## The Eternal Deity of Christ

by Harry Osborne

For many years, brethren have opposed the so-called "Jehovah's Witness" error denying the deity of Christ. As brethren affirmed Christ's deity, they have consistently made the arguments comprising the bulk of this article. Brethren did not find it necessary to redefine the concept of deity to affirm that Jesus possessed and exhibited His divinity while on earth. Neither did they find it necessary to explain how Jesus was both divine and human while on earth. Generally, brethren merely affirmed His co-existent deity and humanity and left the how to God as a matter unrevealed (Deut. 29:29).

Yet, in recent years, strange sounds have come from some brethren who seem to alternately reject and then confess the deity of Christ while on earth and as He now exists in heaven. Consequently, there is a need to teach the truth about Christ’s divinity in contrast to statements such as follows:

"Jesus performed miracles as a man and through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. He did not perform miracles through his own innate power as the Son of God for this would have been to deny his humanity."

"Jesus Christ did not give up divinity for just 33 years. He gave it up for all time - all time. It wasn't just temporarily as Superman stepped out of the phone booth. He gave it up for all time."

This statement manifests an abandonment of the truth regarding the deity of Christ as set forth in the word of God. What does the Bible have to say about the past and present divine nature of Christ?

**(1) Jesus possessed divine nature upon the earth.** While on earth, Jesus affirmed His knowledge of His eternal existence (Jn. 8:14). In the same context, He claimed to be the same "***I AM***" as present in the time of Abraham (Jn. 8:51-58). The knowledge possessed by Jesus of His eternal nature and previous place with the Father was not the knowledge of a mere man, but an evidence of knowledge that predated His earthly existence (Jn. 13:1-3; 16:25-28). He remembered the heavenly glory shared with the Father in the eternal realm and sought it again after completion of His redemptive work (Jn. 17:4-5).

Jesus further claimed, "I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10:30). Upon hearing this claim, the Jews sought to kill Jesus for blasphemy because He made Himself God (Jn. 10:31-33). If such was a misunderstanding, Jesus failed to correct it. Every indication from the text is that the Jews rightly interpreted Jesus' claim to be divine, but they wrongly rejected His claim to divinity. A similar circumstance led the Jews of His time to persecute Jesus because He "called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (Jn. 5:16-18).

Jesus' description as the "Son of God" evidences the truth of this claim because a son shares the nature of his father. If the Father is divine, the Son's divine nature logically follows. Remember that Jesus claimed to be and was recognized as the "Son of God" while on the earth (Jn. 10:36; Lk. 1:35). That is why He could rightly be called Immanuel, "God with us," in fulfillment of prophecy (Isa 7:14; 9:6; Matt. 1:22-23).

**(2) Jesus possessed and demonstrated divine power upon the earth.** When Jesus healed the man sick of the palsy, it was to prove that He had "authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mk. 2:1-12). This was not a power shared by the apostles, but one unique to Christ and His divine power to forgive even as He later did upon the cross (Lk. 23:39-43). When Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea to produce an immediate calm in the midst of a great storm, the disciples asked, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matt. 8:26-27). Later under similar circumstances, Jesus' power over the natural forces caused His disciples to worship Him and exclaim, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14:22-33). Thus, they saw His divine nature as the Son of God confirmed by a manifestation of Jesus' divine power causing them to give to Jesus that which belongs only to God - ***worship***.

Jesus also affirmed His divine power to bring about His own resurrection saying, "I lay down my life, that I may take it again... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn. 10:17-18). He made the same claim earlier in stating, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... He was speaking of the temple of His body" (Jn. 2:13-21). Paul affirms that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). How could Jesus be proven "the Son of God with power" if He never used His own divine power, but was divested of power when coming to earth? In commenting on Romans 1:4, Moses Lard wrote:

"Moreover, when we reflect on all the facts in the life of Christ, not one strikes the mind as so overwhelming a proof of the presence in him of divine power, underived or undelegated, as his raising the dead" (Commentary on Romans, 30).

This principle is true of Jesus' own resurrection as well as the other resurrections performed by His power - "underived or undelegated." He plainly said, "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25).

Jesus also demonstrated His possession of divine knowledge upon the earth. As previously noted, He manifested knowledge of His prior existence in the eternal realm with the Father (Jn. 13:3; 16:28). Jesus also demonstrated a full knowledge of what was going to happen unto Him in the future (Jn. 13:1, 11; 18:4). He also had knowledge of the hearts of men (Jn. 6:64; 1:47-51; 4:16-19, 39). Such knowledge is not within the power of a mere man (1 Cor. 2:11).

**(3) Jesus presently possesses and demonstrates divine nature and power as He rules in heaven.** Jesus has now returned to the glory shared in the eternal realm before man came into existence (Jn. 17:4-5). The same power of Jesus that produced the creation of all things is now being used to "uphold all things by the word of His power" (Col. 1:15-18; Heb. 1:3). If Jesus gave up His divinity for "all time," how could He presently have all power in heaven and on earth? Yet, that is the Bible's claim for Jesus at this time (Matt. 28:18).

**(4) Jesus' acceptance of worship on earth and in the heavenly realm affirms His possession of the divine nature on earth and His continued possession of that divine nature in heaven.** While on earth, Jesus was worshiped at His birth (Matt 2:11). He was worshiped by the disciples (Matt. 14:33). He was worthy of worship by angels while in His earthly ministry (Heb. 1:6). While on earth after His resurrection, Jesus received worship (Matt. 28:9; Jn. 20:28). Jesus was worshiped at the ascension (Lk. 24:50-52). In His reign from heaven, Jesus now receives worship from those before the throne (Rev. 5). Jesus never refused worship directed towards Him. When coupled together with scriptural teaching about God being the only one we may rightfully worship, the implication regarding the present possession of Jesus divine nature is obvious (Rev. 19:10; 22:9; Matt 4:10).

**Conclusion**

As Paul extolls Jesus in his first letter to Timothy, Paul affirms that the same Jesus "who before Pilate witnessed the good confession" is the "blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:13-16). Jesus did not leave His divine nature behind for all time or for any time when He came to earth. The Bible clearly teaches that a part of Jesus' existence included the "days of His flesh" (Heb. 5:7). However, that very affirmation suggests that the same "He" had an existence both before and after that time which was not characterized by "flesh," a mortal nature. That "He" was the same divine spirit known as the Word who came into the world in a body prepared for Him (Heb. 10:5). After that fleshly existence, the same "He" re-entered His heavenly glory (Jn. 17:4-5; Rev. 5). "*Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!*" (Rev. 5:13).