

THE SON OF GOD

- A. Introduction: We're talking about what the Bible is and why we need to read it. The Bible is the number one way that God reveals Himself and His plans and purposes to us. The written Word of God is the most complete and reliable source of information we have about Almighty God.
1. The Bible reveals that Almighty God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him, and He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. The Bible begins and ends with God on earth with His family. Gen 2-3; Rev 21-22
 - a. The Bible also reveals that both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin, going back to the first man and woman, Adam and Eve.
 1. Because of sin, humans are disqualified for the family, and the planet is infused with a curse of corruption and death. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; Rom 8:20; etc.
 2. Following Adam's sin, the Lord promised that a Redeemer would come and undo the damage. (Gen 3:15). God inspired men to keep written records as His plan unfolded (II Tim 3:16).
 3. God's plan to recover His family and the family home from sin through the Redeemer (Jesus) is known as redemption.
 - b. God has progressively revealed Himself and His plan of redemption through the pages of Scripture, until we have the full revelation of Himself and His plan given to us in Jesus. Heb 1:1-2
 1. In our lessons up to this point, we have traced God's unfolding plan through the Bible narrative, down to Jesus' coming, and the record of Him that is found in the New Testament.
 2. We noted that the men who wrote the New Testament were all eyewitnesses of Jesus (or close associates of eyewitnesses). They wrote to tell the world what they saw and heard as they interacted with Jesus for over three years, including His death and resurrection. Mark 16:15-16
 2. Last week we said that to appreciate who Jesus is, why He came to earth, and what He accomplished we must understand some things about the nature of God or the Godhead. Godhead is a term used in the New Testament to mean the Divine nature. Rom 1:20; Acts 17:29; Col 2:9
 - a. The Bible reveals that there is only one God, and that God, in His ultimate Being, exists as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is Triune by nature.
 1. God is not three Gods. Nor is He one Person who sometimes acts as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Holy Spirit. God is one God who simultaneously manifests as three distinct—but not separate—Persons.
 2. These three Persons co-inhere or share one Divine nature. They are the same in substance, power, and glory. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God.
 - b. The full nature of God is beyond our comprehension. God is an infinite, eternal, transcendent Being (unlimited, no beginning, no end, above and beyond), and we are finite (limited) beings.
 1. The eyewitnesses who wrote the New Testament mention these three Persons in numerous passages. And, they report that Jesus spoke about the Father and the Holy Spirit and was clearly referring to Persons other than Himself. John 14:16-17; Matt 28:18-20; etc.
 2. The apostles' interactions with Jesus convinced them that He was (and is) God Incarnate (God in human flesh)—not a new or different God, but a fuller revelation of *Yahweh* (Jehovah), the God who revealed Himself to their ancestors, Moses and Abraham.
 3. When we read everything that the eyewitnesses recorded about Jesus, we find that they believed that Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God.
 3. John 20:30-31—John, one of Jesus' twelve apostles, recorded that he wrote his gospel so that people will believe some very specific things about Jesus—that He is the Christ and that He is the Son of God. In this lesson we'll examine what these various names or titles tell us about Jesus.

- B. Let's begin with some background on John's document (his gospel). The four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are biographies of Jesus. They are based on either direct or indirect eyewitness material. All are rooted in fact. They mention people and places that actually existed, and events that really occurred.
1. Matthew, Mark, and Luke's books were written around the same time (Mark AD 55-65; Matthew AD 58-68; Luke AD 60-68). John wrote his gospel later (AD 80-90).
 - a. By the time John wrote, false teachers and false teachings had arisen and were infiltrating and affecting churches. (Jesus warned that this would happen, Matt 13:19). These teachings distorted who Jesus is and why He came to earth.
 - b. A philosophy that has become known as Gnosticism was developing. Among other things, this philosophy denied the Deity of Jesus (the fact that He is God) and His incarnation (the fact that He took on a full human nature in the womb of the virgin Mary).
 - c. Note what John wrote in one of his epistles (letters)—Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist (II John 7).
 2. John wrote his gospel to counter these false teachings by clearly stating that Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. He opens his book with an introduction that makes this clear. John 1:1-18
 - a. John 1:1-3—John began with a statement that the Word (whom he identified as Jesus, v17) is the eternal God and Creator: The Word was with God, the Word is God, the Word is the Creator of all.
 1. The Word was with God in the beginning. The Greek word translated with (*pros*) indicates intimate, unbroken fellowship and communion, and implies two distinct Persons.
 - A. Gen 1:1 says that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; Isa 45:18 states that God alone created this world. Yet John tells us that in the beginning, the Word who was with God and was God, created all things (John 1:3).
 - B. Gen 1:2 says the Spirit of God was also being involved in creation. Three distinct Persons were active in creation, and have enjoyed loving fellowship since forever.
 2. John 1:14—John further stated that the Creator of the universe entered time and space, took on a human nature, and lived among us (meaning the eyewitnesses who interacted with Him).
 - b. To make the point that the Word is the eternal God, and that the Word was already in existence before time began, John used two different Greek verbs in the first six verses of his prologue.
 1. When John writes about the Word in v1-2 he uses *en* which denotes continuous action in the past (meaning no point of origin). When John refers to created things in v3, and to John the Baptist in v6, he uses *egeneto* which refers to a point of origin, a time when something came into existence.
 2. When John writes that the Word became flesh in v14 he uses *egeneto*. In other words, the Word, who has always existed, entered human existence at a point in time. At that time the Word was made flesh and became fully man without ceasing to be fully God.
 - A. It was not merely an appearance—the Word became flesh. One false teaching said Jesus wasn't a material being. He only appeared to be a man who died and rose from the dead.
 - B. Those who believed this false idea spread stories about Jesus walking on the beach, and the disciples noticing that He left no footprints—because He was not a flesh and blood being.
 - c. John called the Word made flesh the Only Begotten of the Father. This is the first time that John identifies God the Father by name. Note that the Father and the Word are two different Persons. The Greek word that is translated begotten is *monogenes*. It refers to uniqueness or one of a kind.
 1. Jesus is unique because He is the God-man, fully God and fully man—one Person, two natures, human and Divine. Jesus is unique because He is the only man whose birth did not mark his beginning. He has no beginning because He is God.
 2. How can the unlimited God enter into the limitation of human flesh? How can Jesus be fully

God at the same time that He is fully man? Neither John, nor any of the apostles, made any effort to explain the Triune nature of God or the Incarnation. They accepted both with reverent awe and worship.

A. Paul the apostle referred to this as the mystery of the Incarnation: I Tim 3:16—Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith (NLT); God was manifest in the flesh (KJV).

B. Paul (an eyewitness) also wrote: For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus (I Tim 2:5, NLT).

C. And, Paul wrote: For in Him the whole fullness of Deity (the Godhead) continues to dwell in bodily form—giving complete expression of the divine nature (Col 2:9, Amp).

d. John 1:18—John ends his prologue with another statement that Jesus is God. Once again he refers to the Word as the Only Begotten (*monogenes*), but follows it with the Greek word for God (*theos*).

1. The KJV translates the passage as the only begotten Son. However, a number of translations render John's statement as the only begotten God (NASB); God the One and Only God (NIV); God the only Son (NRSV). Why the difference?

2. The KJV was translated from later manuscripts and the others from earlier manuscripts that were copied closer to the time of the originals. This is an example of a textual variant, a natural mistake made by copyists who were used to saying and writing the Only Begotten Son.

3. Keep in mind that John was an eyewitness of Jesus, one of the original twelve apostles, and part of Jesus' inner circle. John wrote what he believed about Jesus, based on what he saw and heard. He and the other eyewitnesses believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Matt 16:16; John 6:69

C. What does it mean that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Let's talk about Jesus' various names and titles. They reveal who Jesus is and why He came to this world.

1. When Mary, the mother of Jesus, conceived a child by the power of the Holy Spirit, both she and Joseph, (Jesus' stepfather) were instructed by an angel to give the child the name Jesus. Luke 1:31; Matt 1:21

a. Jesus means Savior. The Word (God) took on a human nature and was born into this world so that He could die for the sins of men and save us from sin's penalty and power. Heb 2:14-15

b. On the night of Jesus' birth, an angel appeared to shepherds outside the city of Bethlehem and proclaimed: A Savior has been born today. Note, the angel called Him Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11

1. Christ is a title that was added to Jesus' given name. The Old Testament prophet Daniel recorded that the angel Gabriel spoke to him about the coming Redeemer and referred to Him as the Anointed One (*mashiyach* or Messiah) (Dan 9:24-26). Christ is from the Greek word for anointed (*Christos*).

2. Lord (*kurios*) means supreme in authority and is equivalent to the term Jehovah (or *Yahweh*).

Kurios was used for *Yahweh* in the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament).

2. The angel Gabriel was also the first to use the title Son of God for Jesus, before Jesus was conceived, before He took on flesh in the womb of the Mary, the virgin.

a. Gabriel was the one who told Mary that the Holy Ghost was going to overshadow her, and that she would bear a child. Gabriel told Mary that the child would be called the Son of God. He was referring to the fact that God was the Father of Jesus' humanity. Luke 1:31-35; Heb 10:5 (Ps 40:6) b.

But there's another aspect to what Son of God means. In that culture, son did mean offspring of, but it also often had nothing to do with being fathered or sired by someone. It meant on the order of or possessing his father's qualities. (Remember, to properly interpret Scripture we must consider what it meant to the writers and the first hearers. That establishes context.)

1. The Old Testament refers to sons of the prophets and sons of the singers. They weren't literal children of prophets or singers. They were trained for those positions, and they possessed and demonstrated the qualities of their teachers. I Kings 20:35; II Kings 2:3,5,7,15; Neh 12:28

2. Paul the apostle used the phrase son of to mean sameness of nature of nature and equality of being when he called people sons of the devil and sons of disobedience. Eph 2:2-3; Eph 5:6-8
 - A. Jesus is not the Son of God because He was born in Bethlehem or because He is less than God. Jesus is the Son because He is God and possesses the qualities of God.
 - B. This is why the religious leaders took up stones to execute Jesus when He referred to God as His Father (and Himself as the Son). They knew that He was claiming equality with God. John 5:18
- c. Keep in mind that John, Paul, and the other eyewitnesses were monotheists (believed in only one God). To put a created being on the same level as God was considered blasphemy. Yet they were convinced that Jesus was and is God become man without ceasing to be God.
3. Jesus' first followers were Jewish and, based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets, they were expecting a coming Redeemer. Those writings affirmed Jesus' identity.
 - a. When Jesus gave His apostles a post resurrection Bible study, it confirmed His identity as Immanuel or God with us. Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44-46; Isa 7:14; Matt 1:22-23
 - b. Although the prophets weren't clearly shown that the Son would be God Incarnate (in human flesh), looking back at the Scriptures, we can see that the teaching is there. Consider two prophecies.
 1. Micah 5:2—The prophet Micah wrote that one will come from Bethlehem who goes forth have been from everlasting (literally the days of eternity). The prophet Habakkuk used this same word referring to the Lord and God—*Yahweh* or *Jehovah* (Hab 1:12).
 2. Isa 9:6—The prophet Isaiah wrote that a child will be given and a son will be born. Among other things, Isaiah called him the everlasting Father.
 - A. This is a Hebrew figure of speech (idiom) that means Father of eternity. To call someone father of something meant that he is that thing.
 - B. Father of strength means he is strong. Father of knowledge means he is intelligent. Father of eternity means he is an eternal being.
 - b. The eyewitnesses, through their interaction with Jesus, came to believe that He was the promised Savior, Messiah (the Anointed One or the Christ), and the Son of God—God incarnate. They believed that Jesus was and is God become man without ceasing to be God.
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say about Jesus, the God-Man, in next week's lesson. But consider these thoughts as we close. Lessons like this don't seem practical. However, they are vitally important.
 1. There's no doubt that we are living near the end of this age and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this world. Two thousand years ago, Jesus warned His followers that His second coming would be preceded by a time of great religious deception—specifically false Christs and false prophet. Matt 24:4-5
 - a. False ideas, false teachings about Jesus—who He is and why He came into this world—bound. Social media has taken the availability of deceptive ideas to a whole new level.
 - b. If ever there was a time to know Jesus as He truly is, according to the Bible, it's now. Accurate information from the inspired Word of God is our only protection against deception. Ps 91:4
 2. Remember where we started this series. God reveals Himself through His written Word because He wants to be known by the creatures He created. He wants relationship with men and women.
 - a. John the apostle reported that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have enjoyed unbroken fellowship since forever (John 1:1, *pros*).
 - b. We have been invited into this fellowship through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord, the Christ and the Son of God. Let's get to know Almighty God through the greatest revelation He has given us—the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is revealed in the pages of the written Word, the Bible.
 - c. Much more next week!!