

Text: 1 Jn 4.2 et al

We are working on a series called “Orthodoxy.” I’m not simply trying to teach orthodox doctrine, but to show that orthodox doctrine existed in the church from the very beginning.

We are responding to a notion promoted by some false teachers of the past and present that what we call “Orthodoxy” is merely the version of Christianity that won out of competing versions that existed in the early church.

I have to say that this view is somewhat bizarre, and, if true, would make Christianity perhaps the only organized group in history that ever started out with competing viewpoints that ultimately coalesced into one.

However, be that as it may, some do attack Christianity on this basis.

In our series so far, we looked at these topics:

1. The Rock: the doctrine of Jesus Christ
2. The Witnesses: the faithful proclaimers of Jesus Christ (the apostles)
3. The Message: the central gospel message of the death, burial, and resurrection

Today we are going to look at several passages that offer “confessions” of faith about Jesus Christ. We can see the importance of getting “the confession” right in 1 Jn 4.2

1 Jn 4.2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

This confession includes these elements:

1. Jesus the Christ (the promised king of Israel)
2. Has come in the flesh (incarnation, implies pre-existence)
3. Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (a real, physical, human person)

These truths are core doctrines, right at the center of our faith.

One thing you will notice is that we keep repeating certain themes. We are looking at the center of our faith, so we are looking at the core doctrines again and again, albeit from different aspects.

Proposition: The early church consistently confessed the doctrine of Jesus as Christ, Lord, and God.

I. Jesus is Messiah

Mk 8.29 And He *continued* by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”

Mt 16.16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jn 11.27 She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world.”

Ac 2.36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ— this Jesus whom you crucified.”

1 Jn 5.1 ¶ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

A. The meaning of Christ: “anointed”

1. Messiah = “anointed”
2. The “anointed” is the King of Israel

B. The statements as confessions

1. Each giving these statements are Jewish
 - a. Peter (Mk 8.29/Mt 16.16)
 - b. Martha (Jn 11.27)
 - c. Peter on Pentecost (Ac 2.36)
 - d. John in his epistle (1 Jn 5.1)
2. The statements are in the form of a confession
3. John requires the confession of Gentiles (writing to Gentile Christians)

One of the earliest standards of Christianity is to accept Jesus as Messiah and King.

II. Jesus is Lord

Jn 20.28 Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

Ac 2.36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ— this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Rm 10.9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

Col 2.6 ¶ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

Phil 2.11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

A. Thomas began his new life as an apostle with the confession: “my Lord and my God” (Jn 20.28)

B. Peter on Pentecost again: now we emphasize the term “Lord” (Ac 2.36)

1. Lord and Christ (Messiah)

2. “Lord” is an additional concept

3. The word used in this way implies more than mere respect: title of deity

Romans would refer to “Lord Augustus” – conferring divine honors on Augustus

C. Confessing Jesus as Lord brings salvation (Rm 10.9)

D. Confessing Jesus as Lord brings a new way of life (Col 2.6)

E. Confessing Jesus as Lord is the destiny of every tongue [though not all in faith] (Phil 2.11)

The church’s beliefs center on this man Jesus who is Lord: a consistent message from the beginning.

III. Jesus is the Son of God

A. The mighty works of the Lord led to belief that Jesus is the Son of God

Mt 14.33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Mk 15.39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

B. The purpose of the Gospels (esp. John) was to inspire faith in Jesus as the Son of God

Jn 20.31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

C. The evangelism of Acts led to the faith in Jesus as the Son of God

Ac 8.37 And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Ac 9.20 and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

D. The Lord Jesus himself affirmed his status as the Son of God at trial

Mt 26.63-64 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

1. The term "son of God" speaks of his deity and authority
2. The chief priests took it this way; Jesus meant it this way

Conclusion:

Proposition: The early church consistently confessed the doctrine of Jesus as Christ, Lord, and God.

The church confessed this truth over and over again throughout the founding era.

The church continued in this faith year over year in the subsequent history of the church.

Anyone today who joins the confession finds forgiveness of sin and eternal life.