

Romans (51)
The Privileges of Israel,
and the Deity of Jesus Christ

Let us turn our attention to the next major section of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which is contained in chapters 9, 10, and 11. These three chapters before us address the issue of *God's righteousness that He has shown to both Jews and Gentiles in bestowing and withholding salvation from them*. Now we have stated several times that this is clearly a new and major division of this epistle. But in saying that we are not suggesting that these chapters are disconnected from what has already been asserted by the apostle to this point in his epistle. Indeed, some have disconnected the subject of these chapters from what went before, but it is a mistake to do so. Indeed, one could say that the teaching of Romans 1 through 8 makes necessary Paul's addressing this important matter in these three chapters. As one once wrote:

The idea that these chapters disrupt the argument of the epistle (e.g. Sanday and Headlam 1902: 225; C. Dodd 1932: 148) has all but vanished today, and rightly so, for they form an integral part of the letter and have been called the "climax" of Paul's argument (Stendhal 1976: 4). Indeed, chapters 9-11 flow from and are necessitated by the previous chapters.¹

The need for the teaching of these chapters is clear. Paul has stated directly and has asserted indirectly that the promises of God to Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures are being realized to the people who have their faith alone in Jesus Christ. He has shown in many different ways that the church that is now comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers all share in these promises. Since this is the case, how does one explain the fact that Israel, for the most part, failed to believe on Jesus Christ as their Messiah? How is it that the Jewish people, who had all of the glorious promises given to them by God, find themselves excluded from the enjoyment of these blessings, whereas Gentiles, who never had the desire to know God and who were excluded from God's Messianic promises, become beneficiaries of God's saving grace? Romans 9 through 11 provide a solution to this problem.

There are various ways to outline these chapters. The editors of **The New Reformation Study Bible** propose the following outline:

- VI. God Demonstrates His Righteousness in Jew and Gentile (Rom. 9-11)
 - A. God's Righteousness Established in History (Rom. 9)
 - B. God's Righteousness Received Only by Faith (Rom. 10)
 - C. God's Righteousness Revealed in Jew and Gentile (Rom. 11)²

The outline in **The ESV Study Bible** has this outline of these chapters:

- V. God's Righteousness to Israel and to the Gentiles (9:1-11:36)
 - A. God's saving promises to Israel (9:1-29)
 - B. Israel's rejection of God's saving promises (9:30-11:10)
 - C. God's righteousness in His plan for Jews and Gentiles (11:11-32)
 - D. Concluding doxology (11:33-36)³

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 469.

² R. C. Sproul, gen. ed. **The New Reformation Study Bible** (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 1765.

We may see, therefore, that Paul had sought to set before his readers the purposes and ways of God in bringing His chosen people to salvation.

But how are these chapters to be understood in the light of the entire epistle? **John Murray** gave a very good assessment and introduction of these chapters in a section of his commentary, which he entitled, "Purpose of Chapters 9-11." This is a lengthy quotation, but a helpful one.

But what of chapters 9 to 11? It might seem that there is discontinuity in this portion of the epistle and its length appears to aggravate the question raised. It is only as we fail to discern or overlook the relation that these chapters sustain to the thesis of the epistle that any thought of irrelevance or discontinuity is entertained. On closer inspection this part of the epistle is seen to bring to climatic vindication the thesis stated in 1:16, 17 and correlative doctrines unfolded later in chapters 1 to 8. If this section of the epistle were absent, there would be a hiatus leaving us with unanswered questions and the corresponding perplexity. It is not that we may demand or expect answers to all our questions. But in this instance we may be profoundly grateful that the supreme author of Scripture inspired the apostle to deal with questions so germane to the grand theme of this epistle and urgently pressing upon the minds of intelligent readers.

It is, however, not merely the questions that emerge from this epistle that are answered in chapters 9 to 11. They are the questions which the biblico-theological perspective derived from the whole of Scripture necessarily provokes. It is noteworthy to what an extent Paul appeals to the Old Testament in this part of the epistle. This appeal shows that the subjects with which he deals are those that have their roots in the Old Testament and are, therefore, to be understood in the light of the apostle's interpretation and application. In other words, the apostle, writing in the full light of fulfillment which the advent of Christ brought and by the inspiration of the Spirit at Pentecost, furnishes us with the orientation in terms of which the prophetic Scriptures are to be understood.

Furthermore, these chapters delineate for us the worldwide design of God in reference to Jew and Gentile. They disclose to us in a manner that is without parallel in the New Testament revelation the ways in which God's diverse providences to Jew and Gentile react upon and interact with one another for the promotion of his saving designs. It is as the apostle leads us on through this delineation and reaches the climax at 11:32: "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all" that we with him reach the apex of adoring wonder and exclaim: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" That Paul, at the conclusion of the section of the epistle concerned, should have occasion to burst forth in such exclamatory doxology is of itself demonstration that the themes of these chapters are the fitting sequel to the great theses of the gospel developed in the first eight chapters.⁴

Now I wish to make clear several important points of very great importance at the outset of our consideration of these three chapters. *First*, although Paul speaks a great deal of the Jewish people in these three chapters, ***Paul's use of the term "Israel" or "Israelites" should be understood to refer to the Jewish people as an ethnic race***; he does not speak of "Israel" as a political, national, entity, in other words, the state of Israel. The reason that I emphasize this point is that our dispensational friends have as one of their major tenants of belief that God has a future purpose for Israel as a constituted political and geographical nation that will ascend over the Gentile nations of the earth. I do not believe that Paul or any other biblical writer for that matter holds forth such a promise. The promised restoration of the

³ **The ESV Study Bible** (Crossway Bibles, 2008), p. 2156. This is the identical outline in Thomas Schreiner's commentary on Romans, since he was also an editor for The ESV Study Bible. See Schreiner, **Romans** (Baker Academic, 1998), p. viii.

⁴ John Murray, ***The Epistle to the Romans*** (Eerdmans Publishing, 1965), pp. xii and xiii. This volume has Murray's two volume commentary in a single volume. These introductory pages are of the second volume contained in this one book.

Davidic kingdom is being realized in the present kingdom over which the Son of David reigns, even the kingdom of God. And so, in these three chapters Paul never speaks of Israel as a Jewish nation, but rather of Israelites who are ethnic Jewish people. We will later see in Romans 11 that God has purposed in the future to bring many Jewish people into the church through faith in Jesus Christ, but there is no promise anywhere in these three chapters (or anywhere else for that matter) of Israel to be a favored political nation over the Gentile nations of the world. Paul is addressing the subject of Jewish people, not a Jewish nation. And *second*, although Paul does speak of Jewish people and Gentiles throughout these three chapters, this is not the major theme of Paul in these three chapters. Rather, *the major point of emphasis for Paul is the unfailing faithfulness of God to be true to Himself and to all of His promises*. As Paul will show, the Jewish people were greatly favored and blest of God in Old Testament times. But he has shown that the promises that God had given to Israel have been fulfilled in the church.⁵ The unspoken “problem” arises, therefore, if all of God’s promises to Israel are not to be realized, but rather the church has and is and will enjoy all that God had promised to Israel, where then, is the faithfulness of God in all this? And, if a charge could be laid against God that He had been unfaithful to His promises to Israel (which Paul demonstrates cannot be legitimately done), then how could the church be assured that He would be faithful to her?

If the Jews and the Gentiles are both equally indicted in sin and have equal access to salvation through Christ, and if the blessings of the OT people of God are in the possession of the church (righteousness, reconciliation, sonship, the gift of the Spirit, the ability to keep the law, the promise of future salvation), then what does one make of the OT promises made to Israel qua Israel (see Byrne 1979: 127-128; Fitzmyer 1993c: 541; Stuhlmaker 1994: 144)? Have the promises simply been transferred to the church and ethnic Israel left outside? If God’s promises to Israel have not come to fruition, then how can one be sure that the great promises made to the church in Romans 8 will be fulfilled? How could a righteous God transfer his promises from Israel to the church (so Thielman 1994a: 204)? Paul says that nothing will separate one from Christ’s love and that those who are justified will be glorified. But God also chose Israel, and if his covenant promises to Israel were not realized, then how can one assert that they will be fulfilled for the church of God? The fundamental issue in Romans 9-11, then, is not the place of Israel, though that is a crucial issue. The primary question relates to the faithfulness and righteousness of God (so E. Johnson 1995: 215). Is the God who made these saving promises to Israel faithful to his pledges? Thus, though the focus is on Israel here since it has strikingly fallen short of realizing God’s promises, the text is not limited to Israel. Romans 9-11 emphasize God’s faithfulness to Israel and to the Gentiles, demonstrating in three movements that God’s s plan in history fulfills his promises.⁶

Let us consider the opening paragraph of Romans 9, which is contained in verses 1 through 5. Here we have Paul’s expression of great grief and concern that the Jewish people were largely in unbelief.

I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit--²that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

⁵ “The eschatological blessing promised in the OT (e.g., Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27) has been poured out on the Gentiles who believe in Jesus as Messiah. Those who believe in Jesus have all the prerogatives of Israel in the OT: they are children of God, inheritors of the promise, God’s elect people, righteous in his sight, and assured of glorification (Rom. 8:18-39).” Schreiner, **Romans**, p. 470.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 471.

Notice that here in **verse 1** Paul swears a **legitimate oath** before God. He calls upon Jesus Christ as His witness as well as the Holy Spirit to bear witness with his conscience that he indeed is burdened for the well being of the Jewish people. The Bible teaches that there occasions when we may find it necessary to make an oath before God or a vow to God. There are some who argue that a Christian should never swear an oath. They assume that our Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount forbid all such oath taking. He taught His disciples,

³³“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil. (Matt. 5:33-37)

Based upon these words some have argued that a Christian should never swear an oath. But our Lord was not forbidding all oath taking, but rather rash and vain oaths that people would take to assure to others that they were speaking the truth. Our Lord was basically saying that a person's words should be truthful and he should not have to swear an oath in order to begin to speak truthfully. The fact is that the Bible does teach that there are legitimate oaths that may be offered before the Lord. From time to time a biblical writer or biblical character swears an oath before God. Here in Romans 9:1ff we have an example of the Apostle Paul swearing a legitimate oath, calling upon the Holy Spirit as His witness.

Our **1689 Confession of Faith** has an article dedicated to this matter of lawful oaths and vows. Here are three of the five paragraphs of that article:

1. A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein the person swearing in truth, righteousness, and judgment, solemnly calleth God to witness what he sweareth, and to judge him according to the truth or falseness thereof. (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 10:20; Jeremiah 4:2; 2 Chronicles 6:22, 23)

2. The name of God only is that by which men ought to swear; and therein it is to be used, with all holy fear and reverence; therefore to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and dreadful name, or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred; yet as in matter of weight and moment, for confirmation of truth, and ending all strife, an oath is warranted by the word of God; so a lawful oath being imposed by lawful authority in such matters, ought to be taken. (Matthew 5:34, 37; James 5:12; Hebrews 6:16; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Nehemiah 13:25)

3. Whosoever taketh an oath warranted by the Word of God, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he knoweth to be truth; for that by rash, false, and vain oaths, the Lord is provoked, and for them this land mourns. (Leviticus 19:12; Jeremiah 23:10)

And so, here in Romans 9:1 Paul swears an oath with God as his witness that he was speaking the truth that he had a deep and genuine love and concern for the Jewish people who had refused to believe on Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Now the love that Paul had for his Jewish brethren is quite amazing. **Verses 2 and 3** read: ***“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”*** Here we see the great love of the apostle for his people, the Jewish people. He would have exchanged places with them, choosing to suffer eternal damnation, if it meant that they would be saved from their sin.

It was important for Paul to affirm out the outset of his personal love for his brethren. Some of his assertions that he had made and would make in his epistle would be difficult for his “brethren” to receive. His claims could perhaps be dismissed or discredited by charging him with being unconcerned for the

Jewish people, or perhaps even disposed against them because of the persecution that he had suffered at their hands. And so, as the apostle begins to address what God's purposes are with the Jews, it would serve him to affirm his genuine love for the Jewish people.⁷

It may be noted that Paul had a love for His people like Jesus Christ has a love for His people; it is the same kind of love that Jesus Christ has for all of His people. But whereas Paul would have been willing to become accursed, if it meant the salvation of his people, Jesus Christ actually became cursed of God in order to redeem His own. Paul had written elsewhere: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Gal 3:13). And 2 Corinthians 5:21 reads, "For He (the Father) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Paul identified himself with his Jewish "brothers." But lest anyone misunderstand and assume that he was here speaking of his Christian brethren, he adds the clarifying statement, "***my kinsmen according to the flesh.***" But it is not merely his genetic ties to his people that caused his great concern for them and his own identification with them. His concern was born of the promises and the blessings of God that had been conferred upon them in which Paul had shared with them being Jewish himself. And so he writes in verses 4 and 5: "***They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.***"

Paul enumerated the blessings of God afforded the Jewish people. Let us consider these. ***First***, to the Jewish people, the Israelites belonged "***the adoption.***" Israel was God's adopted son who had very great privileges because of its relationship with God.⁸ ***Second***, to the Israelites belonged "***the glory.***" This refers to the manifestive presence of God in His glory to Israel on Mount Sinai, through the tabernacle and later temple manifestations when the glory of God abode above the mercy seat.⁹ ***Third***, to the Israelites belonged "***the covenants.***" The plural is used perhaps to denote the covenants that God made with Israel through Abraham, later at Mount Sinai through Moses, and then later still with Israel through King David.¹⁰ ***Fourth***, to the Israelites belonged "***the giving of the law***", which is of course a reference to the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. ***Fifth***, to the Israelites the true "***worship of God.***" This was also given to Israel through Moses when he instituted the worship of God in the tabernacle. Sixth, to the Israelites were given "the promises." These are the promises of God to His people found throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. ***Seventh***, to the Israelites "***belong the patriarchs.***" These men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were the reason that God had shown favor to Israel, because they were the physical descendants of these men to whom God had given His promises of blessing. But the greatest of privileges that the Jews had received is that through Israel, ***eighth***, it was from the Israelites that "***according to the flesh is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.***" The promised Savior came into the world through Israel. The cause of Paul's great concern and grief was due to the great privilege that God had given to Israel in every way, but because they had rejected Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, they had forfeited receiving the full benefit of all that God had assured to them through Christ. Paul was grieved by his own people's rejection of Jesus Christ. By rejecting Him they had lost it all.

Let us consider the very important statement at the end of verse 5 in which Paul described Jesus Christ as being "***from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.***" These words are translated differently in the various versions of the Bible.

⁷ Paul's claim to love the Jewish people to the extent that he would forfeit his salvation if it mean their salvation has not been regarded as sufficient by some to affirm the genuineness of his love for them. I recall reading during my seminary days of charges against the apostle Paul as being the most egregious anti-Semite. This is an interesting assertion given the fact that Paul himself was Jewish.

⁸ Cf. Exod. 4:22f; Deut. 14:1f; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 1:6; 2:10.

⁹ Cf. Exo. 24:16f; 40:34-38; Lev. 16:2; 1 Kings 8:10f; 2 Chron. 7:1f. Exo.

¹⁰ Cf. Gen. 15:8-21; 17:1-21; Exo. 2:24; 6:4f; Deut. 8:18; Luke 1:72f.

English Standard Version: “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

King James Version: “Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

New American Standard Version: “whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”

New International Version. “Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

New King James Version. “of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”

We can see from these various translations that the punctuation of these verses may be varied somewhat. Actually, scholars are sharply divided as to whether or not Paul is declaring that Jesus Christ is God, or if Paul was referring to God the Father. For a number of reasons it may be affirmed from Romans 9:5 that Paul is declaring that Jesus Christ is God, who is the sovereign Ruler of history.¹¹ And so, here we have one of the certain declarations of Scripture in which Jesus Christ is declared to be eternal God.

Connecting “God” to “Christ” is therefore exegetically preferable, theological unobjectionable, and contextually appropriate. Paul here calls the Messiah, Jesus, “God,” attributing to him full divine status. The frequent association of God with “blessed” makes it likely that these should be kept together, and the whole taken in apposition to “the one who is over all”: “Christ, who is supreme over all things, God blessed forever.”¹²

With this subject of the deity of Jesus Christ declared in our text, it would be good for us to take some time to reaffirm in our hearing and to reinforce our conviction of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ as taught in the Holy Scriptures. Of this subject we are greatly blessed to be living at this time in history, for the hard work to articulate the biblical teaching regarding this doctrine was done long before us in the first centuries of the Christian era. Most of the terms and language we use to describe the person and nature of the Lord Jesus emerged in church history as the Lord enabled His people to address and refute error with biblical truth. They searched the Scriptures and drew conclusions on what the Word of God revealed respecting the deity, as well as the humanity, of our Lord Jesus. And so let us **first** affirm **that Jesus Christ is God is amply testified in the Scriptures.**

We may read the following truth claims of the deity of Jesus Christ. In John 1:1 we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And then verse 14 reads, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” These verses clearly teach us that Jesus is God. Later in John’s Gospel we read of the testimony of the apostle Thomas. “And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”” (John 20:28). If this were not a true statement by Thomas, Jesus would have immediately rebuked Him.

In the book of Acts Paul asserted the deity of Christ to the elders of the church at Ephesus. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood.” Here God is referring to Jesus Christ that purchased the church with His own blood. Paul wrote to Timothy, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifested in the flesh*, justified in the

¹¹ Cf. Schreiner, pp. 486-489; Douglas Moo, **The Epistle to the Romans** (Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 565-568.

¹² Moo, p. 568.

Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16).

Later in the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer declared that in contrast to God’s reference to the angels God the Father had spoken to His Son affirming His deity. “**But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom’**” (Heb. 1:8).

The apostle John stated the deity of Jesus Christ in several places in his epistles. In 1 John 3:16 we read, “Hereby perceive we the love of **God**, because **he laid down his life for us**: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” God laid down His life for us. It was not God the Father that laid down His life for us, but Jesus Christ did so, here identified as “God.” And then we read in 1 John 5:20. “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God** and eternal life.”

Aside from direct references to Jesus being God in the Holy Scriptures, we can see **secondly** that from **biblical descriptions of Jesus that can only lead to the conclusion that Jesus is God**. (1) There are attributes of Jesus that are only true of God, for they are the incommunicable attributes that only God can possess. When we consider the various attributes of God described and depicted in the Scriptures, we may classify them into two categories; some attributes of God are communicable and some are incommunicable. Communicable attributes are those that we can mimic or illustrate in our lives in a finite way, such as God’s holiness, goodness, love, and mercy. But God’s incommunicable attributes can only be true of God. In the Scriptures, Jesus is shown to have incommunicable attributes, therefore Jesus is God. For example, (a) Jesus is described as **eternal**, which is only true of God. Revelation 1:17, “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; **I am the First and the Last.**’” (b) Jesus is **infinite** as only God can be infinite. In Matthew 28:20 we read that Jesus promised His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Only God can be with His people everywhere for only God is infinite. (c) Jesus is **omniscient** as only God can be. Matthew 9:4 reads, “But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts?’” (d) Jesus is **omnipotent** as only God can be all-powerful. John 3:31 records, “He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.” In Philippians 3:21 it is said of Jesus that He “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” And Revelation 1:18 declares, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” Only an omnipotent God has the keys of Hades and Death, and we see here the Lord Jesus has those keys. Jesus Christ is eternal God.

In addition, the deity of our Lord Jesus is also shown in (2) **that there are relations that Jesus has with God the Father that can only lead to the conclusion that Jesus Himself is eternal God**. Let me cite several of these. (a) Jesus is **the only begotten Son** of the Father. John 1:18, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” (b) Jesus is **the very image** of God the Father. Of unbelievers it is said in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “whose minds the god of this age has blinded (a reference to satan blinding them), who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of **Christ, who is the image of God**, should shine on them.” And **Colossians 1:15** reads of Christ, “He is the **image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation.” And then there is **Hebrews 1:3**, which tells us of Jesus, who is **the brightness of His glory and is the express image of His person**, and is upholding all things by the word of His power. And therefore these relations that Jesus has with God, one can only conclude that Jesus Himself is God; Jesus is divine.

(3) **Thirdly, there are acts that Jesus did that can only be done by God, proving Him to be eternal God incarnate**. There are a number of these. (a) He refers to Himself as the author of the believer’s election. He told His disciples in John 13:8, “I do not speak concerning all of you. **I know whom I have chosen**; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’” Commonly the Scriptures attribute the believers’ election to God the Father, but here the Lord Jesus speaks of His having elected His own. Again, one must conclude that Jesus is God. (b) Jesus is shown to have **known** the inner secrets of men’s unexpressed thoughts. Matthew 9:4, “**But Jesus**,

knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts?’” Only God has the ability to be a discerner of men’s thoughts. You don’t have that ability. I don’t. Jesus could. Jesus can. Jesus is God. (c) Jesus hears *the prayers* of His people. John 14:14, “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.” Only God can hear and answer prayer. (d) Jesus will be *the judge* of all human beings. **John 5:22**, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.” Only God could judge the entire human race; Jesus is God. (e) Jesus *creates* as only God can create. John 1:3, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” (f) Jesus *commands* as only God could command. **Matthew 8:26**, “But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.” That is evidence of His deity. (g) Jesus *forgives sins* as only God can forgive sins. Matthew 9:6, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’-- then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’” Jesus forgives sins. Only God can forgive sins. Jesus is God. (h) Jesus *sanctifies* His people as only God can sanctify, as we read in John 1. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” How could Jesus sanctify His people unless He is God? (i) He *glorifies* as only God can glorify. John 10:28, “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” How can Jesus glorify someone unless He is God Himself? And so these acts that Jesus did could only be done by God. Proving that Jesus is God.

(4) ***Fourthly, it can be shown that Jesus Christ is God by the manner in which His disciples regarded Him and related to Him.*** This is certainly the case throughout the Gospel accounts. His disciples regarded Him and treated Him as only God would be, showing that they believed Him to be God. (a) Jesus is *believed* on as God would be believed on. John 3:18, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” And so, we believe on Jesus as we believe on God, for Jesus is God. (b) Jesus is *loved* as only they would love God. 1 Corinthians 16:22, “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!” Here, we see again, if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus, let him be damned. And so, we see that disciples loved Jesus as they would only love God, because Jesus is God. (c) Jesus would be *obeyed* as God alone would be obeyed. John 17:5, “While He was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’” That command of the Father to hear His Son means, “Listen to Him teach you and listen to him command you and do what He says.” And so Christians obey Jesus Christ as they would obey God for He is eternal God. (d) Jesus is *prayed to* as though He were God. Acts 7:59, “And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’” Now normally we read in the Scriptures that prayer is offered to God the Father, through the merit of Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is perfectly proper to pray to the Spirit or to pray to Jesus directly, as we see here in Acts 7:59. But the normal order that we should practice is that prayer is offered to the Father through the Lord Jesus. (e) He is *praised* as God is praised. Revelation 5:13, “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’” Here we see blessing, honor, and glory being ascribed to the Father, but in addition to God the Father, to the Lamb of God as well, which is clearly Jesus Christ, because Jesus is God as the Father is God. (f) Jesus is *adored* by His people as God is adored. Hebrews 1:6, “But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’” Angels worship Jesus; only God should be worshipped. Angels worship Jesus to how that He is. And then we read in Philippians 2:10, “At the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth and they will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And so, they do obeisance to Him. They humble themselves and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. They glorify Him. They praise Him with a praise that only God deserves and only God should receive, but Jesus receives it, because He is God.

Why must the eternally begotten Son of God become man? I think that this is an important question for us to answer. ***It was necessary for our salvation.*** There are several reasons for this. ***First***, only God can save souls from damnation and only God could satisfy for the guilt and debt that is owed to God for our sin, and therefore God must become man. **Psalm 49:7** and **15** record the words of the psalmist, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. ***But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave***, for He shall receive me.” You see that only God can atone for man’s sin. ***Second***, why was it necessary for God to become man? Because the sacrifice for sin that is made must be of infinite value or merit. God’s wrath upon sin is infinite, it would take a sacrifice of infinite worth to make a just atonement. And that is why God Himself became a man to offer an atonement for our sin. ***Third***, He must be God for a finite human being could not have born the burden of wrath that would be heaped upon a sacrifice for sin. This is what **Isaac Ambrose** wrote, “Christ must therefore must needs be God, that He might abide the burden, and sustain the manhood by His divine power.” Only the Lord Jesus being eternal God could endure what He endured through all of the guilt and weight, and guilt of sin and punishment of sin heaped upon Him. ***Fourth***, He must be God for the enemies of our souls were too powerful for us. It would take God Himself to overcome the devil and defeat him so as to secure our souls for heaven. It would take God to overcome sin, death, and hell, and damnation in order to deliver us from our condemned state and establish us blameless before the throne of God. And therefore it was most necessary that the eternally begotten Son of the Father become man in order to redeem us from our sin.

The deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is an essential doctrine of the faith that God once for all delivered unto the saints. One cannot be a Christian unless he or she embraces what we have shown respecting the identity of His person. The Scriptures declare this truth repeatedly. We are to embrace this truth fully.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
To God our Savior, Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24f)