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Why Is It Necessary to Believe Jesus Is God?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why it's necessary to believe Jesus is God, whether belief in the Trinity is required for salvation, and why one has to believe in the Trinity if the words "Trinity," "God the Son," and "God the Holy Spirit" aren't in the Bible.

* Why is it necessary to believe Jesus is God? Since the Trinity is so difficult for our little human minds to comprehend, is belief in the Trinity really required for salvation?

* Where do you see the words "Trinity," "God the Son," and "God the Holy Spirit" in the Bible, and if they're not there, do I have to believe in the Trinity?

Transcript

Thank you so much for joining us on hashtag SDRask. I'm Amy Hall, and Greg Koukl is with me today. Amy.

And our first question comes from Jim. Alright. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is the only path to forgiveness and salvation, but why is it necessary to believe that he is God? For example, Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe Jesus is the only path to forgiveness and salvation? But why is it necessary to believe that he is God? For example, Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe Jesus is God.

in his deity, but they recognize him as the path. Some religions believe in modalism. Couldn't that be acceptable? Since the Trinity is so difficult for our little human minds to comprehend, is belief in the Trinity really required for salvation? Well, on one hand, you could say, I don't see the connection.

On the other hand, the text indicates that that's required. If you confess with your mouth, Jesus as Lord, and believe in God, that God raise earth, the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10.

When it says Jesus as Lord, a reference to Jesus as Lord, that's a divine title. The Lord is God. The Lord God.

Nobody else was the Lord. This is the most common title given to Jesus. In reference to Jesus throughout the Gospels, and frequently in the Epistles, Jesus said, unless you believe agoy me, you will die in your sins.

Now it's translated, I am. He sometimes, but it's just agoy me. I am.

And there are a number of times where Jesus uses this Greek form of the name of God from Exodus. What for? I am that I am. That's where Yahweh comes from.

However, is the proper way to pronounce it, nobody knows because whatever. The point is, he consistently identifies himself with the God of creation, and so do his apostles, those who he spent three and a half years with and taught. This kind of curious, the Alex O'Connor made a claim that Jesus didn't really believe he was God, because what in John 10, when he is asked about that he makes this reference to you are all gods or whatever, blah, blah.

John, he could have said, they were going to stone him, and he could have said, right then made it really cool. Yes, I am saying I am God, but he doesn't say that. Therefore, Alex O'Connor, the atheist thinks he missed his opportunity, which means he didn't really believe it.

But what's curious about this is this is John recording Jesus, and all throughout John, you have a very high Christology, and especially starting in the first few verses, the beginning was the word, the word was with God, and the word was God. All things came into being through him, and nothing came into being that has come into being, he's yet created a creator. You have this high Christology.

So why would you want to strain at that gnat in John 10, like Alex O'Connor is, that Jesus could have identified himself clearly as God, but he didn't do that. Yeah, he didn't clearly say he wasn't God either. You're making a mistake, I'm not claimed to be God.

Put the stones down, they're about to execute. Anyway, so you see this pattern throughout, even though you have some naysayers like Alex O'Connor, the John understood what Jesus was getting at, and that's why all throughout his gospel, especially, but in many other places, you have a very high Jesus as God. And even after the apostles died, when you have the first few generations of disciples who were discipled by the apostles, they're making the same claim against those who denied the deity of Christ, like the Gnostics.

So I'm not sure I can give a theological justification for it. Well, if you don't believe in Jesus as God that, well, maybe you're believing in a different Jesus than the one who is the real Jesus. And Paul talks about that in 2 Corinthians, there were many other Jesuses, and that's true.

They're all kind. There's the Muslim Jesus, there's the Jehovah's Witness Jesus, there's the LDS Jesus, there's the New Age Jesus, there's all kinds of different Jesuses that's not the Jesus that saves. And so the identity of Christ turns out to be the thing that's the most important.

And I mentioned there's a number of references to this. I'm just thinking of some more towards the end of his ministry with the disciples. He said, who do people say that I am? Blah, blah, blah.

Who do you say that I am? And Peter says, you are the Christ, the Son of God. There's are two things. When John writes his gospel at the end in chapter 20, he says, this evidence I've given you in the gospel is in order that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, two things.

Son of God is a divine title, indication, I should say, and in believing have life in his name. So we have all these texts that tie a proper high Christology to salvation. And if you don't hold to the high Christology, then you don't hold, you don't benefit from the salvation that goes with the confession or the belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

There are so many reference to these things in the New Testament that it's hard to, even if you don't give any theological justification for it, and I think there is one I offered it just a moment ago, you got to believe in the real Jesus because of the counterfeits, but the testimony of the text is overwhelming about the importance and necessity of that. And you have to ask yourself, what is your gospel if you don't believe in the deity of Christ? Because that does affect his ability to save. Like all of those things play into our salvation.

So I don't think it's just rejecting the deity of Christ that you're rejecting. It will affect your understanding of the gospel in some way. And if what saves us is not what Jesus tells us to do, but it's actually Jesus himself and it's knowing him and being united to him.

If you don't know him, then how are you being saved by him? And I just want to say one thing about, and you touched on this by saying that it's so clear in the text, so Jim asked, couldn't that be acceptable, since the Trinity is so difficult for a little human minds to comprehend, is belief in the Trinity really required for salvation. But in reality, the aspects of the Trinity are not difficult to comprehend. What's difficult is for us to understand that by analogy because there's nothing else we can compare that to.

But the idea that there is one God, that's not hard to comprehend. We all understand that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God. These things are all clear in the text.

Again, that's a concept. It's not difficult to understand. And then the Son is not the Father, the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, etc.

Again, a simple concept. Now, how we fit all these together is harder to kind of picture because we have nothing to compare it to. But those aspects of the Trinity are actually quite simple.

So if all of those things are explained in the text, and you reject one or more of them, then now you're rejecting the revelation God has given of himself. And so all of these things are an indication that you are not actually submitted to God, that you have some other God that you're

worshiping, basically. That's a good way to put it.

Think of the first commandment. I mean, the same kind of argument could be made. Why do the details matter? There's Moloch, there's Ba'al, there's Ashrath, there's Yahweh.

So what? They're all worshiping God. Of course, make this same claim today. There's only one God, right? Therefore, everybody who worships God is worshiping the same God.

No wrong, that doesn't follow. And so it's interesting, you've got to get God right even from the very beginning, right? And at least from the law, before that, you have Abraham being called by God, leave your people and your land and come. And so now you have a different God calling.

And it was understandable back then, they call it Hinotheism, or we call it that now. But the idea that different groups of people had their God, and the success of the group of people reflected the power of their God, okay? And so now you've got Abraham being called by Yahweh, and we learn as time goes on that these other gods aren't any nevertheless, the point is Abraham was to worship this particular God, not the other ones. It mattered, the details mattered, and then when it comes to the time of Jesus, you have the same thing.

And incidentally, if Jesus is not God, it's hard to make sense. If you have a low Christology, it's hard to make sense of how it is that a mere man could pay for the sins of, or the penalty that would be an eternal penalty for a multitude, an innumerable multitude of people who, who end up in perdition, all right? I mean, how does one man pay for all these people? And, and how is that an example of the love of God? For God so loved the world that he gave is only gotten son, so that he could beat up his son and kill his son and crucify his son to express for God's love? See, it doesn't make any sense. Maybe if the son says, I'll do it, which is the case here, then that would be an evidence of the love of the son, no greater love has anyone than this that a man laid down his life for a friend.

So that's Jesus' love, but how is it God's love? It can't be an expression of God's love unless it's God who does the suffering. Which is exactly what the text says. Well, this goes to the very nature of the gospel itself, and I mentioned this before, but think about it.

What you said was if he's not God, how could he have paid for all the sins of all the people? And the answer is what happens is when people say that Jesus is not God, what happens is they're gospel changes. And now the gospel quote, gospel is about doing certain things to gain salvation. So if it doesn't matter, well, if that's the way we get to God by doing certain things, then the identity of Jesus doesn't really matter.

But if we come to God through Jesus, then the identity of Jesus definitely does matter, both in who he is and his ability to save. And that's precisely what we are trusting in when we put our faith in Christ, his full ability to do that. And anyway, so the text is really clear.

This is for Christians, at least, this would be, that should be an adequate argument because of the clarity of the text in so many places. So let's get into that question just a little bit more specifically. And because this question follows from that, it comes from Ernie.

Where do you see the words trinity, God, the Son, God, the Holy Spirit in the Bible? I have been taught this all of my life, but have not found it in the Bible. If it is not in the Bible, do I have to believe it? Well, I guess my answer to the first aspect of the question is so what? I didn't see God, the Son, God, the Spirit, God. You didn't see those words.

You don't see the word trinity in there either. There are lots of, there are lots of words that are tied to theological realities that no one takes exception with, which words are not in the text. But this is, this is the point or this is irrelevant.

Okay. So if I introduce Abby and Eva to my friends, I said, these are my daughters, Abby and Eva. And somebody raises a complaint, you never said you're a father.

The notion of a father is entailed in having daughters, heavy children. It's entailed in that. It's irrelevant if I don't use that word.

Okay. So if John says of the word who became flesh in John chapter one, if he says all things were created through him and apart from him, nothing was created that has been created. Isn't that enough detail about that individual to say that that individual called the word is the uncreated creator? It's crystal clear in that verse verse three of John one.

And if he is the uncreated creator, gee, who's that? Who is the only uncreated creator? God. He created all things in the beginning. God created the heavens and the earth.

So when Jesus, when the word who became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth is identified as the one who created everything, that is enough to say that this is God. Okay. But he is not the same as the father in the beginning was the word.

And the word was with God. And when you see the word God frequently in the text, it's a come just G.O.D. Theos. It's accompanied with the phrase the father.

So the distinctions made that God, when the word God is used is the father. God, the father, actually that phrase is used frequently. God, the father was that part of the question.

It's not in there. It's in there all the time. God, the father, Trinity, God, the son, God, the Holy Spirit.

Oh, okay. Oh, I got the fathers in there. But then we have the word being the uncreated creator.

Now the word is distinct from the father, from God the father, the one the word who know we know becomes Jesus when he takes on humanity. Therefore he is God too. Now how do you

distinguish God the father from God the word? Well, the word is called the son of God.

So he is God, the son by entailment. It doesn't use that phrase. It says son of God.

That means distinct from the father, but son as creator of all things that were ever created means he's uncreated. Therefore he's a different person, though he is the he is he is part of the Godhead, God, the son. And we I mean, people strain it this this language.

Well, if it's not in the Bible, should I it is in the Bible, just not in the words you're demanding of it. But if if if if if if Jesus is called God, which he is, it in different places. And if he has has the characteristics of divinity like the creator, and he has the privileges he is to receive worship.

He did receive worship, but you worship God alone, but Jesus received worship. These things all fit together. God says, I will not share my glory with another, but he glorifies Jesus.

Yeah, there it is. You know, and and read John chapter five, you know, Jesus talks about so all would honor me even as they honor the father. What? I give life to whoever I will.

What? These are brash statements, and there there are the statements of a lunatic unless they're true of Jesus. So there's an abundant abundance in the record of these kinds of statements that allow us to draw the conclusion scripturally that Jesus is God, but he's not the father who is also God. And I the way that I put it, and others, I didn't think of this, but others.

You see, they're like one what and three who's, it's a way of putting it. Do you want to, the best way to capture it all in one, or there is one God with three centers of consciousness, one God, three centers of consciousness within that God. They call it hypostasis, but that's that's the technical theological word.

The point is, okay, here's the best we can do. You're right. There are no parallel.

There's no analogous circumstance in the world because God's unique. And most of the parallels or the illustrations fail badly as it turns out, describing something that's actually heretical. But that the text teaches these things is pretty clear.

And this is why my approach to this is that it's a solution. The Trinity is a solution. It's not a problem textually.

If you reject that, you have huge problems with the text. Now, if you don't care about the text, all right, then go big deal. Well, he said, if it's not in the Bible, do I have to believe it? So we're saying, yes, it's in the Bible.

And think about the Holy Spirit. If the scripture is inspired by God, is breathed out by God. And yet it also says the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of David.

Yeah. Again, you have the Holy Spirit being God. And that's just the first one that comes to mind

for me.

Yeah, there's and we're to all of those other details, pretty much most of them that I mentioned, specifically apply to the Spirit as well. A called God has divine prerogatives and exercises to find behavior, so to speak. So these are there's somebody uses the acronym hand H-A-N-D honors and titles.

I think that came from Rob Bowman and Kamachaski. Yeah, Kamachaski, right. Yeah, they're they're what was the name of their first book? Something about Jesus.

It's pretty Jesus in this place. Yes, I think that's it. I think that's it.

Now they've expanded that by another 150 pages or something and it's out in a different title. Yeah, they use that as a way of keeping in mind. I just use divine title called God.

Essentially, they do the things that only God could do and they have privileges that God gets like being worshiped, for example. So the bottom line is that these things are in the Bible. People didn't just out of the blue come up with the idea of the Trinity and impose that on the Bible.

It came from the Bible and was argued for using the Bible. That's right. And this goes with the previous question we had.

But hopefully that'll make that a little more clear to you, Ernie. Thank you so much for your question and thank you, Jim, also. And we'd love to hear from you.

If you have a question, you can always send that on X with the hashtag STRask. And we always look forward to hearing from you. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocle for Stand to Reason.