

## Lesson 1 “Biblical Monotheism”

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:” – Deuteronomy 6:4*

### Introduction

#### *Goal of the Series*

This series of lessons on “The Oneness of God is the first of a three-part series on the foundational theological and biblical truths that define who we are as apostolic Bible-believers.

The goal of this series of lessons is to clearly and authoritatively teach sound doctrine – not simply for intellectual growth or personal enrichment but also “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

Thus we hope to accomplish at least a two-fold purpose through this teaching:

- 1) Firstly, we desire to see each and every one of us grounded in Truth, so that we will not fall into error and be lost.
- 2) Secondly, we desire to see every member of this local assembly equipped to share the gospel with a lost and dying world.

To borrow the words of the Apostle Paul we believe that through faithful teaching and preaching of this blessed Truth we should be built up and established in the faith and “no longer be children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful people, who lead others into error by tricks they invent. Instead by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head” (Ephesians 4:14-15 *Good News Bible*).

#### *Why begin with “the Oneness of God?”*

We will begin this series on *The Apostles’ Doctrine* by studying the doctrine of the oneness of God. I believe that this is appropriate for two reasons.

#### *Reason #1*

Firstly, the revelation that there is only one God is the foundational truth of the Bible. How do we know this? Because Jesus tells us so Himself! In Mark 12:28 the Bible tells us that “one of the scribes came” and asked Jesus “which is the first commandment of all?” Or as other translations word it, “which commandment is the most important of all?” (*ESV*). Then “Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is,<sup>1</sup> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment” (Mark 12:29, 30).

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<sup>1</sup> *The Good News Bible* reads “the most important one is this”

So Jesus Himself taught us that the revelation that there is *only one God* – and that we should love that one God with all of our being – is the most important foundational truth and commandment to be found in the Word of God.

### *Reason #2*

The second reason that this is an important and appropriate place to start this series is because of the great confusion in the religious world concerning the number, nature, and identity of God. Many people are confused by the theories of philosophy, man-made traditions, and worldly reasoning instead of being grounded in the simple and straightforward message of God's infallible Word.

Paul warned us that this confusion and false teaching would come in Colossians 2:8 when he wrote "beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." He then goes on to reiterate the Truth that we must not allow to be "spoiled" – the truth of the Oneness of God! He declares in the next verse "For in him [Jesus Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

There may be great confusion *in the world* concerning the number, nature, and identity of God, but the Biblical message is clear: "There is one God, and now we know Him in His fullness – Jesus Christ, our Lord!"

### **Various Beliefs about God**

If you do not believe that there is confusion in the world concerning God and who He is, let us briefly consider some of the various beliefs that one may encounter concerning the existence and nature of God. (Refer students to the chart in the students' handout.)

### *Five Basic Belief Systems*

There are at least five different and distinct beliefs that a person might hold concerning God:

- 1) Monotheism – the belief in only one God; the word "monotheism" come from a combination of two Greek words, *mono*, meaning "one" and *theos* which means "God."
- 2) Atheism – the belief that there is no God.
- 3) Agnosticism – Agnostics believe that the existence of God is unknown and probably unknowable. Their attitude is "it is impossible to prove or disprove that there is a God."
- 4) Pantheism – teaches that the universe itself is God, or that all of nature or the forces of nature are God. To the pantheist all matter – from invisible atoms to rocks, trees, animals, humans, planets, and stars – is part of God; most eastern religions contain strong elements of pantheism.
- 5) Polytheism – the belief that there is more than one God. Polytheists may believe in two gods, three gods, or thousands of Gods.

If this is not testimony enough to the confusion that exists concerning God, consider the fact that *within* each of these five categories there are countless different beliefs concerning the nature and identity of these people's god or gods.

### *Three Major Monotheistic Religions*

Consider monotheism for instance; there are three major world religions that call themselves monotheistic:

- 1) Judaism is the first of the monotheistic religions. There are almost 14 million Jews in the world today. The Jews worship Jehovah-God of the Old Testament, but they do not believe that the Messiah has come and are still waiting and looking for his arrival.
- 2) Christianity is the world's largest religion with over 2 billion people on the planet identifying as Christians. Christians also worship Jehovah-God of the Old Testament, but unlike the Jews, Christians believe that the Messiah has already appeared in the person of Jesus Christ.
- 3) Islam is the third great monotheistic religion. There are about 1.6 billion Muslims in the world today, or about 23% of the global population<sup>2</sup>; this makes Islam the world's second largest religion. Muslims also claim to worship the God of Abraham. Though they believe that Jesus was a prophet, they do not believe that He was divine. Islam teaches that Mohammed – the founder of the religion – was the last and greatest prophet sent from God.

### *Three Views of the Godhead in Christianity*

But even *this* is not the end of the confusion concerning the nature and identity of God. Within Christianity itself there are three distinct views concerning the Godhead:

- 1) Strict Monotheism – teaches that God is one in personhood, number, and nature; there is only one person in the Godhead.
- 2) Binitarianism – Binitarians believe that there are two separate persons in the Godhead (thus the prefix “bi” signifying “two”). They generally teach that the Father and the Holy Spirit are the same person, but that the Son exists as a separate and distinct person in the Godhead.
- 3) Trinitarianism – the doctrine of the trinity teaches that there are three separate and distinct coequal, coeternal, and coexistent persons in the Godhead – namely the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (or “Holy Ghost”).

### *Two Interpretations of Strict Monotheism*

Even within the group of “strict monotheists” there are two different doctrines.

- 1) Some groups of strict monotheists affirm the indivisible nature and oneness of God, but they do so at the expense of Christ's deity. They

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<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, April 2, 2015, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.” Accessed at [http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/03/PF\\_15.04.02\\_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf](http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/03/PF_15.04.02_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf) on June 22, 2015.

believe that the one God cannot be divided, and they subsequently deny the deity of Jesus Christ and relegate Him to the place of an anointed prophet or a good teacher.

- 2) Others who are strict monotheists also maintain the indivisible nature and oneness of God, but in doing so they affirm and celebrate the divinity of Jesus Christ believing that Jesus was both fully man and fully God. They teach that all of God's fullness has been revealed in and dwells within the man Christ Jesus.

*Where does one find the answer?*

In the midst of the confusion and competing claims concerning God, where does one find answers? As we have seen, the Christian world is filled with different doctrines concerning the Godhead and the identity of Jesus Christ. How then do we differentiate between truth and falsehood? How do we determine what doctrine is true and sound doctrine and what is false doctrine?

There is only one standard for Truth and one source for doctrine in the Church and that is the Word of God; we must turn to the Bible for our answers.

Paul has already warned us in Colossians 2:8 that we must not be spoiled through "philosophy and vain deceit" and "the tradition of men." Man made doctrines will never please God, for in Matthew 15:9 the Lord declares, "in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The doctrine of the Church cannot be based on man's opinion, philosophy, or tradition. Instead it must be based on the infallible, inspired, and eternal Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Jesus told the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29, "you do err" – or "are wrong, and fallen into error" – "not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." The Lord also taught that *if* we are to know Him and understand who He really is, then we must "search the Scriptures" for "they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

So in this series of lesson we will "search the Scriptures" and see what the Bible has to say concerning the existence of God and His character and identity.

### **The Testimony of Scripture**

*There is a God*

The Bible declares itself to be "the Word of God," and its pages are filled with the testimony of the existence of God and of His kindness toward us.

The very first verse of the Bible proclaims "In the beginning *God*..." (Genesis 1:1). The Psalmist says that only "the fool hath said in his heart, 'there is no God'" (Psalm 14:1). However, not only does the Bible teach that there *is* a God, but it undeniably teaches that there is but *one* True and Living God.

*The Testimony of the Old Testament*

The Old Testament emphatically teaches that there is only one God. When the scribe asked Jesus “which is the first commandment of all” (Mark 12:28), Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4 – “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.”

*The Law declares that there is One God*

This passage of Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:4) is known as “the Shema” in Hebrew, and in Jesus’ day this verse had already become “the most distinctive and important statement of faith for the Jews.”<sup>3</sup> Even today, a devout Jew will try to repeat this confession of faith as his final words before drawing his last breath. As we have already seen, the declaration of God’s oneness was followed by the command “to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

This passage of Scripture was so important to God that He gave the Israelites these special commands:

And these words, which I have commanded thee this day, shall be in thine heart: [7] And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. [8] And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. [9] And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.  
(Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

Even today “Orthodox Jews [still] literally obey these commands... by binding *tefillin* (phylacteries) on their left forearms and on their foreheads when they pray and by placing *mezuzah* on their doors and gates.”<sup>4</sup>

The revelation that there is only one God set the Hebrews apart from every polytheistic pagan nation around them. This principle was so important to God that when He gave the Ten Commandments, the first commandment was “Thou shalt have no other gods before me... for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:3,5)

In Deuteronomy 32:39 the LORD declared unto Israel, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me.” The Bible teaches that there is no God *with* Jehovah, neither is there any God *beside* Him, for Deuteronomy 4:35 reads, “the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.” 2 Samuel 7:22 and 1 Chronicles 17:20 likewise declare this same truth.

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<sup>3</sup> David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, revised, vol. 1, Pentecostal Theology (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2000), 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:17.

*Isaiah testifies that there is One God*

The book of Isaiah's prophecy beautifully and majestically declares the truth that there is only one God.

- Isaiah 43:10, 11 declares, "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior."
- The Lord speaks in Isaiah 44:6, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."
- And again, only two verses later, "Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any" (Isaiah 44:8).
- Isaiah 44:24 reads, "I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself."
- In Isaiah 45:6, "There is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else."
- And we read in Isaiah 45:21-23 "... There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."
- In Isaiah 46:9, the Lord instructs us "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me."
- And in Isaiah 48:11, Jehovah declares, "I will not give my glory unto another."

*Jehovah and His Name revealed in Jesus Christ*

Yet it was this same Isaiah who prophesied of Jesus Christ saying, "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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Thus, Isaiah gives us the prophetic promise that Jehovah-God would not "give [His] glory unto another" but would come Himself – "the mighty God" would come to mankind as a human child; "the everlasting Father" would come as a Son, and would establish His Kingdom and purchase our redemption! That's who Jesus is; He is the mighty God and the everlasting Father!

The Old Testament teaches us in Malachi 2:10 that there is only one God, who is the Creator and Father of all humanity, and in Zechariah 14:7-9 we read of a day when the Lord and His Name will be known in all the earth.

But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. [8] And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them

toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. [9] And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

The prophet foresaw a glorious day – a day when the light of revelation would shine, a day when rivers of living waters would flow, and a day in which the Lord and His Name would be revealed in the earth! In that day, Jehovah would be king “over all the earth,” – not just the king and lord of the Jews, but He would be worshipped by Jew and Gentile alike. Today, we worship that One Lord and we know that One Name – the matchless Name of Jesus!

In short, the Old Testament indisputably teaches that there is One Lord, One God, and One Name. The Old Testament refers to God as “the Holy One” thirty-six times, but never once does it refer to Him as the “holy two,” the “holy three,” or any other number. The Old Testament teaches that there is but one God!

#### *The Testimony of the New Testament*

The Oneness of God is not a doctrine unique to the Old Testament, but it is reaffirmed and further revealed in the New Testament.

As we have already seen, Jesus taught that the first and most important commandment was “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.” Jesus and the apostles were Jewish believers who devoutly believed and taught the message of the One God, as declared in the Old Testament. This is evident in the writings of the apostles.

We find Paul expressing his belief in the One God:

- He wrote in Romans 3:30 that “it is one God, which shall justify.”
- In 1 Corinthians 8:4 he declares, “There is none other God but one” and goes on to reiterate in verse six, that “to us there is but one God, the Father...”
- He wrote to the church at Galatia telling them in Galatians 3:20 that “God is one.”
- In Ephesians 4:6 we read that there is “One God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”
- And in 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul reminds young Timothy, “There is one God.”

James, the brother of Jesus, also taught that there is only one God. In fact he tells us that even the devils know that there is only one God! James 2:19 proclaims, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” This “One God Message” makes the devil and the demons of hell tremble and shake with fear!

John, too, taught and understood that there is only one God. In 1 John 2:20 he, like the Old Testament writers, refers to God as “the Holy One,” and in His vision of heaven in Revelation 4:2 John saw “a throne... and one sat on the throne.”

### **Conclusion**

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible teaches that there is One God who is the Father of all creation and of mankind. The Bible is His revelation of Himself to us, and His voice calling us to forsake the gods of this world and to worship Him as the only True and Living God.

Today we are blessed to walk in the “evening light” that Zechariah spoke of, and our hearts should be filled with praise when we understand that we know the “One Lord” and we know His “One Name” – oh the beauty of the name of Jesus! He is our Saviour, our Lord, and our God; we “are complete in Him” (Colossians 2:9). For this reason we can sing “*There shall be light in the evening time... tis a fact that God and Christ are one!*”



## Lesson 2 “The Nature of God”

*“And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.” – Exodus 6:3*

### Introduction

#### *Review of Previous Week*

In the previous lesson we established *why* we should teach on the oneness of God, and *how* we should teach it.

Why should we teach on this subject? Because the oneness of God is the foundational truth of the Bible, yet there is great confusion in the world of religion concerning the number, nature, and identity of God; there is a great need for teaching on this subject.

How should we teach this doctrine – and for that matter all other doctrine as well? We can only establish doctrine by turning to the Word of God; the Bible alone “is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine” (2 Timothy 3:16). Everything that we teach and preach must align with the standard of God’s Word.

Now, having noted that there is great confusion in the world concerning the number, nature, and identity of God, I hope that last week’s lesson cleared up some of that confusion by establishing what the Bible says about the “*number*” of God. Our goal in that lesson was to establish the fact that the Scriptures emphatically and undeniably declare that there is one God and one Name. We read passages from both the Old and New Testaments that attest to this fact.

#### *Object of this Lesson – The Nature of God*

Having studied what the Bible says about “the number” of God last week, today we will begin to study what Scripture teaches about the nature of God. We know that there is one God, but what sort of God is He? What can we learn of His character, His nature, and His attributes? How has He chosen to reveal Himself to humanity? These are some of the questions that we hope to explore throughout this series of lessons.

### The Nature of God

#### *God is a Spirit*

The first thing to be understood is that God is a Spirit.

“Webster’s dictionary includes in its definition of the word [spirit] the following: ‘A supernatural, incorporeal [without a body], rational being usually invisible to human beings but having the power to become visible at will...’<sup>5</sup>

As we shall see, this is also an accurate description of God’s spiritual nature.

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<sup>5</sup> David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, revised, vol. 1, Pentecostal Theology (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2000), 24.

In John 4:24 Jesus told the woman at the well, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” The Scriptures reveals this truth, that God is a Spirit, consistently from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible begins in Genesis 1:1-2 with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the *Spirit* of God moved upon the face of the waters.” And at the end of the Bible we read in Revelation 22:17, “And *the Spirit* and the bride say come.”

The Bible speaks of:

- “The Spirit of the Father” in Matthew 10:20.
- In John 14:17, God’s Spirit is referred to as “the spirit of truth.”
- Romans 8:9 calls the Spirit of God in you, the “Spirit of Christ.”
- In 2 Corinthians 3:3, Paul speaks of “the Spirit of the Living God.”
- Galatians 4:6 refers to the “Spirit of [the] Son.”
- Ephesians 4:30 mentions “the holy Spirit of God.”
- Philippians 1:19 talks about “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”
- 1 Peter 4:14 speaks of “the spirit of glory and of God...”
- And Revelation 19:10 calls Jesus, “the spirit of prophecy.”

Now are “the Spirit of the Father,” the “Spirit of Christ,” and “the Holy Spirit” three separate spirits and persons? No! For Ephesians 4:4 declares that “There is one body, and *one Spirit*...” Not two, not three, but one Spirit, and God is that Spirit!

*As a Spirit God does not have a physical body*

The Bible teaches us that God is a Spirit, and it also teaches that since God is a Spirit, He does not have a physical, or natural, body. We know from Luke 24 that spirits do not have bodies of flesh and bone. In this passage the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples. The passage, beginning in verse 37, reads:

They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. [38] And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? [39] Behold my hands and feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. (Luke 24:37-39)

And in Matthew 16:17 Jesus indicates that a spirit does not have “flesh and blood” when speaking to Simon Peter he says, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Thus we see that the Bible teaches that God is a Spirit without physical body of flesh, blood, and bone.

*As a Spirit God is Invisible*

Since God is a Spirit without a physical body of flesh and bone, He is invisible to the natural eye. This too fits Webster’s definition of a “supernatural, incorporeal... being usually invisible to human beings but having the power to become visible at will...”

How do we know that God is an invisible Spirit?

- John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12 tell us, “No man hath seen God at any time...”
- Paul describes God in 1 Timothy 6:15-16 as the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see...”
- The Bible also uses the word invisible to describe God. In his salutation to Timothy, Paul addresses God as “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God...” (1 Timothy 1:17) Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 11:27 also describe God as “invisible.”

However, the invisible God has the ability to make Himself visible to man if He so desires. In the Old Testament, God sometimes appeared and spoke to man in manifestations known as theophanies. In the New Testament, though, God chose to manifest Himself to mankind in all His fullness so that He might bring salvation to man. Thus, the invisible God took on human flesh and became to known to us as Jesus Christ – “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16), the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15).

#### *God's Divine Attributes*

##### *Omnipresence*

Because God is a Spirit, He can be everywhere at once; this quality is known as “omnipresence”.

In his book, *The Oneness of God*, David Bernard points out that God “is the only Spirit that is truly omnipresent; for all other spirit beings can be confined to specific locations.”<sup>6</sup> For instance in Mark 5:10 we learn that demonic spirits can be cast out and sent to another place; in this passage of Scripture Jesus cast the spirit named Legion out the man from Gadarene, and we find the unclean spirit begging Jesus to not “send them away out of the country.” He granted their request by sending them into a herd of pigs that immediately responded by stampeding into the sea where they drowned.

In Jude 1:16 we read of the rebellious angels having “left their own habitation” and now being “bound... in chains of darkness.” And in Revelation 20:1-3 we find the devil being shut up in the bottomless pit.

God cannot be confined to one location. Though He reigns from heaven, God’s presence fills all the universe. 1 Kings 8:27 declares, “Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee (Also see 2 Chronicles 2:6).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1:25.

In the book of Acts, we read that Paul after having discovered the Athenians' altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD", described the one true God in the following way. Paul said:

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; [25] Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth breath, and all things... [27] He be not far from every one of us: [28] For in him we live, and move, and have our being. (Acts 17:24-25, 27-28)

Perhaps the most majestic and beautiful description of His omnipresence was penned by the Psalmist in Psalm 139:7-10.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? [8] If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. [9] If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; [10] Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

#### *Omniscience*

Not only is God everywhere, but He also knows everything. This attribute of God is called "omniscience."

1 John 3:20 tells us that "God... knoweth all things." Man can hide nothing from God; He even knows our every thought, for in Job 42:2 we read, "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be hidden from thee."

God has complete knowledge of all things, including foreknowledge of the future. In Isaiah 42:9, the Lord proclaimed, "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." The very existence of the gift of prophecy lets us know that God has foreknowledge of the future. If not, how else would anyone be able to prophesy by inspiration from God? (See Acts 2:23, Acts 15:18)

God alone is omniscient. No one or nothing else has the ability to "read all the thought of people, foresee the future with certainty, or know everything there is to know."<sup>7</sup> This is why Paul could refer to Him as "the only wise God" (1 Timothy 1:17).

#### *Omnipotence*

In addition to His omnipresence and omniscience, God is also omnipotent. The word omnipotent means "having unlimited power; able to do anything."

The Bible commonly uses the word "almighty" to describe God; almighty is simply a synonym for omnipotent. In fact the dictionary defines the word "almighty" as "having complete power; omnipotent." The title "The Almighty" is given to God forty-six times throughout Scripture. Our God has all power!

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1:29.

Since all power belongs to Him, no other being can exercise any power unless God allows it. No spirit – including the devil – or human has any power unless the Lord has allowed them to exercise it. Romans 13:1 reminds us that “there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”

1 Timothy 6:15 describes God as “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,” and in Revelation 19:6 the saints in heaven praise God crying, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” We can truly say “is anything too hard for the Lord?” No! For with our God “all things are possible” (Mark 10:27).

### *Eternal*

The omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent God reigns forever! “Of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:33), for He is the eternal, immortal, and everlasting God! Psalm 145:13 reads “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.” Isaiah describes both the Lord’s eternal nature as well as His omnipotence and omniscience in Isaiah 40:25-28.

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One. [26] Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. [27] Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? [28] Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?

The Lord testifies of both His own oneness and His eternal existence in Deuteronomy 32:39 saying, “See now that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever.”

The Apostle Paul wonderfully described our God’s divine attributes in 1 Timothy 1:17 when he wrote, “Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

### *Immutable*

The Bible testifies of a mighty God, an eternal God, an all-knowing God, an all-powerful God, and an ever-present God!

Scripture proclaims that our God:

- Created the world and everything in it by the Word of His Mouth.
- Our God parted the Red Sea, and then drowned the enemy.
- Our God provided manna in the wilderness, and brought forth water from a rock.

- That same God flattened the walls of Jericho and made the sun to stand still in the sky.
- The Bible says that our God healed the sick.
- He raised the dead.
- Our God opened blinded eyes, and made the lame to walk again.
- Our God delivered the demoniacs from every *evil* spirit, and our God sent His own *Holy Spirit* to fill the believers with power from on high.
- The God of the Bible is a mighty God; He is an all-powerful God!

Some, though, seem to think that He has lost His power. Some teach that He no longer heals, that He no longer miraculously delivers, and that He no longer fills souls with the Holy Ghost. But they are wrong! They are completely and totally wrong! For not only does the Bible describe Him as eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal, but it also describes Him as immutable.

Immutable; the word means “unchanging over time or unable to be changed.” Our God is unchanging, immutable, the everlasting God! In Malachi 3:6, our God declares, “I am the LORD, I change not...”

The author of Hebrews quotes the Psalmist in Hebrews 1:10-12:

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth;  
and the heavens are the works of thine hands: [11] They shall perish;  
but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; [12]  
And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed:  
but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

We do not have to worry about whether our God has changed or will change, but He is a faithful God. He is forever faithful and true; He changes not. James 1:17 reminds us of His faithful goodness and kindness toward us saying, “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

It is from this passage of Scripture that the hymn was inspired:

*Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;  
There is no shadow of turning with thee.  
Thou changest not; thy compassions they fail not;  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.*

*Summer and winter and springtime and harvest  
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above;  
Join with all nature in manifold witness,  
To thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness!*

*Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see.  
All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided;  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*

### *God is a Person*

We have established that God is omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, and immutable, but something else must be said about God – God is a person. We are made in the image of God, and just as we exist as distinct individuals with personalities – with the ability to think and reason and with emotions and feeling – so does God. God is not simply some impersonal “First Cause.” He is not just a “force” that began everything else. No! God is a real, living, caring God, and each of us have been created in His own image.

- Romans 9:19 tells us that God has a will, and that man sometimes foolishly chooses to resist His will. In fact the Bible uses the phrase “will of God” twenty-three times.
- We know that the Lord has the ability to reason, for we hear His summons in Isaiah 1:18 to “Come now, and let us reason together...”
- Romans 11:33-34 assures us that God has an intelligent mind, but it also reminds us that His mind is so much greater than ours that we will never be able to fully comprehend or understand it. The Scripture says “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?”

So like us, the Lord has a mind and reasoning; in short, He is an intelligent being. Not only is God an intelligent being with a mind and reasoning abilities, but He also possesses emotions. The Scriptures tell us “He has many emotions such as delight, pity or compassion, hatred of sin,”<sup>8</sup> and a jealousy for His people and their worship (See Psalm 18:19; Psalm 103:13; Proverbs 6:16; Exodus 20:5). The Bible also lets us know that God can be provoked to anger (Deuteronomy 4:25).

Of course God’s mind, intelligence, and emotions are impossible for us to understand or fully explain, but He is able to reveal Himself to us in some degree, because we are made in His image. Still, we must remember and be humbled by these words – “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

### *God’s Moral Attributes*

All of the attributes mentioned above – the fact that He is all-powerful, all-knowing, ever present, eternal, and immutable – are attributes, or characteristics that God has

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1:31.

simply because He is divine. In other words He is all-powerful because He is the One and Only God; by definition the One and Only God would be all-powerful. And, it only makes sense that the One True God would be all-knowing... and in order to be God, He must be eternal – nothing else could come before Him. These are the attributes of His divinity; these are the things that *make Him God*.

However, there are some other attributes, known as His moral attributes, that go beyond that – yes, His divine attributes make Him God, but His moral attributes make Him a *good God!*

We could serve an all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, and eternal God that was also hateful, evil, cruel, and vindictive. These words could be descriptions of our God's moral nature, but instead we serve a God who can only be described as "a mighty good God!" We must echo the words of the psalmist in Psalm 73:1, "Truly God is good to Israel."

#### *Love the Source of All of God's Goodness*

The first of God's moral attributes is love. 1 John 4:8 simply declares "God is love." Love is the very definition of who God is; it is His very nature. The greatest expression of God's love is His love for Himself and for His own glory; He loves us because we are made in His image and because we bring Him glory. The rest of God's attributes flow from His great love.

- 1 Peter 1:16 tells us that God is holy. In fact in this scripture the Lord commands us "be ye holy, for I am holy." God's holy nature is a product of His twofold love – His love of His own glory and His love and goodwill toward us.
- Psalm 103:8 declares that the Lord is merciful and gracious.
- Psalm 18:35 identifies "gentleness" as one of God's moral attributes.
- Matthew 5:48 says that He is "perfect."
- Isaiah 45:21 describes Him as a "a just God."
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 calls Him "faithful."
- John 14:6 proclaims that He is truth and life.

#### **Does God Have a Body?**

All of these attributes describe our God – a living personal God who has chosen to reveal Himself to us. Some may ask, "If God is a person with intelligence and emotions, does He also have a body?"

Since God is a Spirit and the Scriptures tell us that a spirit does not have flesh, bones, or blood, we know that God does not have a body as we know it. Moreover, God is omnipresent so we know that His Spirit could not be confined to a body in a certain place in space or time.



*Anthropomorphism*

When the Bible speaks of God's eyes, hands, arms, feet, heart, and other bodily parts this is an example "anthropomorphism," or "interpretations of the nonhuman in terms of the human so that humans can understand."

For instance, when the Bible speaks of the heart of God, it is speaking of His intellect and emotions – not a blood-pumping organ. When God said heaven was His throne and earth His footstool "He described His omnipresence, not a pair of literal feet propped up on the globe... 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place' does not mean that God has physical eyes in every location but [instead it] indicates His omnipresence and omniscience."<sup>9</sup>

*Theophanies*

Throughout human history God has chosen to reveal Himself at certain times to His people. These manifestation of God are called "theophanies," which simply means "a visible manifestation to humankind of God."

In the Old Testament on more than one occasion the Bible speaks of the "angel of the Lord" appearing to man, but being subsequently worshipped or acknowledged as God. One notable example is in the life of Jacob. In Genesis 32:24-30, the Bible says that Jacob wrestled with "a man" all night long, but Jacob named the place Peniel because he said that he had "seen God face to face" there. And then in Hosea 12:4 the Bible says that it was "an angel" that Jacob had wrestled.

Such occurrences happen to other Bible characters including Abraham and Joshua. There are two possible explanations, either:

- 1) God, Himself, appeared as a theophany in the appearance of man to speak directly to someone, or
- 2) The angel of the Lord appeared to these men, and they were referred to as Lord because the men and women realized that the angel was operating as the mouthpiece and representative of God.

God also manifested Himself in other theophanies in the Old Testament.

- He appeared to Abraham as a smoking furnace and a burning lamp.
- To Moses, He appeared in a burning bush.
- He manifested His presence to Israel through the pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day.
- Job saw God in a whirlwind.
- Many of the prophets saw the Lord manifested through visions.

However, all of these theophanies were but temporary and partial manifestations of God to select people. His full nature and deity was never revealed to anyone at once. But now we do know Him in the fullness of His glory for He has revealed Himself to us.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1:27–28.

*God's Body – the Man Christ Jesus*

God did create and prepare a body for Himself (Hebrews 10:5) – Jesus Christ, born of a virgin and “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). Christ Jesus was the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.

The love of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God, the justice of God, the holiness of God, the truth of God, the light of God, the power of God, the Spirit of God, the Lamb of God, the Word of God, the Plan of God – the fullness of God made flesh.

All the attributes of God – His nature, His character, His fullness – have been made manifest in Jesus Christ. For in Jesus Christ we see the “brightness of [God's] glory” and “the express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3).

### Lesson 3 “The Names and Titles of God”

*“...and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” – Isaiah 9:6*

#### Introduction

##### *Review of Previous Week*

In the first lesson of this series we studied the number of God, establishing the fact that the Bible indisputably teaches that there is one God and one alone. This is the foundational truth and doctrine of the Word of God; “Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.”

Last week we turned our attention to the nature of God. We established first that God is an invisible Spirit without flesh and bones, and that they who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). Secondly, we identified God’s divine attributes – those things about His nature that actually “make Him God.” We also identified some of the attributes that make up God’s moral nature; His divine nature simply makes Him “God,” but His moral nature and attributes make Him a “good God.” Our God is an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, immutable, and eternal Spirit, but He is also loving, merciful, gracious, gentle, perfect, just, faithful, and true.

##### *Object of this Lesson – The Names and Titles of God*

In the first two lessons we addressed “the number and nature of God.” Today’s lesson will address His identity as we begin to study the names and titles of God. Understanding the various names and titles attributed to God throughout the Bible is greatly helpful in understanding the ways in which God has revealed Himself to His people throughout salvation history.

#### Importance of a Name

What is so important about a name? Many have alluded to Shakespeare and said “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” but in fact a name has great significance and import – especially in the Bible.

The dictionary defines a name as “that by which a thing is called; the sound or combination of sounds used to express an idea, or any material substance, quality, or act.” Webster goes on to say, though, that the word “name” may also indicate one’s “reputation; character; that which is commonly said of a person; as a good name; [or] a bad name.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the name of God is not only a “sound or combination of sounds” that we use to refer to the idea of deity, but the names and titles of God also give us information

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<sup>10</sup> *Webster’s Dictionary 1828*, s.v. “Name,” accessed October 15, 2015, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/>.

concerning his “reputation” and “character.” *Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary* says this about the use of names in the Bible: “Names carry more value and importance in biblical than in modern usage. Not only may a name identify, but it frequently expresses the essential nature of its bearer; *to know the name is to know the person.*”<sup>11</sup>

Proverbs 22:1 emphasizes this conflation of one’s name with one’s character when it says “a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.”

The importance of names and their meanings is evident when we realize that on multiple occasions when God called a man, He also changed the man’s name. When God promised Abram that He would make him a father of many nations, the Lord changed his name to Abraham. Jacob’s name described him for what he was – a heel grabber, supplanter, and deceiver – until he had an encounter with God, and then his name was changed to Israel. Simon’s name was changed to Peter, or “rock,” for he had the bedrock revelation and message that the Church is built upon. It is apparent that names mean something to God!

### **Names and Revelation of Identity**

Throughout salvation history God has used names and titles to reveal Himself to His people. One source says, “to know the name of God is to witness the manifestation of those attributes and apprehend that character which the name denotes... God’s name [is] His self-revelation.”<sup>12</sup>

#### *Progressive Self-Revelation*

God used names and titles to progressively reveal Himself to His people throughout the Old Testament.

What do we mean by “progressively?”

God never revealed all of Himself at one time to one person or group of people; the revelation of various facets or attributes of God was given to different people at different times. The revelation of God through names and titles in the Old Testament was never a full revelation but was always only a *partial* revelation of God’s character and identity. The process was progressive because each revelation of God added to the knowledge of God’s character and attributes, building upon what the people already knew about Him.

This process of progressive self-revelation is referred to by God, Himself, in Exodus 6:1-3.

Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong

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<sup>11</sup> Allen C. Myers, ed., “Name,” *Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, revised, vol. 1, Pentecostal Theology (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2000), 43.

hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

In this passage, God is promising to reveal Himself to Moses and the Children of Israel in a new way. Abraham had only known Him as “God Almighty” – or El Shaddai – the God who ruled the universe and the affairs of men.

As El-Shaddai God had revealed Himself as a “mighty mountain of strength” that ruled over the world, but as Jehovah, God revealed Himself in a personal way as the “I AM.”

Jehovah became Israel’s savior who would carry them through to the Promised Land. Jehovah was a personal revelation of a God who would say:

- I AM your deliverer
- I AM your waymaker
- I AM your water in the desert place
- I AM your cloud by day and fire by night
- I AM the manna from heaven
- I AM meat when you are hungry
- I AM the healer of your disease
- I AM the God who brought you out of Egypt
- I AM all you need; whatever you need – I AM!

The name JEHOVAH was the culmination of God’s self-revelation in the Old Testament. Thus Jehovah, became Israel’s covenant name for God.

This self-revelation began in Genesis 1:1 with the words “In the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth.” The word “God” here is the Hebrew word “Elohim.” The word Elohim can be used in a plural or singular sense and is very generic in meaning. It basically means “higher power” or “deity.” So the very first and most basic revelation of God is “Elohim;” there is a higher power that created everything.

In Genesis 14:18 God is called “the most high God,” or El-Elyon. We see that the revelation of the “higher power” or “deity” expressed in Elohim has progressed so that the revelation has come to Abraham that this God is the ONLY GOD; He is the “God most High” – there is none like Him, with Him, or above Him.

In Genesis 15:2 Abraham asks God, “Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless...?” Here the word “Lord” is the Hebrew word “Adonai,” which might be translated into English as “master.” Thus we see a progressive revelation from an impersonal creator who is God “above all else” to a mighty God who is also a “master” and Lord over humans and who is concerned with them as individuals. Adonai – lord or master – is a God who can be prayed to, as we see Abram doing in this passage.

God revealed Himself as El-Roiy – “the God who sees” – to Hagar in Genesis 16:3 when He saw her dying of thirst in the wilderness and came to her rescue.

But it was not until Exodus 6 that the Lord revealed Himself as YAHWEH, JEHOVAH, the I AM THAT I AM. It was here that the Hebrews realized “He is all that we need.” He is not just Elohim, the creator. He is more than just El-Elyon, the High and Mighty One. He is something more than Adonai – more than just a master who controls the lives of man. He is even more than only “the God who sees.”

Not only does He see, but He cares, and He is the I AM. He is willing to be whatever we are in need of.

- Are you in bondage? I AM your deliverer.
- Are you sick? I AM Jehovah-rapha, the Lord who healeth thee.
- Have you lost your way? I AM Jehovah-raah, the Lord your shepherd.
- You are in the midst of a storm? I AM Jehovah-shalom, the Lord is Peace.
- Are you in need? I AM Jehovah-jireh, the Lord your provider.
- Is your heart scarred and stained by sin? I AM Jehovah-tsidekenu, your righteousness.

### **Old Testament Titles Inadequate**

#### *Titles – not a Name*

So throughout the Old Testament, the Lord graciously used titles and names to reveal glimpses of His character and certain chosen attributes of His Person to His people. With each name, with each title, and with each new revelation God gave the people a greater understanding of His nature and His character, but His true identity was still a mystery.

None of these “names of God” were really names at all. Instead, they were titles or descriptions of certain attributes or characteristics of God.

For instance I might describe you as a human, a man or woman, a brother or sister, a mother or father, a resident of such-and-such place. I might describe your age, occupation or religious affiliation, but none of these things are your name. All of these details may describe certain things about you – what you are, where you reside, what you do, how old you are, or your relationship to others.

These descriptions might give someone enough information that if they came looking for you that they could find you, but until they found you they still would not know your true, given, and proper name.

This is the same type of revelation that God had given Israel through the names and titles revealed to them.

- They knew of His residence. He is El-Elyon, the High and Mighty One who dwells in heaven.
- They knew of His position. He is Adonai, the Lord and Master.
- They knew of His relationship. According to the prophet Malachi, He is the Father of all humanity and creation (Malachi 2:10).

- They knew His age. He is the I AM, the eternal, the First and the Last.
- They knew of His work and activities. He was Elohim – the Creator. He was a healer, a savior, He was righteousness, He was the bread from heaven, and life giving water in the wilderness.
- They knew according to the Psalmist that he was the King of Glory who reigned over all the earth (Psalm 24:8-10).

But this was not enough. The people of God realized, “We know what He is, we know where He abides, we know what He is like, and we know what He does. But really, we still do not know *who* He is. We know of His nature. We know of His character. We know of His work. But we still do not know His identity! We still do not know His Name!”

#### *A Desire to Know God's Name*

We see this hunger to know God's Name in displayed by Jacob at Peniel. After he wrestled with God all night, Jacob asked of the Lord in Genesis 32:29, “Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.”

In Judges 13:17-18, Manoah, Samson's father, asked the angel of the LORD – the theophany of God that had appeared to him and his wife – “What is thy name?” And the angel answered him, “Why askest thus after my name, seeing it is a secret.” Manoah then spoke to his wife saying “we shall surely die, because we have seen God” (Judges 13:22).

The Jewish people knew all *about* God, but yet they hungered to truly *know Him* – to know His true identity and to know His Name!

Surely, they thought “We know where He resides. If we could but ascend to heaven, we could find Him. We could see Him, identify Him, and learn His Name. Yet no man has ascended into heaven. How then will we ever know Him? Will His Name remain a secret? Will He never reveal His identity to us?”

#### *A Hopeful Promise*

But a word of hope and a sure word of prophecy was given in Zechariah 14:9 that the king of heaven would also be “king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.”

Man cannot ascend into heaven to find God, but God can descend to earth and reveal Himself to man!

Isaiah prophesied of this glorious revelation of God to man, this unveiling of God's identity, this condescension of deity to dwell among humanity when he said in Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” – or “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). Of that day the Lord promised through the words of the prophet saying, “Therefore my people shall *know my name...*” (Isaiah 52:6)

### **The Name Revealed – Jesus**

This magnificent Name – the Name that the patriarchs had longed to know, the Name that Jacob had enquired of, the Name that Zechariah and Isaiah had prophesied about, the revelation that the Lord Himself had promised – this name was finally revealed to a carpenter. The Lord spoke to a carpenter named Joseph in a dream as he lay sleeping and informed him that his fiancée – a virgin named Mary – was going to bear a child conceived by the Holy Ghost.

The angel of the Lord declared to Joseph:

She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. [22] Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, [23] Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us. (Matthew 1:21-23)

This was the name – Jesus! The One Name of the One Lord! Here through a child born of a virgin, God came down from heaven and revealed Himself to mankind. Here in this child of Mary, the God of the Old Testament was embodied, manifest, and made visible to us. Every description of God’s attributes and character from the Old Testament – every name and title of God – was summed up and made flesh in Jesus Christ!

#### *The Fulfillment of Prophecy*

In Jesus Christ we find the fulfillment of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament.

- He was Emmanuel, God with us – a baby born of a virgin.
- He was a baby boy, a son, but He was more than that for He was the son prophesied of in Isaiah 9:6 who would be the “mighty God.”
- God had revealed Himself to the Hebrews as El-elyon, the One who dwelt in heaven. John 3:13 says that Jesus was the “Son of man” who “came down from heaven.”
- God revealed Himself to Abraham as Adonai – the Lord and Master. Jesus said in John 13:13, “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.”
- The Jews knew that God was the Father in relationship. Isaiah called Jesus “the everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6) and Jesus told Phillip “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).
- The Jews also knew that God was eternal in age, the I AM, and the First and the Last.
  - Colossians 1:17 says that Jesus Christ existed “before all things, and by him all things consist.”
  - John 1:1 describes the Word that “in the beginning” was “with God, and... was God.”
  - Jesus told the Jews in John 8:58, “before Abraham was, I AM.”



- And in Revelation 22:13 Jesus says, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the First and the Last.”

The Israelites also knew of God’s work and activity.

- They knew God to be the creator. John 1:3, 10 declares of Jesus Christ, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made... He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”
- The Jews knew God as Jehovah-rapha, the healer. 1 Peter 2:24 says that it was Jesus Christ, “by whose stripes ye were healed.”
- God had revealed Himself in the Old Testament as Jehovah-tsidkenu – Jehovah our righteousness. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that Jesus Christ was “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”
- In the wilderness God had shown Himself to be Jehovah-jireh, the Provider who gave bread from heaven and water from a rock. Jesus said in John 6:41, “I am the bread which came down from heaven,” and 1 Corinthians 10:4 tells us that the rock that followed Israel in the wilderness – “that Rock was Christ.”

God had declared Himself to be the King of Glory in the Old Testament. Could this Jesus – a child born in a carpenter’s home – be the King of Glory? Revelation 17:4 proclaims Him to be “the King of Kings” and “the Lord of Lords.”

### **Conclusion**

Man could not go up into heaven and search for God, but God came down from heaven and made Himself known to man. Jesus Christ is God made flesh; He is Emmanuel, “God With Us.” Every attribute and characteristic of God can be found in Him for “in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

If you are searching for someone to fulfill all the names and titles of God revealed in the Old Testament, only Jesus Christ will fit the bill. Many names were used in the Old Testament to describe His various characteristics and attributes, but today we know the “One Lord” and His “One Name.” Jesus! When you say Jesus, you’ve said it all!

#### *The Importance of Jesus’ Name*

There is no salvation outside of the Name of Jesus. Acts 4:12 unequivocally declares, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

The New Testament Church is centered on the Name and Person of Jesus Christ.

- Jesus said that we would be hated by all men for His name’s sake (Matthew 10:22).
- We are to teach and preach in the Name of Jesus (Acts 4:17-18; 5:28).

- We cast out devils, receive supernatural power and protection, and pray for the sick – all in the Name of Jesus (Mark 16:17-18; James 5:14).
- We baptize in the name of Jesus according to the command of Acts 2:38 and the example of the apostles.
- In fact, the Name of Jesus is so important that we are commanded in Colossians 3:17, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Jesus came as the full revelation of God to mankind. He came as our Savior, our Healer, our Deliverer, our Prince of Peace, our Master, our Lord, our Provider, our Righteousness, our High Priest... Jesus Christ has truly become our All in All. We no longer need to search for the right “name” of God for every different situation, but we can rest in the assurance that all power in heaven and earth is vested in the Name of Jesus, and can be called into action by faith in that Holy Name.

## Lesson 4 “Jesus is God”

*“For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” – Colossians 2:9*

### Introduction

#### *Review of Previous Lessons*

We have already stated that the goal of this series of lessons has been to examine and establish what is sound Bible doctrine concerning the number, nature, and identity of God. We have seen what the Bible teaches concerning the “number of God;” the Word clearly declares “the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

The Bible’s teachings concerning the nature and character of God have also been examined in the last several lessons. In Lesson 2 we studied both the divine attributes and the moral attributes of God. The divine attributes of God are those things that “make Him God” such as His omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, eternity, and immutability. His moral attributes are those things that make Him a “good God.” For instance, God’s love, holiness, mercy, justice, and faithfulness are all examples of His moral attributes or moral character.

Last week’s lesson, “The Names and Titles of God,” dealt with the way in which God’s nature or character and His identity are connected and interrelated. Throughout the salvation history of the Old Testament, God progressively revealed Himself to His people through names and titles that described His nature and character. However, as we saw last week, none of these titles were truly names. They were simply partial and incomplete revelations of God’s character and nature.

#### *Object of this Lesson – Jesus is God*

But the prophet Zechariah foretold the day when the Lord would be “king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9). The identity of the one Lord and His one Name were revealed in Jesus Christ. Every Old Testament name and title of God was perfectly and completely embodied and fulfilled within the man Christ Jesus. For this reason He was called Emmanuel – God with us (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

This will be the focus of today’s lesson – the fact that God came to dwell with us. For today we will see that the Scriptures unequivocally and indisputably affirm and declare that Jesus is God!

### **Jesus has all the Attributes of God**

The first reason that we can say that “Jesus is God” is because He possesses all the attributes and prerogatives of God.

Think of God’s self-revelation in the Old Testament as a police sketch of a suspect in a crime. Various characteristics and identifying features are described by a witness

and sketched by the police so that when the suspect is seen, he or she may be identified as the wanted man or woman. So it was with God in the Old Testament. He bore witness of Himself and progressively gave new glimpses of Himself to His people. New facets of His character and new dimensions of His nature were revealed to different people at different times. This was the threefold purpose of the Old Testament:

- 1) To reveal the nature and character of God to man
- 2) To reveal man's own sinful, rebellious, and broken nature to himself
- 3) And, to prepare man to recognize both His need for a Savior and to recognize the Savior when He came

Jehovah declared to Israel in Isaiah 43:3, "I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior..." And in Isaiah 43:11, He had said, "I even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior."

But who was this Savior? What was His Name? Did the LORD God have a name? Would He ever completely reveal His identity to His people?

Yes! The LORD Jehovah came as the Savior of mankind and revealed His Name and His Person fully and completely with the angelic proclamation that declared that Mary "shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus Christ came as the fulfillment of every prophecy and every Messianic expectation, and He came matching every Old Testament description of the character and nature of Jehovah-God. Jesus is both fully God and fully man; in this lesson we will study His deity, and in the next lesson we will learn more about His humanity.

### *Jesus Possesses the Divine Attributes of God*

#### *God is a Spirit – Jesus is a Spirit*

The Bible teaches that God is a Spirit. Jesus was in His human nature flesh, but in His divine nature He was a Spirit. Romans 8:9 speaks of the "Spirit of Christ," and Philippians 1:19 tells us of "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

#### *God is Omnipresent – Jesus is Omnipresent*

In His humanity Jesus had a physical body of flesh and bones. This physical body was confined to one place in time and space; in order to get somewhere, Jesus – like you and me – had to walk or ride. However, *in His deity* Jesus –as God – was omnipresent, or everywhere at once.

For instance in John 3:13, Jesus said "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." Now, here was Jesus, the Son of Man standing on the earth but saying that He was also in heaven at the same time. As a man, He was confined to one place, but as God His Spirit is omnipresent.

It is for this same reason that Jesus could look at His disciples and say, “For where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them” (John 18:20).

*God is Omniscient – Jesus is Omniscient*

In His divinity, Jesus was also omniscient, or “all knowing.”

- We see in Mark 2:6-12 that He could read the thoughts of others.
- He knew the condition of Nathanael’s heart and his previous actions before He even met him in John 1:47-50.
- In John 21:17, Peter testified of Jesus, “Lord, thou knowest all things...”

*God is Omnipotent – Jesus is Omnipotent*

Not only is Jesus an omnipresent and omniscient Spirit, but He is also omnipotent, or “all-powerful.”

- Jesus declared in Matthew 28:18, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”
- Colossians 2:10 tells us, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”
- Revelation 1:8 calls Him “the Almighty.”

Truly all power belongs to Him!

*God is Immutable and Eternal – Jesus is Immutable and Eternal*

The Bible also declares that Jesus in His deity is immutable, unchanging, and faithful. For Hebrews 13:8, says that He is “Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and today, and forever.”

Revelation 1:8 speaks of His eternity. In this passage Jesus says of Himself, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” (Also see Revelation 1:18; Hebrews 1:8-12)

Thus, we see that Jesus possessed all of the divine attributes of God. Those things that “make God, God” were also characteristics of Jesus Christ. Anyone who is ever-present, all-knowing, all-powerful, eternal, and unchanging has to be God, for these are the attributes that define who God is.

*Jesus Possesses the Moral Attributes of God*

Not only does Jesus possess the divine attributes of God, but He also personifies the moral nature of God. The moral perfection of God – His love, His holiness, His mercy, His goodness – was displayed and manifest in the person of Jesus Christ.

**The Old Testament Testifies that Jesus is God**

The Jews should have recognized Jesus as God – even though most of them did not – because, the Old Testament had clearly testified and predicted that the Messiah would come, and that the Messiah would be God Himself.

*The Branch and Root of Jesse*

One of the most powerful Old Testament scriptures that proves that Jesus is the Messiah is Isaiah 9:6 which prophesied, "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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." In this passage the designations "child" and "son" clearly refer to Christ's humanity, while the titles "mighty God" and "everlasting Father" testify of His complete deity and Godhood.

Another scripture that we have already mentioned is Isaiah 7:14 which prophesied that the Messiah would be called Immanuel – meaning "God with us." Matthew 1:21-23 makes clear that this prophecy was fulfilled at the conception and birth of Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah as the "Branch" or offshoot of the "Tree of Jesse." Jesse was David's father, thus signifying that the Messiah would be of the House of David – a descendant of David. Yet in verse 10, the prophet calls the Messiah "the root of Jesse," meaning that He came *before* David. In the flesh Jesus was the Branch of the Tree of Jesse, signifying that Jesse and David were His ancestors, but in the Spirit, Jesus was the "Root of Jesse," signifying that He was before them, and was their Creator and their source of life.

It was this same truth that Jesus referred to when He questioned the Pharisees in Matthew 22:42-46:

Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. [43] He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, [44] the LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? [45] If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? [46] And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

*Before Abraham was, I AM*

The Pharisees did not understand that the Messiah was both David's descendant or son after the flesh – the Branch of Jesse. But, He was also David's Lord and God in His deity – the Root of Jesse. It was by this same principle that Jesus could tell the Jews in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Though He is a child of Abraham in the flesh, in His deity He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – El Shaddai, the Almighty God.

*Your God... He will Come and Save You*

In Isaiah 35:4-6, the prophet proclaimed:

Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. [5] Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. [6] Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and stream in the desert.

The passage said “Your God... He will come and save you.” How do we know that this passage is speaking of Jesus? In Luke 7:19 when John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?,” Jesus gave His answer by instructing them to testify to John about how they had seen Jesus fulfill this prophesy of Isaiah.

Jesus told them, “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and hear; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Luke 7:22-23).

Here Jesus fulfills that prophesy of Isaiah’s... “Your God... He will come and save you.”

*The Voice of Him that Crieth in the Wilderness fulfilled in John the Baptist*

Isaiah 40:3 prophesied that there would be “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God”

The gospels tell us that this “voice in the wilderness” was John the Baptist who came preparing the way for Jesus Christ. Thus we see that Jesus is described in this passage as the LORD – Jehovah – and “our God.”

*Micah’s Prophecy of Christ’s Birthplace*

The prophet Micah foretold the place of the Messiah’s birth in Micah 5:2, writing, “But, thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.”

Here, Micah identified Jesus – the baby born in Bethlehem’s manger – as the eternal God of the Old Testament “whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.”

The Old Testament clearly foretold that the expected Messiah and Savior would be more than just a rabbi, a prophet, a teacher, or a military conqueror. Instead the Scriptures clearly indicated that He would be God Himself – truly, Immanuel, God with us.

### **The New Testament Testifies that Jesus is God**

The apostles and writers of the New Testament also taught that Jesus is God.

- In John 20:28, Thomas greeted the resurrected Jesus as “My Lord and my God.”
- We know that Jesus died on the cross, but Acts 20:28 says that *God* purchased the church “with his own blood.”
- Paul equates Christ with God. For in 1 Corinthians 3:15, we are told that “the Spirit of God” dwells in us, but in Ephesians 3:17 that it is “Christ” who dwells in our hearts. ‘Tis a fact that God and Christ are one!
- Paul strongly emphasized the deity of Christ in Colossians. It is in Colossians 2:9-10 that we read, “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

### *Jesus is God Manifest in Flesh*

If Jesus were a man, a human child born to Mary, and He was also God, this implies that God came and took on human flesh and lived on the earth in the body of a man. In fact, this is exactly what the Bible teaches.

1 Timothy 3:16 reads, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Or as the *Good News Bible* renders the passage, “He appeared in human form, was show to be right by the Spirit, and was seen by angels. He was preached among the nations, was believed in throughout the world, and was taken up to heaven.”

God appeared and was revealed, or made manifest or visible, in the flesh. He was preached to the Gentiles and believed on in the world. He was also received up into glory. Clearly, God was manifest in the man Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:19 declares that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” John 1:18 reminds us that God is an invisible Spirit. But, He has revealed himself to us through the Son of God – Jesus Christ. John wrote, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Listen to this Scripture in the *Good News Bible* and then from the *Contemporary English Version*.

- The *GNB* reads like this, “No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who *is the same as God* and is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”
- The *CEV* reads, “No one has ever seen God. The only Son, *who is truly God* and is closest to the Father, has shown us what God is like.”<sup>13</sup>

God is invisible, but the man – the mediator – Jesus Christ, the fleshly Son of God has revealed God to us. Jesus Christ is all of God that we will ever see.

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<sup>13</sup> Emphasis mine in both passages



And He is enough! Because, Colossians 1:15 proclaims Him to be “the image of the invisible God.” (Also see 2 Corinthians 4:4)

*Jesus is the Express Image of God's One Person*

Hebrews 1:1-3 tells us this:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, [2] Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; [3] Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of Majesty on high.

This passage is important for at least three reasons.

- 1) It tell us that Jesus Christ was the “express image of” God – or God manifest and revealed in the flesh.
- 2) Another thing that we should note is that the author says that Jesus Christ is the express image of “his person” and that the word person is singular. The scripture does *not* say that Jesus was the express image of the Son’s person, or of God’s *persons*. Instead, this scripture tells us that God exists in *one person*, and that one person was fully revealed in the Son of God – the man Jesus Christ.
- 3) Lastly, this passage tells us that the Son purged our sins “by himself.” Why is this important? Because, Trinitarians often maintain that “salvation is impossible” without a Trinitarian God, because salvation is a “Trinitarian work” – in other words that each “person” of the Trinity performs a different and distinct work in our salvation.

Listen to this quote, “God plays the symphony of our salvation in three movements” says the authors of the book *Our Triune God*. They maintain that “each of these movements is associated with and facilitated by a different person of the Trinity.”<sup>14</sup>

This is an interesting and appealing philosophy expressed in beautiful language. However, it is just that – a man made philosophy! For the Bible does not teach that a God in three persons provided for our salvation, but instead this scripture makes clear that the One God in One Person – the person of Jesus Christ – purged our sins “*by Himself*.”

*Jesus is God the Creator*

John 1:10-11 describes Jesus as the God who created the world. The passage reads, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

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<sup>14</sup> “The Work of the Trinity in Salvation,” Crossway Publishers, accessed October 15, 2015, <https://www.crossway.org/blog/2011/05/the-work-of-the-trinity-in-salvation/>.

*Jesus is the Word and the Word is God*

In fact the first chapter of John is one of Scripture's most powerful and beautiful affirmations of the divinity of Jesus Christ. John began his gospel with the words echoing Genesis chapter one.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] The same was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. [4] In him was life; and the life was the light of men. [5] And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not... [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 clearly states that the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh. Jesus Christ – the Word of God, the Logos of God, the Plan of God, God Himself – manifest in the flesh.

*Jesus Claimed to be Jehovah*

Jesus claimed to be the LORD, Jehovah, manifest in the flesh. In fact, even the Jews understood that Jesus claimed to be God, and on more than one occasion they tried to kill Him for this very reason.

In John 5:17-18, Jesus told the Jews that God was His Father, and they accused Him of blasphemy because they realized that in claiming that God was His Father, Jesus had made Himself equal with God.

In John 8:56-59 we read of what Jesus told the Jews and how they reacted.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," the Jews immediately understood who He was claiming to be. He did not say, "Before Abraham was, I was." No; He used the name of Jehovah – I AM. By using this name, He indicated that He believed that He was the God who transcended time. Not only was He God before Abraham, but He was greater than Moses too, for He was the God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush and brought Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Jesus is Jehovah! He is the Great I AM.

The Jews understood what Jesus was saying. They knew that He was claiming to be Jehovah God. However, they did not believe His claim so they picked up stones intending to stone him for being a blasphemer.

**Conclusion**

The Jews sought to kill Jesus because they believed that He as a man was making Himself out to be God (John 10:30-33). What they did not understand was that He was God making Himself man.

This is the revelation of the ages! What had once been a mystery – the identity of the face of God – has now been revealed to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. God made Himself man, that He might reconcile a lost and dying world to Himself.

Paul said in Ephesians 3:4-5 that the “mystery of Christ. Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men... is now revealed... by the Spirit.”  
The Lord has revealed Himself in all His fullness, as our Savior Jesus Christ.

## Lesson 5 Jesus – The Son of God

*“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” – Galatians 4:4*

### Introduction

#### *Review of Previous Lessons*

In the previous weeks' lessons we have studied what the Scripture teaches concerning the number, nature, and identity of God. The number of God is one. Not only does the Old Testament teach the oneness of God, but the New Testament also declares that even the devils believe that there is one God and tremble (James 2:19) The nature of God? He naturally possesses all the attributes of divinity – omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, and immutability. He also possesses moral attributes that make Him a loving, merciful, and gracious God who is also holy, just, and true.

In the last lesson we taught on the identity of God. The One Name of the One Lord – “the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” – is Jesus Christ.

- Jesus Christ is Jehovah God of the Old Testament made flesh.
- He is the “image of the invisible God” – the express image of God’s person.
- Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God reconciling the world to Himself.
- Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, God with us. He is the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father.
- Yet He is also the child born to Mary and the only begotten Son.
- For Jesus Christ is truly both fully God and fully man.

#### *Object of this Lesson – The Humanity of Christ*

Last week, we studied the deity of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures teach that Jesus is fully God; “for in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). This week we will examine the humanity of Jesus Christ, for the Scriptures also teach that Jesus while being fully God is also fully man.

#### *Defining Key Terms*

Before we begin it may be helpful to clarify some key terms and words that we often use.

- 1) Firstly – the name “Jesus.” Jesus is a proper name and is the revealed name of God given to Joseph and Mary when they were instructed to name her child “JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Jewish name “Jehoshua” – this is the name Joshua in the Old Testament. The name means Jehovah-Savior or “Jehovah is Salvation.” Hebrews 1:4 says that the Son of God received His

name by inheritance, and in John 5:43 Jesus declared “I am come in my Father’s name.”

- 2) Secondly – the word “Christ.” The word Christ is not truly a name but instead is a title of Jesus.

It is the English translation of the Greek word “Christos,” or “anointed one.” It is the equivalent of the Hebrew word “Messiah.” Thus Jesus was called Jesus Christ, or “Jesus the Anointed One” – Jesus the Messiah.

However, in the Epistles and in common usage today Christ is simply used as another title for Jesus since He is the Messiah and the Anointed One.

- 3) Thirdly – the title “the Son of God.” The Son of God is a biblical, appropriate, and correct description of Jesus Christ. In fact the New Testament refers to Jesus as the Son of God 47 different times.

However the title “God the Son” is *not* a biblical phrase and is not doctrinally correct. Trinitarian theology identifies three persons in the Godhead – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

“God the Father” is a biblical phrase and is an appropriate description of God as the father and creator of all life, but especially as the father of humanity and of the only begotten Son. The title “God the Father” is used twelve times in the New Testament.

The title “God the Son,” though, is never found in the pages of the Bible, and it is not an appropriate title for Jesus Christ for the Bible never speaks of an eternal and preexistent Son. Instead the Bible always uses the term “Son of God” or “Son of Man” in reference to the incarnation of Christ’s humanity. The biblical doctrine of the incarnation does *not* teach that there is a separate, coeternal, coexistent, and coequal second person in the Godhead named “God the Son.” The Bible teaches *not* that the Father was *separate* from the Son, but that the Father was *in* the Son – God in Christ – reconciling the world to himself.

Thus, the title “Son of God” always refers to the humanity of Jesus Christ. For instance:

- Galatians 4:4 says that the Son was “made of a woman.”
- Luke 1:35 says that the Son was “born.”
- Luke 24:7 says that the Son was “crucified.”
- And Romans 5:10 says that the Son died.

None of these things could be true of the eternal Spirit of God, but they are every one true of the *Man* Christ Jesus, the human Son of God who was both fully God and fully man.

The Son of God was the fleshly tabernacle in which the Spirit of the Father dwelled. It was for this reason that Jesus could truthfully say “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). For in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father was fully united with His Creation – humanity. And thus, the title “Son of God” *always* refers to the Incarnation – God revealed in “the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3).

- 4) Lastly – the title “Son of Man.” The moniker “Son of man” is used in the New Testament as a title of Jesus Christ some 89 times – almost twice as much as the title “Son of God.”

Jesus often referred to Himself as the Son of man. This title obviously refers to Jesus’ humanity – as a human He was both the Son of God and the Son of Man. Christ had no *earthly* father; instead the angel told Joseph “fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:20). And the angel likewise told Mary in Luke 1:35, “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

In his humanity Jesus Christ was the result of the Holy Ghost overshadowing the Virgin Mary; He was truly both the Son of Man and the Son of God.

### **The Dual Nature of Christ**

Because of Jesus’ origins as the Son of God and the son of Mary, Jesus had a dual nature. On his father’s side He was divine; on His mother’s side He was human. The dual nature of Christ is something of a mystery to us. We know that it was accomplished at the conception of Jesus Christ. From the moment that the Holy Ghost overshadowed Mary, the child in her was both fully God and fully man. However, it is a reality that our feeble and finite minds cannot fully comprehend. For this reason Paul could say “without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness, God was manifest in the flesh...” (1 Timothy 3:16)

What do we mean when we say that Jesus had a dual nature? Listen to the following examples:

- As a man Jesus was born as a baby (Luke 2:7). As God, He existed from eternity (Micah 5:2; John 1:1-2).
- As a man He grew mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially (Luke 2:52). But as God, he never changes – the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).
- In His humanity He was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:2), but in His deity He cast out devils (Matthew 12:28).
- As a man Jesus grew hungry (Matthew 4:2). As God He is the Bread of Life (John 6:35), and the One who fed five thousand with only two fish and five loaves of bread (Mark 6:34-44).

- The man Jesus also grew thirsty (John 19:28) even though as God He gives living water (John 4:14).
- In His humanity Jesus grew weary (John 4:6), but as God He gives us rest (Matthew 11:28).
- As a man, He slept in a storm (Mark 4:38). As God, he calmed the storm (Mark 4:39-41).
- As a man, He was scourged and beaten (John 19:1-3). While, as God He heals the sick (Matthew 8:16-17, 1 Peter 2:24).
- The man Jesus Christ died on the cross (Mark 15:37), but as God He raised His own body from the dead (John 2:19-21; 20:9).
- As a man He was the sacrifice for our sin (Hebrews 10:10-12). As God he forgives sin (Mark 2:5-7).
- As a man there were things that He did not know (Mark 13:32), but as God He knows all things (John 21:17).
- In His humanity He had no power (John 5:30), but as God He has all power (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 2:10).
- In His sonship and humanity He was inferior to God (John 14:28), but in His divinity He was equal to God for He was God (John 5:18).
- As a man He was a servant (Philippians 2:7-8). As God, he was King of Kings (Revelation 19:6).
- In His humanity He was a Son (Luke 1:35), but in His deity He was the everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6).

Understanding the dual nature of Jesus Christ is the key to interpreting many Scriptural passages that some people find most difficult. Understanding that Jesus was both fully God and fully man allows one to see that Jesus sometimes spoke as a man and He sometimes spoke as God.

#### *Why did Jesus pray?*

One such thing that people often have a problem understanding is the fact that Jesus prayed. If He was God why did He need to pray? As God He did not need to pray, but He was not *only* fully God. He was also fully man, and He prayed as a man. (This is discussed more in Lesson 8: New Testament Answers and Explanations, or see the book *Is Jesus in the Godhead or is the Godhead in Jesus?* by Gordon Magee.)

#### *Jesus' Human Nature was Complete*

##### *He had a human will*

Though it is impossible for our minds to fully comprehend, Jesus had a fully human nature, but it was a human nature without sin. The humanity of Jesus was more than just a physical shell of a body that the Spirit of God dwelt in. Jesus' human nature was complete in every aspect.

Jesus had a human will, or how else could He pray to the Father "*not my will, but thine be done?*" (Luke 22:42) The co-existence of two wills – one human and one

divine – within Jesus Christ is made evident by the Lord’s statement in John 6:38, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” We can see this tension between the natural human will and the will of God in Jesus as He agonized in the garden over His impending crucifixion. He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

*He had a human spirit*

Jesus also had a human spirit, just as each of us do. This seems evident when He spoke on the cross saying “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). The Bible also speaks of Jesus “sigh[ing] deeply in His spirit,” rejoicing in His spirit, groaning in His spirit, and being troubled in His spirit (Mark 8:12; Luke 10:21; John 11:33; John 13:21). All of these are common descriptions of the human spirit.

*He had a human soul*

Like all of mankind, Jesus also had a human soul. In Matthew 26:38, He said, “My soul is sorrowful, even unto death.”

After His death Jesus’ soul visited *hades*, or hell, as did the souls of all the dead before Calvary. However, the difference was that His soul did not stay there! For even though He has fully man – with a human will, a human spirit, and a human soul – He was also more than *just* a man! He was fully man and fully God. The human body, soul, and spirit of Jesus Christ was inexplicably united with and filled with the Spirit of the Father.

*The saving power of His divine nature*

He was a man, but He was more than a man. He was the fullness of the Godhead made flesh, the Spirit of God in human form, God with us – much more than *just* a man!

That’s why the song truthfully states, “The power of death could not kill Him! The gates of hell could not hold Him! The chains of the grave could not keep Him, and He came forth with the keys of death, hell, and the grave in His hand!”

It was the Spirit of God that dwelt in Jesus Christ that raised Him from the dead and Romans 8:11 promises that “if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

The Spirit of God that raised Him from the grave is the same Holy Ghost that will raise us up in the resurrection for Jesus Christ has conquered death, hell, and the grave for us.

**Jesus Had No Sin**

Though Jesus had a completely human nature, He also had a completely sinless nature. Unlike all other humans Jesus had no sin.

Why? Unlike every one of us He was not born of the seed of Adam, and so He did not inherit the sin nature of our father Adam. Instead Jesus Christ was born of the seed of woman and His father was God (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:20-23).



Jesus was created completely pure and sinless, just as Adam was originally created without sin. In 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47, Paul spoke of this saying “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit... The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.”

And in Romans 5:12, 19, 21, he wrote, “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous... by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Jesus is able to function as our mediator, advocate, and high priest both because He was fully human and because He had no sin. Thus in Hebrews 4:15 we read “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Jesus was fully human, and experienced all of the tests, trials, and temptations that humans face; yet, He was without sin. This qualifies Him to be our spotless sacrifice and our Great High Priest. If Jesus had not come in the flesh as a genuine man He would have been unable to complete and fulfill His divine purpose. Having an understanding of his humanity is so important that John wrote in 2 John 1:7 that those “who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and antichrist.”

### **The Purpose of the Son**

What was this divine purpose that required that God be manifest in the flesh? What was the purpose and mission of Jesus Christ the Son of God? Why must God come *in* Christ – the Father *in* the Son – in order to reconcile the world to Himself?

Because, humanity could only be saved and reconciled to God through a mediator who could bridge the divide between God and man; this could only be done through one who was both fully God and fully man – the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

#### *Our Sinless Sacrifice*

Salvation is impossible without a sacrifice. Because of sin, mankind was condemned to be lost for eternity, and Hebrews 9:22 tells us that “without shedding of blood is no remission.”

In the Old Testament the law decreed the sacrifice of animals, but the Bible tells us in Hebrews 10:4 that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” For animals are inferior and are not an equal atonement for humans. Furthermore, no human could make atonement for another because *all* humans were sinners.

Only God was sinless and so God in His great mercy and grace became a man and offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins in order to satisfy His own justice and holiness. Thus we read in Hebrews 10:5 “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.”

When Jesus Christ shed His blood as a sacrifice to cover our sins, He also became a *substitute* for us. He died in our place, bore our sins, and paid the penalty of death for our sins. That is why Isaiah could speak of Him prophetically and say “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5-6).

1 Peter 2:23 reminds us that “he bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” and Hebrews 2:9 says that He “tasted death for every man.” Only a sinless man could be a substitute for sinful mankind.

#### *Our Kinsman-Redeemer*

In the Old Testament if a man sold his possessions or sold himself as a slave and lost his freedom, a close relative could come and redeem him – or pay the price to restore his freedom and that which was taken from him (Leviticus 25:25, 47-49). When Jesus came in the flesh as a man He became our brother (Hebrews 2:11-12). Thus, He became our kinsman-redeemer and we know that we are not “redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

And so we may sing with the four and twenty elders of Revelation 5:9, O Lamb of God, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

#### *Our Mediator*

Thus we see that in His humanity Jesus Christ became our mediator. Webster defines “mediator” as “one who interposes between parties at variance for the purpose of reconciling them” or simply a “go-between.”

As God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, a *sinless* man, became the go-between who reconciled *sinful* man with a *holy* God. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:5, “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.”

According to David Bernard:

Paul maintained the oneness of God in this verse. There is no distinction in God, but a distinction between God and the man Christ Jesus. There are not two personalities in God; the duality is in Jesus as God and Jesus as man... It is not “God the Son” [who mediates between God and humans], but it is the man Christ Jesus who is our mediator, bridging the gap between fallen humanity and a holy God.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, revised, vol. 1, Pentecostal Theology (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2000), 110.

*Our Great High Priest*

As a mediator, Jesus also functions as our Great High Priest (Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:14-16). In the Old Testament, the high priest mediated between God and the people of Israel. Only He could approach the Shekinah-presence of God behind the veil in the Holy of Holies. Every year the high priest would sprinkle the blood of atonement upon the mercy seat to atone for the sins of the people.

Jesus Christ offered His own blood as atonement for our sins, and thus split the veil at His crucifixion affording us free access to come “boldly before the throne of grace.”

*Our Advocate with the Father*

The Sonship also allows Jesus Christ to serve as our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). If we sin, we have someone who pleads our case for mercy before God in the man Jesus Christ; when we confess our sins, His blood is applied to our hearts, covering and blotting out our sins.

*Our Example*

Not only did Jesus Christ come as the Son of God to effect our salvation, but He also came to be our example. Throughout His life, He demonstrated a life that is pleasing to God and victorious over sin. As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:21, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

**Conclusion**

Thus, Jesus Christ came into the world for one purpose, to show us the loving mercy of our God in the form of a servant and Savior.

For this reason John 3:16 may be the verse that perfectly captures the purpose and mission of the Son of God. “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.”

## Lesson 6 “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” – Matthew 28:19*

*“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ...” – Acts 2:38*

### Introduction

#### *Review of Previous Lessons*

In the last two lessons we have talked about the identity of Jesus Christ. In lesson four we established that the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is God; in fact, in one verse of Scripture (Isaiah 9:6) Jesus is called both “the Mighty God” and the “Everlasting Father.” The Scriptures declare that Jesus Christ is fully God. As God, Jesus is ever present, all knowing, all powerful, never changing, and everlasting.

Jesus is fully God, but lesson five taught us that Jesus is also fully man. As the Son of Man, Jesus was fully human with a human will, a human soul, and a human spirit. As a man Jesus hungered, sorrowed, grew weary, prayed, was crucified, and died.

How could Jesus be both fully God and fully man? The idea that the King of Kings would become a servant, that the Creator would become one of the created, that the Holy God would become a sacrifice for sin – these things are too difficult for the human mind to comprehend. That is why Paul said “without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness...” (1 Timothy 3:16)

But Paul goes on to say “great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” This is both the mystery and the truth of the Incarnation – the fact that God was “manifest in the flesh.” The word manifest simply means “to make evident or certain by showing or displaying.” So God was made evident in the flesh, was shown in the flesh, or was displayed in the flesh through Jesus Christ. For He truly is God in the flesh, the Father in the Son, Emmanuel – God with us; Jesus Christ is the perfect, complete, and total manifestation of God. He is God made flesh, both fully God and fully human.

### Manifestations

When we speak of the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ we understand that God fully revealed Himself in the man Christ Jesus. However, God has manifested Himself in various ways throughout salvation history.

#### *Old Testament Manifestations*

In the Old Testament:

- God manifested, or revealed, Himself in some form to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; He talked with them in the cool of the day.

- In Genesis 15, God manifest Himself to Abraham as a “smoking furnace” and a “burning lamp.”
- Jacob met God in a wrestling match.
- To Moses, He appeared as a burning bush.
- His presence was manifested to the Children of Israel in a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.
- God appeared to Job in the whirlwind.
- He came to Joshua as the “captain of the Lord’s host.”
- Isaiah saw Him sitting upon the throne and His train filling the Temple.
- To Ezekiel, He was “the wheel in the middle of a wheel.”
- And to Daniel, He was shown to be the Ancient of Days.

### *New Testament Manifestations*

In the New Testament, God has revealed Himself as a God who shows loving concern for humanity. In fact the New Testament is the story of God restoring the fellowship with humanity that He once had in the Garden of Eden. For this reason in the New Testament we see God revealed in at least three significant ways.

- 1) God is revealed as a Father who created us and loves us.
- 2) As we have already seen, in the New Testament God manifested Himself fully in the person of Jesus Christ – the Son of God, reconciling the world to Himself and redeeming and saving us.
- 3) God has also manifested Himself to His people as the Holy Ghost at work in our lives.

Today our lesson is concerned with these three important manifestations of God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. For each of these manifestations reveal who God is in relation to humanity.

### **The Father**

The Bible refers to God as the Father; this is a title – not a name – that refers to a certain aspect of God’s identity.

#### *The Father of Creation*

Firstly, the Bible teaches that God is the creator of all things and the Father of all creation. As humans created in His image God is our Father by virtue of creation.

- Malachi 2:10 asks the rhetorical question, “Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?...”
- And in the New Testament, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 8:6 – reading here from the Good News Bible – “yet there is for us only one God, the Father, who is the Creator of all things...”
- It is in this sense that Adam is called the “son of God” in Luke 3:38.
- Isaiah expressed this relationship beautifully in Isaiah 64:8, saying “But now, O LORD, thou art our father; We are the clay, and thou our potter; And we all are the work of thine hand.”

*Our Spiritual Father*

Secondly, the Bible teaches us that God is the spiritual Father of His chosen people. In the Old Testament God promised to be a Father to the Israelites. In Exodus 4:22 God instructed Moses to tell Pharaoh, "Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn." Moses spoke to the Children of Israel in Deuteronomy 14:1-2 saying, "Ye are the children of the LORD your God... thou art a holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."

In the New Testament, the Church has gained this same spiritual paternity and heritage.

- John 1:12 tells us that "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."
- Jesus tells us in John 8:44 that before we come to saving faith in Him, we have the devil as our spiritual father. That is why Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). When you are born again, your spiritual paternity has changed! When in times past you were a child of the devil, you are now a child of God.
- When you receive the Holy Ghost you have become a child of God. We are told in Romans 8:14-16,

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. [15] For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoptions, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. [16] The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

- We have received a calling to be a holy people, a peculiar people, given over completely to the glory of our Father. God promises us in 2 Corinthians 6:16-18:

I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, [18] and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty.

*The Father of the Only Begotten Son*

The Bible identifies God as our father in creation, and as our father through re-creation when we are born again. Finally, the Bible teaches us that God is the Father of the only begotten Son of God – the man Jesus Christ.

- The very fact that the title "Son of God" is used to describe Jesus some 43 times is testimony enough of his paternity.

- When Joseph and Mary found the twelve year old Jesus in the Temple he asked them, “How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49)
- In John 5:18 we read that “the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” The Jews did not understand that Jesus was not only *claiming* to be equal with God; He *was* equal with God – because He indeed *was God!*
- Listen to what Paul says here in Philippians 2:5-8.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: [6] Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: [7] But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: [8] And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

These verses remind us of what we have studied in the last two weeks. Jesus Christ has a dual nature – He is both fully God and fully man. This is why Paul could say that Christ was in the form of God, or He was “truly God,” but “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

In His Spirit, Jesus Christ was fully God – the King of Glory. Yet, in His flesh He was the Son of God.

### **The Son**

Thus, we see that God revealed Himself as both the Father and the Son in the New Testament. In creation, He is our Father yet He came in the form of a man to purchase our redemption and in the man Jesus Christ the fullness of God was revealed.

It is important to note that we are *not* speaking of separate persons in the Godhead, but of different manifestations of the one person of God.

Trinitarian doctrine teaches that there are three separate co-eternal, co-existent, and co-equal persons in the Godhead – namely God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Bible, however, teaches that there is one God in one person who has manifested, or revealed, Himself to humanity in different ways.

Trinitarian doctrine teaches that Jesus is only one person in a Godhead made up of three persons; Trinitarianism teaches that Jesus is the manifestation of the Son *only*, but is *not* the manifestation of the Father or the Holy Ghost. The Bible, though, tells us in Hebrews 1:3 that Jesus Christ is the “brightness of [God’s] glory” and “the express image of His person.” The Scripture then declares that God is one *singular* “person,” and Jesus Christ is the express image of that person.

While manmade tradition teaches that Jesus is in the Godhead, the Bible teaches that the Godhead is in Jesus!

God – our loving Father and Creator – manifested Himself fully in the flesh as the Son of God in order to come as our Redeemer and Savior. In Colossians 1:12-20 we read:

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: [13] Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: [14] In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: [15] Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. [16] For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: [17] And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. [18] And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. [19] For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; [20] And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...

Here Paul clearly gives us an understanding of God's manifestation in the Son. The Son came to bring redemption through His blood and forgiveness of sins, but the Son was not separate from the Father. Indeed, He – the man Christ Jesus – was the very image of the invisible God. Not only was He the *image* of the invisible God, but He *was* the invisible God; He was the Creator and Father made flesh – the God of Genesis 1:1 who created all things.

If Jesus' identity as the Father in the flesh is not clear enough, Paul clearly states that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." All the fullness of what? All the fullness of the Godhead! Because Paul goes on to say a few verses later in Colossians 2:8-10,

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

Jesus Christ is indeed the manifestation of the fullness of the Godhead. He was God in the flesh – the Father in the Son. This is why Paul could say that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Thus, God revealed Himself in the form of a Son, a Servant, a Sacrifice, and a Substitute for Sin in order to reconcile a lost and dying world unto Himself.



### **The Holy Ghost**

God has also revealed Himself to us as the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is simply the Spirit of God at work; the Holy Ghost is God in activity.

One Bible dictionary says “The Holy Spirit of Christian belief began as the Old Testament ‘Spirit of the Lord,’ but the latter is pictured as essentially equivalent to the power of Yahweh that comes upon, seizes, or falls on certain individuals for special tasks.”<sup>16</sup>

In the New Testament, the Holy Ghost is the power and presence of God at work in the world. While in the Old Testament the Holy Ghost “fell on certain individuals for special tasks,” in the New Testament, the Holy Ghost fills and dwells in the born again believer.

- 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells us that our “body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.”
- The Holy Ghost is our “Comforter” (John 14:26).
- It is the “Promise of the Father” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; Acts 2:33).
- The Holy Ghost is “the birth of the Spirit” that every man must receive in order to enter into the Kingdom of God (John 3:5; Acts 2:38).
- We are saved by the “washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).
- The Holy Ghost equips the saints for witnessing and supernatural ministry (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-10).

Truly, the Holy Ghost is God revealing Himself actively at work in the lives of His people.

### **These Three Are One**

As we have already stated, these are but three manifestations of One God and One Person. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three persons in the Godhead but are three manifestation or “revelations” of the One Person of God to humanity.

In the Father, God revealed His creativity, in the Son His identity, and in the Holy Ghost His activity. Thus, the Father is the revelation of God as the creator of life, the re-creator of the born again, and the progenitor of the “only begotten Son.” The Son is the revelation of the Father in the flesh – God in Christ, God manifest in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us, the image of the invisible God. Jesus Christ revealed the true and full identity of God to us. Finally, the Holy Ghost is God in activity – God at work in His Church and among His people.

Once again, Trinitarian dogma teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate persons but the Bible does not! The Bible teaches that there is one God. There is one God, the Father and Creator of everything. The Bible does *not* teach that

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<sup>16</sup> Allen C. Myers, ed., “Holy Spirit,” *Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987).

the Holy Ghost is separate from the Father; these are simply two terms that refer to the same one God. There is no separation between God and His Spirit, for John 4:24 tells us that “God is a Spirit,” so the term Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is simply another way of describing God.

### *The Father and the Holy Ghost are One*

How do we know that the Father and the Holy Ghost are the same?

- The Holy Spirit is the Father and Creator of the universe and everything in it. Genesis 1:1-3 reads “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” Here we see the Spirit creating; the Holy Spirit then is the Father of Creation.
- The Holy Ghost, likewise, is our Father in re-creation; it is when we are born of the water and of the Spirit – baptized with the Holy Ghost – that we become the “sons of God” by the “Spirit of adoption” (Romans 8:9-15).
- The Holy Ghost is also the Father of the Son of God – the man Christ Jesus.
  - Matthew 1:18 says “Not the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.”
  - And in Luke 1:35 the angel of the Lord told Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”
  - The Scriptures emphatically and undeniably teach that the Holy Ghost is the Father of Jesus Christ.

### *Jesus is the Father*

In the last two lessons we established the fact that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. Jesus Christ possessed a dual nature. In His humanity, He was the Son of God – fully man. In His deity He was “the fullness of God.” Jesus Christ was the Father made flesh, or incarnate.

- We have already referred to Isaiah 9:6, but it is worth quoting again. Here the prophet foretells the birth of Jesus Christ. “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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”
- Also we have seen that Colossians 2:9 says that *all* the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus. The Father is God, so this necessarily means that the Father must dwell in Jesus Christ.
- Jesus, Himself, taught that He was the revelation, or manifestation, of the Father. In John 10:30, He declared “I and my Father are one.”
- In John 10:38, Jesus declared, “The Father is in me, and I in him.”
- And in John 14:8-10, we read this exchange.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. [9] Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? [10] Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Without a doubt, the Bible teaches that Jesus is the Father!

### *Jesus is the Holy Ghost*

If Jesus is the Father, and the Holy Ghost and the Father are one and the same, then the Bible must also teach that Jesus is also the Holy Ghost. Indeed, this is what the Scriptures tell us.

- In Philippians 1:19, the Holy Spirit is referred to as “the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”
- And in Galatians 4:6, the Holy Ghost that fills our hearts is called “the Spirit of the Son.”
- The Scriptures teach that there is but “one Spirit” and in 2 Corinthians 3:17 we are told “Now the Lord is that Spirit...”
- In John 14:16-18, 20, Jesus warns the disciples that He is about to leave them, but encourages them with these words:
 

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter [in verse 26, this Comforter is identified as the Holy Ghost], that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you... At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

The Holy Ghost clearly is the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

### **The One Name**

Thus we see that there is one God in one person – Jesus Christ. For truly Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Son, and Jesus is the Holy Ghost. Thus in Jesus Christ the prophecy of Zechariah that the Lord would rule as king over all the earth as One Lord with One Name is fulfilled. The one name of God is “JESUS!”

Listen to the words of Jesus Himself!

- In John 5:43, Jesus said “I am come in my Father’s name...” What was that name?
- In Matthew 1:21 the angel of the Lord told Mary that she would bring forth the Son of God and that His name would be called “JESUS.”

- And in John 14:26, Jesus said “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.”

The disciples, too, had the revelation that Jesus was the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For in Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded His disciples “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Now if you want to see what the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is, all you must do is see what name the apostles used to baptize converts and believers.

What name did the apostles’ baptize in?

- In Acts 2:38, Peter told the crowd on the Day of Pentecost to “Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
- In Acts 8:16, the evangelist Philip baptized the Samaritans in “the name of the Lord Jesus.”
- In Acts 10:48, Peter baptized the Samaritans “in the name of the Lord.” (Most translations read “in the name of Jesus Christ.”)
- In Acts 19:5, Paul rebaptized the disciples of John the Baptist “in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
- And in Acts 22:15, Paul tells us that Ananias baptized him “in the name of the Lord.”

The disciples had a revelation of the identity of Jesus Christ. They knew Jesus is the Father. They knew Jesus is the Son. They knew Jesus is the Holy Ghost. They knew that there is but one saving Name! That is why Peter could stand and say “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Now you can see why Paul could say “In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead, and ye are complete in Him.”

Truly Jesus is everything you need. You are complete in Him! When you say Jesus... you’ve said it all!

## Lesson 7 “Old Testament Answers and Explanations”

*“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” – John 5:39*

### Introduction

#### *Review of Previous Weeks' Lessons*

For the past six weeks we have studied the biblical doctrine of God. We have seen that the Bible clearly teaches several things about God:

- 1) Firstly, the Bible teaches that there is but one God. Jesus told the Jewish scribe in Mark 12:28-30 that the “first” – or greatest – commandment is “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord... And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”
- 2) Secondly, the Bible teaches nowhere that God is divided or separated into more than one person. Instead we read in Hebrews 1:3 of “his person” – *not* “persons,” but person. There is but one person in the Godhead. God, though, has *manifest* – or revealed – Himself through time in different ways to different people. In the Old Testament, God manifested His character through revealed titles that described Him; from the Old Testament we learn that God is holy, just, merciful, gracious, righteous, faithful, et cetera. God has also revealed Himself in the New Testament as a God of relationship. Last week, we looked at the manifestation of the one God as a Father, a Son, and the Holy Ghost. Yet, none of these revelations of God are separate persons, but instead there is but one God who has revealed Himself in different ways.
- 3) Thirdly, we have also indisputably established from the Word of God that Jesus Christ is the complete and full revelation of the one God. Jesus is both fully God and fully man, both Father and Son, both human and divine; Jesus Christ possesses this dual nature. In His spirit and deity He is identified as the Father or the Holy Spirit – the two being one and the same. In His flesh and humanity He is the Son; He is the man Christ Jesus who “in the fullness of time” was sent forth “made of a woman, made under the law” as we read in Galatians 4:4. Jesus Christ was the perfect and complete manifestation of God. In fact, Colossians 1:15 says that He is “the image of the invisible God.” In 1 Timothy 3:16 we are told that He is “God manifest in the flesh,” and as we read last week from Colossians 1:19, “it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.”

#### *The Object of Today's Lesson*

We began this series of lessons by asserting that there is great confusion in the religious world concerning the “number, nature, and identity of God.” Hopefully we have used the Word of God to firmly establish what the Bible teaches in this regard. However, we must realize that in the minds of many people that we talk to, witness to, and win to the Lord there is still confusion about these very things.

Today we want to look at some passages and concepts from the Bible that are often used to argue *for* a multiplicity or plurality of persons in the Godhead. In other words, these are issues or verses of Scripture that people will point to and say, “See what this says; there must be more than one person in the Godhead!”

Why does this happen? How can there be such confusion after we have seen that the Bible so clearly teaches that there is one God in one person, fully revealed and manifest in Jesus Christ?

This confusion persists because man-made tradition, theologians, and philosophers have taught the doctrine of the Trinity for centuries and have used these very scriptures as arguments to support their position.

### *Some Keys to Understanding*

There are several “keys” to bear in mind while addressing such passages of Scripture. When you remember these four important things it is often much easier to understand the passage at hand.

- 1) Examine the Jewish interpretation of Old Testament passages. Remember, the Jewish religion of the Old Testament was *strictly monotheistic!* The Jews believed in only one God, and this is what set them apart from all other nations. None of the Old Testament scriptures used by some to support a Trinitarian position or a plurality of persons in the Godhead have ever been viewed in that light by the Jews. For some four thousand years these scriptures have been read studied by generations of Jewish scholars including the prophets, the Lord, and the apostles. However, the Jewish faith has *never* interpreted these passages as teaching a plurality of persons in the Godhead; such an idea would be at complete variance with the rest of the Word of God, and we know that Scripture does not contradict itself!
- 2) Remember the New Testament need to encourage believers to believe both in the God of the Old Testament and the revelation of God in the New Testament – Jesus Christ. New Testament writers were writing to either Jews or pagan Gentiles. It was important to the apostles and early Christians to stress to their audience that they must not only put their faith in God the Father – the God of the Old Testament – but in order to be saved they must also believe in Jesus Christ, the Father revealed in the Son.
- 3) Thirdly, remember that when the Bible refers to “the Son,” it is never referring to deity alone. In other words, it is not referencing another person in the Godhead, but instead is *always* referring to the fleshly man Christ Jesus. The Bible teaches that the Father and the Holy Ghost are one and the same, but the Son always refers to Christ’s humanity rather than His deity. The Son is “that holy thing,” the man Christ Jesus, the image of God in the flesh, the human tabernacle that the Father was pleased to dwell in. And in relation to this, we must remember...
- 4) That Jesus is one person with a dual nature. He is fully God and fully man – yet He is one person. However in the Bible, Christ sometimes speaks

from His humanity and sometimes from His deity. The Bible never makes a distinction within the deity; the only distinction is between the human and divine. Thus when studying any passage about Jesus one must ask:

- a. If Jesus is speaking, is He speaking as a human or as God; which part of His nature is being exhibited in this verse?
- b. If the passage is speaking about Jesus, is it speaking about His work as a human – for instance His role as a sacrifice, mediator, substitute, or some other role He fulfilled in the flesh – or is the passage speaking about His identity as God.

### Answers and Explanations

Now, remember these four “keys to understanding” let us look at some of the arguments that are sometimes used to support the belief that there is more than one person in the Godhead.

#### *Elohim*

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word most commonly translated into English as “God” is the Hebrew word “Elohim.” This word Elohim is the plural form of the Hebrews word Eloah, which simply means “God” or “deity.” Some use this as an argument for a Trinity or other plurality of persons in the Godhead.

In answering this argument it is important to remember one of our “keys to understanding.” Throughout the last four millennia the Jewish people – including the prophets and sages of the Old Testament and the apostles and disciples of the New – *never* interpreted this word to indicate that there is more than one person in the Godhead.

Secondly, most scholars agree that in its original intent the plural of the word was used to express the majestic power and sovereignty of God. Listen to the opinions of these commentators and scholars:

- Henry Flanders and Bruce Cresson in their *Introduction to the Bible* write, “the form of the word, Elohim, plural. The Hebrews pluralized nouns to express greatness or majesty.<sup>17</sup>”
- The *Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary* states that “the term is understood as a plural of majesty or an intensive plural, indicating the fullness of the supreme (or only) God... the canonical intent is clearly monotheistic.<sup>18</sup>”
- Even the Trinitarian authors of the *Pulpit Commentary* agree that the term may not reference a Trinitarian God, but instead may simply be “expressive

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<sup>17</sup> David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, revised, vol. 1, Pentecostal Theology (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2000), 147.

<sup>18</sup> Allen C. Myers, ed., “Elohim,” *Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987).

of the fullness of the Divine nature, and the multiplicity of the Divine powers.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, each of these quoted authorities agree that the plural form was used to intensify and magnify God's powers, His majesty, His greatness, and His authority.

*Brown-Driver-Brigg's Hebrew Definitions* tells us that in its common plural usage, the word "Elohim" may refer to "rulers, judges, divine ones, angels and gods." However in its "plural intensive," *Brown-Driver-Brigg's* says the word has a "singular meaning," and is used to refer to God<sup>20</sup>.

Lastly, and most importantly, we can tell from the way the Bible uses the word "Elohim" that it does not refer to a plurality of persons. The word is used at times to refer to things other than the One True God. Let's look at some of those instances.

- In Judges 8:33 the Bible refers to Baal as a false god and uses the word "Elohim." No one uses this to argue that there was a plurality of gods in the idol Baal. No; everyone understands that Baal was one, singular, false god.
- In Judges 16:23 the word is used in reference to Dagon who we know to have been one single idol. The Bible also uses the term in different places to refer to the false gods Chemosh, Nisroch, and the goddess Ashteroth. Each of these gods are accepted as single individual gods.
- In 2 Kings 1:2 the Bible uses the word "Elohim" – again in the singular – to refer to "Beelzebub, the god [Elohim] of Ekron."
- And in Exodus 32, Aaron refers to the "golden calf" as Israel's "Elohim." The word was translated into English as "gods," but each time it is obviously referring to the singular idol of the golden calf.

Thus we see that Elohim was in no way ever interpreted by the Jews to be a reference to more than one person in the Godhead. Commentators and scholars agree that the word was used to stress the majesty, powers, and greatness of God – not a multiplicity of persons in the Godhead. And thirdly, the Bible uses the word not only to refer to the single One True and Living God but also to refer to single individual false idols and false gods.

#### *Genesis 1:26*

Another Old Testament passage often alluded to by Trinitarians and others who believe in more than one person in the Godhead is Genesis 1:26. In this verse – part of the creation account – God says "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and

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<sup>19</sup> H.D.M Spence and Joseph S. Exell, eds., "Genesis," *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 2.

<sup>20</sup> "Elohim H430, *Brown-Driver-Brigg's Hebrews Definitions*, E-Sword Bible Study Software.



over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

The question that we must ask is “why does the Scripture use the plural pronouns ‘us’ and ‘our’ when referring to God in this verse?” Those who believe in a plurality of persons in the Godhead would contend that these words are used to point toward the multiplicity of persons that are God, but let’s consider this issue for a moment.

First, it’s important to note that hundreds of times in the Bible, *singular* pronouns such as me, myself, mine, and I are used in reference to God. This use of a plural pronoun is rare; it is the exception and not the rule. As a matter of fact, in the next verse (Genesis 1:27) the text reverts to the use of the singular pronouns reading “So God created man in *his* own image, in the image of God created *he* him; male and female created *he* them.” How then do we reconcile this use of the plural pronouns in verse 26 with the singular nature and personality of God implied by the use of the singular pronouns used in verse 27 and elsewhere throughout the Bible?

Once again, it is important to note that the Jews never interpreted this passage to indicate that there is more than one person in the Godhead. In fact the prophets strongly affirmed and proclaimed that Jehovah-God created all things *by Himself*. In Isaiah 44:24, the Lord speaks and says “I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens *alone*; that spreadeth abroad the earth *by myself*.” And in Job 9:8 we read again that the Lord “*alone* spreadeth out the heavens.”

Why then were the plural pronouns “us” and “our” used?

The use of these words “Let us make man in our image” obviously does not indicate that there was more than one person who created man, for this explanation plainly contradicts other clear teachings of Scripture including those verses, which we have just read.

Let me offer some possible explanations.

One explanation is that God, in this verse, is simply counseling with His own will. This idea is often supported by referring to Ephesians 1:1 which says that God works “all things after the counsel of His own will.”

Others suggest that God was speaking prophetically of the Son who would be born as a man. In other words this idea suggests that man was made with Christ in mind and so man was made in the image of the Son who was yet to come. This may be so, but I find some weakness in this logic considering that the Bible teaches that Christ was made “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3). It does *not* say that man was made in the likeness of the Son, but that the Son came in the likeness of man.

The explanation that seems the strongest to me is also probably the oldest and most ancient explanation. The Jews have traditionally interpreted this passage to mean that God talked to the angels or what the Jews call “the council of heaven” when He declared His intention to create man.

This is something that may not sound familiar to us, but it does harmonize with Bible teaching. Job talks about the “sons of God” assembling in heaven and “presenting” themselves before God like a council assembling before a king. Also we do know that these same angels described as the “sons of God” were present at the creation for in Job 38:4-7 we find the Lord asking Job:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding. [5] Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? [6] Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? [7] When the morning stars sang together, *And all the sons of God shouted for joy?*”

The sons of God were present in the creation. We know from Job’s account that the Lord speaks to these angels and “counsels” with them. We also see the Lord talking to His angels in 1 Kings 22:19-22 as He discusses with the angels His plan of action concerning King Ahab.

Another reason that I believe that this usage of the plural pronouns occurs specifically at the creation of mankind is because humans are created in the image of *both* God and the angels in the sense that unlike all of the rest of creation, mankind is also a spiritual being with a mind, a will, and an intellect.

God is an invisible and eternal Spirit. Man is not made in the physical image of God, but is instead made in the image of God in the sense that humans also possess a spirit that will never die as well as a soul, a mind, a will, and emotions.

We also share this same image with the angels. Thus, God could say “Let us make man in our image.” For the angels, too, are spirit beings who possess intellect, a will, and emotions. And in one very important way we share a part of the image of the angels that is *not* a part of God’s image. God is the center and object of our worship; He is not a worshipper. However angels, like us, were created as worshippers. In this way we also share the image of the angels; we were created as spiritual beings made to worship the One True God.

All of the creation account in Genesis 1:1-25 speaks of God in the singular form creating light, the seas, the sun, moon and stars, the plants and animals. But when it becomes time to make man the words change to “Let *us* make man in *our* image.” It seems right to think that here God turned to the angels that had been faithful worshippers and said, “Now I’m going to get you involved. I’m making something glorious and wonderful – the crown of my creation. And I’m making them in our image! They will have souls that will forever; they will have emotions and a mind, and they will have a will just like us. But most of all, I’m making them like *you*, angels; I’m creating them to be worshippers!”

Thus we see that the angels were involved in our creation. God fashioned us, created us, and made us by Himself with no help or assistance, but the angels were involved in that they served as models after which we were fashioned. We were made of

earth, yet we were made with spirits and called to worship God from now throughout eternity. Like the angels, too, God entrusted us with authority to wield power on His behalf giving us “dominion over” the earth.

So God was not talking to another person in the Godhead, but He was talking to the angels – the council of heaven.

*The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man*

Another passage of Scripture that Trinitarians often point to as Old Testament evidence for separate persons in the Godhead is Daniel’s vision of the Ancient of Days and the Son of man.

In Daniel 7:2-14, we read:

Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. [3] And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. [4] The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it. [5] And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. [6] After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. [7] After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. [8] I considered the horns, and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. [9] I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. [10] A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. [11] I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flames. [12] As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. [13] I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. [14] And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion,

which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Trinitarians point to this passage and say that the “Ancient of Days” is obviously the Father, and the Son of Man is “God the Son” who is necessarily pre-existent and separate from the Father. When we look at the Scripture, though, we see a different story.

First, let’s answer the question “Who is the Ancient of Days?”

Daniel describes the Ancient of Days as the One who sits on the throne, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. Also, it is the Ancient of Days who comes and destroys the Antichrist in verse 11.

In Revelation 1:13-18, John the Revelator describes Jesus – the New Testament “Son of Man – this way:

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. [14] His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; [15] And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. [16] And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. [17] And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the first and the last: [18] I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Here in this passage, John clearly describes Jesus Christ with the same description that Daniel used for the Ancient of Days; His hair is like white wool and His eyes and feet like fire. Furthermore, Revelation 19 tells us that it is Jesus Christ who will return and destroy the beast – the Antichrist – and his false prophet and will slay the their armies with the sword of His mouth. Thus, Jesus clearly fits the description of the Ancient of Days. So if the Ancient of Days is the Father, then Jesus must be the Father too!

If Jesus is the Ancient of Day then who is the Son of Man that Daniel describes?

Daniel 7:14 tells us that when the Son of man was brought before the Ancient of Days there was given to Him, “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Who is this describing? As New Testament Christians we automatically assume that this is Jesus Christ because the New Testament describes Him as the Son of Man, and we know that He has all dominion and glory and the Kingdom is His.

However, when we continue to read in Daniel 7:15 this is what we find:

I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. [16] I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. [17] These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. [18] But the *saints* of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever... [21] I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; [22] Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom... [26] but the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion [the Antichrist's dominion], to consume and to destroy it unto the end. [27] And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Thus, the Scripture tell us that the dominion and the everlasting kingdom are being presented to God's people, the saints of the most High. The saints here are represented by "a son of Man" – a human being – who is brought before the throne of the Ancient of Days to receive the dominion that is taken from the Antichrist and presented to the Church – the Church which Revelation 5:10 assures us will be made "kings and priests" to "reign on the earth."

This interpretation is consistent with the rest of the Old Testament as well which treats Israel, God's people, as a son who will inherit the kingdom and reign over an everlasting dominion. This is also consistent with the usage of the phrase "son of man" in the Old Testament which is used over 100 times and almost always refers to humanity (for an example within the Book of Daniel see Daniel 8:17).

So when we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture this passage in no way points to a plurality of persons in the Godhead. In fact, it does quite the opposite; it affirms that Jesus Christ is the Ancient of Days!

#### *The Fourth Man in the Fire*

Another verse from Daniel that is sometimes used to argue for a pre-existent and eternal Son is from the story of the Three Hebrew boys and the fiery furnace. When King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace, he saw not three men but four. And in the King James Version we read that he said these words, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25).

As I said, this is what we read in the King James Version. However in the original text there is no definite article in the phrase. In other words, the word "the" is not in

the Hebrew. An accurate translation of the actual Hebrew does not say “*the* Son of God.” Listen to these translations:

- *The Bible in Basic English* – “a son of the gods”
- *The Contemporary English Version* – “the fourth one looks like a god”
- *The English Standard Version* – “the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods”
- *The Good News Bible* – “the fourth one looks like an angel”
- *The Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* – “the fourth is like a son of the gods”
- The *Tanakh*, or Jewish translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew says “the fourth looks like a divine being.”

In other words, the pagan idol-worshipping King Nebuchadnezzar realized that he was seeing a supernatural being in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This pagan king was obviously in no way giving divine and prophetic revelation about Jesus Christ; he was simply stating what *he* believed he was seeing – one of the gods, as he would think of it, or an angel giving divine assistance to the three Hebrew boys.

We cannot know for sure if the man in the fiery furnace was an angel or a theophany of God Himself, but by looking at the original Hebrew text and at all other contemporary translations it is obvious that this passage in no way points to a plurality of persons in the Godhead. This passage gives no support to the doctrine of a separate, coeternal, coequal, and pre-existent Son.

### **Conclusion**

By looking at these examples we see that when we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture and remember our “keys to understanding,” none of these seeming “difficult” passage in any way conflict with the great monotheistic message of the Old Testament and the foundational truth of Judaism and of the Bible – the declaration, “Hear, O Israel; the LORD our God is one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

**Lesson 8:**  
**New Testament Answers and Explanations**

*“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” – 2 Timothy 2:15*

**Introduction**

Last week our lesson focused on several passages and issues from the Old Testament that are sometimes used by Trinitarians to argue that there is more than one person in the Godhead. Therefore the lesson was entitled “Old Testament Answers and Explanations.” This week we will be looking at several New Testament passages and issues that are sometimes used to argue for a plurality of persons in the Godhead; so the topic and title of this week’s lesson is “New Testament Answers and Explanations.”

While many people appeal to philosophy, human reasoning, and church tradition to inform their doctrine of God, we realize that this only leads to man’s opinion being taught as doctrine.

James 2:19 tells us that the devils believe in one God “and tremble.” The power of the Truth of the Mighty God in Christ is a revelation that the devil would love to keep hidden. For centuries he has used false doctrine, pagan philosophies, and manmade traditions to obstruct and confuse the clear biblical teaching that there is only one God who is fully and completely revealed in Jesus Christ.

This is why Paul warned us as we read last week to “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:8-9).

Paul knew – perhaps prophetically – that the time would come that men would introduce philosophy, tradition, and worldly wisdom to contradict and deny the simple yet sublime Bible-truth that there is One God and Jesus is His Name.

It’s for this reason that we sometimes encounter such confusion when talking to people about the identity of Jesus Christ. When witnessing about our Lord Jesus Christ we do not rely on our opinions, philosophies, and traditions to tell people who He is. Instead we must obey His command in John 5:39 when he gives these instructions: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

The Scriptures contain the Truth, and we must search them and study them so that we might share this wonderful Truth with everyone we have the opportunity to meet. We are admonished in 1 Peter 3:15 to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

So we study, not to debate or to argue but to allow the Word of God to speak to us of a beautiful and blessed Truth – the fact that God Himself left the splendor of heaven and came in all His fullness to redeem a sinner like you and me!

As we study this lesson this morning, remember our “four keys to understanding” that we discussed last week (refer to Lesson 7 if necessary).

The first of these keys was especially important last week in approaching the passages and issues from the Old Testament. The last three of these keys, or principles of interpretation, are very important for studying and understanding the New Testament passages that we will be looking at today.

We will use these principles to study and approach some New Testament passages and issues that are sometimes used to suggest that there is more than one person, or a plurality of persons, in the Godhead.

### **Answers and Explanations**

#### *The Baptism of Christ*

The first passage that I would like to approach is Matthew 3:13-17. This portion of Scripture describes the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. The text reads:

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. [14] But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? [15] And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. [16] And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: [17] And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

This is a favorite passage for those who believe that there is more than one person in the Godhead. The Trinitarian will say, “here in this passage we see the Trinity on display. Jesus the Son of God, the voice of the Father from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descending as a dove all portray the three persons of the Trinity.”

The only problem with this is that we have already seen in lesson six that the Bible teaches that the Holy Ghost and the Father are not different persons, but are one and the same. The bible plainly teaches that the Holy Ghost is the Father of Jesus Christ, so there is no way that this passage could be suggesting that there are three separate persons of the Godhead present at Jesus’ baptism.

The question that is often asked is this: “If Jesus is ‘all of God’ and the ‘the fullness of God,’ how could He be getting baptized in the Jordan River and speaking from heaven at the same time?”

The answer is simple: Jesus is fully God!



We have already seen in lesson four that Jesus possesses all the divine attributes of God. What are these? Omniscience, omnipotence, eternity, immutability, *and omnipresence*. What is omnipresence? It means “ever-present” or present everywhere. Because Jesus is fully divine in His Spirit – He is fully God – He is necessarily “omnipresent.” Thus as God, the spirit of Jesus was both present at the Jordan River and in heaven at the same time.

Is there any scripture to support this claim? Yes, there is. In John 3:13, Jesus says to Nicodemus, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”

Here Jesus plainly tells Nicodemus “The Son of Man came down from heaven, but even now He is in heaven.” Jesus is obviously referring to Himself as the Son of Man. How is it possible that Jesus could be both standing on solid ground talking to Nicodemus and claiming to be in heaven at the same time? Because Jesus is God, and God is omnipresent, or everywhere at once. His presence fills the heavens and the earth.

So we see that this passage could not be written with the intention of revealing three separate persons in the Godhead, because Matthew makes clear to us in Matthew 1:20 that the Holy Ghost is the Father. We also can see that because of the very fact that *Jesus is God*, there’s no problem in understanding that this was the Spirit of Jesus – God Himself – speaking from heaven, because as God, Jesus is omnipresent.

What, then, is the purpose of this event? Why *did* the Spirit descend on Jesus in the form of a dove, and why *did* a voice speak from heaven? The answer is twofold.

- 1) Firstly, Jesus was baptized as an example to us. In 1 Peter 2:21, Peter tells the church that Christ came “leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” Even though Jesus had no need for baptism, He told John that He was being baptized “to fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus taught Nicodemus that in order to “enter the kingdom of God” it was necessary for all believers to be “born of the water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5). Even though Jesus did not need to be born again – since He had no sin in His life – His baptism served as a symbol and an example of what every believer should practice and experience.

How was Jesus’ baptism an example of the New Birth experience?

Firstly, Jesus was baptized; every believer should be baptized for this is the “birth of the water.”

Secondly, when Jesus was baptized the Holy Ghost fell upon him in the form of a dove; every believer must be born not only of water but also of the Spirit. Thus, Jesus showed us an example of baptism in water as well as a baptism of the Holy Ghost. In doing this, he served as our example.

But what about the voice from heaven? In this too, Jesus was an example of what every believer should experience as part of the New Birth. In John 3:5, Jesus had declared that every believer must be “born of the water and of the spirit” and in this we have seen Him as our example. But in John 3:7-8, Jesus goes on to tell Nicodemus, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. [8] The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

Jesus taught that there would be a “sound” that heralded the birth of the Spirit; in this He was our example, too, when a “voice from heaven” accompanied the Holy Ghost descending on Him. Every New Testament believer follows in this example; when the Holy Ghost comes in, a “sound from heaven” begins to come forth as the newly born again man or woman speaks in tongues as the Spirit of God gives the utterance.

Jesus’ baptism, then, served as an example to us as to what we should experience as followers of Jesus walking in His footsteps and being “born again” into His kingdom.

- 2) Secondly, Jesus’ baptism served as an inauguration and public announcement of His identity and the beginning of His ministry.

The Bible tells us explicitly in John 1:32-33 that the Spirit descending as a dove was given as a sign to John the Baptist – the forerunner of Christ – confirming Jesus’ identity as the Messiah. John said:

I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. [33] And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. [34] And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.

This anointing identified two important aspects of Christ’s identity and work. First, it identified Jesus to John as the Messiah which literally means “anointed one.”

Secondly, it was the inauguration of Jesus’ ministry as our “great High priest” (Hebrews 4:14). Jesus’ baptism and the beginning of His ministry took place at the age of thirty – the same age that Jewish priests began their ministry (Numbers 4:3, 30). Priests were inducted in the priesthood by being washed in water and anointed with oil – a symbol of the Holy Ghost. So, John saw that God Himself had anointed the man Christ Jesus to be both Messiah and High Priest.

The Spirit descending on Jesus was a sign to John, while at the same time the voice from heaven was a sign to the people that this man Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God. In John 12:28-30, a voice came from heaven and Jesus specifically stated that the voice came as a sign to the people. Here at His baptism, the voice from heaven served to show the multitudes Jesus' true identity.

Thus, we see that Jesus' baptism does not serve as a testimony to a multi-personal Godhead, but instead serves as a testimony to:

- 1) the omnipresence of Jesus as God
- 2) Jesus' example to us that we should follow in being born again
- 3) A testimony to John the Baptist and the people that Jesus truly was the Messiah and the Son of God

### *The Prayers of Christ*

Another issue in the New Testament that some often point to as an argument for a plurality of persons in the Godhead is the fact that Christ prayed. The idea is often proposed that this is an example of "God the Son" praying to God the Father. The argument is often made that Oneness believers must believe that Jesus is praying to Himself. In addressing this issue one of our "keys to understanding" helps immensely; this is the fact that Jesus Christ possessed a dual nature being both fully God and fully man.

Let us first examine the Trinitarian argument that Christ praying is an example of God the Son praying to God the Father. How can this be?

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that there are three separate persons in the Godhead who are coexistent, coeternal, and *coequal*. If God the Son is coequal with – the same in power and Godhood – God the Father, then *why* would God the Son have any need to pray? God does not pray, for God is in need of nothing! To suggest that God the Son would need to pray would demote Him to the status of a demi-god who has less power and deity than God the Father. This in itself denies the basic teaching of Trinitarian doctrine.

Once again, we must remember two of our keys to understanding. The Bible never speaks of "God the Son" but only of the Son of God, and this always references the man Christ Jesus. The dual nature of Christ is essential to understanding why Christ prayed. When Jesus prayed, it was not God praying to Himself (or to some other part of God), but instead it was man – the humanity of Christ – praying to God.

The Bible makes this clear. In the Garden of Gethsemane we read of Jesus praying in Matthew 26:39-42.

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. [40] And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:

the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. [42] He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

This passage makes clear that it was not the will of one divine spirit wrestling with another, but instead it was the will of the flesh wrestling against the will of the Spirit of God which indwelt Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 5:7 makes clear that praying was something that Jesus did in His flesh; He prayed in His capacity as a human. The Scriptures says, "Who in the days of his *flesh*, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears..."

Jesus Christ, then, did not pray as God praying to God for to do so would have meant that His divinity was lacking in something and that He was less than fully God. Instead, when we read of Jesus praying, we know that we are reading of the man Christ Jesus – the flesh – humbling Himself and submitting Himself to the will of the Father, the Spirit that dwelt within Him.

#### *Sent From the Father*

Some people point to Scriptures such as John 3:17 and John 5:30 as arguments for an eternal Son who is distinct and separate from the Father. Some Scriptures such as 1 John 4:9 specifically say that God sent his Son "into the world." Many argue that this can only be true if the Son existed before the incarnation as a coeternal and coexistent person separate from God the Father. There are several faults with this line of reasoning.

Firstly, we know that God did not send someone else but that he came Himself in the form of a man. For the Bible plainly teaches us that Jesus Christ was "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16) and that He is Emmanuel, or God with us (Matthew 1:23).

Secondly, the Bible is referring to "the Son," and as our third key to understanding states, the phrase "the Son" always refers to the man Christ Jesus – the Incarnation – and not the divine and eternal Spirit of God that dwelt in Christ. In other words, every time the Bible speaks of "the Son" being "sent" it is speaking of the fleshly man Jesus Christ being sent into the world. Galatians 4:4 makes this clear saying, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman."

Thirdly, the word "sent" does not imply preexistence of the Son as a man or as a separate divine person, for as we will see this term is used in reference to others human beings as well.

John 1:6 says that John the Baptist was "sent from God." No one would suggest that this means that John was preexistent *with* God in order to be sent *from* God.

In John 17:18, Jesus prays concerning His disciples, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." If this Scripture means that Jesus was pre-existent before His birth and being sent into the world, then it would

also mean that His disciples were preexistent with Him before their birth and being sent into the world. Of course, no one would argue such a thing!

In short, the phrase “sent into the world” in no way suggest a plurality of persons in the Godhead, but it instead emphasizes Christ’s humanity and the purpose of ministry that He was sent into the world to accomplish just as John the Baptist and the disciples were sent to do the work of God.

### *Greetings in the Epistles*

Some also point to the salutations or greetings in the epistles as evidence of a doctrine of multiple persons in the Godhead. For instance in Romans 1:7, Paul wrote, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father; and the Lord Jesus Christ.” And in 1 Corinthians 1:3 he wrote, “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Some would say, “these salutations definitely express a distinction between God the Father and Jesus Christ, and so teach that there is more than one person in the Godhead.”

Once again, there are several problems with this argument.

In every one of the epistles Paul greets the recipients mentioning “God our Father” and “the Lord Jesus Christ.” If these greetings are intended to make a statement about the Godhead this poses a serious problem for Trinitarians; the Holy Spirit is never mentioned. So at best this argument is only good for the binitarian who believes in only *two* persons in the Godhead.

So, if these passages are interpreted as teachings on the number of persons in the Godhead they could mean that there are two persons in the Godhead – the Father and Jesus – or they could mean that there are *four* persons in the Godhead.

- For instance, Colossians 2:2 speaks of “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.” Is God separate from the Father?
- Colossians 3:17 instructs us to give thanks to “God and the Father.”
- James 1:27 says, “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...”
- 1 Thessalonians 1:3 reads, “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.”
- And 1 Thessalonians 3:11 says, “Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.”

If one holds that these verses are teaching us something important about different persons in the Godhead, one will end up with *four* persons in the Godhead – God, the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost – instead of three, two, or one!

Instead, it is obvious that these scriptures are simply using different titles for the One God with each of the different titles emphasizing different works or

manifestations of God. In emphasizing God *and* Jesus Christ, the New Testament authors stressed the importance of not only worshipping the God of the Old Testament but also recognizing Him in the Christ of the New Testament (our second key to understanding applies here).

### **Conclusion**

The number of passages and issues that we can study and the depth at which we can explain them are both limited by time. However, one thing is clear; the New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. He is God manifest, ore revealed, in flesh – not just a part of God but the fullness of God in human form. There is one Lord, one God, and one Name, and that Name is Jesus Christ. He is fully God and fully man, Jesus Christ – Emmanuel, God with us.

## **Lesson 9: Truth or Tradition?**

### **Introduction**

For this entire series of lessons we have studied the biblical doctrine of God. We began this series by asserting that there is great confusion in the world of religion concerning the number, nature, and identity of God. For nine weeks we have examined the Word of God and have sought to apprehend the Truth of Scripture concerning these issues.

Each lesson has presented positive truths concerning the doctrine of God in Scripture.

- In Lesson 1, we studied the biblical message of monotheism, or the truth that there is only one God.
- In Lesson 2, we examined what the Bible tells us about the nature of God.
- In Lesson 3 we looked at various Old Testament names and titles of God and what they reveal about His character.
- Lesson 4 taught us that the Bible declares that Jesus is God. He perfectly exhibits the complete nature of God and is the flesh and blood fulfillment of every Old Testament name and title of God.
- In Lesson 5, we saw that even though Jesus is fully God, He is also fully man. He has a dual nature – both fully human and fully divine.
- In Lesson 6, we looked at the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and saw that the Bible teaches that these are one and the same person completely revealed in Jesus Christ.
- In Lessons 7 & 8 we looked at passages of scripture that are sometimes confusing or difficult to understand, and we saw that none of them in any way dispute or detract from the absolute oneness of God.

Today in Lesson 9, we will conclude this series on the oneness of God by asking the simple question: “which will you choose to believe, Truth or Tradition?”

For eight weeks we have examined a portion of what the scriptures have to say about the doctrine of God. The Biblical message is clear – “There is one God, and one alone; Him only must you serve!”

The message of the Old Testament might be summarized in the words of the Shema, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine hear, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). In fact, Jesus said that this is the first and greatest commandment (see Mark 12:28).

The message of the New Testament is but the fulfillment of the one-God message of the Old, and that is the truth that God was “manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16),

and that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (1 Corinthians 5:19).

How then did the clear teaching of the Bible – that there is one person in the Godhead who is fully revealed in Jesus Christ – give way to the confusion that so many now experience when thinking about the identity of God or Jesus Christ?

The answer is complex and complicated, as history often is, and involves much more than just the Church and theology. Roman politics and Greek philosophies perhaps play a larger role than anything else in the story; movements and ideas like Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, Arianism, and Patripassianism are important to the plot. Words like modalism, *monarchia*, *persona*, and *hypostases* are crucial to the tale. Names like Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, and Constantine, Athanasius, Sabellius, Noetus, and Praxeas are primary characters in the story.

But for the sake of time we will only give a brief account of the development of the traditional doctrine and philosophy of the Trinity. This doctrine was eventually accepted, taught, and enforced by the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church and later by other major Christian denominations that trace their descent from Rome and are now known as the Protestant churches.

### **The Development of a Doctrine**

#### *The Apostolic Doctrine*

A discussion of the history of the Christian doctrine of God should start at the beginning. The Day of Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Church, so let's begin there. What “doctrine of God” was taught on the Day of Pentecost?

In Peter's pentecostal message we find one of the most profound statements concerning the doctrine of God. In Acts 2:38, Peter commands the people to “repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

What does this command have to with the apostles' doctrine of God? Only some ten days before Jesus had commanded these same disciples to “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). When Peter commanded the newly converted Christians to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ” in Acts chapter 2, he was clearly establishing what he and the other apostles who stood with him believed.

They did not contradict Christ's command, but they fulfilled it because they understood that there was one God revealed in Jesus Christ. They knew that Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Son, and Jesus is the Holy Ghost, and so they baptized in His Name for in Him dwelleth *all* the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). This is why there is no baptism ever described as being performed in any way other than in Jesus' Name throughout the Book of Acts.



The apostles and writers of the New Testament explicitly taught that there is one God fully revealed in Christ Jesus.

- Paul wrote to the church at Galatia in Galatians 3:20 and reminded them that “God is one.”
- And in 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul clearly wrote of both the deity and humanity of Christ stating, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”
- In the next chapter, Paul declares that “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16).
- James, the brother of Jesus, said, “thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.”
- The apostles placed their hope in life and in death in the divinity of Jesus Christ and admonishing the believer to live every day looking for the “glorious return of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13, CEV)

The apostles’ doctrine of God is clear – there is one God and Jesus is His Name.

#### *The Post-Apostolic Age (90-140 AD)*

Christian leaders, pastors, and teachers continued to write after the age of the apostles, and some of their writing exist until this day. We know that the rise of false doctrine in some churches had began to be a problem before the death of the apostles. Paul, James, Jude, and John all write about false teachers, some of whom were teaching false doctrines concerning the nature of God and the identity of Christ. For the most part, though, the generation of believers after the apostles seems to have held to an apostolic understanding of the one Mighty God in Christ. For example, listen to quotes from the works of these three men.

- 1) Ignatius – history tells us that Ignatius and Polycarp were both students and disciples of the apostle John. Ignatius wrote somewhere around 110 AD. In his *Epistle to the Ephesians* he called “Jesus Christ our God.” He also declared that “Our God, Jesus Christ, was according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb of Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost.” In his *Epistle to the Magnesians*, he calls Jesus Christ “the inseperable Spirit.” Thus he identifies Jesus Christ as “our God” who is the embodiment of one indivisible, or inseperable, Spirit.
- 2) In his *Epistle to the Philippians*, Polycarp encouraged the Christians he was addressing to read the writings of Ignatius which he had attached to his own letter. Thus, we know that he also agreed with Ignatius’ doctrine of God. Polycarp himself refers to Jesus as “our Lord and our God.”
- 3) Another work from that same time period is *The Shepherd of Hermas*, which was written by an anonymous author around 140 AD. The work was very popular among Christians at the time, and the author clearly does *not* think of God in terms of what would come to be called the Trinity. Instead, he clearly sees the Father and the Holy Ghost as the one and same Spirit of God that tabernacled Himself in the man Christ Jesus. For instance in one place we read, “the Holy Spirit who created all things, dwelt in a body in which He

wished to dwell..." Thus, *The Shepherd* fully equates the Holy Spirit with the Father of Creation and identifies this Spirit – not a separate spirit of God the Son – as the same Spirit that dwelt in Jesus Christ. Elsewhere he also identifies the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Son of God living in the believer.

The belief in the Oneness of God continued to be taught by the leaders of the Church for several generations after the death of the apostles, and the majority of believers continued to believe the apostolic doctrine of Godhead for several generations.

Church historians came to use the term “modalistic monarchianism” to refer to the early oneness doctrine. The term signifies that one God – the *monarchia* – has revealed Himself in different forms – or *modes* – but is yet one indivisible God. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says this about the doctrine:

Modalistic monarchianism, conceiving that the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ, took exception to the “subordination” of some church writers, and maintained that the names Father and Son were only different designations of the same subject, the one God, who “with reference to the relations in which he had previously stood to the world is called the Father, but in reference to His appearance in humanity is called the Son.”<sup>21</sup>

As we have seen this is what the apostles taught – “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily “ (Colossians 2:9). The early Church and the apostles understood that Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophetic words – “the Mighty God, the everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6) – and the majority of believers continued to believe this for generations after the death of the apostles.

#### *The Rise of Greek Philosophy*

What happened then? How did apostolic teaching and the truth of the oneness of God eventually become displaced by the traditions of men and the doctrine of a Trinity?

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says this about the doctrine of the Trinity:

When one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins [the apostles and the early Church] to, say, the last quadrant of the 4<sup>th</sup> century [some 300 years after the death of the apostles]... The formulation “one God in three persons” was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith prior to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, revised, vol. 1, Pentecostal Theology (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2000), 239–240.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:263–264.

How did this Trinitarian doctrine which only began to be formulated and fully assimilated into Christianity more than 300 years after the birth of the Church come to displace the apostles' doctrine? Perhaps the most significant reason is the influence of Greek philosophy.

The men who first formulated, described, and defended what would become the Trinitarian doctrine were steeped in Greek philosophy. Tertullian, Justin Martyr, and later Augustine were all educated in philosophy and logic before becoming Christians. Origen, another champion of Trinitarianism, was so influenced by Greek philosophy that he believed in such heretical ideas as the pre-existence of souls and that all of the wicked – including the devil – would ultimately be saved. Though both Tertullian and Origen are regarded as fathers of the Trinitarian doctrine today, both of them were excommunicated from the Church during their lifetimes for the various heresies that they taught.

The philosophic school of thought that gave rise to these ideas is known as Neo-Platonism, and these Greek influenced thinkers tried to make Christian doctrine harmonize with the philosophical ideas of the Greek philosopher Plato, who had died some 350 years before the birth of Christ.

Why, though, did this doctrine take hold even though it was opposed to the doctrine of the apostles and the early Church? The simplest answer may be “politics.” The teachings that eventually became part of the doctrine of the Trinity were familiar to the manmade traditions of the Greek and Roman world. As the Church began to seek to convert more pagans, they actively sought to make the gospel make sense to them in light of their previous traditions. A doctrine of a triune God did this; it made sense both to those gentiles who were well versed in Greek philosophy and to those who had come from polytheistic pagan religions. The triune God is not unique to apostate Christianity but is also found in many pagan religions that preceded the Roman Catholic Church including the religions of Babylon and Egypt, the Zoroastrians, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

In the early fourth century AD, the Emperor Constantine claimed to convert to Christianity and began to hold extreme power and sway over the affairs of the Church. He called the first council at Nicaea in 325 AD, and from there the conflation of religion and politics quickly accelerated the corruption and eventual rejection of the apostles' doctrine in favor of a doctrine more compatible with pagan philosophies and traditions. In 381 AD at the Council of Constantinople, the doctrine of the Trinity was firmly established as the doctrine of what was becoming the Roman Catholic Church. Over the succeeding generations the church continued to descend into apostasy, eventually becoming a pagan religion with only a thin veneer of Christianity. This “church” worshipped a triune God, venerated statues of saints, and adopted an untold number of other pagan and idolatrous traditions and practices.

The question begs to be asked, “What happened to those who believed in the apostles’ doctrine? Did any continue to teach the biblical doctrine of God.” Yes, indeed they did, but oftentimes at a great price.

Even Tertullian admitted that most Christians did not believe in the Trinitarian view of God in his own day. He wrote:

The majority of believers are startled at the dispensation (of the Three in One), on the very ground that their very Rule of Faith withdraws them from the world’s plurality of gods to the one only true God... The numerical order and distribution of the Trinity, they assume to be a division of the Unity.<sup>23</sup>

Tertullian admitted that “the majority of believers” found the Trinitarian doctrine to be incompatible with the monotheism of the Bible! Even today, I have found that many Christians who attend Trinitarian churches have no clear concept of the Trinity, and many think of God in terms much more closely associated with modalism than with Trinitarianism. Almost all Trinitarians, even scholars, admit that the Trinity is a mystery that cannot be explained.

Eventually, though, it became dangerous to affirm the oneness of God; the Catholic Church executed and burned those that it deemed to be heretics. Still voices of truth rang out down through the centuries. Suffering did not come at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church alone; even the so-called “Protestant” churches persecuted those who refused to accept the Trinitarian doctrine. In 1553, John Calvin, the reformer and founder of the Presbyterian church, approved the execution of Michael Servetus because he believed in and taught the oneness of God.

John saw this corruption of the Church prophetically in Revelation 17:1-6. In this passage, the Bible describes a woman who sits upon seven hills – a clear symbol of the Roman system – and who has committed fornication with the world. John describes her saying,

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: [5] And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. [6] And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

This woman described as the “great whore” has long been interpreted by Protestants to be the paganistic religion of Rome – a church which sold itself for the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 1:241.

elements of this world. But who are her daughters, the “harlots” of which she is the mother? The Catholic Church tells us the answer herself; their doctrine teaches that the Roman church is “the mother church” of all other Trinitarian churches in the world. The Roman Catholic archbishop of Westminster explains “as Christians we share a *common baptism* [the Trinitarian baptism] and the Catholic Church believes this brings us into real, if imperfect, communion.<sup>24</sup>” In other words every church that chooses to affirm the belief in a trinity and baptizes its members into the Catholic-rooted Trinitarian baptism is a daughter of the Catholic Church.

### **Truth or Tradition?**

The choice must be made by every church and every Christian; what will I choose, Truth or Tradition? Will I follow after the vain philosophies, traditions of men, and the rudiments of this world that Paul expressly warned us of in Colossians 2:8, or will I stand for the Truth of the Word of God? Will I align myself with the traditions of this world or will I be counted as part of that number – hated for His Name’s sake – that stands for the Truth of the apostles’ doctrine?

The Church, the Apostolic Church, is not a daughter of Rome! This Church did not come from Rome, but this Church was birthed in Jerusalem.  
This Church did not begin with a papal council; it began in red hot revival!  
This Church doesn’t take it’s creed from the bishop of Rome but from the message of Peter – the man with the keys to the kingdom.

This Church still believes the apostolic message. “Hear, O, Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord... In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Deuteronomy 6:4; Colossians 2:9)

Healing in Jesus’ Name. Salvation in Jesus’ Name. Baptism in Jesus’ Name.  
Deliverance in Jesus’ Name. “For there is none other name...” (Acts 4:12)

Rome may have the gold, the silver, and untold riches. Rome may have the philosophy, the tradition of men, and the rudiments of this world. But the apostolic Church has the power of Jesus’ Name!

What will it be - Truth or Tradition?

- Tradition says, “there are three persons in the Godhead.” In Hebrews 1:3, Truth says that Jesus Christ is the express image of God’s *person* – singular, one and not three.
- Tradition says there are three persons in heaven. In Isaiah 45:5, Truth says “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.”

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<sup>24</sup> “Vatican declaration provokes churches,” *BBC News*. September 5, 2000, accessed October 15, 2015, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/910612.stm/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/910612.stm/).

- Tradition says “God the Son” coexisted with God the Father in heaven before the Incarnation. In Galatians 4:4, Truth says the Son of God was “made of a woman.”
- Tradition says the Son is eternal. In Galatians 4:4, Truth says he came “in the fullness of time... *made* under the law.” In Acts 13:33, Truth says, “Thou art my Son, *this day*, have I begotten [or made] thee.”
- Tradition says the Holy Ghost and the Father are two separate persons. In Matthew 1:20 and Luke 1:35, Truth says the Holy Ghost *is* the Father!
- Tradition says that Jesus is not the Father or the Holy Ghost; He is only the Son.
  - In John 10:30, Truth says “I and my Father are one.”
  - In John 14:9, Truth says, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”
  - In John 14:10, Jesus says, “I am in the Father and the Father in me.”
  - In John 14:17-18, Truth says Jesus is “the Spirit of Truth,” the Comforter or the Holy Ghost.
  - In Romans 8:9, Truth says the Holy Ghost is the “Spirit of God” *and* “the Spirit of Christ.”
- Tradition says Jesus is the Name of the Son *only*.
  - In John 5:43, Truth says Jesus is the Name of the Father.
  - In Matthew 1:21, Truth says Jesus is the Name of the Son.
  - In John 14:26, Truth says Jesus is the name of the Holy Ghost.
- Tradition says we are saved by a God with multiple names. In Acts 4:12, Truth says, “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Truth says that Jesus is the only saving Name!
- Tradition says Jesus was but a part of the Godhead – a third, or one person in three.
  - In 1 Timothy 3:16, Truth says He is “God manifest in the flesh.”
  - In Matthew 1:23, Truth says He is “Emmanuel – God with us.”
  - In Isaiah 9:6, Truth says that He is “the Mighty God.”
  - In Isaiah 9:6, Truth says He is “the everlasting Father.”
  - In John 8:58, Truth says that He is the Great “I AM.”
  - In 1 Timothy 6:15, Truth says He is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”
  - In Revelation 1:8, Truth says that He is “the Almighty.”
  - In 2 Corinthians 4:6, Truth says He is “the glory of God.”
  - In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Truth says He is “the image of God.”
  - In Hebrews 1:3, Truth says that He is “the express image of God.”
  - In Colossians 1:15, Truth say He is “the image of the invisible God.”
- Tradition says that He was only a *part* of the Godhead.
  - In Colossians 1:19, Truth says, “it pleased the Father that in Him should *all fullness* dwell.”
  - And in Colossians 2:9, Truth says, “in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead *bodily*.”

Jesus Christ is not a part of the Godhead. He is not simply one-third of the Godhead. But *all of the Godhead* – the fullness of Divinity – is found in Christ Jesus our Lord!

What will you believe? What will you choose? Truth or Tradition?