

FOR THE LOVE OF MUSLIMS

Lessons for Online Missionaries dealing with Muslims

Lesson 12: Son of God (Part 1)

Is Jesus the Son of God? Perhaps the most common objection you'll hear from Muslim internet contacts is that God cannot have a son. Muslims reject the idea that God had a son because they believe Almighty God could never have relations with a human woman.

In this lesson, we will discuss what the term "Son of God" does NOT mean. Secondly, we'll look at what the Bible really means when it calls Jesus the "Son of God." Thirdly, in the next lesson, we'll see how we can respond to the objection from Muslims that Jesus is not God's son.

1. What "Son of God" does NOT mean.

Part of the reason that Muslims reject the idea of Jesus being the "Son of God" is due to a misunderstanding. Many Muslims think that Christians believe Jesus is God's son in a physical sense, just like human fathers have sons. The idea that God came down and had relations with a woman is blasphemous and disgraceful to Muslims. Of course, this idea is blasphemous to us as well! Jesus is definitely *not* God's son in a physical sense! This is not what the word "son" means in this context. Therefore, as Christians, we agree with Muslims that there is only one God, and that God did not have relations with a human woman. We must reject this idea of "Son of God."

2. What "Son of God" does mean.

Sometimes, as Christians, we don't fully understand what is meant by the term "Son of God." We use the term without fully grasping its significance, and that makes it difficult to explain it to others. It's like when someone asks you to define a word – you're supposed to give the definition without actually using the original word. Could you explain the term "Son of God" to someone without using the words "son" or "father"? It might be good to learn more about this term so that you explain it clearly to Muslim seekers.

The New Testament refers to Jesus as the Son of God a number of times; for example, at the announcement of Jesus' birth (Luke 1:26-38), at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22), and during his trial (Luke 22:66-71). What does it mean that Jesus is God's son? Of course, "son" is used in a spiritual and metaphorical sense, not a physical sense. As an illustration, the New Testament also calls Jesus the "Lamb of God", but this doesn't mean that Jesus was actually a baby sheep! Rather, calling Jesus God's "lamb" shows that Jesus was sinless and perfect, and that he was going to be offered as a sacrifice on our behalf. In the same way, we can look at the term "Son of God", and instead of just taking it at surface value we should attempt to understand what it means.

“Son of God” actually conveys many meanings. It conveys the close relationship Jesus had with God. Jesus was beloved of God, like a father might have a beloved son. The term refers to the fact that Jesus is God’s eternal Word in human form who reveals God to mankind. In many instances in scripture, the term refers to Jesus’ role as God’s Messiah; the anointed, promised king who will rule with God’s power and authority. The term is often used in scripture to show that Jesus has the moral characteristics of God, especially righteousness and holiness. It shows that Jesus is the way to God. It shows that Jesus is appointed by God to rule and save his people. And it is used to show that Jesus has always existed, that he is eternal, and that he is of the same substance as God. All of these ideas, therefore, comprise the meaning of the term “Son of God.”

There is a series of two excellent articles on this topic, written by Rick Brown, a Bible scholar who has lived and worked in Muslim countries for many years. We recommend these articles if you would like to learn more about what the term “Son of God” means and how to explain it to Muslims:

Part I: Explaining the Biblical Term ‘Son(s) of God’ in Muslim Contexts

http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/22_3_PDFs/91-96Brown_SOG.pdf

Part II: Translating the Biblical Term ‘Son(s) of God’ in Muslim Contexts

http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/22_4_PDFs/135-145%20Brown_SOG.pdf

Here’s another article on the subject; this one is shorter and easier to read (Article No. 82 - *How could Jesus be the Son of God? Can God Take a Wife?*):

http://www.arabicbible.com/islam/q_christian_practices.htm

In the next lesson we’ll look at how to respond to Muslim seekers who object to Jesus being the Son of God.

Send comments/questions to flmcomments@nayajeevan.org