

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSE

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LESSON 16 • THE FATHER AND THE SON

Reading: Isaiah 45

"Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7).

This question was asked thousands of years ago by a man called Job. The answer to the question is the same today as it was then - of course we cannot!

We cannot know anything at all about the Great Maker of all things, apart from what He Himself tells us in His Word, the Bible.

Yet we can have no hope of eternal life unless we know Him.

The only way we can know about God is by reading His book, the Bible, which He has given us. God Himself has said:

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8,9).

God is One

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

Moses spoke these words to the Israelites in the wilderness.

The message that 'God is One' is repeated again and again in Scripture. In Isaiah 45:5 we read:

"I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me." More than a thousand years later, the apostle Paul tells us the same thing:

"... there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5), and again, in 1 Timothy 6:15-16 Paul speaks of God as "... the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

This holy God is a God of love

If the Bible told us only of the power and holiness of God, we should certainly fear Him; but we might find it difficult to love Him. But God has shown us that He is also merciful and kind. The Psalmist tells us:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy... Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:8,13-14).

It is in His mercy and His love that God has given the Lord Jesus to take away our sins.

The Son of God

From the beginning, God planned to send His Son to be our Saviour. There are many prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament, such as the one in Isaiah 7:14, where we read:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." 'Immanuel' means, 'God with us'. and God is here promising to send His own Son. Look at these other passages which show that Jesus is the Son of God:

Galatians 4:4

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law."

Mark 1:11

"There came a voice from heaven, saying, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" (God said this at Jesus' baptism.)

John 20:31

that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

Jesus did not pre-exist

When birth takes place, a new life comes into being. The birth of Jesus Christ was no exception.

Some people believe that the Lord Jesus Christ existed before he was born of Mary. There is a sense in which you could say that Jesus was there from the beginning, because God had planned right from the beginning to have a Son. Now, if God plans anything, we know with absolute certainty that it will come to pass. Jesus Christ is at the centre of God's purpose, so when God told faithful people in the Old Testament about His purpose, He told them about Christ.

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In the same way the Bible speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). This does not mean that Jesus was slain before the creation of the world - that terrible event happened once, nearly 2000 years ago (see Hebrews 9:25-28), when Jesus was crucified. Because the death of Jesus is so central to the purpose of God, the Almighty speaks of it as an event so important that it affects all people in all times - Old Testament as well as since. So it has influenced everything 'from the foundation of the world'. The Bible often uses language like this to describe the Lord Jesus, but it does not mean that he was personally alive before his birth.

Christ was in the mind of God as someone He would bring into being at His appointed time. But it was not until Mary's baby was born that the Lord Jesus became a living person.

The nature of Jesus

Because Jesus was born of a woman, he had a nature just like ours. In Hebrews 2:17 we read:

"In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren."

During his life on earth Jesus was tempted in every way but he never sinned.

Look at these passages, all taken from the book of Hebrews, that show that Jesus shared our human nature when he was living on the earth:

Hebrews 4:15

"For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Hebrews 2:14

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus) also himself likewise took part of the same."

Hebrews 2:9

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Hebrews 5:7,8

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he (Jesus) had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

Of course, Jesus was only like this before his death and resurrection. After the resurrection he was given a glorious and powerful immortal nature.

A wrong idea

Many people have neglected the Bible teaching about God, and so they have come to believe in something which they call "the Trinity". They tell us that God consists of three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all equal with each other. (We shall be considering the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit, in Lesson 20.)

The word 'Trinity' and the phrase 'God the Son' do not occur in the Bible. We have already seen the plain Bible teaching that God is One, and that Jesus is His Son. In the same way that a good son is subject to his father, so Jesus is subject to God. He never claimed to be equal with God, but depended on his Father for all things. He said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19).

It is true that Jesus once said: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). He meant that he and his Father were united in purpose and intention, and he prayed that in the same way his disciples would be one (John 17:21).

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

This verse tells us that, even at the end of his 1,000 year reign on earth, Jesus will be subject to his Father, and God will be all in all.

Where did belief in the Trinity come from?

The early Christians did not believe in the Trinity. They believed what the Bible taught - that there is

"... one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Where did the false idea of the Trinity come from?

It was not until over 300 years after Jesus was born that Christians began to believe in 'the Trinity'. This idea was based, not on the Bible, but on the ideas of the Ancient Greeks, who knew nothing about the one true God. Gradually, the church took over the idea of 'three Gods in one', and denied the Bible truth that God is One.

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The true belief of the first Christians

The 'Apostles' Creed', which was composed about 100 years after Jesus went up into heaven, sets out the beliefs of the early Christians. In it we read:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary ..."

This is the true teaching of the Bible (unlike some of the other Creeds).

The Majesty and the power of God are beyond anything we can imagine. We simply cannot begin to understand how the Eternal God could have a son born of a young woman of flesh and blood. But God tells us that it was so, and we know His word is true. We must accept it in faith.

If we are to please God, we must accept what He tells us without adding ideas of men - ideas which are not taught in the Bible.

Summary

1. There is only one God.
2. God is not 'three-in-one'. The doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible.
3. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. He is not God the Son.
4. Jesus was a man; but because God was his Father, he was far, far greater than any other man.
5. The birth of Jesus was a miracle, because his mother was a virgin. His only Father was God Almighty.

If you want to read more about this subject, which is very important, ask for the book JESUS - GOD THE SON OR SON OF GOD? to be sent to you.

Other passages to look up

Jesus' existence as a person started at his birth

1 Peter 1:20; Hebrews 9:26

Jesus was a man

Acts 2:22; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 2:9,14-18

God is greater than Jesus

Ephesians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 11:3; John 14:28; John 10:29

Chapters to read: Deuteronomy 6; Matthew 1:18-25

Learn by heart: 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."