

# JESUS: DELEGATE OF GOD? OR GOD IN THE FLESH?

The question: Did God send someone else to save the world or did He come Himself? That is the essence of the entire Godhead question. I am going to introduce you to a coined word. Deputationalism. Definition: God sent a deputy to save the world. In other words, He sent someone else.

Some think He sent the eternal son of God, the second person in the Trinity. I certainly have no intention to degrade anyone that believes differently than we do, but the Bible never mentions "God the son." Those words are not scriptural. The phrase "eternal son of God" is not in the Bible. The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible, neither is the phrase "second person in the Godhead," nor is the definition that there are "three persons in the Godhead" found there. Those things all come out of man's attempt to understand what only the Bible can explain, the great mystery of Godliness.

You can divide all facets of Christian theology into just two camps. The first is composed of those who believe that God sent somebody else. It does not matter whether it is the eternal son of God. It does not matter, as the Jehovah Witnesses say, that it is the created son of God. They believe God created a son at a point of time in eternity (Or an angel son). They also believe that the son He created, was really an angel. The Adoptionists believe that God sent the son that He adopted. They believe He looked down at the river Jordan and saw a fine young man that had lived a Godly life, and adopted him to be His son. It does not matter if they believe in the eternally begotten son either. Everyone of these believe God sent someone else while God Himself remained remote, and uninvolved. This concept holds that God waits in the heavens to see how it all comes to pass and only makes His presence known once in a while just to speak from heaven and say, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased....." and so on. God remains remote. God remains aloof. God remains a bystander, a spectator, only to watch the great unfolding of the plan of God as the son of God, the appointed deputy, came to save the world.

Deputationalism is believed by Trinitarians. It is believed by Socinians who believe that Jesus was divine in the sense that he represented God, but, like any other prophet, He was not really God. He was just a representative. Socinians believe Jesus was very, very great in that God had a part in his birth; but he was not God Himself. They are very careful to say he was the son of God. The Arians believe that Jesus was a created being. They believe that Jesus was the first creation of God and that Jesus completed the remaining acts of creation. Jesus, the created son existed with God in eternity and came into this world as God's deputy. The Jehovah Witnesses hold to this Arian view. They believe Jesus was God's deputy. The Trinitarians believe that Jesus was God's deputy. The Socinians believe that Jesus was God's deputy. It really does not matter that they each have a little different explanation of him. What is significant is that each of them believes that God sent somebody else.

The second school of thought and the alternative to deputationalism is Theocarnationalism (as distinguished from incarnation). We have stated here that incarnation also is an acceptable term, but it is defined in Webster's Dictionary as "the belief that the second person in the Godhead became a man." Theos, Theo, denotes God. Thus the definition of Theocarnationalism is that God came Himself to save the world; He did not send a delegate or a deputy. He did not send a representative. He did not send somebody else, but He came Himself. Jesus played a dual role, the role of God and the role of the Son of Man.

To show the difficulty and yet the genius of this arrangement I would like to quote from the third chapter of the Gospel of John. It is important that we understand that Jesus is the one speaking here. Nicodemus came to Jesus and was impressed with the miracles and signs which he did. Nicodemus said, "...no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus imagined that Jesus was a good man who was accompanied by God. Then Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). He explained some of that to him, and then said in verse 12, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" There was always this trouble in the ministry of Jesus because people had a difficult time understanding why he was here. Jesus said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. That, whosoever believeth in him [the Son of man] should not perish, but have eternal life. 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 3:13-16).

Jesus had to be God. He had to be God Himself in order to give everlasting life. Now you might be confused by these words. Verse 17, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Jesus is speaking about himself. As he stood there, he was a man, and as a man he was the Son of God. However, when we take the whole body of scripture, we find out he was not only the Son of God, but he was God Himself--Isaiah 9:6, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God." Revelation 1:8, "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Almighty." John 20:28, "Thomas said, My Lord and my God" (The Lord of me and the God of me). John 1:1, "And the word was God...." In none of these scriptures does it say he was the eternal Son. In none of these scriptures does it say he was a second person in the Godhead. Each of them says he was the Almighty, the Mighty God. He was God.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son..." (John 3:16). This text is the banner text of deputationism. It is the text that is used by those who believe that God remained remote in the heavens, that God remained uninvolved, that God remained afar off in the heavens. It is used by those who believe that God watched as a witness and spectator as His son, who existed with Him in eternity came into the world to give his life as a ransom. Yet, it is important, so important, to know that he who came, was also God Himself.

God sent a son into the world to save the world. Was that son, as the Trinitarians say, the eternal Son of God, the second person in the Godhead? Was that son, as the Socinians say, the born son, representative of God? Was that son, as the Arians say, the created Son of God? If so, God would be remote from the world, and not in any way put to a test by sending another into the world. There had to be a better plan than that. There had to be some way for God to get involved in His creation. There had to be some way for God to pay a price. There had to be some way for God to do something that cost Him something. For God to give a begotten son, or for God to give a created son, would not be much of a gift. That is not much of a price. You ask, "What do you mean?"

When Saul and the armies of Israel were looking out over the valley of Elah, Goliath came out and challenged the armies of Israel. Saul was not willing to pay much of a price. When that little lad came into his tent, Saul said, "Well, I will tell you what David, if you want to go and fight the giant, you can wear my armor (1 Samuel 17:37-40)." Oh, how big of you Saul! How magnanimous! Saul, you will sit up there in the tent, look down in the valley and watch what happens. Is that right? Oh, what a great man you are, Saul. No, Saul was not great at all. He was a coward. He remained remote from the battle. David was the great man. He went down without Saul's armor. Instead, he had a sling and five smooth stones. He laid his life on the line. If David had been slain, Saul was in a wonderful position to turn, leave, and escape. David would have been the one to pay the price. Saul would not have paid any price at all. It is no wonder that after battles the women sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands"(1 Samuel 18:7). David was the one who actually went into the battle.

The inadequacy of deputationism can be further illustrated by looking at another moment in David's life. When God brought a judgment against David for numbering the children of Israel, he had a choice of punishment. He could choose either seven years of famine, or fleeing before his enemies for three months, or a plague from the Lord for three days. He chose the plague from the Lord. Then he went to the area where Jerusalem now is and wanted to buy a threshing floor to be used as a place where he could build an altar. There was, a Jebusite there by the name of Araunah. Araunah said, "King David, I have oxen, and I have instruments that the oxen use to thresh. It will not cost you a thing. You can kill the oxen, burn the threshing instruments, and offer a sacrifice to your God right here. It will not cost you anything." David, who sensed that nothing is of value that does not cost a price, said, "God forbid that I should offer to my Lord that which dost cost me nothing. I am going to pay for the threshing floor, the oxen, and the instruments so that I can offer to the Lord something that cost me(2 Samuel 24:24)." Would a God that considers only those offerings that took sacrifice as being valuable; would a God that says without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; would a God that refused the vegetable offering of Cain that cost him no suffering and bloodshed, but smiled on the sacrifice of Abel who brought the firstlings from his flock, that which did cost him suffering and bloodshed; would that kind of a God sit in heaven and say, "Deputy, (be he son, be he created son, be he just simply an adopted son) you go and save the world, that is good enough for me?" I tell you, "NO!!"

The Bible says in Acts 20:28 that we are a part of the church of God, "which he hath purchased with his own blood." Our God did not sit up there in his tent and say, "You go get him, David. You can wear my armor." The Bible says, the Word was God. It says in John 1:14, "the Word was made flesh," and the Word actually became flesh. He did not just dwell in flesh. He became flesh, and He dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. But "God commendeth his love toward us..." God commendeth HIS love toward us, "...in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This would not make any sense at all unless you understood that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (II Corinthians 5:19). God had no blood to give. God did not have a brow to be pierced with the thorns from the dogwood tree. God did not have a side through which a spear could be thrust. He did not have hands that they could drive nails through. So He prepared some. He overshadowed a virgin and He said to that virgin through the angel, that which is conceived in you is of the Holy Ghost. It was not just a descendant of God. It was more than that. The angel said, "thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21); and "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). So that God could have blood, so that God could have a brow, so that God could have a tongue that would thirst,

so that God could become identified with human sorrow, so that God could come into the arena, so that God could take part in the salvation of mankind, God became flesh.

Deputationalism reveals a character weakness. If you tell a child to complete a task and he passes that responsibility on to someone else, what do you think? You say, "I told you to do that. I am glad that your sister did it. That is good for her, but I wanted you to do it." You don't think very kindly of him delegating the task to someone else.

What price did God pay to make the world? I thank the Lord for the world. I am glad for the created world. I am thankful for what we have, but if God is remote from this world, if He is aloof from it, if He just made it and is not a part of it, then He is apart from it. The world then becomes a creation. Now some say, "God made Jesus and then Jesus made everything else." That is worse yet because the creation is then a product of a created being. God would be even more remote from the creation. If God just created the world and is apart from it, who is to say He will not destroy it someday? How do we know that He will not get bored with it? How do we know that after several eons have passed, these created beings called mankind who live on the world will not just weary the Creator? You may say, "God does not get weary in the sense of exasperation." Don't you believe it! When Moses had some trouble with the children of Israel, God said, "Step aside, I will slay them. I will get rid of the whole bunch, Moses, and I will raise up from you another people." God was willing to destroy them. In the days of Noah the Lord said, it repenteth me that I have made them, Genesis 1:7. The Lord was ready to blot them all out, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

How do we know that God will not get tired of everything and just blot the whole thing out? How do we know He will not wipe it away like you would destroy a sand castle that you made on the shore of the sea? That castle would not make any difference to you. You could make another. God, who made Adam, could make another Adam and another and another and a trillion of them. The God who made the world so easily that He just said, Let there be light, could say that every few seconds, day or night, for trillions and trillions of years. "Let there be light. Let there be a world. Let the grass bring forth. Let the water bring forth." It would all come to be. There is a reason why we know that God will not tire of this world. God became part of this world. God became part of this creation.

God came forth from a virgin. He joined the human race. It was not just temporary. It was not in some way that He could someday cast aside the robes of humanity. No, our Lord lived here. He became fused to humanity. God became a man, and He will be a man forevermore. He will not be a Son forevermore. 1 Corinthians 15:28 says the day will come when the Son, the sonship, the office of the son will be put under His feet. However, He will never cease to be Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "as many as have received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). "Now are we the sons of God" 1 John 3:2. What does that mean? Jesus, our great God manifest in the flesh, came to the world as a son. A son in what sense? He was a son in the sense that he was begotten by the Spirit of God. He was a son in the sense that the great creator performed the act of paternity, entered into that body, and lived in that body. He became a son so that I could become a son. He became a son of God so that you could be a son of God. He came and joined the human race so that we could join the divine race. He became a man so that I could become like Him. The great God, who had glory, laid aside His glory and came to this world to be clothed in flesh.

Would God be hard put to make a Socinian Christ? Absolutely not! He could make one. He could make a million, a trillion. Would it be difficult for God to make an Arian created being in eternity? Not at all! He made the angels, so many of them, that when He was here on this earth, He said in Matthew 26:53, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" He could easily have made a billion Socinian Christs but only one true Christ. To produce the true Christ, God had to slow Himself down to time. God, who is bigger than the universe, had to reduce Himself to the size of a single human reproductive cell and put that cell, microscopic in size, in the womb of a woman. God, to become the Christ that died for us, had to breathe his first breath in a stable. God, to be the Christ that we know, had to live thirty years in a little village of Nazareth. God, to be the Christ that we serve, had to walk about the earth, and for three and one half years listening to the cat calls, the criticism, the unthinking things that men said while he did nothing but good. He had to listen to their threats. He had to be rejected by them. To be the kind of a Christ that he really was, he had to bare his back to the smiters. He had to stand in silence as they plucked His beard. He had to feel the buffeting on His face until His visage was marred more than any man's. To be the Christ that we believe in, he had to submit himself to be nailed to a cross, and he had to hang on it for six hours. God, who could spend ten thousand eternities without blinking an eye, had to slow Himself down and hang for six hours while his blood dripped on the ground. He could make a Socinian Christ in an instant. God had to pay a price to become the real Christ.

The Bible says, "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold-but with the precious, blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18). Our God said, "I thirst" (John 19:28). This was the God who did not need water, did not need food, or substance. He did not need anything. Yet he was in a position where he had to say, "I thirst." God did not have to worry about anybody. He could solve all of our problems by just breaking up fish and bread or by saying, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). But on the cross he had to say to John, "Behold, thy mother" (John 19:27). I am concerned about her. I want her to be taken care of John. I will not be here to do it. You behold your mother, and mother behold your son. God, who did not need anything, had to hang upon the cross and say, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalms 22:1, Matthew 27:46). As he felt, as we

often feel, forsaken.

You say, "Then He was not God." HE WAS GOD! But as a man he had to feel Godforsaken because there are times when we feel Godforsaken. He did not become the Christ that we serve just by saying words. He had to live thirty three and one half years with humanity. When our God returned to heaven, He was wearing the tattered uniform of humanity-blood stains. We say we shall know him by the nail prints in his hands. Our God/man has the scars. What would it be for Him to say, "Go save them son. I will be here when you get back. I will help you a little along the way. I will make the sky get dark and make the ground shake when you are hanging there upon the cross. Son, take a deep breath and grit your teeth, and it will all be over shortly. I will be here in heaven when you get back. I will stay up here in the meantime." It was not that way.

Jesus told us in the scripture that I quoted earlier, John 3:13, "no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." He was telling us that while he was here on this earth, that Spirit that radiated out through him filled all known expanse. He was in heaven, on earth, and under the earth all the time that he walked here as a man. God was still on the throne, in command of the universe, while he was saving the world. Even though He was living here with a heart that beats, with blood flowing through His veins, He was still in charge of all things. That is why He could say in Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." Jesus Christ, about six feet tall, one hundred and seventy pounds, living in Nazareth and Jerusalem, but whenever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them. That is why He could say to Nathanael, (and absolutely so startled Nathanael, that Nathanael became his follower), "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me?" He said, "When thou wast under the fig tree" (John 1:45-48). No doubt Christ, though living on earth, also filled all known expanse.

There were things he did not know as a man. He said "Who touched my clothes?" Mark 5:30. He could say, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). He did not know it as a man, but his disciples said, "Lord, thou knowest all things" (John 21:17). Thank God He knew it all as God. He was in charge of the universe. He created everything. "For by him were all things created..all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16). The Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong. They say that God made Christ, and all other things are made by Christ. Not so. The Bible says, "all things were made by him..." Jesus came into the world at Bethlehem trailing divinity. It clung to him. It showed on him. He did not brag about it. He usually parried references to himself and directed praise to the Father, unless it was some probing direct inquiry like Philip's: "Lord, shew us the Father" (John 14:8). We want to know. He would stop and say, "Philip, have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father?" (John 14:9)

The Lord said in John 16:2: "I will not always speak to you in proverbs..." and that really typifies almost everything He said. He said, "I will tell you now that I will pray the Father for you" (and I am talking about the Father and the Son), but then he said "but the time cometh when I will not speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25). There is a veil over the identity of Christ that is gradually lifted. It is not all lifted yet. The Mormons use the term "progressive revelation." I do not believe in it the way they describe it, but there is a sense in which our Lord is progressively revealed. Anytime you think that you know everything about him, if you start studying about him, you will find that there are understandings and depths in the knowledge of Christ that you never dreamed of. However, he is only partially revealed. 1 Timothy 6:15 says "In his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." If you want to know who this is speaking about, go to Revelation 19:13 & 16, and you will find that it is a man that is sitting on a white horse who has written on his vesture the words, the Word of God and on his thigh, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. "In his time he shall show who is that blessed and only Potentate." When Jesus came into this world at Bethlehem, trailing divinity, there were things about him that were divine. He was not just a prophet. A prophet does not say, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). A prophet does not say, "Thy sins be forgiven" (Matthew 9:2). A prophet does not say, "I will; be thou clean" (Mark 1:41). A prophet does not do that. He trailed divinity.

When he got to heaven, he trailed humanity. He still has humanity about him. What does that mean? Because he lives, we shall live also (John 14:19). Man was made of dust, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, earth to earth, and he returns to dust. We are finite. It is all over when we breathe our last breath on this earth. But he overcame death, hell and the grave. He is alive forevermore. He said, "I am the one that was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" (Revelation 1:18). That means that He joined our human race. He is not going to annihilate the human race. He is not going to abolish the human race. He is a member of it. Because he lives, we shall live also.

Only the Almighty God as Christ could give us eternal life. No created son could give us eternal life because he himself is created. No creature could give us eternal life because they are also creatures. They are part of the creation. Only the great God, when He became part of this creation, could actually give us everlasting life. Because he lives we shall live also. He did not send a delegate. He did not deputize somebody else to come. He was not like Saul in his tent. He did not offer a few bloodless vegetables like Cain. He did not pay just half the price. Like David, he paid the full price. If it takes blood, and it does take blood, I will get the blood-the church of God, "which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). What a wonderful truth! Our Father came! He is

the Mighty God! The everlasting Father! Our Father came. The Father is the Son. The Son is the Father. The creator is the Lamb. The Lamb is the Creator. What a wonderful God we serve! What a Saviour he is! He did not send a deputy. He did not delegate somebody else. He did not send a representative. He came Himself!