

The Preexistence and Deity of Christ

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to John 8. We're going to be looking at verse 58.

A lot of people don't know [this], but if you go to Israel, on the Temple Mount, where the temple might have been (there's some discussion of whether or not the temple was actually located in the middle of the Temple Mount or two-thirds north, aligned with the east gate), there's a structure there called the "Dome of the Rock." On the Dome of the Rock, there is a bronze plaque that states [that] Jesus was not the Son of God, and [that] the doctrine of the Trinity is not true.

It's pretty interesting, when you look at all the religions [out] there, that this is one of the [things] that both Jews and Muslims agree on: Jesus was not God, and the doctrine of the Trinity is not true. All through the ages, there have been false teachers saying things like, "Jesus is not God Almighty. He was a great teacher. He was a great prophet. He was a great, moral man. He was a man upon whom the Spirit of God descended. He was 'god' with a little 'g,'" that is, nothing more than a great ruler. Recently He [has been portrayed as] a great sinner and deceiver who was actually married to Mary Magdalene.

Maybe you have had Mormons show up [at] your house. There they are, nice and clean, usually in a pair of two. They tell you [that] they believe in Jesus, and you're thinking, "Well, so do I," but they forget to tell you that

their Jesus used to be a man, and after working really hard, [He] eventually became a god, and just so happens to be the brother of Satan.

Maybe you have had a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses show up to your house, and you have discovered that they believe Jesus is God, too. You [say], "I thought [you] didn't believe that."

They say, "Oh, yeah, we believe in Jesus. We believe Jesus is God."

You say, "Really? So, you believe that He is God—Jehovah?"

"Oh, no."

"What do you mean?"

"We believe He's God, but He's not *Almighty* God. He's not Jehovah God, or Yahweh God. He's just like those rulers in Israel [to whom God] said, 'You are gods' [see Psalm 82:6]" In other words, they were men of importance and authority.

You open your Bible because you're thinking to yourself, "Ah ha! I know this verse, John 1:1, says that Jesus is God." So you whip over to John 1:1, and you read there, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." You read that to [the Jehovah's Witnesses], and you say, "By the way, if you look down in verse 14, you'll see that it says, 'And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,' so obviously [it is] talking about Jesus. If you read [the verses] in between, it's crystal clear, so if 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God,' then if that Word became flesh, then the Word must be God." You're thinking, "Well, that took care of them."

Then they say, "Well, actually, this is an anarthrous construction in the Greek."

You're thinking to yourself, "Oh? What's that?"

They say, "In the English, when you want to make something definite, you put in front of a word the little word 'the.' [For instance], 'the apple,' means a specific apple, or you might have 'the king of Israel,' speaking of a specific king of Israel."

You're thinking, "Well, yeah."

They say, “When the text here says, ‘In the beginning was *the* Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was God*,’ there’s no ‘the’ there [in front of the word “God”], so it’s really not talking about ‘the’ God Almighty.”

You don’t know Greek, [so] when they throw out the term “anarthrous,” you’re thinking that maybe they know what they’re talking about. What they don’t tell you, [however], is that whenever [a word] doesn’t have a “the,” it means “the same quality, or essence” as something. So, really, it says, “In the beginning was the” definite “Word, and the Word was God and the Word was the same quality or essence as God,” but they forget to tell you that because they’ve never read a Greek grammar. They’ve just gone to places that have taught them how to refute the average, unequipped Christian.

Then you think to yourself, “Let’s see, there’s that other verse. Where is that verse? Hebrews 1:8.”

You say, “Go over to Hebrews right here, chapter 1 verse 8. It says, ‘But of the Son He says, ”YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER.”’

They say, “Well, that’s not what our version says.”

You look, and you realize [that] their version doesn’t say that. What you will discover is [that] all [of] the common verses, all [of] the popular verses that you know of for the deity of Christ (all three of them, maybe) [are] changed in their Bible. They’ve got an answer for [those verses] all the way down to the level of the Greek.

You think, “Well, there’s that one other text. Where is it? Colossians 1.” You say, “Well, let me just show you one more passage, because in Colossians 1, let me see where it is. . . Oh, here it is, verse[s] 15[-16]: ‘He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.’” You say, “Ah, ha! Right there.”

They say, “Well, you see that little word ‘firstborn’ there? What that means is [that] Jesus was the first thing God created. He was God’s first-

born, just like a son. There's a firstborn son—He's the first one born. Jesus was the first thing God created."

You're thinking, "Well, that kind of makes sense—the firstborn son, the first one done. It is talking about creation, and so it does say He's the firstborn." But what they don't tell you is that the title of "firstborn" [means] that He has the rights and privileges of the one who owns everything. It says "for by Him all things were created," [and] it's very clear that in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth" [emphasis added]. [You could also] go to Exodus 20:11, [where] it says, "For in six days the LORD," Yahweh God, "made the heavens and the earth" and all they contained, but [the Jehovah's Witnesses] don't take you to that verse, and since you don't know that verse, you just get stumped.

Then you say, "Well, you know what? We have different beliefs," because you can't refute them. Then, you say, "I just don't want to talk about it," you close the door, and that's when the older Jehovah's Witness says to his apprentice as they walk away from your house, "Do you see? We need to pray for these poor Christians because they're deceived into thinking that Jesus was God. You can see how they don't have the answers. They've just been taught these things by rote from an early age, and they don't really understand what the Bible teaches."

You're in your house, [panting] and fretting. You're [thinking], "I wonder if they're right. They seem to have answers for everything. They seem to be so well equipped. They seem to have everything down pat, and I have no idea. I have no idea how to answer them. I *hope* Jesus is God."

Well, turn to John 8. We're going to answer this question tonight: Is Jesus God or is He just a "god" with a little "g"? As you find that text, let me just summarize and get you into the context of John 8. The theme of John's gospel is the deity of Christ, so if you want to study the deity of Christ, John is the place to go. In the first [seven] chapters, John tells us that: 1) Jesus is the Word [1:1]; 2) that He is God [1:1]; 3) that He is the Creator [1:3]; 4) that He is the Light of the world [1:9]; 5) that He is the Light of men [1:4]; 6) that He is the life [1:4]; 7) that He is the Messiah

[1:41]; 8) that He is the Savior of the world [4:42]; 9) that He is the one who has come out of heaven [6:35]; 10) that He is the Son of God [1:34, 49; 3:18, etc.]; 11) that He is God's only begotten Son [3:16]; 12) that He is God the Father's Son [3:16–17]; 13) the Water of Life [4:14]; and [15]) the Bread of Life that came down out of heaven [6:33–51]. That last one there appears seven times.

In addition to these titles that are given to Jesus, several works are recorded of Jesus in these first seven chapters that emphasize His deity: He turns water into wine [2:9]; He is able to heal a lame man [5:3–9]; He feeds 5,000 people [6:5–14]; and He walks on water [6:16–20]. That's just in those first seven chapters [of John]. When Jesus was doing these things, there were some people who were believing [in] Him, but most of the people were believing in the miracles. They believed miracles were happening, but they weren't believing in Jesus as the Messiah. They weren't believing so as to be saved, they were just [thinking], "Wow! Did you see that happen?" They acknowledged that it happened, but they wouldn't see their sin, they wouldn't repent, and they wouldn't come to Christ.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the hyper-strict sect of the Pharisees, believed in Jesus. In fact, he comes to Jesus at night, and he tells Him this. Speaking on behalf of the Pharisees ([who] don't know he snuck away, but he's telling Jesus what the Pharisees as a whole believe), he says: "We know that You have come from God... for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" [John 3:2]. So he acknowledges right off the bat that all [of] the Pharisees are convinced that Jesus is doing the works of God. [The] sad fact, [however], is that most of the Jewish leaders had fallen away from loving God. Jesus, in His ministry, had exposed their sin, exposed their hypocrisy, exposed their false, manmade religion, [in which] they were doing all sorts of manmade things but neglecting the weightier matters of the Law.

By the time we get to John 8, we have the most tooth and nail, claw and tong, drag-out, knock-down [verbal] slugfest recorded in all [of] the gospel. This is the world heavyweight champion verbal contest in John 8.

On one side there are the religious leaders, who at this time are severely incensed [at], jealous [of], and angry with Jesus. On the other side, you have God incarnate, who is cool as a cucumber, who keeps insulting them [and] exposing their sins and hypocrisy. They are fuming. In John 8:31–33, Jesus tells the Jews [that] they need to continue in His word in order to know the truth, and that His word would set them free. This implies that they are in bondage, and they don't like that. They don't like that at all. They respond to Jesus by saying, "We are children of Abraham." In other words, "We're children of Abraham, we are Jews, therefore we are not in bondage." That's their reasoning.

Jesus offends them more in verses 34–38, telling them that they are slaves of sin, killers, ignorant of the truth, and not of Abraham, but of a different father. They again cling to their heritage, and they say, "We have Abraham as our father. What do you mean? Are you saying we're illegitimate?" By the time [we] get to John 8:48, we're in the middle of the verbal slugfest, and like most people who lose arguments, especially public arguments, when [the Pharisees] lose the argument, then [they resort] to name calling because that's all [they] can do. Follow along as I read John 8:48–59. They're right in the middle of this verbal exchange. Jesus has insulted them, insulted them, insulted them, said they're not of Abraham but of a different father, and they're just fuming angry. Then He says this, starting in verse 48: "The Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?'" Oh, well, that wins the argument.

Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death." The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham,

who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

From verse 58 I am going to point out and expand upon two major doctrines alluded to in the text. The first is: Your Savior is eternal and preexisting. Keep in mind that the Jews are in a rage. Jesus exposes their hypocrisy. They're humiliated; they're offended. Jesus tells them they're children of the devil. This [statement] is verified by their murderous motives and actions. In verses 51–53, Jesus claims [that] He can give immortality to those who keep His word. The Jews instantly think of Abraham and the prophets who were godly, who kept God's word, and they think, "Ah, ha!" and ask in verse 53, "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

This is the driving question. They're thinking, "You know, what is this Abraham thing? You're not even fifty. Abraham died 2,000 years ago. Are you telling [us] that you knew Abraham?" Before Jesus tells them who He is directly, He states that He is not there to glorify Himself, that is the Father's prerogative for Him. Up to this point, they don't know who Jesus is referring to when He speaks of His Father. They find out in verse 54, when Jesus tells them that the Father that He speaks of is the one [of] "whom you say, 'He is our God.'" Now they clearly know that Jesus is saying that God is His Father. Shocked and offended, they realize that Jesus is saying

that He is the Son of the Living God. [Jesus] goes on to say that He knows His Father, God, and they do not. This offends them more. Jesus says, “If I were to say I didn’t know the Father, I would be a liar,” and then adds, “like you.”

Then Jesus sets them up to hear the answer to their question, and He says, in verse 56: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” Now, when Jesus said this, the Jews understood that Jesus was saying He personally knew Abraham, and [that] Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus’ day. That is why they said, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” I mean, how could this guy who’s in his early thirties know Father Abraham, who died over 2,000 years ago? It’s a legitimate reasoning.

What’s interesting here is [that] one of the oldest and most reliable ancient manuscripts, *Codex Sinaiticus*, actually reads here in this text, “Has Abraham seen You?” instead of what we have in most of our modern versions, “Have you seen Abraham?” But really, regardless of what translation you take, the outcome is the same: Jesus and Abraham were buddies. They knew each other. The fact is [that] when you look in the Old Testament, you first discover that Abraham was given a promise by God that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Abraham believed that promise, the promise of God that he would have an heir, and the whole earth would be blessed through that heir. So he knew Jesus in that way.

Secondly, Abraham saw and was seen by the pre-incarnate Christ. We know this from texts like Genesis 17:1: “Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD,” Yahweh, “appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless.’” Again, in Genesis 18:1, we read: “Now the LORD,” Yahweh, “appeared to him,” Abraham, “by the oaks of Mamre.” So, in a couple [of] instances, Abraham talked directly with Yahweh God. Those are the only occurrences where Abraham is actually talking and gets a visit from God. If you remember the whole story with Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah, he’s left there talking with the Lord, Yahweh.

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, “OK, Jack, I’m following you with the Genesis part here. I see that Abraham talked with the Lord, but how do we know that Jesus is Yahweh?” Well, look at John 8:58. [The Pharisees] have just made the astute observation that Jesus is less than fifty years old. They have done the math—Jesus is less than fifty, Abraham is greater than 2,000, which equals: Jesus is a liar. That’s their reasoning. So they sneeringly ask the question: “Have you seen Abraham?” to see how Jesus is going to answer. This is when Jesus lets the hammer fall, when He prefaces the blow with: “Truly, truly.” The Greek word translated “truly” here is said to be the most universal of all words. As a matter of fact, you can go to most places where Christians are, [and no matter what language they speak], you’ll hear this one word that everybody uses, and almost all of them translate it literally, straight over from the Greek. It’s the word “amen.” We say, “Amen,” [which is] what the Greek says. If you go to Russia, they say, “Amen.” I don’t know what they’re saying in their prayers, but when they say “amen” at the end, I get that part.

And so, “amen,” when it occurs at the end of a prayer, means “Let it be done,” or “so be it,” but when it occurs at the beginning [of a phrase or sentence], it means “this is certainly true.” And so, Jesus is saying, “This is certainly true, this is certainly true.” He prefaces [what’s He’s going to say next] twice. What is “certainly true”? He is now going to tell them. He answers the question they ask at the end of verse 53: “Who do You think You are?” and the question at the end of verse 57: “Have you seen Abraham?” This is Jesus’ answer: “I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” Jesus’ answer was “yes” to both questions.

“Who do You think You are?”

“Well, I think I’m God.”

And, “Have you seen Abraham?”

“Yes.” He says, “Before Abraham was born, I am.” This tells us [that] Jesus had always existed. That’s what we want to look at now. When He was born a man, He had already existed before Abraham. Now, that is an interesting dilemma. If you’re [coming] from the perspective of the Jews

and you're trying to understand who Jesus is, and He says, "Before Abraham was born, I am," you would think that that is a strange [idea]. How could Jesus exist before Abraham if He's only thirty-three years old?

B.F. Wescott says in his commentary on John: "The phrase marks a timeless existence..." and "there is in the phrase the contrast between the created and the uncreated, and the temporal and the eternal." This wasn't the first time the Jews had heard of the preexistence of Christ. As a matter of fact, if you turn over to John 1:15, we'll see that they had heard it before. John, the gospel writer, is recording the words of John the Baptist, who says in verse 15: "He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me." Now, [do] you remember, according to Luke 1:36 and the Christmas narrative, who became pregnant first—Mary or Elizabeth? Elizabeth [did], six months before Mary became pregnant. So John the Baptist was born six months before Jesus, and yet John says, "He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me."

How in the world does that work? Well, the same dilemma occurs. John is saying that the Messiah, who is coming after him, has existed before him, though [John] is physically older than the Messiah. [Do you] remember what Paul says in Philippians 2:5–8? Let me just remind you. He says: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed," in the past, before His incarnation:

in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

So here we see again that the Scriptures speak of Jesus as having existed before being born. Paul tells us that before Jesus became a man he preexisted in the form of God. Now, what form does God exist in? God is spirit. So, Jesus was God the spirit (not God the Holy Spirit, but God in a

spirit form) before He was incarnated, that is, before He took on flesh and became a man. He appears in the Old Testament as the angel of the Lord. He seems to be the one who is always communicating between God and men—He’s the mediator.

This is why, in John 1:34, we see John testifying that Jesus is the Son of God. Then later, in verse 41, John records that Andrew came, and told Peter, “We have found the Messiah,” and if Jesus is the Messiah, it proves that He preexisted Abraham. Do you know why? If Jesus is the Messiah, then why does that mean He had to exist before Abraham? Let me show you. Turn over to John 7:41[–42]. The crowd is discussing Jesus’ identity, and this is what we read:

Others were saying, “This is the Christ.” Still others were saying, “Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?”

Here Jesus is doing these miracles, and they’re wondering if He is the Christ. Someone says, “Well, you know, He doesn’t come from Galilee—the Messiah doesn’t come from Nazareth. Don’t the Scriptures say [where He comes from]?”

Remember the Christmas story when the magi come, and say, “Where is the King? We’ve come to worship Him”? Do you remember what [the scribes] said?

The scribes right away say what? “He is to be born in” what? “Bethlehem of Judea,” because that’s what the prophets say. Instantly they understand that Jesus is to be born in Bethlehem of Judea. That was common knowledge. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah. They had all the [messianic] texts all laid out; they had them down. They didn’t have to [say], “We’ll have to go read the whole corpus of the Hebrew Scriptures to find out where Jesus was born.” They just knew: Bethlehem of Judea. They

[also] knew He was to be of the tribe of Judah, because way back in Genesis 49[:10], it says that the scepter would not depart from Judah. It says that that's where the King would come [from] and that King would never depart from Judah. They also know, from 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17, in the Davidic covenant, that the Messiah would come from the line of David.

So they know: 1) He's going to be of the tribe of Judah; 2) [He's going to be] of the line of David; and 3) He is going to be born in Bethlehem. So [why] does that tell us that Jesus preexisted Abraham? This is why: because when you go to Micah 5:2, which is one of the famous Christmas texts, the verse that describes where the Messiah would be born, it says: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." That tells us that the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem was a Messiah who had already exist[ed] before the days of eternity. He preexisted Abraham. The text says: "His goings forth are from long ago." The King James Version says: "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Charles Fineburg, who is probably one of the [greatest] Old Testament scholars who has ever lived, said of Micah 5:2: "The phrases of this text is the strongest possible statement of infinite duration in the Hebrew language." Micah, John the Baptist, John the gospel writer, and Jesus Himself made it clear that He preexisted Abraham.

Now, having established that, you have to put into a box all [of] the possibilities of who Jesus could be if He preexisted Abraham. That brings us to our next point: Jesus was the Lord God.

[Imagine that] you're taking a college class, maybe at a secular university. You're sitting there in class, and all of a sudden, the professor says, "Jesus never claimed to be God, though some of His followers have [claimed that of Him] through the ages. I think Paul later evolved and developed that doctrine, but it was not anything that Jesus ever claimed."

There you are, sitting in class, and you're thinking, "Uh uh. Jesus claimed to be God. OK, I'm going to raise my hand." So you say, "Pro-

fessor Atheist, excuse me, but I think you're mistaken because Jesus did claim to be God."

And so, in front of the whole class, he puts you on the spot. He pulls the Bible off the shelf, and says, "Show me." What do you do? You go to John 8:58, and I'll show you why. John 8:58 is the go-to text for those who deny that Jesus ever claimed to be God. The mere fact that Jesus claimed to have always existed [relegates] Him to a category of one: God. I mean, how many other people fit into "always having existed"?

Stauffer, commenting on this verse, said: "The phrase harbors within itself the most authentic, the most audacious, and the most profound affirmation by Jesus of who He was." G. Campbell Morgan said of this verse: "The 'I am' claims the eternity of existence, antedating the whole of the Hebrew economy, existing in the eternal Being. These are the words of the most impudent blasphemer that ever spoke, or the words of God incarnate." You can't escape [this]. He says, "Before Abraham was born, I am."

You may be thinking, "'I am' what?" Turn to Exodus 3:[13-]14 and let's see what "I am" means. This is the account [in which] Moses is being called by God. [Moses is] talking to the burning bush, [and] God wants him to lead the people of Israel [to] the Promised Land. Moses is scared; he doesn't want to do it. He offers multiple excuses [for] why he's not the guy to do what God wants him to do—all these lame excuses. "Then Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?'" Burning Bush? Moses says, "What do I do, tell them 'Burning Bush' sent me? That's just not very convincing. 'Yeah, I talked to a burning bush,' and they're thinking 'Oh, brother.' So, what shall I say to them?"

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.''" The whole phrase there of "I AM" is, in fact, the memorial name of God. Sometimes people try and pronounce it "Yahweh," sometimes people pronounce it "Jehovah." It is what is called the "ineffable tetragrammaton." (That's a good word.)

The reason it's called that [is that] "ineffable" means "unutterable," [and] "tetragrammaton" is "four-letter name." The reason it's called the "unutterable four-letter name" is that if Orthodox Jews [are] reading the Scriptures and they come across what you have mostly in your English Bibles as "LORD" in the Old Testament—that is "Yahweh," or "Jehovah," [or] the "ineffable tetragrammaton"—when they come to that word, they say, "the Name." They won't try and pronounce it. Or they might substitute another name, another title: "Adonai." But they don't say [the actual name] because they have so much respect for the memorial name of God that they won't even utter it. So here Jesus says, "Before Abraham was born, I have preexisted Abraham, memorial name of God." That's what He was saying.

Now, some boast that Jesus never claimed to be God, yet [in John 8:]²⁴ Jesus has already said, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am. . . , you will die in your sins." Your version may have "He" there. Do you know why it's in italics? [It is] because it's not [actually] there. "Unless you believe I am the I AM, the Eternally Existing One," which is what "I AM" means, "you will die in your sins."

Turn back to John 5:17. It's amazing how tight John's gospel is in presenting this argument. It's the Sabbath day, and Jesus has just healed the lame man. The lame man is ecstatic with joy; he's telling everyone Jesus has healed him. The Jews are offended because Jesus healed on the Sabbath, and Jesus replies in John 5:17: "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working," which means [that] because God the Father is working now, God the Son is working now, too.

You may think to yourself, "Well, Jack, this is a stretch to say that we understand what Jesus meant by saying, 'The Father is working'; that He was actually claiming Godhead." Look at [John 5:]¹⁸, and notice how the Jews respond: "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." They un-

derstood what He was saying. They understood [that] Jesus was claiming deity.

Go back to John 8:59. How do we know that Jesus was calling Himself “the great I AM,” and He wasn’t just saying, “Well, I existed as the first-born of creation”? Look at the beginning of verse 59 and notice what the text says: “Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him.” You say, “So what? What’s the big deal?” Well, it just so happens that in Leviticus 24:16, we read this: “Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.” What is meant by “the Name”? It is God’s memorial name: Yahweh. Why did they pick up stones when Jesus said, “Before Abraham was born, I am”? Because He was claiming deity, and they said, “Hey, we’ve got to obey the Law,” so they picked up stones because He was claiming to be God, He was blaspheming, they thought.

Turn over to John 10:30. Jesus, in verse 27, [says], “I’m the Good Shepherd,” and He [goes on to say], “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand” [10:27–28]. In verse 30, He says, “I and the Father are one.” Then notice [that] the Jews picked up stones again—*again*—to stone Him.

Jesus answered them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?” The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.” [10:32–33]

You can deny all you want that Jesus [ever] claimed to be God because you don’t understand it, [but] the fact is [that] those Jesus spoke to understood [that] He was what? He was claiming to be God. In three separate instances, they picked up stones because He was claiming to be God. God,

in Deuteronomy 32:39, says: “See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.” And yet Jesus claims to be “the life” [see John 11:25], the giver of life [see John 10:28], [and] the “bread of life” [see John 6:35, 48, 51]. John presents all of these arguments.

There are a few texts in Isaiah where God refers to Himself as “the Eternally Existing One.” Here is just one example [in] Isaiah 43:10, [which] says: “‘You are My witnesses,’ declares the LORD, ‘And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He,’” that is, “I AM, the Eternally Existing One,” “Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me.” There’s only one God, He is the eternally existing God, there is no god before Him, there’s no god after Him, there’s just one, only one, it’s the Lord God, and that’s who Jesus claimed to be.

You could say to yourself, “Well, Jack, I mean, come on. Is that all?” No, that’s not all. As a matter of fact, if we had many, many nights, I could go through all [of] the other reasons, but [we don’t have that much time, so] let me just give you thirty-two more [things that the Scriptures teach us about the eternity and deity of Christ]. I’m just going to read them—we can’t even go into these.

If you’re interested in studying this, I can give you a lesson that has all [of] these verses that support every one of these truths and more. If you want, you can call the office and ask Ruth for it. You might even want to get a copy and leave it at your house. When you talk to a Jehovah’s Witness, and they say, “Well, if you can show me from the Bible that Jesus is God, that would be great.” I happen to have a copy by my door, and so I took [a Jehovah’s Witness] through the whole eleven pages, and I told him, “Now, I just want you to know, if one of these Scriptures here is right, you’re going to hell.”

Here’s what the Scriptures teach us. 1) Only God is to be worshiped, [and] Jesus received worship, and we are called to worship Him. 2) Jews

acknowledged that Jesus claimed to be God. We saw several examples of this. 3) God is the Creator of heaven and earth, and Jesus is the Creator of heaven and earth. 4) Only God can forgive sin, and Jesus can forgive sin. 5) Only God can give life, and Jesus gives life. 6) Only God can create out of nothing, heal all manner of disease and sickness, and raise the dead. Jesus can do these things, too. 7) The Lord God is the judge of all, and Jesus is the judge of all. 8) God alone is the Redeemer, and Jesus is the Redeemer. 9) God alone is the Savior, and Jesus is the Savior. 10) God is eternal, and Jesus is eternal.

11) God is completely faithful, and Jesus is completely faithful. 12) God is the Lord of glory, and Jesus is the Lord of glory. 13) God alone is perfectly holy, and Jesus is perfectly holy. 14) God alone never changes; Jesus never changes. 15) God is omnipresent, and Jesus is omnipresent: “Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age” [see Matthew 28:20]. 16) God is omnipotent, and Jesus is omnipotent. Nothing is impossible for Him. 17) God is omniscient, and Jesus is omniscient, or all knowing. 18) God is perfect, and Jesus is perfect. 19) God is righteous, and Jesus is righteous. 20) God is sinless, and Jesus is sinless. 21) God is sovereign, and Jesus is sovereign. 22) God is a spirit, and Jesus existed as a spirit before His incarnation. 23) God claims to be God; Jesus claims to be God.

By comparing Old Testament Scriptures that [refer to Jesus and] are quoted by New Testament authors (this is really fascinating and fun to do), [you can discover even more about Christ]. For instance, [take] Psalm 110, where it says: “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet,’” which is quoted several times [in the New Testament]. When you compare those Old Testament prophecies of Christ that are quoted in the New Testament, this is what you discover: [24)] Jesus is Adonai; [25)] Jesus is Elohim; [26)] Jesus is Emmanuel; [27)] Jesus is the LORD, or Yahweh; [28)] Jesus is the Messiah, or Christ; [29)] Jesus is the Son of God; [30)] Jesus is the Son of Man; [31)] Jesus is the First and the Last; and [32)] Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega,

the beginning and the end. [These are] all titles [that] belong to the one and only God.

You may be out there thinking, “OK, so what’s the application of this?” What is the “so what factor” for your life? Here it is: First, you must believe the deity of Christ or you can’t be saved. John 8:24 [says]: “Unless you believe that I am,” Yahweh, “you will die in your sins.” It’s not a doctrine you can take or leave. It’s not one you can be wrong on. He’s either the Almighty God or not. You can’t have any fudging here. If you want to go to heaven, you have to believe that Jesus is God. Partially God, a great man, a great prophet, a great moral teacher, “god” with a little “g,” a man whom the Spirit of God descended [upon] don’t cut it. You need to trust in Jesus, the Son of God, God Incarnate, and if you don’t trust in Him, or you trust in a Jesus but the wrong Jesus, defined incorrectly, you can’t go to heaven.

Second, you need to thank and praise God for sending His Son to earth to die for you and your sins. When you think about this, this is what’s amazing. When you’re reading about Jesus in the New Testament, you tend to think, “Oh, yeah, He was a man. Yeah, He was God,” but when you think about it, He was *God*. He was God Almighty, the infinite God, the Creator of heaven and earth. All [of] the universe is like a speck of dust in the vastness of His being. He creates the universe, creates this little world, creates some people, gives them one rule, they break it, they keep sinning, they keep sinning, He gives them the Law, He gives them prophets, they sin, they sin, they sin. So finally, that great, infinite, transcendent God humbles Himself by becoming a man.

Thomas Watson said, “He humbled Himself more by entering into the virgin’s womb than by dying on the cross.” The huge leap that Jesus took, the huge step of humbling was not from being a man to being a crucified man, it was from being the infinite, transcendent God and then laying [that] aside, choosing not to exercise all of those infinite attributes that He contained, [choosing] not to use them but to clothe Himself with flesh, enter into a sin-cursed world to live among sin-cursed men, who eventually falsely try Him, accuse Him, torture Him, nail Him to the cross, [and] insult

Him while He is dying for them and their sins on the cross. When you see that, it makes you realize, “I have a great Savior. I have a *great* Savior. He loves me more than I know because who would ever go through that for someone like me?”

Third, if you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to repent and believe because He's coming back, and when He comes back again, He's not going to come back by entering into a virgin's womb. He's going to come back as the Lord of glory. He's going to rend the heavens. If you don't know Christ, then now is the time. You need to give your life to Him and believe that He died on the cross for your sins, [and] that He rose again. I mean, this *is* Easter.

So, that's all we have for tonight. Jesus has always existed. Jesus is God. It's clear from the Scriptures. It's irrefutable. Although some cult members may be able to out-argue you, the Church has always held this [doctrine] and it is only those who deny it [who] are heretics. As Jesus said, “Unless you believe that I am. . . you will die in your sins.” All right, let's pray.

Father, we thank You for what we were able to learn from John 8:58 and related Scriptures. Father, I thank You for each of these people here, coming here tonight. It's just been kind of fun to be able to open up Your Word and be able to preach on Sunday night for the first time since I've been here. Father, we just thank You for this opportunity, may we leave here grateful for Your love toward us, the humility of Christ, and, Father, for the salvation we have in Him through faith. We thank You for all this in Christ's name, Amen.