



Faith Pulpit

The Eternal Sonship of Christ

Every group claiming to be Christian teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The problem is: What does “Son of God” mean? What one thinks this title means will determine when one thinks Jesus became the Son of God. There are four major views on this issue.

View #1: Jesus is called God’s Son because he is the first and highest created being by God. This view rejects the Trinity and does not believe in the deity of Christ.

Note: All of the remaining views are held by people who do believe in the Trinity and in the deity of Jesus Christ.

View #2: Jesus is called God’s Son because as a member of the Godhead He has always had this relationship to God the Father. According to this view, Christ’s sonship is tied to His deity.

View #3: Jesus is called God’s Son because at some point before creation, the first two Members of the Godhead entered into a working relationship with each other, making the second Person subordinate to the first Person until the purpose of this working relationship is fulfilled. In this view, “son” does not necessarily refer to our Lord’s humanity, but it does refer to a temporal subordinate role in the working relationship.

View #4: Jesus is called God’s Son because He became a man. Since he will always remain human (without ceasing to be a member of the Godhead), he will be the Son of God forever.

An Evaluation

In order to defend Christ’s eternal sonship (view #2), we must look at four key passages in God’s Word. Limits on space prohibit an examination of other references.

John 1:1, 14, 18. In verse 1, three things are said about the Word (who is identified as Jesus in v.14):

- He was already existing in the beginning;
- He was in fellowship with God [the Father];
- He was God.

In verse 14 the Word became human. John adds: “and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” This glory that John saw—undoubtedly at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–5)—is it related to His humanity and work of redemption or is it related to His deity? John 17:5 connects it to His deity, and John 1:14 connects this glory to the Father-Son relationship between the first two Persons of the Godhead! In John 1:18 the one who “hath declared” (past tense) God is described as being (present participle) “in the bosom of the Father.” It does not say merely, “in the bosom of God” but rather, “in the bosom of the Father [the place of intimate fellowship]. It is because the Father and the Son have been existing in this relationship that the Son is qualified to declare Him.

John 5:1–23, 26. The Jews understood the claim of Jesus (that God was His own Father) to be a claim that He was equal with God the Father. Jesus reinforces this understanding by telling them:

- His claim originates with the Father, not Himself;
- the Father has committed all judgment to the Son so that everyone would give the same honor to the Son that they give to the Father;
- just as the Father has always possessed underived life (“life in himself”), “so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” Sonship is tied, in each of our Lord’s statements, to His deity.

John 10:30–39. Jesus made a very specific statement: “I and my Father are one” (v. 30). The Jews understood this to be a claim of deity and were ready to stone Him (vv. 31–33). Our Lord does not deny this interpretation but replies that if God’s Word once called the judges in Israel “gods” with a small “g”, how much more appropriate was the title “God” with a capital “G” for Him, since the Father had sanctified and sent Him into the world (vv. 34–36). Notice something important: In verse 30, our Lord’s statement is, “I and my Father are one.” In verse 36 He refers to this statement as meaning “I am the Son of God.” In verse 38 both of these statements are interpreted to mean “that the Father is in me, and I in him.” Clearly the title, “Son of God” is a claim to be one with God [the Father].

Hebrews 1:1–8. Note carefully the following facts:

- Jesus is greater than the prophets because He is God’s Son (vv. 1,2);
- this Son is the One through whom God the Father created the worlds (v. 2);
- this Son is the brightness of God the Father’s glory and the express image of His person [literally, the representation of God’s substance] (v. 3);

- this Son is better than the angels precisely because He has inherited a more excellent “name” than they, i.e., the title, “Son” (vv. 4,5)! That is why all the angels are commanded to worship God’s “first-begotten” (v. 6), and that is why the Son is addressed as “God” (v. 8).

Conclusion

The title, “Son of God” describes a relationship between the first two Persons of the Godhead that has always existed, and it expresses in clear terms Christ’s deity.

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Dr. Houghton was promoted to Heaven on July 13, 2020, leaving a legacy of service and faithfulness to the thousands of men and women who he impacted during his ministry.