

The Son of God

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“People of the book, do not transgress the bounds of your religion. Speak nothing but the truth about Allah. The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was no more than Allah’s apostle---Allah forbid that he should have a Son.”

So reads a quotation from the Koran, inscribed on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the golden mosque which is one of the three most holy places of Islam.

But Jesus is God’s Son. Jesus said so. The Bible says so.

The fact that God did have a son is the cornerstone of Christianity. If it were not true, the Christian religion would be false, with Jesus an imposter.

The expressed purpose of the gospel of John is to help us to believe that Jesus is God’s Son.

“that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

John 20, verse 31

Four ways to look at Jesus

The Bible has four separate “gospels”--Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The four accounts are like four pictures of the same individual, created by four artists. The artists’ pictures would be different from each other. They might be created from water colours, oil paints or pencil, and they would each have a distinctive expression and style. By putting the pictures together, you gain a fuller understanding of the subject.

In a similar way, the four gospels portray Jesus from different viewpoints. Each describes the work and character of Jesus, and together they help us to understand his life and teaching.

- Matthew’s gospel presents Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish people, promised by the Old Testament prophets.

- Mark, the “action” gospel, focuses on the power of Jesus and the miracles he performed---on what he did, more than what he said.

- Luke was a physician. Fittingly, his gospel stresses the humanity of Jesus and his kindness toward the weak and suffering.

- John shows Jesus as the Son of God. Throughout this gospel, Jesus often refers to God as “Father”, and many passages explain this relationship. All the gospels say that Jesus is God’s Son, but John paints this relationship in brilliant colour.

Condemned---for revealing his Identity

As a child, Jesus knew he was God’s Son. When he was grown, at his baptism, God declared it from heaven:

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him, I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3, verse 17

Jesus claimed to be God’s Son. But the religious leaders of his day called his claim blasphemy, a crime worthy of death under their law:

“We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

John 19, verse 7

Thus, Jesus’ insistence that he was the Son of God led to his own end: his accusers refused to accept it and demanded his death. Jesus never wavered.

The Son shows what the Father is like

If you want to know what God is like, look at the Bible record of Jesus. Listening to Jesus was like listening to God, because his message was from God. Kindness, mercy, righteousness--all characteristics of his Father--were qualities he both preached and demonstrated.

Jesus’ disciples listened to him,

spellbound, trying to absorb every word! Children were drawn to him. People followed him wherever he went.

He amazed his hearers because he taught with God’s authority, not as the teachers of his day who supported their arguments by what other people had said. He demanded unconditional obedience to God.

He warned of God’s coming judgements on the world. He comforted the poor and humble, reassuring them that God would one day lift them up. He couldn’t be put down in argument, because he spoke with God’s power.

He told the people in his home town of Nazareth that he was the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy in the book of Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 4, verses 18, 19; quoted from Isaiah 61, verses 1, 2

Jesus is not God

The Bible teaches clearly that Jesus is the Son of God, His only Son. Jesus represented God, spoke for God, and demonstrated in his life God’s wonderful qualities.

Perhaps this truth was too simple to satisfy the minds of early church scholars. Within the first three hundred years of Christianity, they had turned the nature of Jesus and God into a

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complicated and mystical concept.

They argued that Jesus was not only like God, he was God! In addition, they claimed that the Holy Spirit (the great power by which God works) must be a person, who is also God.

This thinking became the doctrine of the Trinity, expressed in church creeds as “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.”

But nowhere do the words “God the Son,” or “God the Holy Ghost” ever appear together in the Bible.

Jesus always refers to God as his superior:

“for the Father is greater than I.”

John 14, verse 28

“I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.”

John 14, verse 31

“I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

John 20,

verse 17

Jesus’ power as Son of God

After his resurrection, Jesus went to heaven, where he was given glory, power, and responsibility second only to God (Matthew 28, verse 18). There he remains, awaiting the day when he will return to set up his kingdom.

How different Jesus is from the way he is often pictured! Some people think of him as a little baby, or as a weak young man, a “gentle Jesus, meek and mild, who could be pushed around. Not so! Jesus has been given enormous power by God, and great authority over the world.

The final book in the Bible, Revelation, gives some powerful pictures of Jesus. There he is called,

“the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”

Revelation 1, verse 5

The family of God

Jesus is the only true Son of God. The Bible says he is:

“the one and only Son.”

John 1, verse 14

He became God’s son by the power of the Holy Spirit upon his mother, Mary; he had no human father.

However, you can also become one of God’s children---by adoption. Through Christ, you can join the family of God and become a brother or sister of Jesus. Those who belong to Christ, who have been baptized into the name of Christ become part of God’s family. (See Galatians 3, verses 26, 27)

God’s plan is that his family will all share in His divine nature when Jesus returns to establish God’s kingdom on earth. At that time, God’s children will share Jesus’ perfect nature, possessing vitality and power, never to die.

“And we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly body so they will be like His glorious body.”

Philippians 3, verses 20, 21

To be an adopted brother or sister of Jesus, to claim God as your Father, is truly a privilege. It does not depend on achievement, or social status, or money, It is a gift for those of humble faith and obedience, who become God’s children.

Early debate about the nature of Jesus

The first formal statement of the Trinity was mandated by a non-Christian emperor. Constantine, when he became emperor, wanted to use Christianity to unite his empire.

However, a major dispute about the nature of Christ was threatening to divide Christianity. As this did not suit his purpose, in 325 AD he summoned over 300 Christian bishops to a council at Nicaea.

The bishops were split over the views of two bishops, Arius and Athanasius. Arius said Christ was not the same as God, but was a created being. Athanasius said that Christ was of the “same substance” as God the Father.

Constantine presided over the council, although he understood little of the theological arguments. After many days of inconclusive debate, the impatient emperor intervened to demand that the Athanasian view be adopted. Thus “the Nicene Creed”. A brief quotation became accepted as church doctrine.

Some years later, the church’s definition of the Trinity was completed, expressed in the “Athanasian Creed”. A brief quotation will illustrate how far the church strayed from the Bible:

“That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the Substance.....So the Father is God; and the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods: but one God....And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater or less than the other: but the whole three Persons are coeternal together; and coequal.”

This is a far cry from the earliest known creed, the Apostles’ Creed, which says,

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the holy Ghost,

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born of the virgin Mary.”

Chapter one of revelation portrays him with an appearance of blazing fire, his face shining like the sun in its brilliance. The vision is symbolic. Its purpose is to show the power of Jesus, the faithful Son of God, now exalted to God’s right hand.

Recap

Jesus is the Son of God. He is like his father, but subject to Him.

He spoke for his Father and demonstrated what He is like.

He has been given all power and authority in heaven and on earth by God.

He will return in his kingdom, when his adopted brothers and sisters will share his perfect nature.

Recommended Bible Readings

Jesus’ exalted nature, representing God: Hebrews, chapter 1; Revelation, chapter 1.

Jesus as subject to his Father, the one and only God: 1 Timothy 2, verse 5; Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verses 4-5; Revelation chapter 5.

Jesus’ concern and prayer for his disciples: John 17

Jesus the coming judge and ruler of the world: Revelation 22.