

Christ the Eternal Word. The Deity Of Christ John Ch 5: 39

Each of the four gospels provide for us faithful accounts of the Life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a cursory study of the four gospels you will discover that each gospel differs in its presentation of Christ, in that each Gospel writer majors on a particular feature or characteristic concerning Christ. Each book of the bible has peculiar to itself some prominent or dominant theme, and the gospels are no different. For that very reason we reject the position that many bible scholars adopt today, in questioning the fact that there are four gospels, and they tell us that there is no need for four gospels, one would suffice. But as I said, each gospel is unique in that they all present and set forth Christ in entirely different ways. Notice how the first three Gospels begin.

a) **Gospel of Matthew**. In his account Matthew begins by setting forth **Christ's human descent**. In Matt Ch1 you will read the genealogy of Christ & be able to trace the royal lineage of Christ, from Abraham to David to Joseph right up until His birth. Matthew relates Christ as King.

b) **Gospel of Mark**. Mark in his gospel begins with **Christ's public ministry**. Throughout Mark's gospel you read of Christ's dealings with men. Christ in His role as a servant is in view.

c) **Gospel of Luke**. Luke begins with **Christ's infancy**, deals with Christ's **parentage & Christ's humanity**.

What you notice about these first three gospels is that Christ is presented and viewed in earthly & human relationships. But when we come to John's gospel, we find that we approach entirely different ground, from that which is traversed by the other three. While it is true that the period of time covered by John is the same as that covered by the other three gospel writers & certain events and occurrences recorded in Matt, Mark, & Luke are to be found in John, while this is so, everything else is entirely new within John's account. The viewpoint that John takes concerning the Person & Life of Christ is one that is far more elevated than that of the other three gospels.

See how John begins his gospel account (Read Ch1v1). John dispenses with the Genealogy. He begins his gospel not by relating to **Christ's human relationship to men as the other synoptic gospels do, but by setting forth Christ's divine relationship to His Father**. So in the same way that the other Gospels each have their own peculiar and dominant theme, John's Gospel also has its own continuing subject. **That subject matter is expressed in the opening words of John Ch1: 1**, where we are brought to focus on **the deity & divinity of Christ**.

That is the one dominant theme of John's gospel - The Deity of Christ. Nowhere else in the scriptures is the deity and the Godhood of Christ so fully expounded than in the fourth Gospel. That is apparent from the opening verses; John commences by unveiling the eternal sonship and divine pre-existence of Christ. In John 1v1-2 we view Christ dwelling with the Father, before time began, before there ever was a creature formed. John also relates to his readers, not only the reality of Christ's pre-existence with the Father but also the actuality of Christ's incarnation. That as the Son of God who dwelt in eternity with His Father, there was a time when He was born of a woman and actually dwelt among men (**Read v14**). **And so John begins his gospel account**, with this statement in regards to Christ's Divinity/Deity. As you study the entire gospel you will be able to trace very clearly this theme of Christ's Deity, to a very large degree everything that John has to say in this gospel is either bound up or closely related to this fact of Christ's Deity.

Why does John write concerning Christ's Deity? By the year A.D. 90 when John wrote his gospel, all of the apostles were deceased, all except John remained. In John's day on every side there were those who denied the Deity of Christ. The **Gnostics**, a very active movement in John's day, which denied Christ's deity, were especially a constant threat to the Church with their Heresies (**Cerinthius taught that Christ began as a mere man**). There therefore was a real need for an inspired, authoritative, systematic presentation of the Deity of Christ. The Holy Spirit moved John, the last surviving Apostle, to write concerning this matter. In a very real way John's Gospel comes as a refutation to those particular heresies that flourished at the close of the 1st Century, 50-60 yrs after the death of Christ.

It is interesting to notice how John refutes these errors. In silencing those who propounded heresies concerning Christ's Deity, **John didn't devise his own plan or method**, neither did he set forth arguments that were **based upon His own theology**, but rather John presented the very words & arguments that Christ himself used when His divinity/Deity was challenged. **The very chapter where we read (Ch5) records for us an instance** where the Saviour's divinity His Godhood was disputed, (**v16 read**). **The Lord had just healed the impotent man**, when the Jews heard of it, they sought Christ out, not to honour him, but to slay Him, because he had healed on the Sabbath. What really motivated the Jews to persecute Christ, was not so much the fact that he healed on the Sabbath, but that he had declared himself equal with God (**v18**). The Jews resented this aspect of Christ's ministry. You will discover that there is no other element of Christ's person & character that comes under such a sustained & concerted attack than, His essential Deity.

1) Notice Christ's Response. - Christ responded to this challenge upon His divinity by presenting a **threefold witness**, to testify to the fact that he truly was God, God manifest in the flesh.

a) - The 1st of these witnesses to whom Christ appeals for proof of His deity is found in (**v36**) **His own works**.

b) - The 2nd witness to whom Christ appeals is found in (**v37**). Christ declares that **His Father** 'Hath borne witness of me. **At His baptism, God openly declared 'this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased**

c) - The 3rd & final witness that Christ cites are (**v39**) **The scriptures** they testify to Christ's deity & divinity. **In a threefold manner Christ affirms His deity**. It's quite remarkable to note the order in which Christ calls these three witnesses. 1) **The witness of Himself**. 2) **The witness of the Father**. 3) **The witness of the scripture (Holy Spirit)**. There you have a remarkable reference to the Trinity, all bearing witness to the Deity of Christ.

While (v39) is the last witness, which the Lord cites, as proof of His deity. For the Church and us today it is by far the most important. The works of Christ are no longer before us. The voice of the Father is no longer heard (audibly). But the scriptures abide on. beyond them we have nor need no further witness.

2). The Scriptures as a whole primarily reveal Christ's Deity.

It is interesting to note that in Ch1v1 John uses the title of Christ '*The word.*' Take the title of Christ '*The Word.*' Understanding that John's reference to '*The Word*' is in connection with Christ's Deity, '*The word was with God, the word was God.*' Referring to **Christ's pre-existence with the Father.** It always strikes me that John's gospel opens with words concerning Christ, similar to those with which the OT commences (In the beginning...was the word).

Closely related to that particular title is another of Christ's titles in **Rev Ch1v8 'The Alpha & Omega.'** The reference there is to the Greek alphabet, but it also is a reference to the Holy Scriptures, the Divine Letters, the Divine alphabet, the words of scripture. Christ is declared to be God's alphabet. The Title '*Alpha & Omega*' is an all-inclusive term. It refers (not only to the A&O but to everything in between. There Christ is said to be the beginning & end (First & Last) & he is unchangeably so. the thought of immutability is brought before our minds, there is only one person who is said to be immutable (God Himself). Yet here in Rev Ch1v8 Christ is given this incommunicable attribute of God, immutability. This title also suggests, communication & revelation. When you compare Christ's title with the title given to the Scriptures, '*The Word of God.*' You discover that in a very real way, all that is contained in the divine alphabet (the scriptures, the word) is expressed in the person of Christ, who is the personification of the written word. The Scriptures reveal and Christ reveals, the Scriptures communicates to us the mind of God, Christ communicates to us the mind of God, since, He is the word of God personified. The '*Scriptures*' therefore clearly express the Deity of Deity.

Many may say well is all that really important? Well it is, for that means that throughout the scriptures from start to finish, Christ and His deity ought always to be in view. It also means that when it comes to expounding this book in any place, you can't get away from the Deity of Christ. That answers a lot of questions, in regards to what the gospel is? & What the gospel should include when preached. Since Christ's deity is the dominant theme of all scripture, then in all preaching there ought to be a focusing upon the Deity of Christ (John Ch8v24)

That is why the '*Word*' ought to be central in our worship services. We often speak of '*preaching the word.*' We live in days when many fail understand just what that means. For a man to '*Preach the word*' is for him to preach Christ. **This very book which we hold in our hands, bears one of the titles of Christ '*The Word.*'** And when the '*Word*' is preached, none but Christ should be seen. In places where Christ is not preached, there is no gospel. Essentially the message of the gospel is Christ!

2) Why Defend the Deity of Christ? The Deity of Christ is connected to the Atoning work of Christ.

History has always shown that both these doctrines of Christ's Deity & Atonement are either received together or rejected together. Both are necessary to each other, hence the true Church in every age has confessed to both. **In scripture the Lord Jesus always connected the two.** And were you have mention of Christ's Deity you will have the Atonement. **Read (Ch5v39)** Christ speaks of His Deity, but in doing so He connects it with '*eternal life.*' **John Ch3 v14-15** (Read). Christ speaks of His Deity & of '*Eternal life.*' The reference to eternal life is associated with Redemption & Salvation. And when you deal with Redemption, you of necessity must deal with the Atonement, the putting away of sin. **But why is the Deity of Christ so essential to the Atonement of Christ?**

Because if man is to be redeemed the one who would be the redeemer must be both human & divine. Without such mans Salvation would be impossible. **The endurance of the curse & penalty of the law would be infinitely beyond the resources of a mere human.** The redeemer had to be a human & a divine person. In Christ both these credentials are found, he was wholly man & wholly God. When Christ suffered, he **Christ suffered as a man,** His humanity suffered. Christ's Divine nature did not suffer, it could not, **Deity cannot be punished,** but by virtue of the human & divine natures being united, His Deity lent to His Humanity, the ability to endure the sufferings of the cross. Christ was enabled to encounter & bear infinitely more than a mere man could have borne. Due to His being the Godman (Human & Divine), Christ gave an infinite value to His sufferings/Atonement, and made Redemption a reality for millions.

We must conclude, that any system of doctrine that looks with an unfavourable eye upon the Deity of Christ, or Christ's eternal sonship, cannot have a consistent position on the Atonement. Once Christ's Deity is removed, the foundation the bedrock of our redemption (*the atonement*) is overthrown. That is why every believer ought to come to an understanding of these matters. There ought to be not only in the church, but also in the life of the individual a focusing upon the Essential Deity of Christ. Forgiveness of sins, Salvation & Christian assurance all are embedded in the person of Christ. Because He suffered as the Godman, He has obtained eternal redemption for us. While many are prepared to cast to the side the final court of appeal to which Christ cited as proof of His Deity, let us endeavour by God's grace to make it known, to magnify Christ.