In Defense of the Faith: The Divinity of Christ

Good morning everyone, would you please turn in your bibles to 2 Timothy 4:1-4 and please stand with me in reverence of the word of God

1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Thank you, you may be seated.

At this time I would like to release the children for Kids on the Rock.

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Now, I really would like to highlight what is found in our reading from Paul’s second letter to Timothy, and it is really in verses 3 and 4.

3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

I don’t believe I need to stand up here and harp on this subject too much. We see this truth represented all around us every hour of every day. Whether it be false religions guised in a Christian theme, such a Mormonism or Jehovah’s Witnesses, polytheistic religions like Hinduism or Universalism, or the absence of religion such as Atheism or Agnosticism, many people the world over are rejecting the Good News of Christ for the fake news of the world. We however, as believers, are called to honor Christ, and defend this faith that we have like Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3

15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

So, recognizing that people have been/ are being/ and will be lead astray by false teaching and we are called to defend our faith my aim during these times that I have the privilege of being upfront and teaching up here is to examine what we as The Rock of the Christian and Missionary alliance believe, common arguments and cases against that belief, and then the biblical evidence that we have to prove this belief. The goal of this is so that next time you are confronted be someone being lead astray by these myths you can point them to the truth in a gentle, respectful way through the scriptures. I have chosen one statement of faith to teach on today (By the way if you are wondering where you can find our entire statement of faith it is located on our website therockcma.com) and it reads as follows

Jesus Christ is the true God and the true man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He died upon the cross, the Just for the unjust, as a substitutionary sacrifice, and all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood. He arose from the dead according to the Scriptures. He is now at the right hand of Majesty on high as our great High Priest. He will come again to establish His kingdom, righteousness and peace.

There is a lot in this portion of our statement of faith, too much to cover and defend in a thoughtful, careful manner while still respecting your schedules for today. So I would like to start today with the first sentence, and really just the first half of the sentence,

Jesus Christ is the true God

The eternal deity of Christ is one of the most attacked aspects of our faith, and has been for the past nearly 2000 years. From the Ebionites in the second century refuting the divinity of Christ and claiming him just a prophet, Arianism in the third century claiming Jesus was not the true God, but a creation of the Father, to Islam in the 7th century going back to claiming Christ as just a prophet and not divine, skipping forward to the 19th century and the Jehovah’s Witnesses are back to claiming that Jesus was not the true God, but a creation of the father. Skip forward to our post-everything world and now Atheist deny that there is any God at all, let alone that Jesus is God.

People will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit definitely knew the heart of man when they inspired Paul to write these words.

So what are some common arguments against the deity of Christ, and what does the bible have to say refuting their claims. First let us start with the extremely low hanging fruit here.

The bible never said Jesus was God

This is just factually not true, although many people will try to convince you otherwise. Turn with me to Colossians 2 and we will start in verse 6

6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving 8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Let me just repeat verse 9

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily

Well, that seems like pretty simple, irrefutable evidence that Jesus is God, let’s close up shop, our task is done. Jesus is God! Can I get an amen? To which I think this is a perfectly reasonable response. This seems like enough evidence to me, but unfortunately I have to introduce you to one of the difficulties with conversations like this (and yes I recognize I am effectively having a conversation with myself) It is the moving target. You see, the secular world like to deny the existence of Paul, because his existence was never recorded in the likes of famed Jewish historian Josephus, or Roman historians Tacitus, or Suetonius, and they don’t accept the historical evidence of him in the bible. They claim the letters of Paul were written later and by some unknown person trying to insert their own theology into Christianity and their own “Spiritual Superhero” in Acts. So, while recognizing the lunacy of this argument, is there evidence of the deity of Christ outside the writings of Paul and his story? Well, how about we go to an eye witness to Christ’s life, and his resurrection, Peter, and his thoughts in 2 Peter 1.

1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

our God and Savior Jesus Christ

Once again, seems like a pretty solid case that Jesus is our God and Savior. Now some might argue that Peter is talking about two different people here, the first being “our God” and the second being our Savior Jesus Christ. Which seems like a plausible argument when reading in English, however the Greek leaves absolutely no question about who our God is, and who our Savior is. Let’s put our Greek hats on (of which I am no expert) and talk about

“The Granville Sharp Rule”

“When the copulative kai connects two nouns of the same case of personal description, if the article ho, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle”

Alright so that satisfies that, right? Naw it took me a while to really understand what this rule was saying essentially this

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And I want to be clear here, because sometimes our language “rules” aren’t really rules, just guidelines, I’m looking at you I before E except after C! This is a hard rule, in Koine Greek, or biblical Greek, this is always, always true. So, what we have here is Peter, an eye witness, who was there with Christ, a church father, unequivocally saying Jesus is God! Surely, the buck stops here right? This must be enough to prove without a doubt that Jesus our God and Savior is indeed, God. Welllllllllllllll,

Jesus never says He is God.

So clearly his disciples just misunderstood Christ’s intensions. First, this is what we would call an indefensible position, please turn with me to John 21:25

Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

The fact of the matter is, we have no idea whether or not the words exact words “I am God” came out of Christ’s mouth (although it is highly unlikely He said those words in English), because we don’t have a complete recording of everything He ever said and did. Okay fine,

The bible never recorded Jesus saying He was God.

Again, a common claim put forth by many opponents to the Gospel, and once again a completely false one. Let’s go to John 8 and start in verse 56

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

Notice what Christ is saying here, first in foremost, he isn’t using the correct tense of the word in this situation. It should say “ Before Abraham was, I was” if He was just speaking generally, but he is making a very specific statement here “I am” or “I exist” Jesus himself is making a huge claim to deity here, he is saying He is God. This is the same thing the Father says to Isaiah in Isaiah 43 starting in verse 10

“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord,

“and my servant whom I have chosen,

that you may know and believe me

and understand that I am he.

Before me no god was formed,

nor shall there be any after me.

11 I, I am the Lord,

and besides me there is no savior.

Or in Exodus 3 where Moses is at the burning bush and the Father gives Moses his name to give to the people he says in verse 14 “Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.

Jesus is putting himself equal to the Father here, and the Jews thought so as well, look what they do in our passage in John in verse 59

59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

What is the punishment for blasphemy, for equating yourself to God?

Leviticus 24:16 says, “Anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.”

They were responding to Jesus’ claim of divinity in the way they thought appropriate. Clearly Jesus is saying “I am God” here. So there we go, case settled. From the mouth of Christ himself, in the holy scriptures, Jesus is God. Welllllllllllllll, the Gospel according to John is significantly different then the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke or what is known as the synoptic gospels. The gospel according to John emphasizes the deity of Christ, while the synoptic gospels emphasis the humanity of Christ. The gospel according to John contains many unique accounts, while the synoptic gospels share a huge amount of the same material

Diagram

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Surely, John didn’t want to write a unique account of his time spent with Christ and reflect on the personal teachings of Christ to his disciples. It must be from another heretical source, just like all the writings of Paul as well. I hope you are hearing my sarcasm here and you are starting to see the tactic here when it comes to being proved wrong. Okay, so

Jesus doesn’t call himself God in the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

Another demonstrably false statement.

Mark 14 starting in verse 60. Jesus has been betrayed at this point and is before the high priest and the chief priests and the elders and scribes.

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” 61 But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” 62 And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” 63 And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? 64 You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. 65 And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophesy!” And the guards received him with blows.

Through out the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus has called himself the son of man. I pretty specific title, using sparingly in the old testament. As a matter of fact it is only used in two books of the old testament. Mostly in the Book of Ezekiel, to contract the low status of man compared to God, and in the book of Daniel. A distinctly familiar scripture for any Messianic Jew. The title is found in Daniel 7, lets turn there and start reading as verse 9.

9 “As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. 10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. 11 “Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. 12 (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.) 13 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Compare vs. 62 of Mark 14 “And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” And verse 13-15 of Daniel 7 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

Jesus is claiming to be God! That is why the high priest and everyone else acts the way that they do! It isn’t that he was claiming to be the Messiah, plenty of people did that during these time. It was his claim of divinity that spurred these men to seek the crucifixion of Christ!

Phew, we did it. We proved without a doubt the Jesus is God! Goooooo team! Welllllllll, except the whole bible needs to be thrown out and you can’t trust any of it. Which is a whole different sermon on the trustworthiness of the scriptures, which we might get to depending on how long our pastoral search takes, but that brings me to my last point. When you meet someone who does not accept that the word of God is even that, the word of God, you have one last tool to show people that Jesus Christ is our God and Savior, and that’s you. Your story, your testimony, the way that faith in Christ as God has altered your life and empowered you to radically love others.

In John 13:34-35 Christ tells us

**34**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **35**By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

So go, go and live your life loving one another, testifying to the world that you are a disciple of our God and Savior Lord and when people around you have doubts, when their ears start to itch, and you see them wandering off into myths about the deity of Christ, gently correct them, showing them through the scripture that Jesus is truly divine.

Let’s Pray!