omniscience of Christ is explicitly affirmed in John 21:17, where Peter’s third declaration of love draws from him the pained acknowledgment: “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You” (NASB 1995). The phrase “You know all things” (σὺ πάντα οἶδας, sy panta oidas) is not an expression of spiritual perception or heightened intuition; it is a straightforward attribution of exhaustive knowledge to Jesus. Colossians 2:3 confirms it: in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (NASB 1995). The phrase “all the treasures” (πάντες οἱ θησαυροί, pantes hoi thēsauroi) is comprehensive: not some of the treasures of wisdom, not most of the treasures of

knowledge, but all of them, hidden in Christ. The one who has all the treasures of all wisdom and knowledge is the one who knows all things.

John 16:30 records the disciples' recognition of this attribute during the Upper Room Discourse: "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God" (NASB 1995). They connect His omniscience ("You know all things") with His divine origin ("You came from God"), a connection that reflects the New Testament's consistent pattern of grounding the divine attributes of Christ in His divine nature rather than in a merely functional exaltation. John 2:24–25 provides the narrative demonstration: "Jesus... knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man" (NASB 1995). The omniscience of Jesus is not the product of divine revelation given to Him from outside; it is the intrinsic knowledge of the one who is himself divine.

B. Omnipotence

The divine omnipotence of Christ is established primarily through the creation texts already examined in Lesson 3: "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:3, NASB 1995); "by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible" (Colossians 1:16, NASB 1995); "Through whom also He made the world" (Hebrews 1:2, NASB 1995). The power to create all things out of nothing is the power of omnipotence, and the New Testament attributes it unambiguously to Christ.

The omnipotence of Christ is also manifest in the incarnate life: He commands the wind and the waves and they obey ("Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Mark 4:41, NASB 1995). He raises the dead by the power of His own word: "Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43, NASB 1995). He heals with a word and a touch that require no assistance from any power outside Himself. And He predicts, with perfect accuracy, the circumstances of His own death and resurrection, a power over historical events that belongs to God alone. Matthew 28:18 records His resurrection declaration: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (NASB 1995). The scope of this authority, "all authority," "in heaven and on earth", is the scope of divine omnipotence.

C. Omnipresence

The divine omnipresence of Christ is expressed in two remarkable promises that bracket the Gospel of Matthew. At the beginning of the narrative, He is named Immanuel, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23, NASB 1995). At the end, He promises "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20, NASB 1995). The promise of universal, perpetual presence, with all His disciples, in all places, at all times, until the end of the age, is a promise that only an omnipresent being can make and keep. A merely human Jesus, however exalted, cannot be simultaneously present with disciples in Jerusalem, in Samaria, in Rome, in Antioch, and in every subsequent generation of the church until the end of the age.

Matthew 18:20 makes the point explicit in a different context: “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (NASB 1995). The promise is not “I will send My Spirit to be among you” (though the Spirit is indeed sent); it is “I am there”, a personal, immediate divine presence of Christ Himself in every gathering of His people, wherever in the world and in history that gathering occurs. This is the omnipresence of God, claimed by and for the one who is God the Son.

D. Immutability and Eternity

Hebrews 13:8 declares the divine immutability of Christ with the comprehensive simplicity of a creedal confession: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (NASB 1995). The threefold “same” across yesterday (the past), today (the present), and forever (the eternal future) is the language of immutability, the divine attribute of unchangeable, unalterable being. This is not merely a declaration that Jesus’ character is consistent or that His promises are reliable; it is a declaration that the one who is the subject of the statement is unchangeable in His essential being across all time and eternity.

Hebrews 1:10–12 applies to Christ the words of Psalm 102:25–27 that the original psalm addressed to YHWH: “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands; they will perish, but You remain” (Hebrews 1:10–11, NASB 1995). The application of these words to Christ is a breathtaking hermeneutical move: the author of Hebrews identifies Jesus with the YHWH of Psalm 102, attributing to Him the acts of creation and the attribute of immutability that the psalm predicates of God. The created order will perish; Christ remains. The heavens will wear out like a garment; He is the same. This is not the immutability of a created being who happens to be long-lasting; it is the immutability of the eternal, unchangeable God.

III. THE DIVINE WORKS: THE SON DOES WHAT ONLY GOD CAN DO

Creation, Sustaining the Universe, Forgiving Sins, Raising the Dead, Judging the World

A. Creation and Cosmic Sustenance

The divine works of Christ begin with the most fundamental of all divine acts: creation. John 1:3 declares that “all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (NASB 1995). Colossians 1:16 extends the scope: “for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him” (NASB 1995). The comprehensiveness of the creative work attributed to Christ, all things, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible, including the highest orders of angelic beings, is the comprehensiveness of divine

omnipotence. There is nothing that exists that He did not make; there is nothing He made that He made without being fully divine.

Colossians 1:17 extends the divine work from creation to cosmic sustenance: “in Him all things hold together” (NASB 1995). Hebrews 1:3 states it with elegant economy: He “upholds all things by the word of His power” (NASB 1995). The universe does not merely owe its origin to Christ; it owes its continued existence, moment by moment, to His active, powerful, sustaining word. The one who spoke the universe into being continues to speak it into continued existence at every moment. This is not the work of a created mediator, however exalted; it is the work of the one who is himself the ground of all existence.

B. Forgiving Sins and Raising the Dead

The most theologically provocative of all the divine works attributed to Christ in the Gospels is the forgiveness of sins. Mark 2:5–12 records the healing of the paralytic alongside the pronouncement of forgiveness, and the scribes’ response to the forgiveness pronouncement is theologically precise: “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7, NASB 1995). The scribes are exactly right about the theological principle: only God can forgive sins, because sin is ultimately an offense against God, and only the one against whom the offense is committed can release the offender from its guilt. They are wrong only about the identity of the one making the pronouncement: it is not a blasphemer, it is the one who is himself the God against whom every sin is committed. The pronouncement of forgiveness is a divine act, and Jesus performs it with the authority of the one who has the right to perform it.

The raising of the dead is equally exclusive as a divine work, and equally clearly attributed to Christ in the New Testament. John 11:25 records His categorical self-declaration: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies” (NASB 1995). He does not say “I have the power to resurrect” or “I can pray for resurrection”; He says “I am the resurrection”, the resurrection is not something He does in dependence on a power outside Himself; it is something He is, because He is the source of life itself (John 5:26: “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself”, NASB 1995). John 5:21 makes the divine equivalence explicit: “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes” (NASB 1995).

C. Judging the World

The divine prerogative of final judgment is shared between the Father and the Son with an explicitness that leaves no room for a merely creaturely Christology. John 5:22, 27 records Jesus’s own declaration: “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son... and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man” (NASB 1995). The final judgment of all humanity has been entrusted to Jesus Christ, not as a delegated authority that could in principle be withdrawn or revoked, but as the expression of His own divine authority as the Son.

Acts 17:31 confirms it: “He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (NASB 1995). The one who will judge the world is a man, the man Christ Jesus, and He is simultaneously the one to whom the divine prerogative of universal judgment has been committed.

The combination of divine works, creation, cosmic sustenance, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the dead, judgment of the world, constitutes an overwhelming case for the full deity of Christ from the standpoint of what He does. No creature, however exalted, has been granted the power to create all things, sustain the universe, forgive sins with inherent authority, raise the dead from His own life-giving power, and exercise the final judgment of all humanity. These works are not delegated functions that a sufficiently exalted creature could perform; they are the exclusive prerogatives of the one, true, eternal God. And the New Testament attributes them, without qualification, to Jesus Christ.

IV. THE DIVINE WORSHIP: THE SON RECEIVES WHAT ONLY GOD MAY RECEIVE

Worship, Prayer, and the Universal Doxology of the Lamb

A. The Worship of the Angels

The First Council of Nicaea (325 AD) rightly identified the worship offered to Christ as one of the most decisive evidences of His full deity, because in the thoroughly monotheistic framework of both the Old and New Testaments, the worship of anyone or anything other than the one, true God is idolatry. The Old Testament is absolutely uncompromising on this point: “You shall worship the LORD your God and serve Him only” (Deuteronomy 6:13, NASB 1995; cited by Jesus against Satan in Matthew 4:10). Any created being who receives divine worship is either committing fraud or being falsely worshipped by idolators. There is no middle ground.

Hebrews 1:6 therefore carries extraordinary theological weight: “And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘And let all the angels of God worship Him’” (NASB 1995). The command to the angels is a citation of Psalm 97:7 (LXX), which in the original psalm is addressed to the worship of YHWH. The author of Hebrews applies this divine worship command to the Son, not because the Son is the highest of the angels, but because He is the Lord of the angels, the one before whom even the highest creaturely beings are commanded to bow. The angels worship the Son because the Son is God.

B. Thomas’s Confession and the New Testament Pattern of Doxology to Christ

Thomas’s confession (“My Lord and my God!” John 20:28) has already been examined as an explicit verbal affirmation of deity. Its significance as an act of worship deserves equal attention. Thomas

does not merely make a theological statement about Jesus; he addresses Jesus directly, personally, and in the second person: “My Lord and my God!” This is prayer. This is the direct address of a creature to the one it recognizes as its Creator and its God. And Jesus receives it without correction, because it is correct. To receive the address “My God” without correction, in a monotheistic framework, is to confirm that one is God.

The pattern of doxology to Christ runs throughout the New Testament. Philippians 2:10–11 declares that at the name of Jesus “every knee will bow”, the language is drawn from Isaiah 45:23, where YHWH declares that every knee will bow before Him. Revelation 5:9–14 depicts the worship of the Lamb in terms that are explicitly parallel to the worship of the Father: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (v. 12, NASB 1995), followed by the combined doxology of verse 13: “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever” (NASB 1995). The Lamb receives the same sevenfold doxology as the Father, in the same act of worship, before the same heavenly throne. This is not the exaltation of a created being to near-divine status; it is the recognition of the co-equal, co-eternal divine glory of the Son.

C. Prayer to Christ and the Invocation of His Name

The New Testament pattern of prayer directly addressed to Christ provides further evidence of His divine status, since in both Old and New Testament contexts, prayer is directed exclusively to God. Stephen, dying under a hail of stones, prays: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59, NASB 1995), the same prayer that Jesus offered to the Father from the cross (Luke 23:46), now offered by Stephen to Jesus. Paul prays to “the Lord” (whom the context identifies as Christ) for relief from his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:8). The Aramaic invocation Maranatha (μαρاناθά, “Our Lord, come!” or “The Lord has come!”, 1 Corinthians 16:22; Revelation 22:20) is the earliest known liturgical prayer of the Christian church, addressed to Christ as Lord, a prayer whose Aramaic form indicates its origin in the earliest Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christian communities, before any alleged Hellenistic elevation of Jesus to divine status could have occurred.

The invocation of the name of Jesus Christ across the entire New Testament, in baptism, in prayer, in healing, in exorcism, in the forgiveness of sins, in the bestowal of the Spirit, reflects the early church’s understanding that the name of Jesus is the name of God. To act “in the name of” someone in the ancient world is to act in their authority and with their power. The name of Jesus is invoked with the same authority and the same confidence as the name of YHWH in the Old Testament, because Jesus is YHWH, the eternal Son incarnate.

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” | “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

REVELATION 5:12–13, NASB 1995

V. THE DIVINE NAMES: WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT CALLS JESUS

Immanuel, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, Alpha and Omega

A. The Names of Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah 9:6 bestows on the coming Messianic King a series of names that, when applied to Jesus in the New Testament context, constitute one of the most theologically compressed christological declarations in Scripture: “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (NASB 1995). The name “Mighty God” (אל גִּבּוֹר, El Gibbor) is a divine title used in the Old Testament of YHWH Himself (Isaiah 10:21; Deuteronomy 10:17; Nehemiah 9:32). The name “Eternal Father” (אֲבִי עֵד, Avi-ad, literally “Father of Eternity”) designates the coming king as the source and possessor of eternal life, a designation that belongs to God alone.

The application of these names to Jesus in the New Testament is the natural consequence of the apostolic recognition that He is the fulfillment of this prophecy. The one who was born in Bethlehem is the child of Isaiah 9:6; and the child of Isaiah 9:6 is called Mighty God and Eternal Father. These are not honorary titles or hyperbolic designations of a merely human king; they are the divine names that the prophet, under divine inspiration, applied to the coming one, knowing that only the divine Son could bear them.

B. Immanuel and Alpha and Omega

The name Immanuel (“God with us”) has already been discussed in connection with Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23. Its christological significance cannot be overstated: the name declares that the one born of the Virgin Mary is not merely sent from God, not merely approved by God, not merely the greatest representative of God among human beings, He is God with us. The preposition “with” (עִמָּנוּ, ‘immanu) does not diminish the divine identification; it specifies its mode. God is with us, in the person of His Son, in the flesh. Immanuel is the theological name for the incarnation.

Revelation 1:8 and 22:13 apply to Christ the divine self-designation “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (NASB 1995). In the Old Testament, the “first and the last” (רִאשׁוֹן וְאַחֲרֹן, ri’shōn və’achārōn) is an exclusive divine self-designation used by YHWH to assert His unique sovereignty over history: “I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last I am He” (Isaiah 41:4, NASB 1995). Applied to Christ in Revelation, this designation places Him in the same position of absolute temporal sovereignty over all of history, He is the origin of all things and the goal of all things, the one from whom all history proceeds and to whom all history moves. This is not

the temporal sovereignty of a creature within history; it is the eternal sovereignty of the Creator over history.

VI. AGAINST THE DENIALS AND DOXOLOGICAL CONCLUSION

Engaging Contemporary Christological Reductionism and Arriving at Adoration

A. The Ancient and Modern Denials of Christ's Deity

The denials of Christ's full deity are as old as the church itself. Ebionism (the earliest Jewish-Christian sect) denied His divine nature, regarding Him as a purely human prophet uniquely anointed by God at His baptism. Arianism (fourth century) denied His co-equality with the Father, making Him a supreme creature rather than the eternal God. Socinianism (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) denied both the Trinity and the deity of Christ, reducing Him to the greatest of human teachers. Unitarianism (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) stripped the Christian tradition of its Trinitarian structure and presented Jesus as the moral exemplar of the universal divine fatherhood. Liberal Protestantism (nineteenth and twentieth centuries) preserved the language of Christ's divinity while systematically emptying it of metaphysical content: Jesus is "divine" in the sense that He is the supreme embodiment of human spiritual potential.

Contemporary denials of Christ's full deity are found across the theological spectrum: in the Jehovah's Witnesses' Arian Christology (Jesus is Michael the Archangel, a created being exalted above all other creatures but not co-equal with God); in certain forms of process theology (Jesus is the supreme exemplification of divine creative love, but not the ontological Son of the eternal Trinity); in the Christology of some open theists (who have been accused, with varying degrees of justice, of functional subordinationism that approaches Arianism); and in the popular reductionist Christologies of bestselling books and documentary films that present Jesus as a first-century Jewish revolutionary or mystical teacher shorn of His divine nature.

B. The Soteriological Stakes

The stakes of the denial of Christ's full deity are not merely theological; they are soteriological. A Christ who is not truly God cannot save, and the reasons are not difficult to identify. First, the atonement requires divine value: the death of a creature, however righteous, has finite value and can atone only for a finite offense. But sin is an infinite offense against the infinite holiness of the eternal God; only a sacrifice of infinite value can provide sufficient atonement. The death of the eternal Son of God on the cross is a sacrifice of infinite value precisely because the one who died is of infinite worth. A merely human or merely creaturely sacrifice cannot carry this weight.

Second, the resurrection requires divine power: the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the exercise of divine power over the last enemy, death itself. A creature cannot raise itself from the dead by its own power; the resurrection requires the power of the eternal Creator who has life in Himself and can communicate that life to the dead. John 10:18 records Jesus' own claim: "I lay it down on My own initiative... I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (NASB 1995). The authority to take up the life that has been laid down is the authority of the one who is himself the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Third, the intercession requires divine access: the intercession of Christ before the throne of the Father presupposes that He has permanent, direct, unrestricted access to the Father, the kind of access that belongs only to the one who is co-equal with the Father in divine nature. A creaturely intercessor has access only by grace, conditionally, and with limitations. The intercession of the eternal Son is perpetual, unconditional, and efficacious because He is himself fully God.

C. The Doxological Conclusion: Worthy Is the Lamb

The proper response to the full deity of Christ is not merely intellectual conviction but prostrated adoration. John, who more than any other New Testament writer pressed the theological case for the deity of Christ, was also the one who fell at the feet of the glorified Christ "like a dead man" (Revelation 1:17). Thomas, whose confession is the most direct explicit affirmation of Christ's deity in all the Gospels, spoke it in the form of a prayer: "My Lord and my God!" The Nicene fathers, who forged the most precise theological language for the deity of Christ in the face of the Arian assault, gathered at the conclusion of the council not for a symposium of theological self-congratulation but for the celebration of the Eucharist, the act of worship in which the divine reality they had been articulating was received and adored.

The doctrine of the full deity of Christ is not a proposition to be defended and filed; it is the revelation of a reality to be worshipped. The one who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, who upholds all things by the word of His power, who intercedes perpetually for every believer who draws near through Him, who will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and to make all things new, this one is not merely an exalted creature in whom God has specially dwelt. He is God the Son, the second Person of the eternal Trinity, co-equal with the Father and the Spirit in power and glory, before whom every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. And the confession of the church, "My Lord and my God!", is not the end of the theological inquiry. It is the beginning of an eternity of adoration.

Key Texts: *John 1:1, 18; John 5:21–22, 26; John 11:25; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Colossians 1:16–17; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3, 6, 8–12; Isaiah 9:6; Revelation 1:8; 5:9–14; 22:13*

THEOLOGICAL TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Full Deity of Christ	The orthodox affirmation that Jesus Christ is fully, essentially, and unreservedly God, not a divine-like being, not a semi-divine exalted creature, not a secondary deity, but the one, true, eternal God in the Person of the eternal Son. The full deity of Christ is established by: (1) explicit New Testament designations of Jesus as God (John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8); (2) the attribution to Him of every divine attribute (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, eternity); (3) the attribution to Him of exclusively divine works (creation, sustaining the universe, forgiving sins, raising the dead, judging the world); and (4) the reception by Him of exclusively divine worship.
Granville Sharp Rule	A grammatical principle in Koine Greek, formulated by Granville Sharp in 1798, governing constructions in which two personal nouns are joined by kai (and) with a definite article preceding only the first noun: both nouns refer to the same person. Applied to Titus 2:13 ('the great God and Savior, Christ Jesus'): the single article before 'God' governs both 'God' and 'Savior,' identifying both designations as belonging to the single person of Christ. The rule eliminates the interpretation that 'God' refers to the Father and 'Savior' to Christ, and requires the reading in which both titles belong to Christ.
Theopaschitism	From Greek theos (God) and paschein (to suffer). The theological position that God, specifically the divine nature of Christ, literally suffered and died on the cross. Theopaschitism was condemned in ancient controversies as an overstatement of the communication of attributes: suffering is attributed to the one Person of the Son in His human nature, not to the divine nature as such. The Chalcedonian framework preserves the genuine suffering of the incarnate Son (against Docetism) while maintaining that the divine nature as such is impassible. The cross is the genuine human suffering of the divine Person of the Son, not the suffering of the divine nature.
Ebionism	An early Jewish-Christian sect, condemned as heretical by the second-century church, that denied the pre-existence and divine nature of Jesus, regarding Him as a purely human figure uniquely anointed by God at His baptism (a form of adoptionism). Ebionism represents the earliest systematic denial of the deity of Christ, arising from a Jewish monotheistic context that could not accommodate the full Trinitarian claims of the apostolic testimony. The Ebionite Jesus is a supremely gifted human prophet, not the eternal Son of God incarnate.

Term	Definition
Socinianism	The theological movement associated with Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604) and the Polish Brethren, which denied the Trinity and the deity of Christ, rejecting both eternal generation and the pre-existence of the Son. Socinianism reduced Jesus to the greatest of human teachers, uniquely inspired by God but not ontologically divine. Socinian Christology anticipates modern Unitarian and liberal Protestant reductions of Jesus and represents one of the most thoroughgoing denials of orthodox Christology in the history of the Western church.
El Gibbor	Hebrew: ‘Mighty God.’ One of the divine names applied to the coming Messianic King in Isaiah 9:6. In the Old Testament, El Gibbor is used as a divine title for YHWH Himself (Isaiah 10:21; Deuteronomy 10:17). Its application to the child to be born in Isaiah 9:6, and through it to Jesus, who is identified as the fulfillment of this prophecy, is one of the most direct Old Testament attributions of divine nature to the coming Messiah. The name cannot be reduced to a metaphor for extraordinary human strength or divine favor; it is the divine title of the Mighty God applied to the one who will be born.
Alpha and Omega	The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, used as a divine self-designation in Revelation 1:8 (‘I am the Alpha and the Omega’) and applied to Christ in Revelation 22:13 (‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’). The designation is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew ‘first and last’ (ראשון ואחרון), used exclusively of YHWH in the Old Testament (Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12) to assert His unique, absolute sovereignty over all of history. Applied to Christ, the title declares His co-equal divine sovereignty with the Father, He is not merely the greatest figure within history but the one from whom all history originates and toward whom all history moves.
Maranatha	Aramaic: ‘Our Lord, come!’ (maran atha) or ‘The Lord has come’ (marana tha, depending on word division). An early Christian liturgical invocation of Christ found in 1 Corinthians 16:22, Revelation 22:20 (in Greek: ‘Come, Lord Jesus’), and in the Didache. Its Aramaic form establishes its origin in the earliest Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christian communities, predating any alleged Hellenistic elevation of Jesus to divine status. The prayer is addressed to Christ as Lord (מראן, maran, an Aramaic equivalent of YHWH’s lordship), and as the coming one whose arrival is both invoked and anticipated. Maranatha is the most ancient evidence of liturgical prayer addressed directly to Christ.
Communicatio Gloriae	Latin: ‘communication of glory.’ The theological principle that the divine glory of Christ, which was veiled during the period of His humiliation, was permanently and fully restored at the exaltation, so that the risen and ascended Christ is glorified with the same glory He possessed before the incarnation (John 17:5). The communicatio gloriæ is the exaltation counterpart of the kenosis: where the kenosis involved the veiling of the divine glory in the state of humiliation, the exaltation involves the restoration of that glory in the state

Term	Definition
	of exaltation, now expressed through the glorified human nature that the Son retains permanently.
Nicene and Chalcedonian Settlement	The ecumenical christological consensus established at the First Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), affirming that Jesus Christ is fully divine (homoousios with the Father, Nicaea) and fully human (truly God and truly man, Chalcedon), the two natures united in one Person without confusion, change, division, or separation (Chalcedon's four negatives). This settlement represents the church's most precise and most universally received christological formulation and remains the ecumenical standard across Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant traditions. The affirmation of Christ's full deity is the Nicene contribution; the precise definition of the relationship between the two natures is the Chalcedonian contribution.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A. For the Mind: What Must We Believe?

We must believe that the full deity of Christ is not a secondary or peripheral Christian doctrine that can be held loosely without consequence; it is the central, load-bearing conviction of the entire Christian faith. Every dimension of the gospel depends on it: the atonement requires a sacrifice of infinite value (only possible if the one who dies is infinite in worth); the resurrection requires the power of the Creator over death (only possible if the one who rises has life in Himself); the intercession requires direct, permanent, unconditional access to the Father (only possible if the one who intercedes is co-equal in divine nature with the Father); and the beatific vision requires that the one we will see face to face is the face of God (only possible if the one who comes to us in Jesus is truly God).

We must also be equipped to recognize and respond to the contemporary denials of Christ's full deity in their various forms. The Jehovah's Witnesses' translation of John 1:1 ("the Word was a god"), the open theists' functional subordinationism, the liberal Protestants' elevation of Jesus to the supreme embodiment of human spiritual potential, and the popular reductionist Christologies of bestselling books and documentaries, all of these represent versions of the ancient errors that the Nicene fathers engaged and refuted. The pastor who has worked through the biblical case for the full deity of Christ presented in this lesson has the exegetical and theological tools to engage every one of these denials with both intellectual rigor and pastoral compassion.

B. For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?

Let the full deity of Christ transform the quality of your worship. If Jesus is truly God, if the one you pray to, sing to, depend on, and place your eternal hope in is the eternal Creator of the universe, the one before whom the seraphim veil their faces and cry “Holy, holy, holy”, then your worship should be marked by an awe, a reverence, and an adoration that goes far deeper than mere emotional warmth or spiritual enthusiasm. The knowledge that you are addressing God when you address Jesus should produce the same prostrating worship that it produced in John on the island of Patmos, in Thomas in the upper room, and in the twenty-four elders before the throne of the Lamb in Revelation 5. You are not talking to an admirable human being; you are speaking to God.

Desire, above all, to be the kind of preacher, teacher, and witness who presents the full, undiminished, unqualified deity of Christ to those who have been offered a reduced, manageable, domesticated version of Him. The congregation that has encountered the full deity of Christ, the one who is the Alpha and the Omega, who upholds all things by the word of His power, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, will find their faith placed on a far more solid foundation than the one whose Jesus is merely a wise teacher or a moral exemplar. The deity of Christ is not an obstacle to faith; it is the ground of faith. Only God can do what sinners need done, and the God who can do it has done it, in the flesh, in history, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

C. For the Hands: What Must We Do?

- Memorize the key texts for the deity of Christ and be able to deploy them in apologetic conversations. The core texts are: John 1:1 (the Word was God), John 20:28 (Thomas’s confession), Romans 9:5 (Christ is God over all), Titus 2:13 (our great God and Savior), Colossians 2:9 (all the fullness of Deity), and Hebrews 1:8 (God addresses the Son as ‘God’). Know the Granville Sharp Rule for Titus 2:13. Know the response to the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ reading of John 1:1. Know the Old Testament background of Hebrews 1:10–12 (the application of Psalm 102 to Christ). These are the tools of the trade for every pastor who will be called to defend the deity of Christ in a pluralistic world.
- Engage the Jehovah’s Witnesses directly, lovingly, and with thorough preparation. The JW Christology is the most numerically significant Arian movement in the world today, and its followers are specifically trained to engage Christians on the question of Christ’s deity. Know their key arguments (the anarthrous theos in John 1:1; the ‘firstborn of all creation’ in Colossians 1:15; the ‘the Father is greater than I’ of John 14:28), and know the exegetical responses this series has developed in Lessons 3 and 4. Pray for them, love them, and give them the full biblical case for the deity of Christ with patience and clarity.
- Preach the divine works of Christ with christological intentionality. Every time you preach a healing miracle, a nature miracle, or a resurrection account in the Gospels, you have an opportunity to connect the divine power displayed in the miracle to the divine nature of the one performing it. The calming of the storm is not merely a demonstration that Jesus has special divine authority; it is a demonstration that He is the one who made the storm and who

sustains the weather systems of the planet by the word of His power. Connect the works to the Worker, and connect the Worker to the divine nature that grounds His works.

- Use Revelation 5 as a regular text for congregational worship. The worship of the Lamb in Revelation 5 is the most fully realized picture of corporate christological adoration in all of Scripture. Its sevenfold doxology (“power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing”, v. 12) is the most comprehensive ascription of divine glory to Christ in the New Testament. Use it in corporate worship: read it, sing it, pray it, and let its vision of the universal adoration of the Lamb shape the congregation’s understanding of why Sunday morning worship is the most important thing they do each week.
- Read B.B. Warfield’s *The Lord of Glory* as a thorough and exegetically rigorous survey of the New Testament evidence for the deity of Christ. Warfield’s work remains one of the most comprehensive and most carefully argued treatments of the biblical case for Christ’s deity ever produced, and it will equip the pastor to engage any form of contemporary Christological reductionism with both scholarly confidence and pastoral warmth.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

OPENING QUESTION

1. If a theologically curious non-Christian asked you to give a single, concise reason why Christians believe Jesus is God, not merely the greatest human being who ever lived, but truly, fully God, what would you say? After studying this lesson, how would your answer be different from, more developed than, or more precisely stated than it would have been before?

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DO THE TEXTS SAY?)

2. Read John 20:24–29. Describe the development of the narrative from Thomas’s initial skepticism (v. 25) to his encounter with the risen Christ (vv. 26–27) to his confession (v. 28). What is the specific content of his confession, and to whom is it addressed? How does Jesus respond to the confession in verse 29? What does the absence of any correction from Jesus imply about the truthfulness of the confession?

3. Read Hebrews 1:1–12. Identify every christological affirmation made about the Son in verses 1–4. Then examine the catena (chain) of Old Testament quotations in verses 5–12: which Old Testament texts are applied to the Son, and what divine attributes or actions do they attribute to Him? Pay particular attention to the application of Psalm 102:25–27 to Christ in verses 10–12, what is the significance of applying this psalm (originally addressed to YHWH) to Jesus?

4. Read Colossians 1:15–20 and Colossians 2:9. From Colossians 1, identify the divine works attributed to Christ (vv. 16–17) and the description of His relationship to the church and the cosmos (vv. 18–20). How does Colossians 2:9 ('all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form') function as a concentrated summary of the Colossian Christology? What does the word 'all' (pasa) in verse 9 contribute to the meaning?
5. Read Revelation 5:1–14. Describe the scene in the heavenly throne room and the christological significance of the Lamb's worthiness to open the scroll. What is the content of the new song sung by the living creatures and elders (vv. 9–10)? How does the doxology of verse 12 compare to the doxology of verse 13? What is the theological significance of the Lamb receiving the same sevenfold doxology as the Father?

INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

6. The lesson presents four categories of evidence for the full deity of Christ: explicit affirmations, divine attributes, divine works, and divine worship. Which of these four categories do you find most compelling as evidence for the deity of Christ, and why? Are they independent lines of argument, or do they mutually reinforce each other? Could any one of the four categories stand alone as sufficient evidence, or do they require the support of the others?
7. The lesson argues that the soteriological stakes of the denial of Christ's full deity are not merely theological but directly practical: a merely creaturely Christ cannot save, because (a) His death has finite value insufficient for infinite atonement, (b) His resurrection would not demonstrate the Creator's power over death, and (c) His intercession would be conditional and limited. Evaluate each of these three soteriological arguments. Which do you find most persuasive? Are there additional soteriological arguments the lesson does not discuss?
8. The lesson applies Isaiah 9:6's divine names (Mighty God, Eternal Father) to Jesus, arguing that these are genuine divine titles rather than hyperbolic designations of an exalted human king. How would you respond to the objection that these names are simply the hyperbolic language of ancient Near Eastern royal ideology, applied to the Davidic king without any intention of claiming literal divine status? What contextual evidence within Isaiah supports the genuinely divine interpretation?
9. Hebrews 1:6 commands the angels to worship the Son, citing language from Psalm 97:7 that in the original context refers to the worship of YHWH. How does the author of Hebrews' application of this text to Christ function as an implicit identification of Christ with YHWH? What are the implications of this hermeneutical move for the relationship between the Old Testament's monotheism and the New Testament's Trinitarian Christology?
10. The lesson identifies contemporary denials of Christ's deity in Jehovah's Witness theology, process theology, open theism, and popular reductionist Christologies. For each of these, identify the specific christological claim being made and the specific biblical evidence that most directly refutes

it. Which of these contemporary denials do you most frequently encounter in your ministry context, and how would you most effectively respond to it?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DOES IT DEMAND OF US?)

11. The lesson argues that the full deity of Christ should transform the quality of worship, that the knowledge that you are addressing God when you address Jesus should produce the same prostrating worship that it produced in John on Patmos and Thomas in the upper room. How does your congregation's corporate worship reflect (or fail to reflect) the full deity of Christ? What specific changes in liturgy, song selection, posture, or theological content would most effectively communicate the divine majesty of the one being worshipped?

12. The lesson recommends memorizing the core deity texts and the key arguments (Granville Sharp Rule, the response to the anathrous theos in John 1:1, the Old Testament background of Hebrews 1:10–12) for engagement with contemporary Arianism. How prepared are you currently to have that conversation with a Jehovah's Witness who knocks on your door? What is the most significant gap in your preparation, and how will you address it in the next month?

13. The lesson describes the deity of Christ as 'not an obstacle to faith but the ground of faith', the conviction that only God can do what sinners need done, and the God who can do it has done it in the person of Jesus. How would you communicate this truth to a person who finds the doctrine of Christ's deity intellectually difficult or emotionally alienating? What pastoral approach would you take, and what specific biblical evidence would you prioritize?

14. This lesson completes Unit 3 on the Incarnation, bringing together the foundational lesson on the Word becoming flesh (Lesson 6), the Virgin Birth (Lesson 7), the True Humanity (Lesson 8), and now the Full Deity (Lesson 9). Looking ahead to Unit 4 on the Hypostatic Union (Lessons 10–13), how do the four lessons of Unit 3 together prepare the ground for the Chalcedonian definition? What specific questions about the relationship between Christ's divine and human natures have been raised by the Unit 3 lessons that the Chalcedonian definition will need to resolve?

PRAYER FOCUS

Open this lesson's prayer time with a reading of Revelation 5:1–14, the most fully realized vision of corporate christological adoration in all of Scripture. Read it slowly, as a heavenly liturgy rather than a historical document, attending to the movement from the crisis of the sealed scroll (vv. 1–4) through the announcement of the Lion-Lamb (vv. 5–6) to the universal outpouring of worship that His appearance evokes (vv. 7–14). Let the group notice that the Lamb who receives the worship of the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, the myriads of angels, and ultimately every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth is identified as the one who was slain (v. 6), the one who purchased for God people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (v. 9), and the one to whom every creature ascribes blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever (v. 13). This is the Lamb whom the church worships. This is the one the Christian gospel announces. This is the full deity of Christ in its ultimate, uncontainable doxological expression.

Spend time in adoration of Jesus Christ as the fully divine, fully exalted, eternally reigning Lord, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Adore Him as the Creator through whom all things were made and for whom all things exist; as the Sustainer who upholds all things by the word of His power; as the Redeemer who purchased the people of God with His own blood; as the Intercessor who always lives to make intercession for those He has redeemed; and as the coming King who will appear in glory to judge the living and the dead and to make all things new. Let the sevenfold doxology of Revelation 5:12 be your model: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." Let each of the seven attributes become a specific act of adoration, reflecting on what it means that this particular attribute belongs to the Lamb who was slain.

Pray specifically for the missionary task of declaring the full deity of Christ to those who have never heard it, and for the apologetic task of defending it to those who have encountered its denial. Pray for those who are engaged in mission to Jehovah's Witnesses, to Muslims (for whom the Trinity and the deity of Christ are the primary theological barriers), to secular Westerners who have been offered a reduced, manageable Jesus by the culture around them, and to those within nominal Christianity who have been exposed to liberal christological reductionism without ever encountering the full biblical testimony to who Jesus actually is. Pray that the church would recover its confidence in the proclamation of the full deity of Christ, not as an imposition but as the greatest good news in the history of the universe: the one, true God has come to us, in the flesh, in history, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and He is mighty to save.

Close with Thomas's confession, spoken together not as a liturgical formula but as a living act of faith and adoration, the most personal, the most direct, and the most theologically precise declaration of Christ's deity in all of the New Testament:

“My Lord and my God!”

JOHN 20:28, NASB 1995

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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