

February 1994

Frank W. Nelte

JOHN 10:34 AND 'YOU ARE GODS'

In the gospel of John we find the following statement:

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, YE ARE GODS?" (John 10:34 AV)

Some people, who disagree with the literal meaning of this statement, have made any number of claims in an attempt to get away from the obvious conclusion we must draw from this Scripture. So what is the truth? What does this verse mean?

Now we know what Paul said about the Scriptures.

ALL SCRIPTURE [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (2 Timothy 3:16)

"All scripture" certainly includes John 10:34. So we need to establish if this is a correct translation here in John 10:34

Jesus Christ is the One who had inspired David to write these words. Jesus Christ, in quoting this verse, said that David wrote this under inspiration. In so doing Christ was SHOWING GODLY APPROVAL for the Greek translation of this particular Hebrew verse!

Here is the context in which this statement appears.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? (John 10:34)

The Greek word here translated as "gods" is THEOS.

If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; (John 10:35)

The Greek word here translated as "gods" is THEOS.

Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? (John 10:36)

The Greek word here translated as "God" is THEOS.

The same Greek word "theos" is used to refer to Jesus Christ (i.e. "the Son of theos") and to what we human beings are to become (i.e. "theos").

Jesus Christ was here quoting from Psalm 82, and He assuredly did not mean to imply that the Hebrew

word used there should mean "judges". It simply would not make any sense! It would look like this:

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are JUDGES (theos)? If he called them JUDGES (theos), unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of the JUDGE (theos)? (John 10:34-36)

The Jews were not upset with Jesus Christ because He called Himself "the Son of the Judge", but because He called Himself "the Son of GOD". And here Jesus Christ used the same Greek word to refer to Himself and to what we are to become.

Clearly, Jesus Christ meant to say that we have the potential to become GOD!

The line of reasoning that Jesus Christ was presenting in John chapter 10 is as follows:

IF David in the Psalms already pointed out, one of the many things that you Pharisees have never really understood, that you, mortal human beings, have the potential to become "Gods" (Elohim in Hebrew and theos in Greek), THEN what is so strange or unreasonable about my statement that I am the Son of God, something you too have the potential of becoming?

THAT is the reasoning Christ was presenting to the Pharisees.

The verse preceding Christ's statement here also makes quite clear that a human being becoming God was the real issue that was being addressed.

The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that THOU, BEING A MAN, MAKEST THYSELF GOD. (John 10:33)

In this context any translation of the quote from Psalm 82:6 as anything other than "YOU ARE GODS" is meaningless.

Let's look at the verse Christ was quoting:

I have said, YE ARE GODS (Hebrew elohim); and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O God (Hebrew elohim), judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations." (Ps 82:6-8 AV)

Here in the Hebrew text the same Hebrew word is also used to refer to human beings and to God.

In these verses the psalmist was presenting a contrast. First he presented the human POTENTIAL, which is to become "gods" (elohim in the Hebrew) and the sons of God. Then the contrast is that because people sin and do not really repent, therefore they will fall short of that potential and die, and perhaps miss out altogether on that potential. Then he calls upon God (again elohim) to judge the earth.

So Psalm 82:6 states that it is our human potential to become "gods", and Jesus Christ confirmed this when He quoted this verse in John 10:34

Frank W. Nelte