

Series: *Colossians – Christ Above All*

Title: "How Do We Know Jesus is God?"

Speaker: Rev. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/8/2009

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Introduction

We're continuing our study of the questions that relate to the great declaration about Jesus Christ that we find in Colossians chapter one, verse fifteen: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." By way of brief review, let me mention three things we've already focused upon.

First, what does Paul mean when he declares that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God"? We've seen that the word translated "image" in this verse tells us that Jesus is the exact representation and the complete revelation of God the Father – so exact, and so complete, that as Jesus Himself said in John 14:9, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

Secondly, what does Paul mean when he declare that Jesus is "the firstborn over all creation"? We saw that the Greek word that is translated "firstborn" in Colossians 1:15 means "someone or something who existed before other things." It also means "someone who has the inheritance rights of the firstborn." And it also means that the person who bears this title of firstborn is in a position of superiority. The word "firstborn" in Colossians 1:15 is not a word that has to do with birth, or birth order, or even temporal beginning. Paul says that Jesus is "the firstborn over all creation." He is saying that Jesus Christ existed before anything was created. He is eternally existent.

Thirdly, we've answered the question, "What is the Trinity, and what is the place of Jesus Christ in the Godhead?" And we saw, first of all, that the Trinity is an absolutely vital doctrine. It is fundamental. To believe in the God of the Bible, you must believe

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in the Trinity. If you don't believe in the Trinity, you don't believe in the God of the Bible. And we saw that the place of Jesus Christ within the Trinity is this: Jesus Christ is the visible manifestation of the one true, living, and eternal God, who is composed of three united persons of one substance and power, without separate existence.

And we saw that the Trinity is a doctrine that human wisdom cannot fully comprehend or explain. It can only be accepted, believed, on the basis of God's propositional revelation in His Word. And God calls upon us to do just that – to believe it. We accept the doctrine of the Trinity because God's Word says it is so. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a mere theological technicality. It is one of the rock-bottom fundamentals, one of the non-negotiables, of authentic Biblical Christianity.

How Do We Know That Jesus Christ is God?

This brings us today to a fourth question. And it is related to this matter of the Trinity. We believe, on the authority of the Word of God, on the authority of the declarations that we find within the pages of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation – on that authority we believe in one God, revealed in three persons. But today I want to focus, as Colossians chapter one, verse fifteen does, on the second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we know that Jesus Christ is God? Many people deny that Jesus Christ is God. Liberal churches deny it. Cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons deny it. The false religion of Islam denies it.

So how do we know that Jesus Christ is God – God the Son, the second person of the Trinity? And once again, as with the doctrine of the Trinity itself, our sole

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authority is the Word of God, Holy Scripture. And Scripture leaves no question about the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the eternal Son.

Scripture's Declaration

Scripture declares that God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, existed from eternity, that He is God from all eternity, and that He is the Creator of all things. Let me give you eight points on this – these are ways in which the Bible declares this to be so. I'm going to give them all to you first, and then we'll come back and focus on each one.

Point number one: We have the great declaration of John chapter one, verses one through three, concerning the deity of Christ.

Point number two: Jesus Himself unequivocally stated that He was God.

Point number three – and this is something from our last message that we'll revisit just briefly – is the fact that Jesus is spoken of as "the Son" throughout the Bible, from as early in the Old Testament as the second Psalm.

Point number four: We have the inspired declarations of the writer of the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is a great New Testament commentary on Old Testament truth, and it is a very rich commentary on the person and work of Christ.

Point number five: We have the testimony of Scripture about the incarnation of God the Son – what happened when God the Son came into the world in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Point number six: Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the deity of the Son of God by teaching Christ's deity in His names.

Point number seven: Scripture ascribes to Jesus Christ the attributes that only God can have.

And point number eight: The Bible says that Jesus Christ is to be worshipped, and only God is to be worshipped.

So let's now look at each of these eight points in which Scripture declares that Jesus Christ is God Himself.

John's Great Declaration

First, we have the great declaration of John 1:1-3 – "In the beginning was the Word [Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God, 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."

Jesus' Own Statements

Point number two is this: Jesus Himself unequivocally stated that He was God. John 8:58 – "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' " Here Jesus declared Himself to be Jehovah, the "I AM". In other words, Jesus declares Himself to be *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. *Yahweh* or Jehovah is the proper name for God that is translated "Lord" over 6,500 times in the Old Testament.

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Let me just say a word about the names of God, because this is important in relation to what I am saying. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, God reveals Himself through His names. The focus of the New Testament is on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the Old Testament the names of God are manifold. Some of them are names that God uses to identify Himself. Others are names that are ascribed to God by men. The meanings of the names of God reveal Him to us. It is largely by His names that we understand who God is. It is by the names of God that we understand His character and attributes; we understand His decrees; we understand His ways of governing His creation; and we understand His ways of dealing with individuals and nations, both believers and unbelievers. It is also important to note that all of the names of God in the Bible are masculine names.

But among all the names of God in the Old Testament, there is actually only one proper name of God, and that name is *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*, which literally means, "I AM." By the name *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*, God identifies Himself as the self-existent One. He identifies Himself as the One who is eternal, immortal, and unchangeable. He is the One who is dependent on nothing else and on no one else. And thus, in Exodus 3:14-15, God declares to Moses,

"I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' " Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations."

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And it is by the name *Yahweh* or Jehovah that we understand the significance of the many "I AM" declarations that Jesus Christ makes in the New Testament Gospels, especially in the Gospel of John. He says, in John 8:18, "I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."

And in John 6:35 – "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

John 8:12 – "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

John 10:9 – "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved..."

John 10:11 – "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

John 11:25 – "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

John 15:1 – "I am the true vine..."

John 14:6 – "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Jesus continually declared Himself to be the "I AM." He unequivocally declared His equality with Jehovah. And so it is that in John 8:58, Jesus is saying that He is the "I AM" – He is *Yahweh* – He is Jehovah – He is the one, true, living, and eternal God. And the Jews who heard Jesus make this declaration immediately knew that He

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was making Himself equal to God, He was saying that He is God Himself, and that is why, we read in the next verse, John 8:59, that they took up stones to stone Him.

The Son in the Old Testament

Point number three is one that we saw in our last message, the fact that Jesus is spoken of as "the Son" as early in the Bible as the second Psalm, that great prophecy of the coming of Christ as Redeemer and King:

Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him. (Psalm 2:6-12)

The Person & Work of Christ in Hebrews

Point number four: We have the inspired declarations of the writer of the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is a great New Testament commentary on Old Testament truth. The writer of Hebrews spends a great deal of time explaining the types and symbols of the Old Testament, in light of the incarnation, life, death, burial, and resurrection of

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Jesus Christ. All of these things find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. And in Hebrews chapter one beginning at verse eight, the inspired writer quotes three passages from the Psalms (45:6-7, 102:25-27, and 110:1), and he says that they all address and describe "the Son," Jesus Christ. He writes this, beginning at Hebrews 1:8 –

But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail." But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? (Hebrews 1:8-13)

Christ Before & After His Incarnation

Point number five: We have the testimony of Scripture about the incarnation of God the Son – what happened when God the Son came into the world in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before His incarnation the Son was, according to Philippians 2:6, in the form of God. The Greek word for "form" is *morphe*, which means that His outward appearance was in agreement with His inward essence, in other words, Jesus Christ was God in His very essence before He came to earth. Philippians 2:6 also says

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that He was equal with God. The Greek word for “equal” is *isa*, which means “the same as.” In other words, Jesus was the same as God.

And Jesus Himself claimed to be equal with God. We don’t have time to read the whole passage, but you’ll find the Lord Jesus declaring this at length in John 5:19-31. And Scripture tells us that in His incarnation, Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, not of a human father, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” And we find this prophecy fulfilled in Luke 1:31-35 and Matthew 1:20. The virgin-born Christ was given the name Immanuel, which means "God with us," as we read in Matthew 1:23.

This, once again, is why Paul declares in Colossians 1:15 that Jesus Christ is the very “image of the invisible God.” And we read later on in Colossians, in chapter two verse nine, that in the incarnate Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in a body. I think that statement is the most amazing and monumentally important statement in all the world. In the incarnate Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in a human body. He is fully God and fully man.

Declarations of Deity

Point number six: Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the deity of the Son of God by teaching Christ’s deity in His names. Let me give you just a few examples:

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Hebrews 1:8 – "But to the *Son* He says: "Your throne, *O God*, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom."

John 20:28 – When Thomas saw the resurrected Christ after he had expressed his doubts about the reality of the resurrection, and Jesus 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!"

Titus 2:13 – Paul says that we Christians are "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great *God* and Savior Jesus Christ."

Matthew 22, beginning at verse 41 – Jesus said to the unbelieving Pharisees, "What do you think about the Christ? 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."

And our last example, John 5:25 – Jesus Himself spoke to the unbelieving Jews about His Second Coming, and He said this: "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."

(We'll cover points seven and eight in the next message.)

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