

An open book is shown from a top-down perspective, lying flat. The pages are filled with text, though it is mostly illegible due to the lighting and focus. The background is a dramatic sunset or sunrise sky with warm orange and yellow tones and scattered clouds. The sun is positioned behind the book, creating a bright glow and lens flare effect that illuminates the pages and the sky.

KNOWLEDGE
OF THE SON OF GOD

*in Old
Testament
Times*

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Knowledge of the Son of God

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Knowledge of the Son of God in Old Testament Times

In conversations I am often confronted with the idea that Jesus became the Son of God at his birth by Mary. The view that the "sonship" was not more than a "job" that Jesus fulfilled in his time here on earth, was often presented to me. It is also argued that in the Old Testament the Son of God does not really come into appearance. Is that the truth?

Recently I read the testimony of Nathanael, the disciple of Jesus:

*John 1:49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, **Rabbi, thou art the son of God; thou art the King of Israel!***

I wondered:

How did Nathanael know that Jesus was the Son of God? At that time Jesus had just been baptized and had not yet begun to teach. If it really had been an unknown fact at that time that the expected Messiah would be the Son of God, why then did Nathanael respond in that spontaneous and enthusiastic manner? Ellen White writes that he had previously been praying under the fig tree desiring to know whether Jesus was the promised Messiah. Then, when he met Jesus and Jesus told him: "*Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.*", Nathanael immediately answered: "***Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!***".

Why didn't Nathanael simply say: "*Rabbi, you are the Messiah!*"? For Nathanael it seemed quite normal that the Messiah would also be the Son of God. Shortly before Philip had come to him and told him: "*We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*" After a brief moment of doubt Nathanael was convinced and called out: "***Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel!***"

If we look at the following testimonies, it seems to be obvious that in the minds of the Israelites the term "*Messiah*" or "*Christ*" was connected with the knowledge that he would be the Son of God:

For example Peter's statement:

*John 6:6 I believe and are sure that thou art **that Christ, the Son of the living God.***

Or Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus:

*John 11:27 Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art **the Christ, the Son of God,** which should come into the world.*

Or the beloved disciple John:

*John 20:31 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."*

Even the high priest Caiaphas mentioned the term "Son of God" in connection with the office of the Messiah:

*Matthew 26:63 And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be **the Christ, the Son of God.***

The term "Messiah" or "Christ" is always mentioned along with the term "Son of God". When we take some time to study the history of salvation in the writings of Ellen G. White, we will discover **that there was for centuries a corporate knowledge amongst the Patriarchs and the people of Israel that the Messiah would be the only begotten Son of God.**

Let us go all the way back to the beginning. What did Adam know about the Son of God?

*Adam and Eve were charmed with the beauties of their Eden home. They were delighted with the little songsters around them, wearing their bright yet graceful plumage, and warbling forth their happy, cheerful music. **The holy pair united with them and raised their voices in harmonious songs of love, praise, and adoration to the Father and His dear Son for the tokens of love which surrounded them.** They recognized the order and harmony of creation, which spoke of wisdom and knowledge that were infinite. Some new beauty and additional*

glory of their Eden home they were continually discovering, which filled their hearts with deeper love and brought from their lips expressions of gratitude and reverence to their Creator. {SR 22.3}

*It was decided in Heaven's council for angels to visit Eden and warn Adam that he was in danger from the foe. Two angels sped on their way to visit our first parents. The holy pair received them with joyful innocence, expressing their grateful thanks to their Creator for thus surrounding them with such a profusion of his bounty. Everything lovely and attractive was theirs to enjoy, and everything seemed wisely adapted to their wants; and **that which they prized above all other blessings, was the society of the Son of God and the heavenly angels**, for they had much to relate to them at every visit, of their new discoveries of the beauties of nature in their lovely Eden home, and they had many questions to ask relative to many things which they could but indistinctly comprehend. {1SP 32.3}*

*Adam and Eve assured the angels that they should never transgress the express command of God; for it was their highest pleasure to do his will. The angels united with Adam and Eve in holy strains of harmonious music; and as their songs pealed forth from blissful Eden, Satan heard **the sound of their strains of joyful adoration to the Father and Son**. {1SP 34.3}*

After the fall:

***Heavenly angels more fully opened to our first parents the plan that had been devised for their salvation.** Adam and his companion were assured that notwithstanding their great sin, they were not to be abandoned to the control of Satan. **The Son of God had offered to atone**, with His own life, for their transgression. A period of probation would be granted them, and through repentance and faith in Christ they might again become the children of God. {PP 66.2}*

*The sacrifice demanded by their transgression revealed to Adam and Eve the sacred character of the law of God; and they saw, as they had never seen before, the guilt of sin and its dire results. **In their remorse and anguish they pleaded that the penalty might not fall upon Him whose love had been the source of all their joy;** rather let it descend upon them and their posterity. They were told that since the law of Jehovah is the foundation of His government in heaven as well as upon the earth, even the life of an angel could not be accepted as a sacrifice for its transgression. Not one of its precepts could be abrogated or changed to meet man in his fallen condition; **but the Son of God, who had created man, could make an atonement for him.** As Adam's transgression had brought wretchedness and death, so the sacrifice of Christ would bring life and immortality. {PP 66.4}*

*When Adam and Eve realized how exalted and sacred was the law of God, the transgression of which made so costly a sacrifice necessary to save them and their posterity from utter ruin, they pled to die themselves, or to let them and their posterity endure the penalty of their transgression, **rather than that the beloved Son of God should make this great sacrifice....** {TA 60.4}*

*When Adam, according to God's special directions, made an offering for sin, it was to him a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which God alone could give, and make an offering for sin. It was the first time he had witnessed death. As he looked upon the bleeding victim, writhing in the agonies of death, **he was to look forward by faith to the Son of God, whom the victim prefigured, who was to die man's sacrifice.** {1SP 53.1}*

The entire system of sacrificial offerings had already been given to Adam, which symbolized the coming Saviour, the Messiah.

The Lord first established the system of sacrificial offerings with Adam after his fall, which he taught to his descendants. {1SP 266.4}

The very system of sacrifices was devised by Christ, and given to Adam as typifying a Saviour to come. {CIHS 21.1}

The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death. To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate. And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation. {PP 68.1}

Thus were revealed to Adam important events in the history of mankind, from the time when the divine sentence was pronounced in Eden, to the Flood, and onward to the **first advent of the Son of God**. He was shown that while the sacrifice of Christ would be of sufficient value to save the whole world, many would choose a life of sin rather than of repentance and obedience. {PP 67.3}

It is clear that Adam had been taught the plan of salvation and he understood that the Son of God would come to this earth to die for the human race. **This knowledge of the plan of salvation Adam transmitted to the generations before the flood.**

Cain und Abel:

[Cain and Abel] had been instructed in regard to the provision made for the salvation of the human race. They were required to carry out a system of humble obedience, showing their reverence for God, and their faith and dependence upon the promised Redeemer, by slaying the firstlings of the flock, and solemnly presenting it with the blood, as a burnt offering to God.... {TA 64.2}

*Instead of acknowledging his sin, Cain continued to complain of the injustice of God and to cherish jealousy and hatred of Abel. In meekness, yet firmly, Abel defended the justice and goodness of God. He pointed out Cain's error and tried to convince him that the wrong was in himself. He pointed to the compassion of God in sparing the life of their parents when He might have punished them with instant death, and urged **that God loved them or He would not have given His Son, innocent and holy, to suffer the penalty which they had incurred.** All this caused Cain's anger to burn the hotter. {EP39}*

Seth:

*To Adam was given another son, to be the inheritor of the divine promise, the heir of the spiritual birthright. The name Seth, given to this son, signified "appointed," or "compensation;" "for," said the mother, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." Seth was of more noble stature than Cain or Abel, and resembled Adam more closely than did his other sons. He was a worthy character, following in the steps of Abel. Yet he inherited no more natural goodness than did Cain. Concerning the creation of Adam it is said, "In the likeness of God made He him;" but man, after the Fall, "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents. **But he received also the knowledge of the Redeemer** and instruction in righteousness. By divine grace he*

served and honored God; and he labored, as Abel would have done, had he lived, to turn the minds of sinful men to revere and obey their Creator. {PP 80.1}

Enoch:

Enoch learned from the lips of Adam the painful story of the fall, and the precious story of God's condescending grace in the gift of His Son as the world's Redeemer. {TA 66.1}

*Of Enoch it is written that he lived sixty-five years, and begat a son. After that he walked with God three hundred years. During these earlier years Enoch had loved and feared God and had kept His commandments. He was one of the holy line, the preservers of the true faith, the progenitors of the promised seed. From the lips of Adam he had learned the dark story of the Fall, and the cheering one of God's grace as seen in the promise; and he relied upon **the Redeemer** to come. But after the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience; he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child's love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that first-born son, **he learned a precious lesson of the wonderful love of God to men in the gift of His Son**, and the confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly Father. The infinite, unfathomable love of God through Christ became the subject of his meditations day and night; and with all the fervor of his soul he sought to reveal that love to the people among whom he dwelt. {PP 84.3}*

Abraham:

*Abraham had greatly desired to see the promised Saviour. He offered up the most earnest prayer that before his death he might behold **the Messiah**. And he saw Christ. A supernatural light was given him, and he acknowledged Christ's divine character. He saw His day, and was glad. He was given a view of*

*the divine sacrifice for sin. **Of this sacrifice he had an illustration in his own experience.** The command came to him, "Take now thy son, **thine only son Isaac**, whom thou lovest, ... and offer him ... for a burnt offering." Genesis 22:2. Upon the altar of sacrifice he laid the son of promise, the son in whom his hopes were centered. Then as he waited beside the altar with knife upraised to obey God, he heard a voice from heaven saying, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." Genesis 22:12. **This terrible ordeal was imposed upon Abraham that he might see the day of Christ, and realize the great love of God for the world, so great that to raise it from its degradation, He gave His only-begotten Son to a most shameful death.** {DA 468.4}*

*Two of the heavenly messengers departed, leaving Abraham alone with Him whom **he now knew to be the Son of God.** ... With deep reverence and humility he urged his plea: "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." {PP 139.2+3}*

*Abraham learned of God the greatest lesson ever given to mortal. His prayer that he might see Christ before he should die was answered. He saw Christ; he saw all that mortal can see, and live. By making an entire surrender, he was able to understand the vision of Christ, which had been given him. **He was shown that in giving His only-begotten Son to save sinners from eternal ruin, God was making a greater and more wonderful sacrifice than ever man could make.** {DA 469.1}*

Moses:

Through Moses, God's purpose to send His Son as the Redeemer of the fallen race, was kept before Israel.** On one occasion, shortly before his death, Moses declared, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken." **Plainly

had Moses been instructed for Israel concerning the work of the Messiah to come. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee," was the word of Jehovah to His servant; "and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him." Deuteronomy 18:15, 18. {PK 684.3}

To Moses the system of the sacrificial offerings was given anew, which, as we have read, had previously been given to Adam but was corrupted and misused before the flood.

The Lord gave Moses definite instructions in regard to the ceremonial offerings which were to cease at the death of Christ. This system, first established with Adam after his fall, and taught by him to his descendants, was corrupted before the flood. {ST June 17, 1880, par. 9}

*The sacrificial offerings constituted a perpetual reminder of the coming of a Saviour. Throughout Israel's history **each day the people were taught by types and shadows the great truths of Christ as Redeemer, Priest, and King.** {SS 354.5}*

*It was **the Son of God** that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. **Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel.** They looked for salvation through man's Substitute and Surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh; and some of them talked with Christ and heavenly angels face to face. {PP 366.1}*

We can see clearly that the Patriarchs and the Hebrews knew that the coming Redeemer, the Messiah, would be the only begotten Son of God. They understood the gospel. This knowledge was common to the people, and it was daily sustained and strengthened through the sacrificial service and through some other laws, such as the law of the dedication of the firstborn:

*The dedication of the first-born had its origin in the earliest times. **God had promised to give the First-born of heaven to save the sinner.** This gift was to be acknowledged in every household by the consecration of the first-born son. He was to be devoted to the priesthood, as a representative of Christ among men. {DA 51.1}*

*Thus the law for the presentation of the first-born was made particularly significant. While it was a memorial of the Lord's wonderful deliverance of the children of Israel, it prefigured a greater deliverance, to be wrought out by the **only-begotten Son of God.** As the blood sprinkled on the doorposts had saved the first-born of Israel, so the blood of Christ has power to save the world. {DA 51.5}*

When the first Passover took place, they understood that the blood on the doorposts represented the blood of the Son of God.

*The Lord told Moses that every family of the Israelites must kill a lamb, and put some of the blood upon the door-posts of their dwellings. This was a sign, that the angel of death might pass over all the houses of the Israelites ... **This blood of the "Passover" represented to the Jews the blood of Christ. For in due time, God would give His dear Son to be slain as the lamb had been slain ... So as each family in Israel brought the eldest son to the temple, they were to remember how the children had been saved from the plague, and how all might be saved from sin and eternal death.** {SJ 18}*

*The people who celebrated this ordinance (Passover) were instructed **to associate the slaying of the lamb with the future death of the Son of God. The blood, marking the door-posts of their houses, was the symbol of the blood of Christ** {2SP 36.1}*

The serpent on the pole:

*The people of **Israel** well knew that in that semblance of a serpent was no healing virtue. **They knew that it was only a***

symbol of the Son of God, and that faith in the divine word, and immediate action, would be the power of salvation to them. {ST October 28, 1880, par. 18}

Daniel and his fellows understood the gospel and proclaimed it in Babylon:

***The Hebrew captives had told Nebuchadnezzar of Christ, the Redeemer that was to come, and from the description thus given the king recognized the form of the fourth in the fiery furnace as the Son of God.** Hastening to the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar cried, “Ye servants of the most high God, come forth.” And they obeyed, before that vast multitude showing themselves unhurt, not even the smell of fire being on their garments. True to duty, they had been proof against the flames. Only their fetters had been burned. {CTr 178.3}*

*How did Nebuchadnezzar know that the form of the fourth was like the Son of God? **He had heard of the Son of God from the Hebrew captives that were in his kingdom. They had brought the knowledge of the living God who ruleth all things.** {RH May 3, 1892, par. 10}*

***How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like?** The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. **They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.** {PK 509.2}*

There were many leaders from different nations present at this event in Babylon! They all brought reports about what they had seen and heard back into their own countries:

*And in a marvelous manner their faith in the living Word had been honored in the sight of all. **The tidings of their wonderful deliverance were carried to many countries by the***

representatives of the different nations that had been invited by Nebuchadnezzar to the dedication. Through the faithfulness of His children, God was glorified in all the earth. {PK 511.1}

Ellen White shows plainly that the knowledge of the Son of God to come as the Redeemer and Messiah was never entirely extinguished:

*This hope of redemption through **the advent of the Son of God as Saviour and King**, has never become extinct in the hearts of men. From the beginning there have been some whose faith has reached out beyond the shadows of the present to the realities of the future. **Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**— through these and other worthies the Lord has preserved the precious revealings of His will. **And it was thus that to the children of Israel, the chosen people through whom was to be given to the world the promised Messiah, God imparted a knowledge of the requirements of His law, and of the salvation to be accomplished through the atoning sacrifice of His beloved Son.** {PK 682.2}*

Hebrews 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

We see clearly that the people of God in every generation had a knowledge of the true gospel that is: "**For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**" (John 3:16), and that this Gospel was also witnessed to the world in each generation through God's elected.

So, the Israelites understood the following texts of the Old Testament very well:

*Proverbs 30:4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? **what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?***

*Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, **unto us a son is given:** and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

Psalm 2 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take together,

against the LORD, and against his anointed (Messiah), saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,...

*Yet have **I set my king** upon my holy hill of Zion.*

I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me,

Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee....

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

***Kiss the Son,** lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,*

when his wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

So for Nathanael, Peter and Martha the faith in the Son of God as the Messiah was something completely natural and originated out of the knowledge that the people of God had since time immemorial.

May we say and believe as they did:

Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Knowledge of the SON OF GOD in Old Testament Times

What was known about the Son of God in the times of the patriarchs and the people of Israel?

In conversations I am often confronted with the idea that Jesus became the Son of God at his birth by Mary. The view that the "sonship" was not more than a "job" that Jesus fulfilled in his time here on earth, was often presented to me. It is also argued that in the Old Testament the Son of God does not really come into appearance.

Is that the truth? Here is the answer.

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