

# Chapter 10

## THE NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE

---

*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. . . . Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (John 20:31; 1 John 5:5)*

**C**ertainly the concept of Sonship is central to our faith. The Father's gift of love to this world is His only begotten Son (John 3:16). God commands us to believe on the name of His Son (1 John 3:23). We must confess, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). If a person is condemned it is because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). The person who has the Son has eternal life (1 John 5:11-12). With ceaseless thanksgiving we can praise the Father for delivering us from the power of darkness and translating us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13). All of the preceding pivotal statements revolve around the Sonship of Christ, and it is

essential that our concept of His Sonship be in full harmony with God's revelation.

What should our attitude be with regard to the denial of the doctrine of eternal Sonship? How critical is this issue? How important is this doctrine? How dangerous is the view which supposes that our Lord became the Son of God at some point in history? Should we consider those who hold such a view to be sound in the faith? Should we tolerate this view as orthodox?

There are those today who do not consider the doctrine of eternal Sonship to be an important issue. They say that if a person strongly believes in the deity of Christ, the pre-existence of Christ, and the triune godhead, whether or not he believes in eternal Sonship is a minor matter (a mere technicality or matter of terminology). They say that those who deny and those who affirm eternal Sonship are both within the orthodox camp and should be considered sound in the faith. They argue, "Why does it really matter since we all agree that Jesus Christ is the Son of God both now and forevermore?"

Others have embraced the doctrine of eternal Sonship and believe it to be a vital Bible doctrine that must not be compromised. During the past century many in the Plymouth Brethren assemblies have valiantly defended this doctrine and have broken fellowship over this issue as they deemed necessary.<sup>1</sup> Many doctrinal statements of churches, Bible schools, and mission agencies declare that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, and the inclusion of this point in such documents indicates that this doctrine is considered important and an integral part of "those things which are most surely believed among us" (Luke 1:1).

Of historical interest is the case of Calvin and the intolerant Swiss reformers in the days when Servetus was burned at the stake for his heretical teaching regarding the Trinity. The controversy centered on his denial of the doctrine of eternal Sonship:

When Servetus heard of the unexpected sentence of death, he was horror-struck. . . . The venerable old Farel visited him in the prison at seven in the morning, and remained with him till the hour of his death. He tried to convince him of his error. Servetus asked him to quote a single Scripture passage where Christ was called “Son of God” *before* his incarnation. Farel could not satisfy him.<sup>2</sup>

Servetus was taken to the stake to be burned. The account continues:

The flames soon reach him and consume his mortal frame in the forty-fourth year of his fitful life. In the last moment he is heard to pray, in smoke and agony, with a loud voice: “Jesus Christ, thou Son of the eternal God, have mercy upon me!” This was at once a confession of his faith and of his error. He could not be induced, says Farel, to confess that Christ was the *eternal* Son of God.<sup>3</sup>

It is one thing to condemn error but quite another thing to put the offender to death. Obviously we do not recommend the execution of those who deny the doctrine of eternal Sonship.<sup>4</sup> Some of these men we hold in high esteem. We appreciate their Bible-centered teaching in other areas and the contributions they have made by way of pulpit and pen. At the same time we dare not minimize the importance of sound doctrine as it relates to the person of God’s Son. We must give our hearty “Amen” to what the Spirit of God teaches us in the Word of God about the Son of God.

God’s people living in this present church age have a definite responsibility with respect to false doctrine and erroneous teaching. God’s truth must ever be jealously guarded. Our hearts need to be right and our teaching needs to be sound: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine”

(1 Timothy 4:16; also see Acts 20:28). Our God-given responsibility to preserve doctrinal purity demands we take the following seven steps:

**1. Test all things by the Word of God.** “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The inerrant Word of God is the objective standard by which we are to test all things. In our day there are many winds of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14) and these must be examined and scrutinized according to God’s perfect standard of truth. God’s people need to be very discerning as they read books, listen to taped messages, hear radio broadcasts, and view religious television programs. We must ask ourselves how each teaching lines up with God’s Word. Is the teaching truth that we can hold fast or is it error that must be rejected? May the blessed Spirit of God give us keen minds to discern between truth and error so that we do not embrace any opinion or viewpoint that is contrary to the mind of the Lord, even if such an opinion is voiced by a highly-respected Bible teacher.

**2. Indoctrinate God’s people.** Such was the ministry of the apostle Paul: “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). God’s people need to be immersed in a program of total indoctrination. The devil himself knows the importance of indoctrination. The average Jehovah’s Witness, for example, is ready always to give an answer to every man that asks him a reason of the false hope that is within him. The average Bible-believer is horribly ignorant of God’s truth. Many believers would have difficulty proving from the Scriptures even the basic truth that Jesus Christ is God. Many local churches function as evangelistic centers instead of edification centers. People are taught how to be saved, and for this we thank God, but believers are not being built up in the most holy faith. They are thus doctrinally illiterate and totally unprepared

to evaluate properly a deviant doctrinal viewpoint such as the Sonship-by-incarnation theory. The more we understand the truth about the person of Christ, the more we will be able to detect that which is false. One Bible teacher said that “the best defense against false teaching is a thoroughly biblical Christology.”<sup>5</sup>

**3. Expose erroneous teaching.** Paul did this repeatedly in his Epistles. He exposed the false teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who erred with respect to the resurrection (2 Timothy 2:17-18). When necessary Paul would name names. Today we are sometimes told that our ministry should be positive and loving and we should not cause division in the body of Christ by pointing out doctrinal differences. Dr. John MacArthur, in dealing with the modern charismatic movement, spoke well to this issue:

That kind of thinking sacrifices truth for the sake of a superficial peace. Such an attitude pervades the contemporary church. . . . It is *not* unkind to analyze doctrinal differences in the light of Scripture. It is not necessarily factious to voice disagreement with someone else’s teaching. In fact, we have a moral imperative to examine what is proclaimed in Jesus’ name, and to expose and condemn false teaching and unbiblical behavior. The apostle Paul felt it necessary at times to rebuke people by name in epistles meant to be read publicly (Phil. 4:2-3; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17).<sup>6</sup>

We should expose those who hold an erroneous view regarding the person of God the Holy Spirit. We must do the same with those who hold an erroneous view regarding the person of the Son.

**4. Warn God’s people.** We dare not depreciate the importance of a warning ministry. God forbid that those who

stand in the pulpits today should be timid sentinels. Again Paul is our example: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). Merely to teach God's people "positive" truth without giving warning is to fatten the sheep for the wolves who will not spare the flock (Acts 20:29-30).

Are believers immune to dangers? Are they safe from contamination by subtle errors? Is doctrinal defection an impossibility? Has the god of this age lost all control and influence over our minds? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then a ministry of warning is totally unnecessary.

**5. Demand doctrinal integrity.** If a church, mission agency, school, or organization has a doctrinal statement that is based on the clear teachings of the Bible, this document must be upheld by those in leadership. Honesty and integrity require that they believe just what they say they believe. Those who sign the doctrinal statement must do so only if they are in hearty agreement with the entire document. Membership must be denied to any who are not in hearty agreement with the statement of faith. Consistency and doctrinal integrity demand this. If the doctrinal statement does not accurately reflect the teaching of the Bible, the statement should be changed so that it is an accurate representation of "those things which are most surely believed among us" (Luke 1:1).

Not too many years ago the director of a mission made it known that he no longer embraced the pretribulation-rapture position.<sup>7</sup> This change in his thinking put him in conflict with the doctrinal statement of the mission he directed. He could no longer be in wholehearted agreement with the statement of faith. The board of the mission had to make a decision. They could follow the wishes of the director and change the doctrinal statement

to allow for his new view on the rapture, or they could abide by their stated doctrinal position. They refused to change and as a result the director felt he had to resign. The director was wrong to abandon the Biblical doctrine of the pretribulation rapture, but he was right to remove himself from the mission since he could no longer sign the doctrinal statement.

If a doctrinal statement says, “We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God,” how can a person sign the statement if he denies the eternal Sonship of Christ? To be consistent, a person should not sign such a doctrinal statement if he holds the Sonship-by-incarnation view. Inconsistency is serious and the issue becomes even more serious when a person’s published writings set forth a doctrine that contradicts the clear doctrinal statement of the organization of which he is a part.<sup>8</sup>

The doctrinal integrity of an organization is compromised when its leaders knowingly allow and tolerate deviant and contrary doctrines that contradict the clear wording of the official doctrinal position. In effect such leaders are saying that the doctrinal statement does not really mean what it says. This approach is dangerous. It makes the doctrinal statement a meaningless document. Norman L. Geisler made the following keen observation:

This is precisely how denominations go liberal, namely, when their doctrinal statements are stretched beyond their original meaning to accommodate new doctrinal deviations. . . . We cannot allow this crucial doctrine [of the bodily resurrection] to be watered down by accommodating deviant views, no matter how much we personally like those who hold these positions. The simple truth is that brotherly charity should not be used as an excuse to neglect doctrinal purity. Eternal vigilance is the price for orthodoxy. . . . It is a sad day indeed

when we allow the original meaning of our doctrines to be changed without ever permitting the church representatives to vote on it.<sup>9</sup>

The well-documented case of Fuller Seminary's departure from the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy illustrates what happens when doctrinal integrity is compromised.<sup>10</sup> Fuller's original doctrinal statement was very clear. The Bible was said to be "free from all error in the whole and in the part." One professor could not honestly sign that part of the statement of faith and as a result he left the institution. There were, however, other professors who signed the statement of faith even though they did not believe in the doctrine of inerrancy. They clearly violated doctrinal integrity. How can a doctrinal statement have any credibility if those signing it have mental reservations and do not really believe what they sign? The statement becomes a meaningless document. About a decade after the controversy began, Fuller Seminary changed its doctrinal statement so that it no longer said "free from all error." The leaven of doctrinal compromise leavened the whole lump.

Spiritual leaders must not tolerate and must not accommodate doctrinal positions that are contrary to God's Word and contrary to their organization's stated doctrinal position. Integrity and honesty demand that we hold fast to what we have said we believe. Even God's Word is of no profit if we refuse to believe it, adhere to it, and practice it (Hebrews 4:2). Paul's exhortation to Timothy is appropriate: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).

**6. *Speak the truth in love.*** The apostle Paul spoke of the importance of believers being unified in the knowledge of the Son of God: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,

unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). The unity that believers possess and enjoy is based on truth and this truth centers in the person of the Son of God. In this context Paul stated the necessity of “speaking the truth in love” so that believers might “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

There are many today who minimize the importance of Bible doctrine by saying that the only thing that really matters is love. They say that what we believe does not matter as long as we love each other. To them the mark of true orthodoxy is love, not doctrine. They say that if we truly love each other, we will not allow ourselves to be divided over doctrinal matters. They think that if believers are to win the world for Christ, they must bury their differences and proclaim the essential core of the gospel in a positive way.

Should we really sacrifice truth and sound doctrine for the sake of love, tolerance, peace, and unity? Does not true love rejoice in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6)? The apostle John often spoke of love in his Epistles, but he also issued very strong words against those who did not abide in the correct doctrine of Christ (2 John 7-11). Preaching the gospel is essential, but if we are careless about truth and doctrine, even the gospel we proclaim is in jeopardy. The gospel message centers in the person of Jesus Christ the Son of God (Romans 1:1-4). How can we preach Christ in a God-honoring way if we do not jealously guard the truth concerning Christ and who He is? The gospel message must ever be “according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Bible doctrine is extremely important. Souls are saved and believers are sanctified and unified on the basis of God’s truth (James 1:18; John 17:17; Ephesians 4:13-15). If we truly love a person, we will desire that person to be totally indoctrinated in the truth of God from Genesis to Revelation. True unity is enjoyed only as believers enter

into a common understanding of the Word of God. From God's perspective those who are hindering the cause of Christian unity are those who refuse to stand faithfully and obediently upon the written Word of God. God's truth must prevail. "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1).

**7. Protect the doctrinal purity of the local assembly of believers.** (The same imperative would of course apply to schools and mission agencies.) Error must be dealt with. It must not be ignored. It must not be tolerated or minimized. Those who are teaching error must be confronted in an honest, loving, and Biblical manner. Godly church leaders need to protect the local church from devious error: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30).

Doctrinal error enters churches in very subtle and seemingly innocuous ways. Dr. Ironside recognized this fact and issued this admonition:

It is always right to stand firmly for what God has revealed concerning His blessed Son's person and work. The father of lies deals in half-truths, and specializes in most subtle fallacies concerning the Lord Jesus, our sole and sufficient Saviour.<sup>11</sup>

Departure from God's Word may be at first very slight and difficult to discern. For this reason many have failed to see the problems and dangers of the incarnational Sonship position. Many who deny eternal Sonship still believe in the deity of Christ. They believe in the pre-existence or

eternality of Christ. They believe in the three persons of the Trinity who have eternally existed. Is their concept of Christ's Sonship really a serious problem? Is it insidious error that if left unchecked will damage the body of Christ?

To deny our Lord's true, essential, proper, unique, eternal, and inherent relationship with the Father *is* serious error. We must not approve of the teaching that says the Father/Son relationship was nonexistent prior to the incarnation. We must not rob the second person of the Trinity of His essential identity as the beloved and eternal Son of the Father (Colossians 1:13). We must strongly oppose any teaching that says that His Sonship has nothing to do with His essential nature and essence. This is the very heart of the eternal Sonship issue.

Denial of eternal Sonship may appear to be only a slight deviation but the error can lead to more serious departure from the truth. False teaching is dangerous not only because it misrepresents facts on which one's faith is to be fixed; false teaching can also lead one in the wrong direction and influence others to stray. One person who accepts a false view of Christ could open the door for another person to hold an even more dangerous view. Christians have a responsibility to guard the truth concerning Christ's Sonship in order to help others avoid even more serious error.

If left unchecked, the denial of the doctrine of eternal Sonship *will* damage the body of Christ. We can work to prevent such damage by defending the doctrine, and we can defend the doctrine by pointing out the problems facing those who deny it. There are at least ten problems:

**1. *Those who deny eternal Sonship are proposing a view that is contrary to the plain teaching of the Bible.***<sup>12</sup> They deny what the Scriptures assert: that Christ is the eternal Son. They also assert what the Scriptures deny: that He

became the Son at the incarnation or at some other point in history. Unbiblical teaching of any kind must be taken seriously, and much more so when dealing with a subject as important as the person of Christ and His relationship with the Father.

It is crucial that we give a clear and correct answer to our Lord's question, "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). Every believer must acknowledge (confess) the Son (1 John 2:23). We must acknowledge that Jesus Christ is exactly who God says He is. God the Father has testified concerning His Son (1 John 5:9), and we need to be in full agreement with this testimony. In His Word the Father has given clear and ample testimony regarding His eternal Son, and it is neither wise nor safe to deny or disagree with what God has said.

***2. Those who deny eternal Sonship must change the normal and natural meaning of many key passages of Scripture, often robbing the text of its force or true significance.*** The following are a few examples of how certain verses would need to be paraphrased to fit the Sonship-by-incarnation view:

Colossians 1:13,16—All things were created by the Son, who was not truly the Son until thousands of years after the time of creation.

John 3:16—God so loved the world that He gave the One who became His only begotten Son at the time of the incarnation.

John 3:17—God sent His Son into the world to be the Savior, although the One who was sent did not actually become the Son until the incarnation.

John 16:28—The Lord Jesus came forth from the

Father, who was not actually His Father until He had come forth.

John 17:24—The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world, although at that time a Father/Son relationship did not yet exist.

1 John 1:1-2—In the beginning the One who is eternal life was with the Father, although in the beginning He was not yet the Son and the Father was not yet the Father.

John 1:18—Before the foundation of the world the One we now know as the Son was in the bosom of the One we now know as the Father, delighting in the love of the One who would someday become His Father at the incarnation.

**3. *Those who deny eternal Sonship teach that Christ's Sonship has no bearing whatever on the issue of Christ's essential nature.*** They thus divorce Christ's Sonship from the person He is. When speaking of the Son they emphasize *who He became* rather than *who He is*. They say that He *became* the Son, insisting that before the incarnation He was not the Son.

Before the incarnation Jesus Christ existed as the second person of the Trinity in all of the inherent fullness and glory of His blessed person. He was everything the eternal God should be. If He were not the Son prior to His coming into this world, we would conclude that Sonship bears no real intrinsic relationship to His eternal person because He could be exactly who He is and yet not be the Son. According to this view Sonship must be external, extrinsic, and extraneous to the real, true, proper, and essential essence of who Jesus Christ really is.

In contrast to the incarnational Sonship view, the

Bible teaches that the Sonship of Jesus Christ involves the very person and nature of our Lord, the essence of who He is as the second person of the Trinity. Since He can never become other than who He is, He can never exist apart from being the Son. We must not divorce His Sonship from His person. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8) and He is the Son yesterday, today, and forever. To say that He once existed without being the Son of God is to say that He once was other than who He really is. The Gospel of John was written so that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:31). It was not written so that we might believe that He became the Son of God when He assumed the role of Son. He *is* the Son.

**4. Those who deny eternal Sonship insult the person of Christ by making His Sonship merely a role, title, office, function, or name that He assumed.** They refuse to recognize Sonship as part of His real, actual, and intrinsic nature. They rob Him of His true identity. They insist that *Son of God* was merely a title He acquired, a role He played, a name He took on, and a function that He assumed at the time of the incarnation. They deny that He is really, truly, actually, properly, intrinsically, and eternally the beloved Son of the Father. According to their view Christ is the Son not because of who He is essentially and ontologically, but because of what He became and what He did. Their teaching with respect to the Father is the same. They say that the first person of the Trinity received the title and took on the role of Father at the incarnation.

Yet the Bible never refers to Christ's Sonship as a title or as a role. Scripture calls it a *name*: "Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). *Son* is an essential name, a name that has ever been His, a name that relates to His essential nature and essence. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), he was not acknowledging a mere

title or role. He was declaring who Jesus Christ really and truly and essentially is.

The eternal Sonship position insists that His Sonship is His essential identity, the very essence of who He is. The incarnational Sonship view detracts from the fullness of the essence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we dare offend the second person of the triune God by saying that His Sonship bears no relationship to His essential identity and essence?

**5. *Those who deny eternal Sonship misunderstand the basic significance of the expression “Son of God.”*** They teach that the primary significance of Sonship is that of submission, subservience, obedience, and even inferiority. They confuse Sonship with servitude, whereas the Bible contrasts these two concepts (Hebrews 5:8; 3:5-6). They understand the expression *Son of God* to be an incarnate title, referring to a name He assumed and a role He played when He became a man.

The New Testament makes it abundantly evident that *Son of God* denotes equality, not inferiority (John 5:17-18). To claim to be the Son of God was to claim to be of the same nature as God—to be one with God. Whereas the term *Son of man* refers to Jesus’ humanity, the term *Son of God* emphasizes His full deity. The Lord Jesus did not become the Son of God at His incarnation; He became the Son of man. To understand the term *Son of God* as an incarnate title or role meaning “subservient to God” is a grave mistake.<sup>13</sup>

**6. *Those who deny eternal Sonship also deny eternal fatherhood.*** If Christ was not always the Son, then the first person of the Trinity was not always the Father. He cannot exist as Father apart from the Son. As Dr. John Walvoord correctly stated, “If Christ became a Son by means of the incarnation and was not a Son before that event, then the Father was not a Father of the Lord Jesus before the

incarnation.”<sup>14</sup> Those who deny eternal Sonship, then, believe that the Son was not the Son and the Father was not the Father until the incarnation. This is strange doctrine when we consider that the third person of the Trinity was clearly identified as the Spirit of God thousands of years before the incarnation (Genesis 1:2).

**7. *Those who deny eternal Sonship imply that in the eternal ages prior to the incarnation there was a nameless Trinity.*** If we follow their logic, there are no Bible names by which we can identify the persons of the Trinity in eternity past. How then do we identify and speak of God prior to the creation of the universe? What names do we use to identify the persons of the Trinity? If the second person was not the Son, who was He? The same could be asked concerning the Father.

According to this false view, not only would we have to say the Trinity was nameless; we would also be forced to say that God has not chosen to reveal Himself as He really is, but only as He was pleased to become.<sup>15</sup> The triune God, according to this view, has revealed only the titles and roles He would assume; He has not revealed Himself as He really is.

**8. *Those who deny eternal Sonship fail to explain the nature of the relationship that existed in past ages between the first and second persons of the godhead.*** Dr. Walvoord said the view that begins Christ’s Sonship at the incarnation leaves “unexplained the mystery of the relation of the first Person to the second Person—indeed why the titles and order are justified.”<sup>16</sup> Prior to the creation of the universe, what relationship existed between the persons of the Trinity? Those who reject the idea of eternal Sonship often refer to the *first person* and the *second person*. These terms however are not found in the Bible. Furthermore these theological terms are derived from the

doctrine of eternal Sonship and lose their meaning apart from this doctrine. Because an eternal relationship existed between the Father and Son, we can refer to the first person (Father) and second person (Son). Being able to rank the persons first, second, and third is possible only because God has revealed Himself as the one triune God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

***9. Those who deny eternal Sonship are paving the way for the teaching that the persons of the Trinity could have been interchangeable.*** This teaching says that the Father could have been the Son, the Spirit could have been the Father, the Son could have been the Spirit, etc. If *Son* and *Father* are merely roles and titles, there is no reason why these roles and titles could not have been interchanged. Philpot explained it this way:

If Father, Son and Holy Ghost are mere names and titles, distinct from and independent of their very mode of subsistence, the Holy Ghost might have been the Father and sent the Son, or the Son might have been the Father . . . for if the three Persons of the Trinity are three distinct subsistences, independent of each other, and have no such mutual and eternal relationship as these very names imply, there seems to be no reason why these titles might not have been interchanged . . . for certainly if they are three equal, independent Persons, at liberty to choose Their several titles, there appears to be no reason why They should not have chosen otherwise than They did . . . the Father might have been the Son, and the Son might have been the Father, etc. . . . We see therefore, into what confusion men get when they forsake the simple statements of Scripture.<sup>18</sup>

God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33)!

**10. Those who deny eternal Sonship are paving the way for the teaching that says that Jesus Christ was once less than God.** Thankfully many who teach that Christ became the Son by means of incarnation recoil in horror from the thought that He was ever less than God, and yet this is what their teaching implies.

The New Testament makes it very clear that the expression *Son of God* was a declaration of deity. At the trial of Christ the key issue was whether or not He was the Son of God. When Jesus affirmed His divine Sonship, He was condemned to die for blasphemy (Matthew 26:63-65; Luke 22:70; John 19:7). He was claiming to be equal with God (John 5:18)! He was claiming to share God's divine nature. To say, "I am the Son of God," was the same as saying, "I am God. I am of the same nature as the Father. I and my Father are one."

Despite these claims to deity, those who deny eternal Sonship insist that Christ *became* God's Son at some point in history. The implications of this view need to be carefully weighed. Suppose a man correctly understands *Son of God* as an expression that points to the full deity of Christ. The man knows that Christ as God's Son is a distinct person from the Father yet shares the same divine nature as the Father. If the man is then told that Jesus Christ *became* God's Son and that there was a time when He was not the Son of God, what will his conclusion be? The man will think that since *Son of God* means equality with God, there must have been a time when Christ was not equal with God, when He was less than God, not fully possessing the divine nature. The implication is that He became full deity and of the same nature as God at the time of His incarnation; prior to His becoming the Son, He must have been less than full deity. Thus denial of Christ's eternal Sonship can lead to denial of the full and eternal deity of Christ.

Because of these ten problems it is essential that God's

people hold firmly to the doctrine of eternal Sonship without wavering. This truth involves the person and essential identity of our blessed Savior and must never be surrendered. The doctrine is important and it is vital. It is essential truth relating to who Jesus Christ really is. In discussing the differences between incarnational Sonship and eternal Sonship we are not dealing with mere technicalities or semantics. We are dealing with two opposing positions. The one presents His Sonship as merely a role or a title that He assumed at the incarnation. The other position points to His true person and identifies Him by His eternal relationship in the godhead. May the living God open the eyes of our understanding “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

The Lord Jesus Christ is God’s unique and beloved Son from all eternity. Long before the universe ever was, the Son of God was basking in the sunlight of His Father’s love, resting in the joy of His Father’s bosom, and delighting in the blessedness of His Father’s fellowship. The Son was distinct in personality from the Father yet was one in nature, sharing all the attributes of deity. In the fullness of time the Father sent forth His Son into this world on a saving mission (Galatians 4:4; John 3:17). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Blessed be His name! May all those who love the Savior join in ascribing honor and glory to the eternal Son, who is worthy of such both now, in the ages past, and forever.