

The Son of God Matt. 3:13-17

Introduction:

1. Matthew's presentation of Jesus as the Son of God is central to his message.
2. Indeed in all four gospels, and the epistles of Hebrews and 1 John, "Jesus the Son of God" is the theme.
3. As profound as it is to identify oneself as the son of God, historically this title has been used to identify men with deity.
 - a. In a general sense the nation of Israel was considered "the children of God." Cf. Isa. 43:6. Cf. also 2 Cor. 6:18 and particularly Isa. 1:2: "Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have revolted against Me."
 - b. Roman emperors associated themselves with deity. In some inscriptions Augustus Caesar is known as "Caesar son of god."
4. Matthew presents Jesus in a unique sense as "the Son of God." What is the significance of his claims and how is it relevant to us?

Discussion:

- I. Uses of the "Son of God" (and its equivalents) in Matthew.
 - A. In Matthew Jesus refers to God as "Father" some 44 times.
 1. Half of them are in the Sermon on the Mount and describe God as Father of the disciples. Cf. 5:9, 45; 6:1, etc.
 - a. Pray, "Our Father who is in heaven."
 - b. "If you forgive others, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."
 - c. A similar usage as in Isaiah.
 2. The other half refer specifically to God as the Father of Jesus.
 - a. "My Father" (11:27). Reference to authority being handed over to Him by His Father.
 - b. In the garden when He was taken captive He said, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (26:53).
 - B. In Matthew 4 Satan appeals to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God command that these stones become bread." "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down."
 - C. In Matthew 8:29 demons cry out, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God?"
 - D. When Jesus came to the disciples walking on the water in a storm and the wind stopped when He got into the boat they said, "You are certainly God's Son!" (14:33).
 - E. In Matthew 16:16 when asked by Jesus who the son of Man was Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
 - F. At Jesus' trial the High Priest said, "Tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said, "You have said it" (26:63-64).
 - G. Mockers at the cross said, "If you are the Son of God come down from the cross." "He said, 'I am the Son of God,' then let God rescue Him," they said (27:40, 43).

- H. But the centurion and those keeping guard over Him when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening in association with the crucifixion said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (27:54).

II. The above surveys Matthew's presentation of Jesus as the Son of God, but what does it really mean? What is the significance of "the Son of God" phrase? D. J. Verseput ("The Role and Meaning of the 'Son of God' Title in Matthew's Gospel" *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987) 532-556) argues that "Son of God" is used to redefine the nature of Messiahship by emphasizing Jesus' filial obedience in contrast with the "imperial and triumphal" traits of Jewish Davidic expectation.

- A. What the Jews were expecting in a Messiah was not consistent with the nature of sonship with God.
1. While what they were expecting is not made explicit in Scripture it is evident that Jesus did not fit the bill.
 - a. Were they expecting a king to come with "swords loud clashing?" Cf. Lead On, O King Eternal (494, Hymns for Worship). A military defeat of their Roman oppressors?
 - b. Were they expecting a man like David, known for the blood that he spilled? "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands."
 2. As the Son of God, Jesus came with a gentle mission calling men to God. This is evident in Matthew 11 and 12.
 - a. "Are you the expected one," John's disciples asked?
 - b. It was in this context that Jesus spoke of those who would take the kingdom by force (11:12).
 - c. Force was not Jesus' way as Son of God (11:25-30).
 - d. His was the way of compassionate healing and invitation. Cf. Matt. 12:18-21.
 - e. When He was confronted by the Pharisees He would withdraw (12:9, 15).
 3. This kind of approach is evident in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - a. The kingdom belongs to the poor in spirit. Not the powerful and aggressive.
 - b. The gentle inherit the earth, not the forceful and dominate.
 - c. It is the mourning, the merciful, the peacemakers, the persecuted that are blessed.
 - d. It is those who love their enemies, who turn the other cheek, who pray for those who persecute them that are considered "**sons of your Father** who is in heaven" (5:45). "**Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect**" (5:48).
- B. It is a son's obedient submission to His Father that marks the nature of the Kingdom of God's Son. He is indeed "My Servant in whom I am pleased, who has My spirit upon Him" (12:18ff). Like Father, Like Son applies here.
1. Note Jesus' responses to Satan in Matt. 4.
 2. In each instance He responds in submission to God.
 - a. "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."
 - b. "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." If you love me you will
 - c. "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."

- C. Well is there no **authority** associated with being the Son of God?
1. There is very much authority. It is just not what you might expect.
 2. It was not what the disciples expected (cf. Matt. 20:20ff). It was not “lording over,” but “giving oneself up.” Cf. Eph. 5:25; 1 Pet. 5:3.
 3. The Son of God has authority given Him by His Father (Matt. 11:27).
 4. He is placed on level with Father and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18).
 5. It is an authority that is granted by His Father. It is not taken by force (26:47-56). This is so evident in Jesus’ trial as He takes the beating, the mocking, the crown of thorns, the robe, the sign on the cross—“King of the Jews.” All of it marks the nature of His authority as God’s Son, but it is different than the worldly way of thinking of POWER.
- D. It is precisely because He was gentle that He was rejected and that He had to die. Paul actually admonishes us to humility using Jesus as the example (Phil. 2:1-11).
- E. Being the Son of God redefines the nature of the kingdom. It is power achieved by submission! Not what the Jews were expecting!

III. What does this mean for us if we want to be sons of God?

- A. We should respond to God as our Father with the same filial obedience as Jesus did. Are you a child of God? It comes through submitting to the Father through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).
- B. Since our Father and His Father has granted Him all authority we should submit ourselves to Him.
- C. In following His example of filial obedience we should respond to others with the gentleness of the Son of God (Phil. 2:1-11; Matt. 5-6-7).
1. In a marriage (Eph. 5:21ff).
 2. Children and parents (Eph. 6:1-4).
 3. In work relationships (Eph. 6:5-9).
- D. The kingdom does not come with “swords loud clashing.” It is not through military power, but through the preaching of the gospel. Contrast with modern “Armageddon” perspectives of today.
- E. We should be laboring to bring others into subjection to His authority (Matt. 28:19-20).

Conclusion:

1. If you are not among the sons of God would you choose to submit yourself to the Father’s will?
2. Would you give up worldly power for that power granted by the Father?
3. Will you follow the example set by Jesus “to fulfill all righteous” (cf. Matt. 3:15)?