

# The Divine Sonship of Christ

By BROTHER ROBERT ROBERTS

*"If righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain"—Galatians 2:21*

## PART SIX

THE Josephite asks—

*"Are you prepared to give an absolute contradiction to Philip's assertion (John 1:45) that 'Jesus of Nazareth' was 'the son of Joseph'?"*

It is needless to say that no contradiction is needed. Jesus was the son of Joseph by Mary, just as he was the son of David by Mary. The truth requires no softening down of the phrases which affirm his relation to one or the other. There is a place for them both in the truth of the matter. They are not displaced by the fact that he was the Son of God. They stand along with that fact: all points of truth co-exist. There is no incompatibility between them.

Many things appear to be in contradiction till their relation is perceived. The Josephite only recognizes one fact of the case—that Jesus was the son of Joseph. He leaves no room for the other, and much more important fact, that he was the Son of God. He excludes this, and extinguishes the "things concerning the Name of Jesus Christ." This is the fearful result of his error.

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HE makes use of Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks to countenance his idea of Christ's divine sonship dating from his immersion, and not from his birth. His reliance is upon the words—

"From the going forth of the commandment . . . unto Messiah the Prince shall be 69 weeks"  
(or 483 years).

This period expired toward the manhood of Jesus, and the Josephite argues that this fact establishes the conclusion that Jesus was not the son of God **till then**.

He fails to perceive that the expiry of the 69 weeks has relation to the period of his **anointing**, and not to his **sonship**. Jesus was not anointed with the Holy Spirit till the expiry of the period indicated in Daniel. He was not manifested or fully constituted "Messiah the Prince," till then; but—had there been no work of **preparation** leading up to this event?

The Josephite himself recognizes the birth of Jesus 30 years before, in the line of David—his registration according to proper legal forms, and his training in righteousness as a qualification for the position to be afterwards occupied.

Now if Daniel's prophecy admits of this amount and kind of preparation before "the fulness of time," it admits of the other preparation, in which the Josephite refuses to believe. If it admits of his being born son of **Joseph** 30 years before his anointing, it admits of his being born son of **God** 30 years before his anointing.

The contention is not as to his anointing, but as to his sonship. Daniel's prophecy proves what can never be in dispute, that the Christship (or Messiahship) of Jesus is to be reckoned from his anointing (christing) with Holy Spirit at his baptism. But on the question of when he became the Son of God, it throws no light. It avails nothing for this. It throws us back for a settlement of this question upon larger considerations and more specific evidences.

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NOTHING so clearly manifests the utter hollowness and impotence of the Josephite theory and the spiritual perniciousness of it, as his attempt to define the means of justification. He says—

*"If I am asked, 'How then can man be justified with God, and how can he be clean that is born of a woman?'—I answer, By doing what God has commanded to be done to that end."*

By this answer, he destroys the mission of Christ in its very inception, and subverts the whole course of apostolic teaching, for if his answer be true, there was **no necessity for Christ's manifestation in the flesh at all**, and no truth in the testimony that it is HE who is our righteousness and salvation, having been—

"Delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

If a simple compliance with commandments were all that was necessary to justify men, Christ's first advent was merely an incident, and not a necessity, or a vital means of salvation. By the Josephite principle, we could have been saved without it; because, if Christ—a mere man—could do the things commanded, ANY of us mere men could do the same.

The virtue would be in the commandment, and not in anything Christ had done. By "doing what God had commanded to be done to that end," we could have been justified without his death and resurrection.

But this principle is a great fallacy. It was demolished 1800 years ago by Paul, who spent a great part of his life in exalting the Cross as against the Law, and in establishing the proposition that—

"If righteousness come by the Law, then is Christ DEAD IN VAIN" (Gal. 2:21).

As applied to perishing men at the present stage of divine operations, the principle is true, that we become justified "by doing what God has commanded to be done to that end," that is, believing the Gospel and being baptized. But the matter in dispute has relation to the state of things existing **before** this stage was reached, and the means by which the doing of God's commandments became available for justification. The principle is true only after, and in consequence of, what Christ has done.

**Taking our stand with Christ, in the days of his flesh, it ceases to be true. There was no way of salvation then extant, except in the faith that had always pointed forward to him, and which was only prospectively valid, depending for its efficaciousness on what he was to accomplish. He had to die, and to rise again.**

God could command nothing that would impart justification unto life apart from this, because the law of sin and death barred the way. This had to be surmounted without violation or compromise, and it was done by a SINLESS MAN, standing in our nature, as our representative to suffer the death that had constitutionally passed upon all men, and to secure life unending by a resurrection.

In this respect the Josephite is at war with the Truth in its most vital point, and in collision with the great bulk of the apostolic testimony, which is emphatically a testimony concerning the cross, as a symbol of our justification through Christ's personal accomplishments.

On the Josephite premises the first advent of Christ was a superfluity; there was no necessity for his sojourn in the flesh, and his submission to death. His appearance on the scene might have been reserved for the moment when he could enter into his glory without challenge.

**Why** did he come 1800 years ago? The scriptural answer is—

"To PUT AWAY SIN by the sacrifice of himself."

The very first chapter in which he was introduced to Israel by John, has reference to this purpose—

"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The very first explanation of his name is concerned with the same truth—

"His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

The revelation of his approach in the seventy week period has to do with the same great lesson—

"To finish transgressions, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.

"Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself" (Dan. 9:24-26).

Isaiah's delineation of his first appearing is heavily burdened with the same fact—

"He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

And finally the triumphant song of the redeemed multitude lays hold even in the hour of consummated glory, of the great work of Christ in the flesh—

"Worthy is the LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN . . .

"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God BY THY BLOOD, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:12, 9).

Now if Christ was a mere man, how could he take away the sin of the world? If it be answered "by obedience," the answer is a true one, but for the present purpose it is not sufficiently explicit. It comprehends but does not define the truth in the details now in question. Two points are involved in it which must be clearly and separately seen.

First, his obedience involved death, for—

"He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

Now, if he had been a mere man, his death would not have availed for the taking away of sin, but would have been as final to him as to any unjustified son of Adam; for as a mere man he would have been a transgressor, at some stage of life at least, and **a single transgression would have brought him within the clutch of death**, in which the transgression that made him captive would have held him captive.

But (and this introduces the second point) he was obedient in all things, and from the first, which, as a mere man, he could not have been—all experience being the proof, supported by the testimony of the Scriptures, that all have gone astray—that there is none that doeth good, no, not one—that there liveth not a man that sinneth not.

He was **perfectly** subject to the divine will, which, as a mere flesh-born, he could not have been, for it is one of the characteristics of the merely natural mind—the mind formed as the result of impressions on brain flesh in the slow course of experience—that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:7). It is wilful and foolish, from the sheer force of its own nature. This is absolutely true of every human being in the first stage of existence—

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child" (Prov. 22:15).

But Jesus was an exception. Of him, the Spirit in David speaks thus—

"Thou art He that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me to hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

"I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art my God from my mother's belly"

(Ps. 22:9-10).

The meaning of it is practically illustrated in Christ's converse with the doctors while only twelve years of age. His inception by divine energy gave an affinity for things which is lacking in us poor sons of the earth. The Spirit enstamped the perfect image of the Elohim on the product of Mary's womb, and gave to the powers of his mind that perfect balance, which sin had disturbed in the first Adam.

Thus there would exist in him that soil for the quick germination of divine ideas, and a strong affinity for the divine relation which was impossible in the first Adam, and impossible with us—impossible with Adam, because the weight of painful ancestral experience did not exist to incline the balance on the right side; and impossible with us because we inherit a nature hopelessly out of balance—the instincts and propensities far exceeding in development those higher faculties that distinguish us from the brutes.

Thus constituted, Jesus was capable of developing a spotless character, and having our condemned nature upon him, he could stand in our stead. He died for us. He rose again. He was without sin. Death had no claim on him as an individual—

"God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, **because it was not possible that he should be holden of it**" (Acts 2:24).

Having risen, he is immortal (Romans 6:9)—

"Christ being raised from the dead **dieth no more**: death hath no more dominion over him."  
"He raised him from the dead, now no more to see corruption" (Acts 13:34).

As Jesus says of himself—

"I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold **I am alive for evermore**" (Rev. 1:18).

It is his exaltation to this position that is our salvation. He is now an immortal representative of the human race, and having in himself, for us, fully met the law which requires our death, he is permitted, nay, appointed, of God, to offer us a redemption from sin and death, on condition of faith and obedience.

It is to him we have to look. He is the appointed life-giver and judge; God will entertain no human approach unless it come through Christ. He is the only channel of prayer, the only source of hope (Acts 4:12)—

"There is none other name given among men whereby they may be saved."

There is not the smallest chance of salvation for any being apart from him. IN HIM is deposited the life offered—

"He that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11-12).

When men and women believe the Gospel, and are baptized, their sins are remitted on account of the connection which is then and thereby established between them and Christ; because as their representative, he has taken away sin, and brought life and immortality to light.

By the assumption of his Name, and the full surrender of the heart and mind to his authority, they are privileged to become heirs of the life and kingdom which are his. He becomes to them (1 Cor. 1:30)—

"Wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and REDEMPTION."

Belief of the Gospel and baptism do this for them, **on account of what Christ has accomplished in himself**, and not that God has appointed those as the means IN THEMSELVES of securing remission of sins and the inheritance of life in the Kingdom of God.

There is a reason in everything God commands. He does nothing arbitrarily. There is a reason why the Gospel and baptism are the things "commanded to be done" as the means of justification—they give relation to a real means of justification. They introduce us into him who was—

"Delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

Had there been no **resurrection** of Christ, even though a **death** of Christ, there could have been no salvation—

"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain and ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17).

**The Josephite theory would make John's baptism the means of salvation without reference to that which made it so.**

The same principle applied to the Law of Moses would make it a law of life. The Law was a thing God "commanded to be done." True, but not as a means of justification unto life. But why? Because it was **impossible**. The Law was weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3). The flesh was under condemnation, and could not, on account of its weakness, develop a righteousness that would give a title to resurrection. Paul says—

"If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law."

But it was impossible that a justifying righteousness could come by any law, or any commandment, except through the **provision of a man who would be capable of keeping it**, who should die for the sins of those who were weak, and be able by reason of his holiness to rise from the dead. This arrangement was a stumbling block to the Jews, who—

"Going about to establish their own righteousness, had not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3).

Some of the Jewish brethren had still, through the power of early association, a hankering after the Law as a means of justifying righteousness. To them he says—

"A man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ . . .  
"If righteousness came by the Law, THEN CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN" (Gal. 2:21).

Paul here unmistakably connects the death of Christ with the development of a justifying righteousness; but on the Josephite theory all this is excluded, for in Christ, he gives us a mere man, born after the flesh, simply and purely to be a king. And for righteousness, he throws us back upon our puny death-stricken selves in the performance of something God has arbitrarily and without any meaning, "appointed to be done to that end."

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We shall at once anticipate 2 objections. It might be said:

*"Was not Abraham justified, and all the prophets, long before the death of Christ?"*

Truly so, but only by prospect. Their justification, so to speak, was dated forward. As a matter of divine recognition, it was a fact existent in their lives, but as a thing to have actual effect in their deliverance from death, it could not become operative till Christ opened the way. He—

"CONFIRMED the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. 15:8).

Without his death and resurrection, those promises must have remained a nullity, and the justification of the ancients would have been a myth. His death has as much to do with the remission of the sins of those who died before him as with the remission of our sins who live so long after him. This is evident from the following—

"For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament (covenant), that by means of death FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE TRANSGRESSIONS THAT WERE UNDER THE FIRST TESTAMENT, they which are called (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the faithful of other times) might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

The next objection might be—

*"On the principle laid down, belief of the Gospel and baptism ought to ensure salvation, as a matter of certainty. All such testimonies as—*

*"The unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.'*

*"'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of heaven.'*

*—are meaningless, if Christ becomes to those connected with him, a justifying righteousness."*

The answer is that there are two stages in this question which must be kept carefully distinct: before and after baptism.

**Before** baptism, a man can do nothing to save himself; all his righteousness is as 'filthy rags.'

**After** baptism, (he is in a position to "work out his own salvation," because his connection with Christ gives him a position in which his salvation is possible. This arrangement in Christ is all of pure favor; our destiny after introduction to this arrangement is all a question of works.

Baptism confers a title, but subsequent probation determines whether that title shall be taken away, or ratified, at the judgment.

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AS TO the argument on the genuineness of the disputed chapters in Matthew and Luke, we must deny that "the argument turns upon the genuineness of these chapters."

The question stands upon much broader ground. The argument interweaves itself with every utterance of apostolic teaching, and the evidence presses itself upon us at every stage of divine revelation. The history of Christ's life, and the doctrinal application of his achievements by his apostles, involve and necessitate the fact narrated circumstantially in Matthew and Luke.

These chapters, it is true, contain precise information which is not elsewhere to be found; but that the miraculous conception rests upon them is totally at variance with the fact.

They clearly fill in what would be an enormous and painful blank in their absence. They allay the perplexity and the cavilling that would arise in the presence of such a life and such a character as Christ's, were we without the information that he was the son of God, by a direct divine procreation.

But that they originate, or singly uphold the great doctrine, is utterly untrue. It rests upon the broad basis of all the promises of God; it is upheld by almost every stroke of the apostolic pen; it is inwrought with the very substance and essence of the scheme of salvation.