

DIVINE SONSHIP

A study of this most interesting subject in the gospel of John is most profitable. To be sure the entire Bible is in full agreement with this particular book, but in this record there is such clear explanation of the subject.

In the first chapter of this gospel we are informed that the right and authority to bestow Divine sonship upon a human being is vested in One who in the latter part of the same book is being executed for claiming Divine Sonship for Himself.

It is quite evident that if He is justly condemned for a false claim for Himself, He is powerless to transfer the right to others.

We call your attention to two verses for comparison, verses which set forth seeming contradictions of truth.

John 1:12:

“But as many as received Him (Christ), to them gave He authority to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

John 19:7:

“The Jews answered him (Pilate), “We have a law and by our law He (Christ) ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.

“We have a law”; said these Jews to, Pilate. “And this man before you is a wilful and flagrant violator of this law.” “He has broken the law repeatedly, and he is worthy of death.” Did they have a law?

Whether or not they were sincere and conscientious in their motive and their devout respect for their law, they were certainly earnest in their appeal to Pilate. But this Roman governor doubted their conscientious devotion, and believed that they had delivered this prisoner before him because of envy. Of one thing Pilate was sure, and that was, that Christ was not guilty of any serious offense; that he had never broken the Roman law and that He should have been released. As the representative of the Roman Empire, he could not say, “we have a law, and by our law He ought to die. On the contrary he openly expressed belief in the prisoner’s innocence by saying, “I find no fault in Him.”

But the Jews insisted that He was worthy of death. They had a law. If that Man who stood before Pilate was guilty of violating the law that the Jews had in mind; if He was truly guilty of the charge which they were bringing against Him, there is not the slightest doubt that, by that law, He should have been put to death. That law, unlike the Roman laws, was Divine. The eternal God had given the law to His own people with the assurance that they would be held responsible to Him for its enforcement. Therefore the law, as well as the penalty attached for its violation, was not of human origin.

With what offense was the prisoner charged? With blasphemy. What had He done? Had he through some strange hypnotic power together with His legerdemain and very clever arguments and great religious pretenses so deceived the simple minded Jews that some of them had accepted at full face value His unique Divine claims; that He was not only the equal of their eternal God but that He was one with that God and came down from heaven where He had forever been the bosom companion of the one invisible and omnipotent God?

If He really deceived the people and wilfully misrepresented Himself to be the God-Man with the prerogatives and power of the eternal God, whereas He was only the son of a carpenter, a shrewd man taking advantage of the credulity of men and women who were unable to detect His cunning deception, He was a criminal of the first degree.

If only human laws had been involved in such base deception, such a deceiver should have been severely punished. But the charge against Him was far more serious; for He had wilfully broken the holy law of God—according to His accusers—by saying that He had no human father; but was the Son of God. This law is recorded in Leviticus; 24:16. We quote it:

“And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall surely stone him: as well as the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.”

As we shall refer later to Leviticus; 24:7 which follows, we quote it here:

“And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.”

In these two verses we have two great crimes. Any person guilty of either of them should die without mercy, by stoning. The crime of blasphemy is placed before the crime of murder. This is true in the ten commandments, the sixth of which is, “Thou shalt not kill.”

If the just and holy God had demanded the forfeit of life as the just penalty for a guilty blasphemer, and Jesus Christ was one whit less than He claimed to be, he was worthy of the death penalty. He demanded for Himself the same honour, adoration and affection that the eternal God expects of his people. He received worship as a Divine Being. He claimed that He had glory with God before the world was; that He had the right to forgive sins; and that it was impossible for any man to reject Him and have God’s favor. Surely this was blasphemy of the highest order, if he were only the humble son of a laboring man, a poor, despised man, known as the friend of publicans and sinners.

Had Barabbas, the murderer, been tried by the Jews under their law, he would have been stoned to death. His death sentence would have been just and by the command and demand of God. “And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.” In justice, in obedience to God, the Jews should not have interfered with his execution by the Roman government. Barabbas was worthy of death. The Romans crucified their murderers and would have crucified Barabbas, had not the Jews pleaded for his release.

If Jesus Christ were guilty of the charge which the Jews brought against Him, He deserved the same punishment that Barabbas deserved, and had the Jews tried either or both of them in the day when they had authority to enforce their laws they would have been compelled by the direct order of God to mete out capital punishment as the just recompense for either of these great sins against God.

The governments of this world still punish the first degree murderer with the death penalty, but the man who is guilty of profanity and blasphemy against God can continue his crime with impunity. But judged by the law which God gave to Israel through Moses, their prophet; Barabbas should have been put to death. So also should have Jesus Christ been put to death, if he were the son of Joseph or any other man.

Had it been possible for them to do so, the Jews would have put an end to this Man by stoning before he ever reached the Roman court; but one thousand years before He was crucified, God, by the mouth of His holy prophet, said: “They pierced my hands and my feet.” Psalm 22:16. Why did they want to stone Him to death? For blasphemy. Claiming unique Divine Sonship, such as the orthodox Christian claims for Christ today, was the blasphemous act for which they repeatedly tried to stone Him to death. If this claim truly constituted blasphemy, the Christian who continues to make the same claim and to worship Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God is a great sinner, for he is guilty of perpetuating the crime which was begun by Jesus and His first disciples.

If you had been numbered with the Jews to whom Jesus Christ gave His testimony, would you have sided with that group who said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," or would you have joined with the group who insisted upon stoning Him to death? With which group are you associated today? You may belong to that group of hybrids which have been well designated, "Christian agnostics," a twentieth century product. We have this peculiar group of no small number of men and women, who take the most inconsistent and ridiculous position of paying the highest respect and homage to Jesus Christ, proud to bear His name and claim membership in His Church, praising Him as a true and noble servant of God, a most worthy and extraordinary religious leader and example, the founder of the world's ideal moral philosophy and most acceptable religion, while at the same time they do not hesitate to deny His unique Divine Sonship; that is, His heavenly preexistence, His Holy Spirit conception and His sinless nature. By their process of elimination and their most amusing and devilish corruption and interpretation of the Word of God, they seek to bring the nature of the Saviour to the same level as that of other members of the human race and explain away the unique Divinity of the Son of God which was the fundamental characteristic and doctrine out of which came the Christian Church. They are audacious and stupid enough to ask, "What difference does it make whether Joseph or some other man was the father of Jesus." They say human fatherhood would in no way invalidate His testimony and authority. If it were not for the deceiving power of Satan, it would be obvious to even a superficial thinker, that either the sanity or sincerity of any person making such a statement should be questioned.

Why do we say that their position is most inconsistent? They are taking the same position that the Jews took in regard to Christ's Divine Sonship, denying that He was God, the Son. By no juggling of the words of Jesus and by no trickery did those religious Jews try to convince themselves that this Jesus of Nazareth was not continually claiming to be one and equal with God in His essential Deity. Nor can we help but question either the honor or the intelligence of any individual who claims to be both friend and disciple of Jesus Christ, to have great respect for both Teacher and teaching, and yet ignore or deny His utterances as to His pre-incarnate life and Divine and omnipotent power.

There is no neutral stand. There is no compromise position. Either the Jews were justified in their repeated attempts to stone to death Jesus of Nazareth, or Thomas gave the true estimate of Him when he said, "My Lord and My God." What Christian could condone or wink at the sin of God's chosen race if they permitted to go unpunished a man with whose blasphemy that of no blasphemers could be compared if God was not the one and only Father of Jesus Christ? Either Jesus was the eternal Son of God or a guilty blasphemer.

When He said to the Jews; "I and my Father are one," read what followed:

"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him."

"Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?"

"The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou being a man, makest thyself God." John 10:30 to 33.

"Being a man, makest thyself God." What a crime for any mere man to commit, and greater the crime if he persuaded His fellow-men to believe it. The very quintessence of sin shall be found in the coming man of sin, because "he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." II Thessalonians 2:4. O foolish Christian professor, if you are denying the eternal Deity of the Son of God, can you not see that you are charging Him with the crime of the man of sin, as well as that of Satan? If you must deny that the Man who died on the cross was

God the Son, do not pretend to be His friend and disciple. Rather join with the stoners and the infidels.

If you had been present at the trial of Jesus and Pilate had asked for your advice, would you have advised him to utterly disregard the law of God and release Jesus? Whatever you may have done, had you been there as one acquainted with God's law and seeking to uphold that law, and likewise informed as to all the unusual claims of the Man who stood before Pilate, you would either have said guilty or innocent. Guilty—worthy of death. Innocent—worthy of worship, equal with God. Perhaps, there are some today—like some of that day—undecided, uncertain, perplexed, skeptical, afraid to take a stand for or against. But it is hard to conceive of a Jew who knew his Bible believing that Jesus was the son of Joseph and yet against the death sentence for Him.

If you have read the statements which Christ made concerning Himself, would you say that the Jews were not justified in their determined effort to put Him to death? If you have not read them, are you in a position to give an intelligent decision in the case? Now, be honest; in the light of the only documentary evidence in the case, should not Jesus Christ have been either stoned to death or worshipped? Certainly not the latter, if not God. Certainly not the former, if God. Do not say that the Jews did not properly understand that the Son of God claimed to be God the Son; for they did. Hear these words:

“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto and I work.” “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” John 5:17 and 18.

We shall presently refer to the eighth chapter of this book, and show that these same Jews claimed that God was their father, by which claim they did not mean what Jesus Christ meant. When He said God was His Father, He said it in such a way and with such significance that they had no reason to doubt that He was claiming to be the only begotten of the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit, having no earthly father; in fact, making himself equal with God. The verses which follow in the fifth chapter of the Book of John clearly teach this: for instance, John 5:23:

“That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father, which hath sent Him.”

Why should there have been any doubt in the minds of the Jews as to what the Divinity of Jesus meant according to His claims? How can any intelligent and honest man have any respect for the New Testament Scriptures when he lowers the Divinity of Christ to the level of the so-called divinity of men and women with sinful natures? What other rational man would demand equal honour with the eternal God?

If Jesus Christ was not God in human form, was He dreaming or wilfully falsifying to deceive His fellow-men or was He suffering with a mental delusion when he prayed: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was?” John 17:5.

If Jesus Christ came into this world by a natural birth, and was no more than the highest expression of divinity in humanity because of a surrendered life of obedience to God and His righteousness, what does the Apostle Paul mean when he thus writes:

“The first man is of the earth, earthy; the Second Man is from heaven?” I Corinthians 15:47

Although Adam, the first man, was created in the image of God four thousand years before the Second Man was born of the Virgin Mary, yet the Second Man, “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Colossians 1:15. God created all things by Christ.

Ephesians 3:9. Therefore, Christ created the first man. The first born of every creature was Creator before He became a creature. I John 1:1 and 2. Philippians 2:5 to 10.

Adam was the creature of God, created as a fully developed man. He had no mother and was not begotten by a father; therefore he was not the son of God. He was not born: he was created. All other men have been born into this world by a natural birth within the law of procreation. But the Holy Child Jesus was the Son of God, born of a woman who had never known a man, begotten by the eternal God. He was and is the one and only Son ever thus begotten by a Spirit Father. To this Son the Father said, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Hebrews 1:8. "And when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." Hebrews 1:6. God would not permit His angels to worship Adam or any of his natural descendants.

Christ was not thrice-begotten, as some foolish preachers have said. He is the unbegotten and eternal Christ, the pre-existent Word which was with God, co-existent with the eternal God, the self-existent Lord of glory. But no less is He the Son of God, because begotten by God the Father, for His great redemptive purposes. Therefore, He could truly say:

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Revelation 1:8.

No one in the Apostolic Church was stupid enough to bear the name of Christ and deny His eternal Deity. Nor was there any compromise between those who asserted it and those who opposed it. Why should there be today, when Christ said, "If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins?" John 8:24.

And now we call your attention to the controversy between the angry Jews and their Messiah; beginning with John 8:27. They had already accused Him of being the servant of Beelzebub, the devil, and now they intimated that He was born in fornication. John 8:41. But He reverses the accusation, saying to them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, etc." John 8:44.

These verses, as well as many others in the Bible put the lie to the heresy that is being taught even in the name of Christianity that all men are the sons of God. But the Son of God declared certain ones were the children of the devil.

In the heat of this controversy the Jews cried, "We have one Father, even God." John 8:41. When Jesus said that God was His Father, they accused Him of blasphemy. Why did they not stone one another for the same blasphemy when they said that God was their father? Is it not apparent that His claim to Divine Sonship involved much more than any thought that was in their minds when they claimed to be the children of God? If they said God was their Father, and Jesus Christ was of their race, they would have had no desire to murder Him, if he meant by Divine Sonship what they meant by their claim.

For instance, in Christ's parable of the prodigal son, the younger son represented the publican Jew while the elder son represented the Pharisee Jew. Neither of the sons represented an unconverted Gentile. Both sons had been brought up in the father's house under the father's care and the younger son had come to legal age in that father's house and therefore was still the child of that father when he was with the swine. For this reason Christ spoke of the prodigal as a son; but in no way did he intimate that all sinners are the sons of God in contradiction to truth which the holy apostles received by inspiration and contrary to other statements by the Saviour.

In the parable of the "Wheat and Tares," the children of the kingdom are the wheat, while the children of the devil are the tares. These tares are very religious children, not the heathen and criminals in the world but professing Christians mingling with the true children of God. Matthew

13:38. As John writes in his first epistle: "In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil." I John 3:8.

John opens this wonderful third chapter by saying, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "Beloved now are we the sons of God." Then he proceeds to divide the human race into two classes, the sons of God and the sons of the devil.

What are we by nature? Not the children of God; but the children of wrath. Ephesians 2:3. This does in no way contradict the quotation from the Greek poets: "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God." Acts 17:29. God through one man Adam, and a natural law of procreation, is responsible for the birth of all men; but the Apostle who spoke these words to the Athenians also wrote these words: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26. Paul was ever and always logical and always filled with spiritual wisdom; and held the clear distinction between being by natural birth within God's law His offspring and by the Spirit's birth a new creation in Christ. Any one who teaches otherwise from the Bible is either ignorant or dishonest.

There may be some reason for our differences as to when the human being receives the soul and whether that soul life is placed in each human being by the direct act of the Creator in each individual case, or comes as the result of an established law of nature. There may be some doubt as to when the individual soul reaches the moment of responsibility to God, which may vary according to environment and early training. But there should absolutely be no doubt as to when the individual becomes a child of God

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power (or right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; Which were born, not, of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12 and 13.

Herein are set forth two births, the first or natural birth, the will of flesh, born of blood. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." John 3:6. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:8. Second, the spiritual or new birth. "Born of God." If the new birth is being born of God and the first is being born of the will of man, why will sensible people oppose this truth? Answer—Satan, who is a liar and a deceiver. Christ said, "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Ye must be born anew." John 3:3 and 7.

The right to become the sons of God is received from One who was crucified for claiming Divine Sonship for Himself, but who vindicated and proved every claim that He made by His victory over that voluntary death. He told Nicodemus that He would have to suffer that cruel death that sinners might be born anew. John 3:13 and 14.

When the sinner receives Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit, as the proof and evidence of Divine Sonship. "As many as received Him." "Even to them that believe on His name." What does it mean to believe on His name? It means to receive at full face value God's record concerning His Son and His vicarious work in behalf of the lost sinner. Have you thus received Him? If so, you are truly a child of God by regeneration. If not, you are not yet in His spiritual family as a joint-heir with His only begotten Son, even though you have been persuaded by Satan or some of his false prophets to assert this Divine sonship. Why not submit to God's way and become His child? Why insist on your own religious scheme which can result only in deception and eternal separation from God? When I was visiting in one of our large cities a preacher pointed out a home where a young man who had been for years in his Sunday School had lived since he was just a little babe. This young man had always thought that the man and woman of that home were his parents. When finally the story of his true parentage and birth

came to him, and he found out he had been deceived, he became a moral and physical wreck: Think of the deceived ones who shall meet God on the judgment day.

Think seriously. This is a most important issue. Your eternal destiny depends upon your decision in this life. Whether you are a respectable religious sinner or a social outcast, you need Christ and His atoning work to save you. Whether you come in youth, middle-age or old-age, you must become a new born babe in Christ by faith in Him and His sacrificial work, and then God will send His Holy Spirit into your heart whereby we cry "Abba Father." Then His Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that you are His child.

Receive Christ just now, and enter this royal family of God.