

Who is God?

Lesson #3 – The Son

Lesson Objectives

- Explain eternity in terms of the past and future.
- Understand the eternal existence of the Son and explain the significance of His eternal existence with regard to salvation.
- Understand the sacrifice of the Son. Who was it for and why was it necessary?
- Explain the preeminence of the Son.

Lesson

1. The Eternal Existence of the Son

1.1. The two sides of eternity

- When we think of eternity, we typically think of a *future* state of existence. However, that's not a complete view of the concept of eternity. Eternity is defined as a *duration of time that has no beginning or end*. In this respect, eternity is not merely a future state of existence, but it also represents the period that preceded time itself. Though difficult for the finite human mind to comprehend, God not only created all *things*, He created *time* itself. God is an eternal being that is wholly outside of the boundaries of time. Just as He called time into existence, He will one day call it to an end. There will be a day when the final second is ticked off every watch, clock, and computer in the world. When that happens, God will still be because He is the "*I AM*".

Exod 3:14 (KJV)

3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

- While only God existed *before* time began, many things will exist in eternity *after* time ends. Man, having been created in the image of God, will exist for eternity. According to the scripture, most will spend that eternity in Hell after having rejected the salvation that was offered to them in life. Those who are saved will spend eternity in Heaven with God. Yet both will exist, in one of these two states, eternally.

1.2. Scriptural evidence of the Son's eternal existence

- All three persons of the Trinity existed together before time was called into existence (referred to as *eternity past*). Below are scriptures that show the Son's eternal existence before time began.

John 1:1-2 (KJV)

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Rev 13:8 (KJV)

13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

John 17:5 (KJV)

17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

John 17:24 (KJV)

17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

1.3. Significance of the Son's eternal existence with regard to salvation

- It's important to understand the eternal existence of the Son in order to understand the plan of salvation. As was seen in the previous lesson on the attributes of the Father, God does not change. Some men have speculated that the fall of man in the Garden of Eden took God by surprise. However, Jesus already stood as *the Lamb of God* from the very foundation of the world. God knew that man would sin and the Son agreed beforehand to be the sacrifice that would satisfy the law. As God was forming man from the dust of the ground, and as He breathed life into him, the Son knew He would have to die in order to make redemption possible.
- Some have claimed that man was saved in the Old Testament by the sacrificial system of offering the blood of animals. However, we are told plainly in the scriptures that the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was a type and foreshadow of Christ. In Hebrews 10:4, it is stated directly that the blood of the animals sacrificed did not save anyone.

Heb 10:4 (KJV)

10:4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

- Rather than being effective in bringing salvation directly, the sacrificial system pointed men to one who would come (the Son) to be the redeemer of lost mankind.

Heb 9:11-12 (KJV)

9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

- The ultimate significance of the Son's eternal existence is that it proves that the way of salvation has always been through Him. Jesus is *the way*, and has always been *the way*, and will always be *the way*.

2. The Sacrifice of the Son

2.1. Why was the Son's sacrifice necessary?

- The justice of God made the sacrifice of the Son necessary in order to make it possible for man to be redeemed. Without His sacrifice, man would be forever separated from God. God gave Adam and Eve one commandment, to not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told them clearly what the result would be if they disobeyed His command.

Gen 2:17 (KJV)

2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

- Most think of death as an end, but death is actually a *separation* more than an *end*. When Adam and Eve sinned, they became sinners and were separated from the presence and fellowship of God. God's justice demanded payment of the penalty of sin, which is death. Because God is always consistent with His own nature, it was impossible for Him to look beyond the sin that man had committed. The sin brought the penalty of death upon man. As previously stated though, Jesus already stood as a lamb slain who would pay the penalty of man's sin so that he might be redeemed (bought back) and restored to fellowship with God. God prophesied of His Son's sacrifice in Genesis 3:15. In that verse, God the Father foretells of His Son's sacrificial death and propitiation for man's sin. Without the sacrifice of the Son, we would all be separated eternally from God, but through His sacrifice, we have access once again to God.

Eph 2:18 (KJV)

2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

2.2. Who was the Son's sacrifice for?

- The Bible is clear when it comes to understanding for whom Jesus died. He came because of His love for man. All the might of the Roman army could not have placed Jesus on the cross and kept Him there. When Peter attempted to fend off the men that came to take Jesus to His trial and crucifixion, Jesus told him to put his sword away and that if He desired it, the Father would send Him 12 legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). He willingly laid down His life so that all men might have an opportunity to find redemption through His sacrifice. The language of the scripture with regard to the extent of the Lord's sacrifice is inclusive of everyone.
- A fact that is often overlooked today is that while the Lord paid the penalty of sin for man, He also paid it to satisfy His Father and because of the love He has for His Father. He went to the cross because He loved man, yet He also went because of His love for His Father. The vast majority of preaching in mainstream Christianity is highly man-centered. Man is made out to be the object of all of the Lord's work. John 3:16 is often quoted as justification for this man-centeredness.

John 3:16 (KJV)

3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

- While the *depth* of the Lord's love for man is immense, John 3:16 isn't referring to the *depth* of the Lord's love. The key in this verse is to understand the word "so". When most read it, they believe it's referring to *how much* God loved the world. However, the Greek word translated "so" in the King James Version of the bible means "*in this manner*", or "*in this way*". When a correct understanding of the word "so" in this verse is obtained, we see that this verse is actually speaking of "*how God loved the world*", and not "*how much God loved the world*". God loved the world by sending His Son. He sent Him because man needed a redeemer, and man needed a redeemer because man is a sinner in the sight of God. In order to understand God's love, man needs to understand *how* God has loved them. In order to understand how God has loved them, man must understand the Son and His sacrifice for their sin.
- With these thoughts in mind, we see that Jesus died to redeem man, and to satisfy the justice of His Father. It is true that when Jesus was on the cross, we were on His mind. However, it's also true that while on the cross, His mind was equally on His Father as well.

Man is in this way a benefactor of the Lord's love for both man, and the Father. It's important to keep this in mind so that man does not become the focal point in the gospel message. There has been much damage done to the plan of salvation by making man the focal point. Modern day prosperity preachers will tell you that God saw something worthy in you to save and that due to some inherent worthiness in you, He died on the cross. Men have begun to think that they are somehow worth dying for. This is clearly not the case when the scriptures are studied. The scriptures reveal man to be wholly sinful, with nothing worthwhile in them to merit even the Lord's condescension to look upon them. Yet, in our sin, Christ died for us. We ought never to exalt man to a place of worthiness or meritorious of the Son of God's death on the cross at the hands of sinful men. Furthermore, we ought to be careful to not misinterpret scriptures like John 3:16 as justification for doing so. Salvation is completely by grace, not a perceived merit of a man.

Rom 5:7-8 (KJV)

5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

3. The Preeminence of the Son

3.1. With God

- The scriptures make it clear that the Father looks upon His Son as that which pleases Him the most. When Jesus was baptized, the Father expressly states His pleasure with His Son.

Matt 3:16-17 (KJV)

3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

- We are also told in scripture that Jesus is to have the preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:18). To have preeminence is to be first, superior, or surpassing of other things. A right knowledge of the Son will involve our giving to Him the preeminence in all things. He is to be preeminent in our church, our homes, and our hearts. The Son should receive the praise and honor of our worship. As John the Baptist put it, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" [John 3:30] All too often, our singing, preaching, even testifying in the church is geared toward the praise and honor of other men. We must diligently guard against doing this because when we exalt man, we at the same time debase Christ. It's all but impossible

to lift up man and Christ at the same time. While we can be thankful for what the Lord has done through others, our praise and honor must be given to God, not man. Paul brings this thought before us when he asks what we have to be proud of, since everything we have has been given to us by God.

1Cor 4:7 (KJV)

4:7 For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?

3.2. In Salvation

- Jesus told us that He is the way, the truth, and the life.

John 14:6 (KJV)

14:6 Jesus saith unto him, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

- So many Christians today have a less than mature understanding of this profound verse of scripture. Many think of Jesus as only the *way* to Heaven. Yet, from this verse and others like it, we learn that Jesus is not just a *means to an end*. He isn't only the *means* (way) to get to Heaven, but He is the *objective* and *goal* of Heaven (truth and life). We don't repent and believe merely to gain access to Heaven and then look for something beyond the Son as the reward of Heaven. Yet so many today are preaching a gospel that makes the Son merely the way to something they perceive as greater than Christ Himself. Many will think of Heaven and imagine themselves in a mansion setting just off a street paved with gold where their mother, grandmother and family continually gather to enjoy an eternal family reunion. The problem with this picture is that it's entirely unbiblical (recall our study of the sources of knowledge). According to the scriptures, no one will be married and our earthly relationships will be dissolved. Additionally, none of us have a mansion waiting for us just over the hilltop despite what some of our songs may tell us. Jesus did not promise us a *mansion*. What He promised us was a *place*. The idea that everyone will have a mansion comes from the King James translation of John 14:2. However, a study of the Greek word that was translated *mansion* in the King James actually means a *dwelling*, or more simply, a *place*. When men attempts to lure people into becoming a Christian with promises of anything beyond Christ, they are presenting a false gospel. Jesus must always be preeminent in our preaching and teaching. He must be presented as not only the *way* to Heaven, but the *goal* of Heaven as well. He must be so preeminent in our hearts that even

if we were given a mansion in Heaven, we would never stay there because of our desire to be with Christ above all other things.

Conclusion

- The Son is King of kings and Lord of lords. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess this truth. All of creation centers on Him and all of history looks to Him. He will be the light of the city in Heaven and He is to be exalted above all other things. He is not only the *way*, He is the *destination*.