

Lesson 16

Teacher's Manual

THE GODHEAD

READ & MEDITATE ON: John 14:6-21

MEMORIZE: I Timothy 3:16

INTRODUCTION

Who is God? What is His name? What is He like? Jesus presented questions similar to these to the Jews and His disciples when he asked "What think ye of Christ?" and "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" Their answers to these questions would determine their ultimate relationship with God. For this reason it is important to know who Jesus Christ really is.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him..."
Colossians 2:8-10

We have a warning from the Apostle Paul to beware of systems of thinking that would keep us from understanding the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. God wants us to be complete in our relationship with Him. Our Lord wants us to understand who He is. This is the reason He came. For, "...the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (I John 5:20).

I. ONE CREATOR

Who created the world and everything in it? The Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

Is the "Word" a person? Of course not--no more than your word is your person. If we can understand the meaning of the term "Word" we can understand the true meaning of the scriptures here. In the beginning was the "Word"--this comes from the term "logos" which, in the Greek, means thought or concept. In other words, the thought was with God. This scripture does not say that another divine person was with God. It states that the Word was God! It is impossible to separate God from His thoughts, just as our thoughts cannot be separated from our person. This term logos is the same that was used in Matthew 8:16--Jesus cast out devils with His "word." The Word is the expression of God. God conceived in thought the creation; when the Word was spoken or expressed these things became real. He said "Let there be light, and there was light." Not until the Word (logos) was expressed did men see it. The provision of a body for God to dwell in was not seen by man until God expressed Himself. Jesus is the express image of God's person (Hebrews 1:3). The word "person" as used here means "substance" according to the Greek.

C. Created By Jesus Christ

It was the same God who created all things that finally came as a man, and was revealed as Jesus Christ. John said, "All things were made by him" (John 1:3, 10) Malachi asks a question, "Hath not one God created us?" (Malachi 2:10). Since it is stated that Jesus created all things, and since one God must be given credit, how can the two scriptures be reconciled without saying that Jesus is that one God?

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Colossians 1:15-17

Jesus created all things as the Father, not as an eternal Son. His name was not revealed until He took a body and abode on the earth as one of us. He was called Jehovah until then. In eternal beginnings, back before there was anyone on the earth, or even before there was an earth, there was nothing but God, and that one God's name today is Jesus.

have continued to be offered. But these offerings could not make the people perfect. They still bore the guilt of their sins. In those sacrifices there was a remembrance again made of sins every year, and so a perfect sacrifice was sought. This was to be a sacrifice that would satisfy God for all time - one designed to take away sin and leave no trace of condemnation. No animal's death could accomplish such a feat, and no mere man was acceptable in death, to take away the sins of the world. Whose blood was it that must be proof of sin's debt paid? In the book of Acts it is stated that it was God's blood. "The church of God that he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). This was a supreme sacrifice--a divine offering. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all sin (I John 1:7). God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and "A Spirit hath not flesh and bone, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). How could God shed blood when He had no blood? This seems to be an impossible quandary, but herein is the great reason for God being manifest in flesh. Jesus Christ was God's only begotten Son, or body. God had to make a body for Himself, in order that a death could be counted and blood could be shed as payment for the sins of men. A death was counted--it was God's requirement for sin. "...without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh..." (I Timothy 3:16).

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself...."

II Corinthians 5:19

In I Timothy 2:5 we read, "...There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all..." Not another God, but rather the human body that was indwelt by God. This man, this lamb, this sacrifice, was a perfect offering. Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man by means of His death (Hebrews 9:14-15). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh..." (Hebrews 10:19-20). In other words, we can come boldly before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16) feeling qualified by the blood shed on Calvary. The resurrected and glorified body of Jesus, still indwelt by the eternal Spirit, is a constant reminder of the all-sufficient sacrifice made (Hebrews 9:24).

III. ONE GOD

"Hear, o Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD."

Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:29

"...God is one."

Galatians 3:20

Father in Isaiah 9:6. Are all three of them fathers? There is one eternal Spirit, and it was He who planted the seed in the virgin womb. It was altogether proper for the term Father to be employed. How else could one describe the eternal Spirit bringing forth from the virgin womb, a body, but to call it "Son!" The fact that He was born necessitates the usage of the titles Father and Son. "...therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The Son was born; Deity cannot be born. Jesus also referred to the Spirit as "Father" because He wanted people to know who was responsible for the miracles He performed (John 14:10-11). The power demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus was not the ability of flesh, but of the Spirit. "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 the Father (the Spirit) that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." He wanted the distinction recognized. Yet, there was no intention to lead people to believe what was being done was done by another person separate or apart from Himself. Because of this involvement of Spirit in flesh, Jesus could speak as though it were Himself working. He said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13-14). In John 10:30, Jesus says plainly, "I and my Father are one." Not two, but one. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father..."(John 14:9). Only the great God who was also man could truthfully make such a statement. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily (Colossians 2:9). It pleases the Father (or Spirit) that in Him (Jesus) all fulness should dwell; so states Colossians 1:19. The word Godhead means "diety." Paul said that the Godhead was in Jesus. He did not say that Jesus was in the Godhead. The difference is quite significant.

B. God's Three Manifestations

Is God one or three? This important question has plagued Christianity for centuries. Some believe that there are three separate and distinct co-equal and co-eternal persons—a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost—that form a mysterious union as one God (trinitarianism). However, there are people who believe that One Eternal God (the Father) has become flesh (the Son) and that this one God has poured His Spirit (the Holy Ghost) upon all flesh. We are these people. We believe there are three: a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost, but these three are not persons, they are positions or manifestations of God revealing Himself to man.

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are ONE."

I John 5:7

Three separate deities is impossible, and clashes not only with scripture, but with common sense. God is not a united council of three persons, but One Eternal Being made known in various ways. To illustrate: liquid, ice and steam are three different manifestations of one element - water. In the same way, there are not three persons in the Godhead, but three manifestations of one God.

thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Exodus 15:6). What did they see?--a hand, literally? No they saw the waters rushing over the enemy--by the power of God. They called this manifestation of God's power and glory His right hand. In the New Testament, what Stephen saw was similar to the Israelites' experience. As he was being stoned he said, "...Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). He saw Jesus in the place of power and glory, no longer a man among men, but changed and glorified. He saw the right hand of God working as it did back in the exodus of Israel, now glorifying the man, Christ. Read further where Stephen died, "...calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit ." (verse 59) He saw only one person, Jesus, in the place of power and glory. You will read in other places where Jesus stands at the right hand of God. It means that the man Christ Jesus, the humanity, has been glorified by the eternal Spirit, and when we see Him in this place of power we sing again of the right hand of God, that has become excellent in power, by resurrecting Christ's dead body, and taking it into the regions of heaven.

* The Statements: "...Father and Lord..."?

There are numerous scriptural phrases in which the words, "God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" are found (Romans 1:7, I Corinthians 1:3, II Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:3 and 6:23, etc.). At first glances these verses seem to indicate two distinct persons, especially for those with a trinity predisposition, as were the translators of the King James English Bible. Greek scholars know that in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, there are no punctuation marks. All punctuation was added in translation, hopefully according to what the original writer intended. Furthermore, in every one of these salutations, the original Greek text does not have "from the" before the phrase, "Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, a proper rendering of I Corinthians 1:3, for example, would be: "Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ." This is actually what Paul wrote. But this is not what early English trinitarian translators have given us in the King James Version. Also the Greek word for the English word "and" is "Kai." This word is correctly translated "also" and "even," depending on the context where it is used. Thus, I Corinthians 1:3 would more accurately read: "Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, even the Lord Jesus Christ"!

Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name..." (John 5:43)
The name of the Father is Jesus. We already know that the Son's name is Jesus. In John 14:26 we can read of the Holy Ghost being sent in Jesus' name. Therefore, Jesus is also the name of the Holy Ghost. We see then, especially in Matthew 28:19, that the terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not names but titles for the three manifestations of one God whose name is Jesus. When we say Jesus, we are using a name which is applicable to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is why baptism is correctly administered only in the name of Jesus Christ.

A. God's Old Testament Names

You can find in many Bible dictionaries the meaning of God's name, Jehovah. It means LORD. The name Jehovah is derived from the Hebrew word "yahweh." which means "the self-existent one." Furthermore, Yahweh is derived from the word "havah" which means "to reveal oneself." So when we say Jehovah, we are saying "the self-existent one who reveals Himself." Following are seven names Jehovah used in the Old Testament. Every one of them shows different relationships to man that still hold true today.

1. Jehovah-Jireh--(Genesis 22:14)--The Lord provides.
2. Jehovah-Rapha--(Exodus 15:26)--The Lord that healeth.
3. Jehovah-Nissi--(Exodus 17:15)--The Lord is our banner.
4. Jehovah-Shalom--(Judges 6:24)--The Lord our peace.
5. Jehovah-Ra-ah--(Psalms 23)--The Lord is my shepherd.
6. Jehovah-Tsidkenu--(Jeremiah 23:6)--The Lord our
Righteousness.
7. Jehovah-Shammah--(Ezekiel 48:35)--The Lord is present.

B. God's New Testament Name

It is true that God continued to reveal Himself more and more through His name until we know Him in His fullest revelation as Jesus Christ. An angel announced to Joseph that a son was to be born to his espoused wife and told him to, "...call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Here, we can more fully understand the mystery of His name. What does the name "Jesus" mean? It comes from the word "Jehoshua," which means, "Jehovah is become salvation," or, "Jehovah has become our Savior." In the most glorious move ever made by God, He came as the Savior. It was not a second Lord; it was the same One, revealing Himself in the ultimate way. Now, Jehovah, God of the Old Testament, is become salvation and His name is Jesus Christ!

When we look at Jesus Christ, we see the express image of God. On the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17), Peter, James, and John saw a cloud and heard a voice saying, "This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased." Finally, after the cloud was gone, the Bible says, "They saw Jesus only." You may look long and hard for other persons, but when the cloud is gone, you will see only one...Jesus. He is the only visible person of God. To say the name Jesus, is to speak of the everlasting Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; for the fulness of the Godhead is all in Him. HE has all power in heaven and in earth. Jesus said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, THE ALMIGHTY" (Revelation 1:8).

* Christ's Prayers To The Father?

Did not Jesus address His Father when praying for the loaves and fishes, in the garden of Gethsemane, for His disciples and on the cross of Calvary? Yes! Is the second person praying to the first person? No! If the second person was a separate co-equal God, He certainly would not need help. Only men need to pray for help. One divine person praying to another divine person is an absurdity. Was He praying to Himself then? No again. It was Christ's humanity (flesh) praying to His Divinity (Spirit). The Son is the temporal flesh. The Father is the eternal Spirit.

* The Voice Of God?

The preceding reasoning holds true when a voice referring to Jesus was heard at His baptism in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13-17) and also on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5). It was the omnipresent (everywhere present) God who was responsible for the voice identifying His flesh--the Son.

* The Son's Deliverance Of The Kingdom To The Father?

I Corinthians 15:24-28 says Christ will reign until all God's enemies are destroyed including death. In the end, it is God's plan to be absolutely sovereign. When death is no more and the eternal purpose is fulfilled, the office of Sonship will have served its purpose. There will be no need for a Saviour then, for all who were to be saved will be saved. There will be no need for a mediator then, for there will be no more sin. God will be all in all.

IV. THE NAME OF THE LORD

Moses asked God what His name was at the burning bush (Exodus 3:13). He wanted to be able to give Pharaoh the name of the God who was his authority. He was told, "I am that I am" is the name to speak. With this response we see that God was veiling His name until the proper time when He pulled back the covering and allowed men to know it fully. Jesus, with full knowledge of this, used identical words and told the Jews, "Before Abraham was I am" (John 8:58). He lets them know that God's hidden name is revealed now, and in essence is saying, I am the "I am" Moses talked with. Jesus could say that He was the "I am" because He was in the burning bush, but He did not want His New Testament, saving name, brought out in the time of Moses. In John 17:6, speaking of His Father, Jesus said, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." What name did Jesus manifest? Was it "Father"? No, because "father" is not a name.

The subject of the Godhead has been complicated and confused down through the ages by heretical misunderstandings that gave birth to several unbiblical phrases. The following statements commonly used in many Christian circles are nowhere to be found in the Word of God: God the Son; Blessed Holy Trinity; Three Persons; God the Holy Ghost; Three Separate and Distinct Persons. Many unknowing and honest souls have been misled with this terminology without realizing what the implications are. If we divide God into persons, we must also say that three persons indwell the Christian, for Paul said our bodies were the temples of the Holy Ghost, that Christ Jesus was in us, and that the Father was also in us (I Corinthians 6:19; II Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 4:6). There was never a question whether or not God was one until about 100 A.D. Creditable history points out that the term "trinity" and its doctrine was formally accepted in the year 325 A.D. by the Roman Catholic Church at the Nicean Council. They divided God into three persons and ascribed to each member of this heavenly committee equal power, knowledge, and existence. None is greater than the other. Their creed is "co-equal" and "co-eternal." Those who claim to believe in a trinity say it is beyond understanding. It must be, for it is impossible to explain how there can be three divine persons, each co-equal and co-eternal, yet constituting one God. How can they be equal, when Jesus said, "My Father is greater than I (John 14:28)? Jesus is again giving credit here to the eternal Spirit He calls Father. John 8:28 says that the Son was taught by the Father. If they were equal, how could one teach another? The fact that the Son prayed, tells us that He was not equal with the one to whom He was praying. The flesh was dependent upon the Spirit. Does not Philippians 2:6 imply equality? "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, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" The reason Jesus Christ felt it was not robbery to be equal with God was because He was God. He who was known as a man was nothing less than God in flesh. His name "Emmanuel" is interpreted, God with us--not one of the Gods, but the All Mighty! (Matthew 1:23)

BUT WHAT ABOUT...

* The Right Hand of God?

There are several places in scripture where the right hand of God is mentioned. What does it mean? There is nothing literal about the right hand of God. This does not mean that there was one divine person along the side of another divine person. When the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they witnessed a miracle of power and glory. The waters divided and they marched across between the walls reaching above them, held back by the power of God. After the Israelites had reached the other side, Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the sea. Deliverance was now secure, for God had taken care of their enemy. A song was begun and taken up by all: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power:

"Thou believest that there is one God:
thou doest well: the devils also believe,
and tremble."

James 2:19

All who believe in the Bible must believe in one God--for God is one. This one God was, "manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angles, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16). This "mystery of godliness" Paul was speaking to Timothy about was not a mystery concerning how three persons of a supposed trinity could be one. It was a mystery concerning how the great God of heaven robed Himself in human flesh.

A. Christ's Two Natures

The great truth of Jesus' being human and divine provides great benefits to be realized. Because He was a man, He is touched by our plight as helpless, finite beings. As divine, there is an abundance of strength and power to provide for our needs, even to the saving of our souls. We may speak of either of Christ's two natures and expound as long on one as we like and yet we have not subtracted from the other. One could preach about how as a man He moved, lived, grew up, wept, and prayed. One could then extoll His obedience, and surrender to death, then turn to other passages and see Him answer prayer as God, raise the dead and heal the sick with supernatural, divine power. Go as far in either direction as you will, and He is still both human and divine. You cannot make Him all man by saying He prayed, for He also answers prayer, and no one but God can do that (Psalms 65:2). As a MAN He said, "I thirst," but as GOD he proclaimed, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." As a MAN he hungered, but as GOD, with five loaves and two fishes, He miraculously fed the multitudes. As a MAN He was asleep in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, but as GOD He arose and rebuked the wind and the waves and they obeyed His command. As a MAN He walked beside the sea, but as GOD He walked upon the sea. As a MAN he died but as GOD He rose from the dead. Who raised Jesus from the dead? Acts 2:32 says it was God who performed this miracle. Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, (body) and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). What a wonderful truth, and how vividly brought out! The mistake of many people of the world has been that they cannot accept two natures; they want to call it persons--separate human beings. However, we must keep two things in mind when thinking of the Son or Christ's human nature: (1) Time, (2) Humanity, and two things in mind when thinking of the Father or Christ's divine nature: (1) Eternity, (2) Deity.

Jesus referred to the Spirit as "Father" because the Spirit actually was His father. It was the Holy Ghost that over-shadowed Mary (Luke 1:35). One of the most confusing things about Father, Son, and Holy Ghost being separate persons is that it becomes difficult to ascertain just who really is the Father! Here, we read that the Holy Ghost is responsible for the Son's being conceived. Then we are told that God is the Father. How many fathers did He have? To confuse matters further, Jesus Himself is called the everlasting

II. ONE SAVIOUR

The God of the Old Testament declared, "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour" (Isaiah 43:11). The New Testament proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. These truths can only be reconciled when we accept the fact that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament come as the Saviour. As we more fully understand God's coming as a man, we will discover the reasons why He has reserved all credit for salvation to Himself. There are certain rules and laws relative to sin and man that brought about this condescension.

A. Death--Sin's Penalty

Death is a word first known after man sinned; all was life until then. Death is God's recompense for sin (Genesis 3:19), fixed as an eternal law by God, requiring life to be given when sin is committed. There is no other way. By one man's sin (Adam's), death passed upon all men (Romans 5:12). In Adam all die (I Corinthians 15:22), "...For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Every man then, has this promise: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4), and this, of course, takes in eternal death.

B. A Blood Sacrifice Required

There is no proof of death until blood is shed. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11). This is the reason God required blood to be sprinkled in order to have an effective offering for sin. By all rights, when a man sinned, his own blood should have been given, making him responsible for his own errors. From the first sin and pronouncement of death, God took an animal, killed it, and made a covering for man. Blood was shed to prove a life had been given as payment for sin. The man could look at the blood and say, "By the death of this animal I have a covering for my shame and nakedness." This is also the story of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. A brazen altar was made for sacrificial death and there was the sprinkling of blood to prove it. The Old Testament priest would go into the Holiest of Holies once a year, with blood, to offer sacrifice for the people's errors and his own (Hebrews 9:7). "And almost all things are by the Law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). The blood of animals was used to carry out God's plan of death for sin.

C. Christ Our Sacrificial Substitute

For many years men lived with an inadequate sacrifice. The blood of bulls and goats was not able to take sin away (Hebrews 10:4). Paul reasons that if they had been good enough, then they would

A. Created in His Image

"God said let us make man in our image."
Genesis 1:26

Notice the plural terms "us" and "our" that are used as God plans the creation of man. To whom could God have been talking? We look for other deities who may have existed. We know there was not a Son existing literally at that time, for the scripture tells us when the Son was made. "...when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). Could God have been talking to His Son when the Son was not made until the Law had been in force for two thousand years? Impossible! With whom, then, was He counseling? We read in Ephesians 1:11 that God counsels with His own will. He was doing this very thing in creation. In the beginning, God was creating man. How was He to make Him? He decided to make man flesh and blood. In God's mind, He saw Himself as He would come thousands of years later, and made Adam in the figure of Him who was to come (Romans 5:14). Adam was made according to the same blue print that was intended for Jesus. Because God spoke of things that were not as though they were, (Romans 4:17) - including His coming in flesh -, He said, "Let us make man..." Actually, it was necessary to use the plural "us" in creation to explain His two natures, not persons. God is a Spirit. He came in flesh and we are in his image. Since His proposed body was considered in God's mind while making man, He was referring to this humanity, along with Himself (who is Spirit). One God was not counseling with another God.

In the following verse notice the singular term "his" that is used when God actually created man. This conclusively proves that we are made in the image of the One and only God of creation.

"So God created man in his own image,..."
Genesis 1:27

B. Created By His Word

"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....And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...."
John 1:1-3,14