

Heidelberg Catechism 33 – The Unique Sonship of Christ

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: There have been many questions raised about the nature of Jesus Christ throughout history. There were some who believe that Jesus Christ was fully God who took only the shape of man, but was not man. There were others who believed that Jesus Christ was fully man with a great spirit within him, but he was not fully God. Other believed that Jesus Christ's Divinity and Humanity were fused together into a hybrid God/Man. Questions about Jesus are nothing new. Keep in mind that most heresies start with false teaching regarding the persons and nature of the Trinity.

Today we will deal with another issue about Jesus Christ. Was Jesus Christ really the Son of God? We will take some time to prove that he was the Son of God and we will examine the issue of the unique Sonship of Jesus Christ also.

Our headings are: Jesus Christ is The Eternal Natural Son, and Jesus Christ was not the Adopted son of God.

Our goals are: That you would grasp the nature of the Lord Jesus and how that nature was critical for you to become an adopted son of God.

33 Q. WHY IS HE CALLED GOD'S "ONLY BEGOTTEN SON" WHEN WE ALSO ARE GOD'S CHILDREN?

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God. We, however, are adopted children of God— adopted by grace through Christ.

Jesus Christ is The Eternal Natural Son

1. Your Messiah, your Christ, is the eternal natural Son of God. What does that mean? In what way is Jesus the Son of God?

Is Jesus Christ the Son of God in the same way that you are a son of your parents? Jesus is not the Son of God in the same way you are a son of your parents. How is it different? For example: You did not exist at one time and then you were conceived and born, but Jesus was not conceived and born.

2. It is true that God describes himself and his work in anthropomorphic 拟人化 ways – assigning human characteristics to

himself in order that you can understand who he is and what he does. This is simply speaking figuratively 比喻– not literally. For example, God is described as “having an arm that is not so short that he cannot reach and save.” Does this mean that God has a literal arm? No, it does not. God feels for you in his “bowels 肠.” Does God really have bowels? No. God used this anthropomorphic idea to help you understand that he cares for you. So when God says that Jesus is his Son, it is not in the same way you have a Son. If you use a literalist 字义上 interpretation you will dig a big hole, fall in, and never get out, and you would be scared that someone might get a firebrand with the number 666 on it and brand you on the forehead. You must let the context determine the meaning of “Son of God.”

3. So what does it mean then that Messiah was the eternal natural Son of God? Jesus, the Son, is the Son of God from eternity – a time that is impossible to fathom. There was never a time when Jesus was not the Son of God. Jesus

Christ did not become the Son of God after he was born in the earth. Jesus Christ the Son of God became the son of man – the son of Adam – at his birth. When the Bible calls Jesus the Son of God it meant that Jesus had the same nature of his Father. Jesus Christ was not the product of the Father and someone else. This is why he said: I and the Father are one. The Son of God and the Father have the same nature.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus Christ was already the Only Begotten of his Father. Mankind met the Son of God when he became Son of Man – Adam. That same Son of God was there in the beginning with God and was the Creator of heaven and earth.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

4. There are some who misquote and misuse a couple of passages to suggest that Jesus only became the Son of God at his incarnation. One of those passages is Hebrews 1, and it is based on Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:7 "I will declare the decree 旨意: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'"

The Father is teaching that Jesus Christ was to be viewed from that day forward as properly the eternal Son of God.

It is as if God the Father was saying: "From the day of your coming into the world forward it will appear to the world that I have begotten you." Or even better: "...When you, my Son, comes into the world, the world will clearly know that I have begotten you." You see, God has no time. You are bounded by time. You may not take something in our "time sphere" and throw it back to a "non-time" sphere. Psalm 2 was written for your benefit, not Jesus', and so was Hebrews 1. Psalm 2 was not intended to teach the origin of Jesus. It teaches the work and rule of Jesus.

5. Let's look at the clear passages. The Son of God (not "a son of God," but "the Son of God") existed long before his birth in a manger 2000 years ago. Remember how he appeared with the Hebrew boys in Nebuchadnezzar's fire?

Daniel 3:25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

The disciples recognized that the phrase "Son of God" was not a generic "son of God" but a title of Divinity. Notice how they worshiped the Lord.

Matthew 14:33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Even the Jews and their leaders recognize the uniqueness of the Son of God, as opposed to sons of God. They accused Jesus of blasphemy 褻瀆 for claiming to be the Son of God, for that, in their belief, made him equal to God. And for this reason they executed him.

Matthew 26:63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"

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

Even demons confirmed that Jesus was the Son of God.

Mark 3:11 And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God."

5. Let's consider this vital passage in Hebrews (based on Psalm 2) for a few minutes and flesh it out some more.

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days **spoken to us by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? 6 But when **He again brings the firstborn into the world**, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." 7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." **8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever**; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, **Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness** more than Your companions." 13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?

Christ, the Son of God, was the Creator of heaven and earth and perfectly reflect God's nature (V2). He was greater than man, greater than the prophets, and greater than angels. He has an eternal throne and will bring the world to full submission to him by conquering their hearts in peace or heads in punishment. Does that sound like your son? My son can barely get his breakfast.

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, **Unto us a Son is given**; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Jesus Christ was Not The Adopted Son

1. Galatians 3 & 4 highlight by illustration the difference between the **Son of God – who was not adopted but has the same nature of the Father and sons of God who were adopted out of love.** Some Jews in Galatia were trying to force Christians to follow the ceremonies of the Old Testament law – ceremonies that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ and were no longer to be done. This story typified the two types of "sons of God." Sadly the Jews began to think of themselves as the sons of God because they were the sons of Abraham. They believed they were the sons of God naturally- even genetically, but they were not. Isn't this what Nicodemus thought in John 3, and Jesus rebuked him? But the Christian knew that he was adopted as God's Son through Abraham's Son, Jesus Christ, the 2nd Adam. The Christian in Galatian was right. The Jews were wrong. Only Jesus is the natural and eternal Son of God.

2. But are all men sons of God. Yes. All men are sons of God as they are considered to be God's creation. Since God is the Creator, he is the God of the whole world. But even then men are only sons of God by creation.

3. Those who come through the Son of God and were restored with the Christly offices (prophet, priest, and king) that were lost through Adam, are adopted and become the children of God by re-creation. This type of adoption is highlighted in a number of passages:

John 1:12 But as many as received Him (the Son), to them **He gave the right to become children of God**, to those who believe in His name:

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

The one who is baptized with Christ has put on Christ... like you would put on clothes to an orphan you adopt. He covers you with righteousness and gives you a new name.

Revelation 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a **new name written** which no one knows except him who receives it."

And the newly adopted children are **given confidence**. They can approach the Lord confidently.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the **Spirit of adoption** by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...

Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God. He was not adopted. There was no need for him to be adopted. And he could not be adopted. But you are the children of God by adoption, through grace, for Christ's sake. That is why Thomas cried out when he saw the resurrected Jesus: My Lord and my God. Thomas did not see Jesus as an equal. You are the adopted sons; Jesus Christ, Son of God, is not.

4. You see, you were like the child who was being trained by a slave in all educational areas. When you were grown up and proved yourself to your father, you were no longer under the tutor—the slave. Theologically, you were under the law, but you are now adopted in Jesus Christ. You are now heirs of the riches of his grace.

Conclusion:

The natural Son of God is the Creator and Sustainer of the world. The natural Son of God who was also the perfect Son of Man (Son of Adam) came into this sin-cursed world to save you with his blood so you could be recreated and then adopted as a son of God.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Since the Lord Jesus, Son of God, is your Creator and Re-Creator, **you can fully put your trust in him for everything in life**. You can trust him with your future, with your job, with your children, with your country, and with your relationships, knowing that he will always do what is best for you. **And you can worship him with whole heart and mouth**. So sing the song: Beautiful Savior, King of Creation, Son of God and Son of Man! Truly I'd love Thee, truly I'd serve Thee, Light of my soul, my Joy, my Crown. When you sing it, mean it. You were the slave being trained by slaves (the law) and kept in slavery (sin), but Jesus Christ, the eternal natural Son of God came and redeemed you from slavery and adopted you as his child. So sing it like you mean it.

Finally, if you are a child of God only by creation, then you are his enemy. But he died that sinners like you can be adopted. Would you accept his offer of help today? Would you say: Yes, I want your death to be my death, yes, I want to be adopted into the family of God and yes, and I want to be in God's household today, not tomorrow? He will adopt you if you sincerely ask.