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**B0516 – April 24, 2005 – Major Bible Themes**  
**Chapter 06 – God The Father**

We've been looking at Theology Proper in the last few weeks. Theology Proper is the study of the existence and nature of God. Such a study entails the arguments for the existence of God, the triune nature of God, the names of God, the attributes of God, and the decree of God. Now we are moving to deal with the three persons of the Trinity individually. We will spend one week on God the Father, seven weeks on God the Son, and six weeks on God the Holy Spirit.

**I. The Father as the First Person**

In the OT, the names Father, Son, and Spirit are used of God but the NT advances our knowledge of the Father, Son and Spirit. For example, the name "Father" is used of God only 15 times in the OT. In the NT "Father" refers to God 245 times.<sup>i</sup>

**Father**

Predestination

Election

Loving

Bestowing

**Son**

Suffering

Redeeming

Upholding Universe

**Spirit**

Regenerating

Indwelling

Baptizing

Sealing

Energizing

Sanctifying

How did the Trinity come to be known as 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Persons? How did the Father become known as the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the Trinity? How did the Son become known as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity? How did the Holy Spirit become known as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person of the Trinity? These designations came about because the Father sent the Son (John 13:16; 8:42) and the Father and the Son sent the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:7). The designations 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> show the order of subordination in the Trinity. And subordination is based on the

doctrine of procession (sending). The designations have nothing to do with their essence. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Persons all share the same attributes. But the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Persons take subordinate roles.

Concerning the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the Trinity four distinct aspects can be observed. 1) Fatherhood over creation, 2) Fatherhood by Intimate Relationship, 3) Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and 4) Father of all who Believe in Christ.

## II. Fatherhood Over Creation

“The human mind seems to comprehend God as Creator more readily than it does as Father. It is more common to investigate the creative activities of God, therefore, than to consider His Fatherhood.”<sup>ii</sup>

God the Father is the source of all creation and therefore is Father over creation. All beings owe their existence to Him. In this sense alone is it proper to refer to the universal fatherhood of God. Modern men have applied the universal fatherhood of God to all men without distinction teaching universal salvation (e.g. Barth). But the universal fatherhood of God does not mean universal salvation but simply that all things are sourced in God and owe their existence to Him. It does not extend to intimate relationship.

In support of the universal fatherhood of God we have Job 38:7 where angels are called the **sons of God** (cf Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6). In James 1:17 God is said to be the “Father of lights”, referring either to angels or to the heavenly bodies (planets, stars, etc...) being sourced in the Father. Adam is called a **son of God** in Luke 3:38. Hebrews 12:9 indicates that God is the Father of human **spirits**. God who is Spirit is the source of all spirits (John 4:24). Ephesians 3:14-15 indicates that God the Father names every family. This is done two ways: directly and indirectly. 1) Directly, God named Abram...Abraham. 2) Indirectly, (a) God names through the human father who names his own children. For example, Abraham named Isaac (Gen. 21:3) and David named Solomon (2 Sam 12:24). (b) God tells the human father what to name his children. For example, God told Isaiah what to name his child (Isa. 8:3), God told Hosea what to name his children (Hos. 1:4, 6, 9), God told Zacharias to name his son John the Baptist (Luke 1:13; 59-63), and God told Joseph to name God’s Son Jesus (Matt. 1:21, 25). So, God the Father is the Father of all creation because all beings owe their existence to Him, but this does not mean universal salvation.

## III. Fatherhood by Intimate Relationship

Secondly, God is called Father in relationship to His elect son Israel in Exod 4:22 (Also see Isa 63:16; 64:8; Jer 31:9; Hosea 11:1; Rom 9:4)

**Exodus 4:22** 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn.

**Hosea 11:1** When Israel *was* a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

This is more than being their Creator, yet less than saying they were regenerated. This has to do with the Father's national election of Israel by way of entering into covenant relationship with them (Gen 12:1-3). Yet this national election and covenant does not guarantee the salvation of every descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some believed and were saved and others did not believe and were not saved. Salvation, in both the OT and NT, is always by grace through faith (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Eph 2:8-9) and not by physical ancestry or circumcision. While the entire nation was elect there was always a believing remnant and a non-remnant (e.g. 1 Kings 19:14-18). The national election of Israel guarantees that the nation will continually exist as a distinct entity. This promise is made in 2 Sam 7:14-16 and other places.

"I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, <sup>15</sup> but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. <sup>16</sup> "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.""

See the covenantal love and care and the continual existence of David's house and kingdom and throne? This elect relationship between God the Father and His son Israel shows an intimacy beyond mere creation. They are unique among the nations and the Father shows His love for them as a parent loves a child.<sup>iii</sup>

#### **IV. The Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

##### **A. 1<sup>st</sup> Person God of His Humanity**

Most importantly, the fatherhood of God involves the relationship between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity. Theologians since the first century have wrestled with a precise definition of how the 1<sup>st</sup> Person is the God and Father of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person.<sup>iv</sup> For example, in many passages the 1<sup>st</sup> Person is described as "*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*"

(Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Pt 1:3). Notice there is a two-fold relationship here. He is 1) God of the Lord Jesus Christ and 2) Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are distinct relationships. They are not the same. "On the side of His humanity, the First Person is said to be His God...The connection in which the First Person is set forth as His God began with the incarnation and continues as long as His humanity continues."

## **B. 1<sup>st</sup> Person Father of His Deity**

On the side of His deity, the First Person is declared to be His Father...The connection in which the First Person is mentioned as His Father has continued from all eternity and will ever remain as it has been...The First Person is never the God of the Second Person, but His Father in a peculiar sense which belongs more to other spheres of existence than it does to this earthly sphere."<sup>v</sup>

Therefore, whenever Jesus addressed the 1<sup>st</sup> Person as God it is clear that He was speaking out of His humanity (cf. Matt 27:46; Heb 10:7). When Jesus addressed the 1<sup>st</sup> Person as Father it is clear that He was speaking out of His deity (i.e. eternal Sonship; cf. John 17:1, 24, 25). Where this is set forth most clearly is John 20:17

**John 20:17** <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"

Obviously there is a very intimate relationship between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Persons. They have a unique and intimate relationship because both the Father and the Son are eternal. Christ was not an inferior created being as Arius and his followers contended and as modern day Unitarians, Liberals, and Jehovah's Witnesses proclaim. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Person is just as eternal as the 1<sup>st</sup> Person.

## **C. When did Christ Become a Son?**

### **1. In Relation to the Father**

Some theologians, while affirming the pre-existence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person have tried to begin His role as Son at some point in time (e.g. MacArthur did this but later recanted). When did Christ become a Son?

Creation

Birth  
Baptism  
Death  
Resurrection  
Ascension

However, all attempts to BEGIN the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person's Sonship in relation to the Father fail in light of Scripture. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Person has been and will always be a Son in relation to the Father. Thus, the scripture says

**John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

*"only begotten"* (*monogenes*) means "one of a kind" "unique". God the Father gave His **unique, one of a kind** Son. He was unique and one of a kind in that the Son was not created. All the other sons of God (national Israel, Angels, Adam, etc...) are created, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person is unique in that He was not created, but the Creator (Col 1:16). That's why John 3:16 says God **gave** Him. For a Son to be given He must already be in existence. Isa 9:6 also affirms this

**Isaiah 9:6** a son will be given to us [deity];

Isa 9:6 says that a son will be given. This signifies that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person was not given to become a Son but was given as a Son. We also have Col 1:15...

**Colossians 1:15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

The word "firstborn" here is *prototokos* and refers to the oldest son in a family or the one existing before. "Firstborn" does not imply that other children were born later (Louw-Nida). It may be interpreted as "before all creation" as a Messianic title. In this context, which is often used by Jehovah's Witnesses to say that Christ was the first creation, Christ is not pictured as the first created being but as the Creator of all things (cf. v. 16). If He created all things and He is a part of all created things then how could a non-existent being create Himself? Within the Jehovah's Witnesses most important context this problem becomes insurmountable. It is impossible that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person is a created being and thus He is an eternal Son. In relation to the Father, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person never became a Son, He always was a Son. Turn over to

**Hebrews 1:6** And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM."

Here the author uses *prototokos* again. God had already brought the "firstborn" into the world at the 1<sup>st</sup> Coming. But notice, he was the "firstborn" before He was brought into the world the 1<sup>st</sup> time. This is because "firstborn" has nothing to do with His incarnation but with His eternal existence and unique relationship as Son to the Father. He was not always a child. He became a child at His incarnation but He was forever a Son.

**Galatians 4:4** But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son,

## 2. In Relation to Mankind

**Isaiah 9:6** For a child will be born to us [humanity];

A child was born to humanity. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Person did become a human son when He took human form and He was conceived in His humanity by the Holy Spirit, but that is a wholly different fact than His being the eternal Son of the Father. Christ's sonship in relation to mankind was realized through the virgin Mary. Thus, Jesus is the son of Mary.

**Matthew 1:25** but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

## V. The Father of All Who Believe in Christ

Lastly we turn to the tremendous truth that all who believe in Christ become sons of God.

### A. The Plan: Predestination

According to Eph 1:5 the Father predestined (*proorizo*) us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ (dative of connection = in connection with the work of Christ) to Him (i.e. the Father).

**Ephesians 1:5** He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

This means your destiny as a son of the Father was pre-planned before the foundation of the world. This predestination was on the basis of the good pleasure of His will.

### **B. The Means of Executing the Plan: Faith**

**Galatians 3:26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Entrance into being a son of God in an intimate way is by means of “faith in Christ Jesus.”

### **C. The Results of Executing the Plan: Regeneration**

Normally sonship involves the actual begetting of the parents which results in legitimate sonship and legitimate parenthood if done lawfully. Is there any sense in which a believer is actually a son of God? The answer is “yes”.

**John 1:12-13** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

There is an actual spiritual re-birth for everyone who believes in Christ Jesus. At the moment of regeneration you became a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4). His seed came to abide in you (1 John 3:9). Eternal life was imparted to you. Christ’s life was created in you. The moment you were regenerated, which is simultaneous with belief and in accordance with divine predestination, at that moment you became an actual son of God. Therefore, you are actually, not hypothetically, a son of God. A real transaction took place at your regeneration.

### **D. The Results of the Plan in Time: Intimacy & Heirship**

You now possess a genuine and unique father-son relationship with the Father such that the Spirit of His Son who indwells your heart (i.e. the center of your being) cries out “Abba! Father!” There is now an intimacy between you and your heavenly Father. You can call on your heavenly Father at any time in prayer and the Spirit intercedes on our behalf when we know not how to pray. Secondly, because we are now **sons** we are **heirs through God**. We have an inheritance by means of our sonship.

**Galatians 4:6-7** Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup> Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

#### **E. The Goal of the Plan: Conformed to Image of His Son**

This predestination unto sonship has as its goal that each of us be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29) with the result that we become brethren of Christ.

**Romans 8:29** He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

The final revelation of the sons of God has not yet appeared, but the creation anxiously and eagerly awaits this revelation.

**Romans 8:19** For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

As believers in the Son of God we become sons of God. This sonship was pre-planned before the foundation of the world, is based on the good pleasure of the Father’s will, was designed to be carried out by means of personal faith in Jesus Christ, was executed simultaneously at regeneration such that we have an intimate relationship with the Father and possess the indwelling Spirit who cries out “Abba! Father!” With the ultimate goal that we are conformed to the image of His only begotten Son and become His brethren.

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<sup>i</sup> Ryrie, Charles C., *Basic Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 57.

<sup>ii</sup> Chafer, L.S., *Systematic Theology; Vol. 7* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1976), 151.

<sup>iii</sup> Individual election is soteriological. Both Jews and Gentiles partake of individual soteriological election. Only Israel is an elect nation. This does not mean that every Jew is individually elect. Nor does it mean that every Jew will be physically saved. What national election does guarantee is that “God’s purpose(s) for choosing the nation will be accomplished and that the elect nation will always survive as a distinct entity.” (Fruchtenbaum, Arnold, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA; Ariel Ministries, 2001), p. 567). Since Israel is guaranteed survival as a distinct entity the national physical salvation and a national spiritual salvation at the end of the Great Tribulation is also guaranteed. This national salvation will occur on the last day of the Great Tribulation after 2 days of national confession (Zech. 13:8-9; Rom. 11:26; Hosea 6:1-3; Isaiah 53:1-9). This confession and salvation results in the Second Coming of Messiah (Matthew 23:39). These guarantees are what makes Israel the Chosen People of God.

<sup>iv</sup> Chafer and Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 47.

<sup>v</sup> Chafer, L.S., *Systematic Theology; Vol. 7* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1976), 151.