

LESSON 8

The Godhead: (Part 2)

Titles and Terms of the Godhead

Romans 1:16-20

The previous lesson surveyed some basic scriptural truths pertaining to the Godhead. Now we will examine some specific terms and titles relative to our study.

Confusion about the Godhead stems from the inability to differentiate between a *manifestation* of God and the *person* of God. God was *manifest* in the flesh (I Timothy 3:16). Jesus Christ in the flesh is the express image of His *person* (Hebrews 1:3). God spoke in various ways in the past but has chosen to speak to us in these last days by His Son, who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Widely taught and accepted in Christendom is the concept of three distinct persons in the Godhead. According to this teaching, there is a person of the Father, a person of the Son, and a person of the Holy Ghost. These persons are coequal, coeternal, and coessential, and together form the Godhead. Proponents of this teaching affirm that although there are three persons in the Godhead, there is only one God. Such terminology is confusing both intellectually and scripturally. God's Word, rather than tradition, must be the final authority on such important matters.

Examining every manifestation of God in the Bible would be impossible at this time, but it is important for us to study the more basic ones. Let us open our hearts as we open our Bibles to study our great God.

FATHER

In reference to God, the Bible uses the word *Father* in two easily distinguishable ways.

1. As the Creator or Father of all humanity and

creation, God is properly called our Father. When we pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9), or when we refer to God as our "heavenly Father" (Matthew 6:26, 32), we use the word in this sense. God, eternal and never changing, is the Father of all creation and humanity in that He is the fountainhead and source from which all creation and humanity came.

2. All Christendom agrees to the scriptural truth that God is the Father of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost moved on the virgin Mary, causing her to conceive and bring forth the Son of God (Jesus Christ). This event makes God, who is the Holy Ghost, the Father of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25). Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). God has no other son who was begotten or born of a woman. Jesus Christ is the only offspring of God through the process of conception, development, and physical birth.

NOTE: We should note that the Bible does refer to God's family, or the church, as sons of God and begotten of God in a spiritual sense. This description highlights our spiritual relationship with God and in no way refers to a physical birth process like that of Jesus Christ. Through this spiritual birth we become brothers and sisters in Christ (II Corinthians 6:18; Philippians 2:15; I Peter 1:22-25; I John 3:1).

Scripture demands that we recognize God as Father, since the Holy Ghost caused the conception of Jesus Christ. God bears record in heaven as the Father, specifically as the Father of the man Christ Jesus. His being a Father is simply a role, manifestation, or a means of self-revelation. Father is not His

name as some try to conclude from Matthew 28:19; this title simply denotes one of His roles as God.

Proponents of trinitarianism envision the Father as the first person in the Godhead sending His Son, the second person in the Godhead, to become the Savior of the world. They further believe that the Father and Son sent the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Godhead, to become the Comforter. Such teaching is unscriptural in that the man Christ Jesus did not preexist as a person before Bethlehem. God, who is a Spirit, did not beget a son in the flesh before Bethlehem. Jesus Christ was not another God coming into existence but the one true God manifesting Himself in the flesh (I Timothy 3:16).

God's Fatherhood should not be confusing to us. God has not changed; He has not created another God. He is the same eternally. God, as a Spirit, begot the man Christ Jesus and dwelled in Him fully in order to become our Savior (Isaiah 43:10-13; 44:6-8; 45:5-6; Colossians 1:19; 2:9). God is one being, not three persons, and Jesus is the incarnation of the one true God (Ephesians 4:5).

SON

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not another God, or a second person in the Godhead. He is the one true God manifested in the flesh. The Bible never calls Jesus "God the Son," neither does it call Mary "the Mother of God." Jesus is God, and in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 1:19; 2:9).

God moved on the virgin Mary, causing her to conceive and to give birth to Jesus Christ. God, who is Spirit, lived in the body of Jesus Christ entirely and completely. Jesus was the temple or tabernacle of almighty God. He was flesh because Mary was His mother; therefore, He is called the Son of Man (humanity). Since God was the Father of the man, He is called the Son of God. Jesus is God because there is only one God, and the one God was entirely resident in the person of Jesus Christ.

Since Jesus was both God and man, He possessed a full, complete, and entire human nature of body, soul, and spirit. As God, He has power to forgive sins (Matthew 9:1-8), heal the sick (Matthew 8:1-17), raise the dead (John 11:1-44), and walk

on water (Matthew 14:22-33; Job 9:8). As a man, He hungered (Matthew 21:18), became thirsty (John 4:6), and faced temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15). When Jesus referred to His Father, it was the man acknowledging the Spirit that begot Him. When Jesus prayed, it was not one divine person praying to another divine person; it was the man praying to God.

Flesh and Spirit exist simultaneously in the person of Jesus Christ. Distinguishing between flesh and Spirit is important to understanding the Godhead. We cannot make flesh spirit, nor can we make spirit flesh (John 1:14). The flesh houses or tabernacles the Spirit, and the Spirit works through the flesh.

Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer from sin (Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 2:11; John 4:42; I Timothy 4:10; I John 4:14). He has all power in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18), and before Him every knee will bow and every tongue will confess (Philippians 2:5-11; Romans 14:11). When we acknowledge Him, we have the Father; when we deny Him, we do not have either (I John 2:23). Jesus is the revealed name of God (John 5:43; 14:26; 16:23-24), we are baptized in His name (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-5), and He is the one who is coming for the church (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Volumes could be written about Him (John 20:30; 21:25), and should be, because of who He is. Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, deserves our love, worship, and adoration.

HOLY GHOST

God's Word teaches that the Holy Ghost is the Father of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35). God is a Spirit (John 4:24). There is only one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4-6). By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (I Corinthians 12:13), and the Lord is that Spirit (II Corinthians 3:17). We conclude from these passages of Scripture that God is the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, and that there is only one God or one Spirit.

The Bible does not teach, or in any way indicate, that the Holy Ghost was created, was born, was called into existence, or emanated out of God. The Holy Ghost has always existed; the Holy Ghost is

God, and God is the Holy Ghost. The term Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is a descriptive title and manifestation of the one true God.

The title “Holy Ghost” comes into prominent usage in the New Testament, first as the Father of Jesus Christ and second as the Comforter given to New Testament believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). God, as the Holy Ghost, has always existed but is manifested to the world more significantly in the New Testament.

John the Baptist first heralded the coming of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament, or God indwelling humans through His Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). When Christ, the Spirit baptizer, appeared on the scene, He confirmed John’s teaching and promised His followers that they would receive the Holy Ghost (John 3:1-8; 14:15-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:4-8).

Christ’s promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, as about 120 believers were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them the utterance (Acts 2:1-4). New Testament believers received the Holy Ghost as evidenced by speaking with other tongues, and multitudes around the globe still receive this experience.

From the Scripture it is evident that the Holy Ghost is exactly what the term implies— the Spirit of God (John 4:24). It is beautiful that God can dwell in our hearts through His Spirit, the Holy Ghost. What a comfort to know that we not only have God *with* us but *in* us!

TERMS

In reference to the Godhead, we encounter many terms, some scriptural, some unscriptural. Some terms are erroneous and should not be used in reference to God. Others clarify, give glory, and give insight into the nature and deity of God. Here are a few.

Son of God

In the most basic sense, Jesus Christ is the Son of God because God was the Father of the man. The

Holy Ghost caused the virgin Mary to conceive and bring forth Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35). The Bible never refers to Jesus as God the Son, only as the Son of God, and there is a vast difference in these terms. The Holy Ghost did not father another God; He fathered the man Christ Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God, that is, God Himself incarnate. This is why Jesus could declare, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9), and “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

Son of Man

Jesus Christ is called the Son of Man (humanity) because He was born of the virgin Mary. After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary had other children (Matthew 13:55-56), making them half-brothers and sisters of Jesus. From Mary, and Mary alone, Jesus derived His humanity. He had no earthly father; His Father was the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:18-25). Search these and other passages of Scripture on the Son of Man: Matthew 16:13-18; 18:11; Mark 2:10; 6:3; John 3:12-14; 5:18-47; Galatians 4:4; Revelation 1:13; 14:14.

Son of Man and Son of God are different titles for the same person. Though not synonymous, these terms depict and describe our Lord in two distinct but important roles.

Eternal Sonship

A self-contradictory term used by trinitarians to define the Sonship of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is the Son (and He is), His Sonship could not be eternal; there had to be a conception and birth for there to be a Son. The Spirit is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), but the Sonship of Christ began at Bethlehem. Although the manifestation of God in the flesh was foreordained before the foundation of the world, the man (Son) Christ Jesus did not exist before Bethlehem. Sonship indicates and necessitates subordination, inferiority, humanity, and time, and all these are found in the Scripture in relationship to the man Christ Jesus. (See Luke 1:35; 2:10-16; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:4-7; II Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 1:1-14; I Peter 1:18-20.)

Mediatorship of Jesus Christ

God is light (I Timothy 6:14-16; I John 1:5) and Spirit (John 4:24); therefore, humans cannot approach such glory and radiance. God is high and holy, and we are sinful. Thus we cannot simply approach Him and have a relationship, because our impurity alienates us from His purity. We need a mediator, a go-between, who can mediate between us and God and bring reconciliation and peace. Jesus Christ, as perfect man and perfect God, has become our one and only mediator, reconciling us to God through His incarnation (II Corinthians 5:17-21).

The following five terms depict our Savior in His relationship to each of us when we need help and assistance. Study them carefully.

1. Mediator—When the Bible speaks of Jesus as standing or sitting on the right hand of God, it means a position and place of authority, power, and majesty. The metaphor always indicates His mediatorial work, not a place of inferiority. (See Exodus 15:6; Luke 22:69; Acts 7:56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; Revelation 3:21.) There is only *one* mediator between God and man, the *man* Christ Jesus (I Timothy 2:5). Through Jesus Christ, we can go directly to God for ourselves; we do not have to go through anyone else to reach Him.

2. Intercessor—This term refers to someone who approaches a king. Jesus Christ is our intercessor, interceding on our behalf (Isaiah 53:12; 59:16-21; Romans 8:32-34; Hebrews 7:25).

3. High Priest—The Old Testament priests offered up to God an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people. Christ became both our high priest and atoning sacrifice (Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 7:24-26; 9:11; 10:21).

4. Advocate—This word in Greek means someone called to our side to undertake and champion our cause. In secular use, it meant a friend of the accused called to speak of and to defend his character, while seeking the sympathy of the judge (I John 2:1).

5. Propitiation—One who propitiates wins or regains the goodwill of one person toward another. Christ fills this role in our lives (I John 2:1-2; Romans 3:24-25).

The manifestation of God in the flesh is such a beautiful truth (I Timothy 3:16). The Incarnation brought God to our realm and level of suffering; Christ was made like His brethren (humans). Therefore, He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:14-15). Since He has lived among us, He knows how to help us (Romans 8:1-3; Philippians 2:5-11). His flesh is the rent veil, and through it we approach the holiness of God for mercy and grace to help in the time of need (Matthew 27:50-51; Hebrews 4:15-16; 6:18-20; 10:19-20).

CONCLUSION

Those who have misused the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19 (which is explained in Acts 2:38) have tried to develop a triune God, consisting of three distinct coeternal, coexistent, and coequal persons. But Jesus Christ is not in the Godhead; the Godhead is in Christ (Colossians 2:9). Jesus is God manifested in the flesh, who ascended into the heavens and is coming again for His church (I Timothy 3:16; Acts 1:11).

Jesus Christ, the only true God, deserves our highest praise, our deepest dedication, and best of service. Let us exalt Him to His rightful place as Lord of all!