

## Who Died on Calvary?

One of the best known texts in the Bible is John 3:16. Most of us learned this verse while we were still children. It is the verse in the Bible which most completely, in a single verse, expresses the teaching of the whole gospel.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)*

It is a shocking thing, then, to realize that the vast majority of Christians in the world do not believe the truth expressed in this verse. Millions of persons, who quote this text and, claim to believe in the gospel, do not accept fully, the facts proclaimed here.

It was Jesus Himself who spoke these words, and the first great point, which He wanted to make clear, was God's love for the world. He wanted to bring home to our minds, the greatness of God's love for us. "God SO loved," He said, and the word "so," is used to show us the degree, the extent of that love which our heavenly Father, God, has for us.

What is the measure of that love? It is that He gave His son, and not only His son, but *His only begotten Son!* This is how great God's love for us is. It is easier for a good father to die himself than to give his child to die. When God gave His Son to die for us, it cost Him great suffering. Jesus was the only Being in all the universe who was a part of God in the truest sense. He actually came out of God, was born; begotten (we need not ask how. See Proverbs 8:22,23). He was close to the Father in a way that no other being could be. Yet God gave Him, to be separated from Himself for thirty-three years; to suffer the scorn, persecution, hate, rejection of a diseased world; to suffer the pain and indignity of the cross; to know the agony and uncertainty of unexpected separation from His Father for three fearsome days and nights. God gave His only begotten Son to suffer all this, because of the greatness of His love for us.

## WAS JESUS GOD'S BEGOTTEN SON?

The majority of Christians would state positively: "I believe that it was God's Son who died on Calvary for me." However, most Christians do not actually believe that statement. Let me explain what I mean:

Most Christians believe in a doctrine called "***The Trinity***," which teaches that God is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They say that the Father is God, The Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. All three of them are supposed to be one and the same God, because the Bible clearly teaches that there is only ONE God. Since God is eternal, He never had a beginning. If this doctrine of the trinity is true, then what it would mean is that Jesus was not really the actual Son of God. He could not have been really born from God since He Himself would be God, and God has no beginning.

Five times in the Scriptures, Jesus is called the "Only begotten Son of God" (John 1:14, 18; John 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9). This term, *only begotten* is very simple and easy to understand. Any child could readily tell you its meaning. In plain English, it means that He was the only one BORN FROM, i.e. that He came out of God.

In spite of this, the popular teaching in the Christian world today is that Jesus is in actual fact, God Himself, the Almighty One, rather than the Son of God, the only One who was born of the Father. Who are we to believe? Does the Bible tell the truth? Can we trust the teachings of the Scriptures? Or must we look to the learned men for guidance (even when they contradict the plain word of God)?

Consider this: If Jesus was not actually God's Son, then what sacrifice did **the Father** make? Whom did He give? Another God? A friend? A colleague? This does not demonstrate love on the Father's part, but rather selfishness, in sending another, rather than coming Himself! Yet the whole point of John 3:16 is the love of God (the Father).

"God so loved ... that He gave His ... Son..." Did the Father give His Son? Did the Holy Spirit give His Son? Did the Son give His Son? These questions are ridiculous, and yet, they need to be asked in order that we may clearly see what the text is saying.

God is **the Father**. It is He who gave His Son. It is He who had a Son to give. The Son is not the God who gave His Son, neither is the Holy Spirit that God. The focus of this text is the love of God; but we must understand that this refers **specifically to the Father.** It is His love which is being emphasized here. It is He who is God. (1 Cor. 8:6)

## CAN GOD DIE?

The Scriptures teach that God is immortal. (1Tim.6:16) This means that He cannot die. If angels should sin, like Satan did, then they would one day die. But God cannot be made to die. He absolutely cannot, under any circumstances, die. This is why He is said to be the One "*Who ONLY hath immortality ...*" (1 Tim.6:16) Other beings are immortal, but only because He gives them this gift of immortality. He can take this life from them again if He should choose to do so. He alone has immortality in the absolute sense. He can never ever be made mortal, or be made to die.

Yet the Scriptures teach that Jesus died for us! (Romans 5: 6-8). Here is a dilemma indeed. God cannot die, yet Jesus did die. The Scriptures clearly teach both things. Either:

1. If Jesus was God, then He could not really die.

Or:

2. If Jesus died, then He was not the Supreme God (who only hath immortality).

Those who say that Jesus is God (equal to the Father in every way), have no alternative but to say that Jesus did not really die. They say that the "divine part" of Christ did not die, but only the human part.

They say that He only took a HUMAN SIDE when He came to earth. In other words, He had two personalities. One, His personality as God, and the other, His personality as a human being. According to them, the real Son of God did not die at Calvary, only the human body in which He lived. However, if this is true, what we are left with is nothing but a human sacrifice. Could a human sacrifice atone for the sins of the whole world?

If all that died on Calvary was the "human side" of Jesus, then we must ask the question, what did God really sacrifice at Calvary?

According to this doctrine, the "human side" of Jesus was really something created when He was conceived in Mary's womb -something which came into existence two thousand years ago. This, they say, is what died on the cross! The divine side of Jesus, the immortal God-part did not really die but was alive and safe, while the human part suffered and died on Calvary. What do we have then? We have a situation in which God did not really make a sacrifice at Calvary, but rather created a being who paid the price on His behalf. Does this show love? Does such a doctrine glorify God? No. This is a lie about God which prevents us from appreciating what He and His Son did for us at Calvary. It is a most abominable and glaringly false idea.

### THE TRUTH

The truth is that Jesus, the Son of God, did truly die. He did pass into the unconscious, senseless, unknowing sleep of death. He did feel the darkness of death, stealing upon His soul when He prayed that the cup might pass from Him. He did experience, truly, the agony and uncertainty of genuine separation from God. He died, because He could die. He became mortal. He could die, because He is not the one and only God who "hath immortality". This immortal one is the Father, whom "no man hath seen, nor can see." He dwelleth "in the light which no man can approach unto." (1Tim.6:16).

Jesus is a divine Being. There is no question of that. It is obvious that every Son takes the nature of His Father, so if the nature of the Father is divine (having the qualities of God) then it is evident that the Son also is divine. This is why Jesus is called God in several places. It does not mean that He is the Lord God Almighty, but rather that He is a divine Being, the only other person in the universe, apart from the Father who has the nature of God.

John 1:1 says:

*"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God (the Father) and the word was God (a divine Being)."*

When the word "**God**" is used to refer to the qualities of divinity, it can mean either the Father, or the Son. There are TWO divine Beings in the universe; the Father and His begotten Son. Yet, the word "God" also carries with it the idea of the one absolute, supreme Being in the universe. In this sense, there is only One who is God. Not three. This one God is the Father. The One who gave His Son to die. This is the testimony of the Scriptures over and over again (1 Cor. 8:6; 1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 21:22).

All the authority and power which belong to God have been given to His Son (Col.2:9; Matt. 28:18). Yet, these do not belong to Jesus inherently. They have been given to Him by God, (1 John 5:26; Col.1:19) and the day will come when the controversy is finally over and then the Son will be subject to the Father, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

So, was it really God's Son who died on Calvary? Did God's Son really die for you? How do you answer this question? This is the central point of the whole gospel. Undoubtedly, this point, above all others, is the focus of Satan's attack. When we see how these truths have been subtly, but effectively distorted over the ages, it becomes clear that Satan's efforts have been highly successful.

David Clayton