

# **THE KING OF THE KINGDOM:**

## **A SURVEY OF THE EVIDENCE FOR THE DEITY OF CHRIST**<sup>1</sup>

**INTRODUCTION:** Jesus Christ is the almighty, sovereign king of the kingdom of God. As God, He rules over the kingdom of God in its present form and will reign over its final form for all eternity.

Knowing the condition of unregenerate man's heart, it is not surprising though to find that for twenty centuries the person of the King of the kingdom of God, specifically His deity, has been under attack by those who would usurp His throne. Beginning with Arius around the end of the third century, man has repeatedly attacked the truth that Christ is God. Modern-day attacks on the deity of Christ are more pronounced than ever. Jehovah's Witnesses are among the most outspoken opponents<sup>2</sup>, but the challengers come in a variety of guises, from Muslims<sup>3</sup> to followers of The Way International.

Our king is not perturbed by such blasphemous assaults (Psalm 2). Nevertheless it is one duty of the overseer to teach and exhort through sound doctrine the believers under his care and to refute "the gainsayer." (Titus 1:9). It is with those two goals in mind that the following outline has been prepared. I will attempt to demonstrate through a variety of biblical and logical arguments that Jesus Christ, the King of the kingdom, is God, coequal with God the Father. The importance of this cannot be minimized. One writer has said: "...everything depends upon the Deity of Christ; and, therefore, as Athanasius said long ago, in contending for that great truth 'we are contending for our all.'"<sup>4</sup>

### **I. EVIDENCES FOR THE DEITY OF CHRIST.**

#### **A. Jesus Christ Claimed to be God.**

1. "I AM" Ex. 3:14-15 cf. Jn. 8:58.
2. "I and My Father are One"-Jn. 10:30.
3. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."-Jn. 5:17-18. Why kill Him for that? "...His wording startled and angered them. The usage of 'my' was possessive...The word 'his' was not the common personal pronoun autou, but rather idion."<sup>5</sup>
4. "Father","My Father","Holy Father".John 17:1, 11; 5:17.
5. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."-Jn. 14:9.

#### **B. Christ Possessed Attributes That Only God Possesses.**

1. Pre-Existence. Jn. 1:15.
2. Omnipotence. We see Christ's power in:
  - A) Creation-Jn. 1:3,10.
  - B) Preservation-Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3.
3. Omniscience. Jn. 2:24-25; 16:30; 21:17; Col. 2:3.
4. Omnipresence. "In His resurrected human body, He is today in the third heaven, the very presence of the Father(Acts 1:9-11;7:56; I Thess. 1:10;4:16), and yet in His spiritual omnipresence, He can indwell every believer(Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27)...This paradox could only be true of one who is Himself God."<sup>6</sup>
5. Immutability. James 1:17 cf. Heb. 13:8. Also I Pet. 1:24 cf. Heb. 1:10-12.
6. Eternality-Heb. 1:8. cf. Micah 5:2. 'Eternal Father'(Isaiah 9:6). (Jn. 8:58).

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<sup>1</sup> Condensed from a previous paper I wrote for one of my Master's degree courses, "*New Testament Theology*." The longer original version was written in 1994. -Rev. Mike Edwards, Baptist Bible College of the Caribbean, St. Vincent, West Indies, 2007, revised Madison, Ohio, August, 2016 .

<sup>2</sup>Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Christ was the archangel Michael before coming to earth and went back to that form after his death. The view is biblically indefensible: 1) There is not a verse anywhere in the Bible that teaches that idea, 2) If Jesus was Michael, why was he not able to rebuke and overcome Satan himself (Jude 9)?, 3) If Michael was Jesus, then He would be only one of several equivalent princes (Dan. 10:13).

<sup>3</sup>Muslims deny that Christ is God, believing God has no son. Depending on the individual follower, they either 1)deny Christ was crucified, or 2)that He rose from the dead.

<sup>4</sup>Anderson, Sir Robert. "*The Lord From Heaven*." Wheaton,IL:Van Kampen Press, n.d., p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, pp. 46-47.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Gromacki, "*The Virgin Birth: Doctrine of Deity*" (Thomas Nelson, Inc: Nashville, Tennessee, 1974) p. 41.

C. **Christ Was Identified As God By The Apostles & N.T. Writers.**

“...the Biblical writers...directly attributed Deity to Him (Christ). They named Him as God and ascribed to Him both divine attributes and activities.”<sup>7</sup> For example:

1. “*The Word (Christ) was God*”-Jn. 1:1.
2. “*My Lord & My God*”-Jn. 20:28.
3. Christ called “*God*”-Romans 9:5.
4. “*An apostleship from God*”-Gal. 1:1.
5. “*Equal with God*”-Phil. 2:6
6. “*Our Great God and Saviour*”-Titus 2:13
7. “*This is the true God*”-I Jn. 5:20

D. **Christ Is Given Divine Names and Titles and/or is the Fulfillment of Names & Titles Given To God The Father Elsewhere.**

1. “**Jehovah-I Am.**” Ex. 3:14-15 cf. Jn. 8:58 (see above)
2. “**God.**” It will not do to have, as Jehovah’s Witnesses do, a “*little g*” god. There is no place biblically for such a “junior” God. cf. Dt. 6:4; I Cor. 8:4-6; etc. “Culturally, Jesus could not have been called by the name God unless he was considered to be the ‘one God’, since in Jewish thinking there were no ‘other gods.’”<sup>8</sup>
  - A. Heb. 1:8. Christ is here called God in a direct quote of Ps. 45:6.
  - B. II Peter 1:1-Christ is called both God & Saviour. “Grammarians are emphatic that only one person is meant, not two....A.T. Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament (Vol. 6, p. 147) states, ‘One person not two.’”<sup>9</sup>
  - C. Acts 2:36-Jesus is called “*Lord*,” yet verse 39 calls God the Father “*Lord*”. Acts 10:36 reiterates this.
  - D. “Acts 16:31 and 34 refer to belief in the Lord Jesus as belief in God.”<sup>10</sup>
  - E. Rev. 7:10-12, 17. In verse ten God is on the throne, while in verse seventeen Jesus (the Lamb) is in the center of the throne.
  - F. “In Acts 18, the ‘*way of the Lord...the things concerning Jesus*’(v. 25) is the same as the ‘*way of God*’(v.26).”<sup>11</sup>
  - G. “God With Us”-Isa. 7:14. cf. Mt. 1:21-23.
  - H. “The Mighty God”-Isa. 9:6 Jehovah’s Witnesses like to refute this by saying, “Yes Christ is the mighty God, but only Jehovah is Almighty.” cf. Isa.10:21 One chapter later, God the Father (Jehovah) is called the exact same title!
3. **The “Alpha & Omega.”** God the Father is called “the Alpha & Omega” and “the first and the last” in some places(Isa. 41:4; 48:12; Rev. 1:8; 21:6-7), yet Jesus is called the same in other places (Rev. 1:17-18; 22:12-16 cf. v. 20).
4. “**Lord.**”
  - A. Christ called “Lord of All.” Acts 10:36; Romans 10:12.
  - B. They crucified “the Lord of glory.” I Cor. 2:8. cf. Ps 24:10; 96:7-8 where Jehovah is that “*Lord of glory.*”!
  - C. Every knee shall bow to “the Lord.” & “Every Knee Shall Bow.” In the O.T. we are told they will bow to Jehovah(Isa. 45:22-24), yet in the N.T. we are told that all will bow to Jesus Christ (Rom. 14:10-12; Phil. 2:9-11).
  - D. Jehovah instituted the sabbath (Ex. 31:13, 17) yet Jesus says he is the “Lord of the Sabbath”(Mt.12:8).
  - E. Prayer is even offered to Jesus as Lord on five occasions (Acts 7:59-60; 8:24; I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 12:8-9; I Jn. 5:13-15)
5. “**Savior.**” In the Bible you find God the Father as the one and only Savior (Isa. 43:11; 45:22; I Tim. 4:10; Lk. 1:47), yet in the N.T. we find Christ identified as the Savior (Mt. 1:21; Jn. 1:29; 4:42; Heb 5:9; Lk. 2:11). If Christ is not God, there is no explanation! Note too, “Within a span of twelve verses, Paul uses the phrases ‘*God our Savior*’ and ‘*Jesus our Savior*’ interchangeably four times (Titus 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6).”<sup>12</sup>  
“Salvation was in Jehovah God and yet, Jesus was the one who would save Israel from her sins (Mt. 1:21)”<sup>13</sup> See also Acts 4:12 cf. Jn. 3:16-17.

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<sup>7</sup>Gromacki, p. 36.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Josh McDowell, “*Understanding the Cults*” (Here’s Life Publishers: San Bernardino, California, 1982) p. 38; & other books by the same author.

<sup>13</sup>Gromacki, p. 31.

6. **“Creator.”** The Father is called the creator of everything (Isa. 40:28) yet in the N.T. we are told that Jesus created everything (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16).
7. **“Light.”** Both God the Father and Christ the Son are called “Light.” (Lk. 2:32 cf. Isa. 42:6; 60:19-20; Rev. 21:23)
8. **“A Voice of Many Waters.”** Both God the Father & Jesus Christ have the same “voice of many waters.” (Ezek. 43:2 cf. Rev. 1:15).
9. **“Righteousness.”** Both the Father and the Son are given this title (Jer. 23:6 cf. I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:6).
10. **The Ascension.** Christ’s ascension is attributed to God Himself in the Old Testament (Eph. 4:8-10 cf. Ps. 68:17-18).
11. **Jehovah “Pierced?”** In Zechariah 12:10 we read of the Lord who will one day be “pierced.” When the body of Jesus was pierced on the cross John claimed that that was the fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy (Jn.19:31-37; Rev. 1:7). Such would be impossible to explain unless Jesus is God! How could God the Father have ever been pierced or crucified?
12. **Isa. 40:3** “Jehovah was to come to earth to reign over a redeemed, restored Israel.”<sup>14</sup> That could only be possible and explainable if Christ is God!
13. **“King.”** Both the Father and the Son are called this (Ps. 95:3; Isa. 43:15). “While it is true that the term king is often a human title, the New Testament not only speaks of Christ as King in the same sense that the Old Testament describes God, but Jesus is called ‘King of kings’ (Rev. 17:14; 19:16) ...In the Old Testament, Yahweh is referred to as the ‘God of gods and LORD of lords’ (Dt. 10:17)...First Timothy 6:14-16 has special importance... ‘He’, modified by ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’ can refer to either Christ or God...either way it argues for Christ’s divinity.”<sup>15</sup> cf. Rev. 1:12-18. Note also Jer. 10:10 cf. Dan. 7:13-14, as well as the fact that Jehovah is called the “King of Israel” (Isa. 43:15; Zech. 14:9 cf. v.16; 9:9), yet Jesus fulfilled the Zechariah prophecy (Mt. 21:4).
14. **“The Judge.”** While God the Father is indicated as the one who will judge mankind (Ps. 50:4, 6; 96:13; Heb. 12:23, 24; I Peter 1:17) yet we find that the Son will do all the judging (Jn. 5:17-30, esp. v. 22; II Tim. 4:1; II Cor. 5:10 cf. Rom. 14:10; Rev. 2:23 cf. Jer. 17:10; etc.). Clearly they are equal!
15. **“The Rock.”** Both the Father and the Son are called the “rock.” (e.g. Ps. 18:2; I Sam. 2:2 cf. I Pet. 2:6-8; I Cor. 10:4. Particularly note this latter passage in comparison to Ex. 17:6).
16. **“The Redeemer.”** Both Jehovah and Jesus are given this attribution. “God identified Himself as the Redeemer (Isa. 43:14; Hosea 13:14) (yet)...Jesus was considered (such) by the priest Zacharias (Lk 1:68)... by Anna(Lk 2:38), ...by Paul (Gal. 3:13; Eph.1:17), by Peter (I Peter 1:18-19), and... by the twenty-four elders (Rev. 5:9) ...No mere man can redeem his fellow man; only God can redeem the soul (Ps. 49:7-8 cf. 49:15). Thus, Jesus as the redeemer, must be God.”<sup>16</sup> Note: Jer. 14:7-8; 50:34 cf. Job 19:25. Also: Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Isa. 41:14; 47:4; etc., cf. Gal. 4:5; Titus 2:14; Lk. 1:68; I Pet. 1:18; etc.
17. **“Giver of Life.”**  
 “In Deuteronomy 32:39, after saying, ‘...there is no God besides me,’ God said He is the one to ‘give life’ (cf. Ps. 36:9). Jesus said, ‘For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life...’ (Jn. 5:21). Just prior to raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life’ (Jn. 11:25). He went so far as to say that He was the giver of eternal life... (Jn. 10:28-29).”<sup>17</sup> Obviously Christ is claiming to be fully God and equal with the Father.
18. **Psalm 110:1-** “David testified: ‘The Lord (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (Adonai), sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.’ ...Jesus argued that the phrase ‘my Lord’ meant that the Messiah would not only be the physical son of David, but that He would also be the Son of God or deity (Mt. 22:41-46). Why would David acknowledge his direct or distant son to be his Lord? No father worships his son. By the Spirit of God, David sensed that the Messiah would be God.”<sup>18</sup>
19. **The “Lord’s” Return.** Dt. 30:3 says that the Lord (Jehovah) will return at the end when His people regather from all the nations-but the fulfillment will be realized in Christ (Mt. 24:27-31). Again, such verses are only explainable if Christ is God and co-equal with the Father (& the Holy Spirit).
20. **The “Son of Man.”** This title is not one that deemphasizes Christ’s deity at all. “Through this title Jesus most clearly expressed His messianic consciousness... the generally accepted source of this title is one of the dream visions of Daniel

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<sup>14</sup>Gromacki, p. 30.

<sup>15</sup>McDowell, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup>Gromacki, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup>McDowell, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup>Gromacki, p. 28.

(Dan. 7:13-14)... some students would trace it to the Book of Ezekiel... (but) Jesus' use of the title proves conclusively that He is giving it the meaning that it had in the vision of Daniel."<sup>19</sup>

This title is strictly Messianic, showing Christ to be the God who will judge this world in the end. It has nothing to do with His birth into this world, as He was already the Son of Man before He arrived. "It was not His human birth that constituted Him the Son of Man. That birth, indeed, was the fulfilment of the promise which the name implied; but the Son of Man, He declared explicitly, '*descended out of heaven.*' And He said again, 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?... Nor was it as the Virgin's Son, but as the Son of Man, that He claimed to be '*Lord even of the Sabbath,*' and to have 'power upon earth to forgive sins.' And... it is as the Son of Man that the prerogative of judgment has been committed to Him (Jn. 5:27)."<sup>20</sup>

**E. Christ Accepted Worship & Possessed Glory That Only God Has.**

1. Jehovah (the Father) had said that no one else possesses His glory (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). Yet Christ, in His high priestly prayer asked to have the glory restored to Himself that He had shared with God the Father from all eternity (Jn. 17:5).
2. Jn. 5:23-"That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."
3. Heb. 1:6-"Let all the angels of God worship Him," cf. Ex. 20:1-6. If Christ is not God, such worship would be blasphemous. It should be noted that when people tried to worship either the apostles or angels, they were immediately rebuked and the practice terminated. Yet Christ throughout the gospels accepted such worship without a second thought-because He is God!

**F. Incidental Evidences Endorsing Christ's Deity.**

Charles Brown in his wonderful little book "*The Divine Glory of Christ*" presents several usually unnoticed lines of evidence for Christ's deity. I wish to briefly outline a few of them here:

1. **Evidence based on Christ's authority.**
  - A. His demand for supreme affection (Mt. 10:37 cf. Lk. 14:25-26. "If Christ be none other than the God of whom it is commanded in the law,'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength,' then I can understand it at least, however imperfectly able to reach it...But if he be NOT the God of the law, who is he? What creature is this that bids me prefer him in love before my own wife, before my own children?"<sup>21</sup>
  - B. Christ as the husband. Rev. 21:2, 9.
  - C. The ability to forgive sin. Lk. 7:36.
  - D. The parable of the talents. Mt. 25:14-ff. Here Christ indicates Himself as the Master to whom we will answer.
  - E. Christ as the supreme goal of living and devotion. II Cor. 5:14-15; Rom 14:7-9. "If Jesus Christ were not very and eternal God, then, after we had learned to 'live to him,' to take his will for our supreme law, and himself for our highest good and end, what should remain afterwards to be given to the blessed God? What could remain but a mockery of worship, no matter by what name it might be called?"<sup>22</sup>
2. **Evidence based on the Unity of God.** This has been presented above, but the idea is simple: "...we bid the Socinian (one who denies the Trinity) welcome to choose for himself over the entire field of the divine names, perfections, works worship, whatsoever in Scripture may be considered most peculiar to, and characteristic of, the eternal God. And when he shall have made his choice, we undertake to shew him that which he has chosen ascribed to the Lord Jesus in the Scriptures."<sup>23</sup>
3. **Evidence based on Christ's ability to provide all mankind with unending, totally sufficient grace for any need.** For example: Jn. 6:37; 7:37; Mt. 11:28.
4. **Evidence from Christ's pronouncements**-e.g. self-commendation (e.g. Mt. 11:28-30; Jn. 10:7, 9, 11), praising of others' faith (Lk. 7:6-8), as well as the preeminence of His position (e.g. Rom. 8:35, 38-39).

**II. DIFFICULTIES AND OBJECTIONS TO CHRIST'S DEITY.**

The arguments of those who deny Christ's deity are predictable and based on a misinterpretation of a few texts, most of which are listed below. The problem usually lies in one of two areas: (1) A misunderstanding of Christ's position of

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<sup>19</sup>Lehman, Chester K. "*Biblical Theology, Volume Two: New Testament.*" Scottsdale,PA:Herald Press, pp. 137-38.

<sup>20</sup>Anderson, pp. 30-31.

<sup>21</sup>Brown, Charles J. "*The Divine Glory of Christ.*" Edinburgh,Scotland:The Banner of Truth Trust, 1868, 1962, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 28.

voluntary submission to the Father while on this earth, with all the limitations consequent to that “voluntary humiliation”;  
(2) Bible terms whose meaning is misunderstood, or which had a different connotation in the Middle Eastern culture in which the Bible was written e.g. “son”, “begotten”, “first-born”, etc.

A. **“The Father is Greater Than I”-Jn. 14:28**

McDowell writes:

“It is true that in His role as bond-servant while on earth, Jesus occupied a lower rank than the Father. Such a rank, however, does not deny His divine nature. In that same passage, Jesus told Philip, ‘He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, “Show us the Father?”’ (John 14:8-9). That statement makes clear that Jesus and the Father are one in nature...Therefore, Jesus’ words that the Father was greater referred to His temporary position, not to His being. Here we will quote extensively from Arthur W. Pink’s... Exposition of the Gospel of John: ‘...The Savior had just told the apostles that they ought to *rejoice* because He was going to the Father, and then advances this reason, “For my Father is greater than I.” Let this be kept definitely before us and all difficulty vanishes. The Father’s being greater than Christ was the reason assigned WHY the disciples should rejoice at their Master’s going to the Father. This at once fixes the meaning of the disputed ‘greater’ and shows us the sense in which it was here used...in His official status (as Mediator) and in His assumption of human nature, He was inferior to the Father. Throughout this discourse and in the Prayer which follows in chapter 17, the Lord Jesus is represented as the Father’s Servant.

‘...But there is *another sense*, more pertinent, in which the Son was inferior to the Father. In becoming incarnate and tabernacling among men, He had greatly humiliated Himself, by choosing to descend into shame and suffering in their acutest forms....He was the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. In view of this, Christ was now contrasting His SITUATION with that of the Father in the heavenly Sanctuary. The Father was seated upon the throne of highest majesty; the brightness of His glory was un eclipsed; He was surrounded by hosts of holy beings, who worshiped Him with uninterrupted praise. Far different was it with His incarnate Son...In *this* sense too, He was inferior to the Father. Now in going to the Father, the Son would enjoy a vast improvement of situation. It would be again unspeakable ...Therefore, those who really loved Him should have rejoiced at the tidings that He *would* go to the Father, because the Father was greater than He, greater both in official status and in surrounding circumstances.’”<sup>24</sup>

Gromacki comments:

“Did Jesus contradict Himself when He claimed before His enemies, ‘I and my Father are one’(John 10:30), and later before His disciples, ‘...my Father is greater than I’ (John 14:28)? The answer is negative ...’This subordination... relates not to their essential life within the Godhead, but only to their modes of operation or their division of labour in creation and redemption.’...The Father and the Son share the same divine essence, but the Father sent the Son.”<sup>25</sup>

Gromacki then goes on to present a powerful biblical analogy of the relationship of the Father and Son:

“..Paul wrote: ‘But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God’ (I Cor. 11:3). This is a functional, not an essential, headship. In Christ ‘there is neither male nor female’ (Gal.3:28). Both are one in Him. Both share equally the essence of justification, sanctification, and glorification. The man is not greater or more saved than the woman. However, in the family and in the local church, there is authoritative order in order for those institutions to operate without conflict of interests. The same is true of the trinity.”<sup>26</sup>

B. **“God is the Head of Christ.”-I Cor. 11:3** (See above). While Christ was on earth, such a statement was correct.

C. **“Jesus’ Submission to the Father”-I Cor. 15:28** (See above).

D. **“Only Begotten”-Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18** The term “begotten” is misunderstood by many, which creates the problem here. “Some people maintain that the term ‘only begotten’...denies Jesus’ divinity, implying tht He was only another created being. The term ‘only begotten’ however, does not mean created. The word begotten, as used in John’s Gospel, means ‘unique, specially blessed, or favored.’ C.S. Lewis clearly illustrates the meaning of ‘*begotten*’ when he writes: ‘...Will you please get it quite clear that this has nothing to do with the fact that when Christ was born on earth as a man, that man was the son of a virgin? We are not now thinking about the Virgin Birth. We are thinking about something that happened before Nature was created at all, before time began. What does it mean?’

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<sup>24</sup>McDowell, pp. 87-89.

<sup>25</sup>Gromacki, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup>Gromacki, pp. 24-25.

'We don't use the words begetting or begotten much in modern English, but everyone still knows what they mean. To beget is to become the father of: to create is to make. And the difference is this. When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers... But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, a man makes... a statue. If he is a clever enough carver he may make a statue which is very like a man indeed. But, ofcourse, it is not a real man; it only looks like one... Now that is the first thing to get clear. What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God; just as what man makes is not man. That is why men are not Sons of God in the sense that Christ is...They are more like statues or pictures of God.'

"In Hebrews 11:17, Isaac is called the '*only begotten son*' of Abraham, though Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Thus the writer of Hebrews was using 'begotten' in its 'unique, specially blessed, or favored' sense. The same is true in John 3:16 of Jesus (the only difference being that God had one Son and Abraham had two)."<sup>27</sup>

"...'*the only begotten Son*'...is used only five times of Christ, all by John (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; I John 4:9)... literally meaning 'only one [*mono*] of a kind [*genes*].' Elsewhere, it is used of the widow's dead son at Nain (Luke 7:12), Jairus' dying daughter (Luke 8:42)...Abraham's son, Isaac (Heb. 11:17). The latter passage is especially relevant...Abraham had other physical sons: Ishmael by Hagar (Gen. 16:1-16) before the birth of Isaac and six sons by Keturah after the death of his wife, Sarah (Gen. 25:2)...Isaac was unique (one of a kind) because he was the promised heir. How was Christ unique? ...He was God's heir (Rom. 8:17)."<sup>28</sup>

E. "***The First-Born of All Creation***"-Col. 1:16

This is another example of a word which had a different connotation to those in Bible times. "'*First-born*,' does not mean 'first-created.' When Paul stated that Christ was '*the first-born of all creation*' (Col. 1:15), he used the Greek word *prototokos* which meant 'heir, first in rank.' Had he intended to say first-created, he would have used the Greek word for first-created, *protoktistos*. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that God 'created' Jesus. In his *Theology on the Person of Christ*, Lewis Sperry Chafer states: 'This title-sometimes translated First-Born-indicates that Christ is First-Born, the elder in relation to all creation; not the first created thing, but the antecedent to all things as well as the cause of them (Col. 1:16).'<sup>29</sup>

Gromacki perceptively writes:

"The Greek word *prototokos* (*firstborn*) is used nine times in the New Testament. The only non-Christological reference is to the Egyptian firstborn who were killed in the last of the ten plagues (Heb. 11:28)... Jehovah's Witnesses, claim that Christ was the first of a kind, the first and highest of all God's creation, and that He...created all other things. To them, Christ was the chief of the angels, identified as Michael (see footnote #1 on p. 1). Are they correct? Charles Erdman succinctly observed: 'The firstborn of all creation might seem to mean that Christ was himself part of the Creation and himself a created Being, were it not for the fact that the rest of the paragraph deals wholly with the truth that Christ was not created, but himself was the creator.

"The basic error that vexed the Colossian church was a form of Judaistic-Gnosticism. It taught that matter was innately evil; therefore, God who was pure spirit could never have directly created the material universe Himself. Their (view) consisted of a series of successive angelic emanations, each one a little inferior to the one from which it sprang, until finally the last of these (emanations) created the world. They looked upon Christ as a creature, as one of these emanations, probably the first one. Now if 'first-born of every creature' meant that Christ was the first creature created, Paul would have been defeating his purpose in writing... Paul was vehemently opposed to the idea that Christ was less than God... The phrase must be seen in its context. It definitely refers to Christ's preexistence and His sovereignty over creation. This fact is proved by the definitive statements introduced by 'for' (Col. 1:16-18). The creative powers resided in Him; He was the agency, goal and sustainer of creation. In Near Eastern culture, the firstborn son received the birthright which entitled him to a double inheritance and family leadership upon the death of the father. He was known as the firstborn even if no other children were born into the home... If Paul wanted to indicate that Christ was the first creature created, he could have used the Greek word '*protoktistos*' ('*first created one*'). He did not say 'first born of all *other* creation' either. Also, he did not write that Christ *became* the firstborn of all creation. He is the firstborn because of His essence as God and His relationship to the universe as its creator."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>McDowell, pp. 90-92.

<sup>28</sup>Gromacki, pp. 63-64.

<sup>29</sup>McDowell, pp. 93-94.

<sup>30</sup>Gromacki, pp. 66-68.

**CONCLUSION:** A serious contemplation of the fact that Christ is God will produce several things in our lives. First we will be deeply burdened for souls, realizing anew that Christ, because of who He is and what He has said, truly is the ONLY way to heaven. We should also be filled with a heart of gratitude to Christ for who He is and what He has done for us. Thirdly, we should be sobered by the fact that we will stand before Christ and be judged by Him one day. And since He IS God, nothing will escape His notice. Such thoughts should produce a powerful desire for holiness in our life. As for the unbeliever, a careful contemplation of Christ's deity should produce a fear leading to repentance, realizing that this gracious, merciful God who came in human flesh, will soon be returning to judge the world He created.