

JOHN THREE: SIXTEEN

By

R. L. Moyer, D. D.

THE FAMILY ALTAR BOOK SHOP Minneapolis, Minn.

CHAPTER FIVE -

His Only Begotten Son

THE story is told of a child who had been taught to think of GOD only with dread, as of a terrible judge. In her stern home the name of GOD had been mentioned only to terrify and frighten her. One day, in her father's printing office, she picked up a scrap of paper and found on it the first words of this verse, "**God so loved the world that He gave.**" The remaining words were torn off, but even in this mere fragment there was a revelation to her. It told her that GOD loved the world, loved it well enough to give something. What He gave she did not know, but it was a great deal for Him to give anything to it. The new thought brought great joy to her heart. It changed all her conceptions of GOD. She learned to think of Him as One Who loved her, as her Friend, ready to give her rich gifts and all good, and this thought brightened and transformed her life.

We know what GOD gave - "His only begotten Son." How much greater should be our conception of GOD, our joy of heart, the brightness of our life in the light of the unspeakable Gift.

"His Only Begotten Son" Defines CHRIST's Eternal Relationship

We must remember that the word "son" in Scripture is a word of relationship, not necessarily one of origin. David was the son of Saul - by relationship (I Samuel 26:21, 25). In Matthew 1:16 Joseph is the son of Jacob; in Luke 3:23 he is the son of Heli. One man cannot have two fathers, yet both statements are true. Joseph was the son of Jacob by birth; he was the son of Heli by relationship, that is, by marriage.

CHRIST's sonship is a relationship within the Godhead. As Hodge says, in commenting on the Trinity, "The First Person is called FATHER, not because of His relation to His creatures, but because of His relation to the Second Person. The Second Person is called SON, not because of any relation assumed in time, but because of His eternal relation to the First Person."

In human relationships we say "father" of one who existed before a son was born. Remember, however, that he did not become father until a son was born. The one who believes in an eternal FATHER but not in an eternal SON must explain how we can have a father without a son. One who has no son is not a father; therefore, since GOD the FATHER is eternally existing, GOD the SON is eternally existing. There never has been a time when the FATHER did not exist as the FATHER. The SON always has been and always will be the SON.

The words FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT indicate eternal distinctions in the Godhead. We have no more right to say that the SON was created than we have to say that the FATHER had a beginning. GOD is GOD. He always has been GOD. He is immutable; that is, unchangeable. This immutability refers to His nature, not to His operations. GOD is absolutely perfect.

Perfection does not admit of change. There has never been a time when GOD has not been manifested as a Trinity. The words FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT indicate eternal distinctions in the Godhead. The one who holds that there was a time that JESUS CHRIST was not the Son of GOD involves the Godhead in such a stupendous change as to practically demolish GOD.

But the Godhead is unchangeable. There are different times and manners of manifestation of GOD, but there is no difference in the Godhead. The SON is co-existent, co-equal, co-eternal, co-essential with the FATHER. Since GOD is eternal and the SON is His only begotten Son; therefore, JESUS CHRIST is the eternally begotten Son of GOD.

A begotten son is one who partakes of the essence of the FATHER. The SON partakes of the essence of the FATHER, and so is the eternally begotten of the FATHER.

I know it is practically impossible to understand eternal generation. Someone has tried to help in the understanding by the use of the sun. The sun is continually generating light. The very instant it dropped from GOD's creative lips it began to generate light. The light of the sun is as old as the sun itself. You have light the instant you have the sun. The sun had a beginning. It will have an ending, but had it never had a beginning, and if it should never have an ending, then you would have the eternal generation of light. GOD is eternal, and JESUS CHRIST is the eternally begotten Son of GOD.

The Fatherhood in eternity became the Fatherhood in time when CHRIST came into this world by way of the virgin birth. Please remember that when we speak of the virgin birth we are speaking of the manner by which GOD became incarnate. We are not talking about the mere birth of a baby. "**God was manifest in the flesh.**" We believe that GOD always manifests Himself through the Second Person of the Trinity, hence, GOD manifest in the flesh is called the Son of GOD. JESUS CHRIST was neither a descendant of GOD nor a descendant of man. He is GOD.

Sacred prophecy speaks of Christ's incarnation as that of the "**child... born,**" the "**son... given**" (Isaiah 9:6). To transpose "son" and "child" is to create confusion.

As the Son, He was not born, but given. As the Child, He was not given, but born. He did not receive a personality from the FATHER in Heaven; He did not owe His manhood to a father on earth. The SPIRIT of GOD formed within Mary a body through which GOD took a human nature into union with His Divine personality. In nature He was God-man; in personality He was GOD. It will help if we bear in mind the fact that we do not have three Gods, but one GOD Who is a Unity in Trinity and a Trinity in Unity.

The FATHER alone is not GOD, the SON alone is not GOD, the SPIRIT alone is not GOD, but all three constitute GOD, for GOD is FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT. You cannot have one Person

of the Godhead without having the other two; hence, it is written concerning CHRIST that "**in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily**"; that is, in a human body. CHRIST was GOD manifest in the flesh.

He was announced to Mary as the Son of GOD. "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

He was announced to Mary as SAVIOUR. "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus... for He shall save His people from their sins" (Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21). **"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all"** (I Timothy 2:5-6).

It is pointed out that the word "**between**" has the meaning of "*partaker*"; that is, "partaker of God and man," meaning that He partakes the nature of the two parties. The same word in Hebrews 7:2 is translated "**part**." JESUS CHRIST is unique. He is truly a Being by Himself. He stands alone in the eternal sonship in His past Being. He stands alone in His sonship as born alone to die for our sins.

The very title "**Son of God**" marks His equality with GOD. The Jews knew very well what He meant when He claimed to be the SON of GOD. **"Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God"** (John 5:18).

It is very instructive to note that the Lord JESUS was recognized by the only beings who had ever seen Him before His entrance into the world. When the eyes of that other world looked upon Him, they cried out, "**Thou art the Son of God.**"

Some maintain that He is the SON of GOD by miraculous conception. This is not true. He was the SON of GOD before that human birth. He is so named in Psalm 2.

Some declare that He is the SON of GOD by appointment to office. John 10:36 is introduced for proof. **"Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"** This verse, however, does not teach that He became SON by being sent, but, being the SON of GOD, He was sent.

Some affirm that He is the SON of GOD by the resurrection of the dead. **"God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee"** (Acts 13:33). The meaning of the resurrection is made clearer, however, from Romans 1:4, which states that He was declared to be the SON by resurrection - not that He became the Son by resurrection. **"Declared to be"** means marked out, determined. CHRIST's resurrection forever settled the question of His sonship. The voice from Heaven at the baptism and again at the transfiguration said, **"This is My Son."** The resurrection had not yet occurred.

Some insist that He is the SON of GOD only because He was made Heir of all things (Hebrews 1:3-5), but sonship does not come from heirship; heirship comes from sonship. Abraham recognized this, for he said, **"Lo, one born in my house is mine heir."**

JESUS CHRIST is the "only begotten" SON of GOD.

- Angels are called sons of GOD, and such they are by creation.
- Adam was called a son of GOD, and such he was by creation.
- Believers are called sons of GOD, and such they are by regeneration.

But JESUS CHRIST is the only begotten SON of GOD. He is the Isaac of His Father (Genesis 22:2; 25:5). JESUS CHRIST was the Son in eternity; we become sons in time. He was the Son by eternal generation; we become the sons by faith. He was of the same essence with the FATHER; we are of different substance from the FATHER. He is called THE Son, distinguished from all others. He is not A Son.

Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "I know men, and I tell you JESUS CHRIST is not a mere man. He is truly a Being by Himself."

F. E. Marsh says that at one time in a conversation with a sea captain in the town of Sunderland, the captain said, "I cannot believe that JESUS is the SON of GOD. He never claimed to be."

Marsh replied, "Would you believe that JESUS is the SON of GOD if He claimed to be?"

"Yes," was the reply.

Marsh said, "CHRIST once asked His disciples about Himself, '**Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?**'"

"What did they say?"

"They gave various answers, but Peter said, '**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**'"

"What did Christ say in reply?"

"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven."

That was sufficient for the captain, for he clasped his hands and said, "Oh, Christ, Thou SON of GOD, I acknowledge Thy deity, and pray Thee to save me because Thou didst die for me on Calvary's Cross."

"His Only Begotten Son" Describes GOD's Supreme Gift

This gift is the SON of GOD. No other son would do. Not Joseph's son. He was addressed as the son of Joseph by the people of Nazareth (Luke 4:22), even as some today call Him the son of Joseph. He was so addressed because that was what they believed, but if He were the son of Joseph, He was conceived in iniquity and born in sin, and could not be a SAVIOUR.

- He, Himself, would then have needed a SAVIOUR; would have needed to be born again.

- That would mean that His mother was stained with the sin of unchastity and just as guilty as a wife who breaks her marriage vow.
- That would mean that He had no legal, no decent right to live, but was a bastard, born out of wedlock.
- That would mean that He was not the Second Person of the Trinity, and if He is not the Second Person of the Trinity, there is no Second Person of the Trinity, hence there is no Trinity.

A denial of any Person of the Godhead is a denial of GOD. The son of Joseph could not forgive sins. The son of Joseph could no more sacrifice for my sins than you could.

Sin required a victim since GOD is just. "**Where is the lamb?**" asked Isaac, and Abraham answered, "**My son, God will provide Himself a lamb,**" and GOD provided His only begotten Son. No other son is ever called the Lamb of GOD.

It is a hard thing to give a son. During a famine in Germany centuries ago, a poor family being ready to perish, the husband proposed to the wife that they sell one of their children for bread to relieve themselves and the rest. Finally, the mother consented to do so. Then they began to think about which one of the four should be sold.

They named the eldest, but they both refused to part with that one - he was the first born. Well, they came to the second, but they could not part with him, for he was the very picture and image of his father. Then they talked about the third one, but that one looked most like the mother, and they could not part with that one. Only one left, and that was the baby. He was the Benjamin, the last born. They couldn't sell him, so they determined that they would rather perish than part with one of their children.

Remember how Jacob mourned when Joseph and Benjamin were rent from him. What is a child but a piece of the parent wrapped up in another skin? To give a child is like giving your own heart and being. And yet our dearest children are but strangers to us in comparison to the unspeakable dearness between the FATHER and Christ.

The hardest thing the writer ever did was to say one morning, thirteen years ago when his only son was dying, "All right, FATHER, take him." How hard to give him up! And yet, to what was I giving him? To hands of love. To the glory of Heaven. Then stop to think to what God gave His only Son - to sin, to degradation, to curse, to death, to judgment. The greatest manifestation of love in the whole universe is in that gift of GOD's SON for us. Just think how precious to Him you must be in the light of the gift of His SON for you.

"His Only Begotten Son" Discharges GOD's Saving Purpose

As soon as sin entered the world GOD declared His purpose to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15). That Redeemer was to be the Seed of the woman Whose redeeming death was indicated in the crushed heel.

- In I John 4:14 it is very definitely and distinctly stated that the FATHER sent His SON to be the SAVIOUR of the world.
- In Galatians 4:4-6 we are told that GOD sent forth His Son to redeem.

- In Romans 8:32, we are told that God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up to death for us all.
- In I John 4:10 we are told that God sent His Son to be the propitiation or satisfaction for our sins.

It was for this purpose that He came down from Heaven. But for Calvary there would have been no Bethlehem. He was born that He might die.

The expression "**Mine hour**" is found seven times in John's gospel. That hour is the hour of His death. That is the greatest hour since hours began to be numbered. The hour of His resurrection was only GOD's approval upon the hour of His death. That was the hour fixed by the triune GOD even before the foundation of the world. That was the hour which, in the eternal councils of the Godhead, had been marked out for the sacrificial work and death of the SON of GOD.

It was for the sake of that hour that He left the bosom of the FATHER for the womb of the virgin.

- That was the hour when the seed of the serpent bruised the heel of the Seed of the woman.
- That was the hour that God had in mind when He clad Adam and Eve in coats of skin.
- That was the hour in which Abel had hope as he offered the firstling of the flock to GOD.
- That was the hour which Abraham saw as he looked away from the altar on Mt. Moriah where his own son was ready to be offered.

"Abraham rejoiced to see my day," the Lord said. That was the hour that gave value to the blood of the passover lamb.

The thousands of Israelites came with their droves of beasts for the altar of JEHOVAH, but now the fire is quenched, the altar is hewn down, the sacrifices are driven away, for the hour of which they speak is now fulfilled. The Holy of Holies was aglow with the divine Shekinah. The great High Priest was there. Israel stood without confessing her sins. The sacrificial victims were bleeding. But now - the veil of the temple, rent from the top throughout, is left fluttering in the winds of Heaven. The Holiest is deserted. Why? Because the hour of which they spoke is fulfilled in Calvary.

- The brazen serpent on the pole pointed off to that hour.
- The smitten rock was only the shadow of the smitten Redeemer.
- Psalm 22, with its pierced, suffering, dying Man who cried, "**My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?**" is meaningless apart from that hour.
- Isaiah wrote of that hour, "**He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.**" "**The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**"
- Zechariah had that hour in view when he cried out, "**Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow**" (Zechariah 13:7).

All the prophecies, all the types, all the shadows, all the symbols met at the Cross in that hour, and the end of them all came with that last loud cry that sent its echoes pealing through the plains of Judea - "**It is finished!**"

- That was the hour when the One without sin was made to be sin for us, when He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.
- That was the hour to which the prophets pointed.
- That is the hour to which we now look.
- It is the hour to which all ages point and to which all dispensations look.
- That was the hour when the new covenant was sealed and our salvation secured in the blood of the SON of GOD.

JESUS said, "**The Son of Man must be lifted up.**" "Must" means "must." None other could fulfill the saving purpose of GOD because He alone is the SON of GOD. He alone is sinless, and so He alone could bear our sins.

A missionary, in charge of one of the native churches in China, was examining a number of candidates for Christian baptism. He asked a woman who had applied for church membership, "Had Jesus sin?" and somewhat to the missionary's astonishment, although she had been taught otherwise, she replied, "Yes." The missionary thought that perhaps she did not understand the question, and so repeated it in a way likely to elicit a negative reply, but the woman answered very positively, "He had sin." Then the missionary asked her if she did not understand that the Lord JESUS was GOD incarnate and could have no sin, but her unhesitating reply was, "Why He had mine."

That woman seemed to be a deeper theologian than the missionary himself. She knew that the Lord had laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and that He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

"All thy sins were laid upon Him,
JESUS bore them on the tree;
GOD, who knew them, laid them on Him,
And, believing, thou art free."

"His Only Begotten Son" Determines Man's Eternal Destiny

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

It is to as many as received Him that He gives power to become the sons of GOD, even to them who believe on His name. John 1:12 makes it plain that receiving and believing are synonymous terms. The one who believes on the Lord JESUS CHRIST is the one who receives Him as a personal SAVIOUR.

A friend of mine recently received a gift from one with whom he was not in fellowship. He immediately returned the gift to the one who sent it. He refused the receive it. In like manner men may refuse GOD's great Gift of His only begotten Son. Such a refusal means no life, but only the wrath of GOD. On the other hand, to receive GOD's Gift means a place in GOD's family with the eternal privileges and blessings that shall be the portion of every child of GOD. So

man's destiny is sealed by his acceptance or rejection of JESUS CHRIST as SAVIOUR.

Dr. George F. Pentecost tells the story of a poor ragged little Scotch girl who came to him one night in Aberdeen, after nearly all the other people had gone out from the service, and followed him about as he was leaving the hall. Finally, he asked her what she wanted. He fully expected that she was a little beggar; and so she was, but it was the bread of life she was after.

"Lassie," he said, "what do you want?" The little girl reached up on her tiptoes as he bent down, and whispered into his ear, "I want to get saved."

He was surprised and startled at the intensity of her whispered words, and drew back and looked her eagerly in the face, and repeated her own words for answer, "You want to get saved?"

"Ay, sir, I do," ever so pathetically, and still in a whisper.

"And why do you want to get saved?"

Again on her tiptoes she reached up and whispered in his ear, "Because I am a sinner."

This was so satisfactory a reason, and by this time the child had so interested him. that he drew her to one side, away from the gentlemen who were standing by, that he might talk with her unreservedly. "How do you know you are a sinner? Who told you so?" "Because GOD says so in the Book; and I feel it right here," and she laid her little hand on her breast, as the publican did when he said, "**God be merciful to me a sinner.**"

"Well," said Dr. Pentecost, "do you think I can save you?" Up to this time she had spoken in whispers; but now, drawing away from him, her eyes taking fire, her words rang out short and clear, "No, no, man; you cannot save me. No man can save a sinner."

By this time his interest was greatly deepened, and he drew her down beside him on one of the benches, and taking her little hand in his, and speaking as kindly as he knew how, he said to her, "You are quite right; no man can save you, much less I. Tell me why, then, did you come to me? I cannot save you. Who, then, can save you?"

Again she dropped into a whisper, and almost touched his ear with her lips. There was an infinite pathos in her voice as she said, "JESUS can save me."

"Yes, you are quite right. JESUS can save you. But tell me how can He save you? What has He done to save you?" Again the lips to his ear, and again the eager whisper - if possible more pathetic and tender, "Oh, sir, He died for me."

Out of curiosity to know how the little waif, who had so hotly repudiated the idea of man's ability to save, would answer, Dr. Pentecost replied, "Then He is dead, is He? How can He save you if He is dead?"

The little thing sprang up from her seat, and her eyes, only a moment before suffused with tears, flashed upon him. No whisper now, no timid putting of lips to his ear, but her voice rang out as

once before, "He is not dead. He is not dead!"

"But you just now said that He died for you. If He died for you He must be dead. How can a dead man save you, however good and loving He may have been?"

She looked at him as in amazement, and lifting her little lean bare arm in striking gesture she replied again, "Man, JESUS is not dead. He died for me, but He is not a dead Man. He is GOD's SON. Man, did you not tell us this very night that GOD raised Him from the dead? He was dead, but He is not dead now. Oh, man, I want to get saved!" and her voice dropped into the old pathetic tones. "Do not fool me, but tell me all about it, and how I can get saved."

He had preached that night from the text, He "**was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.**" And this little waif had been drinking it in. He did tell her all about it, and she went away glad and thankful, and full of the consciousness that her sins were forgiven by the SAVIOUR Who was alive forevermore.

~ end of chapter 5 ~
