



GOD **The Son**

**Understanding God
Through The Gospel
Of The Incarnational Son**

DICKSON

God, The Son

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CONTENTS

Introduction – 3

1 – *God, The Son* – 4

2 – *The Deity Of The Son* – 14

3 – *Relationship Between Father And Son* – 19

4 – *The Ministry Of The Son* – 3

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GOD, THE SON

From the one God came forth the incarnate manifestation of God whose work it was to make the way for the obedient of this world to come into the realm of eternal dwelling with God. It was the work of God, the Son, therefore, to accomplish the divine link between God and man, and thus, justify man through the cross in order that he be able to approach unto God as a result of being sanctified by the blood of the incarnate Son. The Son, therefore, became the mediator between God and man. All men must come to God through the Son who gave Himself as a ransom for the sins of men. Not only is the Son the incarnate manifestation of God who is beyond the physical world, He is also the only begotten Son of God. He is the only One through whom we can have access to God. No one can approach God except through Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is the only mediator between God and man, all men must come to God through the cross of Jesus.

The manifestation of God the Son into the environment of the world does not assume that God “broke up in pieces of Deity.” God is one, and in order to be one, He must be able to manifest Himself as He desires and yet remain one. In order to carry out the divine plan of redemption, it was God’s plan before the creation of the world to manifest the Son for the purpose of being the eternal sacrifice for sins. When the fullness of time came, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit sent forth the Son into the world in order to redeem the world through the offering of the incarnate sacrifice on the cross (Gl 4:4).

We do not believe that the three of God work as a corporate body, making decisions in agreement with one another so as to carry out the divine plan of redemption. We must not view the Father,

Son and Holy Spirit sitting in a corporate board room making decisions. God is one, but manifests Himself in three ministries for the redemption of man. It is not that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit came to a corporate agreement, and then carried out their agreement of the plan of redemption.

Someone will complain that they do not understand this. But who can understand the nature and function of God. We would not presume to be gods ourselves in order to postulate answers for our frustrations in order to determine the exact nature of God. We must be content to be left with our speculations concerning the true nature of God. However, our speculations must be based on what revelation is given to us through the Bible. Speculations that are sterile of Bible truth are only the mental meanderings of a mind

that creates a god after one's own mental powers that can be understood. We do not believe in such gods.

When we consider the manifestation of God the Son, it is our goal to look into the Scriptures in order to seek an understanding of the being, character and ministry of the Son. In some way, therefore, it is our initial goal to first seek to investigate the revelation of God in order to form any opinion concerning God. Once

information is discovered in the Scriptures, then it is our effort to apply the nature of Jesus to our lives and live in the aroma of His character. It is our final goal to live the gospel of Jesus in order to enjoy the outcome of such living. It is our goal to continue to discover the abundant life that aids our understanding of His love, His mercy, His justice and His longsuffering for us in order that we be with Him in eternity.

Chapter 1

GOD, THE SON

The Hebrew writer stated in Hebrew 5:8, *"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."* This statement has all the substance of a divine metaphor. Jesus was the Son of God, yet He was not a son after the literal sense of the term "son" as it is used among men. As the Son of God, Jesus did not come into existence at the time a small babe was born in a Bethlehem manger about two thousand years ago. Before Abraham existed, He was in existence (Jn 8:58). Jesus "learned" obedience, yet not as an earthly, fleshly son learns obedience from an earthly father who disciplines his child. Both Jesus' sonship and obedience were in existence before the incarnation.

There are a host of questions that will never be answered in this life in reference to the Son and the relationship He maintained with the Father while in His incarnate state on earth. This should not trouble us. After all, we must be God in order to fully understand God. Those

who believe they have all the answers to the questions should be cautioned, for we do not know all the answers when we question things concerning God.

Through the revelation of the Bible, we today have the privilege of looking into the character, attributes and nature of the Son through the limitations of our dictionary. Though we have not personally experienced the Son as did the early twelve disciples, God knew that we would receive enough information through inspired words that would suffice our yearnings to know the Son. Jesus said, *"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God. Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me'"* (Jn 6:45).

It is certainly our intention to learn from the Father. Our learning will draw us closer to Jesus. Our learning will draw us to belief in the Son. John continued, *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are*

written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn 20:30,31). This is our goal. We seek to be near Jesus. We seek to believe. In order to accomplish these two spiritual aspirations, we must draw near to the revelation of God in the Scriptures. No one can draw near to Jesus without the word of God.

It is our desire to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. And yet, revelation takes us beyond this belief to understand that Jesus is God. We realize that there are limitations to what God can reveal to us through the words of an inspired book that is composed with humanly defined words. Nevertheless, God has revealed to us all that He expects of us to know in this lifetime. The Scriptures are sufficient to relate to us enough about Jesus as God to produce faith (Rm 10:17; 2 Tm 3:16,17).

Nevertheless, it is our inclination to understand more. We want to lift our minds beyond revelation and ponder those things that are yet to come. We want to understand more about Jesus than what we can grasp from words. We want to know how Jesus can be both the incarnate Son of God and also God. To what extent was the incarnation? To what extent was the incarnate Jesus divine? To what extent was He God?

Is there a supposed contradiction here in reference to the Christian’s concept of Deity, or is the problem centered around our inability to understand the nature of God? The problem is the latter. We struggle with our ability to understand

that which is beyond our small world of physical perceptions. Nevertheless, we seek to understand the Son, for it is He who has revealed God to us. And, it is through Him that we will eventually be brought into the presence of God (2 Th 1:6-9).

Jesus said, *“I and the Father are one”* (Jn 10:30). Jesus certainly did not mean that the Father was incarnate as the Son was at the time He made the statement. The oneness of the Father and Son assumes that before the incarnation, the Son was of the nature and character of the one God. In this preexistent state Jesus was in the *“form of God”* (Ph 2:6). Paul wrote, *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God”* (Ph 2:5,6). The Greek word *morph* (form) that Paul uses here refers to Jesus being in the whole nature of Deity and participating in whatever that would include. He was equal with God (Ph 2:6). However, He *“made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men He humbled Himself”* (Ph 2:7,8). In some way, therefore, the oneness of the Father and Son, while the Son was on earth, was different than before the incarnation when the Son was in the *“form”* of God. Jesus’ preexistent state of being in the *“form”* of God means that He was as God. Before His incarnation, therefore, we would assume that Jesus was God with God the Father and Holy Spirit.

While on the earth, the Son said, *“My Father is greater than I”* (Jn 14:28).

When Jesus emptied Himself through incarnation, the Father stood as “greater” than He was on earth. We would assume that Jesus meant that God the Father was greater than the incarnate flesh into which the Son came into the world. We would not assume that Jesus meant that the Father was greater in divinity. The Father was not “more God” than the Son. The Son had simply emptied Himself in order to dwell among men within the flesh of man.

Though the Father was greater at the time of the incarnation of the Son, the common goal and purpose of the work of the Father and Son remained the same. The oneness of the Father and Son during Jesus’ ministry emphasized Jesus’ one goal and purpose with the Father in order to carry out the divine plan of redemption. There was no variation in ministry between the Father, and the manifestation of the Son in the flesh, to bring us into eternity.

We would not say that the Father and Son worked in conjunction with one another in order to carry out the plan of redemption. To use the phrase “in conjunction with” would indicate two independent individuals working in harmony with one another. But the oneness of God in redemption was not based on the agreement of two individuals who were accomplishing a work because they had agreed to do so. Redemption was based on the one God doing the work of redemption as one God. God simply works as one. It is not that the Father and Son worked in harmony as two individuals would so work to accomplish a goal. God

worked, and whenever God works, it is the work of one.

No two men on earth can work together as God worked as one in order to carry out the plan of redemption. Three individuals can work together to carry out a common goal. But when we speak of the work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are discussing something different than three men working together in order to accomplish a specific work.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked as one because such is the nature and character of God. Therefore, since the Son and Father are one, we would suppose that the Son would have the attributes of the Father. Though the Son gave up an equality with the Father through the incarnation, we would not be incorrect to say that He now has at least the following attributes in common with the Father in His eternal existence:

A. The Son as God is eternal:

The Son did not give up eternity when He was incarnate in the flesh of man. God cannot cease to be eternal. Jesus was, and always will be, “*everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*” (Is 9:6). His “*goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*” (Mc 5:2). Though He became flesh, and gave up an equality with God in the flesh, we cannot assume that He gave up His eternal being.

1. *The Word existed in eternity before the creation of the world.* John wrote, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word*

was God” (Jn 1:1). It was no accident that John used the Greek **imperfect tense** in this statement to identify the eternity of the Word. The imperfect expresses continuous or linear action in the past. Before the Word became flesh, He was in continuous existence before the creation of the world (Jn 1:14). The Word was in continuous existence as God before the incarnation.

Though John used the imperfect tense at the time he wrote, this does not mean that the Word ceased eternity at the time of his writing. Neither does it mean that Jesus ceased eternity at the time the Word became flesh (Jn 1:14). John is speaking of the existence of the Word before he wrote the words. He wants us to understand that in the past the Word was eternal in existence. His explanation of the eternity of the Word in the past emphasizes His eternity in the present and future. Since God cannot cease to exist, then at the time John wrote, the Word continues to exist.

2. The Word continues in existence now and in the future. In this sense, therefore, the Word has always existed and will always exist. This is the sense of the Greek present tense that Jesus used when He said, “*Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am*” (Jn 8:58). Eternality cannot be expressed in the finite words of those who cannot comprehend eternity. Therefore, Jesus simply exists. He says, “I am.” How else could it be expressed?

Before the existence of Abraham, Jesus was there. During the life of Abraham, Jesus was there. When the words

of John 8:58 were spoken, Jesus was there. And now, when we read the words of John 8:58, Jesus is here. He is the “*Alpha and the Omega*” (Rv 1:8). These first and last letters of the Greek alphabet were used by John to affirm that Jesus is “*the Beginning and the End*” (Rv 1:8). Jesus is the One “*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*” (Rv 1:8). As God is eternal, there can be no beginning or ending of God the Son.

The eternity of Jesus was assumed in the Hebrew writer’s reference to Melchizedek in Hebrews 7. Melchizedek was “*without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life ...*” (Hb 7:3). Melchizedek remains a priest because Jesus remains. We have no recorded history of the beginning of Melchizedek. We have no recorded history of his death. He thus continues to be an illustration of the eternity of the priesthood and kingship of Jesus. Jesus continues as a priest and king in heaven (Hb 8:1). He is eternal in the heavens as our priest and king.

B. The Son as God is unchangeable.

The Son is unchangeable in His Deity. “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Hb 13:8). The Hebrew writer spoke of Jesus: “*Like a cloak You will fold them up [the earth and heavens], and they will be changed. But You [Jesus] are the same, and Your years will not fail*” (Hb 1:12). The Father and Son are not changeable in reference to their eternal purpose to save man. They are not changeable in reference to their be-

ing as God. The very nature of God is that there is no change in attributes, character and eternal ministry. This is the encouragement to which the Hebrew writer focuses our attention. Because God is unchangeable, we can be assured that His redemption plan is also unchangeable.

Since Jesus as God is also omniscient, then He knows the future. And since He was in the beginning when the world was created, and was crucified before the creation of the world (Rv 13:8), then there is no need to change from God's original redemptive plans. God foreknew, and thus established the plan of redemption before the creation of the world. There is no need to change the plans. The creation of the world and the rebellion of man do not cause God to change His plans concerning the plan of redemption.

Man's perception of who the Son is may change. We change our minds as we gain more knowledge of Jesus. We change our understanding of Jesus as we grow in character to be in the image of the Son (See 2 Pt 3:18). However, the Son stays the same. He is as He was yesterday, and is today, and will be tomorrow. If we could calculate the existence of Jesus in earth years, He would be the same a billion billion years from now as He is today. The Christian's hope is founded on the fact that because Jesus will remain the same, His promises and plan of redemption will remain the same.

C. The Son as God is all-powerful.

When considering the power and ex-

istence of the Son to manifest the environment of Deity, there are three periods of history in reference to the world concerning the Son's existence in eternity that must be considered: (1) There is His existence before the creation and incarnation. (2) There is His existence in the flesh during His ministry on earth. (3) There is His existence now as king and head over all things with all authority.

Under this third consideration, we would add the present state of existence of Jesus concerning the belief of the permanency of the incarnation. This state of His incarnate existence would exist both now and in the new heavens and earth wherein Jesus will dwell with the saved. In any one state of being, the Son exercised and continues to exercise the power of God.

1. *The power of the Son before incarnation:* The Son as God was in the beginning and active in creation (Gn 1:1,26,27). In reference to creation, it was the Son who created all things. Paul stated in Colossians 1:16,

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit spoke the command to create. Paul seems to indicate, however, that it was God the Son who did the work of creation.

If one would ask from where the ma-

terial world originated, the answer would be in the creative power of the Son. If one would ask from where angels originated, the answer would be in the creative power of the Son. And if one would ask from where Satan originated, the answer would be in the creative power of the Son who first created Satan as all angelic beings. The Son certainly did not create Satan evil in the beginning. Satan was, as all angels, created for a “proper habitation” (Jd 6). But he, as well as a host of free-moral angels, forsook their domain in which they were first placed. They were subsequently cast down to be reserved for the day of judgment (2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6).

The term “agent of creation” is often used in reference to the Son in His creation work. However, this term can be misleading. Moses recorded that God (*Elohim*) said, “*Let there be ... and it was so*” (Gn 1). God worked as one. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked as one to bring all things into existence. Whatever our view is concerning how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked as one, we must not ignore what Colossians 1:16 is says. Jesus was the creator of all that exists, both in the physical and spiritual realm. “*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made*” (Jn 1:3).

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked as one in creation. If we separate the oneness of God, then we separate God. Though we do not fully understand the work of God in creation, it is certain that the divine *Elohim* worked as one in order to bring about that which

now exists.

2. *The power of the Son on earth:*

In reference to the Son’s time of incarnation and ministry on earth, He relinquished power to the Father when He came in the form of man. Paul wrote, “... *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men*” (Ph 2:6,7).

When the Son came in the form of man, in some way and to some extent He emptied Himself. However, on earth He was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:1). He thus went forth with the “*power of the Spirit*” (Lk 4:14). It was the Spirit working through Him that enabled Him to accomplish His ministry (Lk 4:18,19). Through the work of miracles that He did, the Son manifested the environment from which He came (See Mt 8:16,26,27; 9:6; Lk 4:39; 7:14; 8:54,55; Jn 3:2).

One example of Son’s power during His earthly ministry would be the occasion when He said to the wind and waves on the stormy Sea of Galilee, “*Peace, be still.*” “*And the wind ceased and there was a great calm*” (Mk 4:39). The reaction of the disciples to the miracle was justified. Mark recorded, “*And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, ‘Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!’*” (Mk 4:41). Only God has the power to control natural law. We would answer the disciples’ wonder by saying that God was in their presence through the power of the Holy Spirit that worked through Jesus.

During His ministry, Jesus brought

His disciples to the point of asking them, “*But who do you say that I am?*” (Mt 16:15). Before asking this question, however, He had reminded them to remember the miracles of feeding the 5,000 and 4,000 people with a few loaves and fish (Mt 16:8-11). The reason He asked them to remember these miracles was that they should remember how many basket fulls of leftovers were taken up. The leftovers proved one thing in reference to the power of Jesus. While on earth, He had the power to create, and only God can create. Therefore, while on earth Jesus had the power with which He created all things in the first place (Cl 1:16).

3. *The power of the Son in His present existence:* Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:16, “*Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.*” Jesus has ascended on high (Ep 4:8). He sat down at the right hand of the Father (At 7:55; Rm 8:34; Hb 1:13; 10:12). He has been given all authority (Mt 28:18). He now upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3). We thus know Jesus no longer according to the flesh, but as He is now, King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).

It is true that the Son is now exalted “*far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named*” (Ep 1:20,21). However, in some way all authority was given to Him while He was yet on earth. Jesus said just before His ascension to the right hand of the Father, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*” (Mt 28:18). The Greek tense here is past

tense. At the time Jesus made the statement, therefore, He had been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Before Jesus made this statement, John recorded that at the time of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus knew that all things had been given into His hands by the Father (Jn 13:3). The Father gave authority to the Son while on earth to have “*authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You [the Father] have given Him*” (Jn 17:2). This authority in some way referred to the Son having the right to forgive sins on earth (Mt 9:6). He not only had this authority, but He also had the power to unleash the environment of Deity in the realm of the physical, thus manifesting the realm of the supernatural among men (See Jn 3:2).

Our emphasis according to 2 Corinthians 5:16 must now be on Jesus as Lord and King. Peter’s announcement of such on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 generated an obedient response in the hearts of about 3,000 people (At 2:36-38,41). Such will have the same effect today, for it is this Jesus who is coming again to judge the world. It is before Him we will be held accountable (Jn 12:48; At 17:30,31). Through the records of Jesus that were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, our knowledge of Jesus as He ministered on earth is limited. Our knowledge of Him must grow in reference to His present state of existence. This is where we turn to the epistles.

In 2 Corinthians 5:16 Paul recorded that he wants us to know Jesus as He presently exists as King of kings and Lord of lords. He wants us to know Jesus as the

One who has authority over all things, and the One who is coming again to judge all according to His word.

What we do know of the power and authority of the Son in these days is that He is in control of all things. He upholds “*all things by the word of His power*” (Hb 1:3). If it were not for the controlling power of Jesus, the worlds would disintegrate. But in the new heaven and earth to come, the Son will relinquish kingdom reign to Him who submitted all things to Him. Paul wrote that when all that exists is subjected to God, then God the Son will subject Himself to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order that God be all in all as it was before the creation (1 Co 15:28).

4. The power of the Son in the new heaven and earth: It is not coincidental, that when the Holy Spirit revealed truth concerning what we will be in bodily form in the new heavens and earth in 1 Corinthians 15 (2 Pt 3:13), that He referred to the state of the Son at this “time” in eternity that is yet to come. Before discussing the nature of the bodily resurrection that we will experience, Paul first explained the nature of the being of Jesus throughout eternity. Paul knew that it was important to give a limited revelation concerning the present existence of Jesus. This revelation was important in order to encourage us that we will likewise be in a similar state of existence as Jesus will be when He comes again (1 Jn 3:2).

a. Jesus will submit kingdom reign to God. At the end of this world,

the Son will deliver kingdom reign to God the Father (1 Co 15:24). He will do such when death, the last enemy, is destroyed by the power of the resurrection (1 Co 15:25-27). “*Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all*” (1 Co 15:28). And so in eternity to come, the Son will submit to God the Father in order to make God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit “all in all” throughout eternity.

We could speculate concerning this arrangement. However, all such speculation is futile in this life, and may possibly be so even when we come to the point of being in the new heavens and earth. Nevertheless, what Paul does reveal is that eventually Jesus will change His function in reference to His present authority over all things.

b. Jesus will dwell among the saved. In reference to the incarnation of Jesus, we must consider the possibility that the incarnation of the Son of God was permanent. When Jesus was incarnated into the flesh of man, there was some permanence about the incarnation that would carry on throughout eternity. It would be in this state of “embodiment” that He would dwell with the saints in the new heavens and earth. The following are some important points to consider that the incarnation was permanent in some way:

(1) Jesus came in the flesh.

John encountered and argued against a false doctrine that some taught in the first

century concerning the incarnation nature of Jesus in the flesh. It was taught by some that Jesus had not actually come in the flesh at the time of His earthly ministry. John begins his argument against this doctrine in 1 John by reaffirming, “*That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked upon**, and our hands have **handled** ...*” (1 Jn 1:1). The imperfect tense that John used in reference to his and the apostles’ encounter with Jesus leaves no question that over an extended period of time, they saw, handled and beheld Jesus, both before and after His resurrection. He had come in the flesh (Jn 1:14). John’s argument is against those who rejected the fact that the Son of God had come in the flesh of man.

(2) Jesus is in the flesh. John is not willing to leave the matter of Deity in the flesh to a period between birth and ascension. He seems to emphasize a continuance of that which was manifested after the resurrection. Concerning the final coming, John assures us that in our resurrection we do not know what we will be. John wrote, “*But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 Jn 3:2). In our resurrection, this mortal body will put on immortality; this physical body will put on a spiritual body (1 Co 15:50-54). We will be changed (1 Co 15:51,52). Does this mean that we will be changed into what Jesus now is? We will “see” Him as He **is**. John’s use of the present tense in 1 John 3:2 indicates that the resurrected Jesus now **is** that

which we will be. What we will be will, according to Paul, be tangible. We will have a body, though we do not know the nature of that body (1 Co 15:51-53). If we are allowed to reason from Paul to John, then we would conclude that Jesus now is that which Paul explains we will be in 1 Corinthians 15:42-49. We will be raised with a spiritual, immortal body that is fit for eternal dwelling. Is Jesus now as this body that Paul explains we will have? One thing is certain. We will not be as spirits floating in space.

(3) Jesus continues in the flesh.

John continues in 1 John by arguing against the beliefs of the antichrist. In 1 John 4:2 John wrote, “*Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ **has come in the flesh is of God.***” The emphasis of the perfect active participle (“has come”) in 1 John 4:2 indicates that at one time in the past in reference to the time John wrote his letter, Jesus came in the flesh and that such a state of existence continued until at least the time of the writing of 1 John. The emphasis is on the continuation of that which existed at the time the writer wrote the words.

John continued, “*... and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ **has come in the flesh is not of God***” (1 Jn 4:3). John seems to indicate that there was a continuous action of the incarnation that had carried on to the time of the writing of his letter and would carry on into the new heavens and earth. The incarnation was in continuous action at the time he wrote and it is assumed that such would continue into the future. In this sense, therefore, we will see Jesus as He

is at His appearing (1 Jn 3:2).

(4) Jesus is coming in the flesh.

In 2 John, John referred to the incarnation in another manner. *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh”* (2 Jn 7). This is in harmony with what the angels said to the disciples at the time of the ascension. *“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner”* (At 1:11). If the coming of Jesus is in like manner as His going, then truly we will see Him as He is. Does this indicate that Jesus is presently in the form of His going into heaven? We believe that such does not necessarily have to be. After all, He is God and He has the right to so dwell in what form He may so choose. We would guard ourselves from confining God to our inadequate postulations.

If there is a permanency of the Son’s coming in order to be in all things as His brethren when He emptied Himself in the incarnation (see Ph 2:6-8; Hb 2:17), then certainly the sacrifice He made on behalf of the saints is truly exemplified. His sacrifice was not just for a few thirty-three years of incarnation on earth. **It was for an eternity.** When He gave up being on an equality with God, **it was forever.** If He did this for us, what should we be doing for Him? If Jesus did empty Himself on an eternally permanent basis, then the sacrifice that He paid for our salvation was far beyond the cross. It was an eternal sacrifice, a sacrifice of which every inhabitant of heaven will be

made aware throughout eternity. When the grace of God was manifested on the cross for our salvation (Ti 2:11), God’s efforts to save us were not measured by a few hours on the cross, but by eternity.

We would not assume that Jesus is presently in the state of existence that He was in while on earth after the resurrection. The fact that we will be changed to be as Him (1 Jn 3:2) indicates that He is now in an existence different than the flesh we are now in. We will be changed to be like Him. He will not be changed to be like we now are.

Hebrews 5:7 makes the statement in reference to Jesus, *“... in the days of His flesh.”* The Hebrew writer was discussing something in the past in reference to Jesus during His earthly ministry. At the time of the writing of the statement of Hebrews 5:7, therefore, Jesus was in a different form than the “days of His flesh.” One should not confuse this statement with what Jesus stated to the disciples immediately after His resurrection. *“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have”* (Lk 24:39). Jesus remained in the flesh on this occasion in order to prove His bodily resurrection. To assume that this is the type of spiritual, immortal habitation in which we will be as Him in eternal dwelling (1 Jn 3:2), is to say that there will be no change in our bodily presence for heaven.

But there will be a change. We will be changed. Paul wrote,

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not

all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Co 15:51,52).

We shall be as Him, but not as His physical body that was resurrected from the grave. We shall have a new habitation.

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life (2 Co 5:2-4).

At the time of His coming, Jesus “*will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body ...*” (Ph 3:21).

5. The Son as the omniscient God:

As we consider the Father to be omniscient, we would also assume that Jesus is omniscient. While on earth, He knew the thoughts of men (Mt 9:4; Lk 5:22). He knew what was in man (Jn 2:25). Since He existed before the creation of the world, then He knew, as the Father, the eternal plan of redemption. He knew the future. He was in the beginning and before the creation of the world when the eternal plan of redemption was planned by God (See volume II, Book 4).

We must assume the omniscience of Jesus in reference to His ministry. The work of His ministry was dictated by His knowledge of where He was going. The gospel of the cross determined His actions and teachings. When studying the records of Jesus’ ministry, we must always affirm that the environment and circumstances of His ministry were under His control in order that He take Himself to the cross. At no time throughout His ministry did things “get out of hand.” He had the authority to lay down His life, and thus, no man would take it from Him without His permission (Jn 10:17,18). Jesus, as God, was in total control of His destiny.

Chapter 2

THE DEITY OF THE SON

The Son is one with the Father, and thus, when identifying either the Father or Son we would be identifying the other. However, when Jesus came into the world, He gave up being on an equality with God (Ph 2:6,7). Our definition of God the Father by referring to the Son

of God in a state of incarnation would thus be inadequate. This would also be true in reference to understanding God the Son. We cannot truly understand God the Son before the incarnation by understanding Him while He was in the flesh. Paul stated that Jesus was in the “form”

of God before the incarnation. He was “equal” to God (Ph 2:6). Whatever we would understand to be the nature of God in eternity, therefore, would be the nature of Jesus before His incarnation. But this would not be true of Jesus while He was in the flesh on earth. As God before the incarnation, Jesus was in “form” as the Father and Holy Spirit. But in incarnation, He “*made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men*” (Ph 2:7).

There has been a debate for centuries concerning the extent to which Jesus emptied Himself when He was born of woman into our world. We wonder how an omnipresent Deity could confine Himself to location in a body of flesh. How could the infinite wisdom of Deity be confined to the head of a single individual? We wonder concerning the extent to which Jesus gave up an equality with God when He was incarnate in the flesh. The fact is that we will never know the answers to all our inquiries. We are simply told in Scripture that there are some things that God has chosen not to reveal (Dt 29:29). If those secret things were revealed, we are sure that none of us would understand the revelation. It is not in the capacity of our finiteness to understand fully the infinite.

There are some things concerning the Deity of Jesus that are revealed. These statements of Scripture do help us to a limited extent to understand His Deity. At least these windows of revelation explain enough to answer some misinformation that is circulated concerning the nature of Jesus. There are some in the

religious world who are set on defaming who Jesus really was on earth, and especially, who He now is at the right hand of God. Nevertheless, there is much revealed concerning the Deity of Jesus. Enough is revealed to conclude that He was more than a prophet. He was the only incarnate Son of God who was formerly on an equality with God.

We must remember what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:16. “*Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.*” We understand Jesus according to the flesh through the documents of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. However, Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords at the right hand of the Father (1 Tm 6:15). We seek to know Him as He now is. However, in order to know Him as He now is, we must first know Him according to the flesh.

A. Jesus was the Word that became flesh.

In his writings, John emphasized the physical nature of Jesus. He emphasized the humanity of Jesus because there were some in his audience who denied that the Word, the Son of God, actually came in the flesh of man. John thus set forth the teaching that Jesus was the embodiment of all that God would communicate to man. Jesus was the Word.

1. *The Word became flesh.* John wrote, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (Jn 1:1). The Word was

not a god, as some have erroneously affirmed. In the Greek text the definite article “the” preceding the word “God” is absent. But in the phrase “the Word was God,” there is no justification for adding the indefinite article “a” to make the reading “a god.”

John had a reason for leaving out the definite article. In order to emphasize this reason, some have translated the phrase of John 1:1 to read, “The Word was divine.” This expresses the nature of Jesus in His preexistent state. This translation indicates what John wants to convey to us by not including the article. However, we must keep in mind that the text is properly translated, “the Word was God.”

Emphasis in John 1:1 is on what Jesus was before incarnation, not on the nature of His existence after incarnation. His nature was divine. He was as Deity. As Deity, He was God. He was of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And then, the Word became flesh. The Word gave up being on an equality with God, and thus humbled Himself to be made in the likeness of man (Ph 2:6-8). He became God in the flesh.

2. *The incarnate Word dwelt among men in the form of man.* John continued in John 1, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...*” (Jn 1:14; see Ph 2:6-8). Jesus was not a phantom manifestation of God. He was not a spirit, or apparition that appeared to the disciples. In the context of such Gnostic beliefs that evidently crept into the theology of the early church, John was more definitive in the letter of 1 John. Con-

cerning the Word of life, Jesus was, John affirms, that “*which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands handled*” (1 Jn 1:1). There is no question that John is discussing the Word as flesh and blood. The Word was human as John and the other disciples. Incarnation was complete in the sense that John knew no difference between his own body and the body of the One his hands handled. John’s repetitive use of words that emphasize empirical contact with the incarnate Word—heard (hearing), seen and looked upon (sight), handled (touch)—leaves no doubt that Jesus was in the flesh. He was not as the Docetic Gnostics presumed, an apparition or phantom of the spirit world. Incarnation was complete in the sense that God the Son had become as the flesh of man (Ph 2:6).

3. *The incarnate Word was the manifestation of life.* John continued in 1 John 1:2, “*... the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.*” The fact of Jesus’ incarnation could not be made more clear. Jesus was originally with God; He was God. He emptied Himself of the “form” and “equality” with God in order to become flesh as all men. How much He emptied Himself, we do not know. To what extent He gave up His “Godness,” we do not know. However, we do know that He became as man in order to reveal eternal life to man.

4. *The fullness of God dwelt in the*

incarnate Word. Paul proclaimed, “*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell ...*” (Cl 1:19). This was all the fullness of God that should dwell in bodily form in Jesus. We assume that Paul makes this statement in reference to the Son of God while the Son of God was in the state of incarnation. In Colossians 2:9, Paul added, “*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*” Jesus was human, but Deity dwelt in Him. He was the union of God and man. These are overwhelming statements that should surely move our understanding of Jesus beyond our consideration of Jesus as just one of the prophets. He was God on earth, but a man among men.

In the above texts of Colossians 1:19 and 2:9, Paul takes an interesting word from the mystical religious beliefs of Far East religious thought that had permeated the religious culture of the Colossian religious society. The Greek word he uses is *pleroma* (fullness). This word would later be used by advocates of gnosticism to identify the environment of Deity in which there was no evil, and from which God supposedly would not reach out to a material world. However, Paul wants his readers to understand that all the fullness of God dwelt in the Son of God. The Son is not an emanation from God. He is not an inferior messenger from God. He is the representative of God in the flesh. All the fullness of what God is must be identified as dwelling in Jesus.

In the texts of Colossians 1:19 and 2:9, “fullness” is from the Greek word *pleroma*. The secular use of *pleroma* re-

fers to that which fills, fulfills, or completes (See Ps 24:1; 1 Co 10:26). In reference to the Christ, *pleroma* refers to the totality of power and attributes that are possessed by God were possessed by Jesus. Jesus was not the totality of God, but the fullness of God that dwelt in Him while He was on earth.

Gnostics assumed that Christ was only one in a series of aeons (mediators) who came forth from the fullness of God. However, Paul wants us to understand that Jesus was filled with God. Jesus was not a digression from God. He was not so far removed from God that He was void of divinity. Though He emptied Himself, He was not empty of God. Though He gave up the form of God, He was not a formless spirit without the fullness of God within Him.

B. Jesus and the Father are one.

In John 10:30, Jesus said, “*I and My Father are one.*” They were one in goal, work and purpose. However, could we suppose that there was something meant in the John 10:30 statement other than unity in goal, work and purpose? Certainly. Jesus maintained His Deity while on earth. In Him the fullness of the Godhead dwelt. He gave up the form and equality with God, but He did not give up all of God in the incarnation. He did not lose His connection with God when He connected with man through the incarnation.

Herein is the thought that no manifestation of the Godhead worked independently of the whole. Though Jesus

was on earth in an embodied state, He did not cease being God. He did not cease in His work as God to bring about the plan of redemption. He was limited in comparison to God the Father and the Holy Spirit while on earth, but in Him the fullness of God dwelt. He went forth by the power of God the Holy Spirit, and thus, He had the power of God among men.

Jesus' statement in John 10:30 will always confound our minds. In Him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily. However, in His state of incarnation, Jesus was not the totality of the Godhead. God was certainly "bigger" than the incarnate body of Jesus of Nazareth. If Jesus were emphasizing His united work and goal as one with the Father, then we have little difficulty in understanding what He meant in John 10:30. However, if He were referring to Paul's revelation of Colossians 1:19 and 2:9, then we are left to speculation. We must speculate concerning the limit or extent to which the incarnate Word gave up being on an equality with God.

C. Jesus was God on earth.

Thomas' confession after the resurrection was correct and affirmed as correct by the direction of the Spirit-inspired pen of John who recorded his very words. "*My Lord and my God!*" (Jn 20:28). Jesus was God. He was God on earth. It might be argued that this statement of Thomas is of Jesus after His resurrection, and thus, explanatory of Jesus who had in some way returned to that which He

had before incarnation. This could possibly be true, though Jesus affirmed that He was still in the body of flesh after the resurrection (Lk 24:39).

At least one thing is true. Jesus is now considered God by the inspired writers. John affirmed that Jesus is now "*the true God and eternal life*" (1 Jn 5:20). Paul stated that Jesus is now "*over all, the eternally blessed God*" (Rm 9:5). As Christians, we are "*looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*" (Ti 2:13; see 2 Pt 1:1). It was said to the Son, "*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever*" (Hb 1:8). At least in Jesus' present state of being He is more than a man, more than a prophet, more in possession of authority than what He had while He was on earth. He is God. He is God who reigns over all things.

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be "*everlasting Father*" (Is 9:6). John affirmed that He was God (Jn 1:1). Isaiah also prophesied that the way of the Lord would be prepared for His coming to the earth (Is 40:3). John the Baptist was the one who prepared the way for the Lord (Mt 3:3). Jesus was the One for whom the way was prepared, and thus, Jesus was the Lord. He was the everlasting Father for whom the way had been prepared to come into this world.

Isaiah also spoke of seeing the glory of the Lord in Isaiah 6. John referred to this statement of Isaiah in John 12 (Jn 12:39-41). John then applied the fulfillment of the statement of Isaiah 6 to Jesus. Therefore, Jesus was the Lord, whose glory Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6.

We live in a world that seeks to do everything with Jesus except affirm who He said He was. He is believed to be a good teacher, a great prophet, a good buddy with whom we can have a personal relationship, and a son of God in a series of many. But if one would accept the Bible as the revelation of God, he cannot affirm Jesus to be anything less than God.

While on earth, Jesus was not all that God was. This does not mean, however,

that He was separated from God, or the parcelling out of God in the form of man. In Him dwelt all the fullness of Deity. Jesus was the manifestation of God on earth, and as such, He came to manifest God. He gave up the “form” of God and relinquished an “equality” with God in order to become the manifestation of God on earth. Therefore, if anyone would come to God, he or she must approach God through God the Son. There is no way to eternal life but through the One

Chapter 3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FATHER AND SON

who is eternal (At 4:12).

God works as one. The manifestation of His work is as three. The three manifestations of God’s work to redeem man should not confuse us into thinking that there are three Gods. Our inability to understand how God can function as one through three manifestations of work would be expected since God is omnipresent. Though it is impossible to fully understand the nature of the one God who is three in ministry, the Scriptures do make some statements concerning the relationship that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is especially true in reference to the ministry of the Son while on earth. The following are a few thoughts that should help in understanding the God who worked as one through the incarnate Son:

A. The Son was with the Father.

The Son was first in the beginning with the Father. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **with** God ...*” (Jn 1:1). The imperfect tense of “was” in this verse affirms that the Word was existing at the time of the creation. The imperfect tense of the verb also emphasizes the continuous existence of the Word with the Godhead. The Word did not come into existence. If this were true, then John would have used the aorist tense verb that expresses a onetime event in the past. But the Word was not created. The Word was in existence, and it was by the Word that all things were created (Jn 1:2).

1. The Son was the firstborn. It was not that the Son was created as an individual entity as some have so erroneously proposed. Paul stated that the Son was “*the firstborn over all creation*” (Cl 1:15). In the context of his statement,

emphasis is on the use of the word “first-born” as a metaphor. The Son was the beginning of all that was created and in existence, “*for by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible*” (Cl 1:16). As a firstborn son on earth had legal rights over all the possessions of the father, so the Son of God had legal rights over all that the Father gave Him. He was the firstborn **over** creation. He was not the first to be created.

2. The Son was the beginning of the creation. It is in the above sense that Revelation 3:14 should also be understood. “*These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.*” It is not that the Son was first created as a separate entity of God, and then from the Son, all things were subsequently created (See Jn 1:2,3). Revelation 3:14 teaches that the Son as God was the originator (creator) of all that exists other than God Himself.

In the divine plan of redemption, it was the work of the Son to begin creation by first bringing into existence the physical environment of the world. After the world was created, the Son then created man for whom He would provide redemption in order that man come into the spiritual environment of eternity in the presence of God. In this sense, therefore, the Son was the beginning of the creation of all things of God. He was the source from which all creation came. He was the origin of all that exists. He was the representative of God whose task it was to set into motion, not only creation, but also the plan of redemption. This is

Paul’s revelation in Colossians 1 where he stated, “*All things were created through Him and for Him*” (Cl 1:16). Jesus is thus “*before all things, and in Him all things consist*” (Cl 1:17).

B. The Son was incarnate into His creation.

When creation was finalized, then another work of the Son was set into action as a result of the sin of Adam. Through the sin of Adam spiritual death entered into the environment of creation (Rm 5:12). Adam was subsequently driven from the tree of life of which he could have eaten and lived forever (Gn 3:22-24). But the consequences of this separation from the tree of life affected all humanity, “*for as in Adam all die*” (1 Co 15:22; Hb 9:27). God’s work as three was set into action at the time of Adam’s sin (See Gn 3:15). That work included the incarnation of the One who created all things. It was the Son who created, and subsequently, the Son accepted the responsibility of reconciling to God His creation through His own incarnational offering.

Jesus’ love is greatly manifested in the fact that omniscience made it possible for Him to know the incarnation and cross before creation occurred. He knew the price He would have to pay for creation before the creation of the people He brought into existence. He would have to purchase with His own incarnate blood those He knew would fall through sin. We now understand what John meant when he said that Jesus was crucified be-

fore the creation of the world (Rv 13:8).

With the foreknowledge of the fall of man, the Son went ahead and created even though He knew that He Himself would have to take the form of man. He created man while knowing that He would have to humble Himself to the crucifying hands of those whom He created (Ph 2:6-8). This is the heart of the God of love that was revealed through Jesus.

C. The Son came in subjection to the world.

If we could fully understand the nature of God, then we could fully understand the extent to which Jesus as God humbled Himself in the incarnation. What we do know concerning Jesus, however, is enough to make us realize that he humbled Himself from the greatness of the form of God in order to become as those for whom He would die.

1. The Son humbled Himself to be a servant. In some way, and to some extent, the Son “*did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men*” (Ph 2:6,7). While on earth, the Son affirmed that the Father was “*greater than all*” (Jn 10:29). He stated, “*My Father is greater than I*” (Jn 14:28). At least in His incarnate state Jesus affirmed that the Father was greater than the Son. It was the Father who gave all authority to the Son (Mt 28:18). It was the Father who gave all things into the hands of the Son (Jn 13:3; 17:2). In some way, there-

fore, we must assume that the Father, as that part of God who did not incarnate, remained in control of all things throughout the days of the incarnation. By remaining in control of all things during the incarnation of the Son, the Father was able to give control to the Son when the Son ascended to the right hand of the Father..

2. The Son humbled Himself to be sent. While on earth, the Son claimed to have been sent from the Father. “*But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish – the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me*” (Jn 5:36; see 8:17-19). The Son claimed sonship of the Father (Mt 16:16,17). The Son thus did the Father’s will (Jn 4:34; 6:38), while affirming that He was less than the Father when on earth (Jn 10:29; 14:28). The Father, therefore, remained in control of all things while the Son was incarnate on the earth.

3. The Son revealed the spiritual nature of God. While on earth, Jesus was the image of the invisible God (Cl 1:15). In other words, in order to see and know God, one must understand Jesus. Jesus said, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14:9). This is not in the empirical sense of sight perception. God is spirit (Jn 4:24). He does not have the physical presentation of man. Therefore, Jesus was not referring to His physical presentation on earth. What Jesus meant was that the Son revealed the spiritual character of God. We see God through the spiritual character of Jesus who revealed the character of

God to us through His person. In this way, therefore, Jesus is the image of God (2 Co 4:4). The only way to know God is to know Jesus. Anyone who does not know Jesus, therefore, cannot know God. Religions of the world that do not focus on the revelation of God through His word can never come to a true knowledge of God. It is for this reason that it is essential to find God through our understanding of Jesus in the Bible.

Jesus elevates our understanding of God above the level of man, for we see in Him who is greater than man. However, we would not assume that Jesus on earth revealed the maximum of God. We must remember that Jesus gave up the “form” and “equality” of God when He was in an incarnate state of existence on this earth. To what extent He gave up Deity can be debated. Nevertheless, the closest we can come to understand God while we are in this state of existence is through a knowledge of Jesus in His incarnate state, which state is recorded in the Bible.

On the cross, Jesus committed His spirit to the Father (Lk 23:46). Jesus went to the grave, and then in resurrection, returned to the Father (Jn 14:12) when He ascended on high (Dn 7:13,14; Jn 20:17; Ep 1:20). Paul said, “*Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer*” (2 Co 5:16). So we must in our understanding of the relationship between the Father and Son, graduate to heaven where the Son is now head over all things at the right hand of the Father (Cl 1:18). He is now King of kings and

Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). We must now know Him to have the power to uphold all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3). The Son came in subjection to the world, but now the world is in subjection to Him (Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). Our knowledge of Jesus as He now is in His glory is limited to the revelation of the Scriptures. However, there is coming a time when we will see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:2). We will be in His presence (2 Co 5:8).

D. The Son is exalted at the right hand of the Father.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul wrote, “*But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*” If we understand this passage from the view that there is a separation between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then it is easy to assume an interpretation that places the Father in authority over the Son and Holy Spirit. However, this passage can be understood from a different perspective than to assume that the Father is the head of the Son.

We must first understand that the passage was written after the ascension of Jesus. Therefore, it must be understood in the context of Jesus’ present position in reference to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (2 Co 5:16).

1 Corinthians 11:3 speaks of “God” being the head of Christ. It does not state that the word “God” refers specifically to the Father. The point is that no one manifestation of the Godhead works in-

dividually in order to carry out an independent agenda. Every manifestation, or “personality,” is subject to the oneness of the whole. In this way, the Son is subject to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as God. Each manifestation of God has separate works, but each manifestation is subject to the headship of God as a whole from whom the three are manifested. Paul’s emphasis in 1 Corinthians 11:3 would be that God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is the head of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 may help in understanding the authority and headship relationship between the Father and Son. Paul affirmed that when the end of the world comes, the Son will deliver kingdom reign to God (1 Co 15:28). This will come after all rule, authority and power have been subjected to the Son, “for He [the Son] must reign *till* He has put all enemies under His feet” (1 Co 15:25). The Son is now reigning in heaven. However, His reign will come to an end, for He will reign *till* all enemies are destroyed. The last enemy is not a power or person. It is physical death (1 Co 15:26). By the resurrection of all, and the termination of physical death, death itself will end (See Rv 20:13,14).

It will end at the time of the final resurrection.

At the present time of His state of exaltation, all things have been put under the headship of the Son, though we do not now see the reality of all things in subjection to the Son (Hb 2:8). All things are subjected to the Son except the Godhead (1 Co 15:27). When all things have finally been subjected to the Son, then the Son will submit to the Godhead who submitted all things to Him (1 Co 15:28). However, in the end “*when all things are made subject to Him [the Son], then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all*” (vs 28).

In the final outcome of all things, the Son will function among His brethren in subjection to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He will do such in order that God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—be the totality of the eternal plan that was in the mind of God from the very beginning of creation. The Son will submit to the three in order to carry throughout eternity the finality of the gospel plan of redemption. In this way God will be “all in all,” that is, all that is God will exist as such throughout eternity.

Chapter 4

THE MINISTRY OF THE SON

No manifestation of the Godhead has been idle at any one time in the history of the world. Throughout the Bible there is revealed the work of all that is God at all times. In reference to the Son, He, as

well as the Father and Holy Spirit, have not changed, and will not change in their gospel ministry to man from the beginning of time to the end of the world. What is important to remember is that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all three un-

changeable and active in accomplishing the gospel plan of redemption. Since the world is the result of the creative work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then we must assume that they continue to work together in fulfilling the purpose of the gospel.

A. The work of the Son in creation:

“In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth” (Gn 1:1). The Hebrew word “Elohim” is plural, as indicated by the plural pronoun in Genesis 1:26 where Moses revealed, *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man ...’* (See Gn 11:7). God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were at work in creation. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit spoke, though it was the specific work of the Son to create (Cl 1:16).

Through the revelation of the New Testament, we understand that the word “God” refers to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, the Jews did not have such an understanding, though Moses revealed through the plurality of the word *Elohim* that the omnipresent God could reveal Himself through the plurality of who God is. The Son of God had not yet been revealed to Israel until the revelation of the mystery of God through Jesus when He came into this world

We do not know how creation was actually carried out. Such is God’s business. However, we know that when God spoke, it was done (Ps 33:6-9). Nehemiah wrote, *“You alone are the Lord; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and*

all things on it, the seas and all that is in them” (Ne 9:6; see Jr 27:5; At 14:15; 17:24,25; Rv 4:11). The Old Testament reveals the creation of all things by *Elohim*, though it does not reveal the three manifestations of *Elohim* as does the New Testament.

When we turn to the New Testament revelation, we find more detail of whose work it was to create. John and Paul revealed, *“All things were made through Him [the Son], and without Him nothing was made that was made”* (Jn 1:3). *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth ...”* (Cl 1:16). The work of the Son was to create. Our understanding of Old Testament passages that speak of creation, therefore, must be interpreted by New Testament revelations that speak of the Son as the creator.

Some have used the term “agent” in reference to the Son as the creator. By this it is meant that the Father spoke and the Son did the actual creation work. The Hebrew writer stated in reference to the Son, *“... through Whom [the Son] also He [God] made the worlds [ages]”* (Hb 1:2). If we understand that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created as one through the specific work of the Son, then statements as John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16 harmonize with Hebrews 1:2. God works as one in all things, but in specific works through one or the other of the whole of the one God. When God created, it was “Us.” When specific credit is given for creation, it was “the Son.” But we cannot separate the Son from the “Us” who created all things, for the Fa-

ther, Son and Holy Spirit are one. The Son is given credit for creation since it is the work of the Son as God to create. We would not, therefore, say that the Son was the agent of creation. He was God at work in creation. He did not work alone as the gnostics affirmed that a digressive aeon mischievously created the material world. The Son did not work in creation in any way that would separate Him from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, when we conceive of God working in creation, we must understand that God worked as one through the work of the Son.

B. The work of the Son in the Old Testament:

We must not assume that any part of the Godhead is idle at any time in the history of the world. This is true of the work of the Son from the beginning of the world until His advent into the world through the virgin birth. Simply because there are no statements in the Old Testament as in the New Testament that refer to the Son of God, does not mean that the Son was on vacation until the time of the incarnation. He was active throughout the recorded history of the Old Testament in order to bring about the gospel of the cross.

Some Bible students have assumed that the “angel of the Lord,” sometimes referred to as the “angel of God,” was the Son of God at work in the Old Testament. The angel of the Lord was sent by God as His personal agent and spokesman to carry out missions and messages

on behalf of God. The close relationship of the angel of God with God is revealed in the fact that the first person singular is used in the angel’s discussions with those to whom he was sent (Gn 16; 21; 22; 31:13; Ex 3:2; Jg 6:11ff). The angel of the Lord is the one who brings judgment and destruction (2 Sm 24:16; 2 Kg 19:35; Ps 35:5,6; At 12:23; see 2 Th 1:6-9). He brings protection and deliverance (Ex 14:19; Ps 34:7; Is 63:9) and offers guidance and gives instructions (Gn 24:7,40; Ex 23:23; 1 Kg 19:7; 2 Kg 1:3). All these things were accomplished by God the Son who is revealed in the New Testament.

However, in every situation, we would not assume that the angel of the Lord is the Son of God because he is manifested in a physical form in Genesis 16:1-13. Sarah said, “*Have I also here seen Him who sees me?*” We would not conclude that the Son of God was incarnate in a presence before Sarah before His incarnation in the virgin birth.

Though we would conclude that the angel of the Lord was not the preexistent Christ, Paul does mention the Christ as the Rock that followed Israel in the wilderness. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 Paul said,

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and **that Rock***

was Christ.

The Son of God was the Rock that gave direction to Israel in the wilderness. He was the foundation upon which they stood. The preexistent Christ was with Israel in order to preserve the seedline of woman for His incarnation into this world.

C. The work of the Son as a teacher:

It was the work of Jesus to teach the disciples, and then commission them to all the world to teach what they had been taught (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). Jesus was a teacher among men (Jn 3:2). He taught daily in the temple when in Jerusalem (Lk 22:53). He went about doing and teaching throughout His earthly ministry (Mt 4:23; At 1:1). And when it was time for Him to ascend to the Father, He commissioned His disciples to continue His teaching ministry. *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Mt 28:19,20).

Jesus’ incarnation and ministry reached far beyond being a good teacher. He was the Lamb of God who was slain before the creation of the world (Rv 13:8). He was as John proclaimed, *“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (Jn 1:29; see Is 53:11; 1 Co 15:3; Gl 1:4; 1 Pt 2:24; 1 Jn 2:2; Rv 1:5). The cross was the primary reason for the incarnation. It was the destiny of the Son that determines our own destiny.

D. The work of the Son to offer an eternal sacrifice:

When the Son was incarnate in the world, it was His work to do the will of the Father. Jesus said, *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work”* (Jn 4:34) *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me”* (Jn 6:38; see Mt 26:39; Jn 5:20,36; 17:4; 19:30; Hb 5:8). Jesus thus worked the works of the Father throughout His ministry in order to accomplish the purpose for which He was incarnate.

Through the cross, the Son revealed the grace of God (Ep 2:6-9; Ti 2:11; 1 Jn 4:14), and thus, He brought salvation to all men. Through His death on the cross, atonement was made for the sins of all those who would respond to the grace of God. As a result of one’s obedient response to the gospel, eternal life is given to those who come to the blood of the Lamb (Jn 3:16; 10:28; 17:2).

The sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God was necessary because only through such a sacrifice could eternal life be made possible. It was impossible that any living creature that originated solely from this earth should be an adequate sacrifice that would obligate God to forgive the sins of men. The Hebrew writer stated that *“it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”* (Hb 10:4). Therefore, there had to be a connection between the “world” of God and the physical world of man. Only God can obligate Himself to forgive sins. Nothing of this world could in any way

be a sufficient sacrifice that would result in the forgiveness of sin that exists between God and man. Nothing from that which was created could demand atonement from that which creates. The created cannot obligate the Creator. Therefore, the incarnation of Deity was necessary to make the connection between God and the material. Since only God can deal with sin against God, then only God can provide the remedy for sin.

Some have wondered why it could not be that something of creation could have been offered as a sacrifice for the sins of man. Why not an animal? Why not a good moral saint? Why not even an angel? Why not Gabriel? Though we do not propose to understand the totality of God's mind, we would dare to assume that God would not accept as an eternal sacrifice anything that was the work of His creation. In reference to sin, God could not accept a cheap sacrifice.

All that exists resulted from the creative work of God. From angels to angel fish, nothing now exists that did not come from God's creative power (Cl 1:16). *"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made out of the things which are visible"* (Hb 11:3). All that was created depends on the power of God for continuation in existence. He upholds *"all things by the word of His power"* (Hb 1:3). How could an eternal sacrifice be found by that which needs the power of God to continue in existence? Only God is indigenous in eternity. Only God can endlessly exist without being "propped up"

by an external power. And thus, in order to offer a sacrifice that would be "once and for all," it had to come from that which has the indigenous power to exist for all time. There could be no created sacrifice that could sufficiently accomplish what God alone had to do. Therefore, before the world was created, and before the very first breath went into the nostrils of man, the Lamb was slain in a predetermined plan to save man from his sin (Rv 13:8).

The divine connection between God and man was Jesus, through whom a sufficient sacrifice for sins was made for all time. The Hebrew writer stated, *"And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man [Jesus], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God"* (Hb 10:11,12). *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"* (Hb 10:14). No animal, no man and no angel could ever have accomplished this eternal sacrifice. God the Son did not create a sufficient sacrifice for our sins. He was the sufficient sacrifice.

E. The work of the Son as King and head:

The Son once and for all offered a sufficient sacrifice for sin. He is now at the right hand of God (Hb 8:1). Our present understanding of Jesus is that He is far above all power that is manifested in this world. Christians now know Jesus as more than a teacher of Palestine (2 Co

5:16). They know Him beyond His ministry on earth, for He is now King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).

When Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father, He began a new work in reference to those who respond to the gospel. In reference to that which He now does for the benefit of the redeemed, He functions in the following capacity:

1. He is now King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).
2. He is head over all things for the sake of the church (Ep 1:22).
3. He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3).
4. He is in control of all (1 Pt 3:22).
5. He functions as the Christian's High Priest (Hb 8:1)
6. He is making intercession on behalf of Christians (Hb 7:25).
7. He functions as an advocate for Christians (1 Jn 2:1).
8. He is the Christian's mediator with God (1 Tm 2:5).

Jesus is now King, Lord, Head, High Priest, Intercessor, Advocate and Mediator. It was through Jesus' redemptive work on behalf of man that made it possible for us to come to Him through obedience to the gospel. He is now the Lamb who is worthy to control that which God works in the affairs of man. In this sense, therefore, we can understand what John revealed in Revelation 5 concerning the future to those to whom he wrote. In the vision John recorded that an angel proclaimed, "*Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?*" (Rv 5:2). No one could except "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah,*

the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll" (Rv 5:5). He was worthy to open and loose because He was slain, and thus, "*redeemed us to God by*" His blood (Rv 5:9; Jn 1:29; Hb 9:12; 1 Pt 1:18,19).

E. The work of the Son in final judgment:

The authority of final judgment has been given into the hands of the Son. Paul proclaimed,

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained (At 17:30,31).

The One that God has ordained to judge the world in righteousness is the same Jesus who walked on this earth. By the word of Jesus, the world will be judged (Jn 12:48). He will "*judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom*" (2 Tm 4:1). "*It is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead*" (At 10:42). Therefore, "*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body*" (2 Co 5:10; see Rm 2:16; 14:10,12).

It is the Son of the eternal Godhead who has been given the right to judge. He is the One who is worthy to make the final judgment of all. John revealed, "*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!*" (Rv 5:12; see 4:11). Because

of His sacrifice, it is Jesus who is worthy to accomplish judgment, for it is through His cross that all who respond to God by faith and obedience will be brought into eternal glory.

When all things have been subjected to the Son, and the last enemy destroyed, then the Son will have completed His gospel ministry as the redeemer of those who have submitted to Him. The Son

will return kingdom reign to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1 Co 15:24) in order “*that God may be all in all*” (1 Co 15:28). What will be the state or relationship between God and man in eternity is yet to be revealed. The Son will have concluded His redemptive work, and thus, into eternity will go those who have responded to the grace of God by obedience to the gospel. It is these who will dwell with God for eternity.