

John 14: Jesus' "Father" Theology

Jesus' Coming and Going

John 14.28-31

²⁸ You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.'

If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for
the Father is greater than I.

²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen
you will believe.

³⁰ I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming.

He has no hold over me, ³¹ but he comes so that the world may learn
that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

Come now; let us leave.

Assumed Love vs. Authenticated Love

You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

JOHN 14.30-31

- ❖ What differentiates the assumed love of the disciples for Jesus, “*if you loved me,*” and Jesus’ demonstrational love for the Father, “*I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me*”? The disciples have all avowed their loyalty to Jesus; their forthcoming actions will prove otherwise. Jesus’ emphasis on demonstrational love will be an important theme as the evening goes on: “*If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in His love.*” 15.1

- ❖ What demonstrates “greater than I” love? For Jesus, it is doing exactly what the Father had commanded him, and therefore bringing glory to the Father (17.4).
- ❖ Jesus implied a deficiency in his disciples’ love because they were troubled that he was going away: *“If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”* He had taken his disciples into his confidence, showing them everything about the Father’s will and purposes for him: *“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”* (15.15)

However, instead of being glad that Jesus was completing the work the Father had given him to do (cf. 17.4) which would result in eternal life for all who believe, all they could see was what they were losing. We are often more concerned with personal security or what causes us grief or loss, than we are with what brings joy to our Master. A true follower of Christ sets his heart on what is gained in fulfilling his Lord’s will and on what is eternally achieved (cf. 15.8; 17.23-24).

How is the Father greater than Jesus?

“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”

“For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing . . .”

JOHN 5.18-19

❖ Throughout church history, this has been a highly controversial verse and the basis for conflicting belief about Christ. Jesus has, in fact, already spoken about this very dynamic, as well as presenting us with his own trinitarian emphasis—

But the Advocate, 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. ^{14.26}

- ❖ The Apostle John summarized in the prologue of his Gospel the exclusive status and mission of the *“One and Only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (1.14). His statements reflected what Jesus unambiguously declared about his equality with the Father and the prerogatives he possessed to judge and grant eternal life (cf. 5.18, 21, 23, 27, 30). He was the *God-Word* (1.1) made visible (1.14), the *Seen-Sent-One* making known the *Unseen Father* (1.18; 5.46).
- ❖ Jesus came to do the Father’s will: *“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”* (6.38) and he was fully committed to it— *“I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”* (5.30b) Therefore Jesus would say: *“For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”* (10.49-50)

- ❖ As the *God-Word-who-became-flesh* (1.14), Jesus was—
 - ▶ the Son of Man, the visible authority of God on earth for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Matthew 9.6),
 - ▶ the designated Substitute for ransom of sinners (Matthew 20.28),
 - ▶ the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world (John 1.29), thus becoming the means through which a new covenant could be established that would allow the Father to acquit guilty sinners and declare them righteous in His sight (cf. Romans 3.25-26).
- ❖ The Father was greater, not because Jesus was less, but because he was committed to representing the Father as only he could and fulfilling the mission that only he could accomplish.

- ❖ “Arianism,” as taught by Arius of Alexandria (A.D. 256-336), an “anti-trinitarian” theology, presented Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who was begotten by God the Father, with the difference that the Son of God did not always exist but was begotten within time by God the Father. Therefore Jesus was not co-eternal with God the Father, and is subordinate to the Father. Arius stated: *“If the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not.”*
- ❖ “Oneness Pentecostals” (also known as “Jesus Only”) believe in *modalistic monarchianism*, i.e., that there is “one God, a singular divine Spirit, who manifests himself in many ways, including as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” and that “Jesus is the one name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. . . . Oneness Pentecostalism also defines salvation as saved by grace through faith and that “true faith leads to repentance, full-submersion water baptism (in the name of Jesus Christ) and baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues.”

- ❖ The Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS; Mormons): The first article of faith for the LDS church states: *“We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”* Jeffery R. Holland of the LDS Quorum of the Twelve Apostles states, *“We believe these three divine persons constituting a single Godhead are united in purpose, in manner, in testimony, in mission. . . . They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable **except** believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the scriptures because it is not true.”* Concerning God, Robert L. Miller, former dean of religion at Brigham Young University, said, *“I believe that God is an exalted man, that He is a separate and distinct personage from the Son and the Holy Ghost.”* While LDS Christology and soteriology can sound compatible with orthodox Christian belief, “under the hood” we find that God (Elohim) had a father, and that Jesus was not born of the Holy Spirit but by a sexual union between Elohim and Mary, “a natural occurrence” in which “the Father God was the literal parent of Jesus in the flesh as well as in the spirit.”

- ❖ Jehovah's Witness theology teaches that only God the Father (Jehovah) is the one true, almighty God. Jesus, whose death is a ransom providing salvation for us, is God's unique creation and Only-Begotten Son; as such, the Father is greater than the Son. The Holy Spirit is God's applied power, an active force and not a person.
- ❖ Concerning Jesus, Islam teaches: *"The similitude of Jesus before Allah is that of Adam: he created him from dust, and then said to him, 'Be': and he was."* (Surah 3.59). Addressing Christians, Surah 4:171 says, *"People of the Book! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, and attribute to Allah nothing except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of Allah, and His command that He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him (which led to Mary's conception). So believe in Allah and in His Messengers, and do not say: (Allah is a) trinity. Give up this assertion; it would be better for you. Allah is indeed just one God. Far be it from His glory that He should have a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. Allah is sufficient for a guardian."*

“Come now; let us leave.”

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings . . .

HEBREWS 10.11-22a

- ❖ Before the next twenty-four hours have passed, everything will have changed. The previous order will be obsolete; the inefficacious animal sacrifices will be replaced by the infinitely efficacious blood of the Lamb. A new covenant, a new commandment, a new and living way. Nothing will be the same.