

The Father

By J. W. Jepson

© 2014 J. W. Jepson. All rights reserved, including the right to grant the following permission and to prohibit the misuse thereof: The Author hereby grants permission to reproduce the text of this article, without changes or alterations*, as a ministry, but not for commercial or non-ministry purposes. *Permission is given for publication of excerpts and condensed versions.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New King James Version, © 1990 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

(NIV) Scripture quotations from the Holy Bible, New International Version are copyright © 1973, 1978, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

As was stated earlier in What You Should Know About God, what is revealed about God applies to all three Persons in the Deity ("Godhead")--The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit--*with particular application to the Father because of the Father's primacy*, that is, His position as first among equals. For this reason the book was intended to be about the Father over all and yet including all.

"God the Father" (John 6:27). "God and Father" (Ephesians 4:6). "God our Father" (Colossians 1:2). "Our God and Father" (Philippians 4:20). These and other references to God as the Father occur numerous times in the Scriptures. This in itself establishes a principle: *unless the Scriptural reference is to all the Trinity or specifically to the Son and/or to the Holy Spirit, "God" means "The Father."*

Also, when the Scriptures speak of God in relationship to the Son, "God" means "the Father." For example, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Who loved the world and gave His Son? The Father. Again, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). We have peace with *whom* through our Lord Jesus Christ? The Father. And so throughout the New Testament.

Even though it was assumed that the book would be about the Father over all, it has become clear that attention needs to be given to what is specific to the Father in His Fatherhood. That is the purpose of this Appendix.

It is important to define what is meant by the "masculinity" of the Father. Of course, it has nothing to do with sexuality because God is sexless. God is masculine in the sense that masculinity means "that which initiates, creates, provides, acts upon." All of creation is feminine in the sense that femininity means "that which receives the action, processes it, and gives it back."

Of the equal Persons in the Deity, the Father is the sovereign initiating authority. The Son is the mediating administrator. The Holy Spirit is the functioning agent.

Each Person in the Deity--the Trinity--is not a "part" or "fraction" of God. God is indivisible. Each does not exist apart from God. Each does not act independently of God. They are all in one and one in all. They are of one essence, one nature, one character, one mind and one

will. They *are* God. They are *He*. The Trinity is commonly expressed as: "God the Father; God the Son; God the Holy Spirit." The Trinity is even better expressed as: "The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit--God."

What is commonly termed "the Fatherhood of God" is the unique relationship of the Father to: (1) the angelic and physical creation; (2) the Son; (3) mankind in general; and (4) His covenant people in particular. This relationship includes His wise, benevolent and rightful authority and also His gracious provisions and care.

The Fatherhood Of God To The Angelic And Physical Creation.

When The Scriptures speak of God as the "Father" of the angelic and physical creation, they mean only that He is the creator, sustainer, and sole proprietor of it all with all sovereign rights and authority over it all.

Angelic spirits, both obedient and disobedient, good and evil, are called "sons of God" in the sense that God created them spirit-kind beings as He Himself is a spirit-being, as Jesus said (John 4:24).

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD and Satan [adversary, accuser] came among them" (Job 1:6; also 2:1).

God questioned Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4 - 7).

Many believe that the "mighty ones" in Psalm 29:1 and "the sons of the mighty" in Psalm 89:6 are angelic beings.

As the creator of the physical universe, God is called "the Father of lights," that is, the heavenly bodies (James 1:17).

"There is only one God, the Father, of [from] whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live" (1 Corinthians 8:6). He "gives life to all things" (1 Timothy 6:13).

The Fatherhood Of God To The Son.

The Scriptures clearly teach that the Persons in the Deity, the Holy Trinity, are co-equal and co-eternal. The Scriptures also teach that Jesus Christ is uniquely the Son of God. The question then that gave rise to the Christological issue in the post-apostolic Church is this: "How can the Second Person in the Trinity be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and yet be His Son?"

This early controversy took place primarily within the contemporary and prevalent Greek mind-set. That mind-set formed the philosophical milieu that generated and contextualized the Christological controversy itself. In the process it produced the poisonous fruit of Arianism.

The Christological issue was formally settled at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325). The decision was affirmed at the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). The Nicene Creed became and continues to be the definitive creedal statement of orthodox Christology.

This also established and gave creedal authority to the doctrine known as "The Eternal Generation Of The Son." Origen (ca. A.D. 185 - 254) was among the first to advance the idea of the eternal generation of the Son. Others followed.

The Eternal Generation of the Son is the doctrine that the Father by an act out of the necessity of His nature eternally generates the person but not the essence of the Son by communicating to the Son the whole and indivisible substance of the Deity. The doctrine has been stated, restated and refined in great depth and elaborate detail. It is firmly established in Catholic and Reformed theology. The Westminster Confession states that "the Son is eternally begotten of the Father" (WCF II:3).

The Nicene Creed itself contains elements of the doctrine, for example in the words "very God *of very God*" (emphasis added). Without the italicized words, it would read simply "very God."

Not all evangelicals accept the doctrine of The Eternal Generation Of The Son. No *undisputed* proof-text for the doctrine exists in the Scriptures. However it is refined and stated, the doctrine tends toward the very error it is intended to prevent. Intricate and abstruse terminology notwithstanding, one can hardly (if at all) escape the doctrine's implication that the deity of the Second Person in the Trinity is a *derived* deity.

One wonders whether or not the Christological controversy would have arisen at all were it not for the existence and influence of the prevailing Greek philosophical milieu that surrounded the post-apostolic Church.

Regarding the Fatherhood of God to the Son, let us consider the following:

(1) The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal as to their essence, deity and personhood. The Father is primary in position as the sovereign initiating authority and head. The Son and the Holy Spirit are subject to the Father *in position and function*. "Father" and "Son" are terms of relationship. The Father is not the source of the essence (being) of the Son; therefore He is not the source of the person of the Son. The Father is the source of the *sending* of the Son.

(2) The Second Person in the Deity was and is eternally willed by the Father with the concurrent (united) will of the whole Deity to be the Son. *Yeshua* (Jesus)--Jehovah (Yahweh)-Savior--is His eternal name. This eternal status and designated relationship to

the Father was prophesied in Psalm 2:7. "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You'." "Today" is a prolepsis (an anticipated future act stated as already existing). It refers to the day when the Second Person in the eternal Trinity would become in time and space history the Son of God by the Incarnation, as He was eternally designated. "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). We find another prolepsis in Revelation 13:8, where Jesus is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This is the natural reading. The alternative reading actually presupposes this because no one's name can be "written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world," as stated in Revelation 17:8, unless the proleptic sacrifice of the Lamb had made it possible. Revelation 13:8 makes Revelation 17:8 possible.

"For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have become your Father [begotten you]'? Or again, 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son'? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (Hebrews 1:5, 6 NIV). This states that the Second Person in the eternal Trinity would become in *fact* as well as in *designation* the Son of God in Jesus, the Christ, both Son of God and Son of Man in the hypostatic union of the Incarnation. Notice the future tense of the emphasized words of the ancient prophecies: "I *will be* to Him a Father." "He *shall be* to Me a Son." "The day" arrived when the hypostatic union of God and man was accomplished by the Father with the Holy Spirit in the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary (Luke 1:30 - 35). Please ponder the words of this profound announcement, especially verse 35: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore [*for that reason*], also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Jesus is called the Son of God because of the Incarnation. Nine months later God brought the firstborn [*prototokos*] into the world (*oikoumene*) in a manger in Bethlehem; it was then that "a multitude of the heavenly host" broke into praise (Luke 2:1 - 14).

At Jesus' baptism, "suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Later, on the Mount Of Transfiguration, a cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). Later, Peter wrote, "For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (2 Peter 1:17).

(3) The Second Person in the Trinity will always be the only begotten (*monogenes*) and firstborn (*prototokos*) Son of God in *fact* as well as in designation, fully God and fully man (Son of God/Son of Man). Jesus Christ will forever be united with our redeemed humanity, our Brother. There is a *Man* in the glory--"the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

God will *not* "open the Trinity and let us in." God did *not* "become man that we might become God," another notion that emerged out of the ancient Greek mind-set. God will always be God; we will always be humanity--redeemed.

(4) The Second Person in the eternal Trinity is and always has been fully God and the *Logos* (Word) of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3). See also 1 John 1:1, 2; Revelation 19:13. He is the verbal expression of God. God spoke the worlds into existence through Him—the *Logos*, the Word. When the *Logos* became flesh as the incarnated Son of the Father (John 1:14), He—the living Word--became the spoken Word of God to us. "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. . . ." (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

(5) The diversity in unity of the persons in the Trinity is a divine mystery, known only to God and revealed by God to man only to the extent that God has willed to reveal it. Even before the Second Person became the Son of God in fact as well as in eternal designation, the Father loved Him with the absolute love that exists eternally within the Deity. Jesus acknowledged this when He prayed to the Father, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Jesus said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). "The Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John 10:38).

The Father was the source of Jesus' teachings. He said to the puzzled Jews, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (John 7:16). He said on another occasion, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as the Father taught Me, I do these things" (John 8:28). The Father anointed Him with the Holy Spirit for His works as well as His teaching. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). The Father is the ultimate source of our salvation. Paul wrote, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The Second Person in the Trinity had an eternal glory with God the Father. He laid this aside when He became the Son in the Incarnation (Philippians 2:7). Just before His crucifixion He prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). He requested that upon the completion of His earthly mission the Father would restore to Him His pre-incarnate glory.

"Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4). "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). "When He had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). He is "in the bosom of [in intimate union with] the Father" (John 1:18), receiving from the Father all the fullness of God and filling us with that fullness by His Spirit (Ephesians 3:19; 5:18). He is "at the right hand of the Father," making intercession for us (Romans 8:34). When He returns, He will come "in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26; also Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38).

(6) As fully God, the Second Person in the Trinity is co-equal with the Father in eternal *essence*. As the incarnate Son of God He is subject to the Father in *position* (as is also the Holy Spirit). This distinction must be kept in mind; otherwise, people mistake Jesus'

statements about Himself and His relationship to the Father as the Son. Jesus said, "The Father is greater than I" (John 10:29;14:28). Notice, He did *not* say, "The Father is *better* than I." The Son is not a lesser deity. He is not inferior in being (essence).

"In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8 - 10). The Son never disobeyed the Father. He did always the things that please the Father (John 8:29); yet, as the Son made flesh, He Himself went through the experience of human temptation and suffering. He learned firsthand from our standpoint what it is and how to handle it in obedience to the Father. He can sympathize with our weaknesses because He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). This perfected (fully qualified) Him to be our "merciful and faithful High Priest" to God (Hebrews 2:17).

Paul wrote, "The head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). "You are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23). God is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:31; 1 Peter 1:3), "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (Ephesians 1:17). On the cross Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46, from Psalm 22:1).

God the Father addressed the Son as God and at the same time referred to Himself as the God of the Son. Quoting verses six and seven of Psalm 45, the author of The Epistle to the Hebrews quoted God as saying to the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions" (Hebrews 1:9). Jesus said to the disciples, "And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me" (Luke 22:29). When the end comes, Jesus Christ will deliver the kingdom "to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24). "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (verse 28).

After His resurrection Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17). As the Son, Jesus Christ forever honors the higher position of the Father. Even from heaven He said, "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name" (Revelation 3:12).

In these statements Jesus is speaking as the "Son of Man" as well as the Son of God, and they should be understood in that context—Son of God co-equally with the Father, Son of Man in co-submission with redeemed humanity to the Father. This is His dual Sonship.

He is forever identified with us in our submission and subjection to the Father as God. He is forever glorified with the Father as the Son of God and forever glorifying the Father as the Son of Man.

Jesus Reveals The Father.

To know God, we must confine ourselves to His self-revelation; otherwise, we drift into speculation and error. God has chosen to reveal Himself in and by His Son. Jesus made this very clear in His statement: "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). He said, "I do know Him and keep His word" (John 8:55). John wrote, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him (John 1:18). "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may 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). Only the Son can reveal the Father because only the Son truly and fully knows the Father.

Later, in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:13 - 17). Also, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would testify of Him (John 15:26).

So then, by the Holy Spirit *the Father reveals the Son so that the Son will reveal the Father.* Jesus said that the Father has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them to babes. So it seemed good in the Father's sight (Matthew 11:25, 26).

Because no one can *know* the Father except the person to whom the Son reveals Him, it follows logically that no one can *come to* the Father except through the Son. Jesus made this also very clear in His statement: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Jesus Christ is the only way to know God and the only way to come to God. There is no other way. This is the exclusiveness of the gospel. It offends human pride and evokes its hostility. Nevertheless, it is the truth. The gospel is the only answer to man's sin and guilt. Believe or perish.

Some things the Son did not reveal to us. In the Olivet Discourse Jesus said to the disciples, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:31, 32). After His resurrection, He said to the disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7).

Jesus showed us the Father by: (1) who He was (and is); (2) what He said; (3) what He did.

(1) Who He was (and is).

As a twelve year old child, Jesus knew who He was and who His real Father was. He said, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49).

On one occasion Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also" (John 8:19).

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus was addressing His disciples. When He said to them, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him," Philip interrupted Him: "Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us." Jesus replied, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves" (John 14:7 - 11).

Earlier, we looked at Hebrews 1:1, 2. As we go into verse 3 we read that the Son is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person. "Express image" means "exact representation," or as we might say, the "living picture" of God.

(2) What He said.

Jesus said, "I speak what I have seen with My Father" (John 8:38). To His disciples He said, "All things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

Jesus said much *to* the Father and *about* the Father. As we examine His words, we learn more about the Father. In doing so we keep in mind that even though we learn much *about* the Father through Jesus' words, we can truly *know* the Father only through a personal relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus never addressed God as "our Father." He taught us to do so, but He never included Himself in that collective prayer. In speaking to others about the Father, Jesus used the plural, "your Father." Yet, at least on one occasion, in the Sermon On The Mount, Jesus used the singular. "Your [singular, Thy (KJV)] Father who sees in secret" (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18). Sometimes He said "the Father." He spoke to the Father as His Father. He addressed God "Father" in prayer. In speaking of the Father, Jesus usually said "my Father."

The classic example of Jesus' prayers to the Father is His high-priestly prayer just before His crucifixion, recorded in John 17. He prayed that the Father would keep us through His name (verses 11 - 16); sanctify us by the truth (verses 17 - 19); perfectly unite us together in Him and the Father by the *delegated* (not pre-incarnate) glory that the Father gave to Him and that He in turn delegated to us, so that the world will know that the Father sent the Son and that He loves us just as He loves Jesus (verses 20 - 23); and bring us "home" to Jesus at last so we can behold His eternal pre-incarnate glory (verse 24). He concluded His prayer, "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (verse 26).

Jesus gave us a true picture of the Father in what He taught and what He did. Jesus did not express the grace and compassion of the Father to the exclusion of the justice of the Father. In the Sermon On The Mount He said, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14, 15). Later, in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, where the king forgave the servant's multi-million dollar debt but the servant would not forgive the few dollars that *his* fellow-servant owed *him*, the king reinstated the first servant's life-devastating debt. Jesus concluded: "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (Matthew 18:23 – 35). Sobering words.

Jesus said, "The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:22, 23). "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted to the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (verses 26, 27).

Paul made clear that God will judge the world by Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). Therefore, everyone will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10, 11).

Jesus told us many things about the Father. He said to the disciples, "The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God" (John 16:27). He said "your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him," and that He knows *before* we ask Him (Matthew 6:8, 32; Luke 12:30). "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11; Luke 11:13).

Jesus assured us that the Father sees the sparrow when it falls and knows the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:29 - 31). He knows more about you than you know about yourself. That is how closely, personally and tenderly He watches over you.

Jesus assured us, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John 10:27 - 30).

Jesus concluded The Parable of the Lost Sheep by saying, "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14. Also Luke 15:4 - 7).

In the Parable Of The Lost Son Jesus showed us clearly the depth of the yearning heart of the Father over every wayward soul (Luke 15:11 - 32).

In His last instructions to His disciples before He was crucified, Jesus told them that in the gospel age after His resurrection, ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, He would tell

them plainly about The Father (John 16:25) This He did by the Spirit to the apostles and other New Testament writers.

(3). What He did.

Jesus said to the Jews, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). "Most assuredly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son does also in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will" (Verses 19 - 21). Later He said to them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father" (John 10:32).

Peter declared: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38).

What did Jesus do?

He healed the dying son of a desperate nobleman.

He spoke healing for a dying servant of a centurion at Capernaum.

He expelled demons by His spoken command and restored their victims to health, sanity and society.

He destroyed the infection in Peter's mother-in-law that had laid her low with a fever.

He cleansed lepers.

He gave sight to the blind.

He healed the lame, the maimed, the paralyzed.

He restored the severed ear of Malchus.

He went throughout Galilee healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

He raised a widow's son from the dead at Nain and turned the funeral into a celebration.

He reconstituted the decaying body of Lazarus and restored him to life with a single command: "Lazarus, come out!"

He raised Jairus's young daughter from the dead. On the way, he felt power flow out of him and heal a hemorrhaging woman when she touched the hem of His garment.

He stilled the storm on the Sea Of Galilee.

He filled the disciples' net with fish.

He fed thousands with a few loaves and a few little fish.

He forgave the woman who had been caught in adultery.

He took the children up in His arms and blessed them.

He laid down His life for us and took it up again. This command He received from His Father.

He is highly exalted at the right hand of the Father as our Great High priest.

He is coming again in power at the command of the Father.

These are the works of the Father, done by the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. *These are the works of God.*

The Fatherhood Of God To Mankind.

God is the Father of all mankind *by creation*. We go to the book of the prophet Malachi, chapter 2, verse 10. "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" This rhetorical question demands one answer: *yes*. Although the prophet is addressing the nation of Israel, he speaks of God as our universal Father by creation, not by His covenant relationship with Israel.

Luke 3:23 - 38 traces the physical lineage of Jesus through His mother, Mary, from Joseph's legal father-in-law, Heli, working back progressively son-to-father all the way to Adam. The passage concludes by identifying Adam as the son of God because he was created by the direct action of God and thus became the progenitor and head of mankind.

As the apostle Paul was in the Areopagus in Athens proclaiming the one true God (whom they admitted not knowing) and exposing the folly of idolatry, he quoted from their own poets (Aratus of Soli and Cleanthes): "For we are also His offspring." Paul affirmed this statement of God's Fatherhood of our common humanity and drove the point "home." "Therefore since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature [Deity] is like gold or silver or stone, shaped by art and man's devising." He then went on to make his appeal. (See Acts 17:28 - 31).

Moses addressed God as "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Numbers 16:22; 27:16). Likewise, the author of The Epistle To The Hebrews calls God "the Father of spirits," referring to our human spirit (Hebrews 12:9).

The Biblical references to God as the Father of mankind include:

(1) His act of creating us. We are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26, 27).

(2) His providential care. He is "a father of the fatherless" (Psalm 68:5a). Jesus said that the Father "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Paul said to the idol worshipers at Lystra, "[God] did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). He affirmed in the Areopagus that God "gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). The Scriptures are full of statements that speak of our Father's care of all of His creatures, especially His human children. He is good to all.

(3) His governance, including His right and duty to judge. Psalm 68:5b says that He is also "a defender of widows." Even though "the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22), that authority came from the Father (verse 27). God is the Judge of all (Hebrews 12:23). "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Romans 2:16).

(4) His being the initiator and the ultimate source of the plan and provision of salvation.

It was the Father who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

(5) His unique Fatherhood to His covenant people. "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" (Hebrews 12:5, 6; from Proverbs 3:11, 12).

The Fatherhood Of God To His Covenant People.

Israel: The Old Covenant.

Even before the children of Israel were delivered from bondage in Egypt, God identified them collectively as His son. God commanded Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Israel is My Son, My firstborn" (Exodus 4:22).

God said through the prophet Hosea, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1). The immediate and direct reference of this divine statement was to the nation of Israel. Its ultimate and highest reference is to Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God (Matthew 2:15).

In this statement through Hosea, God called the Israelites His "child" and affirmed His love for him even when they were still growing and increasing in Egypt. Upon their deliverance, God adopted them as His son. This established a special covenant relationship with them and marked them off from all other people and nations as uniquely His by adoption.

For this reason they were forbidden to engage in the cultic practices of other nations and cultures. Moses reminded the post-wilderness generation: "You are the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead" (Deuteronomy 14:1).

This covenant relationship was the basis of God's appeals to the nation in their backslidings.

"Do you thus deal with the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?" (Deuteronomy 32:6).

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me'" (Isaiah 1:2).

God spoke through the prophet Malachi: "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I then am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?" (Malachi 1:6).

In his prayer for the nation, the prophet Isaiah appealed to God for His mercies on the basis of His covenant relationship to them as their Father. "Doubtless You are our Father, though

Abraham was ignorant of us, and Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O LORD, are our Father; our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name" (Isaiah 63:16). "But now, O LORD, you are our Father" (Isaiah 64:8).

In Isaiah 43:5 - 7 God promised a future restoration. He said to Israel, "Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth--everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

We find the same promise in Jeremiah 31:7 - 9. "For thus says the LORD, 'Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!" Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the mother with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.'" ""Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him,' says the LORD " (verse 20).

God established a special covenant with David and his royal line. In 2 Samuel 7:11 -16 God spoke to David through Nathan the prophet. "Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house, When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."

The promises of this Davidic Covenant were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the son of David *and* the Son of God.

In Psalm 89:26, 27 God said about David, "He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.' Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." This part of the Davidic Covenant also has its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

The Church: The New Covenant.

It would be easy for this section to become more about the sonship *of* believers than about the Fatherhood of God *to* believers because so much is written about believers' part in the relationship. However, our focus here is primarily on God as our Father and only secondarily on believers' corresponding sonship and its privileges and responsibilities.

Jesus made clear that there are two *spiritual* "fatherhoods." He spoke of God as the Father

of His covenant people. He also said to the disobedient, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:44).

When Elymas the sorcerer withstood Barnabas and Saul, Saul (Paul) said to him, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all unrighteousness, will you not cease perverting the right ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10). The apostle John wrote, "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10). This is the sure test with obvious results.

We all know that we had no choice whatever in becoming children of God by creation. That was the result of natural conception by our parents with the impartation of "the image of God" by the Holy Spirit. "There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding" (Job 32:8). "Breath" here means more than the air in our lungs--air does not give us understanding. It stands for the special infusion of personhood that comes by the creative action of the Holy Spirit. Some translate it "inspiration." God asked Job the rhetorical question, "Who has put wisdom in the mind [literally, inward parts]?, or who has given understanding to the heart?" (Job 38:36). All of us can and should say, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4). As was mentioned earlier, Paul affirmed in the Areopagus that God "gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25).

By contrast, we *do* have a choice in becoming children of God by redemption and adoption. Faith in Jesus Christ is an essential condition of becoming a child of God. He gave us this authority and privilege upon our receiving Jesus Christ by faith. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

God is the initiator and prime agent of the new birth. The truth--His word--is His instrument. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18). God sent His Son to redeem us; He gave us the gospel in His word; He sent the Holy Spirit to draw us to Jesus Christ; through faith in Christ we are reconciled to Him to live a new life joyfully in fellowship with Him in the Spirit. That is the new birth.

We are born again of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3 – 8), and by the witness of the Spirit we become aware of our sonship. We are born again of the Spirit to live in the Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:14 - 17).

Paul wrote, "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14, 15). (Note: the absence of the definite article in verse 15, *pasa patria*, does not necessitate the alternate translation, "every family." See, e.g., Ephesians 2:21; Matthew

2:3; Acts 2:36; 7:22). God is the Father of the whole family of born-again believers, including those who are now in heaven and those who are still on earth.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:3 - 6).

"Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:29, 30).

To conform us to the character image of His Son, The Father has the right to discipline us. My father never spanked the neighbor's kids. His concern was to make sure how *I* grew up. To be born-again children of God subjects us to His discipline. Our Father is determined to make us just like Jesus. We can either come the easy way or come the hard way. The choice is ours.

"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 [*mastigoi*, "whips"--ouch! *Put that disobedience on your "never-again" list*] every son whom He receives [from Proverbs 3:11, 12]. 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 are you illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:5 - 11).

It is all for our good. In Matthew 10::29, 30 Jesus said that our heavenly Father sees the sparrow when it falls. He knows at every moment the very hairs of our head. That is how closely, carefully and tenderly our Father watches over each and every one of us. He knows more about us personally than we know about ourselves, and He cares more about our personal well-being than we ourselves often do.

The Father loves you. He wants you to know Him. Do not let fear keep you from Him. Come to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ, *and live*.