

LORD'S DAY 13

33. Q. Why is He called God's *only-begotten Son*,
Since we also are children of God?

A. Because Christ alone
is the eternal, natural Son of God.¹
We, however, are children of God by adoption,
Through grace, for Christ's sake.²

1. **John 1:1-3** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

John 1:14 And the Word became 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 1:18 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 3:16 "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."

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Hebrews 1 (especially **vss 2,3** ...His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.... cf. also **vss. 8-12** But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." ¹⁰ And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the

earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

¹¹ They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; ¹² Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail." (These verses quote texts from the Old Testament which are applied to God, and in the New Testament are specifically applied to the Son of God. From these texts it is evident that the Son is true God.)

1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

2. **John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

Romans 8:14-17 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 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." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 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.

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Ephesians 1:5,6 ...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

34. Q. Why do you call Him *our Lord*?

A. Because He has ransomed us,
body and soul,¹
from all our sins,
not with silver or gold
but with His precious blood,²
and has freed us from all the power of the devil
to make us His own possession.³

1. **1 Corinthians 6:20** For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Timothy 2:5,6 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

2. **1 Peter 1:18,19** ...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of

Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

3. **Colossians 1:13,14** He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 2:14,15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

In this Lord's Day we must speak about two remaining titles or names which belong to Jesus Christ: the titles "Son" and "Lord."

The title "Son" brings certain ideas to our mind. Some of them apply to Christ's relationship to the Father, while others do not. Two ideas that **do not** apply are:

1. **that of origin** - A son owes his existence to his father and mother. Yet we may not speak of Christ coming into existence. There was never a time when the Son did not exist. The Son, like the Father, is eternal.
2. **that of being under authority** - A son is under the authority of his father. This, however, does not apply to Jesus Christ as God's Son. In His divinity, the Son is not subject to the Father. They are equal in authority. Only when Christ humbled Himself and took the form of a servant did He become subject to the Father (cf. Philippians 2:6ff.). As man Christ said, "My Father is greater than I," (cf. John 14:28).

Two ideas which come to mind in the title "son" and which **do** apply to Christ are:

1. **that of likeness** - We have a saying, "Like father, like son." We expect children to look like one of their parents. We always look for that likeness. And we expect them to have many of the same qualities and characteristics. So the Son of God is like His Father. In the Athanasian Creed (pg. 438 of the Book of Praise), we read: "(7) *Such as the Father is, such is the Son.... the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.*" It goes on to compare the Father and the Son, as we will do below:

The Father is:	The Son is:
Uncreate	Uncreate
Incomprehensible	Incomprehensible
Eternal	Eternal
Almighty	Almighty
God	God

This does not mean that they are exactly the same in every respect. The Athanasian Creed describes one of the differences between them as well. "*The Father is of none; the Son is of the Father.*" In Art 8 of the Belgic Confession, we confess that the Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible. The Son is the Word, the wisdom and the image of the Father. Thus we also see a difference in the work which we have already described in Lord's Day 8 of the Catechism.

2. **that idea of "relationship"** - We expect a close bond to exist between father and son. Such a relationship exists between the Father and the Son of God. There is a bond of love that unites them. The Son loves the Father (John 14:31) and the Father loves the Son (John 17:24).

The Apostles' Creed calls Christ "*the only begotten Son of God.*" The verb "**beget** - **begat-begotten**" means "**to father a child.**" A woman conceives and bears a child; a father begets a child. As we have seen already, this is not to be interpreted as though the Father precedes the Son in time. For the Son is eternal. The term "begotten" emphasises the likeness between the Father and the Son. Just as humans give birth to humans, and animals give birth to their own kind, so the begotten Son of God is God, very God of very God.

Not all Bible translations render the Greek word in question as "*only begotten.*" "Some (such as the RSV and the NIV) translate this word as God's "*only*" Son or "*one and only*" (cf. John 1:14,19). Although it may seem otherwise, the difference is not really that great. For the intent of the phrase "*only begotten*" is to emphasise the uniqueness of Christ's sonship to God in comparison with ours, as the Catechism stresses. There is no other Son of God like Christ. Although we are sons of God, we are so in a very different way. For Christ is the eternal, natural Son of God. He is very God of very God.

We, however, are mortal and finite. We are created sons.

We can speak of ourselves as being God's sons in two different ways. In the first place, we may say that we are sons of God in light of God being our Creator. In this sense, God is the Father of all men. However, when man sinned, he no longer bore God's image, and that relationship was broken. Instead, man bore the image of Satan. Thus mankind really lost that title of being sons of God. Man became a child of the devil. (cf. John 8:44).

Nevertheless, Christ came in order to restore us to the position of sons. For His sake, we are adopted as sons of God (cf. Galatians 4:5). We are once again given the position and the ability to bear the image of God, for we are being renewed in Christ's image. In this sense, the Scripture even speaks about believers as those who are "*begotten of God*" (or as it is sometimes translated "*born of God*"). We are reborn through the power of the Holy Spirit, recreated in God's image (cf. 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 3:9). It is this unique relationship which we as believers have with God which is usually referred to when we speak about God as our Father, and we as God's children.

When we consider the impact of this on our lives, it should become very clear that if we have been made sons, and if we have been made image-bearers again of God, then we must also bear this image in everything we do. We must be holy, as our Father is holy. It should be like Father, like son. We should do the things that please our Father, submitting ourselves to Him as obedient children.

There is a rich comfort that comes with being children of the Father in Christ. Our heavenly Father looks upon His children with sympathy and with love (cf. Psalm 103:13). He knows our needs, and He is working for our good in every situation. This should give us great happiness as children of God.

There is also the title "*Lord*," which means "*Master*." This title "*Lord*" is an English word. In the olden days, the

servants or slaves would address their masters by saying, "*Yes my lord*."

We confess that Christ is our Lord, our Master. We should realise that in the beginning God was our Lord and Master. We were created to be "*slaves of God*." To be God's slave was not grievous to man in paradise, for God is a very gracious Master. He sought for our well-being. He provided us with all things we needed to do our work for Him. And the work we had to do was not burdensome. It was very pleasant. It was good to be God's slave. (In this respect, think of those slaves in the Old Testament who loved their masters and wanted to remain slaves even though they could be free –Read Exodus 21:1-6).

However, man was tempted with so-called freedom. The serpent promised Adam and Eve that they would become like God themselves determining what was good and what was evil, what they could and could not do. Man, in his foolishness, found this "freedom" appealing. Yet how sadly he was deceived. Man was never created to rule over himself. He was given the position of ruling over all of creation, but God remained the Ruler of man.

The "*freedom*" which Satan offered actually led to man's bondage. Mankind was sold under sin to Satan. Satan was given the power to rule over man. Satan became the cruel tyrant who seeks to destroy man who has come under his power.

The ungodly think that they are free. They think that they are doing what they want. They look at Christians as being slaves of their religion, which prevents them from doing many exciting things. They do not see the reality of their slavery. They are slaves of sin, slaves of Satan. Satan rules over them. Through his lies, he blinds them so that they cannot see the truth of their bondage. Through his power, he induces them to do evil things.

Man cannot free himself from his bondage to sin and Satan. Because of his sin God has given him into the power of Satan, and he remains in Satan's power until full payment has been made to God for

his sins. The only possible way by which man can be set free is by way of making complete payment. Since man is not able to make that payment, he cannot free himself from the tyranny of Satan.

Instead of leaving man in this slavery to sin and Satan, God was pleased to redeem man and restore Him to the position of being God's servant. (**redeem = to buy back**). It was God's gracious will to have His Son Jesus Christ make payment for our sin. Thus Christ redeemed us, not with silver and gold, but with His precious blood. He bought us with His blood.

Since He has bought us we are not our own. We belong to Jesus Christ. We are His possession. This means that we may

not do with ourselves as we please. In 1 Corinthians 6:19,20, Paul says, "*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*" Christ has redeemed us and set us free from the tyranny of Satan. The freedom that we have in Christ, however, is not a freedom to sin, but a freedom to righteousness. We have been restored as slaves of God (cf. Romans 6:5,6 & 16-18). We have been set free from the power of sin so that we might once again serve God with our whole life.



Questions:

1. Which titles of Christ do we speak about in Lord's Day 13?
2. By necessity, earthly fathers are always older than their sons. Is God the Father older than God the Son?
3. A son is under the authority of his father. Is the Son of God under the authority of God the Father? In what sense can we say that He is?
4. A son is often like his father. Is the Son of God like the Father? If so, in what way. If not, in what way do they differ?
5. What other idea does the title "*son*" convey about the relationship between the Father and the Son?
6. What does the word "*beget*" mean? What must we not think when we speak about the only begotten Son of God? What does this term emphasise?
7. How do some Bible translations render the phrase "*only begotten*"? What does that translation emphasise? Is the difference really that great?
8. In what two senses can we say that we are sons of God? Which sense is usually referred to when we speak about ourselves as sons of God?
9. Can we also speak of ourselves as "*begotten (or born) of God?*" If so, in what way? If not, why not?
10. What impact does our "sonship" have upon our life?
11. What is another word for the title "*Lord?*" What kind of relationship between Christ and us is highlighted by this title? (We are Christ's _____ and He is our _____).
12. Who was our master in paradise? Was this good?
13. With what did Satan tempt man? Could this ever be possible? Why or why not?
14. Are unbelievers free? If not, who is their lord or master?
15. How has Christ become our Lord? What does the word "*redeem*" mean?
16. If we are servants or slaves of Christ, can we speak about ourselves as being free? If not, why not? If so, how?

Additional Question:

17. In Romans 9, Paul emphasises that not the children of the flesh are the children of God, but the children of promise. What does this mean. Consider 1 John 3:9 in your answer.