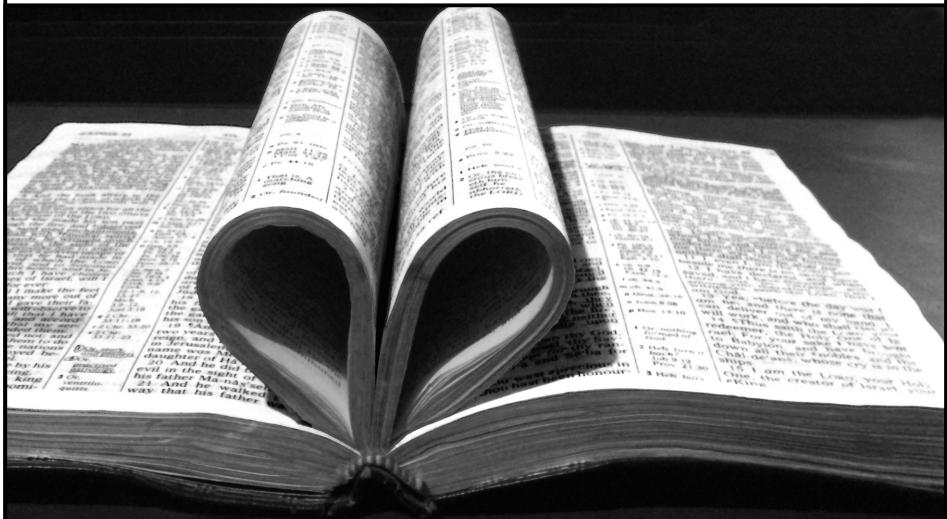


Understanding the Personality of God

by Lynnford Beachy



“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But **let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD** which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”

Jeremiah 9:23, 24

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Present Truth Ministries
PO Box 315
Kansas, Oklahoma 74347
U. S. A.

Phone: 304-633-5411
Internet: www.presenttruth.info
E-mail: books@presenttruth.info

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The Need to Know God

Since the creation of this world, God has sought to have fellowship with mankind. He daily communed with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, the richness of this communion was spoiled when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, yet God continued to seek them. God has not ceased desiring fellowship with the creatures who were made in His own image. He loves us very much and wants to have continual fellowship with us. He sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins so that we could be reconciled to Him and restored to the closeness of the fellowship He had with mankind before they fell.

To restore fellowship with Himself, God has revealed His character and attributes in His word, the Bible, so that mankind can know and love Him. A knowledge of God is the most important knowledge we can have. God said, “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23, 24).

The one thing we have a right to glory in is that we understand and know God, and specifically His character of

love. Surely we cannot understand and know everything about God, yet we should understand and know what He has revealed about Himself in the Bible. This knowledge is the most important information that can be acquired.

Can you rightly say that you understand and know God if you think He is a pantheon of gods like the Hindus believe? Certainly not! In India there are shrines on nearly every corner dedicated to Hindu gods. They worship monkeys, cows, elephants, peacocks, three-headed and six-armed statues, etc. They are confused about who God really is, and this confusion keeps them from having close fellowship with Him.

To understand and know God, you must first have a basic understanding of who God is. You must understand something about His identity and characteristics before you can take the next step of actually knowing Him on a personal level and building a relationship with Him.

Having a basic knowledge of God's identity and character is not enough if you do not take the next step and establish a relationship with God. Even the devils have a basic knowledge about God, but they refuse to submit to God's control. James wrote to His Jewish brethren, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James

2:19). Having a basic knowledge of God is good, but you cannot end there. A knowledge of God, regardless of how correct it is, will not make you any better than the devils if you do not invite Him to live in your heart and submit your life to be molded and shaped by His pure character.

The Person of God

Is God a person? Is He a thing or a committee? Who is God? These are important questions to answer and should be easily answered by anyone who understands and knows God. This is basic knowledge about God. Surprisingly, many Christians are stumped by these questions because they have been taught that God is a ghostly, mysterious vapor that pervades all nature.

Daniel was given a vision that helps us understand God. He wrote, “I beheld till the thrones were cast down [literally: ‘set up’], 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” (Daniel 7:9).

Someone called “the Ancient of days,” who wears a white garment and has white hair, takes a seat on a throne. Shortly thereafter the “Son of man” (verse 13) comes before Him. The Ancient of days must be God, the Father. According to the Bible our heavenly Father is a real Person.

John was given a vision of this same event and states, “And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back-side, sealed with seven seals” (Revelation 5:1). Shortly after John saw this, Jesus Christ approaches the throne and takes the book out of His Father’s hand.

Again, we find that God is a real Person who sits on a throne and has a book in His right hand.

God must be a real Person, for Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). In another place Jesus gave a warning, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10).

We should expect that God is a real Person, for we were created in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). When we get to heaven, we will find that we resemble God. We will not find a three-headed monster with six arms or any other strange thing like that. God’s outward form is very much like our own. This is the biblical description of what God is like. He is truly a Person.

The writer of Hebrew states, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 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; 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 the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Here we learn that Jesus Christ is the express image of God’s Person. Therefore God must be a person, and Jesus Christ is a real Person as well.

Paul confirmed this when He wrote, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Philippians 2:5-6). The Greek word that was translated

“form” means, “the form by which a person or thing strikes the vision, external appearance” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). God has an external appearance, and His Son, Jesus Christ, has the same type of appearance.

Knowing God

In His closing prayer to His Father, after the last supper, Jesus said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Jesus revealed that life eternal depends upon knowing both the only true God and Jesus Christ His Son.

What does it mean to know the Father and the Son? Does Satan know God and His Son in the way Jesus was describing? Certainly not! If he did, then he would have eternal life too, but we know that Satan will come to an end. The Bible says that he will be burned up and turned into ashes (Ezekiel 28:13-19). Knowing God is more than knowing about God. We must know Him on a personal level. To know God is to love God (1 John 4:7, 8). And this begins with knowing His love for us (1 John 4:19).

In the most well-known verse of the Bible, Jesus said, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). When Jesus said God “so loved the world,” He was saying this is how much God loves you, He loves you so much that He did something for you—He demonstrated His love for you by giving up His most precious possession, His only begotten Son.

If God had loved the world so much that He gave a goat, you and I would

seriously question God’s love for us because a goat would be an almost meaningless gift for God to give up, since it is something He created. If God had loved the world so much that He gave a human, what would we think then? That is a little better than a goat, but it is still a small gift because humans were also created. What if God had loved the world so much that He gave an angel? That is a better gift than a human, but it still falls far short of demonstrating how much God loves us. You see, our understanding of God’s love depends upon the value of the gift He gave up for us. The more valuable the gift He gave, the more we can see His love for us.

God gave His only begotten Son. He has others who are called “sons,” but He only has one begotten Son. We can be “sons of God” by adoption (Romans 8:14), angels are “sons of God” by creation (Job 1:6; 2:1), but Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. What sets Jesus Christ apart from everyone else in the universe, and by which we know God’s love for us, is the fact that He was begotten. This puts Him in the closest possible relationship with God.

God knows, from firsthand experience, the most valuable possession a person can have. He knows that nothing is more valuable to a person than a child whom they love. This is precisely where God tested Abraham’s love and loyalty when He asked him to offer his beloved son, Isaac, for a sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-12). Abraham’s willingness to obey God’s command proved that he loved God with all his heart. It proved that he would be willing to give up every possession he had for God.

The same thing is true with God. When He gave up His only begotten

Son, it proved that He is willing to give up every possession, suffer any amount of pain, and endure any hardship in order to save those whom He loves. This is what Paul meant when he said, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things” (Romans 8:32).

John wrote, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5). John stressed the importance of believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Without this belief, we cannot overcome the world. Why is it so important to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? What if we believe that Jesus is the friend of God, isn’t that good enough? What if we think Jesus is the cousin of God, or His uncle? Would it make a difference in our ability to overcome the world?

Suppose I said to you, “I love you so much, I am going to send my friend, Frank, to die for you.” What would you think? You would probably wonder, If you love me so much, why didn’t you come and die for me yourself instead of sending a friend to do it? But if I said, “I love you so much, I am going to send my son to die for you,” you would know that my love is real.

My friends, God really means what He says. He says that He gave His only begotten Son. If Jesus Christ was not the begotten Son of God before God sent Him into the world, then what did the Father give up? Many sincere Christians believe that Jesus Christ is an exactly equal, same-aged companion of the Father. If this were true, then all the Father gave up was a friend, a companion! If this were true, then the One who loves us the most is Christ, be-

cause He is the One who willingly died for us.

It is true that Jesus Christ loves us very much, and we praise and thank Him for that love. However, the Bible teaches that God, the Father, suffered tremendously when His Son was suffering under the weight of our sins. (Compare Psalm 18:4-11 with Matthew 27:45-51.) In Abraham and Isaac’s story, it was obviously the father, Abraham, who suffered more than Isaac when he gave up his beloved son. Jesus said, “the Father himself loveth you” (John 16:27). John wrote, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us” (1 John 3:1). We cannot behold the love of the Father if we do not know what He gave up for us. John wrote, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). God has an only begotten Son whom He willingly gave up so that you could be forgiven of your sins and live for eternity. Praise God for such wonderful love!

Our love for God is directly related to how much we see His love for us. This is why John emphasized that we must believe Jesus is the Son of God to overcome the world. If you believe Jesus is God’s friend, cousin, uncle, or anyone other than the Son of God, your perception of God’s love is decreased. In proportion to how much your perception of God’s love is reduced, your ability to love God in return is reduced.

Believing that Jesus is the begotten Son of God enables us to overcome the world by elevating our perception of God’s love and enabling us to love Him with all our hearts. John explained: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

The Foundation of the Church

The fact that Jesus is the Son of God is so important that Jesus said He would build His church upon this truth.

One day Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and *upon this rock I will build my church;* and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:13-18).

Notice that the subject of this conversation was the identity of Jesus. When Jesus said "upon this rock I will build my church," He wasn't referring to Peter as the rock, but to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. Upon this truth, Jesus said, "I will build my church." This is obviously a very important truth, the truth upon which God's church is built.

The fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is so important that, at the close of his gospel, John wrote, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30).

The apostle Peter, who lived with Jesus and heard His messages firsthand, including the many things He said that

are not recorded, exclaimed, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). Christ's disciples also exclaimed, "We believe that thou camest forth from God" (John 16:30).

Right after Paul learned the gospel directly from Christ Himself, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20).

Right after Phillip preached the gospel to the eunuch, "Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest [be baptized]. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).

Martha, a close friend of Jesus, who heard many of His teachings, said to Him, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:27).

Nathaniel, of whom Christ said in him "is no guile," said to Jesus, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:47, 49).

Christ said, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:28). John the Baptist testified, "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34).

Of all the witnesses, the greatest is God the Father Himself. Two times He spoke from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). And we know that God "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2).

I am persuaded to take my stand with the faithful witnesses in the Bible who proclaimed that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God. This is a vital truth we must believe before we can truly know the depths of God's love (Ephesians 3:16-19).

The Divinity of Christ

One unique quality of deity is that divine beings are worthy of worship. It is dangerous and sinful to worship anyone but God. There are a few examples of people ignorantly attempting to worship God's servants. Notice the response given whenever this happened: "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:25, 26). This is the proper response for God's people.

John attempted to worship an angel on two occasions. He wrote, "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Revelation 22:8, 9). We see from these examples that God's faithful servants, whether human or angelic, refuse to receive worship from anyone.

There is an account of someone who received worship in Joshua chapter 5. It says, "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy

foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:13-15).

Joshua met someone who identified Himself as "the captain of the host of the LORD." This person was not the LORD Himself, but rather His chief Captain. And when Joshua bowed to worship Him, this Captain not only allowed Himself to be worshiped, but commanded Joshua to take off his shoes for he was standing on holy ground. Joshua was told that he was not worshiping sufficiently, but needed to show more respect. The only other time in the Bible when anyone was asked to take their shoes off because they were on holy ground was when Moses was before the burning bush.

So who was this magnificent being who appeared to Joshua? He was not God, the Father, for "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18). He identified Himself as the captain of the LORD's host rather than the LORD Himself. The fact that this being allowed worship, and even demanded more worship, proves that He could not be an angelic being, nor a mere human. Moreover this person is said to be the captain of the LORD's angels. Jesus is commander of the angels (Matthew 13:41). The only person this could be is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is worthy of worship, and even God, the Father commanded His angels to worship His Son. "When he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6). Jesus said, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not

the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:22, 23). We are commanded to honour and worship the Son.

Problems in Worship

Jesus gave an important principle about worship when He told a Samaritan woman, "true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). It is important that we worship God correctly.

One important aspect of worship is praise. Throughout the Bible there are many examples of people worshiping God accompanied by praise and exaltation through spoken words. For example John recorded how worship is conducted in heaven: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:11-13).

Here the true worshippers in heaven extol the Lamb by saying that He was slain to receive power, riches, wisdom, etc. Notice the clarity of distinction these worshippers make between the Father and the Son. They do not extol praises to the One who sits on the throne by saying that He was slain or died. Nor do they say that the One sit-

ting on the throne received riches. This type of worship would not be true worship, for it would not be "in truth." Yet, to Christ, the Lamb, they ascribe praise for His death, and state that He is worthy to receive riches, something the Father could not receive, for He already owns everything. The Father said that He "appointed" His Son to be "heir of all things." An heir receives things from someone else. Jesus testified, "I received of my Father" (Revelation 2:27). It would be improper and untruthful to claim the Father received riches from someone else.

In a desire to show honour and respect to Jesus, many have gone to the extreme of worshiping Him at the expense of the Father. Their songs and praises are filled with confusing terminology, such as "We thank you most high God for coming down to die for us," or "the immortal God died for our sins," or similar statements that blur the distinction between the Father and His Son. We are to worship the Son as the Son of God, not as "the most high God." Notice how the disciples worshipped Jesus: "Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). His disciples were not confused about His identity, nor did their worship include confusing and contradictory statements about His identity. They stated plainly that Jesus is the Son of God.

There are a significant number of hymns that contain untruthful statements about the Father and Son. Sometimes we mindlessly repeat these sayings without realizing that we are not speaking the truth. There have been several times that I have been engaged in singing hymns when I must stop

myself from speaking the words, for I know they are not true. We should guard against worshipping God or Christ in an untruthful manner.

The Begotten Son of God

Jesus proclaimed, “I said, I am the Son of God?” (John 10:36). He said that He is “the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). The word begotten literally means born. Jesus said, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). According to His own testimony, Jesus really is the only begotten Son of God and literally received life from His Father.

Paul explained of Christ, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15). *Barnes New Testament Notes* says, “the word firstborn — pro-tot-ok'-os — properly means the firstborn child of a father or mother.” *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary* says, “Begotten (literally, ‘born’) before every creature.” *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* says, “Christ is called, firstborn of all creation, who came into being through God prior to the entire universe of created things.”

Jesus Christ is called the “the image of God,” “the image of the invisible God,” and “the express image of his person” (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). An image is never the original, but always a likeness or duplication of the original. Christ is the Son of God and, therefore, the express image of His Father. It would be incorrect to say that the Father is the image of His Son because the Father is the original. In like manner it would be incorrect to refer to Christ as the true, or original, God, since He is the image of the true God.

Micah wrote of Jesus, “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 [origin] have been from of old, from everlasting [Margin: ‘the days of eternity’]” (Micah 5:2). *The Revised Standard Version* translates it, “Whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.” The origin of the Son of God was in the days of eternity. He was begotten before anything was created, even before time as we know it, in the days of eternity.

In the first verse of Proverbs eight, it says that wisdom is speaking. Who is wisdom? Verse 8 tells us that He has a mouth and speaks, and verse 17 says that He loves. Paul wrote, “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Christ is Wisdom, and is speaking in Proverbs chapter eight.

He says, “When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth” (Proverbs 8:24, 25). *The 1965 Bible in Basic English* says, “When there was no deep I was given birth, when there were no fountains flowing with water. Before the mountains were put in their places, before the hills was my birth.”

The Hebrew word חַזְלָלָתִי, which was translated “I was brought forth,” is a verb. Hebrew verbs can be found in many different forms. In the Old Testament, this particular verb was used in

six different forms. They are Qal, Polel, Pulal, Hophal, Hithpolel, and Hithpalpel. Depending upon what form is used for this verb, the meaning of the word can be completely changed. For example, when this Hebrew verb חַלְלָתִי is used in the Qal form, it means “to dance, to twist, to writhe, to whirl, to whirl about” (*Brown-Driver-Brigg's Hebrew Lexicon*). It is obvious from the context that this definition would not apply in Proverbs 8:24, 25, and it could not apply because the Hebrew word חַלְלָתִי is used, in these verses in the Pulal form. The definition for the Pulal form is the only definition that can apply here. This definition is as follows: “to be made to writhe, be made to bear, to be brought forth” (*Brown-Driver-Brigg's Hebrew Lexicon*). This verb in this form is only used three places in the Bible, and here are the other two places where it is used: “Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made [Hebrew: חַלְלָתִי in the Pulal form] before the hills?” (Job 15:7). “Behold, I was shapen [Hebrew: ytllwx in the Pulal form] in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). As we can plainly see, the term “brought forth” in Proverbs 8:24, 25 can mean nothing other than being begotten, or born.

Let us continue with the rest of the verses in Proverbs chapter eight and learn more about the characteristics of Wisdom.

“While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the foun-

tains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, *rejoicing always before him*; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. *For whoso findeth me findeth life*, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:26-36).

The speaker here says that He was brought up with the LORD and was daily His delight, and rejoiced always before Him. This is a real Person. He then says, “For whoso findeth me findeth life.” John wrote, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). Jesus Christ is the one speaking about Himself in Proverbs chapter eight. He is truly the Son of God, just as John wrote, “the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love” (2 John 1:3).

The terms Father and Son, by definition, indicate the existence of one before the other. This was the understanding of the Israelites. In the book of Proverbs we read: “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name,

and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Proverbs 30:4).

Some people have mistakenly concluded that God used the terms "Father" and "Son" to get across to our feeble minds a divine relationship (not Father and Son) that they could not possibly explain in our language. To come to this conclusion you would have to assume that God just happened upon this strange type of beings who have a strange language and manner of reproduction, and then was left struggling to explain Himself to these strange creatures. You would have to forget that God created our language and designed our manner of reproduction, after He already had a Son. God designed us with the ability to have a son, and then He exclaimed of Jesus, "This is my beloved Son..." (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). God means what He says even regarding our human relationships of father and son that He designed in His own image.

According to the Bible, Jesus Christ was begotten, which literally means born, before anything was created—long before God sent Him into the world. (See Hebrews 1:1-9; Colossians 1:15; John 3:16, 17; 18:37; and 1 John 4:9.) How He was begotten is not for us to know, but God wants us to realize that He and His Son have a close, genuine, father-son relationship that is not just a role, or an act.

Truly the Son of God

To deny that Jesus is truly the Son of God is antichristian because it denies the very cornerstone of the gospel. The good news that God loves us enough to send His Son to die for us is meaningless if we deny that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). This has caused many to be confused into thinking that Jesus is the Father, or is somehow joined to Him in a way that makes the Father and Son a compound being. Yet, this faulty conclusion need not be reached. It is helpful to read the context. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:30-36). Jesus denied the charge of claiming to be God, pointing out that His claim was merely to be the Son of God.

The Jews evidently understood His words, because when He was finally charged for blasphemy and condemned to death, the accusation was that He claimed to be the Son of God.

When brought before Caiaphas, the Bible says, "Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63). Luke's account says, "Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves

have heard of his own mouth" (Luke 22:70, 71). After this Jesus was brought before Pilate, and when Pilate said he could find no fault in Him, "The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7).

The jeering crowd at Christ's crucifixion said, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God" (Matthew 27:43). Naturally, the strongest accusations about Christ would come from those who condemned Him to death. They all said that His claim was that He is the Son of God. This is exactly who Jesus said He is (Matthew 26:63, 64; Luke 22:70, 71).

Conclusion

Some people think that God is beyond the possibility of having a Son, but Jesus said, "with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

The Bible refers to Christ as God's Son at least 120 times. The Bible does this by using the phrase "Son of God" forty-seven times. Regarding the genuineness of Christ's Sonship, He is called "the only begotten" five times, "the firstborn" three times, "the firstbegotten" once, and God's "holy child" twice. Four verses say He was "begotten" prior to His incarnation. Four verses say that He "proceeded forth from," "came out from" or "camest forth from" the Father. The evidence on this subject is overwhelming. Christ truly is the literal begotten Son of God, brought forth from the Father before all creation. If God expected us to believe anything different, He did a poor job of presenting it in the Bible. In fact, if God had wanted us to believe differ-

ently, He purposely confused us by making so many clear statements indicating that Christ is literally the begotten Son of God, without the slightest clarification to indicate that we should not take His words in their common meaning. Yet, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Any writer or public speaker knows that when they use a word or a phrase that could be easily misunderstood, clarifications need to be made to prevent people from coming to the wrong conclusions. Yet, throughout the New Testament, where Christ is said to be the begotten Son of God, there is never any type of correction or clarification so that these words would not be taken in their natural sense. Jesus said that He is "the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Concerning another subject, but the principle can be applied with equal force here, He said, "If it were not so, I would have told you" (John 14:2).

You might be thinking, "I have always believed Jesus is the Son of God." Great! You might also be questioning, "Don't all Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God?" The sad reality is that most who profess to be Christians actually do not believe Jesus to be the real Son of God if they subscribe to their denominations' statements of belief.

Almost all Christians will affirm, "Jesus is the Son of God," but there are very different meanings attached to these words. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus is the Son of God, but when asked to describe what that means, they will tell you that Jesus was the first angel that God created, and was no different than Lucifer or any of the

other angels. Catholics will tell you that Jesus is the Son of God, but when asked to explain, will say that He is part of the same substance of God, connected to His being as thoroughly as a Siamese twin, and is the same age as His Father. Have you ever seen a Son like this? Others will explain that Jesus is a co-eternal companion of God whom God declared to be His Son even though He is not really His Son. Others will say that Jesus became the Son of God when He was born in Bethlehem by the virgin Mary, and was not the Son of God in any other sense.

Each of these theories denies that Jesus is the Son of God in one way or another. The Bible says, “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:22, 23). We must be careful not to deny the Son of God just so that we can uphold a church creed that is not taught in the Bible. A denial of the Son of God will result in our inability to overcome the world and will inhibit our relationship with God.

Many people have a false concept of God that denies the true sonship of Christ. No matter how hard a person tries to love a god like this, they will never be able to love him with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. This is true because God’s love is misrepresented by all false theories about Him, and we can only love Him by first seeing His love for us, as John said, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

The Bible says, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If we are beholding a god that only loves us enough to put on an act, to pretend to be someone he is not, then we will love him only enough to put on an act, to pretend to be Christians, when we are not.

Remember that no lie is safe, no matter how innocently it is believed. Paul wrote that those who “believe a lie” will be “damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12). Also, keep in mind that the majority are seldom right in religious matters. Jesus said, “broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14). The councils of men, and the man-made creeds that are so often esteemed by Christians, are not the standards by which we can determine truth. There is only one standard, and one alone, that we can trust as an infallible guide to truth, and that is the Word of God. We must not trust man to lead us into truth, for God said, “the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed” (Isaiah 9:16).

I pray that you will only accept a plain, “Thus saith the Lord” as a reason for all of your beliefs about the Son of God and that you will truly accept Jesus for who He has declared Himself to be, “the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). I pray that this truth will open the doors for unrestricted fellowship with the great God of heaven who yielded His Son to die for your sins. Now, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

The Only True God

God desires that His creatures who were made in His image would know Him, and as a result, love Him with all their hearts. The greatest problem with people who do not appreciate God is that they do not know Him as He really is. John wrote, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8). Many have a distorted view of God’s character, and this causes them not to appreciate or love God as He deserves.

Spreading darkness about God’s character has been the primary focus of Satan’s attacks against God’s kingdom. It is because of His work of spreading lies about God that many remain ignorant of God’s love and refuse to accept Him as the ruler of their lives.

The darkness regarding God’s character exists in varying degrees in different people. Some have an understanding of God’s love that is close to His real attributes and therefore they love Him as much as possible with their limited views of God’s love. Yet, their love for God is hindered by every cherished falsehood regarding God’s character. These errors prevent them from being able to love God with all their hearts. In this condition their love cannot be “made perfect” (1 John 4:17).

This darkness will not last forever. God will manifest Himself to His people, and through them to others. He will say, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is ris-

en upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isaiah 60:1-3).

The glory of the Lord is His character (Exodus 33:18, 19). God’s character will be revealed to His people and they will be transformed into His image. Paul wrote, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Beholding God’s character as He reveals it in His word is essential because we will be changed into the image of what we behold. If we behold a god who is unloving and cruel, then we will become unloving and cruel as well.

Our characters are directly related to our perceptions of God’s character. This is why Jesus stressed the importance of knowing God. When praying to His Father for us, He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Our eternal life rests upon knowing the only true God and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the most important knowledge we can have. Peter wrote, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through

the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Peter 1:2).

Knowing Who We Worship

Jesus said to a Samaritan woman He met at Jacob's well, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:22-24). Rather than complimenting this woman for her ignorance in worship, Jesus was seeking to elevate her understanding of God and correct her misunderstandings.

Jesus included Himself when He said, "we know what we worship." Did you know Jesus worships somebody? He said so Himself, and then He explained who He worships. He said, "the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Jesus worships His Father along with all "true worshipers." He worships His Father, because His Father is His God. He said to Mary, right after His resurrection, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17).

Jesus told His disciples that His God is the same God as their God. He also explained who this God is, the Father. He assured the disciples that His Father, is also our Father, and His God is also our God.

Jesus promised, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of *my God*, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the

name of *my God*, and the name of the city of *my God*, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from *my God*: and I will write upon him my new name" (Revelation 3:12).

Paul wrote, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Ephesians 1:17).

Jesus said that the true worshipers must worship the Father "in spirit and in truth." It is not enough to worship God in spirit, you must worship Him in truth as well. To worship God in spirit means to have your spirit involved in worship. Have you ever found yourself singing hymns while your mind is thinking about your car, your house, or a sports game? At those times, can you say you are worshiping in spirit? No! If your heart and thoughts are not involved, then it is not true worship.

What if your heart is involved in worship, but you are worshiping an idol? Are you a true worshiper? Certainly not! To be a true worshiper you must not only have your heart and mind involved, but you must worship in truth by worshipping the true God. Who is the true God whom the true worshipers are to worship? Jesus said, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Was the woman at the well worshiping God in truth? No! Jesus said she did not know what she worshiped. It is a dangerous thing to worship strange or unknown gods.

Paul reprimanded the pagans on Mars Hill because they had an altar with the inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23). Ignorant worship is not true worship. God rebuked the Israelites, saying, "They sac-

rificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not" (Deuteronomy 32:17). Here we learn that devils are actually getting worship if we worship gods whom we know not. Paul wrote, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Corinthians 10:20).

Merging Paganism and Christianity

The Bible prophesied that a worldly power would arise on the scene and do abominable things, including instituting a false god. (Read Daniel chapters 7, 8, 11 and Revelation 13. For more information, please read the December 2008 issue of *Present Truth*.)

Speaking of the rise of this power, the angel Gabriel told Daniel, "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all" (Daniel 11:36, 37).

This description is almost identical to Paul's description in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. A study of Daniel 7, 8 and 11 reveals that this power is the papacy. Notice, Gabriel said that when the papacy comes to power it will disregard the God of his fathers. In other words, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Peter, Paul, and the other apostles, would be disregarded by the papacy. Gabriel continued, "But in his

estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain" (Daniel 11:38, 39).

Just as prophesied in the Bible, when the papacy came to power, the "God of [their] fathers" was disregarded, and a "strange god" emerged whom their "fathers knew not." This prophecy was fulfilled to the letter when Satan inspired the papacy to invent and adopt the Trinity doctrine in the fourth century.

The Trinity doctrine was not always part of the religion of main-stream Christianity. On page 11 of the book, *Handbook for Today's Catholic*, we read, "The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church... The Church studied this mystery with great care and, after four centuries of clarification, decided to state the doctrine in this way: in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit..."

The central doctrine of the Catholic faith, which they admit was their own formulation, is the "strange god" prophesied in Daniel 11:39. This god is so strange it is popularly called "a mystery," and its adherents are told not to bother trying to understand its confusing contradictions. Those who worship a mysterious strange god are as truly worshiping they "know not what" as was the woman at the well whom

Jesus admonished to worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. To worship God in truth, we must know who we are worshiping.

Do you know who you worship? I have been in churches where they mix everything up. They say, “We thank you O Father for coming down and dying for our sins.” I hear people praying to Jesus and closing the prayer “in Jesus name.” Does it make sense to pray to Jesus in His own name? He is our mediator, and He told us to pray to the Father in Jesus’ name (Luke 11:2; John 16:23; Ephesians 5:20). I have heard people pray to the Father, and end with, “in your name.” The Bible says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). We are to pray to God, the Father, in the name of our Mediator, Jesus Christ. It would appear that people who confuse the biblical distinctions and positions of the Father and Son do not know who they are worshiping, and thus are not worshiping in truth.

Distinctions Between Father and Son

Paul wrote, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 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” (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

God appointed His Son to be the heir of all things. An heir is “one who receives his allotted possession by right of sonship” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). All things the Son has, He received from His Father, including life itself. Jesus said, “For as the Father hath life

in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” (John 5:26).

Continuing in Hebrews we read, “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 the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3).

An image is a likeness of the original. In this case, Jesus is called, “the express image” of His Father. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* defines the Greek word used here as a, “precise reproduction in every respect.” As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the image, or reproduction, of His Father. It is impossible to be the image and the original at the same time. You can be one or the other, but not both. Would it be right or proper to say that the Father is the image of the Son? No, and that is why He is never referred to in this manner, because He is the original. People have approached me saying, “Your son looks just like you.” It would be rare for a person to approach me and say, “You look like your son.” Why? My son is the image of me, not the other way around, because I came first.

Continuing, Paul wrote, “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:4). By right of sonship, Jesus Christ received a more excellent name than the angels. Angels are not literal sons, and therefore do not receive what Christ naturally inherits because He really is God’s Son.

Paul continued, “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father,

and he shall be to me a Son?" (Hebrews 1:5). Notice the argument Paul uses to distinguish Jesus from the angels. Over and over again he argues that Jesus is better because He is the Son of God, because He was "begotten," because He is "the express image" of His Father, because He is the "heir of all things," because He naturally receives an "inheritance" from His Father.

Paul wrote, "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:6-8). Here, Paul is telling us that Jesus is divine because He is really God's Son. His language used to emphasize this is inescapable. Jesus is better than the angels because He was born of the Father, which cannot be said of any of the angels.

When Paul comes to the point of Jesus being called God, he wrote, "But unto the Son he [the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Hebrews 1:8, 9). As the Son of God, Jesus is, by right of inheritance, God by nature. A true Son of God, could be nothing else or nothing less than God by nature.

There is a law in nature that creatures can only have offspring "after their kind" (Genesis 1:24, 25). The offspring of a dog is always a dog, the offspring of a bird is always a bird, the offspring

of a human is always a human, and the offspring of God, naturally is God. It is right and proper to refer to Jesus Christ as "God," for God, the Father Himself calls Him, "God." Yet, in the same breath, the Father makes it clear that He is the God of His Son. He says, "thy God, hath anointed thee..." Jesus is God, yet He has a God above Him who is also His Father.

God, the Father continued speaking to His Son, "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands" (Hebrews 1:10). God had said to His Son, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Jesus Christ participated with His Father in the creation of all things. The Father states that the heavens are the works of His Son's hands. The Bible says, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

When Jesus was on earth it was His hands that touched the lepers to give them health, it was His hands that touched the eyes of the blind to give them sight. It was His mouth that spoke the words, "be thou clean" to heal the sick. Yet, Jesus said, "the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10). God, the Father, is the one who exercised His power in healing the sick, but He chose to do it through the hands of His Son. The same is true in creation. Over and over, God, the Father, is given the credit for creating everything, and Jesus is the channel by which He did this. Even at the beginning of this chapter in Hebrews it says, "God... made the

worlds” and it says that He made them “by” “His Son” (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Paul wrote, “God... created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9).

Jesus is God, and He cooperated with His Father in the creation of all things. John wrote of this, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:1-3).

Here Jesus is called “God,” yet there is a clear distinction between Him and “God” whom He was with. The God who Jesus was with is God, the Father. Jesus was not the same “God” He was with, but rather, Jesus was God in the sense of being divine just like His Father. The Father is God, so, necessarily, His Son is God by nature. Biblical Greek Scholars generally agree that the second time the word “God” is used in John 1:1, it is used as a “qualitative noun” to describe the qualities of “the Word.” Harner says that nouns “with an anarthrous [no article] predicate preceding the verb, are primarily qualitative in meaning” (*The Journal of Biblical Literature*, Philip B. Harner, article “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1.”) “The clause could be translated, ‘the same nature as God.’ This would be one way of representing John’s thought, which is, as I understand it, that ho logos [‘the word’], no less than ho theos [‘the God’], had the nature of theos.” (*ibid.*)

Attributes of the Father

A reading of the Bible reveals clear distinctions between the Father and Son. The following is a partial list of attributes of God, the Father:

- **He’s the one who sent His Son.**

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14).

- **He’s the one who gave His Son a work to do.**

Jesus said, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4).

- **He’s the one who commanded His Son what to say and speak.**

Jesus said, “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49).

- **He’s the one who gave His Son power over all flesh.**

Jesus said, “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (John 17:2).

- **He’s the one who gave authority to His Son.**

Jesus said that His Father, “hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:27).

- **He’s the one who told His Son to sit on His right hand.**

“But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?” (Hebrews 1:13).

- **He’s the one who anointed His Son.**

“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:9).

- **He's the one who gave His Spirit to His Son.**

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:34).

- **He's the one who gave to His Son to have life in Himself.**

"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26).

- **He's the one who Gave His Son all power in heaven and earth.**

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

- **He's the one who highly exalted His Son.**

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him..." (Philippians 2:9).

- **He's the one who gave His Son a name which is above every name.**

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

- **He's the one who has given all things into His Son's hand.**

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35).

- **He's the one who committed all judgment unto His Son.**

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

- **He's the one to whom Christ will be subject for all eternity.**

"And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

- **He's the one who is the head of Christ.**

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

- **He's the one who is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Ephesians 1:17).

In no case do we find that the opposite is true. The Son never sent the Father anywhere. He never gave the Father a work to do, or commanded what He should speak. The Son never gave power or authority to His Father. The Son never anointed His Father. He never gave life to His Father. The Father has never, and will never be subject to His Son. The Son is not the head of the Father, nor is He His God. It is acknowledged by most that the Father holds the highest rank. The continual attempt of trinitarians to make the Son absolutely equal to the Father is virtually proof that He is not. They never seek to prove the Father is equal to the Son. It is true that Jesus is equal to His Father in many respects, including nature, but in each of the aspects mentioned in the verses above, the Father holds the highest position. In fact, He is the only being in the Bible given the titles, "most High" or "the Highest."

A possessed man came up to Jesus, "And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not" (Mark 5:7). In case this man was

mistaken we have a confirmation from God's angel, Gabriel, who said of Jesus, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32).

How many most Highs can you have? If there is more than one most High, then you have just eliminated the most High, because now you have a committee of most Highs. There can only be one most High.

Paul wrote, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). In explaining hierarchy, Paul stopped when he came to God. Why? He can't go any higher! The Father is the most high God, and is the head of Christ.

Titles of the Father

- **Most High**
- **The Highest**
- **Above all**
- **Greater than all**
- **The God and Father of all**
- **The Ancient of days**
- **The only true God**
- **Lord of heaven and earth**
- **The only Potentate**

The Father is called "the Ancient of days" in Daniel 7:9, 13, 22. He is the only one given this title in the Bible. Do you think there is a reason for this? God is trying to tell us something about Himself. He is older than any other being in the universe.

Paul wrote of the Father, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians

4:6). The Father is the Most High God, and as such is "above all."

Of Christ's closing prayer at the last supper, the Bible says, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:1-3).

Jesus called His Father, "the only true God." The Greek word μονον that was translated "only" means, "alone, (without a companion)" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). How many true Gods can there be, if there is only one?

The Greek word αληθινον that was translated "true" means, "real, true genuine,... it contrasts realities with their semblances" or resemblances (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). This word distinguishes the original from its resemblances. It is used in Hebrews 8:2, where it says of Christ that He is "A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Paul was distinguishing the original tabernacle that God pitched in heaven from the copy that Moses built on earth.

When Jesus called His Father "the only true God," He was not excluding Himself from being God, but stating that His Father is the only original God. Jesus is the image of the true God, but not the true God Himself.

It is life eternal to know both the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. You may have wondered why Jesus left somebody out of this equation. If there is a third god called, "the Holy Spirit,"

then it is not necessary to your salvation for you to know him, because life eternal depends upon knowing only two individuals, the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. (We will study about the Holy Spirit in the next chapter.)

Paul wrote that we should pray for everyone because God, “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:4, 5). God wants everyone to know the truth about God, that there is only one God and one mediator between us and God, Jesus Christ.

Paul also wrote, “As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

Paul is very emphatic in this verse. He says, “there is none other God but one.” If there were two or three Gods, could Paul have truthfully made this statement? No! There is only one God, and Paul did not leave us in the dark about the identity of this one God. He says, “to us there is but one God, the Father...” The “one God” of the Bible beside whom “there is none other” is “the Father.” Paul is very clear on this point. None need to be confused about it. Paul also pointed out that “all things” are *of* or *from* Him. The Father is the source of all things. Paul then pointed out that there is also “one Lord

Jesus Christ, *by whom are all things.*” Jesus is the channel through whom all blessings flow. He is separate and distinct from the “one God” of the Bible. In fact, the term “one God” is used seven times in the Bible (Malachi 2:10; Mark 12:32; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19), and in every case it is referring exclusively to the Father.

One day Jesus was reasoning with the Pharisees and Sadducees. “And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments 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. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:28-31). In giving an answer to this scribe, Jesus began by emphasizing that there is one God.

“And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 12:32, 33). This scribe’s answer was very emphatic and exclusive in stating that “there is one God; and there is none other but he.” Notice that the scribe did not say, “there is none other but them.” He used a singular word

“he” to refer to one individual. The word is singular in English as well as in Greek and in the Aramaic translation of Greek. Every time in the Bible where pronouns are used to refer to both the Father and Son they are always plural, such as “us,” “we,” “our,” “them,” etc. There is never a case where both the Father and Son are referred to using singular pronouns such as “I,” “me,” “he,” “him,” etc. This scribe was referring to one individual when he said, “there is one God; and there is none other but he.”

We can be certain to whom this scribe was referring as the “one God.” At another time when Jesus was reasoning with the Jews, “Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God” (John 8:54). Jesus knew that when a Jewish man spoke about God, he was referring to His Father. Jesus knew that when this scribe said “there is one God; and there is none other but he” that he was talking specifically about His Father. Now this would have been the perfect opportunity for Jesus to have corrected him if he was mistaken. Jesus could have said, “Well, actually there are three Gods, and I am one of them.” But Jesus did not do this. Instead the Bible says, “And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question” (Mark 12:34). Rather than offering a correction to this man, Jesus complimented him for his good answer.

The Bible is clear regarding the identity of God and His only begotten Son. Notice some Bible facts about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

• **Father**

“God the Father” 13 times
“The Most High God” 11 times
“The Highest” 6 times
“The only true God” once

• **Jesus**

“Son of God” 46 times.
God’s “holy child” twice
His “firstborn” 4 times
The “only begotten” 5 times
“The firstbegotten” once

• **The Holy Spirit**

The “Spirit of God” 26 times
“God’s Spirit” 9 times
“Thy spirit” 4 times
“The Holy Spirit of God” once

In contrast to these plain Bible facts, let us look at some of the phrases used by trinitarians and see how they are used in the Bible.

• **Trinitarian Phrases**

“Trinity” 0 times
“Triune God” 0 times
“God in three persons” 0 times
“Three persons” 0 times
“God the Son” 0 times
“God the Holy Spirit” 0 times

Conclusion

In all the places where Jesus is referred to in language to indicate that He is God’s Son, there is never a clarification to reveal that we should not take these words in their natural sense. Three times, while Jesus was on earth, God the Father spoke from heaven, and two of those times He said of Jesus, “This is my beloved Son...” If God did not expect us to believe just what He said about His Son, why didn’t He tell us? He had many opportunities to explain that actually Jesus is His companion or emanation of Himself as the

trinity and tritheism claims, but He passed up every opportunity. Never once did He tell us that Jesus is someone other than His actual Son. If God wanted us to believe something other than that Jesus is His real Son, then He did a very poor job of explaining it in Scripture, and He even made many, many statements in the Bible that would only serve to lead us to believe something other than the truth. Friends, “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33). God wants us to believe exactly what He said about His Son. If we believe anything else we are making God out to be a liar. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son” (1 John 5:10).

The fact that Jesus is the Son of God is the single most important doctrine in the Bible. Jesus said that He would build His church upon this truth (Matthew 16:13-18). John said that this was the one point He wants you to gain from His writings (John 20:30, 31). John also said that believing that Jesus is the Son of God is the key to overcoming the world (1 John 5:5). It is this truth that unlocks the beauty of God’s love (1 John 4:9, 10), and it is this truth that will transform your character into the image of God (2 Corinthians 3:18).

I would like you to think about something. Even Trinitarians, when they seek converts from the world, will never use the Trinity doctrine to convert sinners, but rather they use what they call heresy, for they know it has more power to convert people than their beloved Trinity doctrine. Trinitarian churches around the world will tell sinners that God loves them

so much that He gave His Son to die for their sins. This reaches the hearts of prospective converts and brings them power in their lives to overcome sin. Yet, sadly, after they are converted and come into the church, they are told that Jesus is not really God’s Son, but the second person of the Trinity, and that the Son could not die for their sins, because God cannot die. Thus, the truth that gave them power in the beginning is effectively removed, leaving them with a form of godliness without the power.

If a Trinitarian were to approach a lost sinner and say, “God loves you so much that He sent His companion into the world to pretend to be His Son and to pretend to die for you,” it would be as useless as anything could be, and would not possibly convert a sinner to the Lord. Jesus said, “The truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) The truth is what converts and sets men free, not lies.

Most theologians will admit that the trinity is not explicitly taught in the Old Testament. Some have found verses that could possibly lend support to the idea, but it is not clearly taught anywhere in the Old Testament. This fact is illustrated by the Jewish people who, as a whole, reject any form of the trinity as completely foreign to the Old Testament. They are strictly and emphatically monotheistic.

Again, most theologians will admit that the trinity is not explicitly taught in the New Testament. It is true that there are verses that are used to support the idea, but the doctrine is nowhere outlined in the New Testament, and there are a vast number of verses that teach contrary to it. It was not until the Roman Catholic church began to merge

paganism with Christianity that the “Christian” trinity doctrine was introduced to the world. Most churches today who believe in the trinity do not use Scripture language to define this doctrine, but rather borrow language from Catholic church fathers or creeds to state the doctrine.

Think about this. If the trinity is really the truth that God wants us to believe, then He failed to get the point across for the first 4,000 years of earth’s history. Great men of old, like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, King David, Daniel, etc., all died without the slightest hint that God was a trinity. Enoch and Elijah went to heaven without seeing death even though they never heard that God is a trinity. The early Christian church thrived with thousands converted in a day, and yet the trinity was foreign to them. If the trinity were true, then finally, about four hundred years after Christ died, the Catholic Church figured out that God is a trinity and God was finally able to make it clear to the world by using formulas and creeds voted on at the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in 325 and 381 AD.

Friends, this could not be the case. The essential knowledge for salvation was revealed to Adam and Eve and was known by God’s people through every generation, and the trinity was not part of this knowledge. Jesus Himself said that life eternal depends upon knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ, not a trinity. The only doctrinal confession

given in the Bible before baptism was “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). In many churches today you have to confess belief in a trinity before baptism. This was not part of early Christianity. Shortly after the council of Nicaea in 325 AD where the trinity doctrine was in its early formation stages, one astonished Christian wrote:

“We have never heard, my Lord, of two beings unbegotten, nor of one divided into two;... but that there is one unbegotten, and another truly from Him” (Letter written by Eusebius of Nicomedia as found in *An Historical View of the Council of Nice*, by Isaac Boyle, page 41. This book was included in Baker Book House’s edition of *Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History*.)

The trinity doctrine was a surprise and shock to early Christianity. Unfortunately, today it is almost universally accepted as truth even though it is not taught in the Scriptures and its confusing contradictions cannot be reconciled.

We are exhorted to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3), and the trinity is not part of that faith. It is foreign to scripture. It is a strange god whom our fathers knew not.

I pray that you will have “fellowship... with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). I leave you with the salutation of Paul, “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 6:23).

The Holy Spirit of God

In the first two chapters we examined what the Bible says about God, the Father and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. We learned that “there is but one God, the Father” (1 Corinthians 8:6), who is “the only true God” (John 17:3). We also learned that God has a real Son, who is God’s “firstborn,” “holy child,” and “the only begotten Son of God” (Colossians 1:15; Acts 4:30; John 3:18).

Yet, this is not the end of the story. Jesus promised to send “another Comforter” (John 14:16). In His final discourse to His disciples, the night before His death, Jesus told them about a gift that would be given to help them after His departure.

Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;...” (John 14:15, 16). The purpose of the gift of the Comforter is that He may abide with the disciples forever. This was excellent news to the disciples, for they were sad to hear of Christ’s soon departure. Jesus continued His discourse, stating that He would send “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” (John 14:17).

Jesus said that the world could not receive the Spirit of truth, because it did not see him nor know him. The world does not see that this gift is available to them, nor does it know the Person who is the Comforter.

Immediately following this explanation Jesus said something startling. He told His disciples, “but ye know him.” How could the disciples know the promised “Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit” (v. 26),* if Jesus had not yet prayed for the gift, and it evidently had not yet been given? John stated, “the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39).

Jesus explained, “ye know him; for [or because] he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). Who was dwelling with the disciples? Jesus Christ! Jesus explained that soon this Person who was dwelling with them would be in them. It certainly would be better for the Comforter to dwell in the disciples rather than dwelling outside of them. That is exactly what Jesus said a short time later. In the same discourse, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth; It is *expedient* [profitable] for you that I go

* Every time in the Bible where you find the term, “Holy Ghost,” it should have been translated “Holy Spirit.” Sometimes the translators of the Bible chose to translate πνεῦμα ἁγίου (*pneuma hagion*) into “Holy Ghost,” and other times they translated the same phrase as “Holy Spirit” (Luke 11:13). Holy Spirit is the most accurate translation, and I will use it throughout this chapter, including in the Bible verses I quote.

away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).

Jesus said that His disciples would be better off if He left them, went to His Father, and sent the Comforter to dwell in them. He also pointed out that the coming of the Comforter depended upon His departure, and glorification. As long as Christ was living on the earth as a man, it was not possible for this promised Comforter to come to live in the disciples.

Jesus did not end His conversation in verse 17. In the next verse He said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18). This sheds a great deal of light on the subject. It explains why the Comforter could not come until after Christ went away and was glorified, for Christ said that He, Himself, would come back to His disciples to comfort them.

Let's continue reading Christ's discourse to see how He reinforced this point. He said, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:19, 20). A few moments earlier Jesus had said to His disciples that the Comforter "shall be in you." Now, Jesus says that when the Comforter comes, "Ye shall know that I am in you." Jesus assured His disciples that He would not send someone else to comfort them, but that He would come Himself to be their Comforter. Isn't that beautiful! The disciples had become close friends of Christ; so close that John felt comfortable leaning on His bosom. It was a comfort to them when Christ was near. Now Jesus tells them some wonderful news. He tells them

that after He goes to His Father, He would come back to them as the Comforter, and they would know that it was He who was dwelling in them—they would recognize that the same Person who was dwelling with them was now in them, by His Spirit.

Next, Jesus said something that caused one of His disciples to inquire of Him how this could take place. Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:21-23).

Many people believe that in John 14, Jesus was trying to teach His disciples that God is a trinity, that the Holy Spirit is a third member of the God family. Yet, when Jesus was asked to explain Himself He did not say, anything similar to "God is a trinity of persons." Instead, Jesus made it abundantly clear that after He left the world, He would come back to make His abode in the hearts of His disciples. Not only would He return, but His Father would come with Him, so that both of Them would live in the hearts of His children, not physically, but by God's Spirit. In this way, the disciples could have intimate communion and fellowship with both the Father and His Son. John emphasized this when he wrote, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is

with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

At the beginning of Christ's discourse at the last supper He said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1, 2). If the coming of the Comforter was more than both the Father and the Son, He would have told us. If God was made up of three persons, He would have told us. If the only true God was more than only the Father, Jesus would have told us. Instead, at the end of this discourse He said that His Father is "the only true God" (John 17:3). If Jesus wanted us to believe that God is a trinity, He did a very poor job of explaining it. He had many opportunities to explain that God is a trinity, yet He never did. Not only did He fail to tell us God is a trinity, He made statements over and over again that are not in harmony with the doctrine of the trinity. If He wanted us to believe that God is a trinity, He made many statements that would serve only to confuse rather than to clarify. But "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Jesus wants us to believe that "there is one God; and there is none other but he," "God the Father," who is "the only true God" (Mark 12:32; John 6:27; 17:3).

John expressed the lovely truth of God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, living in us in several other verses. He wrote, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 1:9). In 1 John 2:22, 23 he wrote, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the

Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." It is truly a blessing to have personal fellowship with both the Father and His Son, and I am very thankful that God has made this available to us.

The Promised Comforter

As Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, He commanded His disciples "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me" (Acts 1:4). Jesus pointed His disciples forward to the day when the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon them with great power. He continued, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The disciples waited in the upper room at Jerusalem for the Spirit to be poured out, as promised. Then it came, and they preached the gospel of Jesus Christ with power to the many Jews who were assembled at Jerusalem. Concerning the outpouring of the Spirit, Peter said, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:32, 33).

The gift that was poured out at Pentecost is still available to us today, and we can have it if we recognize and accept it. Yet, the gift of the Holy Spirit was not always available in the same

way. In fact, the Bible tells us that God has provided something better for us, than He did for all those who lived before Christ came to this earth. We read about this in Hebrews chapter 11. After giving an account of the mighty faith of the patriarchs and prophets in the Old Testament, the chapter ends by saying, “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39, 40). That is wonderful! God has provided something better for us, than He provided for all those mighty men and women of faith in Hebrews. They all died without receiving the promise of the Comforter that Jesus spoke about in John 14 and in Acts 1.

Please do not get me wrong, the Holy Spirit was working upon the hearts of people long before the day of Pentecost, helping them to overcome sin. The Patriarch David wrote, “Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me” (Psalms 51:11). This shows that the Holy Spirit was at work before Christ came to earth. Not only that, but to be more specific, the Bible says that the Spirit of Christ worked in Old Testament times. Peter wrote about the prophets, “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:10, 11). The Spirit of Christ was living in the prophets, long before the day of Pentecost, but, according to Scripture, there was

something special about the coming of the Comforter at Pentecost; something different and better than had ever been poured out before. Let us read about this better gift.

Something Better

In Hebrews 2:18 we find the key that explains what was better about the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It says: “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to *succour* [help] them that are tempted.” Here is the answer! This is something better that is available to us, today, that could not have been available to the prophets of old. Even though the Spirit of Christ lived in the prophets, Christ had not yet been tempted, and therefore He could not help them in the same way that He can help us now. The word “succour” in this verse was translated from the Greek word *βοηθησαι*, which means, “to aid, to relieve, to help,” and, as *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* puts it, it also means, “to run to the cry of those in danger.” I like that definition! The verse is telling us that because Christ has suffered being tempted, He is able to come to us swiftly to help us, when we cry unto Him for help with our temptations. The Bible says, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psalms 50:15). When we are being tempted, we are in serious trouble, and if we call upon the Lord for help, He will come to our aid immediately, and give us the victory we so desperately need. Christ is able to do this for us in a way that He could not do it for the prophets of old, because today, He has already experienced what it is like to be tempted. This is why Jesus called the Comforter, “another

Comforter.” The Greek word αλλον, which was translated “another” in this verse was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, in 1 Samuel 10:6. Here, it says of Saul, “And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man” (1 Samuel 10:6). Saul became another man, because of the experience he went through. Jesus became another Comforter because now He has experienced what it is like to be tempted.

Think about something for a minute. Suppose your teenage son died in a plane crash, and the next week, your spouse died in a car accident. Now suppose that I come up to you and say, “I know exactly what you are going through,” even though I had never been through that experience. Would I be able to comfort you with these words? Certainly not! If I have never experienced what you are going through, it is very hard for me to understand what you are feeling, or how to help you through it. Even if I was sent by someone who had experienced the type of hardships you are going through, my comfort to you could not be the same as if the one who had experienced your turmoil would comfort you himself.

Many Christians believe that Jesus came to this earth as a man and experienced what it is like to have trials and temptations, and then returned to heaven to send someone else to comfort us. If that were true, why didn’t He just send him in the first place? Someone who has experienced our griefs is more qualified to comfort us than a different person who is just sent in his behalf.

The Bible says that Jesus Christ, “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus Christ experienced what we are going through when we are tempted and, because of this, He is able to help us when we are tempted in a greater way than He could before He came to earth. It is He who said, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” Praise the Lord that our Comforter knows what we are going through in our struggles with temptation. We are given a precious promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13. It says, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” The way of escape that God has ordained for us is to call upon the Lord for help. Whenever we are tempted, if we call upon Him, He will help us. And God has promised that He has made this way of escape for every temptation. That old saying, “the devil made me do it,” is absolutely false. The devil cannot make you do anything. He can use strong enticements, but he can never force you to sin. There is always a way of escape, and our Comforter is eager to give us the victory.

Jesus said that when the Comforter is come, “he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). This is exactly what the Bible says Jesus would do when He comes back to us as our Comforter. The Bible says, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). And in the book of Acts we read, “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts

3:26). After God raised His Son from the dead, He sent His Spirit into our hearts, to bless us in turning us away from our sins. Jesus Christ is the best Person qualified to do this job, because He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Praise the Lord that we have a Comforter who knows what we are going through in our struggles with temptation, and can help us through it better than anyone else.

This is the gift that God is eager to give to all those who ask (Luke 11:13). This is the gift that “the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him” (John 14:17). The world does not recognize that this gift exists; they do not know who their Comforter is, and therefore, they cannot receive Him. Friends, God does not want you to be like the rest of the world, He wants you to know who your Comforter is, so you can receive the full benefits of this blessed gift. Jesus said, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our Comforter. In fact, John told us exactly that in 1 John 2:1. Notice what he wrote here: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate [παρακλητος: Comforter] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The other four times παρακλητος was used in the Bible it was translated, Comforter. In Greek there is no distinction between the advocate in this verse and the Comforter in John’s other writings, and here John plainly tells us that the Comforter is Jesus Christ.

The Bible says of Jesus, “Wherfore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, see-

ing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus is our intercessor, our mediator. The Bible says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). How many mediators do we have between us and God? One! Yet, the Bible says, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26). The Spirit makes intercession for us as our Advocate and Comforter. This Spirit that makes intercession for us is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In this verse the Spirit is referred to with the pronoun “itself.” In English this seems strange because we would not refer to a person as “it” or “itself,” yet the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit this way several times.

Paul wrote, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). Peter wrote, “Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11). Here the Spirit of Christ is called “it.” John the Baptist did the same thing when he said, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him” (John 1:32).

The reality is that it is no more improper to refer to the Spirit of Christ as “it” as it is to refer to “the mind of Christ” as “it.” In fact, in Greek, the word πνευμα, which was translated “Spirit,” is a neuter noun, and as the grammatical rules demand, all pronouns referring to the Spirit are neuter,

even though several times most English Bibles render these pronouns as “he” or “him.”

The Greek word for Comforter is masculine, and therefore all pronouns referring directly to the Comforter are masculine. However, this does not indicate that the Holy Spirit is a literal male individual separate from the Father and His Son. For example, an angel said, “And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe [βρεφος neuter] wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger [φατνη feminine].” (Luke 2:12) Here is an example of how the gender of Greek nouns cannot be relied upon to determine the personality of nouns. The Greek word that was translated babe is a neuter noun even though the babe is a male person. In the same sentence the Greek word that was translated manger is a feminine noun even though a manger is an inanimate object. If there had been any Greek pronouns in this verse referring to either the babe or the manger, the pronouns would most likely have been the same gender as the nouns they represent.

I say “most likely” because there are some cases when these grammar rules were broken by Bible writers to demonstrate the personality of the person represented by a Greek pronoun.

Bible writers adhered to the rules of Greek grammar regarding pronouns most of the time. For example, John wrote, “For the Lamb [αρνιον neuter] which [to neuter] is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,...” (Revelation 7:17). Here John strictly adhered to the rules of Greek grammar and used a neuter pronoun for “the Lamb” even though it had already been established that the Lamb is the Son of God. But

later, John wrote, “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb [αρνιον neuter] stood on the mount Sion, and with him [αυτου masculine] an hundred forty and four thousand, having his [αυτου masculine] Father’s name written in their foreheads” (Revelation 14:1). Here John broke the rules of Greek grammar and referred to the Lamb using masculine pronouns even though the word “Lamb” is neuter in Greek.

John was not the only Bible writer to break the rules of Greek grammar to demonstrate the literal personality of the one represented by a pronoun. Mark wrote, “And he took the damsel [παιδιον neuter] by the hand, and said unto her [αυτη feminine], Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise” (Mark 5:41). For more examples like these, read Matthew 2:13, 14, 20, 21; Luke 1:59, 80; 2:21.

There was biblical precedent for John to have broken the rules of Greek grammar when referring to the Holy Spirit to give it personality by using masculine pronouns in reference to it. But he never did this! Some trinitarians have argued that John actually did break the rules of grammar by using masculine pronouns to refer to the Holy Spirit. But, in these cases John was actually referring to the masculine noun, Comforter, rather than to the neuter noun, Spirit, and was not breaking any rules of grammar. These supposed broken rules of grammar are in John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 8, 13, 14, but all of these masculine pronouns refer back to the masculine noun Comforter rather than to the neuter noun Spirit. In reality John did not break the rules of Greek grammar to refer to the Holy Spirit with masculine pronouns. In all places

where John was actually using pronouns to refer to the Spirit, he used neuter pronouns.

John wrote, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter [παρακλητον masculine], that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit [πνευμα neuter] of truth; whom [ο neuter] the world cannot receive, because it seeth him [αυτο neuter] not, neither knoweth him [αυτο neuter]: but ye know him [αυτο neuter]; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16, 17). For more examples of where neuter pronouns were used for the Spirit read John 7:39; Acts 5:32; Romans 8:16, 26; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 6:19; & 1 John 3:24. I have read every verse where a pronoun is used for the Holy Spirit, and I have not found a single case where masculine pronouns were used for the Spirit. It would appear that none of the Bible writers understood the Holy Spirit to be an actual separate person from the Father and Son.

Christ in You

When you have the Spirit of Christ, you have Christ Himself. Paul wrote, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:17). In this way you can be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Without this experience, Jesus said, “ye have no life in you.” “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12).

Paul exclaimed, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). This is our only hope of salvation. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). We must all be able to say, with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet

not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

When Christ was here, He cried out to God, addressing Him as, “Abba, Father” (Mark 14:36). This term expresses a close, personal relationship with His Father. This same relationship is given to us. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). When we receive this Spirit, we also cry, “Abba, Father.” Paul explained, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). It is Christ in you crying “Abba, Father.” By giving us the Spirit of His Son, God is giving us that close, personal relationship with Himself that His Son has with Him. That is beautiful!

The best gift that God ever gave is the gift of His only begotten Son, whom He gave to die for our sins that we might live forever (John 3:16). Not only did He give His Son to die for us, He gave Him to live within us as our Comforter. Praise God for such a wonderful gift! I pray that you will utilize this gift to the full potential of Christ in you, and that you will be ready to meet Jesus in peace when He returns for His people.

What is a Spirit

We have learned that God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to comfort us, but what is a spirit? Some people think that a spirit is a ghost,

some bodiless phantom that floats around. Is this what God sends to the world to comfort us? Certainly not! According to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, ghost means: "The spirit of a dead person, especially one believed to appear in bodily likeness to living persons or to haunt former habitats." The Holy Spirit is not a ghost as described above. Let us read the Bible and see what it has to say about a spirit.

In the book of Job it says, "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). Daniel explained, "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body" (Daniel 7:15). A spirit is the part of a person that can be grieved. In Mark's gospel we read, "And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" (Mark 2:8). A spirit is the part of a person that can perceive or understand things. The king of Babylon had a dream, and he told his wise men, "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream" (Daniel 2:3). A spirit is the part of a person that can be troubled. These Bible texts confirm the definition of "spirit" found in *The American Heritage Dictionary*, which says, "The part of a human being associated with the mind, will, and feelings."

The Bible mentions several different types of spirit. We read in the Bible about "foul spirit," "evil spirit," "unclean spirit," "dumb spirit," "excellent spirit," "humble spirit," "wounded spirit," "broken spirit," "haughty spirit," "faithful spirit," "good spirit," etc. All these spirits are distinguishable by the adjective that describes them. We know

that God the Father has a spirit (Matthew 10:20), and can that spirit be anything else, or anything less, than Holy? The word "Holy" is an adjective in every case, whether in English or in Greek. "Holy Spirit" is not a name, but a description of the Spirit of God.

Notice how Paul compared the spirit of man with the Spirit of God: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). Here the spirit of man is likened to the Spirit of God. Just as man has a spirit, so God has a Spirit, and His Spirit, just as man's spirit, is the part of Him "associated with the mind, will, and feelings." The Holy Spirit is "the holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30). Just as the spirit of man, God's Spirit can be grieved or vexed. God's Spirit belongs to God, just as my spirit belongs to me. This is to be expected, since we were made in God's image (Genesis 1:26).

Suppose I told you, "I know that we have met before, but have you ever met my spirit? I would like to introduce you to my spirit, he is sitting over there on that chair." What would you think? You would immediately recognize that I have a twisted concept of what my spirit is. It is not some other person, separate and distinct from me. My spirit is really me, it is who I am. If I say, "My mother is very pleasant to be around, she has an excellent spirit," you would not suppose that I am talking about two persons. I would only be talking about one person, my mother, who has a pleasant personality and character.

I would like you to notice something about how the term "Holy Spirit" is

used in the Bible. Luke records a conversation that Jesus had with His disciples. Jesus said, “When they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say” (Luke 12:11, 12). Matthew records this same conversation, but notice the different words he uses to describe the Holy Spirit: “When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Matthew 10:19, 20).

Here we see that the Holy Spirit is called, “the Spirit of your Father.” This is very appropriate, because later Jesus said, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26). Here Jesus explained that “the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit” (John 14:26), proceeds from the Father. In other words, the Father is the source of the Holy Spirit, because it is His Spirit. Please do not get confused here. We saw earlier that Jesus Christ is our Comforter. Notice, in the verse we just read, Jesus said that He would send the Comforter, which comes from the Father. This is just what Peter said on the day of Pentecost, when he explained that Jesus, “being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). The Comforter comes from the Father, through the Son, to us. Paul ex-

plained it this way, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; Which *he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour*” (Titus 3:5, 6).

So we see that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, which He sends to us through Jesus Christ, and when we receive the Spirit, we are receiving both the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of His Son. Two Persons come to live in us, and we have fellowship with both the Father and His Son. The Comforter can rightly be called either the Spirit of the Father or the Spirit of Christ, or both. We find Paul interchanging these terms in the following scripture: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But 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” (Romans 8:9-11).

Two Divine Persons

Some people get confused regarding the Holy Spirit, as if it was a third individual, separate and distinct from God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. I would like you to notice some facts from the Bible.

There are 27 books in the New Testament. Fifteen of them begin with a greeting similar to this: “Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:3). Out of all of these greetings,

not one of them mentions the Holy Spirit as a separate individual.*

Paul began his letter to the Thessalonians, “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 1:1-3). Paul taught that God is the Father and Jesus is our Lord. Paul wrote to these Gentiles, “...how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10). It is clear that in Paul’s mind, the “true God” is God, the Father only, just as Jesus said (John 17:3). Paul also believed in the Holy Spirit, but notice what he said about it, “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:8). The Holy Spirit is the property of someone, it is God, the Father’s, own Spirit, which is holy.

When Jesus’ authority and truthfulness were challenged by the Jews, Jesus mentioned two individuals who bear witness of Him: Himself, and His Father. He said, “If I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth

witness of me” (John 8:16-18). If Jesus knew of a third divine person who could bear witness in His behalf, He would most likely have mentioned him here (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12), but He did not.

Jesus repeatedly spoke of Himself and His Father, referring to His Father as God as well as using the pronouns “Him,” “He,” or “His,” indicating that God is a singular Person other than Himself. Jesus said to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). Jesus spoke of Himself as someone in addition to God. To Jesus, God is His Father, and He is God’s Son. Never did Jesus refer to Himself and His Father collectively as “Him” or “He.” Instead He always said “us,” “we,” or “our,” and in each of these cases He never included a third individual called “the Holy Spirit.”

When Jesus was asked to explain His discourse on the Comforter, “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make *our* abode with him” (John 14:23). The “we” and “our” in this verse refer exclusively to both the Father and His Son. He made no reference to a third individual living in His disciples. Jesus said, “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. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the

* Revelation 1:4 mentions “the seven Spirits which are before [the Father’s] throne,” but this does not refer to a separate individual called, “the Spirit.” If so it would refer to seven individuals. In Revelation 3:1 Jesus is said to have “the seven Spirits of God,” showing that the seven Spirits belong to God. Seven is a perfect number, indicating completeness. The seven Spirits of God could represent the complete manifestation of God’s Spirit or possibly the entire angelic host. (See the book entitled, *Answering Objections* for more information.).

Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14:10, 11). There is no indication of a third divine individual in this picture.

When Jesus spoke of the Jews who hated Him, He said, "He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated *both me and my Father*" (John 15:23, 24). Jesus spoke repeatedly about Himself and His Father, with no mention of another individual.

Jesus continued, "And these things will they do unto you, because *they have not known the Father, nor me*" (John 16:3). In one of the most pointed explanations of who God is, Jesus said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Life eternal depends upon knowing only the Father and His Son. There is no need to know a third individual.

In Jesus' closing prayer to His Father, He said, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11). Again, the "we" in this verse refers exclusively to both the Father and His Son.

Earlier in this prayer, Jesus petitioned, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). It may seem strange that the Father could give His own self to His Son, but this is exactly what He did. This is what God does when He gives His Spirit; He gives Himself.

John wrote, "For he whom God hath sent [Jesus] speaketh the words of God:

for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:34). God gave to His Son, His own Spirit (self) without measure.

Later in Christ's prayer, He says, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:21, 22). Notice the connection here. Jesus had just explained that the glory He received from His Father was His Father's "own self." Then He said that He gives this glory to us. Jesus gives us His Father's own self, His presence, His Spirit. God's Spirit is His "own self."

When Paul charged Timothy to observe the things that he had been taught, he called heaven to witness this solemn charge. He wrote, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Timothy 5:21). If Paul knew of a third divine individual, surely he would have mentioned him here, but he did not. If there was a third divine person, Paul would have injured him by not mentioning him, and to add insult to injury, he even mentioned the angels instead of him. Obviously Paul did not believe that a third divine person existed.

When Jesus spoke of His return He said, "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26). Jesus said He would return in His own glory, the glory of His Father,

and the glory of the angels. The glory of all of heaven will be present at Christ's return, and Jesus excluded the glory of the Holy Spirit as if He was not aware of its existence as a separate individual.

Please think about something for a moment. There are many places in the Bible where the Son speaks to the Father. There are also many places where the Father speaks to His Son. But, there is never any record that the Father spoke to a third person called, "the Holy Spirit." Neither is there any record of the Son speaking to the Holy Spirit. Nor is there any record of the Holy Spirit speaking to either the Father or the Son. It is very strange for a supposed third member of the God family to be left out of all conversations, including those regarding our salvation. The Bible says that "the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zechariah 6:13). There are only two Beings who counseled together for our salvation. No third being was allowed to enter that council.

We know that God loves us very much, because He sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins (John 3:16). We know that Jesus Christ loves us very much, because He came down to earth to die for us. But, if the Holy Spirit is a third individual, we have no way of knowing that he loves us, because he neither gave his son, nor gave himself. In fact, he gave nothing for us, so his love is unrecognizable. Nor are there any verses in the Bible that speak of the love that the Holy Spirit has for us. When Jesus spoke of God's love, He always directed people to the love of the Father. Jesus told His disciples, "For the Father himself loveth you" (John 16:27). Yet, Jesus never explained that the Holy

Spirit loves us, as if the Holy Spirit was a third distinct individual from the Father and the Son.

We are commanded to worship God, the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:22, 23). The Bible says, "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6). We are commanded to worship, both the Father and the Son, but we are never commanded to worship the Holy Spirit. There are many examples in the Bible of people worshipping the Father and the Son, but there is no example of anyone ever worshipping or praying to the Holy Spirit. In the book of Revelation, John wrote, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb [Jesus Christ] for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13). This is the consistent example of worship in heaven. It is given only to God, the Father and His Son. In the new earth, John saw "no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Revelation 21:22). It is clear that the worshippers in heaven do not worship a trinity, but rather only the Father and His Son.

Conclusion

The gift of God's Spirit is one of the most precious gifts God has ever given to

us. To receive the benefits of this gift as God intended, we must recognize it for what it is. The gift of God's Spirit is the impartation of His life in us, the means by which He and His Son can personally live in our hearts. The great blessing of the Pentecost experience is the reception of God's Spirit coming to us with the added benefit of the Spirit of God's victorious Son coming into our hearts to help us in our struggle against sin and temptation. Satan would like you to think that Jesus Christ is not in us, but that He sent someone else to take His place. Friends, that is an invention of Satan, specifically designed to take away your hope of glory. Paul wrote, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Don't let anyone take away this hope, this precious gift of Christ in you. If a gift is not recognized, it will not be utilized. Take full advantage of the ministry of Christ in your behalf; let Him come

into your heart, and do a work that only He can do. Ask Christ into your heart, and He will come in, and bring His Father with Him. Jesus says to you now, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Let Him come in, and you will be glad you did. I cannot tell you how happy I am that I asked Him into my heart. Even though I was a very wicked sinner, involved in many wicked things, when I opened the door of my heart to Him, He gladly came in.

Friends, no matter how wicked you are, Jesus has promised that He will accept you if you come to Him. He said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Come to Him now, accept Him as your Saviour, and accept the gift of His Spirit into your life to give you the victory in your struggle with temptations. You will never, never be sorry you made this decision.

The Death of the Son of God

“We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10). God did not send an ordinary man, not just a human. The divine Son of God was made flesh and then died to reconcile us to God (John 1:14).

God loves us so much that He sent His only begotten Son into this world to die for wretched sinners like you and me. The thought contained in these words demonstrates the immense sacrifice that God made in our behalf. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). If God was willing to give up His own Son for us, it proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He is willing to give up all that He possesses for our benefit, because His Son meant more to Him than anything in the universe. When we understand what took place at the cross, it will melt our hearts like nothing else can. It would benefit us greatly to spend time each day meditating on the life of Christ, especially on His suffering and death.

The Emotional Struggle

The extreme anguish Christ experienced at the cross is described in Psalm 88. David, prophesying of Christ’s experience, wrote, “I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength” (Psalm 88:4). Christ was counted with them that go down into the pit. Isaiah

portrayed a similar account in chapter 53 of his book. Speaking of Christ, Isaiah wrote, “He hath poured out his soul unto death: and *he was numbered with the transgressors*; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).

Continuing in Psalm 88, we read, “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves” (Psalm 88:6, 7). Christ suffered the worst death that anyone has ever, or will ever, suffer. Others have suffered equally or even greater if we limit His suffering to His physical pain alone. Christ’s death was the worst because His relationship with His Father was closer than anyone has ever experienced. Therefore, the loss of that relationship caused Him the greatest anguish that anyone could ever suffer. As He realized His Father’s displeasure, fearing that His separation would be eternal, it literally broke His heart. Jesus said through the Psalmist, “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels” (Psalm 22:14). “Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psalm 69:20). When His side was pierced, water and blood flowed out (John 19:33, 34). This indicated that the Son of God died of a

broken heart, not from the torture or the nails in His hands and feet.

Christ experienced suffering much greater than just the physical pain He endured. Suffering so great that He would have died even if the Roman soldiers had not beaten Him and hanged Him on a cross. Just before the soldiers came to take Him captive, Jesus pleaded with His Father the third time, "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:42-44). If an angel had not come to strengthen Him, He would have died right there in the garden under the load of our sins. His agony was so great that He sweat as it were great drops of blood. This only takes place under extreme stress. It is very obvious that the real sufferings of Christ were much deeper than the physical pain inflicted upon Him by the Roman soldiers.

In the Garden of Gethsemane

Christ ate His last supper with His disciples and, afterward, "they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch" (Mark 14:32-34).

When Christ entered the Garden of Gethsemane He began, for the first time, to be "sore amazed," literally meaning: "to be struck with terror" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). Something

happened to Christ that terrified Him. We also read that He was "very heavy," literally meaning: "to be in distress of mind, (to be sated to loathing)" (*Strong's Greek Dictionary*). To be "sated to loathing" means to satisfy the appetite or a desire so fully as to cause a sudden violent hostility or disgust of feelings, to the point of abhorring them. (See *Grolier's New Webster's Dictionary* on "sated.")

For the first time in Christ's life, He was flooded with terror, and filled with feelings that were disgusting to Him. What were those feelings? The Bible says, "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 53:6). The sin (along with the guilt) of all the world was placed upon the Son of God. The result of sin is explained by Isaiah, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). Whenever a person sins against God, it causes a separation between himself and God. The awareness of this separation is often accompanied by the feeling of guilt. Just think of the most guilty, dirty feeling you have ever had, and multiply that billions upon billions of times, and you will have some idea of the guilt Christ was experiencing in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had always done those things that please His Father. He said, "He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). Jesus Christ delighted to do the will of His Father, and He knew that His Father was pleased with Him. He never sinned against God, not even in thought, so He

did not know what it was like to feel His Father's displeasure and the awful feeling of guilt and shame.

All this changed when He entered the Garden of Gethsemane. When my sins and your sins were placed upon Him, and He stood before God as if He had done the wicked things you and I have done, then for the first time that perfect peace between Him and His Father was broken up. He staggered under the weight of our sins. He left His disciples and, no longer able to stand, "He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:35, 36). Three times He pleaded with His Father to take this experience away from Him.

The Son of God entered into an experience that even He did not foresee completely. Just a few hours earlier He told His disciples, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John 16:32). He said, I know you will all leave me tonight. I know that I will be forsaken of my friends, but that's alright, because my Father will be with me. He will not leave me alone.

But, when He entered into the Garden of Gethsemane, and the sins of the whole world were placed upon Him something took place that He had not fully understood. He had just told His disciples that His Father would not leave Him alone, but now He began to feel a separation from His Father, so great that He faltered under its weight.

Did Jesus Know All Things when He was Here?

Some may say, "Wait a minute, Jesus couldn't have been surprised by anything because when He was here He knew all things." But that is not what the Bible says; instead it is a fruit of that old Trinitarian absurdity. (For a thorough study on the trinity doctrine, explaining its ascendence and outlining its dangers, please contact us and request the book entitled, *God's Love on Trial*.) It is part of the obstacle placed in people's way, by Satan, to hide God's love. When Jesus was here He said, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father [only]" (Mark 13:32; compare with Matthew 24:36). It also says, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). It is impossible to increase in wisdom when you already have it all. When Jesus came to this earth, He was limited by the human body prepared for Him, and He had to learn things just as you and I must. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). He only knew what He had learned by the normal process of life, and what His Father had miraculously revealed to Him. It is true that Jesus knew the thoughts of others at times, but this was no sign that He knew all things, for Peter, Elisha, Daniel, etc., all had the thoughts of others revealed to them by God. (See Acts 5:1-4; 2 Kings 5:25-27; Daniel 2:28-30.)

When the sins of the whole world were placed upon Him, Jesus was truly entering the unknown. It is one

thing to say, “I know I am going to die,” but it is another thing to experience it. I can tell you I am going to die, but I cannot tell you what it is like. The same was true with Christ. There was an element that caught Him by surprise. He told His disciples that His Father would be with Him throughout this experience, but when He entered the Garden of Gethsemane He began to feel His Father withdrawing His presence. The separation grew worse until at Calvary He finally cried out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). The prophecy in Psalm 88 portrays Christ saying, “LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?” (Psalms 88:14). Truly He has “trodden the winepress alone” (Isaiah 63:3).

The separation was so awful that He pleaded with His Father to spare Him from this dreadful hour, saying, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me” (Luke 22:42). He “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death” (Hebrews 5:7).

Was Jesus All Powerful when He was Here?

Some will say, “Wait a minute, Jesus Christ was all powerful when He was here, so He did not have to rely upon His Father for help.” Here again is the stamp of Satan, a fruit of the Trinitarian doctrine specifically designed to hide God’s love. Jesus said “I can of mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30). All the miracles performed by Christ while He was here were done by the power of His Father. Every great miracle that Jesus performed, was performed in a sim-

ilar manner by His disciples or by prophets in the Old Testament, including walking on water and raising the dead. (See Matthew 14:29; 1 Kings 17:22; Acts 20:9, 10). This is no sign that they had all power, but a sign that God was with them, as He was with Jesus. Peter said, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). Jesus said, “The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 14:10).

As Christ was struggling under the weight of sin, pleading with His Father to save Him from death, He made the conscious decision that if it meant He must die for eternity so you and I can live with God forever, then He was willing to do it. He decided that He would rather die for eternity than live without us. That is an amazing amount of love. Some have been willing to give their own temporal lives to save others, but very few would be willing to give up their eternal life for another.

Yet, there is another man who was willing to die forever rather than live without his companions. His name was Moses. He pleaded with God for the children of Israel, saying, “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written” (Exodus 32:32). Moses was referring to the book of life. He was saying, if you cannot forgive them, and give them eternal life, then I don’t want eternal life either. Jesus Christ made the same decision, yet the blood of the spotless, divine Son of God had the ability to actually save us from death. He laid down His eternal life for us. (See John 10:15). That is why the 144,000 will sing the song of Moses

and the Lamb. They too will love “not their *lives* [souls] unto the death” (Revelation 15:3; 12:11).

At any moment the Son of God could have cried to His Father to deliver Him, but He continued, knowing that some would be saved. When a group of soldiers came out to capture Christ, Peter began to fight for Him, but Christ rebuked him saying, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53). Notice that Christ did not say He had the power to deliver Himself, but that He could petition His Father for deliverance, which was His only avenue of escape. Yet, He was determined never to give up, even if it meant He would not live again. He had decided to surrender His will to His Father, saying, “Not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36). The Son of God was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). Finally, as He died upon the cross, right after He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46), He yielded up His eternal life into the hands of His Father, saying, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). He was saying, “Father, I am giving my eternal life into your hands. If you wish to raise me from the dead, or if you choose to leave me in the grave for eternity, I am leaving that in your hands.”

Was Jesus Immortal when He was Here?

“Wait a minute!” says the objector, “The Son of God was so exalted that He could not die or cease to exist.” Again we find the unholy trinity doc-

trine exerting its unholy influence. This doctrine teaches that Jesus Christ is exactly equal to His Father in every way. Therefore, it is claimed that since the Father cannot die, then His Son cannot die either. But the Bible says there is only One Person who cannot die under any circumstances, and He is God the Father. The Bible says that when Jesus appears, “he shall shew, who is the blessed and only *Potentate* [Sovereign, or supreme ruler], the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:14-16). This can be none other than God, the Father, for He is the One whom “No man hath seen... at any time” (John 1:18). The Father is the one “who only hath immortality.” Yet, we know that we will “put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53), many angels have immortality, and Jesus Christ is “alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:18).

When the Bible says the Father “only hath immortality” it must mean immortality in an absolute and unlimited sense. The Father is the only One who cannot die under any circumstances. Jesus Christ was made subject to death, and “died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Man can die; “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20). Angels can die; “everlasting fire,” is “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). This fire is so hot, it will devour them. God said to Satan, “I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.... and never shalt

thou be any more" (Ezekiel 28:18, 19). So it is certainly true that God, the Father, is the only Person who cannot die under any circumstances. This excludes His Son, who tasted "death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). We are compelled by this verse to conclude that Jesus Christ was not immortal when He was here. In fact, the primary reason for Him becoming a human was so that He could die for our sins. The Son of God suffered a real death for our sins. (See Isaiah 53:6 and 1 John 2:2.). It was not pretend, it was not an act, it was real.

The Completeness of Christ's Death

There are some who claim, as a result of the trinity doctrine, that Christ came down from heaven and inhabited a human body and that, when it came time to die, only the human body died while the divine being who came down from heaven remained alive. With this view we would have to conclude that there was only a human sacrifice made for our redemption. No matter how exalted the pre-existent Son was, no matter how glorious, how powerful, or even eternal, if the manhood only died, the sacrifice was only human. It is unreasonable to believe that a human sacrifice is sufficient to redeem mankind, and it is contrary to Scripture to say that only half of Christ died. If Christ only pretended to die when He was here, it takes away the necessity of Him becoming a man, for He "was made a little lower than the angels **for** the suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:9). If He was planning to pretend to die, He could have done that without becoming a man.

In the first chapter of Hebrews Paul portrays Christ as being highly exalted,

the one who was begotten in the express image of His Father's person. Then, in Hebrews chapter two, Paul explains the necessity of Christ becoming a man. He emphasized this point in several ways. In verse nine of this chapter he explains, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). Paul explains the importance of Christ becoming a man, made a little lower than the angels, so that He could die; not so that a human body could die, but so that the divine Son of God could die.

The fact that Christ did die is also emphasized in the following verses: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of *no reputation* [Greek: emptied Himself], and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:5-9). The same identical Being who was in the form of God in verse six, died in verse eight. Jesus Christ Himself made it very clear to John that He was dead. Jesus said, "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" (Revelation 1:18). Jesus Christ truly "died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Are the Dead Really Dead?

This is an important question that must be answered before we can truly understand the sufferings of Christ. Are the dead really dead? Satan would have us believe that the dead are not really dead, but consciously living either in paradise or misery. Satan has said from the very beginning, “ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). Satan taught that man could disobey God and still live forever without dying. This statement directly contradicts God who said, “thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Since that day Satan has continued to teach men that they will not surely die. According to Satan, all men who have ever died are not really dead. Sadly, many Christians believe Satan’s lie today. They think that death is not really death, but rather a continuation of life in another realm. This teaching in Christianity is a fruit of the unholy trinity doctrine. The Catholic Church admits that they formulated the trinity doctrine, and they claim, “The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church” (*Handbook for Today's Catholic*, page 11). The idea that the dead are not really dead is based upon the false doctrine of the trinity. Notice what Augustine, one of the primary persons who formulated the trinity doctrine, had to say about the death of Christ:

“No dead man can raise himself. He [Christ] only was able to raise Himself,

who though His Body was dead, was not dead. For He raised up that which was dead. He raised up Himself, who in Himself was alive, but in His Body that was to be raised was dead. For not the Father only, of whom it was said by the Apostle, ‘Wherefore God also hath exalted Him,’ raised the Son, but the Lord also raised Himself, that is, His Body” (*Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 1, volume 6, page 656, St. Augustine, “Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament”).

It is true that a dead man cannot raise himself from the dead, for he cannot even think. Thus saith the Lord, “The dead know not any thing” (Ecclesiastes 9:6). In Augustine’s words we see the very seeds of that unholy teaching about death which claims dead people are not dead. Notice in his statement Augustine rightly remarks that dead men cannot raise themselves, since they are not alive, but then he goes on to make the assumption that Jesus Christ was not dead. This idea could easily be modified to include every dead person. For if, in the Bible, Christ is said to have died, but the trinity doctrine claims He did not die, then it is only logical to believe that when the Bible speaks of others dying that they too must have remained alive. This is how most Christians today have been duped into believing dead people are really alive somewhere, even though the Bible is so plain on the subject. Let us notice a few verses on this point:

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:3, 4). When a person dies his thoughts perish; he can no longer think. He remains asleep in the dust, unconscious of anything, until the Lord raises him from the dead.

Death is called sleep. “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). Isaiah wrote, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isaiah 26:19). The first thing we notice about this verse is that the dead men shall, at some time in the future, live again. These people are not living now, but they shall live at some time in the future. Right now they are those who dwell in the dust. When we die we return to dust, there to remain in unconscious sleep until the Lord raises us from the dead.

What About the Spirit of Man?

In the book of Job it says, “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:8). Daniel explained, “I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body” (Daniel 7:15). A spirit is the part of a person that can be grieved. In Mark’s gospel we read, “And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?” (Mark 2:8). The king of Babylon had a dream,

and he told his wise men, “I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream” (Daniel 2:3). A spirit is the part of a person that can perceive or understand things, and can be grieved or troubled. These few Bible texts confirm the definition of “spirit” found in *The American Heritage Dictionary*, which says, “The part of a human being associated with the mind, will, and feelings.”

What happens to this spirit when a person dies? Solomon wrote, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Notice that this refers to all people who die, whether they are the most righteous saint, or the most wicked sinner. When any man dies, there will be a time when he lives again, whether he is raised in the resurrection of the just, or of the unjust (Acts 24:15). His mind, which contains his life history, will be given to him again at his resurrection. He will come forth from the grave with the same character and manner of thinking that he had before death. When the dead are raised, God will give them back their spirit (or mind), which was in them before. During their sleep in the grave they were not alive anywhere.

Every person will be raised, therefore, God has to retain a record of his life, so that same person can return at the resurrection; God retains their spirits in an unconscious condition. Solomon wrote, “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21). At death, the spirit of an animal goes down to the earth because there is no need for God to retain it, for there is no

resurrection for animals. But the spirit of man goes upward to God, there to remain in an unconscious condition until the resurrection.

"But," some may say, "don't the righteous go straight to heaven when they die, and the wicked go to a place of torment?" "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.... For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand" (Acts 2:29, 34). David will be in heaven, but he has not yet ascended to heaven. His spirit has gone back to God in an unconscious condition, waiting to be reunited with his body. The same is true of the wicked. "That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath" (Job 21:30). The Lord is reserving the wicked for the day of destruction. They shall be brought forth, or raised from the dead, to the day of wrath. They are not suffering right now.

I would like to use a cassette tape to illustrate what the Bible is saying. Suppose I put a cassette tape in a cassette recorder and begin to record information on the tape. As long as the tape is in the tape player, it can function. I can record information onto it, and play back what is recorded. But as soon as I remove the cassette tape from the cassette recorder, it can no longer function. The tape without the recorder is useless, just as the tape recorder is useless without a tape. Neither can function by themselves. If I remove the tape and destroy the tape player, I can replace it, but if I destroy the tape, then I have lost the information, it is not replaceable.

The body and spirit are similar. As long as they are united, they can function, but as soon as the spirit is taken out of the body, the body turns to dust again, and the spirit is unconscious, unable to function at all. At the resurrection, God will take that same spirit and put it into a new body, and it will again function just as it did before. But if the spirit is destroyed, then there can be no resurrection. This is what takes place at the second death.

The First and Second Death

John wrote, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6). Here we are told the blessed and holy people will take part in the first resurrection, and the second death will have no power over them. The first resurrection takes place at the second coming of Christ. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Immediately following, the righteous will "live and reign with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5). During the thousand years the wicked will not be alive anywhere. When the thousand years are finished, they will live again; they will be raised in the second resurrection. Then there is a great white throne judgment where the wicked will be "judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [will be] cast into the lake of fire. This is the

second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:13-15). The lake of fire is called the second death, a death from which there is no resurrection. This is where God will “destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). “They shall be as though they had not been” (Obadiah 1:16). They will not live forever to burn for eternity, for they do not have immortality. “Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it” (Isaiah 47:14). When hell fire has done its job and devoured the wicked, then the fire will go out completely.

“But,” some may say, “a soul cannot die.” That is not what the Bible says. To the contrary, the Bible says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20). This is not talking about the first death, from which all will return; but the second death, from which none shall return. That is when the soul dies. There is no such thing as natural immortality of the soul, for the only people who will become immortal are the righteous who shall “put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:54). When man sinned, he was banned from eating the fruit of the tree of life to keep him from living forever in a sinful condition. “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden” (Genesis 3:22, 23). Only those who gain the right to eat from the tree of life will live forever. “Blessed are they that do his

commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

The idea that man has a naturally immortal soul is a fruit of that old Trinitarian absurdity, which undermines the beauty of God’s love demonstrated in the death of His Son. If we are confused about death and immortality it makes it impossible for us to understand how much Christ sacrificed for us. (For a thorough study on the condition of the dead and their final destruction, request the studies entitled, *What Happens After Death and God’s Love Revealed in Hell*.)

The Death of the Son of God

The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). The penalty for sin is death. Not the first death, which we know of as “sleep,” but the second death. Those who reject salvation and stand before God to suffer the “second death” will consciously realize that they will never live again, knowing that they have forfeited all the glories of heaven. This utter separation from God, and the realization that they will never live again, is the worst experience the wicked will endure. Their physical pain, which will be severe, will only be a small part of their suffering, the worst part will be that they shall know that “they shall be as though they had not been” (Obadiah 1:16).

The Bible says, “We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10). He tasted “death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). God’s dear Son died in my place, “the just for the unjust” (1 Peter 3:18). He took the pen-

alty which I deserve, and that penalty is the second death. I understand there was some difference with Christ, since He was raised from the dead, and all those who die the second death will not be resurrected. However, the experience He endured was equivalent to the experience of the wicked when they will die, knowing that they will not be coming back. This is the understanding that Christ had when He cried out with bitter anguish, “My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me” (Matthew 27:46). Christ had to have this experience in order to pay for the penalty of sin. Some may say, “But He didn’t burn in the lake of fire.” True, but remember, the wages of sin is death, not suffering. “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

In Isaiah 53 we read the following account: “it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,... he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the

transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:10-12).

According to the Scripture, the soul of Christ died; the soul of Christ was made the offering for sin. The soul of a person constitutes the entire being. If a soul dies, the entire being is dead. The soul is more than just the body. Jesus said, “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in *hell* [γεεννα - gehenna]” (Matthew 10:28).

We are told that the soul of Christ was in the grave. On the day of Pentecost Peter said, “He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:31). The word hell in the preceding verse was translated from the Greek root word *hades*. This word means grave in every case. The soul of Christ rested with His body in the tomb. Christ truly died for our sins.

Notes:

Christ Really Died

The Spirit of Christ inspired David to write concerning Christ's death, "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth" (Psalm 88:8). Christ was shut up in the tomb, and He could not come forth. The Bible says more than thirty times that God, the Father, raised Christ from the dead. (Acts 2:24, 30, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:23, 30, 33, 34, 37; 17:31; 26:8; Romans 4:24, 25; 6:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:15; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 1:2.) Paul wrote that he was an apostle, "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God, the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Galatians 1:1).

Paul also emphasized, in Ephesians 1:19, 20, that "the exceeding greatness" of the Father's "mighty power" was demonstrated "when he raised" Christ "from the dead." If Christ had actually raised Himself from the dead, as some people believe, then Paul's words could not have been true. It would not have been the Father's power, but the power of Christ which would have been demonstrated.

Christ did not raise Himself from the dead or else He would not have been dead to begin with, and His words could not be true, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). When the Son of God was asleep in the tomb, He was as the rest of the dead who "know not anything" and whose thoughts have "perished" (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 146:4).

Of Christ we read, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7). Who was Christ praying to with strong crying and tears? Was He praying to Himself? Absolutely not! He was praying to His Father, the only One "that was able to save him from death."

It would have been a mockery for Christ to have cried out to His Father to save Him from death, if all the while He was immortal and able to save Himself from death. Christ died completely, friends, and He relied upon His Father to resurrect Him. He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46), indicating His complete dependence upon His Father to save Him out of death, and His willingness to entrust His eternal life into the hands of His Father.

Many Christians believe that when Jesus was on earth He was omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (having the ability to be all places at once), and immortal. These misconceptions keep people from being able to appreciate the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice and suffering in our behalf. If Christ possessed these divine qualities while He was upon this earth, He could not have experienced surprise, terror, or any concern for His future outcome. It would reduce His emotional turmoil to merely

reciting words of a play, pretending to be distressed.

Some have been confused by Jesus' statement: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take²⁹⁸³ it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take²⁹⁸³ it again. This commandment have I received²⁹⁸³ of my Father" (John 10:17, 18).*

The Greek word λαμβάνω - *lambano* that was translated "I might take," (with Strong's number 2983), can mean take, but also means "to receive (what is given), to gain, get, obtain, to get back" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). Please notice that this word is also used in verse 18 but is translated "received." Christ laid down His life that He might receive it again. The Greek word εξουσίαν - *exousia* that was translated "power" can mean power, but also means "authority, permission" (*ibid.*) Christ had permission to lay down His life so that He could receive it again from His Father.

The KJV translation is not completely accurate in this case. Notice some other translations of this statement: "I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to receive it again. This is the command which I received from my Father" (*Twentieth Century NT*). "Authority, have I, to lay it down, and, authority, have I, again, to receive it: This commandment, received I, from my Father" (*1902 Rotherham Bible*). "I am authorized to lay it down, and I am authorized to receive it back again. This is the command I received from my Father" (*1912 Weymouth NT Translation*). "Authority I have to lay down her, and authority I have again to receive her; this the command I received from the Father of me" (*1865 Diaglot NT*).

The above translations are correct in the way they render the words "authority" and "receive." Jesus was not stating that He could raise Himself from the dead. The prophecy in Psalm 88:8 was true of Him, which says, "I am shut up, and cannot come forth."

What about 1 Peter 3:18-20?

Peter wrote, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: *By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;* Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Peter 3:18-20). Some people think these verses prove that Jesus was conscious while His body was dead, and that He went down to hell to preach to dead people. This of course would not be possible, for dead people cannot even think, and they certainly could not hear a sermon. Not only that, if these dead people were already lost, as most would agree, no amount of preaching would benefit them. Christ would have been wasting His time on two accounts: they could not hear him, and they could not be benefitted even if they could.

The difficulty is cleared up in verse 20. Peter wrote that Christ "preached [past tense] unto the spirits in [present tense] prison." It is obvious that Jesus preached to these people through Noah (1 Peter 1:11). The preaching was done long ago while Noah was still alive. There is nothing in the verse that requires that these wicked people who lived before the flood were being

* The small Strong's number in this verse represents a Greek word in the original text.

preached to while they were in prison, instead they were preached to while they were still alive, and now they are in prison, or dead.

Christ's Great Sacrifice

It was an immense sacrifice for Christ to limit Himself by becoming a man to live among us. There was a genuine risk involved. He could have sinned, which would have doomed Himself, along with the entire planet. God's entire "government" was "upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6). If Christ would have failed, God's government would have failed.

While Christ was in heaven, He could not die (Hebrews 2:9). But when He laid aside the aspects of divinity that prevented Him from experiencing death, He was wide open for the attacks of the devil. "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" (Hebrews 4:15). The Bible says, "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13). Comparing these two texts demonstrates that while Christ was here He did not retain those qualities of divinity that prevent God from being tempted, such as omniscience. Satan knew that Christ was vulnerable, and he exercised all his energies to get Jesus to fall into sin, with no success.

Christ's Ability to Save Us

To accomplish our salvation, Christ was obligated to take upon Himself our fallen human flesh. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high

priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:16-18). His carnal flesh was just like ours, yet His mind was pure. His mind could not have been carnal, for the Bible says, "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). Christ "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" (Hebrews 1:9). He said, through the Psalmist, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). This was Christ's experience from his mother's womb. He was "born again" from the beginning of his life as a man. Yet, for all others Christ declared, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

Some may say that Christ had an advantage over us if He naturally loved righteousness from the beginning, and all others are born with a bent towards sin. This is true, this is a huge advantage over the unrepentant sinner, but Christ gives this advantage to all those who accept Him into their hearts. Love for righteousness and hatred for iniquity is not inherent in fallen man. It is something that must be instilled in us when we are born again. God promises to give us a new heart causing us to walk in His ways (Ezekiel 36:26, 27). This is what the new covenant is all about! God promised, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33, also quoted in Hebrews 10:16).

The Bible says, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). I am glad that Jesus has something better, or else He could not offer us anything more than we already have. I know from experience that I need something better, and that something better is in Christ. It is my prayer that you will experience the blessing of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

Conclusion

Jesus said, “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” (John 3:16). This great gift of God demonstrates His love for us more than anything else in the universe. Understanding the value of this gift is what enables us to love God with all our hearts, which will naturally result in our lives being changed.

The trinity doctrine was invented for the sole purpose of hiding God’s love. Not only does it hide the fact that Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God, begotten of the Father before anything was created, but it also covers up the reality of Christ’s sacrifice for us. It claims that Jesus Christ was all knowing, immortal and all powerful while He was here on earth, which completely removes any possibility of Him being terrified or troubled while He was on earth. Think about it. If you were immortal and all powerful would there be anything that could terrify you or cause you to be concerned about your well being? Certainly not! Surely you can see how dangerous such an idea is when it is applied to Christ. All that we have seen of His internal struggle and emotional

anguish could not possibly have been real if He was immortal and all powerful while He was here. But the Bible says that He was in “anguish,” that His soul was “exceeding sorrowful unto death,” that “He sweat as it were great drops of blood,” that He was struck with terror. All of this took place before a soldier laid a hand upon Him. The extreme anguish that Christ suffered for us was real. The trinity doctrine would have us believe that it was all a fake, that He was just reciting words in a play.

My friends, Jesus Christ truly suffered and died for our sins. May God remove every obstacle that would keep us from beholding “what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us” (1 John 3:1).

Christ trusted entirely upon His Father for help in every situation. He yielded up His eternal life into the hands of His Father. This He did, knowing that at any moment He could have called upon His Father to rescue Him from His struggles, and leave all of us rebellious sinners to perish for eternity. (See Matthew 26:53.)

That is how much He loves you and me. When Christ died on the cross, He gave all that He had to give. He offered up His entire being as a sacrifice for sin. His soul was made an offering for sin so that we might live.

My friend, if you have not yet given your life to Christ, if you have not tasted the wonderful joy of knowing that your sins are forgiven and you are at peace with God, I invite you to do it now, before it is forever too late. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2) “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” (Psalm 34:8)

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Present Truth Ministries

PO Box 315
Kansas, Oklahoma 74347
U. S. A.

Phone: 304-633-5411

Internet: www.presenttruth.info

E-mail: books@presenttruth.info