

DISCIPLESHIP. SUPPLEMENT 8

[GOD]

THE NATURE OF GOD AND THE SON OF GOD

This extra study wants to help people understand something more about the nature of God and the Son of God. **Read** the Bible passages in brackets.

Christians believe in THE GOD WHO REVEALED HIMSELF IN THE BIBLE and in no other “god”. Christians believe in ONE GOD, that is, in one Divine Being who has revealed Himself to mankind (Deuteronomy 6:4). God did not remain aloof from his creation, his people and from whatever happens to his people in history. He has revealed and expressed himself within his own creation (Romans 1:19-20) and within human history (Isaiah 14:24-27)!

1. The nature of God is unfathomable.

The God who revealed himself in the Bible is exalted above everyone and everything. He is sovereign and majestic. The God who revealed himself in the Bible is Spirit (not “flesh” as people are) and in this way of existence, he is omnipresent (everywhere present), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipotent (all powerful).

(1) The God of the Bible is unfathomable and therefore INDESCRIBABLE.

The God who revealed himself in the Bible is unfathomable (Job 11:7-8a; 1 Timothy 6:15-16). No religious, philosophical or scientific person can *define or describe* the nature of God. Without God’s Self-revelation we people can never even know that there is a God and we can never understand something about the nature of God.

But God desires that we know who he is. Therefore he has revealed himself to us so that we may know him. However, we people can understand God only to the extent that God himself has revealed himself to us:

- First in *the creation* or nature¹. But the Creator of the three dimensions of space and the dimension of time is above these dimensions!
- Then through *the prophets* of the Bible. The God of the Bible has not spoken to the so-called prophets of the other religions (Jeremiah 23:21).
- And finally in *Jesus Christ*² (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Beyond God’s Self-revelation, his Divine Being remains a mystery for mankind. We can say about God only what he himself has said about himself to us in the Bible.

(2) The God of the Bible is Spirit and therefore INVISIBLE.

The God who revealed himself in the Bible is “Spirit” (John 4:24). Ordinary people cannot *see* God with their physical eyes (John 1:18). Therefore scientists, philosophers and religions of the world cannot define God!

But God desires that we see what kind of a Being he is. Therefore he has revealed himself *visibly* to us so that we may see what he is like. Without letting go of his divine nature he took on the human nature and entered his own creation and our human history through Jesus Christ (John 1:1,14,18). Jesus Christ is the *visible Image* of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). All the fullness of the divine nature dwells in Jesus Christ *bodily* (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9). Therefore Jesus can say, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

(3) The God of the Bible lives in an unapproachable light and therefore is UNAPPROACHABLE.

The God who revealed himself in the Bible is unapproachable (1 Timothy 6:16). No man can approach God in his own way, by his own power or by his own wisdom gained from science, philosophy or religion. People cannot climb up to God by means of keeping the law or by means of doing good works or by means of practising any religion.

But God desires that we have a personal relationship with him. Therefore God approached us! We can have a personal relationship with God, not by climbing some kind of ladder up to God, but only by God coming down to us in Jesus Christ (and in Christ’s Spirit).

2. God revealed and expressed himself in a way that people might know him.

Although the nature of God is unfathomable, God has *revealed and expressed* himself in a way that people may know him.

- “**God the Father**” is the first and fundamental way of revealing the Divine Being, the basis for the other two ways of revealing God. God the Father is the Origin of all and everyone.
- “**God the Son**” is the second way of revealing the Divine Being. God came to people on earth, spoke to them, saved them and fellowshiped with them through God the Son.
- “**God the Spirit**” is the third way of revealing the Divine Being. God lives in Christians and applies the work of salvation of Christ through God the Spirit.

¹ The revelation in creation is called “the general revelation”

² The revelation in the Old Testament and New Testament is called “the specific revelation”

(1) God has revealed and expressed himself in CREATION.

God has revealed his invisible divine being (especially that he exists and that he is very powerful and orderly) (Psalm 19:1-7; Romans 1:19-20). He even revealed his existence and presence in “fire” (and in “the Angel of the Lord”) (Exodus 3:2-4; Exodus 19:18; Deuteronomy 4:12,24). As the Creator of people from the elements of earth he revealed himself as “Father” (Isaiah 64:8). However, the word “Father” does not refer to a biological relationship, but is a **metaphor** (a figurative expression) for the Creator, Origin and Source of all existence (Isaiah 64:8).

The creation reveals the existence (reality, presence, power, beauty and orderliness) of the Divine Being as Father. God the Father (Creator) is the fundamental and first way of being, of existing and thus also of revealing the Divine Being.

(2) God has revealed himself within THE HEART OF MAN.

God has revealed to man that he is a God who hates what is wrong (Psalm 5:5-6; Psalm 11:5; Isaiah 5:20) and loves what is right by writing some of his *moral laws* on every human heart. And he has given man a *conscience* that accuses or acquits him on the basis of these laws (Romans 2:14-15).

The heart of man reveals the moral standards (the moral law) of God.

(3) God has revealed himself in HIS WORDS.

God has revealed himself by speaking with an audible voice! God did not send one angel to speak to one prophet, but God Himself *spoke audibly* to the prophet Moses (Exodus (3:4-6; Exodus 19:19; Numbers 7:89; Numbers 12:6-8), to the assembly of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:12,32-36; Deuteronomy 5:22-26), to the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-12), to the forerunner John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17) and to three disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 17:5).

God spoke at *many times and in various ways* within human history to our forefathers through all the prophets in the Old Testament period, but now in the last period of time (the New Testament period), he has spoken to us by his Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). The words of God are recorded in THE BIBLE (2 Timothy 3:16). People can only live by these words (Matthew 4:4)!

The words in the Bible reveal the thoughts, plans and will of God.

(4) God has revealed himself in HIS ACTS.

God acted within his creation and within human history by miraculous signs and wonders, by his mighty hand and outstretched arm and by his great and awesome deeds (Deuteronomy 4:34). When God acts no one can reverse his acts (Isaiah 43:13)! Not only his words, but also his acts have been recorded in THE BIBLE (1 Corinthians 10:11).

The acts in the Bible reveal God’s salvation and judgement.

(5) God has revealed himself in TRANSFORMED LIVES.

God’s words and acts, as revealed in the Bible, transform the lives of those people who believe these words and acts. For example, before Paul became a believer he hated Christians and persecuted them. But when Jesus appeared to him, his heart and life changed! His sin was forgiven and he began to live a complete new life. Who changed Paul’s life so much? Paul gives a testimony that it was God through the work of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:15-16). Millions of Christians give testimonies of how their lives have changed. Behind these real Christians is the real God. He transformed them and is still transforming them. When you look at the lives of real Christians and listen to their testimonies, then you can get to know the real God who transforms lives.

The transformed lives of Christians reveal the saving purpose of God.

(6) God has revealed himself in A HUMAN BEING, JESUS CHRIST.

God is Spirit (John 4:24) and therefore invisible. Nevertheless, God revealed and expressed himself visibly in the Word that took on a human body in Jesus Christ. Without laying down his divine nature, God took on the human nature and entered into his own creation and into human history in Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-37; John 1:1,14,18; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 1:15,19; Colossians 2:9). It was not the man, Jesus Christ, who became God, but the One and Only God who took on the human nature in Jesus Christ (John 1:1,14)! Jesus Christ is “the Radiance of God’s glory” (the visible revelation of God’s invisible divinity and divine attributes) “and the Imprint or Exact Representation of God’s being” (the visible expression of God’s invisible divine being) (Hebrews 1:1-3). That is why Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Jesus Christ reveals the Divine Being (his personality, character, words and deeds) visibly in human history. Jesus Christ is the second way of being, of existing and thus also of revealing the Divine Being.

Some people say that God could never exist in a human body. But the Old Testament says 3500 years ago, “The Angel of the LORD appeared to him (Moses) in flames of fire from within a bush.” The Angel of the LORD is THE LORD “The LORD called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’” and introduced himself, “I am the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:2-6). If God can exist and reveal himself in a burning bush, he is surely able to exist (live) and reveal himself in a human body (see also Genesis 18:1-2)!

(7) God has revealed himself in THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“The Spirit of God”, “the Spirit of Christ”, or “Christ in us” is the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-10). After the ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ in “heaven” (a dimension beyond the three dimensional empiric creation) he returned as the invisible Holy Spirit who works in the hearts of both non-Christian and Christians on earth (John 16:8-10). The Holy Spirit *dwells* in the hearts and bodies of Christians (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and also in the Church (Ephesians 2:22).

The Holy Spirit reveals the powerful presence of God in the lives of Christians and the Christian Church. The Holy Spirit is the third way of being, of existing and thus also of revealing the Divine Being.

3. The expression “son” in the Bible.

The expression “Son of God”, as used in the Bible, should not be misunderstood or interpreted in the wrong way. The Semitic languages (Hebrew and Arabic) are familiar with the expression “son of” which may be literal or figurative. The expression “Son of God” in the Bible does not refer to a physical or biological son of God, but is a **metaphor** (a figurative expression).

The Bible speaks of four kinds of “sons” and these must be distinguished clearly:

- literally a physical or biological son
- a spiritual son
- a symbolic son
- a metaphysical or ontological son

4. Jesus Christ is *NOT* the physical or biological son of God.

A. Christians as physical or biological sons.

The expression “son” in the Bible sometimes refers to physical or biological descent: a physical or biological son. John 3:6 says, “Flesh gives birth to flesh.” With people a physical child is born from a physical father and a physical mother. Their human or physical sonship (existence) *has a beginning in history* when they were conceived.

B. Christ is *NOT* a physical or biological son of God.

But Jesus Christ is NOT the physical or biological son of God! Jesus Christ has never been procreated (produced). *His Divine existence has no beginning!* Jesus Christ is not the physical son of God as some other religions falsely accuse Christians to believe or teach.³

(1) Jesus Christ has a unique human (physical) nature.

According to his divine nature Jesus Christ existed from all eternity (John 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17). But according to his human nature he was born in time (in human history) from his physical mother, the virgin Mary (John 1:14). His human nature was not derived from his legal father, Joseph, but was the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). Unlike all other people on earth, Jesus Christ had no physical father! And unlike all other people in history (inclusive the prophets) Jesus was completely sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15)!

(2) God the Father or God the Spirit has no human (physical) body.

Christians do not call the physical body of Jesus “the physical body of God”, because God has no physical body. Also God has no physical relationship as a man with a woman on earth. The Holy Spirit is Spirit and has no physical body. He created the physical body of Jesus in the virgin Mary (Luke 1:35). But biblical Christians never call Mary “the mother of God”, because Mary was only the mother of the human nature of Jesus Christ.

(3) Jesus Christ took on a human body (the human nature) in human history.

Jesus Christ is from all eternity God and possesses the Divine Nature. Therefore Jesus Christ is called “the Son of God”. But in time (in human history) he also took on the human nature besides his divine nature and entered his creation and human history with a human body through the virgin Mary. He died on the cross only in his human nature and thereby made atonement for the sins of the people who believe in him (Romans 3:25). And he rose from the dead also only in his human nature and thereby guaranteed a transformed (born-again) life for believers on earth *before* their physical death and also guaranteed the resurrection of the human body from the dead *after* their physical death.

(4) The relationship between the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ will remain a mystery for people.

Jesus Christ is absolutely unique: he is God who took on the human nature and is called “Mighty God and Everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6). Besides Jesus Christ no one else in human history is called “Immanuel” (God with us) (Matthew 1:23).

³ People and their religious leaders who spread this lie belong to the devil! Jesus says, “The devil is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

5. Jesus Christ is NOT the *spiritual* son of God.

A. Christians as spiritual sons.

The expression “son” in the Bible sometimes refers to *spiritual* descent: a spiritual son. John 3:6 also says, “The Spirit gives birth to spirit.” The Bible clearly distinguishes between a physical (biological) son and a spiritual son.

(1) The Christian becomes a *spiritual* “son of God” (a metaphor) at regeneration.

After his birth, a human being is only the son (or daughter) of his parents on earth. But at his rebirth (regeneration) by the Holy Spirit his formerly (spiritually) dead human spirit is made alive (Ephesians 2:1-5) and he becomes a spiritual child (son or daughter) of God in heaven (John 1:12-13). The moment he believes in Jesus Christ, he is reborn (regenerated) by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8)!

Before the creation of the earth, the Christian is “predestined by God to be adopted (accepted) as God’s child (spiritual son or daughter)” through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5). The Christian is “adopted as the spiritual son (or daughter) of God when he is born-again by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:15). But he will only enter into the full enjoyment of his adoption as God’s spiritual son (or daughter) when he is released from his mortal earthly body at the resurrection from the dead (Romans 8:23). All three Bible passages use the word “adopted as sons”⁴.

(2) The Christian possesses a spiritual nature that shares only certain *divine characteristics*.

While the physical nature of the Christian comes from his physical parents on earth, his spiritual nature comes from God the Holy Spirit. While the Christian by nature does not receive or possess the divine nature, he receives and possesses through the Holy Spirit a spiritual nature that shares certain divine characteristics like knowledge, godliness and love (2 Peter 1:3-9). His spiritual nature is no longer a slave of the guilt, shame, power and destruction of sin, but has been set free to grow more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ. And his spiritual nature is no longer a slave to the devil. He is no longer forced to do the devil’s will (2 Timothy 2:26). He has become a child of God who does what is right in God’s eyes and loves God and his brother (1 John 3:10).

(3) The spiritual sonship of the Christian *has a beginning in history*.

The Christian begins his spiritual sonship when he is born-again.

B. Christ is NOT a spiritual son of God.

But Jesus Christ is NOT a spiritual son of God. He is NOT the religious son of God. Jesus Christ has never been born again, because he is perfectly sinless! From all eternity he is the Son of God, because from all eternity he possesses the Divine Nature. He has no “beginning”!

(1) Jesus Christ possesses the divine nature from eternity to eternity.

From all eternity he is “the Son of God” (a metaphor) in his nature or being. He did not receive a new born again (spiritual) nature in time as Christians do, but *possesses* the divine nature, the spiritual nature, “the (divine) life in himself” from all eternity just as God the Father (John 5:26).

(2) Jesus Christ is the Son of God from eternity to eternity.

God the Father says that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Also Jesus Christ himself says that he is the Son of God (Matthew 11:27; Matthew 27:43; cf. Matthew 21:37-39). Luke says that he is the Son of God (Luke 3:38). The apostle John says that he is the Son of God (John 3:35-36; John 5:19-30). And the apostle Paul says that he is the Son of God (Romans 1:3-4,9; Romans 5:10; Romans 8:3). He is the Son of God *before* he took on the human nature (Psalm 2:6-7; John 3:16).

Jesus Christ did *not become* the Son of God at his birth as Man (when he took on the human nature), but as the eternal Son of God he took on the human nature (a human body) in human history through the virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-37). He is still the Son of God *after* he took on the human nature. At his baptism with water God did not say, “You *have become* my Son”, but God said, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11).

(3) Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

Although Jesus Christ *is* from eternity to eternity the Son of God, he *revealed* his divine nature in time (in human history). He is the *visible* Image of the invisible God, the *visible* Radiance of God’s glory (that is, of God’s essential divine attributes) and the *visible* Imprint (impression, representation) of God’s invisible divine being (Colossians 1:15,19; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3). He is the *comprehensible* Expounder of the unfathomable God. That is also the meaning of the words: “The only-begotten God (Son), who is at the Father’s side, has *made him (God) known* (has expressed and explained God (cf. the word “exegesis”⁵))” (John 1:18; cf. Matthew 11:27).

(4) Jesus Christ is the Spirit of God.

- *During the Old Testament period* before he took on the human nature (that is, *before his incarnation*) Jesus Christ was the Divine Being who spoke through the prophets (1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

⁴ Greek: huiiothesia

⁵ Greek: exegomai

- *At his first coming* Jesus Christ was the Divine Being who took on the human nature in the virgin Mary through the Spirit (Luke 1:26-37).
- *During his ministry on earth* Jesus Christ was the Divine Being who saved and healed people and set them free through the Spirit (Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:18-19; Acts 10:38).
- *After his ascension into heaven* Jesus Christ is the Divine Being who was poured out on Christians as the Holy Spirit, “the Other Counsellor” who would always be with and in them and in this way never abandon them as orphans (John 14:16-18).
- *After Pentecost* Jesus Christ is the Divine Being who lives as “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ” in the bodies of Christians (Romans 8:9-10; Revelation 3:20). Through him Christians personally know God as “Father” (Romans 8:15-17) and are set free from slavery to “those weak and miserable principles of the world” (that is, are set free from the religious laws of Jews and non-Jews by which they try to save themselves) (Galatians 4:1-11).
- *During his ministry in heaven* Jesus Christ is the Divine Being who through the Spirit takes away the veil that covers the eyes, minds and hearts of unbelievers so that they may understand the Bible, become believers and are changed to the likeness of Christ. “Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit ...” (2 Corinthians 3:14-18)!

(5) Jesus Christ is the Word of God.

Jesus Christ is “the Word of God” who is God from all eternity (John 1:1). The word “Word”⁶ is a metaphor that expresses the fact that God speaks the first and the last word.

- The Word in creation. As Creator he spoke the first and last word in the creation (John 1:3; cf. Genesis 1:1-3; Psalm 33:6).
- The Word in maintaining the creation. As the only Heir he sustains all things by his powerful word⁷ (Hebrews 1:3).
- The Word in revelation. As Mediator he spoke and revealed (explained, made plain) who God is and what God desired (John 1:18; Matthew 11:27; Hebrews 1:1-2). After Jesus Christ there will be no more revelations by prophets (Hebrews 1:1)! The words in the holy books of the other religions are NOT the words of the God of the Bible!
- The Word in salvation. As Saviour he speaks and awakens faith in people. “Faith comes through hearing the message or *spoken word*⁸ of Christ” (Romans 10:17). People come to faith when they become aware that Christ is speaking personally to them.
- The Word in recreation. As Recreator Christ said, “I am (*in the process of*) making everything new” (Revelation 21:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:17; cf. Ephesians 1:9-10).
- The Word in the Last Judgement. Jesus Christ will also have the final word in the Last Judgement of all people (Revelation 19:13-16)!

6. Jesus Christ is NOT a symbolic son of God.

A. Christians as sons of the light.

The expression “son” in the Bible together *with the Genitive case of something* (indicating possession or dependence) sometimes has a *symbolical* meaning (is a metaphor). It expresses that “the son” *stands in a close relationship to* this something and *possesses the unique characteristic of* this something.⁹ For example:

- “The sons of this world” (Luke 16:8) refers to “non-Christians who relate intimately to this sinful world and bear the characteristics of this sinful world”.
- “The sons of the light” (Luke 16:8) refers to “Christians who have a close and intimate relationship the Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, and possess the characteristics of light as his holiness, righteousness, mercy, love, wisdom, purity, etc.

Nevertheless, the symbolic sonship (existence) of Christians as “light” in this world *has a beginning* in history when they are born again (John 1:12-13). Thereafter Christians demonstrate the characteristics of light (Matthew 5:14).

B. Christ is NOT a symbolic son of God.

(1) Metaphors.

The word “Father” used of God is a metaphor (a symbol), but not only a symbol! The metaphor “Father” has nothing to do with physical or biological fatherhood! It is an expression that indicates that God is the Eternal Being, the Origin and Source of the whole creation (Isaiah 64:8).

And the expression “Son of God” is also a metaphor, but not only a metaphor! The metaphor “Son of God” has nothing to do with physical or biological sonship! It is an expression that indicates that Jesus Christ has revealed himself in time (human history) as:

⁶ Greek: logos

⁷ Greek: réma

⁸ Greek: “réma”, not “logos”)

⁹ See number 11, “the Son of Man”. Examples in Semitic languages: (1) “I am a son of Egypt” means “I am an Egyptian”. (2) “I am a son of the street” means “I am a vagabond, tramp or streetkid” (3) “I am a son of thirty years” means “I am thirty years old”. Likewise “Son of Man” means Man and “Son of God”, means God!

- “the visible Image (Likeness)¹⁰ of God” (Colossians 1:13)
- “the visible Radiance¹¹ of God’s glory (attributes)” (Hebrews 1:3)
- “the visible Imprint (exact Representation)¹² of God’s entity, being or way of existence”¹³ (Hebrews 1:3).

The Sonship of Jesus Christ is never simply symbolic!

(2) Jesus Christ is not merely a symbol that represents God, but is God himself.

He does not simply stand in a close relationship to God or simply possesses the spiritual characteristics of God. He is GOD! He is not merely a symbol of the light, but he is the Light himself (John 1:4-9; John 8:12)! He is not merely a symbol that resembles God, but is the reality itself! Jesus Christ is God himself (Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 2:8-9; 1 John 5:20)! Jesus Christ is the second way of being, of existing and thus also of revealing the Divine Being.

(3) Jesus Christ has no beginning and no end.

Nowhere in the past history did Jesus Christ become “the Son of God” (the reality). He is “the reality” from all eternity (John 1:1)! *His divine Sonship (the reality) has no beginning and also has no end.* “Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 1:8; Revelation 2:8; Revelation 22:12-13)!

(4) Jesus Christ is not merely the symbolic Son of God.

Expressions of God using the Genitive case are not intended to be literal, but symbolic. Expressions like “the arm of God” and “the ear of God” (Isaiah 59:1-2) do not suggest that God has *physical* arms and ears, but rather that God really hears prayers and really saves people. The expression “the eyes of God” (2 Chronicles 16:9) does not suggest that God has *physical* eyes, but rather that God really sees everyone and everything, something which human eyes cannot do (Hebrews 4:13). The expression “Son of God” also does not suggest that Jesus Christ is literally a physical or biological son of God, but also not that Jesus Christ is merely a spiritual or symbolic son of God. Jesus Christ is in reality the metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal Son of God.

In the deepest being of God there are distinctions which God himself makes.

The three ways of being, of existing and thus also of revealing the Divine Being are:

- “God the Father” is the first way of being, of existing and thus of revealing the Divine Being.
- “God the Son” is the second way of being, of existing and thus of revealing the Divine Being.
- “God the Holy Spirit” is the third way of being, of existing and thus of revealing the Divine Being.

7. Jesus Christ is the Son of God in metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal sense.

A. Christians are spiritual sons of God.

The God who reveals himself in the Bible is “the Father” of Christians only in a *spiritual* sense (and not in a real, symbolical or biological sense).

Christians are never “god” and never become “god”, but remain creatures of God and different from God. Before they believed in Jesus Christ, they were enemies of the God of the Bible (Romans 5:10). But after they came to faith in Jesus Christ, Christians became (spiritual) sons and daughters of God” (Ephesians 1:5) or “(spiritual) children of God” (John 1:12-13), who more and more acquire the spiritual characteristics of the God of the Bible (Ephesians 4:24; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:1-3).

The God of the Bible reigns in a sovereign (almighty) way from heaven over everyone and everything; he executes his plan of salvation through Jesus Christ; and he lives in Christians through the Holy Spirit. The unity between Christians can be derived from the unity of the God of the Bible and from the unity between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Divine Being (John 17:21-23). The unity of the Christian Church is demonstrated by Christians who have the same God of the Bible as their Creator (Isaiah 64:8; Matthew 6:9), the same Saviour of their sins and the same indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). Christians also have the same faith, hope and love (Ephesians 4:3-6)!

B. Christ is the Son of God in a metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal sense.

(1) The God of the Bible is the Father of Jesus Christ in a real (ontological) sense.

“Ontology” means “the doctrine of what exists”. God the Father and God the Son have the same divine “being”, “nature” or “existence” from eternity. The relationship between the Father and the Son has nothing to do with physical or biological fatherhood, which some religions falsely ascribe to Christian teaching. From eternity their relationship is by nature metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal.

(2) In the following Bible passages the emphasis is on the human nature of Jesus Christ.

- The God who reveals himself in the Bible is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).¹⁴

¹⁰ Greek: eikón

¹¹ Greek: apaugasma

¹² Greek: charaktér

¹³ Greek: hupostasis

¹⁴ A “god” of one or another religion that denies this, is not the God of the Bible!

- Jesus Christ says, “The Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).
- And he says, “I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17).

These statements emphasize the human nature of Jesus Christ.

(3) In the following Bible passages the emphasis is on the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

- Jesus Christ is “My Son, whom I love, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5).
- He is God’s “One and Only Son” (John 1:18; John 3:16).
- He is God’s “own Son” (Romans 8:32).
- He is God’s “eternal Son” because he possessed the glory (glorious attributes) of God before the world began and because “the Father loved the Son before the creation of the world” (John 17:5,24).

The expression: “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ” emphasises the human nature of Jesus Christ (cf. John 14:28)¹⁵. And the expression: “The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” emphasises the divine nature of Jesus Christ (cf. John 10:30)¹⁶.

All other “gods” of the other religions in the world are NOT the Father of Jesus Christ in metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal sense! They have nothing in common with the God of the Bible!

- The Old Testament already called Jesus Christ “Mighty God”: a name for the LORD¹⁷ (Isaiah 9:5; Isaiah 10:20-21).
- The Old Testament also called Jesus Christ “Everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:5): a name of the LORD (Isaiah 63:16; Isaiah 64:8).
- And in the New Testament Jesus Christ says, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

These statements emphasize the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

The Christian Church and Christians confess one God in three ways of being, of existence and thus of revelation within the creation of God and within the history of man: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

8. Only after his death and resurrection Jesus Christ is appointed (decreed) and acknowledged to be the Son of God clothed with sovereign power.

The expression Son of God” emphasizes the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ.

(1) Jesus Christ is the Son of God *before his incarnation* (before he took on the human nature besides his divine nature).

Psalm 2:7b-9 probably originated in the liturgy of the coronation of the king in Judah. The whole of Psalm 2 is a prophecy about the coming Messianic King, who would descend from king David (Jeremiah 23:5-6; Ezekiel 37:24-28). Through the Old Testament prophets God said about Jesus Christ, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son” (2 Samuel 7:14; cf. Hebrews 1:5). While the author of 2 Samuel 7:12-16 spoke about David’s own son (Solomon)(verse 12), the author of 1 Chronicles 17:11-14 spoke about one of David’s sons (descendants)(Jesus Christ)(verse 11), the only One in whom these words could be fulfilled! “His throne will be established forever” (1 Chronicles 17:14).

(2) Jesus Christ is the Son of God *at the announcement of his birth.*

The words of the angel Gabriel to Mary confirmed that the prophecy in 1 Chronicles 17 would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. “You are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32-33).

(3) Jesus Christ is the Son of God *at his baptism with water.*

When Jesus was baptised with water in the Jordan by John the Baptist, the voice of God from heaven said, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11).

(4) Jesus Christ is the Son of God *before and after his resurrection from the dead.*

Paul speaks of “the gospel ... regarding God’s Son” (Romans 1:1-3a). He speaks of the human nature of the Son of God (the Divine Being or Divine Nature) and differentiates between the human nature of Jesus Christ before his death and the human nature of Jesus Christ after his resurrection. He differentiates between Jesus “as to the flesh was a descendant of David” and Jesus “as to the Spirit of holiness was (*openly*) declared¹⁸ to be the Son of God (clothed) with power by his resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:3b-4; Acts 17:31).

- The human nature of Jesus (literally: flesh) *after his birth* from the lineage of David was characterised by *weakness*: he became tired, hungry and thirsty; and he experienced anxiety and temptation; he was truly mortal.
- But the human nature of Jesus *after his resurrection* from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit was characterised by *power*: his resurrected body was no longer subject to the laws of nature, but was completely controlled by the Holy Spirit. He passed through grave clothes, a rock tomb and closed doors. He could suddenly appear and suddenly

¹⁵ John 14:28 “For the Father is greater than I”.

¹⁶ John 10:30 “I and the Father are one.”

¹⁷ Hebrew: JaHWeH, the God of the covenant

¹⁸ Greek: horizó

disappear. Finally he ascended into heaven (beyond the three dimensions of space and the dimension of time to which the creation is limited) and sat at the right hand of God.

- Compare Acts 17:31. As proof to all people that God had appointed Jesus Christ to judge the world, he raised him from the dead!

The words in verse 4 do not mean that Jesus Christ was appointed and declared to be the Son of God when he was resurrected from the dead. Because Jesus Christ is God from all eternity, the emphasis does not fall on his divine nature (the Son of God), but on his human nature (his birth as a weak human being and his resurrection from the dead as a powerful human being). The emphasis falls on the words: “in power”, meaning: “clothed) with power”.

- **After his birth** his power in all its glory was hidden so that people could not see it. But in this state of humiliation he was still the Son of God!
- **After his resurrection** from the dead he was declared (appointed, decreed)¹⁹ to be the Son of God clothed with all “power”²⁰ (Romans 1:4), with “all authority”²¹ in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18; John 13:3), “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given”²² (Ephesians 1:20-22), something that surpassed his human state before his resurrection. *In his state of exaltation and glory* he is still “the Son of God”. Before his resurrection from the dead and his ascension into heaven, people could still have said that he was not almighty! But now his authority and power has been confirmed (made absolute certain) through his resurrection from the dead and his ascension into heaven!

Although Jesus Christ is from all eternity “the Son of God” (in metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal sense), he began to exercise his absolute sovereign authority and power in human history on earth at his resurrection, ascension and enthronement. Only after he had proved his absolute obedience in his death and resurrection, he began to draw *all people* to himself (John 12:31-32). Only then the Church began to proclaim the obedience that comes from faith to *all nations* (Romans 1:5); Romans 16:25-26), to make disciples of *all nations* and to spread over *the whole earth* (Matthew 28:19-20).

(5) Jesus Christ is the Son of God at his enthronement in heaven.

- “The Son of God” (Jesus Christ) compared to “the sons of God” (the angels).

Although angels may collectively be called “sons of God”²³ (Genesis 6:2,4; Job 1:6; Job 2:1)²⁴, no angel is ever called “the Son of God” – an expression that gives to Jesus Christ a unique and chosen status!

- “The Son of God” (Jesus Christ) compared to “the gods” in the ancient world.

Jesus uses an argument from the Bible that supports the fact that he is “the Son of God”. In the ancient world of the Middle East “God” is represented as the Great Judge surrounded on the one hand by “the gods” (Hebrew: elohim) of the world as heavenly judges (read 1 Kings 22:19-23; Job 1:6) and surrounded on the other hand the earthly judges as “gods” (Hebrew: elohim), as “sons of the Most High” (read Psalm 82:1-8).

Read Numbers 22:7-14. “The gods” of the other religions are also called “god” (Hebrew: elohim). Bileam is a fortune-teller who tells fortunes (make solemn appeals, divinations of astrologers, or witchcraft)” (Numbers 24:1) for money by listening to “the gods” (Hebrew: elohim) (Numbers 22:9-12) (NIV: translates wrongly: “God” with a capital letter). In the old world of the East people understood the word “elohim” to consist of all good and evil powers belonging to the unseen world, *the world of gods*.

In the Bible the God of the Bible revealed himself to Moses as “the God (Hebrew: elohim), THE GOD of your fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) (Exodus 3:6,13,15) who revealed himself as THE LORD²⁵, the God²⁶ of the Hebrews” (Exodus 3:18); and who says, “I will be your God”²⁷. Then you will know that I am the LORD, your God²⁸” (Exodus 6:6). He commands: “You shall have no other gods²⁹ before me” (Exodus 20:3)! Israel has but one God. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one”³⁰ (Deuteronomy 6:4)! “Before me (the LORD) no god³¹ was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD³², apart from me there is no saviour” (Isaiah 43:10-11). “I am the first and I am the last (Revelation 22:13). Apart from me (the LORD) there is no God³³” (Isaiah 44:6)! The “gods” (elohim) of the other religions do not really exist at all, except in the minds or imaginations of religious people!

¹⁹ Greek: horizó

²⁰ Greek: dunamis

²¹ Greek: pasa exousia

²² Greek: pasa arché, exousia, dunamis, kuriotés, onoma

²³ Hebrew: bene ha-Elohim

²⁴ In Genesis 6:2,4 “the sons of God” refer to people who believe (the descendents of Set) in contrast to “the daughters of man”, the people who do not believe (the descendents of Cain)(See Genesis 10).

²⁵ Hebrew: JaHWeH

²⁶ Hebrew: elohim

²⁷ Hebrew: elohim

²⁸ Hebrew: elohim

²⁹ Hebrew: elohim

³⁰ Hebrew: Shema Jishrael: JaHWeH Elohenu JaHWeH ehad

³¹ Hebrew: elohim

³² Hebrew: JaHWeH

³³ Hebrew: elohim

As the Self-revelation of the LORD unfolds in the Old Testament, it becomes very clear that THE LORD is THE (only, unique) ELOHIM (Deuteronomy 4:35; 1 Kings 18:37)! The other so-called “gods”³⁴ of the other religions cannot rightly make the claim that they are GOD. “I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God” (Isaiah 45:5)!

• **“The Son of God” (Jesus Christ) compared to “judges”.**

In Job 1 and 2 God as Judge rebukes Satan who *falsely accused* Job. In Psalm 82 God as Judge rebukes the judges on earth that they were *giving unjust verdicts against the weak and the poor*. God (or Asaph inspired by God) calls all these judges “gods”³⁵ and “sons of the Most High”³⁶ (Psalm 82:6), not because they were really gods, but because they were supposed to represent divine justice on earth! God demands that they judge fairly (Deuteronomy 1:16-17; Deuteronomy 16:18-19).

Read John 10:34-36. Jesus argues that if the Old Testament Book of Law called earthly judges “gods”³⁷ and the Law (the Scriptures) may not be broken, then Jesus Christ as the Judge of the living and the dead within human history (John 5:22; Acts 10:42; Romans 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5) may also be called “the Son of God”! “For he (God) has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

Of course, the words “gods” or “sons of the Most High” (with respect to earthly judges) in Psalm 82:6 and John 10:34 on the one hand and the word “Son of God” (with respect to Jesus Christ) in John 10:36 on the other hand **have complete different meanings!** Jesus was arguing from the small truth in the Old Testament to the big truth in the New Testament!

- The earthly judges are born on earth, but Jesus Christ was sent from heaven.
- The Word of God came to earthly judges, but Jesus Christ is the Word of God.
- The earthly judges represent the ordinary administering of justice, but Jesus Christ represents the absolute and final pronouncement of judgement over all people (John 5:22; Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31).
- If the earthly judges may be addressed with the metaphor “sons of God” in the Old Testament, then the Jews must not protest that Jesus Christ is called “the Son of God” (John 10:34-36; cf. John 1:14,18; John 3:16). With this self-revelation that he is “the Son of God”, Jesus was not blaspheming God, because Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and man (John 5:17-23), the Mediator of creation (John 1:3), the Mediator of miraculous signs (John 5:19-21), the Mediator of salvation (John 5:24-26; 1 Timothy 2:5-6) and the Mediator of the Last Judgement (John 5:22,27,30; John 10:34-36; Acts 17:30-31)!

• **Jesus Christ is acknowledged and confessed in the New Testament as being the Son of God.**

It was only at his enthronement that it became clear in human history that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, clothed with absolute divine power. Hebrews 1:5b says that Psalm 2:7 was fulfilled by Jesus Christ: “To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father’. Or again, ‘I will be his Father, and he will be my Son.’” The New Testament regards Psalm 2 as a messianic Psalm (Acts 4:25-26; Acts 13:33). In this Psalm the Messiah (the Anointed One) quotes these words as the basis of his trust when the kings on the earth and the powers in the world march against him (Psalm 2:2).

God’s words, “Today I have become your Father (literally: begotten you³⁸)” do not mean that Jesus Christ has become the Son of God through his birth as a human. The word “today” in Hebrews 1 refers to the time Jesus Christ was glorified and enthroned (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 1:13). At his resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven and enthronement Jesus Christ was clothed with royal dignity, received the title “Son of God” and began on the basis of his completed work of salvation his sovereign rule as King in heaven over the earth. This is a position above all people on earth (Acts 2:36; Philippians 2:9-11) and above all angels in heaven (Hebrews 1:3-14; 1 Peter 3:22)³⁹. His title “Son of God” refers to who he really is. Therefore people acknowledge and confess him since his first coming (his resurrection, ascension and enthronement) to be the Son of God in a metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal sense!

9. Jesus Christ is the physical (biological) son of Mary (his human nature) and at the same time the only-begotten Son of God (his divine nature).

A. The human nature of Jesus Christ.

The genealogies prove that Jesus Christ was the physical or biological son of Mary.

(1) The genealogy of Matthew.

Matthew wrote his Gospel especially for Jews and was therefore very interested in *legal matters*. He gives the legal (according to Jewish law) genealogy of Jesus Christ in descending line from Abraham to Jesus. In Matthew 1:1-12 the genealogy goes from Abraham, David, via Solomon (not Nathan) to Zerubbabel (538 B.C. at the time of the return

³⁴ Hebrew: elohim

³⁵ Hebrew: elohim

³⁶ Hebrew: bene eljon

³⁷ That is: the earthly judges who are supposed to represent (God’s) justice and righteousness on earth.

³⁸ Greek: gegenéka

³⁹ And of course above all so-called “gods” of the other religions in the world!

of the Jews from Babylonia)(Ezra 1:11 - 2:2). In Matthew 1:13-16 the genealogy goes from Zerubbabel via Abiud (not Rhesa) to Jacob (not Heli). (Literally:) “Jacob fathered”⁴⁰ Joseph, the “legal husband”⁴¹ of Mary. From her was begotten⁴² Jesus who is called Christ.” Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, but the legal father of Jesus, because he was the legal husband of Mary. Thus Matthew concludes: Jesus is very important for Jews and their Law!

The genealogy in Matthew is the genealogy of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus Christ (and thus the genealogy of Jesus Christ according to the law). According to his human nature Jesus Christ is the physical or biological son of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Matthew 1:1; Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:8,16), the physical or biological son of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Luke 1:32; Revelation 22:16) and the physical or biological son of Mary (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:31), but not the physical or biological son of Joseph. According to his physical human nature Jesus descended from Abraham, David and Mary (Matthew 1:1,16). This is how the invisible and eternal God entered the visible creation and time in human history.

(2) The genealogy of Luke.

Luke wrote his Gospel especially to Gentiles and was therefore very interested in the *historical facts* of the Bible (Luke 1:1-4). He gives the historical (according to biblical history) genealogy of Jesus Christ in an ascending line from Jesus to Adam and God. In Luke 3:23 Luke wrote: “Jesus was the son, so it was thought (by the Jews), of Joseph, *the son of Heli*” (not Jacob as in Matthew). Below we will see that Luke probably meant, “Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli” and Heli was the biological father of Mary and thus the biological grandfather of Jesus according to his human nature! In Luke 3:23-27 the genealogy of Joseph goes via Heli (not Jacob) and Rhesa (not Abiud) to Zerubbabel. And in Luke 3:27-31 the genealogy goes from Zerubbabel via Nathan (not Solomon) to David and in Luke 3:28-37 via all the most important generations via Abraham right up to Adam. Thus Luke concludes that Jesus is very important for all the nations on earth!

The genealogy in Luke is most probably the genealogy of Mary (the biological line of Jesus) (and thus the genealogy of Jesus in salvation history) and not the genealogy of Joseph (the legal line of Jesus Christ). The reasons are the following:

- Luke carefully researched the facts concerning the announcement of the birth of Jesus, the birth of Jesus and the genealogy of Jesus (Luke chapters 1-3).
- The angel Gabriel announced to Mary that Jesus would not be the physical or biological son of Joseph, but he would be *the physical or biological son of Mary*. He announced the miracle of virgin birth by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-37). Gabriel also said that Jesus would be the heir of the throne of David, but with this difference, that he would be the last and final king and his kingdom would never end (Luke 3:32).
- The priest Zechariah, filled with the Spirit, prophesied that Jesus would be the promised Saviour coming from the house of David (Luke 1:67-69). Because women in Israel could also become a legal heir (Numbers 27:8), Mary has an extremely important place in the genealogy of king David!
- The genealogies in the Bible only mention the most important names within the lineage and skip over other members of the same lineage. For example, Matthew skips over the kings Ahaziah, (Athaliah,) Joash and Amaziah (1 Chronicles 3:11-12; 2 Kings 11:1) between king Jehoram and king Uzziah and he calls Jehoram “the father of” Uzziah, while in reality he is “the great great grandfather of” Uzziah (Matthew 1:8-9)! Thus the words “the father of” in the Bible could also refer to a very distant ancestor and all the names of unimportant generations were skipped over. Matthew mentions 17 names between David and Zerubbabel, while Luke mentions 23. Even Luke skips over many generations. He mentions only 34 names between David and Adam, that is about 850 years, a number far too few for the period of time covered!
- The expression: “Adam, the son of God” cannot be understood *literally* (Luke 3:38).
- Likewise the sentence: “Jesus was, so it was thought, the son of Joseph, *the son of Heli*” (Luke 3:23) is not a *literal* statement. It could also have skipped several generations. Therefore, Joseph was most probably “the son-in-law of Heli, which means that Mary was “the daughter of Heli”. But because the Jewish genealogies were recorded along the male and not the female line, Joseph (the legal husband of Mary) was recorded instead of Mary.
- The Jewish Talmud calls Mary “the daughter of Heli”. This can only be true when the genealogy of Luke is the genealogy of Mary.
- A Sinaitic-Syrian manuscript translated Luke 2:4 as follows: “Because they (Joseph and Mary) belonged to the house and line of David”.

Thus, both Scripture (Luke 1:31-33) and other historical documents outside the Bible regard Mary as belonging to the lineage of king David. That is why Luke 3:23 must be read as follows: “Joseph was the son-in law of Heli” and Matthew 1:16 as: “Joseph was the physical son of Jacob”.

Conclusion. Matthew presents the legal genealogy of Jesus via his legal father Joseph. Luke presents the physical or biological genealogy of Jesus via his physical or biological mother Mary.

⁴⁰ Greek: gennaó

⁴¹ Greek: andra

⁴² Greek: gennaó

Jesus Christ was the biological son of Abraham, David⁴³ and Mary⁴⁴ with respect to his human nature (Matthew 1:1,16). This is how the invisible and eternal God entered the visible creation and measurable time in human history.

B. The divine nature of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was not the physical Son of God. He is ‘the only-begotten Son of God’ (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18).

First, we explain the Greek word for “begetting, fathering” in the sense of “producing, procreating, becoming father” (said of a man) or “giving birth” (said of a woman).

The Greek word “gennaó” is used in six ways in the Bible.

(1) “Gennaó” means “to produce”.

“Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they *produce* quarrels” (2 Timothy 2:23).

(2) “Gennaó” means “to procreate” or “to father” in *biological (physical)* sense.

The word is used of a man who fathers a physical (biological) child or becomes the father or forefather (ancestor) in a genealogy. Name A begets (becomes the father of) name B (Genesis 4:18 etc.). And passively: many descendents fathered (aorist tense) by one man (Hebrews 11:12); “not fathered (perfect tense) from sexual immorality” (that is, outside the bond of marriage) (John 8:41); “completely fathered (aorist tense) in sin” (John 9:34).

The word is also used for the influence of the Holy Spirit at *the coming into existence of the human nature* of Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:20 says, “What is *procreated* (NIV: conceived) (aorist passive) in her is from the Holy Spirit”. And Luke 1:35 says, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So *the Holy One being procreated* (NIV: to be born) (participle, present, passive) will be called *the Son of God*”. The Holy Spirit worked in the body of the virgin Mary and created only the body or physical/human nature of Jesus in her. He did not create the divine nature of Jesus, because the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus (Romans 8:9-10), the Spirit is eternal (Genesis 1:2) and the divine nature or divine being of Jesus is eternal (John 1:1-2)! Thus, the eternal Divine Being (as the Spirit) took on a human body (as Jesus Christ) within the creation of God and the history of man. That is why Jesus Christ (as God) is also called “the Holy One” and “the Son of God” and therefore he (as Man) received the name “Jesus” (Saviour) (Matthew 1:21; cf. Isaiah 43:10-11). Jesus Christ received only his human nature from his mother. His human nature was brought into existence through the Holy Spirit in Mary. He was not as other humans fathered by a human father, because God the Father has no physical body!

(3) “Gennaó” means “to conceive”, “give birth” or “to become a mother” in a *biological (physical)* sense.

The word is used of a woman who gives birth to a child in this world. “She *gave birth* to a son” (Luke 1:57). “A woman *giving birth* to a child has pain, because her time has come; but when her baby *is born* she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world” (John 16:21). “For this reason I was *born*, and for this I came into this world, to testify to the truth” (John 18:37). “How is it that each one of us hears them in his own language in which we *were born* (Acts 2:8)?” “I was *born* (a Roman citizen)” (Acts 22:28).

(4) “Gennaó” means “to procreate” or “to become a father” in a *spiritual* sense.

The word is used of the spiritual influence of the apostle Paul on the Corinthians. “Even though you have ten thousand pedagogues, you do not have many (spiritual) fathers, for in Christ Jesus I *became your (spiritual) father* through the gospel” (1 Corinthians 4:15). This means that Paul became their spiritual father when they believed the gospel which he preached to them.

The word is also used of the spiritual influence of the Holy Spirit in people. When people believe in Jesus Christ, they are “*born of God*”⁴⁵ (John 1:13; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18); or they are “*born anew*” or “*born from above*”⁴⁶ (John 3:3); or they are “*born of water and Spirit*”⁴⁷ (John 3:5). God the Holy Spirit is the Source and Cause of their spiritual rebirth. “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is *born of God*”⁴⁸ (1 John 5:1a). “And everyone who loves *the Begetter* (of new life)(NIV: the Father)⁴⁹, loves *the one begotten* from Him (NIV: the child)⁵⁰ (1 John 5:1b). The single person may refer to Jesus Christ, but is here more probably a reference to the Christian brother (cf. 1 John 2:9-10).

(5) “Gennaó” means “to give birth” or “to become mother” in a *spiritual (figurative)* sense.

The word is used for the spiritual influence of the Law before the first coming of Jesus Christ to earth. “Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman *was fathered* (NIV: born)⁵¹ in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman *was fathered born* as a result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively (as an allegory) for the women represent two covenants: One covenant is from Mount Sinai and

⁴³ “Born of the seed of David” (Greek: genomenou ek spermatis David < ginomai = to be born)(Romans 1:3)

⁴⁴ “Born of a woman” (Greek: genomenon ek gunaikos < ginomai = to be born)(Galatians 4:4)

⁴⁵ Greek: ek theou gegennéthesan

⁴⁶ Greek: gennéthe anóthen

⁴⁷ Greek: gennéthe ex hudatos kai pneumatós

⁴⁸ Greek: ek tou theou gegennétai, perfect tense

⁴⁹ Greek: gennésanta (aorist, active)

⁵⁰ Greek: ton gegennémenon eks autou (single, perfect tense, passive)

⁵¹ Greek: kai sarka gegennétai (perfect tense, passive)

bears (children)⁵² who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children” (Galatians 4:24-25; cf. Galatians 3:21-23).

(6) “Gennaó means that Christ is declared by God and acknowledged by people to be the Son of God in metaphysical, ontological sense.

The word is used for the influence of the Holy Spirit on Jesus Christ at his resurrection, ascension and enthronement. God says about this event: “You are my Son; today I *have become your Father*”⁵³? And: “I will be⁵⁴ his Father, and he will be⁵⁵ my Son” (Hebrews 1:5, Psalm 2:7).

The word “today”⁵⁶ refers to the resurrection from the dead, the ascension into heaven and the enthronement of Jesus Christ, when he was clothed with royal dignity, received the title “Son of God” who has all authority in heaven and on earth (cf. Matthew 28:18; Romans 1:4; Revelation 1:5-6) and on the basis of his completed work of salvation began with the execution of his Divine authority and power on earth as the Son of God and King.

His title “Son of God” not only refers to *his position since his resurrection*, but also to *whom he is from eternity* (“before the world began”)(John 17:1-5) and before his coming into the world (John 3:16; Hebrews 1:6). Therefore Christians acknowledge and confess him since his first coming (his resurrection, ascension and enthronement) to be the Son of God in a metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal sense!

Second, we explain the Greek word for “only-begotten”.

The Greek word “monogenés” can only refer to the trinitarian Sonship of Jesus Christ.

In John 1:18 this expression does not refer to anything that is related to the human world! It does not refer to any kind of a beginning in the past. It is an expression of the sonship of Jesus Christ in his trinitarian way of existing.

(1) Only-begotten cannot refer to the beginning of the human nature of Jesus.

The word “only-begotten” cannot be a reference to Jesus Christ as the son that was physically fathered by God, because Jesus Christ was already the Only-begotten Son of God before he took on the human nature (John 3:16)! The word “only-begotten” has therefore no relationship to the created world! The only-begotten Son of God stands above the creation.

(2) Only-begotten cannot refer to the beginning of the office of Jesus as the Messiah.

The word “only-begotten” is not derived from the words “only”⁵⁷ and “generation”⁵⁸, that has been derived from the word “being born”⁵⁹, because Jesus Christ is absolutely unique among people in the human race. Jesus is: “God” (John 1:1) and he is “the only-begotten God” (John 1:18 in the best Greek manuscripts). And because “God” is eternal, the word “only-begotten” can never refer to anything that had a beginning!

Only the task of Jesus Christ as the Messiah in human history had a beginning at his birth (Matthew 1:16) and will terminate at his second coming (1 Corinthians 15:28). That is why the word “only-begotten” cannot refer to his office as Messiah, because that office is bound to time. The only-begotten Son, however, is above time!

(3) Only-begotten can only refer to the trinitarian Sonship of Jesus Christ.

Because the word “only-begotten” refers to Someone above the creation (He existed before the beginning of creation) and above time (He existed before the beginning of human history), it can only mean “unique in his kind” or “the One and Only in his category”! That is why it is translated with the phrase “the One and Only Son of God”. The word “only-begotten” can only refer to the metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ, to the second way of existing, of being and therefore of revelation of the Divine Being (see John 1:1; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 1:8,17-18; Revelation 2:8; Revelation 22:13).

Thirdly, we explain the theological concept “Trinity”.

10. The Trinity.

(1) God can only be known completely through Jesus Christ.

There is no human being or religion that knows God as Father than God the Son and the people to whom God the Son reveals this (the Christians)(Matthew 11:27; John 10:15; John 17:25-26)!

Therefore every person stands or falls with regard to his or her relationship to Jesus Christ, the Son of God! “He who receives me, receives the One who sent me” (Matthew 10:40).” “He who rejects me, rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16). “This child is destined to cause the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against” (Luke 2:34). “For in Scripture it says, ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the

⁵² Greek: gennósa (perfect tense, active)

⁵³ Greek: gegennéka (perfect tense, active)

⁵⁴ Greek: esomai (future tense expresses absolute certainty)

⁵⁵ Greek: estai (future tense expresses absolute certainty)

⁵⁶ Greek: sémeron

⁵⁷ Greek: monos

⁵⁸ Greek: genos

⁵⁹ Greek: ginomai

one who trusts in him, will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone” and “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall” (1 Peter 2:6-8)!

(2) God has three ways of existence, of being.

There is only one Divine being (Mark 12:29) with one Name in the singular (Matthew 28:19). He reveals himself in the Bible in three ways of existence or being: as God the Father, as God the Son and as God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:3-6). He himself reveals to us that there is an inner distinction within the unity of the Divine Being. This is far above our ability to grasp or to describe, but demands obedient submission to God’s Self-revelation in the Bible. From all eternity God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit exists in a unique, inner distinct relationship to one another.

The word “Triune” or Trinity” is not a biblical word, but a theological word that expresses that Christians believe in ONE DIVINE BEING with THREE WAYS OF EXISTENCE, OF BEING AND OF REVELATION that cannot be separated from one another, but can be distinguished from one another. In earlier times Christians have indicated this inner distinction with the Greek word “hupostasis” and the Latin word: “persona”. But because the word “person” in modern languages acquired the meaning of “individual”, we should not use this Latin word anymore.

In the original Greek the word “hupostasis” is used and means: “essential or genuine nature”, “essence”, “real being” and is used to express a way of existence or of being of the Divine Being. He (Jesus Christ) is the Imprint (Exact Representation) of God’s Being⁶⁰ (Hebrews 1:3b). “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him” (Colossians 1:19). “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9).

The one Divine Being has three ways of existence, of being and also of revelation within the creation of God and within the history of man on earth:

- as God the Father in heaven (Matthew 6:9)
- as God the Son in heaven (also “before the world began”) and God with us on earth (John 17:5)
- and as God the Spirit in Christians and in the Church on earth.

A created human being is in his created way of existence not “love”, but is able to love another person (God or man). But God in his eternal three ways of existence not only loves, but is in his whole Being “love” (1 Johannes 4:8):

God the Father and God the Son love one another. The Father loves the Son (Luke 3:22) and the Son loves the Father (John 14:32) and the Spirit, who goes out from the Father (John 15:26) and from the Son (Luke 24:49; cf. 1 Peter 1:11) is in all eternity the bond within this love (Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:14).

Likewise it is said of the three ways of existence of the one Divine Being. They:

- know one another completely with the same knowledge (Matthew 11:27; John 10:15)
- consult one another and speak united (John 5:30; John 8:28; John 12:49; John 16:13)
- work as one (John 5:17; John 14:10)
- reign as one forever (Revelation 11:15; Revelation 12:10)
- have life in themselves (John 5:26)
- make the dead alive (John 5:21).

The Bible never speaks about God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit as three individual or separate “gods”, but as one Divine Being with three distinct ways of existence, being and revelation.

(3) God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is one God.

Christians are baptised with water “in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

- The word “the Name” means that God is exactly as he had revealed himself (in the Bible) and the single proves that God is but one unique Divine Being (Deuteronomy 6:4)(NOT three gods).
- The words “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” point to the inner distinction within the unity of the Divine Being. It not only shows that the One God had three ways of revealing himself, but that he has three ways of existing, of being! God is or exists as he has revealed himself in his Name!

(4) God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have three distinct functions:

- **“God as the Father”** is the eternal God of the Bible, the Creator, the Origin and the Source of everything and all. He determines the destination of everything and all (Romans 11:36). He is the Origin of the creation, the revelation and the recreation. As Father he is the Head of his family in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 3:14-15), the One with whom each of his spiritual children have an intimate relationship: “Our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-13).
- **“God as the Son”** is the eternal God of the Bible, who without laying down his Divine Nature took on the human nature as well and entered his creation and human history through the virgin Mary (Philippians 2:6-7; Colossians 2:9). He is “God with us” Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). He is “the Word of God” that revealed himself in creation and in human history (John 1:1,14,18). He is “the Spirit of God” (2 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Peter 1:11) who lives with and in Christians (John 14:16-18). According to the Fourth Ecumenical Synod (worldwide gathering) at Chalcedon (451 A.D.) the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ are “without confusion, without change, without division,

⁶⁰ Greek: charaktér tes hupostaseós

without separation.” The distinction between the two natures is in no way annulled by this union. “The characteristics of each nature” are to be considered as “preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence.” They are not to be “separated into two persons (individuals).” God the Son is equal to God the Father in being almighty (John 1:3; John 5:21,27), in being all-knowing (Matthew 11:27), in honour (John 5:23), in possession of life in himself (John 5:26), in work (John 10:30), in possessions (John 16:15), etc. Jesus Christ was sentenced to death because he claimed that he was the Son of God (John 10:30,33; Matthew 26:63-66).

- **“God as the Spirit”** is the eternal God of the Bible who lives in the hearts and lives of Christians (Romans 8:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and in the Church (Ephesians 2:19-22).

A very limited illustration is “the sun”. The sun is essentially one substance, but has three distinct ways of revelation: the sun exists as “fire”, is visible as “light”, and is felt as “warmth”. Likewise the one Divine Being revealed himself visibly in Jesus Christ and is experienced invisibly as the Holy Spirit. But this illustration is limited, because it only shows distinct ways of revelation and not distinct ways of existence, because the sun is a part of the created reality and thus limited to the dimensions of matter, space and time and God is not limited to these dimensions!

(5) Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are called “God”.

Because God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit has one and the same divine nature, Jesus Christ is called “God with us” (Matthew 1:23), “the Son of God” (Matthew 26:63-64) and even “God” (Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1; Romans 9:5; Romans 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8-9). That is why the Holy Spirit is also called “the Spirit of God”, “the Spirit of Christ”, “Christ in you” (Romans 8:9-10) and even “God” (Acts 5:3,5).

Conclusion. The expression “Son of God” can only refer to the sonship of Jesus Christ that has no beginning. Jesus Christ is the Son of God in metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal sense.

11. Jesus Christ calls himself “the Son of Man”.

A. People as sons of man.

In the Old Testament the term “son of man” simply means “man” (Psalm 8:4). It is a reference to man in all his weakness and dependence, as with the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:1,3,6,8; 3:1,3,4,10,17,25, etc.).

Similarly the meaning of the expression:

- “sons of wickedness” (2 Samuel 3:34) means “wicked people”
- “son of a foreigner”⁶¹ (Exodus 12:43) means “a foreigner”
- “sons of thunder”⁶² (Mark 3:17) means “short-tempered men”
- “the daughters of music”⁶³ (Ecclesiastes 12:4) indicates “musical notes”.

B. Christ is the Son of Man.

(1) The description “a son of man”⁶⁴ in Daniel 7:9-14 becomes the title (name of office or function) of the Messiah in the Gospels.

Besides John 12:34 the expression “Son of Man”⁶⁵ is always the title with which Jesus Christ refers to himself. Compare Matthew 26:64 with Daniel 7:13. Only Stephen spoke of Jesus as the Son of Man whom he saw standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Nowhere else is Jesus addressed or indicated with this title. Also Revelation 1:13 and Revelation 14:14 apply the title “Son of Man” to Jesus in his function as Messiah, the Mediator of salvation and judgement.

(2) The title “Son of Man” is sometimes a description of the humiliation of the human nature of Jesus (the human Jesus).

The Son of Man had no permanent place to sleep (Matthew 8:20), the Jewish religious leaders condemned him to death and the heathen political leaders handed him over to be mocked, flogged and crucified (Matthew 20:18-19). He was buried during a part of three time units called “a day and a night”⁶⁶ (Matthew 12:40), because he was “raised to life on the third day” (Matthew 16:21).

(3) The title “Son of Man” is sometimes a description of the exaltation of the human nature of Jesus.

The Son of Man was raised to life on the third day (Matthew 20:19). A long time after his ascension into heaven he will return visibly in the glory of his Father with his angels and reward each person according to what he has done (Matthew 16:27; Matthew 24:27,30,44) while sitting on his throne in glory (Matthew 25:31; Matthew 26:64).

(4) The title “Son of Man” is sometimes a description of the work of salvation of Jesus Christ.

Compare “the Servant of the LORD”⁶⁷ in Isaiah 42:1-7; Isaiah 49: 1-8; Isaiah 52:13-53:12 who through his life, death and resurrection brought salvation to Jews and Gentiles. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke

⁶¹ Hebrew: ben-nekar

⁶² Greek: huios brontés

⁶³ Hebrew: benot-ha-shir

⁶⁴ Aramaic: bar enash = Hebrew: ben adam

⁶⁵ Greek: ho huios tou anthrōpou

⁶⁶ Dutch: “een etmaal”

⁶⁷ Hebrew: Ebed JahWeH

19:10). He is “the Lord of the Sabbath” and thus Lord of the Ceremonial Law. He sets people free from slavery to the Law (Matthew 12:8). He has authority to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). He sets people free from sins. He came into this world with the purpose to give his life as a ransom for sins in exchange for many people (Matthew 20:28).

(5) The title “Son of Man” enabled Jesus to reveal himself gradually to the Jews.

If Jesus Christ had immediately called himself “the Messiah”, the Jews would not have accepted him, because they expected a mighty leader who would free them from the political yoke of the Romans. But gradually the Jews began to wonder, “Who is this Son of Man?” (John 12:34).

Likewise Jesus challenges us today:

“What do YOU think about the Christ?”

Whose Son is he?”

(Matthew 22:42).