

WHAT ON EARTH IS GOD DOING?

Part II: ARE WE ALL GOD'S CHILDREN?

One of my all time favorite songs is “Crystal Blue Persuasion” by Tommy James and the Shondells. It is a semi-religious song referencing the “sea of glass” of Revelation, or as James, a new Christian at the time phrased it, a “crystal blue” sea. The hopeful and inspiring lyrics envision God looking down one day on “all of his children [in] every nation [when] there’ll be peace and good, brotherhood.” The premise is that we are all God’s children. As much as I still love the song, I must ask, is that really true?

First, we know that God loves all saints and sinners equally, as we read: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). And secondly, we read, “God, who made the world and everything in it...And he has made from one blood every nation of men...therefore...we are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:26,29). That last statement bears qualification. In what way are we God’s offspring, or His children?

God is the father of creation in a **figurative** sense in the same way one might be deemed the father of some invention, or movement, or founding father of a nation. This fatherhood is not relational, familial, or literal. The apostle James wrote that God is the “Father of lights” (Jas. 1:17), yet no one believes that the sun, moon, or stars are literally God’s offspring, or that they have a special relationship with God. Jesus said the devil “is a liar and the father of it” (Jn. 8:44), obviously a figurative reference. So we are not all literally God’s children in any special sense, only figuratively.

In a broad way, the Bible talks about two kinds of human children, while using a number of names and descriptors. One kind is figurative, and the other is literal. The Apostle John wrote, “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (I Jn. 3:10). In his parables of the kingdom, Jesus referenced the “sons of the kingdom [and] the sons of the wicked one” (Mtt. 13:38). This is quite stark. One either lives righteously, and most do not, or one is a figurative son of Satan.

The apostle Paul called the sorcerer, Elymas, a “child of the devil [and] enemy of all righteousness” (Acts 13:10). In John 8 Jesus had harsh words for those who sought to kill him. The Jews claimed God as their father (v41), but Jesus countered by saying, No, “you are of your father the devil...a murderer [and] a liar” (v44). Satan is called “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), “the god of this age” (II Cor. 4:4), and “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Col 3:6).

Most people do not even believe in an actual Satan the devil, let alone that he is the present ruler of the world (Lk. 4:5-7). The truth is that Satan holds a vast sway of deep evil, spiritual influence over the whole world. It is the chief reason behind “disobedience” to God. It is the reason behind most of the evil and wicked thoughts and actions of human beings. Mankind’s disobedience has led directly to God’s anger, and thus these children of Satan are called “the children of [God’s] wrath” (Eph. 2:3).

This is not to say that people do not have a choice but to disobey God and fall prey to Satan, and become one of his children. But one must at least acknowledge his existence, and then make a serious effort to resist his influence. Paul outlined the perfect plan of resistance—“take up the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:12-18).

Jesus said,

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Mtt. 7:13,14; Lk. 13:24).

Jesus continues in this passage by saying there will be “false prophets” who come in his name who will only be discernible by their “fruits” (vs15-20). Then he says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven” (v21). He concludes with a metaphor about one who hear his words and then **does** them (vs24-27).

So we must conclude that not only are we not all God’s children, but that most who have ever lived have been the children of the devil, including many who are/were Christians in name only. Thus only a relatively few have ever been chosen and become the literal sons of God!

How does one become one of the “few”? The Bible tells us, “But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in his name” (Jn. 1:12); “For you are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). Becoming a son of God begins with faith, followed by repentance and baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote,

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that they might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal 4:4-7).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God...You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him, then we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8:14-17).

No one has ever been born a son of God by right of birth except Jesus. Therefore, we must become adopted sons, but with full rights as heirs of our Father. Though adopted, we become the **literal** sons of God through His indwelling Spirit. As the apostle Peter put it, “we are partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). We have been imparted with some of God’s DNA, so to speak.

We are told, “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (I Jn. 1:5). Paul wrote, “Therefore be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love...For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:1,2,8). The sons of Satan are children of darkness, and there can be no greater contrast between them and the sons of God, and the way they both “walk” in the world (Eph. 5:3-7).

So what on earth is God doing? He is adopting children whom He is molding into His character image and likeness. Further, God has named these children His heirs.