

The Amazing Child Who Was God, Part 3

Scripture: Luke 2:49

Code: 42-34

It's our privilege again this morning to open the Word of God to the second chapter of Luke's gospel. We are working our way through this marvelous, marvelous account of the story of Jesus Christ written by Luke who is a great theologian, and a great historian. And, of course, Luke is concerned at the beginning of his gospel with establishing the identity of Jesus Christ. It is greatly important to the understanding of Christianity that we know who Jesus Christ is.

Obviously in the world there are many opinions about Jesus Christ. Some have called Him a great religious leader. Some have called Him a misguided revolutionary. Some have called Him a noble, Jewish rabbi, and it goes on and on and on and on. Whatever may be human opinion doesn't interest us, we want to know the truth and the truth comes to us in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the rest of the writers of the New Testament as to the identity of Jesus Christ.

And Luke is very concerned that we understand who Jesus Christ is. And so two long chapters begin this gospel...chapter 1 and 2, and they are dedicated to settling the question of the identity of Jesus Christ. We have heard the testimony of an old priest and his wife by the name of Zacharias and Elizabeth. We have heard the testimony to the identity of Jesus from Joseph and Mary. We have heard the testimony of Gabriel, the archangel. We have heard the testimony of angels who came to the shepherds in the fields. We have heard the testimony of an old man in the temple by the name of Simeon and an old lady in the temple by the name of Anna. And Luke has basically assembled all of these witnesses, human and angelic, to affirm the identity of Jesus Christ. And, of course, the angels who came to announce the birth of Jesus Christ came from God so we have the word of God on this as well given to us in the account of the angels.

So Luke has really called on testimony to the identity of Jesus from heaven and earth both. But there's one other testimony that is very important and it really culminates and finishes off these two introductory chapters, and that is the testimony of Jesus Himself. It's fine to say that Zacharias and Elizabeth knew He was God in human flesh, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. It's fine to say that Gabriel knew that, the angels knew that, Anna knew it, Simeon knew it. It's fine to say Joseph knew it and Mary knew it because they had been told by God through angels. But what about Jesus? Did He really understand who He was? Or is this a case of people and angels perhaps telling Him something that He was merely trying to live up to? And so Luke tells us in chapter 2 verse 49 that Jesus said, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" And here you have the only recorded words of Jesus in the first 30 years of His life, the only

thing that is recorded in Scripture that came out of the mouth of Jesus in three decades...one simple statement.

You remember the incident. You remember that Jesus was in the temple, He had been there for three days while His parents had started on their way back to Nazareth, returned and looked for Him for a full day and they finally found Him and He was in the middle of all the teachers and He was in dialogue with them and He was asking them questions and they were giving Him answers. And apparently even asking Him questions to which He gave answers and they were staggered and astonished and amazed at His understanding and His answers. And His parents walk into the scene and He's not at all flustered, He's not at all worried, even though He's a twelve-year-old boy. He's been separated from His parents and all alone in a large city of Jerusalem. He's not all concerned about those earthly matters. He is busy discussing theology with the...with the elite teachers of Israel.

And His parents then ask Him why He has done this, and can't He imagine how worried they had been? To which He replies, "I had to be in My Father's house." Now that is a very significant statement. In the first place, listen to this, it is the first time any individual ever claimed God as His personal Father. Oh, it is true that the Jews saw God as the Father of the universe in a creative sense and they saw God as the Father of their nation in a national sense. He had brought the universe into existence, certainly had brought the nation of Israel in existence when He chose Abraham. But nobody had the audacity to say, "God is My Father," in an intimate personal sense because that had tremendous implications. But Jesus at the age of twelve had grown physically, mentally, spiritually to a place where His human mind could grasp the mind of God. He after all was God and man. And by the time He reached twelve, His human mind had developed where He understood who He was and why He had come. and so here you have the single statement in three decades of His life recorded in Scripture, and it is a statement identifying Himself as God's Son. This is monumental.

It tells us in verse 50 that His parents, Joseph and Mary, didn't understand the statement which He had made to them. There were things they did understand. They understood that He was virgin conceived, of course they understood that. They understood that He had no earthly father. They understood that He was sinless, they had lived with Him for twelve years, they had seen that. They understood that He was the Messiah, that He was the King fulfilling the Davidic promise, that He was the seed of Abraham to bring about the fulfillment of Abrahamic promise. They realized that He was the Savior who would bring New Covenant fulfillment. So they knew that He would fulfill the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the New Covenant. They knew that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. They even knew because the angel told them in Luke 1:35, He would be the Son of God. They knew that. But the full meaning of that just was not clear to them.

When Jesus said to Mary and Joseph, "I had to be in My Father's house," you'll notice "house" is in italics, it's not in the original. Some translations say, "I had to be about My Father's business," but the preposition here is enwhich means "in." I had to be in My Father's...and you could say place or house and be accurate. It was the place that He was in that He was referring to. And where was He? He was in the temple. You could say, "I had to be in My Father's temple...I had to be in My Father's place...I had to be in the place that's identified with My Father. My home isn't with you, you're not My parents, really. My Father is heavenly and this is our home, His temple."

He was not really Joseph's son, He was not really Mary's son, He was the Son of God. Now, folks, that becomes the definitive reality of Christian doctrine. Whenever you find a cult, whenever you find anything that deviates, perverts and twists the Christian gospel, they will do so at the point of the nature of Christ. Whether Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Mormons, you name it, they will all deny this reality because in so doing you destroy Christianity. That is why the Apostle Paul said in a blanket statement in Galatians 1, "If anyone preaches another Jesus, or another Christ, let him be anathema." Any other view of Christ other than that which is true of Him brings a curse.

So Jesus says God is My Father. They knew that because the temple belonged to God and that's where He was. They knew exactly who He was referring to. He was saying, "God is My Father. I am the Son of God." And this was more than their minds could grasp because they could understand at least some of the implications, though not all of them. With that confession as a twelve-year-old boy, Jesus made crystal clear to everybody who He was. With that confession we are allowed in some ways to look through the mysterious curtain that separates the natural from the supernatural, that separates the human from the divine and get a glimpse of the wonder of divine Sonship.

This issue of divine Sonship has occupied theologians for centuries, really, and even today when you've studied all that can be studied about divine Sonship, you're still left with a great measure of mystery because we cannot fully comprehend God. But by this confession Jesus takes Himself out of the human realm. He takes Himself out from under His earthly parents and places Himself on the divine realm and places Himself under the will and authority of God who is His true Father. He is saying God is My Father. He is saying God is My authority. I do God's will. He is saying the force controlling everything in My life is God. And He's saying to His parent...You should have known that. Why are you looking around for Me? You should have known that the force in My life, the power in My life, the will in My life, the authority in My life comes down from My Father who is God. You should have come here immediately and first and known this is where I'd be.

Jesus is establishing what 18 years later will take place in fact, and that is that He will no longer be under the authority of His parents. He would step out as a 30-year-old man into the fullness of His ministry that God had called Him to do. But God was His Father. God was His authority. God's will was His mandate.

In Luke's gospel chapter 10, and I want to unfold this because this is cardinal to Christian doctrine. In Luke chapter 10 verse 21 Jesus said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father and no one knows who the Son is except the Father and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son reveals to Him."

Again He links Himself to the Father. He is the Father's Son. He is linked to the Father. It's an incomprehensible identification unless He Himself reveals it to someone.

The gospel of John is the gospel that makes the most of this. In fact, look at John chapter 6 for a moment and I'm going to give you a little quick look at these texts. John 6:37, Jesus again claims to be the Son of God. This, of course, later on when He had begun His ministry, He says in verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me. The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out for I have come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Again He says God is My Father and I do precisely what God desires Me to do. "This is the will of Him who sent Me," verse 39, "that of all that He has given Me I lose none but raise Him up on the last day. This is the will of My Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life and I Myself will raise Him up on the last day." So He says I came to do the Father's will, the Father's will has to do with salvation.

In chapter 8 and verse...and it's important to look at these...in chapter 8 verse 18, "I am He who bears witness of Myself and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." In verse 19, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also." It is true that one cannot grasp, and Joseph and Mary couldn't, and no one can really grasp this relationship unless God reveals it. It is, after all, a supernatural one.

Down in verse 28 of John 8 it says at the end of the verse, "I speak these things as the Father taught Me." I do the Father's will, I speak what the Father tells me to say. Verse 29, "He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. I do what pleases the Father. I do what the Father teaches Me to do. I do what the Father wills for Me to do. That's all I do." Again establishing that God is the authority in His life.

Down in verse 38 of John 8, "I speak the things of which I have seen with My Father." And again He adds, "I do the Father's will, I do what the Father teaches Me. I do what pleases the Father. And I do what I have seen with My Father." Every possible way He says He does God's will.

Down in verse 49, "I don't have a demon," they were accusing Him of having a demon, "but I honor My Father." There you have it again. "I do the Father's will. I do what pleases the Father. I do what

the Father tells Me to do, or teaches Me to do. I do what the Father shows Me to do and I do what honors the Father."

Down in verses 54 and 55, "If I glorify Myself, My glory's nothing. It's My Father who glorifies Me of whom you say He is our God and you have not come to know Him. But I know Him and if I say that I do not know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him and I keep His Word." Again, Jesus reiterating again and again every way you could possibly say it, that He does exactly what the Father tells Him to do. That is His mandate. That is what He is committed to doing.

Over in chapter 10 there are three verses that add to our understanding. Chapter 10 verse 17, "For this reason the Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may take it again, no one has taken it from Me, I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down. I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." So He says it again, I do what the Father commands Me. I do what He wills. I do what He teaches. I do what He shows Me. I do what He takes pleasure in. I do what honors Him. I do what glorifies Him. I do what He commands Me to do, that's what I do.

That is why in Luke's gospel, as you read through Luke's gospel there's this divine necessity. As you go through and you watch Christ, there's this divine mandate. And it says in...for example, Luke 4:43 that Jesus must preach. In Luke 9:22, that He must suffer. In Luke 13:33, that He must go on His way. Or in Luke 19:5, that He must stay at the house of Zacchaeus. Or in Luke 24:7, He must be delivered up, crucified and rise again. Or in Luke 22:37, 24:26, I must suffer these things and enter into glory. And in Luke 24:44, He must fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies with reference to Himself. There's this divine must all the way through which is none other than the Father's will.

So He's telling His parents here in the text, back to Luke 2, and He's telling everybody who would ever read this that the priority for His life was to do the Father's will. He was doing His Father's will and that is because God was His Father and He was the Son of God. That's what He's saying. This is His great claim to being the Son of God.

So, His parents need to understand that, and so does everybody else need to understand it. This becomes definitive, folks. If you understand this concept, you will understand the flow of the gospel of Luke and all the other gospels as well, because it is this very issue that culminates in the execution of Jesus Christ. But it's absolutely essential to understand it, so let me see if I can't help you with that this morning, a little bit of theology this morning.

Luke 1:35, Gabriel says to Mary, "The holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." So the angels identified Him as the Son of God.

Mark 1:1, Mark begins his gospel, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

John 1:34, John says, "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Nathanael...John 1:49, Nathanael says to Him, "Teacher, You are the Son of God."

Matthew 14:33, "And those who were in the boat worshiped Him saying, 'You are certainly the Son of God.'"

John 11:27, Martha says, "Yes, Lord, I have believed that You are Christ, the Son of God."

So as the gospels unfold, the gospel writers are very clear to articulate that this is the Son of God. The writers say that and they record the testimony of people, like Martha and Nathanael, also saying the same thing as well as those who were in the boat that day. This is affirmed again and again. When you get out of the gospels, you get in to the book of Acts. You read about the Apostle Paul in Acts 9:20, he preached Christ, that He is the Son of God. That's what Paul preached. Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

In Romans 1:4 when Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans, he said that Jesus is declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. And all the way through the epistles, for example, 2 Corinthians 1:19, "For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us." Galatians 2:20 refers to the Son of God. Ephesians 4:13 refers to the Son of God. And then in Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 6:6, Hebrews 7:3, Hebrews 10:29, the Son of God, the Son of God, the Son of God. First John 3:8, 1 John 4:15, 5:5, 5:12, 13, 20; Revelation 2:18, He's called the Son of God. And I give you those Scriptures, obviously you probably couldn't write them down that fast, but it will be on the tape...1 John, Hebrews, it's a lot of places, you can look it up yourself.

The bottom line is that the gospel writers were clear He was the Son of God. The angels from heaven were clear He was the Son of God. The apostles who preached Jesus knew He was the Son of God. Let me go a little further, even Satan knew He was the Son of God. Satan in Matthew 4 and Luke 4 both record the temptation of Jesus. Satan, you remember, tempted Jesus in the wilderness and he said to Him, "If..or since You are the Son of God do this... Since You are the Son of God do this...Since You are the Son of God do this..." and he tempted Him three times. But he was affirming those temptations on the basis that Jesus was the Son of God. So even Satan himself gives testimony to Jesus as the Son of God. The demons in Matthew 8:29 said, "What have we to do with You, Son of God?" Even the demons know that Jesus is Son of God. Luke 4:41, "And demons also were coming out of many, crying and saying, 'You are the Son of God.'"

So, whether you're talking about angels or men or Satan or demons, the universal testimony of the New Testament is that Jesus is the Son of God. Even an unbeliever, the Centurion, who was in charge of the crucifixion of Jesus, standing on the Mount of the Crucifixion in Matthew 27:54, the

Centurion says, "Truly this was the Son of God." Every testimony by every personage indicates that this is the Son of God. That's why John in his gospel, chapter 20 verse 31, says, "These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name."

Now, folks, this becomes critical to any understanding of Christian doctrine. He is the Son of God. You have it from Satan. You have it from demons. You have it from angels. You have it from people. And in this particular statement in Luke 2:49 you have it from the lips of Jesus Himself. You also have it from God. You find in the gospels that God several times says, "This is My beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased."

Now this then becomes the single most important claim that Jesus makes. To say you are the Savior, is one thing. To say you are the King is something. To say you are the Deliverer is some...those are important. But to say you are the Son of God is above those other things. And I'll show you that. In fact, it was the claim to be the Son of God that really led to His execution.

Turn to John 5 and verse 18. This unfolds and we'll see this as we go through Luke, but in John 5, in Jesus ministry, hostility began early toward Him. And in John 5:18, well let's look at verse 17, Jesus said, "My Father is working until now and I Myself am working." Whew...He called God His Father, nobody did that...nobody had the audacity to do that. To call God His Father and to say that the Father's working and I'm working on an equal level was intolerable, and so in verse 18, "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him." They already wanted to kill Him, but they were seeking all the more because He not only was breaking their Sabbath law but was calling God His own Father, nobody ever did that. And they saw it as making Himself equal with God. If you want to know what it means to be the Son of God, it means to be equal with God. That's the way the Jews understood it, that's exactly what it meant. That's exactly what He was claiming, to be equal with God, to be God. They understood that because He was using "Son" in their cultural vernacular...and I'll say more about that in a little bit.

Go over to chapter 10...chapter 10 verse 36. Now they are accusing Him of blasphemy and so He says, "Do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified, or set apart, and sent into the world, You are blaspheming because I said I am the Son of God?" And that's exactly what the issue was. He said He was the Son of God and they said You are a blasphemer. You can't make that claim because to say You are the Son of God is to say You are equal to God, it is to say You are of the same essence, nature, rights, privileges and honors as God. This...this became the intolerable claim of Jesus to unbelieving Israel.

Chapter 19 of John, "They dragged Jesus before Pilate," this is such a fascinating part of His life, I just in the last few days finished editing the book called The Murder of Jesus and going through all the trial, be out in February, just an unbelievably fascinating record of the death of Jesus. But they

dragged Him before Pilate and they really didn't have any legitimate claims. And Pilate says in verse 6, "You know, you need to take care of Him yourself, crucify Him if you want, I don't find any guilt in Him." And then in verse 7 they say this, "The Jews answered him, 'We have a law and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.'" That was absolutely intolerable. That constituted blasphemy because to say you were the Son of God is to say you were equal with God. That is the only way you can understand that phrase, that is the way the Jews understood it. And I'll explain why they understood it that way in a bit. But in Matthew 26 verse 63, "Jesus kept silent before Caiaphas," another part of His trial, "and the high priest said to Him, 'I adjure You, or I command You by the living God that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.'" That was the accusation. The high priest says, "You've got to tell us whether You are the Son of God."

Chapter 27 verse 40, they started mocking Him. He's on the cross, He's nailed there, He's hanging on the cross and in verse 40 they say, "If You're the Son of God, come down from the cross." Sarcasm, mockery. Verse 43, "He trusts in God, let Him deliver him now if he takes pleasure in Him because He said I am the Son of God." That was the issue. At the age of twelve the die was cast. When Jesus said, "My Father," He was saying He's the Son of God. Nobody ever said that. Now this is His identity and it is this identity that truly identifies Him and it is this identity that ultimately ended in His execution.

Now what does it mean to say you are the Son of God? And why did it infuriate the Jewish leaders to the degree that it did?

Simply, the answer is this. To say you're the Son of God is to claim deity. It is to claim to be equal with God, and that if not true is blasphemy. If not true it is blasphemy. If true, it is not. And for you to mock Him is blasphemy.

Now let me make it clear. Every time the title "Son of God" is applied in the Scripture to Christ, it always refers to His essential deity, His absolute, eternal equality with God. He is a member of the trinity who has always existed as God the Son. It is not a human title. It is not an earthly title. It is a divine title. And this is essential to understanding the identity of Jesus and sets the stage for everything that unfolds in His life to come.

Now let me give you a little further explanation. Whenever you see the title "Son of God" in Scripture, it always refers to His essential deity and absolute equality with God, always. That is what is meant by Sonship, He is equal to God. The problem we have is that in modern times in the English language, in our conceptions, and even in Greek, it doesn't always give us the significance it should. For example, if I say someone is the son of Bill and Sally, or whoever, you understand that to mean the first generation male offspring of that couple, so that "son" for us means birth, "son" for us means generation, "son" for us means coming into existence from some source.

But that is not the primary sense of the word "son" in Jewish culture. "Son" to them had some idiosyncracies that filled it with different meaning. When they refer to someone as a son, they were not talking about origin. They were not talking about source. They were not talking about birth. Son, whether barin Hebrew or huiosin Greek in the New Testament, can be used to refer to a child who is simply born as a son. But the more technical sense of son is that it reserves itself to speak of someone who has been admitted to the full status of an adult. I already told you this, but I'll just review it very briefly. In Luke as the story of Jesus unfolds, first the word brephos was used which is the word "infant." And then paidos, a little child, and then pais, boy, so you'll notice down in Luke chapter 2 verse 43 Jesus is referred to as a boy. That's pretty consistent with the way we should understand the word son. A boy was a boy, a child was a child, an infant was an infant. A son was someone who had reached adulthood. When the boy became a man, he then became a son so that a son meant he has reached equality with his father. He has now become a son...a son. He has entered into maturity, adulthood. And the Jews eventually instituted what's called bar mitzvah, son of the law. They did that and they still do it today at the age of 13, a boy at the age of 13 is considered to be a man. He becomes a son. He has been a child...he's been an infant, he's been a child, he's been a boy and now he's a bar mitzvah, son of the commandment, son of the law, or he's a son in the sense that he's equal with the father.

So son in the Hebrew culture didn't look at origin and it didn't look at generation, it didn't look at birth, it looked at adulthood. It was the time when the son became equal to his father unto the law. It was the time when the son equal to his father in terms of the adult responsibility. It was the time when the son began to receive his inheritance and enter in to all of the privileges that the father had reserved for him when he became a son.

So that "son" comes to mean "equal to," or "one with." And I can show you this throughout Scripture. For example, many, many times in the Scripture you see the word "son" used this way, has nothing to do with origin, has nothing to do with birth, has nothing to do with begetting, it has nothing to do with someone coming into the world through anybody, it's a term that refers to "one with," or "equal." And that is the Jewish way of looking at it.

For example, there was in the early church, according to acts 4:36, a man named Barnabas. You remember Barnabas? Barnabas is called a son of...you remember?...encouragement. Now his mother wasn't named encouragement, neither was his father. He was a son in the sense that he was so much an encouragement that he was one with encouragement. He was just equal to encouragement. Barnabas was synonymous with encouragement. And that is consistent with the way the word "son" is used.

For example, James and John are called the sons of..what?...thunder in Mark 3:17. That doesn't mean that their mother's name was thunder or their father's name was thunder. That's not the case.

It simply identifies their primary characteristics. They were "bull in a China closet" type people. They just came thundering in to every situation. They were called therefore sons of thunder because they were one with that. They were...they were equal to thunder. That was a way to describe their personality.

In Matthew 23:15 there are certain people who are described by Jesus as being a son of hell. That doesn't mean that hell gave birth to the individual, it simply means that this is a person who has all of the characteristics of those who occupy hell. Also, 2 Thessalonians 2:3 and John 17:12 refer to a son of perdition, John 17:12, the son of perdition is Judas and 2 Thessalonians 2:3 the son of perdition is the Antichrist. It doesn't mean they were born of perdition, it means they were equal to perdition. In other words, they were synonymous with damnation and destruction because that was their character.

In Ephesians 2:2 every unbelieving person alive is called the son of disobedience. It doesn't mean you were born out of a disobedient act, it simply means you are one with or equal to disobedience. Your character is that of disobedience.

Luke 16:8 as well as John 12:36 refers to believers as sons of light. It doesn't mean anything about origins, it doesn't mean anything about birth or generation. It simply means we have all the characteristics of the truth and the light.

Matthew 13:38 says the tares which are false believers in the church are called the sons of the wicked one. They aren't the offspring of Satan in some strange and bizarre fashion, they simply have so much identified with Satan's character that they are literally equal to or one with him.

The same is true in Deuteronomy 13:13 to use a Jewish illustration where men are called bar Belial, sons of Belial. That is they are worthless, utterly worthless, having taken on the characteristics of Belial, which is an Old Testament word for Satan. And they are sons of in the sense that they are equal to or one with Satan.

In Luke 20:36 there is a wonderful expression, "the sons of the resurrection." It doesn't have anything to do with origins and it doesn't have anything to do with offspring generation. It has to do with the fact that our character is identified with the resurrection. We are the resurrection people. We are characterized by resurrection. Do you know already you have resurrection life? So that though your body dies you will never die but you'll enter in to the glory of the Lord, you are already the possessor of resurrection, so you are a son of the resurrection. That's characteristic of your life.

Mark 2:19 talks about the sons of the bride chamber. That is those who are identified with the bridegroom when He comes and the great bridal feast, those who belong as the wife of the bridegroom. In Luke 10:6 a son of peace, somebody who is identified completely with peace. And in

Matthew 8:12 we are called sons of...some people are called sons of the kingdom. They...they're in the kingdom, they're identified with the kingdom. That is the essence of that term.

Now, just all of those are illustrations, about a dozen illustrations, to show you that the meaning...none of those have to do with origin, none of those have to do with some point of beginning. They have to do with characteristics. So when Jesus says He's the Son of God, He doesn't mean He just came into existence, He doesn't mean He was just born in Bethlehem and prior to that He didn't exist, He doesn't mean anything about origins. He's using it in the classic Jewish sense where son means equal to or one with. And when He says He's the Son of God He means He's equal to God or one with God. That is He is of the same essence, the same nature, the same character, the same rights, the same privileges as God Himself. And so that is the point.

And that's why when Jesus said He is the Son of God, the Jews immediately said He has made Himself equal to God. They completely understood that...completely understood. He was claiming to be equal with God, John 5:18 and John 10:33.

Now there are a couple of other terms that can enrich our understanding of this. John calls Jesus five times the only begotten Son of God. And we might ask the question...well that does bring in begetting, doesn't it? Doesn't that tell us that there wasn't a Son of God, and then He was begotten by Mary and then He came into existence? Isn't that what that means, the only begotten?

Well let me answer that. The term "only begotten" in the Greek, monogenes, gennaoto to be born, and monoonly, the only begotten can refer to an only child. I mean, you could use that to refer to somebody who had an only child, the only begotten child. But again, in the Jewish context of the full meaning of monogenes, it didn't have anything to do with the fact that this is the only child that was born to a couple. It had to do with the fact that this was a title given to a son who had been chosen by his father to receive the full inheritance. It's the same as the word prototokos which Paul uses a lot, which we often translate "firstborn." And it doesn't mean the firstborn in time chronologically, it means of all that have been born the first. And again, monogenes, of all that have been born, this one alone is the chosen to receive the inheritance, the one chosen for privilege.

Now I can illustrate that. Hebrews 11:17, you don't need to look it up, Hebrews 11:17, Isaac, now was Isaac Abraham's first son? Who was? Ishmael. So Isaac was not his only begotten son in the sense that he had no other son. But Hebrews 11:17, Isaac is referred to as Abraham's monogenes, his only begotten. Now he had another son, an older brother, half brother. That was not Abraham's only son, but he was Abraham's monogenes which means he was the choice son to receive the Covenant and receive the inheritance. It does not mean the only son of Abraham when it says that. He had...Abraham had other sons, even a son older than Isaac. But when it says he was monogenes it means that he was the premier one, he was given the special place as primary heir. And that's because Isaac was given the Covenant promise back in Genesis 22. And Abraham was...in Genesis

22 when Abraham was going to kill Isaac, remember, you often wonder how could he do that. I'll tell you how cause Hebrews tells us. Hebrews 11, it says, "Because he believed God would do...what?...raise him from the dead." Why did he believe that God would raise Isaac from the dead? Because God had promised through Isaac that he would fulfill His covenant. And God knew that if He was going to take his life He'd have to give it back again.

So Isaac was clearly the monogenes of Abraham because he was the son of covenant promise. It wasn't Ishmael. It wasn't anybody else.

So when you see the word "son" you are talking about one who has come to adulthood, to equality with the father...and that's exactly the way the Jews understood it. You're talking about in the sense that only begotten son, which John uses five times, you're talking about the one who has been selected as the heir of the father, who has been given all the promises of God and who will become the heir of the universe. And we know that to be the case as we read in Psalm 2, and we'll look at that in a moment. And you see the familiar word prototokos which is translated firstborn so often used by Paul, it means the same thing, it means the premier one, the heir to all that God possesses.

So when John writes this is the only begotten Son of God, the Jews know exactly what He's saying. They're claiming this is one who was equal with God, has the very essence of God, He is the Son of God. Not only that, He is the select and chosen Son of God who has been given the full inheritance of God. That is to say He has all the nature of God, He has all the rights of God, He has all the power of God, He has all the privileges of God. That was the claim Jesus made and that is what they constituted as blasphemy and it was for that that they executed Him, because they refused to believe though it was in fact true.

So when you see the term monogenes or prototokos, you're looking at the premier not at the only, in the sense that there were no others. Not in the sense of first chronologically, but in the sense of first in preeminence.

Let me show you this just briefly. Psalm 2, I read it earlier and I want to point this out to you because I think it's an important thing to note. Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He's the Son by eternal nature and privilege and name and inheritance. But I want you to notice how this is indicated to us in Psalm 2. "He said to Me, Thou art My Son," verse 7, God says to the second member of the trinity, God the Son, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee." Verse 8, "Ask of Me and I'll give the nations as Your inheritance." There again, you see, He is identified as a Son as evidenced by the fact that He is given the inheritance. Sonship is connected with inheritance. It's not an issue of origin because there was never an origin of Jesus, was there? Not the eternal Son of God. There was an origin of the man, Jesus, born to Mary, but the eternal Son of God had no origin. He is eternal. He always was. He even said, "Before Abraham was, I am." There never was a time when the second member of the trinity, God the Son, didn't exist. There never was a time when He was begotten in the sense that He

didn't exist and then He came into existence.

Rather, His Sonship is not so much connected with Him coming into existence as it is with receiving the inheritance. Interestingly enough also in Hebrews 1 that same passage is quoted, Psalm 2 is quoted in Hebrews 1. And it says, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee," in verse 5, "And I'll be a Father to Him and He'll be a Son to Me." And then immediately He says when He brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." And then in verse 8 He says to the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever and the righteous scepter is the scepter of Your Kingdom."

In other words, again Sonship is associated...it's associated with rank, it's associated with rule, it's associated with inheritance. Back in verse 4, "He had inherited a more excellent name." It's about His inheritance His rule, about His sovereignty so that both in Psalm 2 and in Hebrews 1 the emphasis is, listen to this word, on enthronement, the assumption of enthronement and authority. That's what identifies the Son. He is a Son because He is equal with God. He is the only begotten and the firstborn because He is the One who will receive all the inheritance, because He is God He will possess all that belongs to God.

In Hebrews chapter 5 that Psalm 2 is quoted again in verse 5, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee," and then He goes immediately to say, "Thou art a priest forever." And then He goes on to talk about the death of Jesus in verse 9, how He became the source of eternal salvation. So here Sonship was manifested in His work of salvation. He is a Son because He is the author of eternal salvation. He is a Son because He is the inheritor of all that God possesses. He is a Son because He is equal to God.

When Psalm 2 identifies the Son, it is identifying one who is equal with God, who will enter into the fullness of that Sonship through His death, burial, resurrection, ascension and enthronement. Some day, as we know, He will have all the full rights and privileges as Son of God in the coming glorious millennial Kingdom and then in the eternal new heaven and new earth. When it says He's a Son, it's saying all of that.

Here's a twelve-year-old boy who says to His parents, "My Father...I need to be in My Father's house." And in so saying He is clearly identifying Himself as God the Son, God the only begotten, the monogenes, the prototokos, the premier one, the one who will receive the inheritance, the one who is equal with God. The Sonship will unfold and be manifest through His perfect life, through His substitutionary and atoning death, resurrection, His ascension, His enthronement, His glorious coming Kingdom and His eternal reign. He will reign as the promise came from Gabriel forever and ever. That was Jesus' claim and it was that very claim to be God a very God, equal with God, the inheritor of all that God possesses that infuriated the apostate leaders of Israel and drove them to execute Him with what they perceived as blasphemy. And in so doing, they blasphemed the very

God they executed.

This is the Son of God. If you understand that, then you understand the gospel story. It unfolds from that great truth. And when someone does not acknowledge that this is God, the eternal God the Son who is the eternal Son, who came into the world to receive all that God had prepared for Him, to obey willingly all God's will, to accomplish redemption and enthronement forever and ever, this is that Son. If you understand that then you understand the Christian gospel. If you don't believe that, no matter what you believe, you can't be saved. There's not salvation in any other name then the name of Jesus which embodies all that He is.

Well Jesus made that claim at the age of twelve in a simple statement. His mother and father couldn't grasp the full sense of it. I trust we can grasp its significance this morning. He came as God the Son. He came to do the Father's will. He came to die. He came to rise. He came to ascend. He came to be enthroned. And He will come back to establish His glorious and eternal Kingdom because He is God's Son. This is the identity that marked Him and marks Him even now and it was this that set the stage for everything that is to come in the rest of the story. We'll see that as we get in to chapter 3 next time. Let's pray.

We want to honor the Son, our Father, we do that when we affirm that He is who He is, that He is one with You in nature, in privilege, in power, in purpose. That it became manifest to us that in fact He was equal to You in His work of redemption as a high priest, in His work of enthronement as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It was through the resurrection that He was declared to be the Son. It was at the cross that He was affirmed to have demonstrated the redemptive power that only God possesses. The day is yet to come when He will take His throne and crush the rejecters with a rod of iron and establish His Kingdom and reign forever. This small twelve-year-old boy on the edge of manhood understood this and so stated it. And, Father, we believe it, and we acknowledge Jesus as Son of God and Savior and Lord and King. We acknowledge that indeed He existed eternally but came into this world in time in human form in order that He might die as man, in the place of men to pay the price for sin, that He rose again and ascended to be enthroned in heaven where He awaits the fullness of His Kingdom at the end of the age when He comes in power and glory to destroy the wicked and establish His Kingdom on earth for a thousand years, and then after that forever in the new heaven and the new earth. This is our Lord, this is our God, this is the one we worship, it's in His name we pray. Amen.

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