

# The Divine Sonship of Christ

## PART FOUR

*"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"—John 1:14*

SOMETHING is made of the circumstances that Jesus was not officially proclaimed Son of God till his immersion in Jordan. Consider the testimony of John the Baptist, who said to his disciples—  
"After me cometh a man who is preferred before me, for he was before me, and I knew him not, but THAT HE SHOULD BE MADE MANIFEST to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

"He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record, that THIS IS THE SON OF GOD" (John 1:30-34).

The immersion of Christ was therefore merely his official introduction to Israel—his manifestation, not his making; the descent of the Holy Spirit at his baptism was his **identification** as the Son of God—not his **constitution**.

He was the Son of God before, having been begotten by the power of the Highest, according to the testimony of Luke.

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THEN it is asked—

*"Is it not strange that there was such positive ignorance of the fact that he was the Son of God, if it was announced at his birth?"*

The answer is that the ignorance was not so positive as assumed. John the Baptist knew there was such a man, though he was unacquainted with him personally. He said—

"There standeth one among you WHOM YE KNOW NOT . . . whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

If it be thought a wonder that John should not know him, being his cousin, we have only to remember that John was brought up in the desert from childhood (Luke 1:80), and probably never had the opportunity of seeing Jesus, who lived in another part of the country.

As to the people not knowing him, it shows they were mistaken in supposing him to be the son of Joseph. As Jesus said to them afterwards—

"Ye judge after the flesh," (John 8:15).

*"But, if it was announced at his birth, why should they be ignorant?"*

We must remember that the announcement was not made with the publicity which it has since attained in the wide-spread diffusion of the Scriptures of the New Testament, nor at a time when there were the facilities for propagating news that now exist. We are apt to judge the incidents of the time with reference to modern experience in the circulation of intelligence.

Thirty years had elapsed from the birth of Christ to the baptism in the Jordan. This was long enough to have effaced in great part the impression made at the time of his birth. The child Jesus grew up as an ordinary child, under the care of his parents; and presenting nothing remarkable to the notice of neighbours. The tradition of his birth, if it ever got beyond his family, would soon sink into forgetfulness. Popular interest feeds on marvel; and when marvel ceased the attention would flag and die, and Jesus would grow up unnoticed, as the carpenter's son.

It is highly improbable that his divine paternity was a matter of common report. It was precisely a matter of that description that would be kept private—

"Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."

It is a question if Joseph and Mary understood the matter fully. It is testified of them in the very narrative that—

"Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things that were spoken of him" (Luke 2:33).

The lapse of thirty years would greatly tend to involve in haze the mysterious and feebly-comprehended occurrences of his birth, and made the public manifestation of his true character by immersion, by the visible effusion of the Holy Spirit, a necessity and an appropriate introduction of him to Israel at full age.

The idea that he was the son of Joseph from his birth to 30, and at that age became the Son of God by the anointing of the Spirit, is a mere theory and absurd at that. There is nothing in proof of it; while to prop it up the Josephite throws overboard the narratives of Matthew and Luke, which, if one or two scholars opine to reject, an overwhelming majority consider genuine, and which, if lacking in one or two MSS. (mutilated to suit the carnal doctrines of the Josephite school), a preponderating number possess.

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The Josephite gives two reasons for Jesus being styled the Son of God.

*"First," he says, "'Son of God' was equivalent to 'the Messiah.' "*

But how came this to be the case? The true answer is, because the Messiah was to be a son of God. Can the Josephite theory furnish an answer?

*"It was so understood by the Jews," he adds—namely, that the two terms were equivalent.*

This does not help the matter. The REASON which made them interchangeable among the Jews, destroys the theory. Although the Jews consider Jesus to be the son of Joseph, yet as to the Messiah of their own expectation, they looked for him to be "the Son of the Blessed" (Mark 14:51), and that he should "continue forever." The "Messiah" and the "Son of God" were interchangeable, **because one was to be the other.**

*The second reason why Josephism alleges Jesus to have been styled Son of God, is the fact that he was the first to rise from the dead immortal.*

This is confuted by the fact that he was called the Son of God before his resurrection, as already shown.

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THE Josephite cannot account for Matthew introducing Joseph as the husband of Mary, and not as the father of Jesus. He simply says that Matthew having done the one, it was unnecessary to do the other. This is not satisfactory.

The truth admits of a complete solution. It was only by the legal union of his mother with Joseph in marriage, that Jesus could acquire the rights and titles of Joseph's first-born, and Matthew is careful to show that this was accomplished.

*The Josephite inquires: "Why was not the miraculous conception, if a fact, placed above suspicion by happening before instead of after the marriage?"*

The answer is fatal to the Josephite view. If Christ's birth happened out of wedlock, he would not have been Joseph's son, and would therefore have lacked one of the qualifications of the Messiahship, but occurring after Mary had become "one flesh" with Joseph, he had all the advantage of a direct paternity, without the hopeless defilement that would have come with a purely Adamic descent.

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*The Josephite claims the application of Isaiah's prophecy—"A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"—to Isaiah's own son, "Mahershalalhashbaz." He says Jesus was not called Immanuel.*

If this is a good reason against Christ, it is a good reason against Mahershalalhashbaz, for HE was not called Emmanuel.

*"But" he says, "It was applied to Mahershalalhashbaz to denote the presence of God in effecting the liberation of the Jews."*

According to this, the name "Emmanuel" was applied on the principle of a recognized significance in the events to which the child stood related. If this is sound in the case of Mahershalalhashbaz, why is it to be refused in the case of Jesus?

*"Oh," says the Josephite, "He was not to be called the MEANING of the word Immanuel, but 'shall call his NAME Immanuel'."*

If this is to rob Jesus of the name, does it not equally bar its applicability to the other child?

But more; if this is a sound principle as applied to Immanuel, can it be unsound in reference to other names? If because Jesus was called Jesus, and not Immanuel, this prophecy does not apply to him, how are we to deal with the prophecy which says—

"His NAME should be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6)?

These names were only realized in **meaning** in Christ and not in personal denomination. By the Josephite argument on Emmanuel, we should be compelled to dismiss this passage in Isaiah from the list of Messianic predictions.

The same remarks apply to "The Branch," "David," "Michael," and other names which only express doctrinal truth concerning Christ, but were not denominatively applied to him. "Immanuel" is as much a name of Christ as "Jesus;" for all names are his that define the truth about him. He, and he alone, is, "God with us"—

"The word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

"Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels," etc. (1 Tim. 3:16).