

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 62, Number 1

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Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

January, 2020

Sons of God

Benjamin Fry

In **John 10:31**, the Jews are preparing to stone Jesus. Their reasoning is that he made himself equal to God. So, in **verse 36**, Jesus asks them what is wrong with him calling himself the Son of God since he is able to do good works, and he also has a quote from **Psalms 82**. In the quote, he references that God himself refers to others as gods. These are those to whom the word of God came. They could not answer him, and so, our Lord was able to prevent them from stoning him.

The interesting part of this is that Jesus uses inclusive language to show that there is a sense in which his being the Son of God is not unique. There are several times throughout the Old Testament where the phrase “sons of God” is used. The majority of these are clearly a reference to angelic beings. Most of these are in Job, though it is not limited to that book (see **Job 1:6, 2:1, and 38:4-7**). There are also a couple of places where God refers to something as his son.

In **Psalms 2:7**, the Lord declares that he has a son. There are a lot of obvious messianic concepts in this Psalm. You have the king on his hill, and he is given the nations as his inheritance. He will rule over them all with a rod of iron (**Psalms 2:9**). All of this imagery obviously pertains to the king who would come, Jesus himself.

In **Exodus 4:22-23**, God says that Moses is to tell Pharaoh that Israel is his firstborn son and is to be released to worship God. This concept is reinforced when the Lord destroys the firstborn of Egypt and again when the Israelites are required to consecrate every firstborn. This idea of Israel being the son of God permeates the whole of their story from **Genesis** to **Malachi**. Hosea reminds us of this in **Hosea 11:1**, and Matthew applies this to Jesus in **Matthew 2:15**.

This is appropriate. For most of history, the inheritance has gone first to the firstborn son, then there has been a distribution amongst the other sons. Daughters were left with a dowry and whatever their husbands could provide. So seeing Jesus as the Son of God is a reminder that he is the one who will inherit his father’s kingdom. As **Psalms 2** reminds us, the nations are his inheritance.

But there is a remaining idea. Hosea also says that there will be a time when those who are not God’s children will be called children of God (**Hosea 1:10**). God desires to have many

children, and Jesus alluded to this in **John 10**. If Jesus is not the only son of God, who are the other inheritors?

Jesus, in talking about the resurrection in **Luke 20:34-38**, says that when we are raised from the dead we will be equal to the angels of God and will be sons of God. Paul, in the book of Galatians, tells us that we are all sons of God (**Galatians 3:26**). He goes on to say that “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (**Galatians 3:28**). Note that Paul uses this language to indicate that we all have an inheritance in God. Jesus will receive the double portion as the firstborn, and the only begotten, but we too have a share in God.

*And what does that Spirit cry?
“Abba, Father.” Not the cry
of an impersonal being, but
the cry of a child to the father
whom they love.*

Elsewhere, the New Testament does refer to females as being the daughters of God and also the generic word for children is used. But in this place, here in Galatians, this is specific to inheritance, and Paul wants us to know that the inheritance is available to all: men, women, slaves, freemen, etc. Neither our status nor gender matters when it comes to the inheritance.

Galatians 4:6-7 tells us how we can be certain that we have that inheritance: he gave us his Spirit. And what does that Spirit cry? “*Abba, Father.*” Not the cry of an impersonal being, but the cry of a child to the father whom they love. By his Spirit we become sons of God, and we receive a promise of the future glory to come. This is further reinforced in **Romans 8:12-17** where Paul tells us that those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God.

We are reminded of this once again in **Revelation 2:26-29**:

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I

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will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

We, who receive the word of God, will, through new birth, be declared the sons of God, and we will receive the nations. God will say to us, "You are my son" (Psalm 2:7).

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Do not Quench the Spirit

Joshua Riggins

2 Corinthians 3:6 tells us that the Spirit gives life. The Corinthian brethren didn't need Paul's letter (**3:1**). Rather, the change in their lives through the Spirit's working was evidence of life in Christ (**3:3**). That life leads to great boldness in the truth (**3:12**), which Paul contrasts to the timidity under the law of tablet and stone, "unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away" (**3:13**). Instead, we are able to look directly at the truths of God. As **verse 15** notes, "the veil is taken away." Under this new Spiritual law, man can boldly receive the fullness of God (**John 1:17-18**). Paul concludes in **2 Corinthians 3:18**, "But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Life through the Spirit results in transformation. Our mortal body becomes something more glorious. Christ displayed pictorially our change to life when he was transfigured on the mountain (**Matthew 17:2**). A great change was brought over him. No longer was his nature entirely flesh; there appeared something spiritual. In the same way, man transfigures from the flesh to spirit (note **Romans 8:11**). It isn't that we leave our mortal bodies, any more than Jesus left his body. Instead, our mortal bodies receive life. The change is in the mind and heart. Our thinking changes: **1 Corinthians 2:12** notes, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given us by God." Our heritage changes: **Romans 8:14-15** explains,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are 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.'"

Our heart changes: **John 7:38-39** states, "He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this he spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive."

Paul describes this transformation as being from glory to

glory. It is a process. We begin at infancy, but we continue to grow and develop into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. **Romans 12:2** describes it as a transformation by the renewing of the mind. We begin viewing the happenings of life through the lenses of the Spirit, concerning ourselves with God's will.

Paul explains in **2 Corinthians 5:4-9**, "For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life." The flesh was created good by God, but it has its weakness in sin. God promises something better, more perfect in the heavenly realm.

"Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well-pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him."

Paul concludes that it is the Spirit within who prepares us for transformation. It is the presence of God's Spirit which enables us to pursue that which pleases God. It is the Spirit who empowers us to walk beyond our physical sight in the light of faith. This is what Paul means by "just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (**2 Corinthians 3:18**). It is through the Spirit that a renewal of the mind takes place.

Paul, therefore, admonishes us, "Do not quench the Holy Spirit" (**1 Thessalonians 5:19**). We have to allow our renewal. God's not going to force transformation. He isn't going to purify our hearts against our will. So He urges us to allow His Spirit to do His work.

The flesh knows this won't always be pleasant. It isn't pleasant to be convicted of sin (see **Acts 2:37**), but that is the Spirit working (**John 16:8**). It isn't always pleasant to be told "no" (see **Acts 8:19-20**), but that is the Spirit helping put us in the right spiritual frame of mind. It isn't our flesh's desire to stand out in the crowd because of our faith (see **2 Timothy 1:6-7**), but it is evidence of a powerful Spirit living within. The flesh wants to balk at the idea of trusting God with all our cares and concerns, but it is the Spirit who works through our prayers (**Romans 8:26-28**).

There is no other way to perfect transformation than by the power of the Holy Spirit. Open your heart and allow Him to blaze forth unto pure holiness.

"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:13-14).

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Wells Without Water

Michael Allen

Between December of 1811 and February of 1812, four of the largest earthquakes to ever hit our country happened in the boot heel of Missouri along the New Madrid fault next to the Mississippi River. Records from this period in history were not always complete, but there were reports of damage as far away as Cincinnati, Ohio. People were awakened in the night by the shaking in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Charleston, South Carolina. Church bells reportedly rang from this shaking along the East Coast. When all was said and done, these quakes were the largest our country has ever seen east of the Rocky Mountains. To give you an idea of the magnitude of this earthquake, the New Madrid quake shook an area ten times larger than the area shaken by the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake.

Years later, in the fall of 1990, a prominent scientist predicted another catastrophic earthquake would hit the New Madrid Fault Zone. He was able to convince quite a few others as well. As the day approached, some schools closed and people braced themselves for the event, but nothing happened. The appointed day came and went and the ground didn't shake. Even though his warnings appeared to be well-intentioned, he's not necessarily remembered for his life's work as a scientist. He's remembered for his failed prediction — the earthquake that was promised, and never came.

In regards to spiritual matters, the Bible is full of warnings about those who profess to have special knowledge, who act either well intentioned or deliberate, and will wind up misleading others. One such place is in **2 Peter 2** as well as similar verses in the book of **Jude**. The two writers compare the characteristics of false teaching to relatable events, the first one being wells without water. Visualize if you will a traditional well with a rope, pulley and bucket. Someone standing next to it at ground level would no doubt make certain assumptions as to what was below the surface. And as the bucket was slowly being raised back up to the surface, there would no doubt be a certain level of anticipation about the water that would soon arrive. And then the disappointment as the person pulls the bucket up that is only full of dust, with not even a hint of moisture. Peter says that's what false prophets are like: they promise you water, they give you every indication that they are brimming with water, and when the time comes to deliver, you realize they have nothing to give.

Another analogy used by Peter are clouds carried by the tempest. Jude uses the phrase clouds without water. The idea is very similar to the well. Storm clouds carry the promise of rain, but if they pass right over, or just dissipate before they arrive, they haven't lived up to what you thought they might give you. Jude also speaks of wandering stars. The idea seems

to be how stars move in predictable patterns. Their topology — the way that they are arranged in relation to other stars — can tell you many different things: the time of year it is, where you are, and what direction is north. But then there are objects in the sky that don't conform to these rules, that don't seem to move in harmony with every thing else in the night sky. And when we see these objects, the implication might be that this is something we can use to help find our way. But stars that wander in the night sky may give the promise of navigation, but in the end will lead you off course.

In **1 John 4:1**, John reminds us to not believe everything that we hear. Every time that we are presented with information that is guaranteed to match up with what God wants, we need to verify it. We need to check it out. Don't wait until you have a dry bucket in your hand. Test each and every claim to see if it truly DOES match up to God's word. That's the only way to make sure that what we are promised will come true.

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Glory to God!

The church in **Nixa, MO** welcomed **Paul and Roseanna Bivins** as members of the church in November.

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7).

Blessed Are the Dead

Mary Jo Riekens, 88, passed away November 20. Sister Mary Jo was a member of the church in **Chariton, IA**. She leaves behind her husband, Norm, and a loving, supportive family.

David Snelling, 69, went to be with the Lord on November 29. Brother David was a member of the church in **Kirksville, MO**.

Joe Holt, 84, laid his earthly tabernacle down on December 5. Brother Joe was a member of the church in **Kirksville, MO**.

Glenn Laverne Meacham, 93, passed away November 30.



Please check your expiration date!

Continued from page 3: "Blessed are the Dead"

Brother Glenn was a member of the church which meets on **Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA**. He served the church as a deacon for many years. He was preceded in death by his wife of sixty-three years, Alna.

Special Meetings

The church which meets in **LaVerne, CA** plans a special New Year's Eve Meeting, "Welcome to 2020: Philippians 3:13-14." Dinner is at 5:30, singing and other activities begin at 7:00.

The church in **Section Church of Christ, Osage City, KS** plans a special weekend meeting for **March 21-22, 2020**. More information will follow in future months.

As was reported in previous issues, the church which meets on **Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA** will no longer be holding their annual weekend meeting. Our readers may recall this meeting was held the traditional weekend of Easter. The church in **Martensdale, IA** has decided to hold a meeting to take the place of the Dean Avenue meeting. However, the meeting will be held the fourth weekend in March instead of Easter weekend beginning in 2020. The church will also host the meeting at a community center in the nearby town of **Indianola, IA**. More information about the meeting can be found at:

<http://martensdalechurchofchrist.org/index.php/about-us/spring-meeting-2020>

Your editor received the following message from **Dennis Shearer**, one of the elders of the church which meets in **LaVerne, CA** concerning the bi-annual campout meeting at **Camp Edison, Shaver Lake, CA** scheduled for **June 22-26, 2020**:

The congregation that meets in La Verne will be hosting the Shaver Lake camp meeting next summer and we are going to try something different regarding reservations.

We would like to try and reserve a group site to accompany some individual sites but in order to do that we need to get our reservations in within the first 2 weeks of January.

So, if you are planning on camping with us next summer, we will need a deposit check of \$150 no later than December 20, so we can get everything put together in time.

More information will be forthcoming, but in the meantime, if you have any questions or want to make sure you are included in our emails, please contact **Dennis Shearer** at dennishearer713@gmail.com or by phone at **951/830-9955**.

2020 Meetings

March 21-22.....Section Church of Christ (Osage City, KS)

March 28-29.....Martensdale, IA

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (USPS:576-040) (ISSN:1054-7991) is published monthly for \$7 per year by **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057. Periodicals Postage Paid at Independence, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057