

A Theological Review of the Concept of the Son of God Based on John 17:1–26

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the concept of the Son of God in the Gospel of John 17:1–26 from a theological perspective. The Gospel of John, one of the canonical Gospels, distinctively emphasizes the divine identity of Jesus as the Son of God. In chapter 17, Jesus prays to His Father in heaven, affirming His unique relationship as the Son of God. The research method employed is biblical text analysis using an exegetical approach. Data were collected from prominent theological sources and relevant academic literature. The findings indicate that the concept of the Son of God in John 17:1–26 encompasses several important theological dimensions, including: first, His equality with God the Father in divinity; second, the uniqueness of His relationship with the Father as the beloved Son; and third, His role in God's plan of salvation for humanity. The conclusion of this study is that the concept of the Son of God in John 17:1–26 affirms the divine identity of Jesus and reveals His intimate relationship with God the Father. This concept has significant theological implications for the Christian understanding of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Keywords: Divinity of Jesus; According to the Gospel of John

1. Introduction

The concept of the Son of God in the Gospel of John has been the subject of theological discourse and scholarly debate for many centuries. One of the core issues that has consistently emerged is the unique nature of Jesus Christ, especially regarding the belief that He possesses two distinct yet unified natures—namely, a fully human nature and a fully divine nature. The Bible presents numerous affirmations of Jesus' divine essence, emphasizing His supernatural identity as more than just a historical figure.

Throughout the history of Christianity, various theological challenges have attempted to obscure or even deny the divinity of Jesus. One such challenge is found in Adoptionism, a sect that views Jesus purely from a human perspective and denies His divine origin and essence. According to F.D. Wellem (2006), Adoptionists consider Jesus as someone who was adopted by God at a certain point in time, rather than being divine by nature from the beginning.

Another theological view that rejects the divinity of Jesus is found among the Gnostics. As Chris Marantika (1985) explains, the Gnostics believed that God, being wholly transcendent and spiritual, could not suffer or die, and therefore they denied the possibility that Jesus, who was crucified, could truly be God. A similar position is held by the Ebionites, an early Jewish-Christian sect. As noted by Dister (2004), the Ebionites considered Jesus to be a mere human being, the biological son of Joseph and Mary, and believed that at the time of His baptism in the Jordan River, He was temporarily endowed with a divine presence. They viewed Him as a prophet chosen to fulfill the role of the Messiah, but not as the eternal Son of God.

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Further complications arise when examining how world religions perceive the identity of Jesus. For instance, Islam, which holds to the absolute oneness of God as revealed in the Qur'an, categorically denies that Jesus is the Son of God. As G.J.O. Moshay (1995) observes, the Qur'anic perspective on Jesus makes it impossible for Muslims to accept the Christian doctrine of the divine Sonship of Christ. This form of rejection differs significantly from the standpoint found in Hinduism. Hindu thought, as expressed by Bansi Pandit (2006), embraces a pluralistic view of salvation, stating that "no single religion teaches the only way to salvation." This pluralistic assertion implies a denial of the exclusive salvific role of Jesus and, by extension, His divine identity and authority as Lord and Savior.

In John 17:1, Jesus lifts His eyes to heaven and prays to the Father, referring to Himself as the Son who glorifies the Father. This profound moment of prayer invites deeper reflection and raises essential theological questions concerning the very nature of Jesus as the Son of God and the unique relationship He shares with God the Father.

2. Proposed Method

This study employs a qualitative research method in the form of library research, which involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data from various written sources such as books, academic journals, articles, and other relevant materials related to the topic of study. Qualitative research is understood as a process that is conducted in a natural and reasonable manner, in accordance with objective conditions in the field, without manipulation (Zainal, 2014). The aim of this research is to explore whether a theological examination of the concept of the Son of God in John 17:1–26 truly affirms Jesus as the Son of God, especially in light of the existence of numerous doctrinal positions in other religions that deny the divinity of Jesus as presented in this passage of John's Gospel.

The background of the issue in John 17:1–26 centers on the situation and context in which Jesus prays before His crucifixion. Several key elements form the backdrop of this prayer. First, it marks the conclusion of Jesus' public ministry. He has completed His public works, including His teaching, miracles, and the establishment of deep relationships with His disciples. Second, it follows the Last Supper, which is a significant moment in which Jesus shares bread and wine with His disciples as symbols of His body and blood that will soon be sacrificed. Third, Jesus is fully aware of the coming betrayal and crucifixion. He knows that Judas Iscariot will betray Him, and that He will soon be arrested, tried, and crucified. He understands that His suffering and death are imminent.

Moreover, Jesus' mission to glorify God is central to this context. He knows that the ultimate purpose of His suffering and death is to glorify the Father. Through the fulfillment of this mission, He brings salvation to humanity and reveals the love and justice of God. This prayer in John 17 also serves as Jesus' spiritual preparation. He prays that through His suffering, God will be glorified and the work of salvation entrusted to Him will be completed. In addition to seeking divine glory, Jesus also expresses concern for His disciples and all who will believe in Him through their testimony. He prays for their protection and unity in the face of the challenges that lie ahead. With this understanding, John 17:1 can be seen not merely as a prayer, but as a profound affirmation of Jesus' mission, His submission to the will of God, and His deep concern for the salvation of humanity.

The background of this research on John 17:1–26 often involves the integration of various academic disciplines and theological approaches. One key aspect is the historical and cultural context, which includes the social and political conditions of Jesus' time, particularly the relationship between the Jewish people and Roman authorities. It also involves an understanding of Jewish religious practices such as the celebration of Passover, which is crucial for interpreting the context of Jesus' prayer. Additionally, the literary context plays an important role. Scholars examine how John 17 fits within the overall structure and themes of the Gospel of John, especially the themes of glory, love, and unity. Linguistic analysis of the original Greek text also helps uncover nuances and meanings that may not be immediately apparent in translation.

Theologically, this passage is deeply significant. From a Christological perspective, the research investigates how John 17:1–26 reveals the identity and mission of Jesus as the Son of God. Trinitarian theology also finds rich material in this chapter, as it speaks profoundly to the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The prayer of Jesus is analyzed theologically in terms of its purpose and meaning in the context of human redemption. Hermeneutical and exegetical methods are employed to explore the historical,

grammatical, and theological dimensions of the text. A contextual hermeneutic is used to understand how this passage has been interpreted in different cultural and theological contexts throughout church history.

In addition to biblical sources, extra-biblical materials are also taken into account. Historical and archaeological documents provide insight into the life and times of Jesus. The writings of the Church Fathers offer valuable perspectives on how this passage was interpreted and understood in the early Christian tradition. By considering these various aspects, the study of John 17:1–26 aims to achieve a deeper and more holistic understanding of the meaning, theological implications, and historical relevance of Jesus' prayer in the final moments before His crucifixion.

3. Results and Discussion

General Overview of the Gospel of John

Scholars have long debated the meaning of the term "Son of God" in the Gospel of John. Some interpret it as a title emphasizing the divinity of Jesus and His unique relationship with God, while others see it as a metaphorical expression of Jesus' role as the Messiah. The context of John 17:1 within the broader narrative of the Gospel sheds light on how Jesus understood His identity and mission. The Gospel of John specifically testifies that Jesus is the very Word of God (Logos) who took on human form to save humankind from sin and destruction (John 1:1-2; 1:14). Understanding the Gospel of John becomes deeper when one focuses on the person of Jesus as the incarnate Word. Nevertheless, certain groups such as the Alogi rejected John's writings, claiming that the Johannine doctrine of the Logos contradicts the rest of the New Testament (Louis Berkhof, 2002).

Chris Marantika asserts that the relationship between the persons and attributes of God should not be questioned. According to him, the Logos is associated with Christ only in the writings of John, and even John presents it in the form of a paradox: "The Logos was truly God, yet the Logos was with God." This paradox, if unresolved in the New Testament, should not be forced into resolution. Cullmann states that the Logos is "God who bears witness," that is, God acting in His self-giving and self-revelation. Any attempt to explain the relationship between the two natures of Christ is futile, for the God who acts through the Logos is the same as the Logos who acts in creation (Marantika, 1983).

To grasp this, every believer must understand the miraculous signs performed by Jesus. The first sign is the turning of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana (John 2:1-11). This is a sign that transcends human logic, as ordinary water is transformed into wine through a symbolic act, proving the direct involvement of divine power. The second sign is the healing of a royal official's son in Capernaum (John 4:46-54), where healing occurred merely through Jesus' word, without physical touch and from a distance. Next, Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-47), emphasizing that only the power of God could restore such a condition.

The fourth sign is the miracle of feeding 5,000 people with just five loaves and two fish (John 6:1-14), which demonstrates divine provision in abundance. Then, Jesus walked on water (John 6:15-21), showing His power over the laws of nature. In John 9:1-14, Jesus healed a man born blind by using mud and saliva, then instructing him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. After he obeyed, he was healed. This was an act impossible for any ordinary human. The climactic sign is the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-57), proving that Jesus has power over death itself. All these signs confirm that only God can perform such extraordinary deeds and that Jesus is God incarnate. Therefore, those who believe in Jesus also believe in God. Conversely, those who reject Jesus are rejecting God (John 1:12).

Jesus also taught about Himself as God through various symbolic declarations. In John 6:53, 41, 48 and John 14:6, Jesus reveals Himself as the source of life, indicating that only through Him can one obtain eternal life. In John 8:12, He declares Himself to be the Light of the World, meaning only Jesus can illuminate the lives of sinful humanity. In John 10:7, 9, Jesus says He is the Door, the only way to eternal life. John 10:11, 14 presents Jesus as the Shepherd who cares for and protects His people. In John 11:25, Jesus proclaims Himself as the Resurrection and the Life, meaning that in Him there is no death. His statement in John 14:6, being the Way, the Truth, and the Life, emphasizes that only through Him can one come to God. In John 15:1-8, Jesus declares Himself the True Vine, meaning that the believer's life can only bear fruit if it remains connected to Him.

To believe in Jesus means to receive true life. In John 1:14, true life is found in Christ. John 3:36 states that those who believe have eternal life, while those who do not will perish. John 5:24 says that believers have passed from death to life. John 6:40 declares that God's will is that whoever believes in His Son shall have eternal life and be raised on the last day. John 11:25-26 emphasizes that whoever believes in Jesus will live even though they die. All these teachings affirm that Jesus is the Son of God, God incarnate, and that eternal salvation can only be obtained through faith in Him.

The Theological Significance of the Concept of the "Son of God" in John 17:1–26

Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, plays a profoundly foundational role in carrying out the will of God in order to fulfill the divine plan of the Father for all humanity. This plan is clearly expressed in John 3:16, which states, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." The sending of the Son into the world was not an arbitrary event but a purposeful and deliberate act of divine love, revealing both the depth of God's compassion and the seriousness of humanity's need for salvation.

In Matthew 28:19–20, the risen Christ gives a command to His followers that continues to shape the mission of the church to this day: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." This Great Commission is not merely a religious statement but a theological declaration that emphasizes the Son's divine identity, His unity with the Father and the Spirit, and His ongoing presence with His people.

During the early days of the Christian church, the gospel message spread rapidly and many individuals came to faith in Christ and received salvation. The church experienced extraordinary growth, and this growth required the unification of different elements such as theology, leadership, and fellowship. The goal was to realize the Great Commission through a coherent and spiritually vibrant community. However, as the church expanded over time, it faced numerous challenges. These included internal disputes, theological disagreements, financial interests that overshadowed spiritual priorities, leadership crises, and various other forms of disunity. Such challenges made it appear as though the essence of the Great Commission was being diluted or even lost.

Even in the midst of these struggles, the church has always had the Bible as its guiding foundation. The Scriptures provide the truth that centers the church, reminding believers of their identity and mission. Because of the truth and authority of the Bible as the Word of God, the church continues to focus on the redemptive purpose of Christ. It is this unwavering truth that allows the church to recover and realign itself, even after times of difficulty or distraction. At the heart of this enduring mission is the prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17:1–26. This prayer, often called the high priestly prayer, is not only a theological treasure but also a spiritual source of strength for the church.

In His prayer, Jesus does not only pray for the twelve disciples who were with Him during His earthly ministry. He also prays for all believers who would come to faith through their message. He prays for unity among His followers, for their protection from the evil one, for their sanctification through the truth, and for their ultimate participation in divine glory. This intercession reveals the deep concern of the Son for the well-being of His people and His desire that they live out their faith in unity, holiness, and truth. The role of the Son of God in this context is not limited to His earthly mission. It also encompasses His ongoing ministry of intercession and His position as the mediator between God and humanity.

The presence of the Son of God in the world is absolutely essential for the fulfillment of the divine mission of salvation. His coming into the world is not only a historical event but also a turning point in the spiritual destiny of humanity. Without the incarnation of the Son, humanity would be left in spiritual darkness and eternal separation from God. The absence of the Son would mean the absence of salvation, the absence of hope, and the absence of the revelation of God's love. Because of this, the presence of the Son of God is central to the Christian life and faith. He is not merely a figure in history, but the very source of life and salvation for those who believe.

It is difficult to imagine the condition of humanity if the Father had not sent His Son into the world. Eternal destruction would have been the inevitable fate of all people. The coming of the Son of God reveals the mercy of God and the seriousness of sin. It also demonstrates the depth of God's desire for reconciliation and restoration. The person and work of the Son are indispensable for understanding the Christian gospel. Jesus Christ as

the Son of God is not simply one teacher among many or a prophet with moral insight. He is the eternal Son who came in the flesh, lived a sinless life, offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, rose again in power, and now reigns in glory.

In conclusion, the concept of the “Son of God” as presented in John 17:1–26 is rich with theological meaning. It affirms the unique and irreplaceable role of Jesus Christ in the plan of salvation. It reminds the church of the divine origin of its mission and the spiritual foundation of its identity. It calls all believers to remain rooted in the truth, empowered by the presence of Christ, and united in their love and obedience. The Son of God is the heart of the Christian message. Without Him, there is no gospel, no church, and no hope. Therefore, understanding and appreciating His role should lead every believer to deeper worship, greater obedience, and a renewed commitment to the mission of God in the world.

Previous Studies on the Concept of “Son of God” in John 17:1-26

Studies on the concept of the Son of God in John 17:1-26 have been conducted by many scholars and theologians from various perspectives. Some previous research includes theological, historical, and literary analyses that focus on understanding the identity and role of Jesus as the Son of God. This refers to the Christological identity of Jesus regarding His unique relationship with the Father, which is often emphasized in the Gospel of John, where Jesus is called the “Son” who has a special and close relationship with the Father. This is shown through prayer and the request to be glorified. In John 17, Jesus also speaks to the Father with authority and intimacy that reflects His divinity. The mission of glory through His crucifixion, namely through His suffering and death, glorifies the Father and completes His salvation mission. The identity of Jesus as the Son of God can be seen from biblical verses such as the following:

John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John 1:14: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 14:6: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 1:29: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

John 1:32: “Then John gave this testimony: ‘I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.’”

John 1:34: “I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

John 1:36: “When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’”

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:35: “The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.”

John 3:36: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”

John 4:11: “The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?’”

John 4:15: “The woman said to him, ‘Give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.’”

John 4:25: “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’”

John 4:26: “Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the one speaking to you—I am he.’”

John 4:49: “The royal official said, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’”

John 5:7: “The sick man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.’”

John 5:25: “Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.”

John 6:35: “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’”

John 6:51: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

John 8:12: “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

John 8:58: “Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am!”

John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

John 11:25: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.'"

John 14:6: "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

John uses the concept of Logos, which is understood by the Jewish people as a wisdom present in the universe or controlling the entire universe, while the Greek understanding is a rational principle that has always existed. However, in his writing, the Logos referred to by John is the person of Jesus Christ.

Marantika writes that the concept of Logos developed in Stoic philosophy, a common philosophy in the first century. Stoicism, with its emphasis on Logos as the cause and guarantor of life and as the matrix of thought, influenced the entire Mediterranean region, notably in the city of Alexandria. This means that the concept of Logos at that time was well understood among both Jews and Greeks according to its development. However, John presents something new from their understanding, namely that the Word is not one of or part of the created things; the Word existed before creation; the Word is eternal and has been with God before time and the world existed (William Barclay, 2003).

More specifically, Tenney writes that "Jesus as the word of God, the word is God's word. It includes the word or words of Jesus. Not only is Jesus the word; the word itself is eternal and preexistent with God. Jesus, then, is the eternal word in history, incarnate." (Merril C. Tenney, 1982)

Baxter states that Lord Jesus is the Kalam or Word, that is the revelation of God, not only a revelation to humans, and not only a revelation from ancient times, but the revelation before all things were made (John 1:2-3), a fundamental, eternal, and indivisible revelation. His existence is not only from the beginning but "in the beginning" He already existed (John 1:1). He is not only "with God" but He "is God" (John 1:1). (Baxter, 2007)

The existence of Jesus in eternity, His unity with God through incarnation, and His existence before all things shows that He is God who has power over all things. Jesus is truly God who is not limited by anything because His existence in the world is not based on time, meaning that nothing in this world exists without the presence and sovereignty of God, the Lord Jesus Christ who is in all things.

The divinity of Jesus becomes even clearer when the first disciples say, "We have found the Messiah" (meaning Christ) (John 1:41). This statement made by Andrew when he met Jesus is a direct acknowledgment of the divinity of Christ.

Pfeiffer and Harrison state that Messiah is the Hebrew word for "anointed one," and the Greek equivalent is Christ. (C.F. Pfeiffer & E.F. Harrison, 2001)

Theological Analysis

A theological examination of John 17:1-26 reveals insights into the Trinitarian understanding of God in Christian theology. Jesus' prayer highlights His submission to the will of the Father while affirming His unity with God. This unity reflects the close relationship between the Father and the Son within the Trinity.

Exegesis of John 17:1: The word "Son" in John 17:1 in Greek is "υἱος" (huios) or "Son." The exegesis of this word requires both linguistic and theological analysis to understand its meaning and implications within the biblical context.

1. Linguistic Analysis: The form of the word "υἱος" (huios) is a masculine noun in Greek meaning "son" or "male child." Commonly used in classical and Hellenistic Greek, "huios" refers to a male child of a father, indicating a biological family relationship.
2. New Testament Theological Context: *The term "Son of God" in the New Testament, especially in the Gospel of John, is often used specifically to refer to Jesus as the "Son of God." This is not merely a biological relationship but rather a unique and divine theological relationship. *The use of the word "υἱος" (huios) for Jesus indicates His unique status and authority given by God the Father. It implies that Jesus has authority and power originating from the Father.

The use of the word "υἱος" (huios) highlights the intimate and distinctive relationship between Jesus and God the Father. Jesus prays to the Father, demonstrating a close and authoritative relationship. Jesus as "huios" or "Son" asks to be glorified so that He may glorify the Father. This emphasizes Jesus' role and mission in the plan of salvation that will be fulfilled through His crucifixion and resurrection.

The use of the word “huios” (huios) in the Gospel of John affirms the divinity of Jesus. This is not only a status as a son but as a son who shares the same essence as the Father. “Huios” also emphasizes the close connection with Jesus’ mission in the world to redeem humanity’s sins. The word also stresses the unity between Jesus and the Father. Jesus as “huios” works in perfect harmony with the will of the Father, demonstrating unity of purpose and action in the Trinity.

The use of “huios” in relation to Jesus supports the doctrine of the Trinity, which teaches that the Father, Son (huios), and Holy Spirit are one God in three distinct persons yet one essence.

The word “Son” in Hebrew comes from the word “בֶּן” (ben) or in the plural form “בָּנִים” (banim), meaning “son.” Literally, “ben” is often used to refer to biological children. For example, the children of Abraham are called “b’nei Abraham” (children of Abraham), referring to his direct descendants (Gen 12:7). Children were also seen as heirs or successors of the family estate. For instance, Isaac is the son (ben) of Abraham who became the heir of God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 21:1-7).

Figuratively, “ben” is often used as a symbolic son in Israel to refer collectively to the nation of Israel as “the children of Israel” (b’nei Yisrael), showing the covenant relationship between God and the chosen people (Ex 4:22). In some texts, the king of Israel is called “God’s son,” indicating a special relationship and status granted by God. For example, in Psalm 2:7, the king is appointed by God and called “My Son.” Theologically, “ben” reflects the covenant relationship with God. The people of Israel are frequently called the children of God, indicating the special covenant and love God shows to them. Like in Hosea 11:1: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.” In Proverbs, the word “son” is often used in the context of instruction and discipline, for example Proverbs 3:11-12: “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline, and do not resent His rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in.” These verses emphasize that God disciplines those He loves as a father disciplines his beloved son. Several Old Testament texts refer to the promised son who will bring salvation and rule with justice. For example, in Isaiah 9:6 the child born is called “the son given,” which is a prophecy about the Messiah. In 2 Samuel 7:14, God promises David that his descendant will reign forever, and this descendant is called “My son”: “I will be his father, and he will be my son.”

Marantika states: Jesus Christ consistently claimed that He is God by declaring Himself as Yahweh of the Old Testament. He repeatedly used the expression “EGO EIMI” meaning “I AM” (John 8:58). This Greek expression is a direct translation of the Hebrew term Yahweh, which is the name of God in the Old Testament. The repeated use of this title by Jesus assures us that He explicitly proclaimed that He Himself is the Lord God. (Chris Marantika, 1985)

Exegesis of the word “son” in the Old Testament reveals a rich and varied meaning. Literally, “son” refers to biological descendants and family heirs. Figuratively, “son” is used to describe the collective relationship of the nation of Israel with God, a special covenant relationship, and the status of the king as God’s representative on earth. Theologically, “Son” reflects the relationship of love and discipline between God and His people as well as the messianic promise of a coming savior. Additionally, the word “son” includes social and legal aspects that govern rights and responsibilities in ancient Israelite society.

All these form the basis for a profound understanding of how the concept of “son” was understood and applied in theology and daily life in the Old Testament.

Guthrie provides five reasons behind the use of the term “Son of God” in the Old Testament:

1. Created beings such as angels are called sons of God.
2. The basis for the depiction of Adam as a son of God.
3. More specifically, the people of Israel are called the sons of God.
4. The individual meaning of the term is then applied collectively (Hosea 11:1), representing the father-son relationship between the nation of Israel and God.
5. The idea of the Son of God is used especially for the theocratic king (2 Samuel 7:14).

Marantika states: Actually, the title “Son of God” was already widely accepted by the first-century church. The Gospel of Mark begins with the statement, “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). The man who was a eunuch confessed Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8:37) and therefore felt worthy to be baptized. This experience shows that the term Jesus Son of God was familiar to the first-century church.

Furthermore, the apostle John gives a strong statement, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God” (1 John 4:15). “Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5). “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

The confession of Jesus’ divinity is a way for believers to express their faith life. Actually, human confession does not affect His essence as God. The most valuable confession of Jesus Christ’s divinity is the confession He Himself uttered. Brill explains that some may say a person’s self-confession is worthless. Regarding Jesus’ self-confession as God, Brill says:

1. He confessed to having divine attributes, namely: Eternal (John 8:58; 17:5), Almighty (Matthew 28:20), Omniscient (Matthew 11:27; John 2:23-25), Omnipresent (Matthew 18:20; John 3:13).
2. He confessed to having the power to perform miracles and gave that power to others (Matthew 10:8; 11:5; 14:19-21; 15:30-31; Mark 6:41-44; Luke 8:41-56; Luke 9:1-2).
3. He confessed to having power that only God Himself possesses, such as forgiving sins (Matthew 9:2-6; Mark 2:5-12; Luke 5:20-26).
4. He confessed to knowing God the Father perfectly, more than anyone else could know Him (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22). He confessed that He is the unique Son of God (Matthew 10:32-33; 16:17-27).
5. He spoke with wisdom higher than humans, and no one ever spoke like Him (John 7:46).
6. He accepted worship from people (Matthew 14:33).
7. He declared He would be the final judge for humanity (Matthew 7:21-23; 13:41-43; 19:28; 25:31-33; Mark 14:62; Luke 9:26; 22:69-70). (J. Wesley Brill, 2003)

Understanding the Context and Audience

Immediate Context

In John 17:1-26, it is narrated that the Lord Jesus is praying to the Father in heaven, which affirms the close relationship between Jesus as the Son of God and God the Father in heaven. The Lord Jesus offers a prayer of affirmation for the faith of His disciples so that they may be perfectly kept in carrying out the mission of evangelism (John 17:9). Jesus reveals His identity as God, that the Son and the Father are one (John 17:11b). He also prays for every believer because of the proclamation of His Word (John 17:20).

Distant Context

"I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)

(Matthew 3:16) After being baptized, Jesus immediately came up from the water, and at that moment the heavens were opened, and a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

(Luke 3:22) And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

(John 14:26) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

(John 15:26) When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about me.

(Romans 1:4) and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Romans 8:9) You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

(1 Corinthians 6:11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

(2 Corinthians 13:14) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

(Galatians 4:6) And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

Understanding the Audience

In John 17:1, the writing of John is addressed to a broader audience than the Synoptic Gospels, aiming to reach both Jewish and non-Jewish people.

1. Jewish and Hellenistic Context:

- a) The Gospel of John frequently refers to Jewish concepts and traditions such as the Messiah concept, the use of the term “Word” (Logos) rooted in Jewish theology, and references to Jewish scriptures. This indicates that the audience includes Jewish people.

- b) The use of the word “Logos” in John 1:1 also appeals to a Hellenistic audience. In Greek philosophy, Logos is the principle of reason or order in the universe, so John uses this concept to bridge understanding between Jewish tradition and Greek thought.
2. **Theological and Philosophical Understanding.** John 1:1-26 introduces Jesus as the Word (Logos) who existed from the beginning and who is the agent of creation. This is a concept understandable both by Jews who believe in God as Creator and by Greeks who see Logos as the universal rational principle. By emphasizing that Jesus is the light coming into the world to enlighten all people (John 1:9), the Gospel of John demonstrates the inclusivity and universality of Christ’s message. The Gospel of John, including John 1:1, is addressed to a wide audience, including Jews familiar with Jewish Scriptures and Greeks familiar with the concept of Logos in their philosophy. The purpose is to introduce Jesus as the divine Word, strengthen the faith of believers, and attract those who have not yet believed into faith in Jesus Christ.

Interpretation of the Relationship Between “Son and Father” in John 17:13

This prayer is one of the most profound and reflective sections in the Gospel of John, revealing the intimate relationship between the Son and the Father, as well as the purpose and mission of Jesus. Contextually, this prayer is known as the High Priestly Prayer. Jesus prays to the Father just before His crucifixion. The prayer includes Jesus’ requests for Himself, for His disciples, and for all who will believe in Him through their preaching. This verse demonstrates an intimate and loving communication, filled with confidence and closeness between Jesus, the Son, and God the Father.

The prayer expresses Jesus’ complete surrender, obedience, and love toward the will of the Father, even though He is fully aware of the suffering that awaits Him. Additionally, this prayer points to His return to heaven after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, signifying the completion of His mission on earth and His return to glory with the Father. Jesus’ prayer teaches His disciples, while He was still on earth, to prepare to remain faithful until His promises are fulfilled. It also serves as a transmission of joy, so that they may remain strong in their faith until they receive and enjoy this joy.

Theologically, this prayer affirms the unity between the Son and the Father within the Trinity. Jesus and the Father work together in perfect harmony, demonstrating one purpose and one will in the mission of human salvation. The relationship between Jesus and the Father serves as a model for the believer’s relationship with God. Through Jesus, believers are invited to experience an intimate relationship with God the Father, characterized by love, obedience, and joy.

John 17:13 emphasizes Jesus’ obedience and His complete surrender to the Father’s will, as well as His goal to bring His disciples into the joy that comes from a close relationship with God. The relationship between the Son and the Father in this verse becomes a model for the relationship believers should have with God, one that is marked by deep love, faithful obedience, and profound joy.

Guthrie explains that when considering the meaning of God as Father, it is important to understand the special significance Jesus gives when referring to God as Father. The general understanding of God as Father indirectly asserts that Jesus is the Son of God, which should be considered an important introduction to the specific use of this title. Jesus often refers to God as “Father,” “My Father,” “My Father in heaven,” or “Your Father in heaven.” This occurs fifty-one times throughout the Gospel of John. This repeated use of the term highlights the deep and unique relationship Jesus has with God, and it invites believers to enter into that same relationship of trust, love, and obedience (Guthrie, 1982).

Theological Implications

Understanding the concept of the Son of God in John 17:1-26 has significant implications for Christian beliefs about Christology and Soteriology. This concept emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus as a person who is fully divine and fully human, embodying the mystery of the Incarnation. Ultimately, this passage invites believers to reflect on the deep love and unity within the Holy Trinity.

Implications for Christian Theology

In John 17:1, this verse carries important implications for Christian beliefs concerning Christology and Soteriology.

Christological Implications

- 1) The Divinity of Jesus, which is the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus refers to Himself as the “Son,” affirming His divinity. Barclay states that at the time of Jesus’ baptism, something happened that convinced John completely that Jesus was the Son of God (William Barclay, 1996). This shows that Jesus shares the same essence as God the Father. Jesus’ request to be glorified by the Father indicates that He possesses divine status and is worthy of receiving glory equal to that of the Father. This reflects the understanding that Jesus is one with the Father in glory and divinity.
- 2) Jesus’ obedience and mission. The statement “the hour has come” refers to a crucial moment in Jesus’ mission: His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. It shows that Jesus was fully aware of and obedient to the divine plan set by God. Jesus’ prayer to be glorified is closely related to His redemptive purpose. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brings glory to God by fulfilling the plan of salvation for humanity.
- 3) Intimate relationship with the Father. Jesus’ prayer reveals a close and direct relationship with God the Father that goes beyond a typical human relationship with God. Jesus and the Father operate in perfect unity. Jesus’ request to be glorified so that He may glorify the Father demonstrates that Jesus’ actions are always aligned with the Father’s will and purpose.
- 4) Implications for believers. Believers are called to recognize and confess the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God. This is the foundation of the Christian faith, which declares Jesus as Lord and Savior. Jesus’ obedience and surrender to the Father’s will become a model for believers, who are called to live in the same obedience and love toward God. Believers are invited to share in the glory given to Jesus, which means living in an intimate relationship with God and reflecting His glory through lives that demonstrate the character of Christ.

In his writings, John refers to Jesus as the Son of God several times (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). Walker notes that John uses the term “Son of God” at least eight times in his Gospel and approximately thirty-three times throughout the New Testament (D.F. Walker, 2006).

John 17:1 provides a strong foundation for various aspects of Christology in Christian belief. This verse affirms Jesus’ divinity, His obedience to God’s redemptive plan, His intimate relationship with the Father, and His glorification through crucifixion and resurrection. For believers, this verse calls them to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, follow His example of obedience, and live in the glory revealed through an intimate relationship with God.

Soteriological Implications of Jesus

- 1) Jesus as the center of salvation, with the crucifixion as the moment of redemption. Jesus is aware that His hour has come, referring to His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. This indicates that God’s saving work reaches its climax in these events. By asking to be glorified, Jesus shows that the salvation of humanity depends on His forthcoming actions. He is the mediator between God and humanity, through whom salvation is given.
- 2) The glorification of Jesus and the glory of God. The glory that comes through obedience means that the salvation Jesus provides through His obedience and suffering also glorifies God, not only for the benefit of humanity but to bring honor to God as well. Jesus’ request to be glorified confirms that the entire plan of salvation is part of a greater divine purpose.
- 3) Love and sacrifice as the foundation of salvation. Salvation results from love that is willing to sacrifice. The crucifixion is the expression of Jesus’ willing sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity.
- 4) The gift of eternal life. Jesus speaks about granting eternal life to all those given to Him by the Father (John 17:2-3). In John’s view, salvation involves the gift of eternal life, which is knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent. The eternal life Jesus gives includes an intimate and close relationship with God, going beyond mere survival after death. It is life in closeness with God, which begins now and continues forever.
- 5) Trust and surrender. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God sent to save and faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Savior are key to receiving the salvation offered. Jesus’ surrender to God’s will shows complete submission to the Father’s plan. Believers are also called to surrender themselves to God by following Jesus’ example of obedience and love.

- 6) Jesus' role as High Priest. John 17 highlights Jesus' role as the High Priest who intercedes for His people. This affirms Jesus' role as the mediator who continually brings the needs and salvation of humanity before God. Jesus, as the perfect High Priest, through His self-sacrifice, opens the way for humans to approach God freely and confidently.

Therefore, John 17 contains rich soteriological implications. This passage affirms that salvation centers on Jesus Christ, who through His crucifixion and resurrection brings glory to God and offers eternal life to humanity. Salvation is the result of Jesus' sacrifice and His full surrender to the Father's will. This emphasizes the importance of faith in Jesus, surrender to God, and the understanding that salvation is an intimate and eternal relationship with God, beginning now and continuing forever.

The Relevance of the Concept of "Son of God" in the Contemporary Context

The concept of the "Son of God" holds deep relevance in the contemporary context, both from theological, spiritual, and social perspectives. The concept of Jesus as the Son of God is the core of the Christian confession of faith. It helps Christians to understand the identity of Jesus as Lord and Savior, which becomes the foundation of their salvation and trust. Acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God strengthens the belief that He has divine authority and the power to save. This also forms the basis for understanding the Trinity, where Jesus is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus as the Son of God provides a perfect example of life. Jesus' teachings and life give ethical and moral guidance for Christians in their daily lives, such as love, forgiveness, and humility. The concept of the Son of God emphasizes an intimate and personal relationship with God. Recognizing Jesus as the Son of God offers assurance of salvation for Christians. In Jesus as the Son of God, Christians find a new identity as children of God.

From a sociological perspective, the concept of the Son of God unites Christians from various backgrounds into one body in Christ. Following the example of Jesus as the Son of God inspires Christians to engage in social service, justice, and dedication to the community. This includes efforts to overcome poverty, injustice, and suffering in the world.

The concept of the Son of God continues to be studied and reinterpreted in contemporary theology. This includes deeper reflections on the human and divine implications of Jesus, as well as its relevance in modern cultural and social contexts (Ridderbos, 1997). Contemporary theology seeks to apply the concept of the Son of God in practical issues such as business ethics, leadership, human rights, and ecology. This shows how the Christian faith can provide meaningful perspectives in various aspects of modern life.

The concept of the Son of God remains relevant in the contemporary context in many ways. It shapes Christian identity and faith, provides a loving example of life, inspires social action, encourages interfaith dialogue, and enriches contemporary theology. By understanding and living out this concept, Christians can find deep and relevant meaning in their daily lives and contribute positively to society and the world.

Comparison with Other Biblical References about Jesus as the Son of God

The concept of Jesus as the Son of God is a central theme in the New Testament, and there are many references that discuss and reinforce this understanding. Here is a comparison of several other biblical references that speak about Jesus as the Son of God: Matthew 3:17 Text: "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Concept: At Jesus' baptism, God the Father identifies Jesus as His beloved Son. This confirms Jesus' divine identity before John the Baptist and the crowd present.

Relevance

In Matthew 3:17, a voice from heaven declares, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This event shows the public acknowledgment by God the Father of Jesus' status as the Son of God and highlights the close and loving relationship between the Father and the Son. In Mark 1:1, the gospel begins with the statement, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," which affirms Jesus' divine identity from the very start. This introduction provides the theological foundation for the entire Gospel of Mark, indicating that everything that follows in Jesus' life, ministry, and sacrifice must be understood in the light of His divinity. Luke 1:35 records the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." This confirms Jesus' unique birth through the Holy Spirit and emphasizes His divine origin and the incarnation, where God became human.

John 1:14 states, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” This verse identifies Jesus as the only Son from the Father and the manifestation of God’s glory on earth. It stresses that Jesus brings God’s grace and truth to the world as the full revelation of divine glory. Romans 1:4 explains that Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.” The resurrection serves as proof and confirmation of Jesus’ divine sonship and His victory over sin and death, which strengthens Christian faith in His saving power. Hebrews 1:1-3 describes Jesus as the final and highest revelation of God, “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,” who upholds the universe by His powerful word. After making purification for sins, He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, demonstrating His supreme authority and role in creation and redemption.

Finally, 1 John 4:15 emphasizes the importance of confessing Jesus as the Son of God by stating, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” This confession is the core of Christian faith and a personal relationship with God. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is consistently portrayed as the divine Son of God, the mediator of salvation, and the revelation of God’s love and power. This confession confirms His divine nature and highlights His role in creation, redemption, and sustaining the relationship between humanity and God. In contemporary contexts, recognizing Jesus as the Son of God strengthens faith, affirms His divine authority, and deepens the understanding of the love and redemption offered through Him.

4. Conclusions

John 17:1 provides deep insight into the divine identity of Jesus, His redemptive work, and the relationship within the Trinity. This verse emphasizes the importance of suffering as the path to glory, the knowledge of God as the essence of eternal life, and serves as the theological foundation for the mission and sending of the church. Additionally, it highlights the importance of prayer in the relationship with God and the fulfillment of God’s promises through Jesus Christ. Theologically, John 17:1-26 contributes significantly to Christian faith. From a Christological perspective, it affirms Jesus’ identity as the Son of God with a special and unique relationship with the Father, and His plea for glorification as the fulfillment of God’s plan for human salvation. In Trinitarian theology, Jesus’ prayer to the Father reveals the dynamic relationship between the Father and the Son, providing insight into the roles of each Person in the Trinity and their cooperation in the plan of salvation. Regarding eternal life, Jesus speaks of granting eternal life, which involves not only duration but also the quality of intimate relationship with God. In the theology of glory and suffering, Jesus’ request for glorification, referring to His crucifixion, shows that God’s glory is revealed through suffering and sacrifice, challenging worldly views of glory and demonstrating that the path to divine glory involves sacrifice and obedience.

In terms of mission and sending, Jesus’ prayer acknowledges that He was sent by the Father to carry out the divine mission and affirms His role as God’s messenger who brings the message of salvation. More broadly, Jesus prays for His disciples who are sent into the world just as He was sent by the Father, providing the theological foundation for the church’s mission to continue Jesus’ work in the world. From the perspective of prayer and relationship with God, Jesus demonstrates intercessory prayer for Himself, His disciples, and all who will believe in Him, underscoring the importance of prayer in the believer’s life as a form of intimate relationship with God. Moreover, Jesus’ prayer emphasizes that His work fulfills the promises of God in the Old Testament, with Jesus as the Son of God fulfilling the covenant given to Abraham, David, and the prophets. John 17:1 makes a significant contribution to various theological discourses in Christianity. It strengthens the understanding of Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, His redemptive work, the relationship within the Trinity, the concept of eternal life, and glory through suffering. Furthermore, it provides a theological basis for the mission and sending of the church and highlights the importance of prayer in the relationship with God. Overall, John 17:1 enriches theological and spiritual understanding of how Jesus fulfills God’s plan for human salvation.

Suggestion for Further Research

The author has outlined the unique and harmonious relationship between Jesus as the Son and His Father in fulfilling God's plan for the salvation of humanity through Jesus' suffering, crucifixion, death on the cross, and resurrection to atone for human sin. Salvation and eternal life are only possible through the way of the cross. The author hopes this writing will be beneficial and contribute to the understanding of Christian faith regarding the role and function of the Trinity for the growth of faith. If there are any shortcomings in this writing, the author gladly welcomes constructive criticism and suggestions to enrich our understanding of Christian faith.

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