

The Father-Son Relationship (Part 4)

Christ's Submission to the Father

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In the previous sermon in this series we spent most of the time explaining the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth, the anointed Savior of God's people—the One who is the Mediator between the Absolute Deity (the term that I have been using to indicate the Father) and mankind since man's creation. There is nobody like Him in the entire universe.

The apostle Paul clearly stated that Jesus said He had equality with God, but He emptied Himself to take on the form of a slave. Equality with God does not indicate that He was co-equal with God in terms of being the Absolute Deity, but rather that He too was of the God-kind. That is very clearly established by Christ Himself when He stated both when He was on the stake and following His resurrection that He, Jesus, has a God. I am going to read two scriptures that touch on this.

Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sa-bach-tha-ni? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

There are some who might make the claim that Jesus stated this only because He was a man, but we will smash that to smithereens.

John 20:17 Jesus said unto her [Mary Magdalene], Touch Me not: for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.

We see Jesus making the claim twice: once when He was in the flesh, that He had a God, and that God was His Father. Even though He was God in the flesh, He had a Father who was greater than He. Then in John 20:17, Jesus was no longer in the flesh. He was transformed into spirit, and began to assume the glory that He had with the Father from the very beginning, and He again stated in *this* condition that He still had a God, and that God He names as His Father. That Father is the One that I have been calling the Absolute Deity.

One is greater than the other. One is the Source, and the other the means through

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whom God—the Source—has revealed Himself. Both are of the God-kind. Both are worthy of worship, and both have thrones of rulership. They do not share equality in the Godhead, and we shall see when this series is all over that they do not permanently occupy the same throne. We are to understand clearly from Christ's own testimony that His Father is the One who is supreme, who is the Absolute Deity, and who is His—Christ's—God.

What I am teaching here is not ditheism. Ditheism is an alternative in some peoples' minds to the Trinity. In the Trinity doctrine the Godhead consists of three co-equal, like-estate beings. In the Ditheism doctrine, the three is reduced to two co-equal beings. But that is wrong too, because the Son is not part of the Godhead. Did you hear that? The Son is not part of the Godhead. The Father is the sole Head of all to such an extent that He is the God of the Son. Is that clear? Do you know God?

I Corinthians 11:2-3 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Christ has a Head, and in the Father's order of things there can be only one Head. The Son agrees completely with that governing principle; otherwise the door is open to confusion and division. This is why democracy will never work to produce the best and the most. There are too many opportunities for too many heads. A republic is better, but it too falls short because it opens the door for everyone to think that he is the head. It is bad business, with human nature and with Satan running around loose to put these ideas into peoples' minds.

The Father and the Son are equal in terms of being of the same kind, and that is what Paul implied when he wrote that "Christ did not think that equality with God was a thing to be grasped at, but rather He emptied Himself." They are not equal in terms of function and responsibility. One is the Head; the other is subordinate, submissive to the Head. Hang on to that thought because that is very important to our salvation.

Even the Son is submissive to the Father. Though He was God in the flesh, and though He is God now, He is always submissive to the Father. The Son directed worship to the Head, and the Head, the Absolute Deity, is supreme over all. Christ instructed us to pray to His Father, even though we may also pray to the Son too; but they are two distinct personalities in the Bible showing clear differences in operation and rank between them.

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Brethren, this does not require a degree in rocket science to understand, and it does not diminish Christ one iota. All that one needs is a clear, unconfused common sense derived from the Scriptures, combined with a clear logic. Think of this in a human sense. Cannot two human beings of the same kind, whether related by blood or not, but for the sake of this logic, be a father and a son, and yet one is greater than the other in function and responsibility? But they are both human, and yet one is greater than the other.

Romans 1:20 For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Are we not supposed to learn things about God from His creation? A simple question: Can you think of anything angelic, human, animal, or whatever, that God has shown us from His creation that has two heads? If you cannot understand this principle clearly seen from creation, then I fear that the Trinity doctrine has affected you greatly. They are asking people to understand something that is impossible in God's order of things.

From here I want you to go with me to Ephesians 1. Notice especially verse 17. This is a prayer that Paul made in behalf of the Ephesians, and made in behalf of you and me. Paul makes it very clear that there is only one God.

Ephesians 1:17-22 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. [He is still talking about the Father.] Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church.

Do you see that, brethren? In one sense here Christ's authority is limited. Who is it limited by? By the Father! There is One giving the orders, and the other is subordinate to those orders, and the Father made Christ the Head of a very, very important part of His purpose. In fact, in once sense we might say *the* most important part of His

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purpose—the church.

Ephesians 1:23 Which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

Paul very clearly shows that there are two distinct Personalities, and one is specifically named "the God of our Lord," and the other Personality is the Lord—the Christ. Verse 22 tells us that the One (the God of our Lord) appointed the other (the Son) to be the Head (meaning ruler) of all things to the church; that is, that He is the church's Head for the church's benefit.

The church, brethren, like everything in God's purpose, has one Head; otherwise there would be chaos. This is one of the major reasons that there are many problems within the church. Far too many people do not look to Christ as the Head of the church. They look to men.

Once you begin to catch on to this, you will see the lines of responsibility are clearly distinctly made all over the place in the Bible.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.

What is there here? There is a very clear stating that God (the Father, the Absolute Deity) sent the Son. He had authority over the Son. Even though the Son was of the God-kind, the Father was greater. He said [to the Son] "Go here. Do this." Christ, the Son, submitted.

Let us look at this principle that we are talking about stated ever so clearly in a context that seems to have nothing to do with it, but it has everything to do with it. It is in Hebrews 2. Paul states this principle in relation to Abraham and Levi. I will just read the verse I am interested in. You can look it up in its context. Without any contradiction Paul is going to give a principle that is irrefutable in this circumstance. "The less is blessed of the better." We are talking about the relationship between the Father and the Son. Here is the principle: The "less" (the Lord, the Christ) is blessed of the better (the Father).

The Father is the Source of every good thing. He blessed us by sending the Son, which we will see as we go through this. It is so clear that it is the Father who hands us the blessings. The one of greater function and responsibility appointed the one of lesser responsibility and function. Does this not show two distinctive Beings, as well as

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"greater and lesser" function and authority? Let us see this principle working right Hebrews 10, in a very interesting way. The subject here is the Son—the One who came into the world.

Hebrews 10:5 Wherefore when he comes into the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering you would not, but a body have you prepared me.

Whom is He talking to? He is talking to the Father, and He is saying that the Father prepared a body for Him. This begins to give you ideas of what is going on here, because Christ gave up His equality with God, and the body that was prepared into which He was placed was the one we know of as Jesus of Nazareth.

Hebrews 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Your will, O God.

Why did He come, brethren? **To do God's will.** To do the Father's will. That is so plain. Again, please hang on to this thought. It is so important to our salvation. It is important because God expects us to follow what His Son did in relation to Him as being the example to you and me, and that is, to do the Father's will. Jesus did the Father's will in carrying out the assignment given to Him. His assignment can be broken down. His assignment was to preach the gospel. His assignment was to be a witness of God's existence. His assignment was to be the example for His disciples and His apostles. His assignment was to die for the sins of the world. And on and on it goes. Whatever the Father laid out for Him to do, that is what He did.

Hebrews 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first [the Old Covenant] that He may establish the second [the New Covenant].

In verse 7 the glory of the Son is revealed. The glory of the Son was to do His Father's will perfectly. The unity of the Father and Son is not expressed as evidence in the oneness of substance, but in the Son's loving obedience to the Father. He submitted totally and completely, even though He Himself was God.

They are of one mind, and His example is very important to us because since we are being created in His image, it is exceedingly important that we follow what He did. In order to be created in Christ's image we have to give ourselves over to being a living

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sacrifice following as closely as we possibly can what Jesus did in submission to His Father in carrying out His assignment.

Our assignment is not exactly the same as was Jesus'. We do not have to die for the sins of the world, but we nonetheless have to show that we will give up our lives in total and complete sacrifice to the Father to be used as He wills them to be used. Can we do that? This is why we have to see God. It is the only way that we can fulfill our assignment.

None of this in any way diminishes Christ one iota, because actually the Scripture is showing off Christ's glory. He is being glorified before you and me by what He did, by His attitudes, by His submission. The Scriptures clearly show that His glory is not in being the Head, but in His submission to the Head. When He is introduced in this same book of Hebrews, in chapter 1, it is not through His being created, but in His begetting. He is the **only** begotten Son, and as such, He is infinitely better to communicate the Father and His nature to mankind.

The sermon takes a bit of a turn here in order to clarify another aspect of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Often we need clarification because we do not really know the meaning of a word. Unfortunately the King James Version helps obscure things because it uses a misleading word now and then, here and there, in relation to this subject.

Acts 17:29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

The word we are going to look at is "Godhead," because Paul was not making mention of a Godhead at all. If you will look up the definition of "Godhead" you will find an interesting thing in Webster's. Webster's defines Godhead as: "The nature of God existing in three persons." Can you imagine that! The word "Godhead" literally forces one to think of the Trinity.

Paul, who made this statement in the first place, never heard of such a thing. We just read in Ephesians 1 that Paul wrote there that there is **ONE** God, not three. He specifically said in I Corinthians 11:2-3 that the one Head of Christ is the Father. Paul was not confused here in Acts 17:29. I looked in four modern translations and they have all corrected this translation here by changing the word "Godhead" to either "divine nature" or "Deity." Either one is correct.

My Bible has a marginal reference right beside the word "Godhead." You look in the margin and it says, "divine nature." Imagine that! Not Godhead, but "divine nature." Either one of those is correct.

Now "divine," according to my *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, means "relating to or proceeding directly from God." Thus divine things are "God-like." With that understanding, that phrase in Acts 17:29 should read something like this: Paul said, "We must not think the divine nature resembles gold, silver, or stone." The divine nature does not resemble gold, silver, or stone. Does Jesus Christ resemble the Father? Absolutely! He said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." But the resemblance was not in what He looked like, but what He was in His person—in the way that He conducted His life.

We are going to follow this a little bit further. Go to II Peter 1. The word used here is a cognate of the word that is translated "Godhead" in Acts 17:29. I want you to notice that Peter knew this in exactly the same way that Paul did. He is pointing out that Jesus Christ had a God, and that God was His Father.

II Peter 1:3-4 According as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Here the word "divine" is translated correctly. "Divine" appears two times, once in each verse. It is the same word or cognate to Acts 17:29, but here it is translated correctly. The "power" in verse 3 relates to and proceeds from God, and "the great and precious promises" of verse 4 also relate to and proceed directly from God; thus they are rightly called "divine." Now, was Jesus divine? Yes! He Himself said that He came from the Father, and that the Father sent Him. Not too long ago the ministry in English speaking countries (especially among Protestant groups) were called "divines" because of the thought that they were called of God and were sent directly to represent Him wherever they were working.

A generation or two ago people used the word "divine" in a more careless way when referring to something like a luscious rich-tasting dessert as being "divine," meaning "heavenly" or "heaven sent." The same is also said especially of handsome men or beautiful women as being "divine" in the beauty of form. Maybe that is a little bit too old for most of you, but I remember it. It was simply a term that people threw around to

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express their appreciation for something they thought was surely shaped by God. Now whether God actually shaped them, I do not know. It is just an illustration to help us understand what the word "divine" means. It means "relating to or proceeding from God," and Jesus certainly fit that description.

Let us go to Colossians 2. Here the statement is a little more dangerous.

Colossians 2:9 For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Again, this is badly translated. How can one person (Jesus) resemble a non-existent Trinity, which is what the term "Godhead" implied? This is a concept that the Bible does not teach at all. Again, you start looking in modern translations. I looked it up in *Moffatt*, the *New International Version*, and even the *Catholic Jerusalem Bible*. They all translated "Godhead" correctly. This is the only place that this particular word appears in the entire Greek New Testament. This word is an exact synonym of our word "Deity" or "divinity." That is how the *Moffatt*, the *New International Version*, and the *Catholic Jerusalem Bible* translated it. The Trinitarian term "Godhead" is completely out of place here.

I am going to read Colossians 2:9 from the *Amplified Version*, which according to many modern commentators is the most literal of all modern translations. "For in Him the whole fullness of Deity (the Godhead) continues to dwell in bodily form [giving complete expression of the divine nature.]" That is a beautiful translation; thus Paul is not saying here that Jesus of Nazareth is the Absolute Deity and part of some non-existent trinity, but rather that as a man, as a human being, He perfectly expressed or represented the Deity in all of His words and actions because He was of the same nature as the Deity. The reason Paul wrote this is because he wanted to insure, to exhort, to encourage us to pay attention to Christ because we are being created in Him, and as far as a human being is concerned, He was the complete expression of the Deity.

There is a loose connection in Paul's thought here in Colossians 2 and of what the apostle John wrote in John 1:1, and thus the term "Deity" is not applied to Christ by Paul, but Paul is saying that Christ is the perfect *complement* of the Deity. That is why we can follow Him because there is something we could see and something we can relate to. We have never seen the Absolute Deity. We have never heard the Absolute Deity. It has all been revealed to us by the perfect Complement of the Absolute Deity (Jesus Christ's Father). Jesus cannot be the complement of Himself.

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Now "complement" here is spelled with the letter "e" in the middle, not the letter "i." It is spelled "complement." According to Webster's that means "something that fills up, completes, or makes perfect." For instance, we might say, "That color hat complements your dress." That is a right use for that word that has the letter "e" in the middle. It is not the dress, but the hat goes with and completes the picture you wish to project of yourself.

Christ is the Complement of the Father, the Absolute Deity. Christ fills up. This is what Paul said in Ephesians 1:24-25 that the church members do. We "fill up." We are the "complement" of Jesus Christ. In this case Christ is the complement of the Father. He fills up and completes and makes perfect the revelation of the Father. The Father has determined in His wisdom that we must live by faith without being able to see or hear Him. The Father has thus determined to make Himself known through an Image—a Word, a Mediator, a Complement—and it is Christ who fulfills these functions perfectly. The entire complement to the Father dwells in Christ perfectly. This then leads to an inescapable and logical and true conclusion. The Christ, who could be literally seen and heard, is not the complement of Himself as He would be if the Trinity existed.

Christ is not primarily engaged in revealing Himself. He is acting for the Father. He is an entirely different Being who nonetheless fills up, completes, and makes perfect the revelation of the Father. He did His revealing responsibility so well that to human eyes He would appear to be the Absolute Deity.

The Bible—the written Word of God—explains that Christ clearly distinguished Himself from the Absolute Deity in many ways. The most easily understood or grasped is where Jesus said, "The Father is greater than I." That immediately distinguishes Him from the greater One.

The second comment He made to distinguish Himself from the Father is that the Father sent Him. In other words, an entirely different Being dispatched Him on His assignment.

The third is, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." It is utterly impossible to be both Father and Son at the same time. They are two different Beings, not two parts of a three-in-one configuration. Jesus is the perfect complement, completing the picture the Father wishes to portray of Himself.

I think that right here is a good place to stop. I am not completely done with this particular word picture, but the sermon takes a bit of a turn here, and I think that it is a good place to break off. I ask the question then, "Is Jesus divine?" Remember what divine means. It means relating to or coming from God. You should know the answer to

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that. God willing, in the next sermon we will flush it all out and you will see that God certainly picked a wonderful Person to reveal Him.