

The Eternal Son of God

by W.E. Best

The sermon explores the profound implications of Christ's Eternal Sonship for understanding His divine nature and our relationship with God.

Scripture: 1 John 4:15

Topics: "Christology", "Trinity"

Description

W.E. Best emphasizes the importance of understanding and aligning our thoughts on Christ's Eternal Sonship with God's thoughts, as revealed in the Scriptures. The confession that Jesus is the Son of God is a revelation from heaven, not merely a human understanding. Denying the Son of God is denying the Father, highlighting the essential nature of acknowledging Christ's divine Sonship. The eternal generation of the Son of God signifies equality and identity of nature with the Father, refuting any notion of inferiority of character. The Son of God, as the Firstborn Son, holds sovereignty, dignity, and heirship among many brethren, reflecting His eternal and unique position.

Transcript

The subject of Christ's Eternal Sonship yields in importance to none. If our thoughts on this subject are not God's thoughts, we will not only dishonor the Lord but will bring damnation to our own souls. The thoughts of God expressed in the Scriptures must be understood in their obvious significance.

Matthew records the first reference in the New Testament of the title "Son of God" (Matt. 16:16). Was Peter's confession due to the fact that Christ's mother was a virgin? This confession could be attested by "flesh and blood" on the recognized principles of evidence, but the Lord declared that His Eternal Sonship was a revelation from heaven "...for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt 16:17). "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15).

We recognize that, in some sense, God may be described by the recognized principles of evidence (Ps. 19:1-11; Rom. 1:19,20), but the elect will not rest in descriptions of God. They demand a revelation of Him which must be given by Himself. This is sufficient proof that the Son of God, in the bosom of the Father, is a divine person. The revelation is not that He is a Son, or the Son born of a virgin, or the Son raised from the dead, though all these are truths concerning Him; it is a revelation of divine Sonship. God is not known as the Father if the Son in the glory of the Godhead is not acknowledged. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son,

the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also"(1 John 2:22,23).

Eternal Fatherhood demands Eternal Sonship. Those who deny the Deity of Christ argue, "If the Father begat the Son, He who was begotten had a beginning of existence. So there was a time when the Son did not exist, therefore, the begotten is inferior to the begetter." There is priority in the Godhead but not superiority. If by inferiority is meant inferiority of relation, we admit the position that the begotten is inferior to the begetter. This is what Christ meant when He said, "...my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). The Sender is greater than the Sent; therefore, the word greater has reference to the authority and not character. As Mediator in His state of humiliation, Christ was the Father's subordinate and servant. If by inferiority is meant inferiority of character, such a notion should be opposed as the greatest heresy ever devised by the depraved heart of man.

Filiation implies not only equality but identity of nature. The begotten must share the nature of his begetter. Where there is no communication of nature, there is no real generation. Our Savior said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). This is in the neuter which refers to one substance not in the masculine which would refer to one person. Thus, the relation of Christ to the Father is an unanswerable argument for Christ's Deity. Among men the action of the future father is necessary to the production of his off-spring, but this is a consequence of human nature. Among Spiritual Beings, however, paternity and filiation are independent of all human necessity. The Father cannot in any sense exist before the Son in eternal generation. The relation of Father and Son is correlative and simultaneous. It is foolish to think of the eternal generation of the Son of God in terms of the human. The terms Father and Son, as used in the Godhead, imply co-equality in nature and eternity. Christ, therefore, never refers to the Father as His Lord, He says "my Father" (His by eternal generation) and "your Father" (ours by regeneration) in order to make the proper distinction between Deity and humanity.

The original Greek uses two words for son-one refers to dignity of position and the other to relationship by birth. The second is never used with reference to our Lord Jesus in His relationship to the Father. The Greek word translated Son in the expressions "Son of God" and "Son of Man" is not always used to designate the thought of being born of God or born of man, as many false teachers assume. The word often carries the thought of being identified with. The same word is used in the following passages: "sons of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:38); "sons of the bridechamber" (Mark 2:19); "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17); "sons of this world" (Luke 16:8); "sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2); "sons of day, of light" (1 Thess. 5:5).

The Son of God is the only Begotten of the Father (John 1:18). This "only begotten Son" is the same person who is designated the "Word" (John 1:1); and of whom it is said, "He was made flesh and dwelt among us"(John 1:14). Those who object to the Deity of Christ say, "If you have been "begotten" then you are not "eternal." He cannot at the same time be the "eternal Son" and the "begotten Son." Person begets person and like begets like in human generation, but the Father begat the Son in eternal generation.

There is similarity between begetting and speaking. It can be said that they both bring forth. When we speak, we do so either within ourselves or without to others. Hebrews 1:1-6 portrays the glory of the Son of God in eternity and in time. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person..." declares His pre-existent and eternal being. "Being made so much better than the angels,...when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world..." affirms His manhood in time. He always had Sonship as God, but by inheritance He obtained it as Man. Thus, He who was eternally with the Father was brought forth in time (2 Tim. 1:9-10).

Only begotten is a term which denotes endearment (John 1:18; 3:16). Isaac was not Abraham's only begotten (Heb. 11:17), for Ishmael was begotten by him too. Isaac was his darling. Why was Isaac his darling? The reason was he was the only begotten of Abraham by his wife Sarah. His other children were called "sons of concubines" (Gen. 25:6). As Isaac was Abraham's darling, so Christ is God's darling. "Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling (Hebrew-my only one) from the lions" (Ps. 35:17). Thus Christ, as the Only Begotten of the Father, was the sole representative of the being and character of the One who sent Him. He is of the same essence with the Father, yet He is a distinct person from the Father. As the inherent splendor of the son cannot exist without the inherent splendor from which it proceeds, so the Inherent Essence of God cannot live without its Manifested Essence, nor the Manifested Essence without the Inherent Essence from whom He came.

The Son of God is the Firstborn Son. Firstborn is used to express the sovereignty, dignity, and prerogative of heirship of Christ's position among many brethren (Heb. 2:11-17). This term is used twice in the New Testament without referring to Christ (Heb. 11:28; 12:23), and seven times as His title. An examination of these references will reveal a three-fold use in the New Testament: (1) Before all creation (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15)-eternal; (2) Firstborn of Mary (Matt. 1:25; Luke 2:7; Heb. 1:6)-His pre-incarnate and incarnate Person; (3) Firstborn of resurrection (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5)-first to be raised from the dead in resurrection life.

The Son of God is both the Word and Son. These two metaphors supplement and protect each other. To think of Christ merely as the Word might suggest an impersonal faculty in God. On the other hand, to think of Him only as the Son might limit us to the conception of a created being. When the two terms are combined, there is no room for either an impersonal faculty or a created being. The substance of John 1:1-18 is that He who is the logos was with God and was God. Three great facts are presented in John 1:1; they are: (1) When the Word was-"in the beginning"; (2) Where the Word was-"with God"; and (3) Who the Word was-"God." First, the "Word was in the beginning." The sun, moon, and stars "were made" in the beginning, but the Word "was" in the beginning.

Christ's existence and theirs differ radically. Had John said "before" the beginning, he would have presented eternity under the laws of time. This would have been as serious as to describe the infinite under the laws of the finite-as difficult as trying to measure the waters of the ocean by one drop in the kitchen sink. But John ascends, in spirit, far above time and space to the peaceful calm where God dwells. Second, "The Word was with God." This expression implies that He had an existence distinct from the Father. He was with Him. For example, He that is with me is not me. The Word was at home in the bosom of the Father; therefore, He never felt as an inferior with a superior but as a loving Son with a loving Father (Prov. 8:22-31). God took unspeakable delight in His Word, for in Him He beheld His own express image (Heb. 1:3). Third, "The Word was God." Sonship is, in truth, the great bulwark of the Deity of Christ. From eternity the Son of God sustained to the Father a relationship involving identity of nature. If in the Godhead there is no filiation, neither is there paternity; if there is not a Divine and Eternal Son, neither is there a Divine and Eternal Father. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father..."(1 John 2:23). "...He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23).

The eternity of our election depends on Eternal Sonship (Eph.1:4; 2 Tim 1:9). If He is not eternal, our election is not eternal, for we are elected in Him.

The integrity of our redemption depends on Eternal Sonship, for He is the Lamb that was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

Our eternal preservation depends on Eternal Sonship. He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). Nothing can survive to eternity but that which came from eternity.

Our choice is between inferiority of nature and inferiority of relation. Christians believe that there is subordination in the Trinity, but strongly deny inferiority of nature in the Godhead. To the Christian, there is no alternative but the good confession (1 Tim. 6:13) of an eternal and divine relation between the subsistences of the Trinity. The Father, as God, begets; the Son, as God, is begotten; the Holy Spirit, as God, proceeds. To call God Father and deny that He begets is as absurd as to call Him a sun and deny that He enlightens. Those who believe in peccability choose inferiority of nature rather than inferiority of relation; thus, they become religionists who are without an impeccable Savior.

(Taken from W.E. Best's book The Impeccable Christ.)

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