

HOW DO I KNOW THAT JESUS WAS (AND STILL IS) GOD, NOT JUST A PROPHET OR A GOOD MAN?

by Gary T. Panell

We will show from this study that the Bible, Jesus disciples, and Jesus Himself all teach that Jesus is in fact God!

The Bible makes it perfectly clear from these verses Jesus is God. “In the beginning was the Word (Jesus-Logos)*, and the Word (Jesus)* was with God (the Father)*, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not (overcome)* it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own (Jews)*, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out , saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1: 1-18) A person can choose not to believe what the Bible says, but please don’t try to deny what it says.

I will show in this article that Jesus did claim divinity, the Bible claims Jesus is God, and His disciples did claim Jesus Christ is God. Most of what people claim are proofs of Jesus not being God, are really examples of Jesus humanity, since He is both God and Man. He came to this earth through the Blessed Virgin Mary to become a human sacrifice for the sins of the entire world. He limited Himself in the flesh, laying aside his glory, and certain aspects of His Godhead. Yes, He did serve God the Father as not only a Son, but as a humble Servant. This was so that He might be an example to us of how we can walk in the Holy Spirit, as He did. But we will get to more of these arguments later in the article.

The thing people need to understand about Christians is that we believe in ONE God, who is in three persons. An example of this is how we are three yet one, we have a body soul and a spirit, but we are still one. There is a mystery about the Trinity that we will not fully understand until we are in heaven, but there is a lot that the Bible has taught us about God that we can understand. For those who are really seeking the truth, the Bible has the answers.

Why do Christians believe God is three in one? We believe God is three in one because it is taught all through the Bible, starting from Genesis going through Revelation. Although the great burden of the Old Testament is on the unity of God, as in Deuteronomy 6: 4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” there are, however, numerous times it speaks of a plurality in the Godhead.

1. **JESUS AND THE TRINITY FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT:**

First, let’s look at the plural nouns and pronouns applied to God, as in Genesis 1:1, 26. “In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth....Then God (Elohim) said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’” Genesis 3:22 “Then the LORD God (Elohim) said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil...’” Gen. 11: 7 “Come, let Us...” Isaiah 6: 8, “...Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us...” Genesis 48: 15,16 ...”God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel (Messenger) who has redeemed me...” It is noteworthy that despite the fact that in Gen. 1:1, 26; 48:15, 16 the name for God is in the plural (Elohim), the verb is in the singular. Also the verb “come” in Gen. 11:7 is really in the plural. It must, therefore, be addressed to at least two others. This can hardly be the angels, for God sends them, but never acts in union with them. Also in the very next verse we are told that God created man in his own image.

There are even other indications that this plurality is a trinity in the following facts:

(1) **LORD is distinguished from LORD** in Gen. 19: 24 “Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens;” and in Hosea 1: 7: “Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the LORD their God...”

(2) **The LORD has a Son**, in Psalm 2:7 we read: “I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You...” By “today” it means the eternal present; it refers to the eternal generation of the Son by the Father. Jesus is not only called the Son of God (John 9:35; Romans 1:4), but also the only begotten Son (John 3:16,18) and His firstborn Son (Hebrews 1: 6). But He was a son before He “brings” Him into the world, and says, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Look at Isaiah 9:6, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Then too, in Micah 5:2 Jesus is seen as being eternal, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

(3) **The Spirit is distinguished as God**. In Genesis 1:1 we read: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;” and in verse 2b, “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” In Gen. 6:3, “And the LORD said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.’” There are many more examples of this in Numbers 27:18, Psalm 51:11, Isaiah 40:13, 48:16, Haggai 2:4, 5.

(4) **In Isaiah 6: 3 the seraphim cry to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of**

hosts...” and in Revelation 4:8b we see this same thing. “And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘**Holy, holy, holy**, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!’”

- (5) **The Aaronic benediction in the Old Testament teaches us there is a trinity:** “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” Numbers 6: 24-26 It should be noted that, even though this is a threefold benediction, it is only One God that blesses. This is made clear from the next verse, which says, “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

Let’s now look at this special term, “**the Angel of the LORD,**” from the Old Testament. We believe this is a designation of the **pre-incarnate Logos** (Jesus, John 1:1), who manifested Himself in angelic or human form, foreshadowing His later coming in the flesh. The term with the one exception, Haggai 1:13, is used of the pre-incarnate God. In Haggai, he himself is the “messenger” (same word as “angel”) of the LORD.

We see the Angel of the LORD in Genesis 16:7-14 as He appeared to Hagar, then to Abraham in Gen. 22: 11-18. He also appeared to Jacob in Gen. 31: 11, 13, to Moses in Exodus 3: 2-5, to Israel in Exodus 14:19; 23:20; 32: 34, and to Balaam in Numbers 22: 22-35. Then to Gideon in Judges 6: 11-23, to Manoah in Judges 13: 2-25, and to David in 1 Chronicles 21: 15-17. Later we see him appearing to Elijah in 1 Kings 19: 5-7. He killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night in 2 Kings 19: 35. He stood among the myrtle trees in Zechariah’s vision in Zechariah 1: 11. He defended Joshua the high priest against Satan, Zechariah 3: 1ff. In Genesis 18, one of the three “men” that appeared to Abraham is repeatedly called the LORD in verse 13, 17, 20, 22-33. “And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD?...” This messenger was none other than the pre-incarnate Christ!

He also appeared to Hagar the mother of Ishmael, Genesis 16: 7-14. “Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. And He said, ‘Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?’ She said, ‘I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.’ The Angel of the LORD said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.’ Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, ‘I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.’ And the Angel of the LORD said to her: ‘Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.’ Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, ‘have I also here seen Him who sees me?’ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.”

2. JESUS IS GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: We have seen that the Holy Trinity is in the Old Testament, and Jesus was seen as the pre-incarnate Angel of the LORD. When we come to the New Testament we find the doctrine of the Godhead, and Jesus as the second person in the Holy Trinity, clearly set forth. The proof of this may be presented in two ways: by means of

general statements and by proof that there are three that are recognized as God.

(1) General Statements. We find these, first, in connection with the baptismal scene of Christ. The Lord Jesus, of course, was present; but we also note that the Spirit descended upon Him, and that a voice out of heaven said: “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3: 16, 17) So Jesus is standing in the water after His baptism, the Holy Spirit comes in the form of a dove, and God the Father speaks from heaven. How much clearer could God make this doctrine of the Holy Trinity, God being three in One?

Secondly, in the statement of Jesus that He would pray the Father to give them another Comforter (John 14: 16, 17). Thirdly, in the baptismal formula, which required the disciples to baptize in the name (singular) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Matthew 28: 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

Fourthly, in the way in which the Father, the Son and the Spirit are associated in their work (1 Corinthians 12: 4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 3:18), “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. (3:18) For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...”

Fifthly, in the Apostolic benediction, in which we pronounce, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthians 13: 14)

(2) Proof that There are Three that are Recognized as God. These are, of course, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Let’s notice the proof for this statement. (a) The Father is recognized as God. This is done so often that we do not need to present an exhaustive list of references. Note, however, the following samples: “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him. Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him who He sent.’” (John 6: 27-29) “God the Father,” (Galatians 1:1, 3, etc., etc.) and many other similar expressions show that when God is being referred to, it is often God the Father.

(3) The Son is recognized as God. The importance of the doctrine of the deity of Christ can not be overestimated. Jesus Christ does not keep the same relationship to Christianity that other founders of religions sustain to the faith which they have started. Buddha (B.C. 563-484), Confucius (551-478), and Mohammed (A.D. 570-632) are a vital part for their teaching; but Jesus Christ is significant primarily for His person. He is central to Christianity! Jesus Himself thought of Himself in this way. He asked, “What do you think about the Christ?” (Matthew 22: 41-46) “Whose Son is He? They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’? ‘If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?’ And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare

question Him anymore.” Who do you believe Jesus is? Is He just a good teacher to you? Is He just a Prophet? No, He is much more, He truly is the second person in the Godhead! He is truly God and man! He wants to be your LORD and Savior!

(a) Jesus has the attributes of Deity. Divine attributes are ascribed to Him and manifested by Him. There are five separate divine attributes. These are 1) eternity, 2) omnipresence, 3) omniscience, 4) omnipotence, and 5) immutability. Christ demonstrates all of these. His is eternal. He was before John (John 1:15), “John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’” He was before Abraham (John 8: 57-59), “Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’” (By the way, this term “I AM” is the very term, God the Father, told Moses to use for the name of God when pharaoh would ask who it was that had sent him. The Jews knew this name meant He was saying He was God, and they believed He was committing blasphemy by calling Himself God, so in the very next verse they tried to stone Him.) “Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

He was here before the world came into being, (John 17: 5, 24);”And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was...Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

He is the, firstborn of all creation, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” (Colossians 1: 15).

He was in existence whenever you want to think of a beginning. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

He is from eternity past, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” (Micah 5:2)

He is forever in the past and in the future, Hebrews 1: 11, “They will perish, but You remain...” Isaiah 9: 6, 7 “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this!”

He is omnipresent and omniscient. He was in heaven while on earth (John 3:13) “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is the Son of Man who is in heaven.” He is on the earth while he is in heaven (Matthew 18: 20; 28:20), “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” “...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

He fills all (Ephesians 1: 2, 3) “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love...”

As for his omniscience, we know that He knows everything (John 16: 30; 21:17) “Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.” “He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” He knew what was in men, “But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” (John 2: 24, 25) He saw Nathanael under the fig-tree when He wasn’t even there, “Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God!’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’” (John 2: 47-51)

He showed His omniscience by knowing the history of the Samaritan woman (John 4:29), the thoughts of men (Luke 6:8; cf. 11:17), the time and manner of His exit out of this world (Matthew 16:21; John 12: 33; 13: 1). He knew who would betray Him (John 6:66), the character and certain end of the present age (Matthew 24: 25), the Father (Matthew 11: 27).

All wisdom is in Him, “...to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Colossians 2: 2b, 3)

Br. Ally questioned Jesus’ omniscience because of (Mark 11:13) “And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.” Jesus was teaching His disciples a lesson about Israel. Jesus knew what He would find, but He went through the motions so His disciples would get the message.

The lesson is: fig trees’ fruit is first formed, then the leaves appear; so one would expect to find satisfying fruit on a tree in full leaf. The fig tree is used here to designate Israel of Jesus’ time, whose religious system and heritage appeared to hold promise of satisfaction. So the curse extended not only to the tree but also to the nation of Israel, and in acting out this, looking for fruit, Jesus was telling His disciples about what was going to happen to the nation of Israel until they receive their Messiah, Him. The nation had professed righteousness and had maintained all the external forms of godliness (leaves), but while professing faith in God, they rejected the Son of God (showing they had leaves, but no fruit). Jesus knew it was not the time for fruit on the tree, but He also knew, because He is a prophet, that that tree would not bear fruit. So too, Jesus knew that the nation of Israel would reject Him even if He had not formally offered Himself as King yet.

Another argument that some people bring up about Jesus not knowing all things is in Mark 13:32 where Jesus says, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” On the basis of this statement, some people would have us believe that Jesus is ignorant on many other points also. But we must remember that while Jesus had the attributes of deity, He had surrendered the independent use of them. All due to the fact that the Father did not allow Him to exercise His divine attributes in these instances. But He now knows the time of His coming. When He was on this earth He also grew in knowledge as a child. He had to learn how to crawl, how to walk, how to talk, but He didn’t cease being God. (Luke 2: 52) And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

He is omnipotent. Jesus says: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8) He upholds all things with the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3) and all authority is given to Him Matthew 28:18. He has power over demons (Mark 5: 11-15), disease (Luke 4: 38-41), death Matthew 9: 25; Luke 7: 14, 15; John 11: 43, 44), the elements (Matthew 8: 26, 27), nature (John 2:11; Matthew 21: 19), and all things (Matthew 28: 18; Rev. 1:8).

Christ performed His miracles through the Spirit (Matthew 12:28), they are, nevertheless, frequently cited as proofs of His deity (John 5:36; 10: 25, 38; 20: 30, 31).

He is also immutable (Hebrews 13: 8) “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He holds the Offices of Deity. He is the Creator Colossians 1:15-22 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

Isaiah 7:14 says, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” Matthew 1: 22, 23 makes this verse very clear in the New Testament, “So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’”

If a person does not want to accept Jesus as their God and Savior, that is their choice, but please don’t try to say that Jesus never taught He was God. One day we will all bow the knee to Him as LORD! (Romans 14: 10b, 11) “...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.’” Everyone has a choice to either accept Jesus as, LORD and Savior, as the one thief on the cross beside Jesus did, or they can choose as the other thief on the other side of Jesus did, and die denying Jesus is LORD. “Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed

Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 'And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23: 39-43)

All humanity is represented by the two thieves, we have to accept or reject Jesus. Those who don't receive Jesus have rejected the only way of salvation. What will you do with Jesus? Will you believe what the Bible says about Him? Will you believe what his disciples said about Him? Will you believe what Jesus said about Himself? Look at what happened after Jesus resurrection in John 20:26-29. "And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus loves you, and wants to save you. What is your choice? He has paid the price for our sins already; if you receive His forgiveness through Jesus' blood you will be saved. Will you say like Thomas said when he saw Christ after He had arisen, My LORD and MY GOD?

(All the verses have been taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.) *These are my own parenthesis, and my own comments. Much of what I have used in the theological section is paraphrased from, Lectures in systematic theology by Henry Clarence Thiessen B. D., Ph. D., D. D.; WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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