

# Jesus' Claims to Deity

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R&R DEITY OF CHRIST DIVINE LIFE AND DOCTRINE PROPHECY

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It is one thing for a human being to claim to be divine. Many in history have done so. But it is quite another for such an individual to **prove** it. Jesus Christ stands out from all other persons who have inhabited the planet in that His claim to divinity actually was proven to be true. The book of John is certainly one prominent witness among the books of the New Testament that report this fact. Since Johns book was written for the explicit purpose of demonstrating "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31), it is not surprising that the deity of Christ is asserted over and over, in many forms, on virtually every page.

## "SON OF MAN" (JOHN 3:13-15)

One such instance is seen in our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin. Having seen the "signs" (used 17 times in John) Jesus performed, he was honest enough to draw the only plausible conclusion warranted by that evidence: "we know that You are a teacher come from God" (John 3:2). After asserting His deity by authoritatively articulating the only way to

enter the kingdom of God (vss. 3-8), Jesus set forth additional teaching: "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:13-15). In this passage, Jesus issued four unmitigated affirmations of His divine identity: (1) He claims to have come from heaven, (2) He claims to be an eternal resident of that heavenly realm, (3) He further claims that He is the source of healing comparable to the snake on the pole in Numbers 21, and (4) He claims that in order for a person to have eternal life and thereby avoid perishing, that person must believe **in Him**. This latter affirmation most certainly does not refer to belief in the sense that mere humans believe in each other; it necessarily refers to attributing to (and hence submitting to) the divine authority that Jesus possesses to dispense eternal life. In fact, one would have to inhabit **eternity** and be preexistent to offer **eternal** life to finite beings (cf. John 6:62).

## Background

Twice in the text of John 3:13-15, Jesus refers to himself as "the Son of Man" (also John 1:51; 5:27; 6:27,53,62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23; 13:31). Of the 88 times the expression "son of man" occurs in the NASB version of the New Testament, all except four are found in the gospel accounts. As Stephen was about to be stoned to death, he was inspired to gaze into the very throne room of God and announce to his persecutors, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" (Acts 7:56). The expression also is used by the Hebrews writer in his quotation of Psalm 8—again, to refer to Jesus (Hebrews 2:6). And depending on one's interpretation of Revelation, Jesus is alluded to as the son of man twice in that book (Revelation 1:13; 14:14). Of the other 84 occurrences among the gospel narratives, "son of man" occurs 31 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark, 26 times in Luke, and 13 times in John. In every case, the expression refers to Jesus.

What is the background of this construction? The phrase "son of man" is actually a Hebrew idiom. In his monumental volume *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, E.W. Bullinger classified this idiom as a case of "Antimereia of the Noun" in which "one noun is placed *in regimen*: *i.e.*, when one governs the other in the genitive case: the latter word (sometimes two words) becomes an adjective" (1968, p. 497, italics and parenthetical item in orig.). For example, the "son of wickedness" (Psalm 89:22) is a wicked person. Middle easterners speak of a "son of the desert," referring to a person who is particularly connected to, linked with, and characterized by the desert. Such a person would be one who is so intimately connected to the desert, either by birth, long-term residence, or ongoing acquaintance, that his association with the desert is unquestioned and readily apparent. The "sons of this world" (Luke 20:34) are those people who are characterized by their devotion to the things of this earthly life. "Son of man" (cf. Jeremiah 49:18,33) refers to one's mortality, the condition of being a human being—"a periphrasis for 'man'" (Thayer, 1901, p. 635) or "a kind of circumlocution for *man*, with special reference to his frail nature and humble condition" (McClintock and Strong, 1879,

9:879, italics in orig.). Of the 107 occurrences of the phrase (*ben adam*) in the Old Testament, 93 occur in Ezekiel to refer to that prophet (see Aune, 1988, 4:574).

Bullinger further observes that the divine names form a special class by themselves in connection with this idiom. When the word "son" is qualified by a subsequent noun, the nature or character of the individual is being indicated (1968, p. 503). Hence, "son of man" emphasizes the individual as perfectly human. When referring to Jesus, the expression emphasizes the human aspect of Jesus—the phenomenon of his enfleshment (cf. Philippians 2:7). However, when preceded by the article ("**the** son of man"), Bullinger suggests that "the phrase appears to have a special idiomatic usage of its own" (p. 842), indicating Jesus' "universal dominion in the earth." C.F.D. Moule notes that, with the exception of quotations from the Old Testament and John 5:27, in the New Testament "son of man" always has the article preceding it (1959, p. 177; cf. p. 116).

## Significance

"The son of man" was Jesus' favorite way to refer to Himself (50 times—McClintock and Strong, 9:879). He undoubtedly wanted people to know that though He is God, when He came to the Earth, He came in human form and became fully human by taking on all the frailties of human flesh:

> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, **taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.** And being found **in appearance as a man**, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8, emp. added).

He undoubtedly wanted every person to understand that "we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Thayer suggests that Jesus preferred this title "because by its lowliness it was least suited to foster the expectation of an earthly Messiah in royal splendor" (1901, p. 635).

In actuality, the expression "son of man" occurs only one time in the Old Testament to refer exclusively to Jesus, the Messiah: Daniel 7:13. Herein likely lies the deeper significance of Jesus' use of the term. It is to this verse that Jesus linked Himself when He came to Earth:

> I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14).

While perhaps most of the "scholarly world" now rejects the identification of "son of man" in Daniel 7:13 with Jesus, the evidence nevertheless points to that very conclusion. Indeed, the features of the

prophecy match perfectly with the multiple specific affirmations made in the New Testament regarding the person of Jesus, depicted first and foremost in the incident recorded in Acts 1:9-11:

> Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and **a cloud received Him** out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was **taken up from you into heaven**, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven (emp. added)."

Observe carefully how Daniel 7 and Acts 1 harmonize with each other perfectly—Daniel giving details from the perspective of heaven and Luke giving the same details from the perspective of Earth where the incident commenced. Since the expression "son of man" well describes Jesus in His earthly form, it fits that He would be so designated in Daniel 7:13 to refer to His post-resurrection, pre-ascension condition. After all, His resurrected body was the same one that was crucified and which He re-inhabited after His death (Luke 24:39; John 20:27). In harmony with the wording of Daniel, Jesus, after His resurrection, passed through (from the perspective of those on Earth), or came with (from the perspective of God), clouds. Jesus echoed Daniel's "cloud" terminology in his trial before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:64). He then approached the Ancient of Days, i.e., God the Father, in the heavenly realm. Next observe that His return to heaven meant that He was enthroned at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3; 10:12) and given "dominion," i.e., rule (cf. Psalm 2:9, NIV), over the kingdom, i.e., the church, which will never be destroyed. All these details are stated explicitly in Acts 2:33-35, Ephesians 1:20-23, Colossians 1:15-18; 2:10, and Hebrews 12:28. When life on Earth is brought to a close, Jesus will hand the kingdom over to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Notice, then, that even though the idiom "son of man" ordinarily emphasizes one's humanness, in John 3 Jesus' repetitious use of the expression to refer to Himself conveyed an expanded and extended usage. Jesus linked His humanity with His divinity by embedding the phrase in the midst of multiple affirmations of His eternality. The same may be said of the way He would use the phrases "son of man" and "son of God" interchangeably (e.g., John 1:49-51; Matthew 26:63-64). "The son of man" was not only the quintessential human being—the ultimate human—He was simultaneously God in the flesh.

## "SON OF GOD" (JOHN 5:18-26)

> Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

> For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself (John 5:18-26).

## Background

The phrase "son of God" is used at least four ways in Scripture. It can refer to human beings as physically created by God (Luke 3:38). It can refer to children of God in the sense of the righteous people (e.g., Genesis 6:2; Romans 9:26). It can refer to angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). And it can refer to the divine person of Jesus as the one and only Son of God (Romans 1:4). It is in this last sense that we encounter the central thrust and very essence of Christianity—the divinity of Jesus Christ. On this single doctrinal reality, the entire superstructure of God's religion for man is erected. Jesus built His church, the kingdom, on that all-encompassing truth (Matthew 16:18).

In the section immediately preceding John 5:18, Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. Rather than drawing the only logical conclusion, i.e., that Jesus is God, the Jews persecuted Jesus on the basis of His having healed the man on the Sabbath. Jesus gave definitive refutations of the bogus charge of violating the Sabbath on more than one occasion (e.g., Matthew 12:1-14; John 7:21-24). But quite obviously, His opponents were simply using that grounds as a guise to cloak their deeper motivations—jealousy, pride, greed, desire for power, etc.

On this occasion, their hostility toward Jesus manifested itself in their outrage at the fact that Jesus "not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). The rest of chapter five constitutes Jesus' stunning discourse confirming their latter charge—what Luther labeled "a sublime apology." Jesus never denied the claim to be divine. Indeed, He asserted the claim Himself and defended it on numerous occasions, even before Pilate (John 18:37; 1 Timothy 6:13; cf. Matthew 26:63-66).

## Significance

Drawing upon the interrelationship sustained by father and son, Jesus defended His deity by describing the intimate connection between Himself and the Father. Seven facets of their relationship demonstrate His claim:

1. The Father and the Son are **one in action**, since the Son does not act independently of the Father. The Father and Son are so united that the Son does nothing that the Father does not do. It would

be against the divine nature of Christ to do anything contrary to the Father. Father and Son are of one mind and one divine nature. Neither acts independently of the other.

2. The Father and the Son are **one in love and intent**. The Father sent the Son to die for lost humanity (John 3:16), and the Son gave Himself for lost humanity (Galatians 1:4; 2:20; Ephesians 5:25). Everything Jesus did on Earth manifested the love that the Father and Son share in common for each other and for human beings. Father and Son did not act independently of each other in Jesus coming to Earth to perform His 33-year role to die, be resurrected, or execute judgment. They are completely united in thought and purpose. Being divine, Christ's nature was contrary to doing anything out of harmony with the Father.

3. The Father and the Son are **one in giving spiritual life** to those who desire it. Only deity has the right and ability to forgive sin (cf. John 6:58; 11:25; Romans 11:15). The pre-condition to receiving eternal life is to believe in, love, and obey the Son (3:36; 6:29; 14:15).

4. The Father and the Son are **one in judgment**. Even as both Father and Son are one in dispensing spiritual life to those who respond with obedient faith, so both are united in imparting judgment and condemnation to those who refuse to obey. Pronouncements of spiritual judgment from the Father and Son are made in this life, and will be made ultimately at the final Judgment (vs. 29; 12:48).

5. The Father and the Son are **one in the honor due them**. Since Jesus is fully God, He is deserving of the same honor due the Father. To fail to honor the Son is to fail to honor the Father.

6. The Father and the Son are **one in the prerequisites of salvation**. One must hear the Word of God and submit to that Word in obedient faith. The Father sent the Son to Earth; the Son articulated the way to be saved. They are unified in the means of receiving eternal life.

7. The Father and the Son are **one in their possession of life**. The Father and the Son share life that is self-existent and eternal. Only they can impart **any** life to others—whether physical or spiritual. They are the source of life. Only they have a right to dispense life according to their Word. The Son came to Earth to make provision for human access to spiritual life.

When Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son, and declared the intimate interconnection between Himself and the Father, He clearly implied a **divine** relationship that consists of **equality of nature**—a fact not lost on the Jews who wanted to execute Him for blasphemy.

## "PROMISED MESSIAH" (JOHN 10:36)

> Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"'? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand (John 10:22-39).

## Background

The Old Testament term "messiah" (*mah-SHEE-ach*), used 39 times, is always translated in the Septuagint by *Christos*. Both terms mean "anointed," and refer to the consecration, or setting apart, of an object (animate or inanimate) for a special, sacred purpose, using anointing oil. Under Mosaic Law, inanimate objects that were anointed included, for example, the tabernacle utensils. Three persons were likewise anointed: priests, kings, and prophets. It is not coincidental that Jesus occupies all three of these roles in His redemptive work on our behalf. He is Prophet (Matthew 13:57; Acts 3:22; 7:37), Priest (Hebrews 7; 9:11), and King (Matthew 21:5; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16).

The Hebrew/Aramaic term "messiah" is used only twice in the Greek New Testament—both times in John. Peter's brother Andrew used the term to refer to Jesus (John 1:41), and the Samaritan woman at the well expressed her awareness of the coming Messiah (John 4:25). *Christos* occurs 19 times in John (Moulton, Geden, and Moulton, 1978, p. 1012). The anointing of the Messiah for His messianic functions occurred when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove at His baptism and "remained on him" (John 1:32). The Spirit then led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Luke 4:1). Jesus later returned to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). He went into the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth and there told His listeners that Isaiah 61:1 was being fulfilled as He read it to them, beginning with the affirmation, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has **anointed Me**…" (Luke 4:18)—another indication of His messianic anointing. Peter accentuated the fruition of Jesus' messianic role when he explained on Pentecost that with the advent of Jesus' resurrection and ascension, "God has made this Jesus…both Lord **and Christ**" (Acts 2:36). No wonder, then, that Jesus pressed the Pharisees and others to grasp the identity of the Messiah (e.g., Matthew 22:41-45).

## Significance

During the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, the Jews surrounded Jesus and challenged Him to come right out and state whether He is the Messiah/Christ. Both His previous verbal affirmations, as well as His demonstrations of miraculous power, had already established the factuality of the point. "The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." "Work" is a synonym for the key word of the book, "sign." Jesus insisted that His miraculous acts verified and authenticated His messianic identity. Their failure to accept the indisputable evidence of that fact was due to their deliberate unbelief—their unmitigated refusal to accept the truth due to ulterior motives and alternate interests.

So Jesus pressed the point again very forthrightly by stating emphatically, "I and My Father are one." Observe that Jesus was never evasive. He never showed fear or hesitation in the face of threats or danger. Instead, He gave them yet another explicit declaration of His divine identity—naturally rekindling their desire to execute Him for blasphemy (as per Leviticus 24:14-16; cf. 1 Kings 21:10). But Jesus short-circuited the intention to stone Him by posing a penetrating question: "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" Since the Son and the Father are one, and the miraculous actions that Jesus performed were every bit as much from the Father as the Son who performed them, which sign evoked this violent intention to execute Him? Of course, Jesus knew that they did not desire to execute Him for His miraculous signs. But by calling attention to His ability to perform miracles, He was again gigging them with their failure to accept the evidence of His divine identity. Dismissing the obvious conclusion that would be drawn by any unbiased, honest person, they insisted that He was deserving of execution for the very fact that He claimed to be God.

As was so often the case with Jesus' handling of His contemporaries, He drew their attention back to the Bible, back to the Word of God (which He, Himself, authored). The Word of God is our only authority for deciding what to believe and how to act (Colossians 3:17). Jesus reminded them of Psalm 82:6—referring to that passage as "law." [NOTE: Advocates of the so-called "new hermeneutic," who have insisted that we have misinterpreted the Bible because we have lacked sufficient sensitivity for the variety of literary genre, need to redirect their criticism toward Jesus. It is true that the Bible contains many types of literature—from poetry and history to epistle and parable. Such literary forms certainly merit consideration in one's attempt to extract the meanings intended by God. However, the hidden agenda of the "liberal" lies in his underhanded attempt to disparage and vilify law, and soften or eliminate the **binding force** of Scripture. Jesus cut through such nonsense by insisting that, regardless of the differing literary characteristics of the books of the Bible, **all** of Scripture is "Law," in the sense that all of it has timelessly authoritative, legally binding application.]

### Psalm 82

Why did Jesus allude to Psalm 82? Some suggest that His point was that since God could refer to mere humans as "gods," Jesus' accusers had no grounds to condemn Him for applying such language to Himself. But this line of reasoning would make it appear as if Jesus was being evasive to avoid being stoned, and that He likened His claim to godhood with other mere humans. A more convincing, alternative interpretation is preferable.

The context of Psalm 82 is a scathing indictment of the unjust judges who had been assigned the responsibility of executing God's justice among the people (cf. Deuteronomy 1:16; 19:17-18; 2 Chronicles 19:6). Such a magistrate was "God's minister" (*diakonos*—Romans 13:4) who acted **in the place of God**, wielding **His authority**, and who was responsible for mediating **God's** help and justice (cf. Exodus 7:1). God had "given them a position that was analogous to His in that He had made them administrators of justice, His justice" (Leupold, 1969, p. 595). In **this** sense, they were "gods" (*elohim*)—**acting as God** to men (Barclay, 1956, 2:89). Hebrew parallelism clarifies this sense: "I said, 'You are gods, and all of you are **children of the Most High**'" (Psalm 82:6, emp. added). They did not share **divinity** with God—but merely **delegated jurisdiction**. They still were mere humans—though invested with divine authority, and permitted to act in God's behalf.

This point is apparent throughout the Pentateuch, where the term translated "judges" or "ruler" is sometimes *elohim* (e.g., Exodus 21:6; 22:9,28). Moses is one example. Moses was not a "god." Yet God told Moses that when he went to Egypt to achieve the release of the Israelites, he would be "God" to his brother Aaron and to Pharaoh (Exodus 4:16; 7:1). He meant that Moses would supply both his brother and Pharaoh with the words that came from God. Though admittedly a rather rare use of *elohim*, nevertheless, "it shows that the word translated 'god' in that place **might** be applied to man" (Barnes, 1949, p. 294, emp. in orig.). Clarke summarized this point: "Ye are my **representatives**, and are clothed with my power and authority to dispense judgment and justice, therefore **all of them** are said to be **children of the Most High**" (n.d., 3:479, emp. in orig.). But because they had shirked their awesome responsibility to represent God's will fairly and accurately, and because they had betrayed the sacred trust bestowed upon them by God Himself, He decreed that they would die (vs. 7). Obviously, they were not "gods," since God could and would **execute** them!

A somewhat analogous mode of expression is seen in Nathan's denunciation of David: "You have killed Uriah the Hittite" (2 Samuel 12:9)—though an enemy archer had done so (2 Samuel 11:24; 12:9). No one would accuse the archer of being David, or David being the archer. Paul said Jesus preached to the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:17)—though Jesus did so through human agency. Peter said Jesus preached to spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19), when, in fact, He did so through Noah. Noah was not Jesus and Jesus was not Noah. If Paul and Noah could be described as functioning in the capacity of Jesus, so judges in Israel could be described as functioning as God.

### Jesus' Point

Jesus marshaled this Old Testament psalm to thwart His opponents' attack, while simultaneously reaffirming His deity (which, as noted previously, is the central feature of the book of John—20:30-

31). He made shrewd use of syllogistic argumentation by reasoning *a minori ad majus* (see Lenski, 1943, pp. 765-770; cf. Fishbane, 1985, p. 420). "Jesus is here arguing like a rabbi from a lesser position to a greater position, a 'how much more' argument very popular among the rabbis" (Pack, 1975, 1:178). In fact, "it is an argument which to a Jewish Rabbi would have been entirely convincing. It was just the kind of argument, an argument founded on a word of scripture, which the Rabbis loved to use and found most unanswerable" (Barclay, 1956, 2:90).

Using an *argumentum ad hominem* (Robertson, 1916, p. 89), Jesus identified the unjust judges of Israel as persons "to whom the word of God came" (John 10:35). That is, they had been "appointed judges by Divine commission" (Butler, 1961, p. 127)—by "the **command of God**; his commission to them to do justice" (Barnes, 1949, p. 294, emp. in orig.; cf. Jeremiah 1:2; Ezekiel 1:3; Luke 3:2). McGarvey summarized the ensuing argument of Jesus: "If it was not blasphemy to call those gods who so remotely represented the Deity, how much less did Christ blaspheme in taking unto himself a title to which he had a better right than they, even in the subordinate sense of being a mere messenger" (n.d., p. 487). Charles Erdman observed:

> By his defense Jesus does not renounce his claim to deity; but he argues that if the judges, who represented Jehovah in their appointed office, could be called "gods," in the Hebrew scriptures, it could not be blasphemy for him, who was **the final and complete revelation of God**, to call himself "the Son of God" (1922, pp. 95-96, emp. added).

Morris agrees: "If in any sense the Psalm may apply this term to men, then **much more** may it be applied to Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world" (1971, pp. 527-528, emp. added). Indeed, "if the divine name had been applied by God to mere men, there could be neither blasphemy nor folly in its application to **the incarnate Son of God himself**" (Alexander, 1873, p. 351, emp. added).

This verse brings into stark contrast the deity—the **Godhood**—of Christ (and His Father Who "sanctified and sent" Him—vs. 36) with the **absence of deity** for all others. Jesus verified this very conclusion by directing the attention of His accusers to the "works" that He performed (vss. 37-38). These "works" (i.e., miraculous signs) proved the divine identity of Jesus to the exclusion of all other alleged deities. Archer concluded: "By no means, then, does our Lord imply here that we are sons of God just as He is—except for a lower level of holiness and virtue. No misunderstanding could be more wrongheaded than that" (1982, p. 374).

So Jesus was not attempting to dodge His critics or deny their charge. The entire context has Jesus asserting His deity, and He immediately reaffirms it by referring to Himself as the one "whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world" (vs. 36). Jesus spotlighted yet another manifestation of the Jews' hypocrisy, bias, and ulterior agenda—their failure to recognize and accept the Messiah. Even if sincere, they were wrong in their thinking; but the fact is that they were **doubly** wrong in that they were not even sincere, a fact that Jesus repeatedly exposed (cf. Matthew 12:7; 15:3-6).

## CONCLUSION

While on Earth, Jesus unequivocally claimed to be deity. It is no exaggeration to state that the essence of God's relationship with humans centers in Christ. Since Christianity is the only true religion, the only way to be acceptable to God and live eternally with Him is to submit to Jesus as the Son of God, Son of Man, Lord, and promised Messiah/Christ. One billion Hindus on Earth reject this conclusion, as do one billion atheists/skeptics and nearly half a billion Buddhists. Over one billion Muslims on the planet most certainly spurn the deity of Christ since the Quran forcefully repudiates the idea [the following translations of the Arabic are from the celebrated translation by Muslim scholar Mohammed Pickthall]:

> Praise be to Allah Who hath revealed the Scripture unto His slave…to give warning of stern punishment from Him…and to warn those who say: **Allah hath chosen a son**, (A thing) whereof they have no knowledge, nor (had) their fathers. **Dreadful is the word that cometh out of their mouths**. They **speak naught but a lie** (*Surah* 18:1-5, emp. added, parenthetical items in orig.).
>
> And they say: The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son. Assuredly **ye utter a disastrous thing**, whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins, **that ye ascribe unto the Beneficent a son**, when **it is not meet for (the Majesty of) the Beneficent that He should choose a son**. There is none in the heavens and the earth but cometh unto the Beneficient **as a slave** (*Surah* 19:88-93, emp. added, parenthetical item in orig.).

One day all human beings will stand before Jesus Christ and give account of their earthly behavior: "For we shall all stand before **the judgment seat of Christ**. For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:10-11, emp. added). "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11, emp. added). May we emulate the example of Thomas, blending our voices with his, in our mutual affirmation of Jesus: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

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