

Sabbath School Lesson #3 – The Backstory: The Prologue – 12-18 October 2024

Christ is Divine, for He is the begotten Son of God. John writes about Christ's Divinity [Greek supplied]: "In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word [Logos] was with God [Theon], and the Word was God [Theos]" (John 1:1). This a common proof text used by trinitarians, but it does not support the trinity doctrine. Ellen White made these non-trinitarian statements that suffice: "The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity, but not in personality" {20LtMs, Ms 116, 1905, par. 19}. "From eternity there was a complete unity between the Father and the Son. They were two, yet little short of being identical; two in individuality, yet one in spirit, and heart, and character" {YI December 16, 1897, par. 5}. No trinitarian would either agree with or make such statements. "God is a person, and Christ is a person. Christ is spoken of in the Word as "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person" {19LtMs, Ms 46, 1904, par. 15}.

Sunday: In the Beginning – The Divine Logos – Read John 1:1–5. The Lesson writer asks, "how can the Word be with God and at the same time be God?" We agree with the Lesson writer's explanation: "In the phrase "the Word was with God," the term "God" has the definite article, thus, pointing to a particular individual, the Father. And the Word was with the Father. In the phrase, "and the Word was God," the term "God" does not have the article, which, in this setting, points to the characteristics of divinity. Jesus is God — not the Father, but He is still the divine Son of God...." But we must disagree with the Lesson writer's addition: "... the second Person of the Godhead" – the Lesson writer alludes to a trinitarian view of God in three persons, a falsehood that also deny the death of the Son of God on the cross and the risk of eternal loss. The trinity view cannot accept the risk factor in the death of Christ, for in trinitarianism, 'the one God', as depicted by the trinity doctrine, can never undergo change. Certainly, none of the three persons could cease to exist else the 'one God' would cease to exist – which would supposedly be impossible. In trinitarian theology therefore, no matter what would have happened in the incarnation, the divine Son of God always remains an integral part of the 'one (triune) God'. In trinitarian reasoning, nothing could possibly happen to Him. He can no more undergo change (or cease to exist) than can the 'one (triune) God'. But that reasoning is contrary to all the following quotations in the Spirit of Prophecy: "Christ has found His pearl of great price in lost, perishing souls. He sold all that he had to come into possession, even engaged to do the work, and run the risk of losing his own life in the conflict" {10LtMs, Lt 119, 1895, par. 32}; "Remember that Christ risked all; 'tempted like as we are,' he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict" {GCB December 1, 1895, par. 23}; "Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss" {DA 49.1}; "Then as the glories of the eternal home burst upon our enraptured senses we shall remember that Jesus left all this for us, that He not only became an exile from the heavenly courts, but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss" {DA 131.2}. If God is a trinity as purported in our 1980 fundamental beliefs (meaning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit constitute the 'one God' therefore these three persons are inseparably connected to each other in the one indivisible being of God), this would make it impossible for any of the three to lose their eternal existence. Ellen White obviously disagreed with this reasoning, she believed they could become separated – and permanently, – for she was never a trinitarian.

Monday: The Word Made Flesh – Read John 1:1-3, 14. What does Christ being made flesh has to do with us who are of human flesh? "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:3). It does not say that every spirit that openly denies it, but every spirit that does not confess it. Bearing in mind what is meant by confession, we learn from these verses in John's epistle that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a fact, whether we confess it or not. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:14). "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it

behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:16-18). The Apostle Peter exhorts us by this fact. “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (1 Peter 4:1-2). He who arms himself with the same mind as Christ, will not, even while remaining in the flesh, live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of the flesh; because although Christ suffered in the flesh, being tempted in all points like as we are, yet it was without sin. He the Son of God, coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, “condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). The divine Word “was made flesh and dwelt among us,” in us – in our very life, “full of grace and truth.”

Tuesday: Hearing or Not Hearing the Word – Read John 1:9-13. What do you make of verse 9? The literal Son of God has never been easily acceptable. In Adventism, the literal Son of God is not popular, the church prefers a metaphorical Son. In His first Advent, Christ was very unpopular: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Very few believed on Him as the Son of God, and they were of the most despised class, and at the last even these forsook Him, while He suffered the most bitter persecution. And what does He say to His disciples? “If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” Those, then, who are waiting for truth to become popular before accepting it, will wait in vain.

Wednesday: Reappearing Themes – Belief/Unbelief – Read John 3:16-21; 9:35–41; 12:36-46; 6:29. What does it mean to “believe on Him whom God hath sent” (John 6:29)? The story of the healing of the blind man answers that, saying, “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him” (John 9:35-38). To “believe on Him whom God hath sent” is to believe and receive Christ as the real Son of God. The Sonship of Christ is not mere title of Christ, but the relationship He has with God. In no any other way can the “works of God”, which includes real liberty, be manifest in any professed child of God. The “works of God” were manifest in the man born blind when the man believed that Christ was the Son of God. The man believed that God was truly the Father of Christ, and that Christ was truly the real Son of God. Only then were the “works of God” manifest in the man. This is what we are told earlier in the story, “And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:1-3). The “works of God” can only be manifest in a person if that person accepts the whole purpose of Scripture, which we learnt earlier is to (a) “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”, so that (b) “believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:31). The “works of God” being “manifest” in the man was not only when he was healed from blindness, much as that led him to see Christ, but were manifest in him when he believed that Christ was indeed the literal Son of God. The man born blind believed in the literal, not metaphorical, Son of God.

Thursday: Reappearing Themes – Glory – Read John 17:1-5. How do you understand the fact Jesus Himself said that “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”? Ellen White said, “The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity, but not in personality” {20LtMs, Ms 116, 1905, par. 19}. Notice, here Ellen White expresses two ways in which someone can be God: in infinity (nature) or in personality (identity). God the Father, essentially, is the “only true God” in personality; His Son is not truly God in personality. But both the Father and His Son are truly God in infinity: both possess infinite love from an infinite divine nature. This statement is also fully compatible with the original Adventist belief in the literal divine Son of God. Why? Because a literal Son inherits the very same nature of His literal Father. In essence, the statement says, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father is not truly God in personality. It directly contradicts modern “God in three persons” position.