

# The Deity of Christ

## Testing the Bible Versions



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### Foreword

I had a gentleman ask me one morning how it was that I knew the King James Version was the word of God, and the New International Version, New American Standard Bible (Version), and other modern English versions were not. I replied that there were tests that could be done using the translation itself, but was not able due to time constraints, to demonstrate my point. The following is a very brief discussion of one of the points presented.

There are only two 'modern' versions used in this comparison. Both of these versions are considered to be the most conservative and accurate of the new versions utilizing a specific underlying text and method of translation that have been produced in the last 50 years. The New King James Version which is also considered to be conservative, is not used here as it has a different underlying source text and must be evaluated separately.

Both the New International Version (NIV) and the New American Standard Version (Bible) (NASV(B)) have many adherents among those who claim to be fundamental. Thus, the particular doctrine selected for evaluation purposes should be very familiar and critical to those who state they are fundamental.

**NOTE:** Differences in the text are emphasized by the use of

underlining. Quotes from the different bible versions are a different font from the body text. Additional emphasis utilizes *italics* when the quote is placed in the body text. Additional comments are placed in footnotes.

## **Consistency of the Scripture**

One of the hallmarks of canon (true scripture) is consistency. Does the text treat the subject under discussion the same as in the rest of scripture? In other words, in a same subject, same context writing, are the subject's characteristics and attributes consistent with other scripture addressing that same subject? For example: Who is Christ? More specifically: Is the Lord Jesus Christ – God?

There are some tests we can apply that would determine that Jesus Christ is indeed God. First, does he claim to be God? Second, does He have the attributes of God? Specifically, is He infinite in being? Is He from everlasting past? Is He self-existent, or was He created? (God is self-existent, creatures are created) These are just a few of the questions that can be asked in determining whether the Bible one is using speaks of God and Christ correctly.

In this brief discussion and comparison only a couple of the above questions will be asked and answered. This is in light of the consistency of scripture. Which Bible is consistent in how it presents the Lord Jesus Christ and some of the hallmarks of deity?

## **The Evidence**

In Matthew 2:5-6 one of the Old Testament prophets is referenced and quoted concerning the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

***Matthew 2:5-6***

*King James Version*

*5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it*

*is written by the prophet,*

*6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*

*New International Version*

*5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:*

*6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."*

*New American Standard Bible*

*5 They said to him, " In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:*

*6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'*"

This is a reference to Micah 5:2 in the Old Testament.

***Micah 5:2***

*King James Version*

*But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

*New International Version*

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."*

*New American Standard Bible*

*"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."

Please note that there is a distinct difference between "goings forth" and "origins", and "everlasting" and "ancient times." One cannot be self-existent and eternally present and have an origin. It is a logical impossibility. However, one can go forth from "of old" and do so from everlasting past. If the Lord Jesus Christ is God, (and thus able to pay for our sins) he would have to be eternally present from everlasting past to everlasting future.

Even though at this point the NASB has not invalidated the eternal existence of the Lord Jesus Christ, it has used the questionable statement "days of eternity," which, as we will see later, will throw question upon the nature of God and His creation. The NASB will also weaken this statement in Micah 5:2 by not reinforcing it in the more familiar passage of Revelation 1.

To then determine which bible is consistent in its treatment of the deity of Christ we need to find a clear statement in scripture concerning the deity of Christ. In the Gospel of St. John this is done several times, as the focus of John is the deity of Christ.

### ***John 8:58***

#### King James Version

*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

#### New International Version

*"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born ((There is a distinct difference between "was" and "was born." The difference is in time. One exists prior to birth. One cannot exist prior to conception (save Christ), but one easily exists several months in the womb. Since the LORD knows everyone and the moment of their existence, the more accurate and precise statement is to say "was" with reference*

to Abraham's existence.)) , I am!"

New American Standard Bible

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born ((Ibid)) , I am."

This is a direct reference to what the LORD God told Moses at the burning bush in Exodus. If one reads the next verse in John 8, one finds that the Jews took up stones to stone Jesus for the blasphemy of making Himself God. The Jews clearly knew the reference Jesus made. So then, let's look at Exodus.

**Exodus 3:14**

King James Version

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

New International Version

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

New American Standard Bible

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.'"

So it is plain by both versions that Jesus is God. Except, in the NIV and NASB the first statement of God is very weak. In fact, anyone could make the statement "I AM WHO I AM." This is entirely true of everyone, including Satan. After all, are you someone else? However, none save God can state "I AM THAT I AM" which speaks of self-existence.

Does another place in the scripture state the eternally present, self-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God? In Revelation, the Lord states clearly this truth. It is interesting how both of the "modern" versions handle the passage stating the infinity of God in contrast to the King

## James Version.

### **Revelation 1:8, 10-13**

#### King James Version

8 I am Alpha and Omega, ((Please note the difference here between the 'modern' versions and the KJV: In the KJV the statement is "I am Alpha and Omega", in the 'modern' versions the statement reads "I am the Alpha and the Omega". The difference here is subtle and dangerous as a certain idea is implied by the insertion of the word "the". One can be Alpha and Omega, which would state that there is only one beginning and only one ending and that person is it. However, if the word "the" is used, then there is an implied beginning of beginnings and an implied ending of endings. In other words, it leaves open the possibility of either precedent creations and antecedent endings, or that there will be subsequent creations and subsequent endings of the type which we experience now. In either case, it lends credence to both the "old earth" creationist, and to the "New Age" adherent in their argument for creation cycles. However, the rest of the true Scripture does not and cannot support this. There will be only one earth like this one, and when it is gone, what will replace it cannot be corrupted at all. (Ref. Isaiah 65:17, II Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1)) the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of

*man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

New International Version

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,

11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

New American Standard Bible

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,

11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

Something should now be plain. It appears that the NIV and NASB are both very inconsistent in their treatment of the deity of Christ. Did you note what phrases are missing in the NIV and NASB in the Revelation passage? All those things that

speak plainly of the self-existent, eternally present, everlasting God that Christ is, are missing. Notice also that the title "*the Son of man*" is changed to "*a son of man*". It almost sounds as if John the Apostle did not know who he was looking at.

There is a final passage to be examined, which ought to be very clear as to who the Lord Jesus Christ is. After all, this passage teaches that believers ought to have a certain mind, and in so doing, plainly instructs that Christ is God.

### ***Philippians 2:5-7***

#### *King James Version*

*5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

*6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

*7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

#### *New International Version*

*5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

*6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,*

*7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

#### *New American Standard Bible*

*5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,*

*6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,*

*7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

Before looking at the obvious difference in how the deity of Christ is treated, it should to be noticed that there are differences between the terms "mind" and "attitude." Even though some may claim that the two are the same, they are not.



Where "attitude" is defined as "a manner of acting, feeling, or thinking that shows one's disposition, opinion, etc.", or "the posture or position of a person showing or meant to show a mental state, emotion, or mood." ((Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary )); a "mind" as it is meant here is defined as "way, state, or direction of thinking and feeling;" which includes the definition "what one intends, wishes, or wills; purpose or desire;"

As can be easily seen in the above definitions, having an "attitude" about something is necessarily less deep than having a "mind" of something. Attitudes can be affected, meaning that they can be a put on, or a facade, so to speak. When one has a certain mind, that is how they think, and subsequently, who they become in their way of thinking.

All that being said, the real issue here is the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and how that is presented in the modern versions. In the above cited passage from Philippians 2, we find in verse 6 in the King James Version the following "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:" which is to state that Christ took nothing away from God by being God. This then teaches the equality of the Trinity where the three persons of the Godhead are one in will, intent and purpose, and that all are omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, took nothing away from the Father, or the Holy Ghost by being God.

However, in the NIV and NASB the statements are made "*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,*" and "*who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,*". Whether the term "very nature of God" is used, or "in the form of God", both deny that Christ is, or was equal to God by stating "*did not consider/regard equality with God something/a thing to be grasped,*". In the context used here, the word "grasped" means "attained" or "reached" which is

plainly stating that Christ was not, and did not consider himself equal with God. In other words, Christ was not an equal member of the Trinity.

This in itself, is a very serious matter. There are religious systems (such as the Jehovah's Witnesses) that hold to Christ being "a god" but not equal to God the Father. The following two passages from the Jehovah's Witness bible, the New World Translation (NWT) demonstrate this:

New World Translation

*John 1:1*

*In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.*

*Philippians 2:6*

*who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God.*

This now sheds further light on the Micah 5:2 passage in the NASB where it states that Christ went forth "From the days of eternity." It can be easily understood that "From the days of eternity." is not equal in time to "from everlasting." If they had stated simply "from eternity" then there would be no question of equality in time to "from everlasting." The addition of the words "the days of" seriously weakens the doctrine of Christ being "the beginning." One can exist from the "days of eternity" yet not be there at the beginning. This indicates a bias towards the Gnostic belief that Christ is a created god.

## **Conclusion**

For Scripture to be believed and taken seriously, it cannot contradict. The true scripture records faithfully the words of the God that authored it. It indeed was God that told Paul to write in his letter to Titus the following: "In hope of

eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" (*Titus 1:2*) As He also did in Hebrews wherein it is stated "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie," (*Hebrews 6:18*) By this we should be assured that the word of God can be depended upon absolutely and totally; so that we have no question as to Who it is that has made the promise, and His ability to keep that promise. This is how Peter, in his second general epistle could make the following statement:

## **2 Peter 1:16-21**

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

It can only be a "more sure word" if you have the right Bible.

*Finis*