

You Are the Christ

The Son of the Living God

By George Davis and Michael Clark

Note: Throughout this discourse we use the term son and sons as do the scriptures, but where it applies to God's elect, it also includes the sisters in Christ.

Recently we sat together contemplating the days ahead. We both sensed that we are entering a time of transition and many of you have written and testified of the same sense in your own walks. The Lord brought to mind the words of Jeremiah 1:10. "See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." We are not saying by this that we are called to preside over nations and kingdoms. But we do feel strongly that Father is leading us out of a long and glorious season, in which we have written boldly and labored with Him rooting out and pulling down, the religious rubbish of men (Nehemiah 4:10) that stands in the way of His eternal purpose. We both sense that for the most part this season is over and that the Lord wants to start using us to build and to plant. The following teaching, we feel, is of that nature. If you have any longing to know about your calling and destiny IN CHRIST THE SON we encourage you to read on. We add to these words our prayers that you will see in your innermost being what the Spirit has been endeavoring to reveal in us! George and Michael--July 2003

"Who do men say that I, the son of man, am?"

Who would have ever thought that a seemingly simple question such as this one posed by Jesus could spark a religious controversy that would last for nearly 2000 years? Men's commentaries and opinions on this passage are both numerous and diverse. Such an important question should never be taken at face value or passed over as something trivial, for Jesus was not seeking information here as if He did not know the thoughts of men (see John 2:25). This question was framed in such a way as to lead the hearer to a particular revelation--the founding revelation or rock the church (His called out ones) is built on. With this in mind, let us join Jesus and His disciples on that fateful day on the coasts of Caesarea Philippi where Jesus asked, "[Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?](#)" (Matthew 16:16).

This self-designation the Son of Man (ho huios tou anthropou) carried messianic and prophetic overtones. Jesus used it in connection to His mission as the suffering Messiah, who must be lifted up from the earth to draw all men unto Himself (John 12: 34). This designation was also used of Old Testament prophets (see Ezekiel 2:1 and Daniel 8:17). Because of His mighty miracles Jesus had become a popular figure. He was the talk of the nation. Everyone seemed to have some idea about who and what He was. Many saw Him as nothing more than a prophet. This was reflected in the disciple's answer to His piercing question, "Some [say] John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Israel could receive Jesus as a reincarnated prophet, but they had much higher hopes in the power of the promised Messiah. The lowly Jesus did not fit their expectation of a conquering emancipator who would free them from the yoke of Roman tyranny.

Now Jesus took His disciples a step further by asking them, "But who do you say that I am?" His questions were always designed to get men to think outside the box. In a bolt of inspiration Simon Peter answered, "[You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.](#)"

Jesus replied, "[Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. I also tell you that you are Peter \(*Petros*\), and on this rock \(*Petra*\) I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it](#)" (Matthew 16:17-18, NRSV). Again, consider the choice of words here. Simon, the name given Peter by his flesh and blood father, draws our attention to Peter's natural parentage, Simon son of Jonah. Jesus was saying that nothing Peter had received from his flesh and blood father could aid or share in this heavenly revelation. Peter did not envision who Jesus is because He possessed the cleverness of his earthly father, or because he had sat at the feet of Judaism's finest teachers. Natural abilities had no part in it whatsoever. "... the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63). Simply put, this revelation was about two fathers, one earthly and One heavenly, and their sons, one earthly and One heavenly, one impulsive and religious and the other simply obedient.

We are certain that Jonah took pride in the man that his son Simon had become. Simon had faithfully learned the family trade from his youth and had grown to share in the family values and was perhaps the mirror image of his earthly father. What more could a father want? As you look throughout scripture you will find that the divine rule of revelation is simply this, first the natural, then the spiritual. On the backdrop of Simon's

natural relationship to his earthly father, Jesus would showcase a divine relationship to His heavenly Father. But more, this occasion would serve as the opportune moment for the Father who is in heaven to proudly set His beloved Son on display.

So what does this have to do with the foundational rock (*Petra*) upon which Christ builds His called out assembly of living stones? What is the rock of the *ekklesia*? Is it, as some suppose, Peter (*Petros*)? Only if you can build a great house on a pebble. A *Petros* is not foundational material because it is a detached stone "that might be thrown or easily moved" (W. E. Vine). Peter was building material in the hands of God, as we all are, but this revelation was not all about Peter, anymore than what God is doing now is all about us. The *Petra* or massive foundational rock the called out community is built on is much larger than a *Petros*.

The words *on this rock I will build* imply a foundation. On this rock, upon this foundation, I will build my Church (see also Luke 6:47-49). So rather than ask if Peter was the rock in reference here, let us instead ask, "What is the foundation of the church?" This puts a different twist on it. If Peter were the foundation-rock being referred to here why are there no supporting scriptures to confirm this? Something as important as the foundation for God's temple of living stones should be consistently verified throughout the scriptures. If Peter were the rock, the foundation, surely the rest of the apostles would have hailed him as the rock and Peter would have shown up in the Book of Acts as the last word in all government and decision-making in the church. Surely, such an all-important point would have been included as fundamental in the teachings of the apostles.

No. It is certain that Peter, the small movable stone (*Petros*), was not the rock (*Petra*), the massive foundation of the *ekklesia*. The prophet Isaiah foretold just who that Rock and Foundation was to be when He said, "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily'" (Isaiah 28:16, NKJV). It is upon this Foundation where the living stones of God's temple find their rest.

If the rock of which Jesus speaks is not Peter, then the foundation or *Petra* of the called out assembly must be the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, right? Almost without exception this is the consensus throughout Protestantism today. Virtually all commentaries and Bible notes agree on this point. This does present a problem

however, when we consider that all of the disciples, with the exception of Judas, already believed that Jesus was the Christ, and if so, why did Jesus make such a big thing out of Peter's words? This was no new revelation to any of them. It is certain that this was the topic of discussion among them early on as they began to forsake all and follow Him. The message that Simon (Peter) heard from Andrew was, "We have found the Messiah!" [which is, being interpreted, Christ] (John 1:41). God had already opened their eyes to see Jesus as the Christ. Simon would never have left his nets had he not believed this anymore than men who believe Jesus was a mere "prophet" in many of the religions of the east follow Him today.

If the foundation-rock is not fully and completely Jesus' messiah-ship, then what is it? What was the new and blessed revelation that the Father showed to Peter? What was it in Peter's words that made Jesus commend him? What does the Father desire to reveal? To answer these questions, let us go back down to Jordan on that memorable day when John the Baptist humbly took Jesus out into the murky waters of the Jordan River to baptize Him. When Jesus came up from the water, John saw the heavens parting, and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. Then the voice of a delighted Father was heard from heaven saying, "[This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!](#)" (Matthew 3:17). The delight of the Father is the Son! Only the Father can reveal Him for "[No one knows who the Son is, except the Father](#)" (see Luke 10:22). To truly see the Son as He is, is to see the Father, for Jesus said, "[If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him](#)" (John 14:7, NKJV).

The great revelation to Peter, upon which the ekklesia or called out community is built, is "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Because God loved the world He sent to the world the purest expression of His love. He sent a Son who flawlessly expressed His brightness and express image (see Hebrews 1:3). The scripture does not say that God so loved the world that He gave the Messiah, although Jesus certainly is the Anointed One. Neither does it say, God so loved the world that He gave a prophet, although Jesus certainly was prophetic. No! God loved the world so much "that He gave His only begotten Son..." As a Father, God gave what was dearest to Him. We could have doubted His love if He had sent a prophet (and even doubted the authenticity of that prophet), but He loves us so much that He sent His only Son, the Son of His love. If you have children, try to put yourself in His place. Try to realize what a sacrifice it was and how it must have pained His fatherly heart to watch His only

begotten Son suffer so much rejection and the death of the cross. This is how much He loves you and me! If we do not comprehend this we will always remain unsure of God's love toward us. "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son (Galatians 4:4), not a prophet or teacher, but His Son. This is the revelation that the Pharisees could not receive, but that the demons cried out whenever they saw Jesus (See Matthew 8:29).

In Matthew 22:40 Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?" Jesus is doing it again. He's leading them. They answered, "The Christ is the Son of David." Wrong answer! Jesus replied, "Then why did David call him 'Lord'?" David, speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, said, "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit by me at my right side, until I put your enemies under your control" (Psalm 110:1). "David calls the Christ 'Lord,' so how can the Christ be his son?" None of the Pharisees could or would answer Jesus' question for there was obviously only one correct answer and they were either unable or unwilling to go there. To go there was to admit that Jesus had a higher position of authority than they did, and that they would not do for fear of losing their place (see John 11:45-48). Oh, how antichrist our pride, longing for power and position really is.

Jesus' words, "David calls the Christ 'Lord,' so how can the Christ be his son?" left them speechless and even more determined to do away with Him. Whose Son is the Christ? If He is not David's Son, then whose Son is He? By process of elimination, Jesus led them to the only possible conclusion. They were looking for the Messiah, the son of David. In all of their study of the scriptures, they had not seen the Christ, the Son of the living God. They couldn't see the blessed revelation that Peter saw! The bottom-line question is simply and always this: What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?

How casually and tritely do we believers today refer to Jesus as "the Son of God"? It has become something that we mindlessly parrot, but do we truly have the revelation of the Son? Has the Father revealed His Son to us and in us? The revelation of the Son is the foundational revelation of all that God is doing in this new and everlasting covenant and is key to understanding the Father's eternal purpose.

Jesus told Nicodemus that whosoever believes on the Son "[shall not perish but have everlasting life](#)" (John 3:16). This is critical, for it does not say that whosoever believes

that Jesus is the Messiah will have eternal life, but whosoever believes on the Son. This is no mere play on words. For the Son has "life in himself" (see John 5:26), and the Father desires "that everyone who sees the Son, and believes in Him, should have eternal life" (John 6:40). The life-giving question is simply this; do we see the Son? And if we see Him, do we believe in Him? The gospel and letters of John were written with this express purpose in mind.

"But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

"God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:11-12, NKJV)

"These things I have written to you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13)

"We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20)

This is the rock upon which the family of God is built--Christ, the Son of the living God. The Christian life is not about being good and moral. It is about us living in the Son and Him living in and through us. No matter how noble and praiseworthy our actions might be, they are unacceptable to the Father if they do not spring from the life of His Son.

May the Father reveal to us what it means to believe on and abide in the name of the Son of God! That we could "live by the faith of the Son" (Galatians 2:20), and experience the very life within that created all things and gave them life, that life eternal that existed in Father and in the Son before the world began. This eternal life is in the Son of God! Do we really know what it means to abide in Him and so doing, abide in eternal life? "He who has the Son has life. He who doesn't have God's Son doesn't have the life." May the Father in heaven open our eyes to see His beloved Son, that we, in deeper and deeper measure, might believe on His name!

The ekklesia or called out community is gathered and built upon the revelation of Christ as the Son. His ekklesia is not an institution but a family in which all who believe in Him are siblings because they have the same Father. God works continuously by His Spirit in those who are called sons to create the family likeness in us and transform us

into the image of His Son, Jesus. As a family, we are taught by Jesus to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name." What is His hallowed name if it is not Father? If He is our Father, then we must be sons and daughters. Apostle Paul wrote, "[For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named](#)" (Ephesians 3:14-15). The Rock is the Son and the church is the family. God sent His Son for the express purpose of bringing many sons (a large family) unto glory (Hebrews 2:10).

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis wrote:

Its very first words [of the Lord's Prayer] are Our Father. Do you see what those words mean? They mean quite frankly, that you are putting yourself in the place of the son of God. To put it bluntly, you are dressing up as Christ. If you like, you are pretending. Because, of course the moment you realize what the word means, you realize that you are not a son of God. You are not being like The Son of God, whose will and interests are at one with those of the Father: you are a bundle of self-centered fears, hopes, greeds, jealousies, and self-conceit, all doomed to death. So that, in a way, this dressing up as Christ is a piece of outrageous cheek. But the odd thing is that He has ordered us to do it... For you are no longer thinking about right and wrong; you are trying to catch the good infection from a Person. It is more painting a portrait than like obeying a set of rules. And the odd thing is that while in one way it is much harder than keeping rules, in another way it is far easier.

The real Son of God is at your side. He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of thing as Himself. He is beginning, so to speak, to "inject" His kind of life and thought, His Zoe, into you; beginning to turn the tin soldier (the first Adam) into a living man (the last Adam). The part of you that does not like it is the part that is still tin ...

Jesus wasn't sent unto us as a prophet like Elijah, Jeremiah or John the Baptist. He was sent as a Son to provoke us into son-ship with His Father! He wasn't a messenger. He was more than that. He WAS the Message--the very Word of God.

Are We Mere Messengers or Sons?

The author of the book of Hebrews labored to make this critical point in the early chapters. His point was simply that the Son is superior to messengers because He brings a superior revelation of the Father. The Son brings "the brightness and express image" of the Father. Messengers bring a word, while the Son is the Word. Regardless

of how glorious the messenger is or how accurate his message may be, he pales in comparison to the Son who bears the substance, the reality, the brightness and the express image of God's very being. It is this great truth that distinguishes the Son from mere messengers, prophetic or angelic, who speak in fragmented parts and portions (see Hebrews 1:1). It is this very comparison that the author of Hebrews made, in his introduction to "the book of better things."

In many parts, and many ways, God of old having spoken to the fathers in the prophets, in these last days did speak to us in a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He did make the ages; who being the brightness of the glory, and the impress of His subsistence [the state of existing in reality], bearing up also all things by the saying of His might--through himself having made a cleansing of our sins, sat down at the right hand of the greatness in the highest, having become so much better than the messengers (*aggelos*), as he did inherit a more excellent name than they.

For to which of the messengers said He ever, "My Son you are -- I today have begotten you?" and again, "I will be to him for a father, and he shall be to Me for a son?" and when again He may bring in the first-born to the world, He says, "And let them bow before him -- all messengers of God"; and unto the messengers, indeed, He says, "Who is making His messengers spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire; and unto the Son: Your throne, O God, [is] to the age of the age; a scepter of righteousness [is] the scepter of your reign ..." (Hebrews 1:1-8 RYLT).

Note the language of family here; a Son, the Son, My Son, begotten, Father, First-born. The importance of this will become clearer as we progress.

We are aware that what we are about to write will probably not be well received by those who call themselves "prophets." For some, losing their place, title and ministry and growing up into sons who only seek glory for the Father is just too high a price to pay. The scriptures speak of a day when prophesying in part will vanish away as well as knowing in part. All prophecy is according to knowledge and is therefore in part (see 1 Corinthians 13:9). Paul wrote, "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Corinthians. 13:10). The Father has a day in view when we will no longer speak in fractured parts, as did the prophets of old. As His sons we are called to manifest the brightness and image of the Father, not in mere words, but in our very being.

The prophets spoke in "many fragments and by various methods" (Hebrews. 1:1, Weymouth), giving an incomplete revelation of God's being and will. "The truth as a whole never comes to light in the O. T." (Vincent). But in these last days God has clearly and fully spoken by a Son. This is very important! For a critical comparison is made here between the Son and prophetic and angelic messengers. A messenger brings a fragmented and partial message. The Son is the "flawless expression of the nature of God, himself the upholding principle of all that is." (J. B. Phillips). One brings a word, the other brings the Reality. As Jesus told Philip, "If you have seen me, Philip, you have seen the Father."

In this passage, the words *a Son* put the emphasis, not just upon Jesus, the Son, but also on the principle of son-ship as a truer and more complete representation of God. Jesus certainly is the Son and we are careful not to take away from that! But first we must consider Jesus as a Son and what this means to those who are predestined to be conformed to His image (Romans 8:29). The emphasis here is not only upon the only begotten Son but also upon the Firstborn of many brethren. He is the Son, but He is also a Son, one of many. Jesus is the Firstborn of many sons. Sons communicate the image of the Father with an effectiveness that is well beyond the abilities of prophets and angels.

We see then that words are a secondary and inferior means of expression even when spoken by the best redeemed men and the most gifted prophet and teacher. As one dear old saint put it, "At best we are speaking the languages of Babel." When Paul was taken up into the third heaven he saw things that were "unlawful to utter." They were beyond words. Only God is glorious and He has chosen to communicate His glory with many sons through a communication that goes far beyond words. Sons have no glory of their own. Their glory is the brightness and exact image of their Father. Like the Son who prayed "[Now, Father, glorify me with Your Own self](#)" (John 17:5), sons have denied their own glory. They seek to be adorned with God's own self, manifesting only Him. This is what makes sons better than mere messengers, apostles, prophets, teachers, etc., though these too can manifest the Father only as much as they are His sons. Note that it takes many sons and daughters in Christ to fully manifest the Son, so not only do we as sons not take away from the glory of the Son, rather we bring it forth as many lights shining throughout a dark world. "[For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light](#)" (Ephesians 5:8, NKJV).

The Least in the Kingdom

God said, "Behold, I will send my messenger (Hebrew malak, Greek aggelos), and he shall prepare the way before me" (Malachi 3:1, Matthew 11:10). This is a prophecy about the coming of the forerunner, John the Baptist. God showed John great honor by calling him "my messenger." And yet, Jesus said of John, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11, RSV).

The key to understanding this passage is found in the two phrases, *born of women* and *in the kingdom*. John was an Old Testament Prophet who was killed before the kingdom he preached had fully come. He was once-born, born of a woman but those in the kingdom of the Father are twice born. If they weren't they could not be in the kingdom. What is born of the flesh is still flesh. What is born of the Spirit is spirit, and one cannot see or enter the kingdom of God unless he is born (Fathered) again (see John 3:3, 5). Those in the kingdom are not just men of God but sons of God, born of the Father, and the least of these are greater than any prophet.

The prophet Moses was called "the man of God" (Ezra 3:2). He was never referred to as a son of God. None of the prophets received this distinction. No doubt they were great among those born of women, but "to whom of the messengers said He at any time, "My Son art thou! I, today, have begotten Thee'? And again, "I shall be to Him for a Father and He shall be to me for a Son'?" (Hebrews 1:5 CLNT).

Jesus was the perfect Son, reflecting the exact imprint of God's very being. The same is true of mature sons. They corporately are called to a higher expression. They are called to be transformed into the image of the Son and to reflect the brightness and image of God the Father. They bring more than a message. They are the message--living epistles!

Many years ago I, Michael, had prayed, "Father, make me like your Son, so that I only do the works I see you doing and only speak the words I hear you saying." I had just enough time to think to myself, "Wow, that sure was a righteous prayer," when I heard the Lord say, "No, my son, that is only the starting point." Shortly after that I was teaching a home Bible study to a group of saints. After the meeting was over a dear older sister named Mary came up to me and said, "That was a good message you just gave. But God wants you to know that when He is done with you, you will not have to

prepare a message. You will be the message!" Over the years of trials and wilderness that He has put me through since, I have never forgotten her words. True transformation only comes by the working of the cross that deals with the propensity to do what we want and speak our minds. Death to this childish behavior is worth it, for the call of God is always upward toward His Pattern Son. I do not say that I have "arrived," but rather I do see now that it is not about me but about the Message in me.

We are fully aware that most translators have indiscriminately translated *aggelos* (messenger) as *angel* unless forced to do otherwise by the context of the scripture. In many cases they have been correct. But we must be careful to note the repeated references to prophetic messengers in the early chapters of Hebrews. Even as far as chapter three the comparison of the superiority of a Son to prophetic messengers is still being made. The author of Hebrews was clearly trying to accentuate this point. He seemed to shift back and forth between prophetic messengers and angelic messengers, both of which are inferior in witness to the least in the kingdom of heaven.

Although Moses "was faithful in all His house," (Hebrews 3: 2) this one (Jesus, the Son) "has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house" (verse 3). Then we come to verse six, which begins, "But Christ was faithful as a son." Moses was faithful as a prophet and we are thankful that he was, but Jesus was faithful as a Son! This is the faithfulness that every born-again believer is called to. Not just a faith expressed in words, but one that is modeled as true sons and daughters of the Father who are the radiance of His glory and the representation of His essence.

In Jewish society there was a strong tendency to elevate dead prophetic messengers beyond what is reasonable. They proudly decorated the tombs of the prophets in an effort to apologize for and distance themselves from their forefathers who had brutally killed these men of God. So elevating departed messengers had become a national tradition, one that even Peter, James and John would endeavor to keep on that fateful day when they went up with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. There they saw Jesus speaking with two of Israel's favorite messengers, Moses and Elijah. They were superstars among the prophets. Understandably then, Peter wanted to do right by them all without distinction, making three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Now that sounds equitable, doesn't it? But in doing so Peter was not only trying to enshrine the moment, but was clearly putting Moses and Elijah on the same

level with God's Son. He was bringing the Son down to the level of a mere prophetic messenger. Speaking of Peter, the narrative says, "for he knew not what he said." Then God's corrective voice thundered from heaven, "[This is My beloved Son. Hear Him.](#)"

By and large the emphasis among God's people today is placed upon the accuracy of the message and great importance is placed on messengers and teachers in our gatherings. This is reflected by an untold number of doctrines, creeds and bylaws that are as varied as they are numerous. We take great care with our words. The centerpiece in our meetings is the podium and the foremost function is sermonizing. Therefore, the greatest among us are those who are eloquent and educated, who alone are deemed worthy to be elevated to this venerated place and function. If you do not believe this, just look at the list of titles and degrees that bracket their names like a gilded frame around a portrait. But God is seeking those who will not glorify themselves, but rather Glorify Him. He still puts His treasures in common earthen vessels and uses the weak and the foolish to confound the mighty and the wise of this world.

Speech in our culture is very important, but imagine for a moment, if you can, that by some miracle we were unable to speak, how would we communicate our faith to others? Even more, how would we reveal the Father to this dying world? There is only one way and that is the radiance and express image of God within and without His saints. As a Son, Jesus bore God's express image. Yes, He did preach the good news to the poor, but only after He was the manifestation of His Father. This is the calling of all sons and daughters of God. If we do not know Jesus as a Son, we cannot understand our relationship as sons to the Father. Jesus did not suffer and die to bring many apostles, many prophets, many evangelists, many pastors and teachers, but many sons unto glory! It is these who have the power to be witness of the Father's kingdom.

The Firstborn Leading Many Sons

In Hebrews chapter one, verse six, Jesus is referred to as the Firstborn. This tells us two things. One, Jesus is like the firstborn son in the Old Testament who has a superior position and receives the full inheritance of his father (See Exodus 4:22, Deuteronomy 21:16, 17). And two, "firstborn" implies that there is more than one child.

The development of God's eternal purpose in His Firstborn Son is found in Hebrews 2:9-10. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain [747 *archegos*] of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:9-10 NKJV). Jesus is the *archegos*, the leader of a file or column, the start of a glorious series of sons--"the general assembly and church of the firstborn." (See Hebrews 12:23).

The Biblical scholar Daniel Steele explains,

There is one word in the Greek Testament that exactly describes this relation of Jesus to the development of the sons of God. The term *archegos* is unfortunately translated by three different English words in the only four passages in which it occurs. It is compounded of two Greek words, signifying, beginning and leading. The best Saxon rendering is file-leader. Thus declares Peter in his indictment of the Jews: "And killed the file-leader of life, whom God hath raised from the dead" (Acts iii. 15). Again, before the Sanhedrim he utters these sublime words: "Him hath God exalted with (or at) His right hand to be a file-leader and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v. 31). The office of Christ as the beginner of a glorious series is strikingly set forth in Heb. ii. 10: "For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the file-leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Here we see, not with the eye of a poet's fancy, but with the anointed vision of inspiration, Jesus Christ marching at the head of a long column, "many sons," leading them into the wide open portals of heaven, till they stand at last in the blaze of its innermost glory, a circle around the throne upon which He sits down.

In chapter one of Hebrews we see a Son, the "only begotten Son"; in chapter two we see many sons. Between the only begotten Son and many sons stood the cross. So it was that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. Jesus spoke of this in the language of agriculture. "Most assuredly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat (the Son) falls into the earth and dies (the cross), it remains by itself alone (the only begotten of the Father). But if it dies, it bears much fruit (firstborn among many brethren, bringing many sons unto glory)" (John 12:24).

It is imperative that we comprehend Jesus as a Son and that we see His son-ship as the rock upon which the church is built. The revelation of Jesus as a Son is foundational to the realization of God's fatherly desire to have a large family, all bearing the family resemblance or image.

Son-ship implies likeness. Those who are born of God are sons of God, predestined to be transformed into the image of the Son. The more accurately we see Him the more we are changed into His image, the image of God. The importance of accurately beholding the Pattern Son cannot be overstated. The more we see Him as He is, the more we are changed into the same image. This is the "revival" so desperately needed among God's people today and nothing less!

True reformation has nothing to do with fixing and repairing an ecclesiastical system, but is the result of a Spirit-wrought revelation of Christ, the Son. This revelation brought forth in many sons in the Book of Acts was what turned the known world on its ear. There is no true and lasting change without it. All that is right and eternal springs from the Son. The power to be a witness of the kingdom comes from a personal revelation of Christ the Son.

Unless the Father glorifies His Son in our eyes, we will never be able to make Him glorious to others. Unless He is revealed in us we can never truly communicate Him to a lost world. The world is not Christ-less for lack of hearing our words about Jesus. They remain Christ-less for the lack of seeing Him as He is, the exact image of God. That image is to be seen in many sons as members of His body. (See 1 Corinthians. 6:15).

Glory is like a circle where participants are giving honor to the others in that circle, and never taking honor to themselves. This is the nature of agape love in action. The Son glorifies the Father. The Father glorifies the Son. As the saints through the Spirit of Christ give glory to the Father and are conformed into the image of the Son, they are taken up into that same glory circle.

"Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You"(John 17:1, NKJV). Earlier something very significant happened when Jesus prayed, "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save Me from this hour"? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 'Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, saying,

'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.' Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to Him.' Jesus answered and said, 'This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.'" (John 12:27-30, NKJV). The Father answered, "I have both glorified it and WILL glorify it again." Then He said the voice came for our sake. What was he speaking of if it was not "many sons unto glory," the path of the cross? (See also John 11:40, 13:32, 14:13, 15:8, 16:14, 17:4, 17:5, 17:10, 17:22, 17:24, 21:19).

In Revelation chapter four we see an interesting passage that speaks of the glory that exists between the Father and the saints.

The twenty-four elders were adorned by the Father with white robes and crowns. Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (Revelation 4:9-11, NKJV).

Twenty-four elders were all wearing white robes and golden crowns and sitting on thrones, but whenever the four living creatures before the throne of God start giving glory to the Father, the elders left their thrones and cast their crowns down before them, lying prostrate before Him. This demonstrates the nature of this "glory circle," a desire to always give glory to the other and never take it to yourself. This is worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth. This is the heart of the sons of God. This is true sonship in action!

We are sons not because we try to live the good Christian life, but because Father has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:6-7, NKJV). True Christianity consists of the indwelling Son living out His devotion to Abba through us. Paul wrote of this in Galatians 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

It Is Not All About Us!

Son-ship is central to everything. The eternal Father sent His eternal Son to accomplish His eternal purpose in bringing many sons to glory. The popular salvation message we hear today focuses primarily upon our inheritance in Christ and leads the new believer to conclude that God's sole purpose in sending His Son was for our blessing and pleasure alone. It is perceived as a message that is all about us! To believe this narrow perspective is to believe that Christ died for no greater end than that we might live a feel-good Christian life and, after we die, go to heaven and spend eternity in heavenly ease and bliss.

I, Michael, recently visited many of the nation's monuments and parks in the western United States with my daughter, Dinah, and her daughter. One of them was the famed Mount Rushmore. There in a museum I saw the words of Thomas Jefferson engraved in granite. They were from the Declaration of Independence and read:

"We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

It seems this is the gospel of the modern Christian. Sorry, but this is not the whole purpose of God and His creation of mankind. The only true life and liberty we can have is in Christ. The pursuit of happiness is not our goal as sons of God, but rather the pursuit of His perfect will on earth as it is in heaven. David wrote, "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the LORD his God" (Psalms 146:5, NKJV). Happiness is like a butterfly. As long as you give chase it will flutter and flit here and there and you will wear yourself out and never catch it. Should you stop pursuing, sit down and be very still it might light upon your shoulder.

Today among Christians there is little talk of God's inheritance in the saints. The purpose of Christ's redemptive work is clearly seen in His first message to His disciples after His resurrection. He appeared to Mary Magdalene and said, "[Don't touch me, for I haven't yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brothers, and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'](#)" (John 20:17). Jesus didn't die on Calvary to birth an institution. He died as the Only Begotten of the Father that He might become the firstborn of many brethren. He suffered the horrors of Calvary so that He could have brothers and the Father could have many adopted sons.

He did not die so God could become the cornucopia of blessings for my life, the facilitator of my goals, the guardian who insures my pursuit of happiness. Nothing could be more fulfilling than knowing the life in the Son, but we so often forfeit that high calling for something much lower, giving the eternal for a bit of the temporal (see 2 Corinthians. 4:16-18). Christ died and rose again for the Father's glory and to bless the Father's by making us His sons and daughters, living for His glory, bearing His image!

Satan tried to throw Jesus off course by tempting Him to "get a piece of the rock," here and now, but this was not His character, His name and or His nature. He withstood every temptation that the enemy offered. Later He told His disciples, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13, NKJV). When Jesus said, in my name, He meant much more than just adding His name at the end of a prayer. To ask in Christ's name is first to ask in His character, His passion for the Father's glory. If we are praying purely for our own interests, seeking our own glory, we are not asking in Christ's name. The Son seeks only the glory of The Father and the Father is glorified only in the Son.

God does not ask us, like so many orphans, to struggle and strain to become like His Son. His way of enabling and empowering us is to show us His Son that He might, by His Spirit, transform us into that very image. Just as God revealed to John an open door in the heavens before He invited him to come up here (see Revelation 4:1), so it is with the Father. He reveals the Son as an invitation to come up here, to be transformed, to be borne on the wings of His Spirit to the heights and to enter the realities of Him who is the Father's delight and see things which must shortly come to pass. Paul wrote:

"Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. . . But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror (a darkened glass) the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. . . But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has

shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 3:16-18, 4:3-6, NKJV)

The glorious truth of the New Covenant is this: we all are called to behold the glory of the Lord, and be transformed into the same image. We never preach about ourselves or our needs. Rather we preach in word and in deed that Christ is the Image of God. And the God of creation who first commanded light to shine out of darkness, who said let there be light and there was light, is still commanding the light of His glory to shine forth in our hearts. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ and we are changed from glory to glory as we behold Him.

This redemption in the ultimate, ongoing sense is more than a one-time act of believing on the finished work of Christ! Full redemption includes restoration, which means bringing something back to its former glory and wholeness. But even more is included here. For in Christ, the Son, man is restored beyond the fractured, empty image of the first Adam.

Not so long ago, the space shuttle, Columbia, blew apart on reentry. There is a giant hanger in Texas with many of the shuttle's parts strewn across the floor. The sum of all these parts still does not show the image of the space shuttle in its former glory. At best they give a hint of what it might have been. So it is with man. Since Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree, they also blew apart what was meant to be the express image and likeness of God.

The Image of God

The Apostle Paul tells us that the degeneration of society and the Church that is adversely influenced by that society is the sad consequence of "changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man." (See Romans 1:23-25). Without doubt the world is reeling from the effects of this. History bears this out.

In the period known as the Dark Ages, Jesus, the image of God, was portrayed as the austere head of an ecclesiastical order in both the art of that period and the doctrines of the fallen church. He was viewed as severe and stern in disposition. The poor, loving and lowly itinerate Jesus was veiled, and another Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 11:4), adorned in gold and silver and bedecked in the purple of lavish royal robes was set before the eyes of the people. And they cowered in fear before the image they created.

These were dark days indeed! Ecclesiastical leaders succeeded in changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man. They had created a Jesus in their own image. Throughout the reformation, society was directly impacted to the degree that Christ, the image of God, was seen. As Christ was seen for whom He is, society and the church were changed. Art changed. Science changed. Everything began to reflect the image.

True Christianity is all about God creating His image and likeness in fallen man, and in so doing, raising him up into His glory. All His dealings have this end in view. He has purposed that all things should be conformed to the true image of Christ. In Christ, God is once again saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . ." (Genesis 1:26).

In the beginning, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:27). The Hebrew word for *image* in the above passage is *tselem*--empty, image, semblance (Strong). In Psalm 39:6, *tselem* is translated *shadow*. "Surely every man walks about like a shadow (*tselem*); Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them" (Psalm 39:6, NKJV). In the New American Bible this verse reads, "Mere phantoms, (*tselem*) we go our way; mere vapor, our restless pursuits; we heap up stores without knowing for whom" (Psalm 39:6).

W.E. Vine gives us a fuller sense of its meaning. "*tselem* . . . a thing which represents the original more closely but lacks its essential characteristic (reality) . . . the word represents a 'dream image'. "As glorious as Adam and Eve were, they still comprised only a dream image, an empty image of God yet to realize its fullness. Adam and Eve lacked completeness. They were a work in progress."

God first creates and then He fills. He created the earth and then He filled it with plants and living creatures. He created the oceans and then He filled them with fish. He created man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life and he became a living soul. He then created Eve out of Adam. Adam and Eve were created and animated by God, but it yet remained for them to be filled with His fullness. God had much more in store for them. They could have freely eaten of the tree of life, and embarked upon an endless and boundless discovery of their Creator. They could have been filled with His fullness, but tragically, they ate from a tree that had a different

effect altogether. They ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and became self-aware (covering their nakedness) rather than God-aware. Now they were overcome with desires and passions for good and for evil that did not come from their heavenly Father.

They had received the empty image of God, but had yet to grow into the likeness (Hebrew *demooth*) of God. This Hebrew word *demooth* does not mean similarity but "one likeness." Ezekiel said of the four angelic beings that he saw in a vision, "[And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness \(*demooth*\).](#)" (Ezekiel 10:10). They had a shared likeness. As applied to Adam and Eve, *demooth* means the exact likeness of God, which they were predestined, through growth and development, to be conformed to. When we consider that God is Spirit, this likeness must consist of more than merely looking like God in image (as a mere photograph), but being like Him in essence. This is the reality that the last Adam, the Son of God, the quickening Spirit, brings to those who believe on His name. In Him we are invited to be partakers of the divine nature (See 2 Peter 1:4), and to become one spirit with Him. "[But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit](#)" (1 Corinthians 6:17). The first Adam never realized this likeness for he was only two-dimensional at best.

To keep them from eating from the tree of life and living forever in their fallen state, adding evil to evil, God drove Adam and Eve from paradise and they began to die in their sin. Thus humankind was temporarily denied the complete filling they were created for. Fallen man remains an empty image, craving the fullness and likeness. He endeavors to fill the void within him with the good and evil of this world. But nothing of this kosmos can quench his insatiable thirst for fullness. He is driven to fill an emptiness that echoes in the center of his being "You are unfinished! You are empty! You are incomplete! You have the image but you lack the likeness!"

Christ Jesus, the Tree of Life, is God's answer for man's emptiness. He is the "fullness of Him who fills all things." Through His redemptive work the way to the Tree of Life is once again open, and we can know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge. We can "be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). Man was not just created to bear God's image but to be filled with God's fullness. Man is a mere vessel that remains unfulfilled as long as he is image without likeness.

Unlike fallen man who bears the empty form of God, Christ in His fullness is God's brightness and express image. We need a fresh revelation of Christ, the Son of the living God, and to be filled with the fullness of Him!

(Note: Where the word *image* [Greek *eikon*] is used in this context in the New Testament, it speaks of a complete manifestation of the thing it represents, whereas the Hebrew word for image in the Genesis account is a mere shadow. See 2 Corinthians 4:4-7.)

In his book *The Ultimate Intention*, DeVern Fromke wrote:

Recently I learned that the word "renew" in Isaiah 40:30 really means "exchange." Thus the text could correctly read, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall exchange their strength." This is the secret! The Christian exchanges his old manner of life and resources for the new. Weakness is exchanged for strength.

I suppose (says A. W. Tozer), it is improper to say that God makes His people strong, but we must understand this to mean that they become strong in exact proportion to their weakness; the weakness being their own and the strength being God's. 'When I am weak then am I strong' is the way Paul said it, and in so saying set a pattern for every believer. What has happened is that he has switched from his little human battery to the infinite power of God.

Now remember we are still considering God's plan for our participation, appropriation and qualifying. This was God's first plan which has in no sense been changed by sin or the Fall . . . we shall see that men have become so engrossed in the wonders of salvation they have missed the larger intention of God for His sons.

We are called not merely to receive His life, imparted by the new birth; we are called to a full participation in the life of Christ. We are called not merely to enjoy the bud, but to allow full blossoming of the flower. Let no one who is still allowing the selfish purpose of life (of the first Adam) to dominate, imagine that he is to any measure participating in this divine life. Jesus Christ will only live one kind of life in us: a life poured out unto the Father and for others. It is the snare of this present hour that men seem to want a crisis-impartation of His life for themselves but have little interest in daily manifesting His life unto God.

The Son Is the Restored Image of God

Luke traces the lineage of Christ all the way back to "Adam, which was the son of God" (Luke 3:38). Paul called him the First Adam. As the son of God, Adam, in his emptiness, "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth" (Genesis 5:3). Mankind was created to bear God's image, likeness and fullness but for the next 4,000 years he would bear the image and emptiness of the First Adam. Man had become a chip off the old block.

But then, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son, the Last Adam, to birth a new humanity that would once again be given the privilege of pursuing the fullness and bearing the true image and likeness of God. Jesus is called the Last Adam because He is the last word in what man is to become. Jesus came to His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him and believed on His name, to them He gave the power (the legal right or power of attorney) to become the sons of God. (See John 1:11-12). Adam was created to reflect his Creator-Father. Likewise, all new creatures in Christ have been called to be sons and as sons are called to reflect the glory and likeness of their heavenly Father. That's what sons do! They reflect their Father! They're the spitting-image of their Dad. John described Jesus' glory in these terms, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, NRSV).

We catch a glimpse of the glorious fellowship between the Father and the Son in John chapter seventeen, as Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may also glorify you...Now, Father, glorify me with Your Own self, with the glory which I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:1, 5). Contained in this high-priestly prayer of the Son to the Father is the secret of His glorious-ness. Wasn't the Son glorious in Himself? Yes! But clearly a far greater glory is in reference here. The Son could not glorify the Father, in the fullest sense, unless the Father glorified Him, "Glorify your Son, that your Son may also glorify you." Why? Because the glory of the Son is the Father's own self.

As it was with the only begotten Son so it is with all sons. We are not called to reflect our own glory! We are called, as Jesus was, to reflect the glorious image of our Father. But that image is not a dream image, a shadowy imprint, as it was with Adam. We are called to share in the likeness, fullness and glory of the Son who is glorified with God's own self.

Jesus goes on to express His desire "that they (all disciples everywhere, throughout all time) may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:21). The operative word here is in. The only way that I can be one with God is for God to be in me and the only way we can truly be one with others is for God to be in us as He is in them. John wrote, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7, NKJV). Here is fellowship and here is our cleansing from all that is of the first Adam.

The opening words of John's first epistle consist of an open invitation into the fellowship and glory of the Father and His Son. "We are writing to you about something which has always existed yet which we ourselves actually heard and saw with our own eyes: something which we had opportunity to observe closely and even to hold in our hands, something of the Word of life! For it was life which appeared before us: we saw it, we are eyewitnesses of it, and are now writing to you about it. It was the very life of all ages, the life that has always existed with the Father, which actually became visible in person to us. We repeat, we really saw and heard what we are now writing to you about. We want you to be with us in this--in this fellowship with the Father, and Jesus Christ His Son" (1 John 1: 1-5 Phillips). This is the true ground of unity!

This is the greatest witness that Jesus is the Son, and was sent by the Father. When the world sees the Father's own self reflected through many sons it will be without excuse. The call of son-ship is far greater than that of mere messengers because sons are called to be glorified with God's own self. This is the greatest witness of all! All creation attests to this from the First Adam, the son of God, to the Last Adam the Son of God. He is taking our captivity captive and giving us the gift of also becoming God's own sons.

All creation bears witness to the paternal heart of the Eternal Father. All creation that has seed within itself attests that God's purposes are seminal, containing the seeds of later development that should come to fruition in the fullness of time. This is the purpose man was originally created for. It is the purpose that was gloriously modeled by Christ, "the seed," the only begotten of the Father, the pattern Son. It is the reason that the only begotten of the Father became the first born among many brethren (many sons).

From Children to Sons -- Changed into His Likeness

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:1-2, NKJV) Selah! Pause and thoughtfully reflect on that for a moment!

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he says in chapter thirteen, "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:10-12).

I, Michael, used to work in the security business and installed closed circuit TV and alarms in banks and business. Many of these businesses had two-way mirrors installed, which were used by the store detectives. They could stand behind them and observe the customers without being seen and catch shoplifters in the act. Customers never knew when they were being observed or not. I discovered that you can defeat a two-way mirror by blocking out the light with cupped hands against the mirror and your face. If the reflective side was darker than the viewing side, you can defeat it. A child or someone not trained in these things looks in this modern "glass darkly" and sees his own reflection, thinking it is a normal mirror. They might even look in it to comb their hair or, like infants, crawl up to their own image and want to play.

What does this have to do with the kingdom of God and seeing God? Since the fall of man, he has chosen his own light (he has become "wise"), and it has blinded him from seeing God as He is. The trouble with looking into a darkened glass or mirror is that the first image we see is our own!

This is what happens to people under the law. The law is weak through the flesh in that when a man looks into it all he can see is his natural face. (See James 1:23.) The difference between children (under the law or "schoolmaster," see Galatians 4) and sons is that sons do not behold their own image in a darkened glass; their maturity enables them to see beyond that. They see through the darkened glass and behold the

glory of the Lord, with open face and are changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). They eagerly await the day when they shall no longer know in part. They look forward to that full day when they shall know even as they are known. They long for that day when their view of Him is no longer darkened by their own reflection but they shall see Him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). Sons look into the scriptures and no longer see their own image. They no longer see a god that is aligned with their own desires and needs. They no longer look for passages that justify their own lusts. They read the scriptures looking for the image of their Father and His needs and desires. They look in the glass and see the glory of the Son.

It is disturbing when we see God's people reading their Bibles purely to find promises that they can use to get something from God. "God give me a newer car and a bigger home! Bless my family! Prosper my soul, expand my boundaries," and so forth. These look into the glass and see only themselves. They do not see the glorious Son, the image of God, who can change myopic, selfish children into glorious sons!

We start out as mere children in His kingdom, speaking as children, understanding as children, and thinking as children. It is all about us. We see the kingdom in terms of our salvation, our callings, our ministries, our comfort, our needs and provisions. But just how did Jesus see the kingdom of His Father? He said that the works that He did were only the works that He saw His Father doing and the words that He spoke were His Father's words. His life was lived to the Father. Jesus was not even worried about eating. When the disciples came back to Him out of the Samaritan village with food, He answered, "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work." Now that is God's weight loss plan! Jesus no longer thought, understood, or spoke as a mere child. He acted and spoke as a son. Sons are taken up with the will of their fathers. Children are taken up with their own wishes and desires.

Carnal man will never see God as He is, but rather see Him as a mixture composed from the lusts of his own heart. Jesus said it clearly in the sermon of the mount, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The double minded man with one eye on the kingdom of God and the other on his own will always be unstable in all his ways. Unless the eye be single, the whole body will never be filled with light.

Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one, as You, Father, [are] in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." How often I,

Michael, read this prayer that we, the church, might be one in each other, but no, that is not what He prayed. Rather He prayed that we might all be one in the Father and the Son. This is what it means to be heavenly sons. Unity with one another in the church can only be true unity as much as we are individually one in Him (1 John 1:7). This comes as we behold the Son and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. It is not about us (i.e., thinking like a child), but it is all about the Son who is the very image of God. We must look beyond the reflection in the mirror, leaving our carnal senses behind and start seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching with spiritual senses. We must "taste and see that the Lord is good." We must do the works we see our Father doing. We must speak the words we hear our Father saying. In this we will touch the heart of God and smell His sweet aroma--all with new senses that are part of our being born of the Spirit. We must go beyond merely being born of the flesh.

As we mature into sons, we are urged to put away childish things. Sons are mature and reflect the love of God, which is the seal of perfection or maturity. The greatest witness of our son-ship is God's love. When agape love is fully developed in us, all those other gifts that are given to build up the body, in love, will have fulfilled their purpose and no longer hold our attention. ["When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" \(1 Corinthians 13:10\)](#). Sadly, many of God's children find their purpose and identity in the gifts and make the gifts the end. When they get a "ministry," they cease their quest to be conformed into the image of the Son. They have taken their eyes off the goal.

Natural children rarely focus on more than one thing at a time. To them the immediate thing is the eminent thing. The only thing they see is the thing that is dangling before their eyes at any given moment. Being egocentric, children relate all things to themselves, taking whatever they can get their little hands on and making it their own unique property. This is often accompanied by the screams, "Mine! Mine!"

Children also have a misguided sense of value. They fight over bottle caps and trample pearls. The same is true with the Lord's toddlers. You can hear their baby talk reverberating throughout the hallowed halls of Christendom today, "Jesus is Mine! The gifts of the Spirit are Mine! My Church, My pastor, My, My, My. Salvation is Mine, the most important ministry is My ministry." In making God's gifts and graces the end or goal, many make attaining this goal so large in their eyes that they cannot see over, under, around or through to the eternal purposes of God. To them, the gifts and graces

of God were given for no greater purpose than to make the holder powerful and of high esteem.

God does not give spiritual gifts as a father gives toys to his children, to be used for their amusement and pleasure. He doesn't give them so that one can say, "I am a prophet" and another, "I am a pastor" and another, "I am an evangelist," or "This is My church and My congregation." It is time to put away such childishness. Spiritual gifts are given for a far greater purpose than this. Gifts are given to men "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13, NKJV).

Mature sons recognize that it is not all about them. They have seen through the many shortfalls and pitfalls of temporary things and pressed on for the eternal. They see all things in relation to their Father's interests. Their eyes are not on the gift but on the Giver. Certainly we should unselfishly exercise the gifts that Christ gives us for the maturing of His body. But we must keep the goal before us; we must remember that these gifts are given to bring a desired end, and work with Him toward that end, never allowing the means to eclipse His greater purpose, many sons unto glory.

The Divine Process

There are children of God and then there are sons. There is a divine process through which God makes His children into sons. Paul wrote:

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children (Greek Teknon - little children) of God, and if children, then heirs (kleronomos - one who receives his allotted possession by right of son-ship) --heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:16-17, NKJV)

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. (Hebrews 12:5-8, NKJV)

As you can see, the Father does not passively sit by and watch us grow up into whatever we will. This lack of maturity is all too common in the world today. Often we see couples who are still ruled by their own childish natures raising their own children. In his foolish wisdom that is against God and His ways, man has rewritten the book on child rearing and stricken the chapter that deals with chastisement to his own peril. Lawlessness is everywhere you look, but true sons of God follow after the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. They embrace the chastisement of the Father and the cross of the Son in their lives.

We do not necessarily ascribe to the teaching known as "the manifest sons of God," but neither do we believe that scriptures should be removed from the Bible because they have been misused. The following scripture is one that has been ignored because of its misuse in the past. Let's not toss the baby out with the bath water for there is a wealth of understanding in it. So please bear with us as we view this passage again with new eyes.

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing (used of events by which things or states or persons hitherto withdrawn from view are made visible to all) of the sons [*huios*--mature sons--come to fullness] of God." (Romans 8:19, RSV)

All that is really being said here is that in God's economy there will be a full-grown manifestation of the sons of God that hitherto has not been seen. In the scheme of seedtime and harvest, there yet remains the full fruition, the full corn in the ear. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but . . . we shall be like Him."

We have already mentioned Hebrews 2:10 and God's desire to bring many sons unto glory. This does not necessarily mean bringing many sons to heaven in the sweet by and by. It is a clear reference to the divine process God uses to bring these sons to the place of glory and dignity as sons of God. The Father glorifies His sons and the sons glorify the Father.

God often renames someone and causes them to grow into that name. For instance there was Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham, "father of a multitude." This was in keeping with the promise that He had made to Abram that he would be the father of many nations. God calls things that are not as though they are. Abraham bore this name long before the promised son was given. Finally this father of a multitude was over 100 years old and still childless. Abraham's wife Sarah was barren, but to

make things worse she was 90 years old, well past the time of childbearing. God, in His faithfulness, brought Abraham to possess the fullness that his name foretold. God chooses to know no man after the flesh, but rather to see him in light of His perfect will. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." (Revelation 2:17 NKJV).

This was also true of Jacob, whom He named Israel, and Simon, whom He named Peter. This is also true of sons. "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). In God's mind it's a done deal. Those He has called He already sees as glorified. Could this be what the Apostle John was marveling over when he wrote, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). We are called to a glory that is beyond the present realities of our sometimes-barren lives. "Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be." It does not yet appear, but it will. And as surely as the earth brings forth fruit of herself, we that are called sons of God will be brought into the good of that name. ". . . first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28).

The time is fast approaching when the sons of God will be brought into the glory of their name and be glorified with the Father's own self. This is as far beyond us to create as it was for Abraham and Sarah to birth Isaac in their old age. As it was with the Son, Jesus, this manifestation of the sons of God, is "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Faithful is He who calls you, who will also do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

We trust that this has helped you to better understand the Father's eternal purpose for many sons in His Son. We realize that a vast subject such as this cannot be covered in such brevity. Even as we received this revelation and started to write it down, verses throughout the Bible were coming alive in a new and exciting way with greater depth and reality. And even now they continue to do so. Nonetheless we submit this writing believing that the Father will open your spiritual eyes to see His glorious Son in ever increasing clarity. That you will begin to see your calling as sons on every page of the

scriptures and as you do, you will write the final chapters of the book of life as His living letters!

Please prayerfully read the following passage in the light of what we have been sharing. May the eyes of our understanding be opened in the full revelation of our glorious Savior! Amen.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to [in] us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; ²¹because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. ²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? (Romans 8:14-32 RSV)