



Cherreguine Bible Doctrine Ministries  
dikaosune.com

## THE SON OF GOD

Ἡἰος τοῦ τηεου; is a title and a means of expressing a relationship, especially of Jesus, which can be indicated in other ways. As a title it was relatively rare, especially in Hellenistic and Jewish circles but popular among Christian. The use of the phrase of Jesus- the Son of God however, can be explained only in light of a Jewish background and peculiarly inside the Christian faith.

In the OT-the use of the phrase referred to several things like celestial beings (Job 1:6; 2:1; Psalms 29:1; 89:6) and Israel (Deuteronomy 14:1; Hosea 1:10) can collectively be called sons of God, Israel's unique relationship with God enabled it to be referred to in the singular as God's firstborn son (Exodus 4:22) or simply as his son (Exodus 4:23; Jeremiah 31:20; Hosea 11:1). The phrase indicates a symbolic relationship of God's referring to Himself as Israel's father (Jeremiah 31:9; Malachi 1:6) and Israel to God as Father (Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4).

In Psalm 2:7 God is quoted at the coronation of the king as saying, "You are my son; today I have begotten you." David's descendants in particular are given divine approval in Psalm 89:26-27, where God called the Davidic king "firstborn" and had the king refer to him as "my Father." This special filial relationship for David's dynasty goes back ultimately to 2 Samuel 7:14.

Nathaniel who had had no prior contact with Jesus, had as his initial reaction to Him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel" (1:49). Martha's confession of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (11:27), seems to reflect some type of messianic expectation. Jesus preferred to refer to Himself as the Son of man, there is sufficient evidence that His identity as Son of God goes back ultimately to His own assertions.

This is especially true of John, but instances of it are also found in the Synoptic. When the high priest asked Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" He answered, "I am," and then proceeded to refer to Himself as the Son of man (Mark 14:61-62).

Earlier He had identified God as the Father of the Son of man (Mark 8:38), and in Matthew He referred to God as "my Father" (7:21; 10:32-33; 20:23; 26:29, 53). In a passage reminiscent of John, Jesus strongly expressed His filial relationship with God (Matthew 11:25-27, Luke 10:21-22) and implied it in His parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:6). Even as a boy of twelve Jesus recognized that God was his Father (Luke 2:49).

At the heart of Jesus' identity in John is His stated divine  $\sigma\omicron\nu\sigma\eta\iota\pi$ . In John 10:36 He admitted saying, "I am the Son of God." Frequently He referred to God as "my Father" (5:17; 6:40; 8:54; 10:18; 15:15). Such assertions as "I and the Father are one" (10:30) and "the Father is in Me and I am in the Father" (38) show that Jesus conceived of His divine  $\sigma\omicron\nu\sigma\eta\iota\pi$  as unique and unparallel.

At both Jesus' baptism and transfiguration, God the Father Himself identified Jesus as His Son in statements reminiscent of Psalm 2:7 (Mark 1:11; 9:35). Before Jesus' birth Gabriel appeared to Mary and identified the child as the "Son of the Most High" and "Son of God" (Luke 1:32, 35).

At His temptation the devil twice challenged Jesus with the words, "If you are the Son of God" (Matthew 4:5, Luke 4:3, 9). During Jesus' ministry unclean spirits or demons directly asserted His divine  $\sigma\omicron\nu\sigma\eta\iota\pi$  (Mark 3:11, Luke 4:41; Mark 5:7). At the beginning of Jesus' ministry John the Baptist testified, "This one is the Son of God" (John 1:34) and at the cross, the centurion exclaimed, "Truly, this was [the] son of God" (Mark 15:39, Matthew 27:54).

The development of Jesus' divine sonship in the NT came principally from his disciples. During his ministry they did this as a group (Matt. 14:33) and as individuals: Peter (16:16), Nathaniel (John 1:49), and Martha (11:27). Saul of Tarsus' initial preaching in Damascus emphasized this point (Acts 9:20). Jesus' divine sonship occupies an important position in the Pauline and  $\theta\omicron\eta\alpha\nu\nu\iota\nu\epsilon$  epistles and in Hebrews.

In the Pauline, "Lord" and "Christ" are the more frequently used  $\chi\eta\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\kappa\alpha\lambda$  titles, but "His Son" or "Son of God" appears in most of his Paul's epistles, especially in contexts dealing with eschatology, Jesus' messianic rule, and salvation.

The  $\theta\omicron\eta\alpha\nu\nu\iota\nu\epsilon$  epistles represent a special case, where Jesus' divine sonship was constantly asserted as a corrective to the  $\Delta\omicron\chi\epsilon\pi\iota\chi$  heresy. The Hebrews writer applied OT messianic texts to Jesus as God's Son, but more importantly, Jesus' sonship is at the heart of his argument that Jesus was superior to angels, Moses, and the  $\Lambda\epsilon\omega\iota\tau\iota\chi\alpha\lambda$  priests.

The key to understanding what NT writers meant by the title "Son of God" is found in the contexts in which the title occurs. Heading the list are those passages, which connect Jesus' divine sonship with His royal office as Messiah. Jesus did this Himself in response to the high priest's question (Mark 14:61-62), as God had earlier done at His baptism and transfiguration, using the language of Psalm 2:7. Paul (Acts 13:33) and the Hebrews writer (1:5; 5:5) also applied this verse to Jesus, as He did (2 Samuel 7:14).

Gabriel told Mary that her son not only would be called God's Son but also would reign on David's throne (Luke 1:32-33). Later in Luke the demons' recognition of Jesus as Son of God was associated with their knowledge that He was the Messiah (4:41). The connection of the two occurs three times in the Gospel of John (1:49; 11:27; 20:31), as it does in Paul's letters (Romans 1:3-4; I Corinthians 15:28; Colossians 1:13). It surfaced in Peter's confession (Matthew 16:16) and in Luke's summary of Saul's initial Damascus preaching (Acts 9:20, 22).

While Son of God and Messiah are connected in the Gospel of John, the major theological point brought out by Jesus' divine sonship is His own divinity. Other themes underscored in the NT by this relationship include salvation (John and Paul) and Jesus' high priesthood (Hebrews). The question of at what point the Son actually became God's Son is not addressed in the NT so much as the points at which He was designated Son.

These are in connection with His birth (Luke 1:32, 35), baptism (Mark 1:11), transfiguration (Mark 9:7), resurrection (Romans 1:4; Acts 13:33), and Second Coming (I Thessalonians 1:10). Hence, there is no formal adoption of Christology as implied by His divine sonship;

rather, numerous passages present the Son as clearly preexistent (Galatians 4:4; Romans 8:3; Colossians 1:13-17).

The believing Israelites in the OT were sons of God, so are disciples of Jesus in the NT, although Jesus is Son in a unique sense (John 3:16, 18; I John 4:9). Jesus Himself used this phrase of His followers (Matthew 5:9, 45), but it is in Pauline that the doctrine became most fully developed. Here it is a part of Paul's doctrine of adoption (Galatians 4:1-7; Romans 8:14-17), which has a pagan Roman, background, rather than Jewish, because the practice of levirate marriage in ancient Judaism neutralized the social dynamic for adoption. Faith is the vehicle for this adoption (Galatians 3:26), and the outcome is that the adopted sons of God become his heirs along with Christ and thus address Him as "Abba, Father," as Jesus did in the garden (Mark 14:36).