

# Jesus Is Fully God (John 1.1-5)

## I. INTRODUCTION

- A. At the heart of the church's historic confession is one of the great paradoxes of our faith: **Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.**
- B. The revelation of Jesus as fully God is foundational to the Christian faith and the message of the gospel. It is a doctrine that has been contested and confronted for most of the church's history. Yet, holding fast to this doctrine is *essential* to rightly understanding, worshiping, following, and living in accordance with Jesus Christ.
- C. When seeking to understand such profound *mysteries*, the goal is not ultimately comprehension but *reverent submission in worship*. The paradoxical truths of Christ's full divinity and full humanity are given by revelation and must be received as God's gracious gift of making known himself in a way that we can live in communion with him.

## II. THE WORD OF GOD

- A. The opening line of John's Gospel introduces us to the concept of ***the Word*** (Gk. *logos*). It is clear from the Prologue of John's Gospel (1.1-18) that the ***personified*** Word of God holds a special place in relation to God, in relation to creation, and in relation to redemption.
- B. It is also clear from the outline of John's Gospel that this extended meditation on the Word (*logos*) serves as a necessary background for understanding and interpreting the events of Jesus' life that are to follow.
- C. In 1.14-18, John writes that this very Word ***became flesh*** and lived among us. This was not only God's Word, but the very glory of God, like the glory of a Son begotten of his Father. This Word / Son of God is also seen to be the full expression (revelation) of the unseen God. This Word made flesh is Jesus of Nazareth.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... <sup>16</sup>For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1.14-18)

- D. Many interpreters try to understand the background for John's use of the term *logos* here. Although there may be warrant for seeking to understand this through Greek philosophical literature, it is more likely that the rich history of the Hebrew Scriptures provides the backdrop for understanding the power of God's word.
- E. The Scripture declares that God created all things through and by the power of his word.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, "Let there be light, and there was light (Gen 1.3; cf. 1.6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26)

<sup>6</sup>By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host (Ps 33.6)

- F. The word of the Lord is said to *come to* (or *appear to*) the prophets at times.

<sup>21</sup>And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord (1 Sam 3.21)

<sup>4</sup>Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah (Isa 38.4)

<sup>4</sup>Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying... (Jer 1.4)

<sup>3</sup>the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the priest... (Ezek 1.3)

- G. Throughout the Old Testament, the word of God has power to bring forth effectual work — particularly in the act of God’s redemption, deliverance, and judgment.

<sup>3</sup>The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders... <sup>4</sup>The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. <sup>5</sup>The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars... <sup>7</sup>The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. <sup>8</sup>The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness... (Ps 29.3-9)

<sup>10</sup>For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa 55.10-11)

- H. Ultimately, the Word is to be understood as the self-expression or self-disclosure of God as seen in creation, revelation, and redemption. Because of this, it is easy for John to utilize and personify this concept and apply it to the perfect and ultimate self-expression of God, his own Son who has come in the person of Christ Jesus.

### III. THE ETERNAL WORD

- A. The opening line of John’s gospel brings us face to face with three realities about Jesus’ nature that must be believed upon and held together in tension. These three realities have helped shape the boundaries around how the church has perceived of the identity of Jesus — particularly in relation to his divinity.

- B. The Word is *eternally* existent

In the beginning was the Word (John 1.1)

1. John begins by declaring that this Word, Jesus Christ, existed in the beginning. The allusion here is clear to draw us back to the opening words of Genesis 1, when the uncreated God of the universe set out to create all things.
2. This statement demonstrates for us that at the “time” of the beginning, this Word existed. To state this illustrates what is referred to as the *pre-existence* of Jesus Christ. In other words, the Son of God (or the Word of God as described here) did not begin to exist at the time of the birth of Jesus — but rather existed *before he came as a man* and existed *prior to creation*.

- C. The Word is *distinct* from God

the word was with God (John 1.1)

1. The second statement from this opening sentence declares that the Word of God was in some manner *distinct* from God. John tells us that at the time of the beginning (in eternity past before creation) the Word existed in a distinct manner from God the Father.
2. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Word can be *with* God “in the beginning”.

- D. The Word is *the same* as God

the word was God (John 1.1)

1. The final reality that John introduces in this statement is that the Word *was in fact God* himself.
2. Although there is some distinction in his personhood as it relates to God the Father, we see here that the Word of God is not a subservient being to God, but is himself God.

- E. Taken together, these three statements demonstrate the *deity* of Jesus Christ — existing eternally as the Word of God who was both *with* God and *himself* God.

#### IV. BIBLICAL CONFESSION

A. The Bible rarely comes out and *says* that Jesus is God. Rather, it demonstrates it in many ways that intentionally show Jesus as either doing things that God alone does or possessing attributes that God alone is said to possess.

#### B. Jesus' role in *creation*

1. Throughout the Old Testament, the Lord *alone* is said to have the power to create. No one else helped him, sustained him, worked with him to bring forth all the earth. He is the unique and powerful creator of all.

<sup>24</sup>Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer... "I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself (Isa 44.24)

2. Yet, the early church understood (through revelation) that Jesus Christ was instrumental in the creation of all things. This is not contrary to the Old Testament understanding of creation — rather, it demonstrates that Jesus is himself God.

<sup>3</sup>All things were made through him [the Word], and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1.3)

<sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. (Col 1.16)

<sup>2</sup>in these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world... <sup>3</sup>and he upholds the universe by the word of his power (Heb 1.2-3)

#### C. Jesus' ability to *save* and *forgive sins*

1. As Jesus sought to proclaim the inbreaking of God's kingdom, he proclaimed the year of the Lord's favor and the release from captivity that God himself would bring.

<sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them." (Matt 11.4-5)

<sup>18</sup>The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4.18-19)

2. Jesus declared that he had the authority to forgive sins. This was *rightly understood* by his hearers as something that God alone had the authority and prerogative to do.

<sup>5</sup>And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." <sup>6</sup>Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup>"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup>And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk?' <sup>10</sup>But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — he said to the paralytic — <sup>11</sup>"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." (Mark 2.5-11)

#### D. Jesus receives the *worship, honor, and glory* due God alone

1. Throughout the Old Testament, God (Yahweh) alone is to be worshiped. To offer worship to another is blasphemy or idolatry.

<sup>3</sup>You shall have no other gods before me (Exod 20.3)

<sup>9</sup>And [Satan] said to [Jesus], "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" (Matt 4.9-10; cf. Deut 6.13)

2. In the Gospels, Jesus receives worship of his disciples and those who offer adoration to him because of his great works.

<sup>10</sup>When they [the Magi] saw the star, they rejoiced... <sup>11</sup>and going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him (Matt 2.10-11)

<sup>25</sup>And in the fourth watch of the night [Jesus] came to them, walking on the sea... <sup>32</sup>And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup>And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Matt 14.25, 32-33)

<sup>17</sup>And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted (Matt 28.17)

3. Jesus is given the name above every name so that all creation will bow to him.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2.9-11)

4. In Revelation, Jesus is given eternal worship *with* God the Father.

<sup>13</sup>And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" <sup>14</sup>And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Rev 5.13-14)

5. Jesus shared in the eternal glory of God in eternity and will receive it again for all eternity.

<sup>8</sup>I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other (Isa 42.8)

<sup>5</sup>And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed (John 17.5)

#### E. Jesus is the *Lord* and *ruler*

1. The New Testament authors believed that Jesus *fulfilled* Scriptures that were said to be promises about God himself.

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'" (Mark 1.1-3)

<sup>15</sup>And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, <sup>16</sup>"After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, <sup>17</sup>that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name (Acts 15.15-17)

2. Jesus declares that his words have authority that will endure beyond the heavens and the earth.

<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever (Isa 40.8)

<sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (Mark 13.31)

3. Jesus is given authority to sit on the throne of God.

<sup>21</sup>I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. (Rev 3.21)

## V. HISTORIC CONFESSION

- A. As the Church grappled with its own understanding of Jesus Christ (at it had been revealed in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Spirit, and inspiration of the writings of the New Testament), there was a need to make clear boundaries around the doctrinal implications of Jesus' *person*.
- B. It is clear from John's Gospel, and the rest of the NT writings, that Jesus was equal with God, eternal in his own nature, distinct from God the Father. Yet, it is also clear that Jesus (in his pre-existent person) shared in things that were unique to God in a way that led them to know and understand that he himself was God.
- C. Over time, this led to the formulation of the orthodox understanding of the Trinitarian doctrine. Simply stated, this is an attempt to summarize the various teachings of the Scripture in a way that illumines the truth of God's nature and provides boundaries around orthodox belief.
  1. God exists as ***one being***. This demonstrates that God is *simple* in his essence and his nature. God is *one* (cf. Deut 6.4). The Bible does not teach that there are multiple Gods (either two or three), but rather that there is ***one God*** who exists from all eternity.
  2. God exists in ***three persons***: However, the reality of the Scripture invites us to see that there are distinct and unique persons within the Godhead. These three persons are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person shares fully in the Divine being and essence but is distinct in relationship to the other persons.
- D. The definitive historical statement on the nature of Christ's pre-existence was established at the Council of Nicaea in 321 AD.

## VI. WHY DEITY MATTERS

- A. The full divinity of Jesus Christ is more than just an obscure or difficult theological doctrine. It is essential for us to receive this truth through faith as we seek to follow him and live our lives in accordance with his designs and commands.
- B. This doctrine is not a "head in the clouds" doctrine that has no effect on our lives as Christians. Rather, it is profoundly important for us to hold this for many reasons.
- C. To believe this is to ***believe God as he has revealed himself***.
  1. It is important to remember that the Scriptures are the inspired, authoritative, and infallible word of God to us (see last week's sermon). Because of this, we must see that to believe in God in accordance with his own self-revelation is to put our faith in Jesus as God.
  2. To reject this as the truth is to reject the *whole* of what Jesus and the Scriptures teach. We cannot pick and choose our own palatable version of a "personal Jesus". We must submit to the Scriptures *as the word of God* and conform our beliefs and our lives according to God's truth.
- D. As God ***Jesus is worthy of worship***
  1. If Jesus is not God, then we should not offer worship to him. He is only worthy of our worship if he is, in fact, eternally God himself.
  2. To offer worship to anyone other than the true Creator God is blasphemy and idolatry.
  3. However, if Jesus is God, then he is worthy of our worship. Stated differently, if he is God, he is worthy of responding to his full revelation as he has made himself known. He is worthy of the whole of our lives, the whole of our affections, the whole of our thoughts, and the whole of our strength.

E. As God *Jesus demands our submission and obedience*

1. Closely tied to the issue of worship is the issue of submission and obedience. The doctrine of Jesus' divinity brings us face to face with the reason *why* we must submit our lives to him and follow him.
2. Many pictures of Jesus seek to garner our sympathies toward his teaching or his wisdom by *first* demonstrating that he is worth our obedience because of what he has done for us — or, because of the value of what he has taught.
3. Although there are beautiful realities to these truths — the *primary reason* that Jesus is worth submitting to is because *he is God*.
4. If he is the creator of all the earth and the Lord of all the earth, then our lives must be oriented around him and submitted to him. If he is the ultimate authority, then we must submit ourselves to him as Lord and Creator over all.

F. As God *Jesus reveals the Father*

1. One of the most necessary implications of Jesus' full divinity is that he is the full self-expression and revelation of God.
2. God revealed aspects of his character, nature, purposes, and will throughout the history of redemption (cf. Heb 1.1). However, these realities were *fulfilled* in Christ Jesus.
3. This means that Jesus is the full revelation of God in a "form" that is accessible to our minds and to our senses. Jesus ultimately reveals God by being *with us* and drawing us into his transforming life.
4. In Jesus there are storehouses of the glory of knowing God. Because of this, we are given an avenue (by faith) to contemplate and meditate upon the infinite splendor, majesty, person, power, work, character, and will of God Almighty.

<sup>23</sup>Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (Matt 1.23)

<sup>6</sup>For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4.5)

<sup>3</sup>in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2.3)

G. As God *Jesus can save us*

1. Most importantly, if Jesus is not God, he cannot ultimately save us.
2. The Scripture is clear that *only God can bring salvation*.

<sup>9</sup>Salvation belongs to the Lord! (Jonah 2.9)

3. The prophet Joel demonstrated that it would only be by calling upon the name of the Lord (Yahweh) that people would be saved. The New Testament writers understood that *in Jesus* this Scripture was fulfilled, and to call upon Jesus' name for salvation is to call upon the name of the Lord — because *he is the Lord!*

<sup>32</sup>And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord [Yahweh] shall be saved (Joel 2.32)

<sup>9</sup>if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved... <sup>13</sup>For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Rom 10.9-13)