

**The Unique Son of the Most High:  
The place of Jesus in the divine council, Part 1 of 4  
John 10:22-42 (Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6)**

**Scripture (John 10:22-42):**

<sup>22</sup> And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. <sup>24</sup> Then came the Jews round about him, and said to him, "How long are you going to make us doubt? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. <sup>26</sup> But you believe not, because you are not of my sheep, as I said to you. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: <sup>28</sup> And I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who gave *them* to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and my Father are one."

<sup>31</sup> Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. <sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "Many good works have I shown you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me?"

<sup>33</sup> The Jews answered him, saying, "**For a good work we would not stone you; but for blasphemy; and because that you, being a man, make yourself God.**" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "**Is it not written in your law: 'I said, you are gods?'**" <sup>35</sup> If he [God/Yahweh] called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; <sup>36</sup> do you say of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, 'You blaspheme!' because I said, I am the Son of God? <sup>37</sup> If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. <sup>38</sup> But if I do, though you don't believe me, believe the works: that you may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him." <sup>39</sup> **Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,** <sup>40</sup> And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. <sup>41</sup> And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. <sup>42</sup> And many believed on him there.

**The Quotation ("it is written in your law")**

**\* in NT usage, "law" refers to any portion of the OT, not just the Torah (cf. Matt. 5:18; John 12:34)**

**Matthew 5:18** For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the **law**, till all be fulfilled. (not just Torah – every prophecy must be fulfilled and cannot fail).

**John 12:34** The people answered him, We have heard out of the **law** that Christ abides for ever (an allusion to Psalm 89:36-37 – the seed of David enduring forever)

**Jesus is quoting Psalm 82:6** – Here's the whole passage:

**Psalm 82:1** God (אלהים; 'elohīm) stands in the divine council (not "council of the mighty" as some English translations have; it's בְּעֵרַת־אֱלֹהִים); he passes judgment upon the gods (אלהים; 'elohīm):

<sup>2</sup> How long will you (*the gods*) judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. <sup>3</sup> Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. <sup>4</sup> Deliver the poor and needy: deliver them out of the hand of the wicked. <sup>5</sup> They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

<sup>6</sup> I (*the speaker is God*) have said, "You are gods (אלהים; 'elohīm); and all of you are children of the most High (בְּנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן; b'ne 'elyōn). <sup>7</sup> But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes (or, "shining ones" – depends on the root). <sup>8</sup> Arise, O God, (*the psalmist is now crying out*) judge the earth: for you shall inherit all nations.

### The Predominant View

- 1) Jesus is addressing the Pharisees (agreed)
- 2) The phrase "to whom the word of God came" refers to the Jews who received the law at Sinai –i.e., the Pharisees' forefathers. (I disagree)
- 3) Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6 as though it referred to human beings, not other gods. He is implying that since the OT uses the word *elohim* to refer to people, he can call himself a god. In this instance, putting 1 and 2 together, we see how the idea that the other *elohim* in Psalm 82 were human judges, for in this interpretation, the Jews who received the law are those being referred to as gods (I disagree completely).

**Meaning:** Jesus is arguing that "since other mere humans can be called "god" so can I. How does this amount to a defense of his deity? It doesn't. He'd be claiming to be merely mortal with only the right to call himself something he's not. This view no more articulates Jesus' deity than the deity of Moses or the king – or the Jews who received the law (and hence the Pharisees who have inherited their office).

Again, I disagree entirely. This view emasculates the passage, the psalm, and Jesus' claims to deity in the gospel of John, this passage, and just a few verses earlier, in 10:30.

### My Own View

**A. Note the larger Context of John** – Both John and Jesus aim to articulate and defend the deity of Jesus and his UNIQUE sonship (important for divine council context of Psalm 82:6 and its "sons of God [the Most High]"). **Here's the point: look at how often John and Jesus claimed Jesus' own equality with God up until John 10 – why change his tune then?**

**John 1:1-3** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> The same was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

**John 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

**John 1:18** No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten (**μονογενής** ; *monogenes*) Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

**John 5:17-18**, "But Jesus answered them, My Father works until now, and I work. Because of this, therefore, the Jews lusted the more to kill him, for not only did he break the sabbath, but **also called God his own father, making himself equal to God.**"

**John 5:22-23**, "For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." Verse 27 continues the thought, **John 5:27** "He also gave authority to him to execute judgment, for he is Son of Man." **The Daniel 7 connection couldn't be clearer.**

**John 6:20** - "But he said to them, **I AM!** Do not fear."

**John 8:24,28** - "If you do not believe that **I AM**, you will die in your sins....When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I AM**; and from myself I do nothing, but as my Father taught me, these things I speak."

**John 8.58,59** - "Truly I say to you, before Abraham came into being, **I AM.**" Then they took up stones.

**John 10:27-31** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: <sup>28</sup> And I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who gave *them* to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> **I and my Father are one.** <sup>31</sup> Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

**B. Obviously, the predominant view does not account for the charge of blasphemy – making oneself God. Let's look again at the predominant view, and I'll offer some critique:**

- 1) Jesus is addressing the Pharisees (agreed)
- 2) The phrase "to whom the word of God came" refers to the Jews who received the law at Sinai –i.e., the Pharisees' forefathers.
- 3) Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6 as though it referred to human beings, not other gods. He is implying that since the OT uses the word *elohim* to refer to people, he can call himself a god.

**Wrong – look at Psalm 82:6, especially at who is speaking:**

<sup>6</sup> I (*the speaker is God*) have said, "You are gods (**אֱלֹהִים**; *ʾelohīm*); and all of you are children of the most High (**בְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן**; *bʿnê ʿelyōn*). <sup>7</sup> But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

**To whom is he speaking? The Jews at Sinai?**

No – the other *elohim* of the council in verse 1 of Psalm 82 are the audience. When Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6, he is mouthing the words of Yahweh (the original speaker in 82:6) and quotes the passage as it originally reads – God speaks to the other *elohim*. Jesus is not using the verse to say that Psalm 82 had God speaking to the Jews at Sinai.

**Verse 7, the next verse, confirms this interpretation**, since it says that these gods to whom God was speaking would "die like men" – if they were already men, this makes no sense. **Who are the princes?** See Daniel 10 – divine beings (the same Hebrew word for Michael and Gabriel beings "princes" is used here in Psalm 82:7 - שָׂרִים - *sar*).

**POINT:** Jesus does not view the plural *elohim* of Psalm 82:1 as mere humans, and there's a reason this is so. **The reason he quotes this verse is NOT to claim he's just a man who can call himself a god like other men – it's to claim deity as a son of the Most High, and to DISTINGUISH himself from the other sons.** The former is the direct impact of John 10; the latter requires taking John 10 in the context of Jesus and John's prior descriptions of Jesus in this same gospel as the "*monogenes*" – the UNIQUE son.

### **What About Jesus' Claim to be Equal with God (and logically superior to the other sons of God)? Does My View Mean Jesus is Just One of Many Divine Beings?**

The short answer is an emphatic "NO" – and this is demonstrable by two things:

- 1) What has contextually preceded John 10 in John's gospel (see above for Jesus' prior claims to be equal with God – the "I AM" of the Old Testament burning bush, God Himself). We won't repeat this material here.
- 2) John's / Jesus' use of the Greek word **μονογενής** (*monogenes*) to refer to Jesus himself. This is the word the King James and other English translations render "only begotten" (cf. the well known John 3:16). While I would agree (mostly because of Proverbs 8:22ff.) that Jesus is not begotten, as the church fathers and trinitarianism of the Nicene Creed articulated, the word cannot mean "only son" as though God had no other sons. Indeed, there are a number of references to "sons of God" (cf. Job 1:6ff; 2:1ff.; Job 38:7 – undisputed texts in that regard – as well as Genesis 6:1-4; Psalm 82:6).

**Rather, the word refers to Jesus' UNIQUE sonship – his special status.**

**Note the use of the word in Hebrews 11:17**

**Hebrews 11:17** By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his (**μονογενής** ; *monogenes*) son.

Was Isaac Abraham's only son? No – he had Ishmael (born before Isaac), and later had others by another wife besides Sarah. Clearly **μονογενής** (*monogenes*) does NOT mean "only son" – **but a son of special, unique, elect status** – which Isaac was (he was the son of the promised covenant with Abraham (cf. Hebrews 11:18; Romans 9:7; Galatians 4:28; Genesis 17:19ff.)).

**Take this meaning / reality to the use of the word with respect to Jesus:**

**John 1:18 (KJV)** No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten (*monogenes*) Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

- **Anyone who saw Jesus saw God the Father. Why? On what basis?** Because Jesus was God's "stand in" – his unique son, the vice-regent of council, as we have detailed before from other passages (esp. Daniel 7 – the son of man, the divine being to whom all authority was given by God. Recall again Jesus' quotation of Daniel 7:13 in Matthew 26 – and Caiaphas' reaction).

This was the person present "before the foundation of the world" whom God had "prepared a body" to bring about redemption once humanity fell into sin. Note Hebrews 10:4-10:

<sup>4</sup> For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. <sup>5</sup> Wherefore when he comes into the world, he said, "Sacrifice and offering you didn't want, but a body you have prepared for me: <sup>6</sup> In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin you have had no pleasure. <sup>7</sup> Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do your will, O God." <sup>8</sup> When he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin you did not want nor took pleasure, which are offered by the law; <sup>9</sup> and said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, He takes away the first, that he may establish the second. <sup>10</sup> By this (the second = his body) we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

**John 3:16 (KJV)** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten (*monogenes*) Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

**1 John 4:9** In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten (*monogenes*) Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Only ONE of God's sons could accomplish this – the unique son who became the focal point of redemption; the one who was equal with the Father; the earthly "I AM" who came in a body.

Next month's issue (January '03) we will explore the deity of the special son more. Jesus in fact is the son of man of Daniel 7, who fulfills the "Baal role" in that classic divine council passage – the "king of the gods" who is above every other son of god set over the nations. February's issue will build on Daniel 7 and discuss Psalm 89's mysterious "cloud witness" – who is also Jesus, according to the New Testament. The cloud witness passage also mirrors the Baal cycle story, demonstrating that, like the son of man in Daniel 7, Yahweh's (the Father) "co-ruler" is a god-son of exalted status. Finally, in March, we will tie all this together by seeing that Yahweh had a co-creator according to Proverbs 8 – Wisdom – who, in Greek, is the "logos" of John 1:1-3, Jesus Christ.