

Praying to God and Jesus

Dear Marc,

On December 21, 2005 you wrote: "Since only God is to be prayed to and worshipped, the Lord Jesus is God because he is prayed to and worshipped in the following passages: Acts 1:24-25; 2 Corinthians 12:8; 2 Timothy 4:18; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 5:11-14 and 22:3."

Response:

As Christians, we pray to God through his Son Jesus Christ because it is only through our belief in the ransom merit of Jesus and our desire to follow God's will that we can have a relationship with our Heavenly Father through prayer. Prior to Jesus' first advent, the Jewish nation had sole access to God through prayer when they followed the Law of Moses and worshipped God and God only. They were his chosen people, from whom God's son, Jesus, the Messiah, would be born. But now, during the Gospel era, all who have come into a heart relationship with our Savior, Jesus, can have access to God's heavenly throne through prayer.

Before we address your scriptures, we will tell you that we are not a Trinitarian group. We believe that God and his Son are two separate entities. God's very first creative act was his Son, the Word, or Logos, by which and through which all things were made (John 1:1-3; Prov. 8:22-31; John 1:10; Col. 1:15-18; Heb. 1:2). In John 1:1 the Greek definite article is used to distinguish the Father as "the God" from the Son, who is called "a God." Although the Greek language contains no indefinite article corresponding to the English "a," the indefinite article is implied by the context and, therefore, must be included in the English translation. Benjamin Wilson gives the correct rendering in his *Emphatic Diaglott*: "In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and a god was the Word." When translated correctly, John 1:1 becomes significant in its contrast between the Father, who is called "the God," and the Word or Representative of the Most High God, who is himself "a god."

Colossians 1:15 also addresses the separateness of God and his Son. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." When we look up "image" in Strong's Concordance we find it means "a faintness as a copy; to resemble or to be like; representation; resemblance." Looking up "firstborn" we discover its meaning to be "foremost in place, order or importance; best, first of all." These definitions clarify the meaning of Col 1:15. We now know that Jesus is a representation of God, a copy in that he resembled God. He was God's first, foremost and best creation. Furthermore, if we look at what Jesus says about himself, we can determine who he is. Jesus says, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me." (John 7:16) This statement verifies the father-son relationship. In the next verse, Jesus says, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." This statement clarifies the separateness between him and his Father. God and Jesus have separate wills, and Jesus does the will of God. "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." (John 6:38) Jesus says that he and his Father are separate beings and that his Father is greater than he. (John 14:28; 1 Cor. 15:28)

After establishing that God and his son are separate beings, we need to determine if Jesus was divine at his creation. If you believe that Jesus was divine there is a problem because divinity means immortality, and, therefore, inability to die. Was his death on the cross an act, or pretense? We think not. In Revelation 1:18 Jesus says, "I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" If Jesus was divine, what did Paul mean when he stated: "By one [man] shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19), "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:21). "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). If you believe that Jesus was divine, his death is minimized. Since Adam was a perfect man who sinned, only another perfect man who did not sin could redeem not only him, but his entire race. God knew that Jesus would need to actually die in order to redeem the fallen human race. After Jesus fulfilled his mission, he was resurrected divine. So, now Jesus sits at the right hand of God and is truly like God. He is immortal and cannot die.

Addressing your scriptures: Acts 1:24-25; 2 Corinthians 12:8; and 2 Timothy 4:18

In these scriptures, as in many, many others in the New Testament, the Greek word "kurios" is translated as "lord." Therefore, it is a matter of judgment and context to determine if it refers to God (Matthew 2:19), Jesus (Matthew 7:21), or some earthly lord (Matthew 18:32). In your above examples, we presume that the apostles and Paul were praying to Jesus. The question is then, should they have been praying to Him and does prayer to Jesus violate the first commandment? We believe that since Jesus is now divine, like his Father, we can make requests to him. Stephen does so in Acts 7:59-60. "When they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'"

2 Peter 3:17-18 states, "Be on guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever! Amen." Apostle Peter tells us to be on guard so that we will not lose the precious truth of Jesus Christ and the ransom he paid. Yes, Jesus is definitely our Lord and Savior. He died as a man paying the ransom price, so that Adam and his entire race could be redeemed. Peter was honoring him when he said, "To him be the glory now and forever!"

Revelation 5:11-14 and 22:3 depict the throne scene in heaven with the glorified Jesus pictured as the Lamb. Revelation 5:13 distinguishes between the two entities of God and Jesus. "To him who sits on the throne (meaning God) and to the Lamb (Jesus) be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" Because of his sacrifice, Jesus has now been glorified with immortality and power, second only to his Father, God. And all in heaven and all on earth (yet a future picture) and all under the earth (those who have died and are yet to be restored to life – another future picture) sing praises to God and his Son, Jesus. Revelation 22:3 states that there will be no more curse because all that was lost in Eden will be restored. Then Jesus will rule on the throne with his Father in that wonderful Millennial Kingdom when the healing of people and nations will take place. Although this Millennial Kingdom will be the kingdom of God's dear Son, it will also be the Kingdom of God, because his Son and the glorified Church will be in absolute accord with

the Father. “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’” (Revelation 21:3-4) Oh, how we long for that glorious day!

We hope we have helped you with your understanding of the scriptures you mentioned. Please feel free to write us again.