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God



Three
Persons

PHIL
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Topics subject to change without notice

OCTOBER 5 – GOD THE FATHER

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father, who is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9). Who is the Father in heaven and what can we know about Him? Our Father is not visible to us, but He has revealed Himself in many ways.

OCTOBER 12 – JESUS THE SON

Jesus frequently describes Him merely as the Son. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man. The Scriptures describe Him as divine but also as coming in the flesh. How do we understand Jesus as both fully human and fully divine?

OCTOBER 19 – THE HOLY SPIRIT

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament speak of the Holy Spirit. Some versions speak of the Spirit as an “it,” Who or what is the Holy Spirit, and is He a divine person or merely a force or influence in the world?

OCTOBER 26 – ONE GOD, THREE PERSONS

The Scriptures clearly teach there is but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4), yet the Scripture also describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as persons who interact with each other. How can there be three and yet be one?

God the Father

When someone speaks of God, is He a mystery to you? Today we're going to see how God has revealed Himself to man. Second Peter 1:20-21 says, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The men who penned the words of the Bible didn't make up what they wrote, but they spoke from God. Because the Holy Spirit moved them to write, their words are utterly trustworthy. The Bible is holy because God is holy.

Though most people in America believe in, God many have serious questions about Him and many misunderstand Him. Paul Froese and Christopher Bader in their book, *America's Four Gods*, say that Americans view God in four ways. Some believe in an "authoritative God" who judges people and is engaged in their lives. A second group believe in a "benevolent God" who is thoroughly involved in their lives, but is loving, not stern. A third group thought that God was a "critical God" who is removed from daily events, but will render judgment in the afterlife. The fourth group said that He's a "distant God" who set the universe in motion, but then disengaged."

Surveying people only tells us what people think. Surveys only show disagreements, and a majority opinion isn't a guarantee of the truth. We believe it's better to survey the Word of God to discover what God says about Himself. Romans 3:4 says, "Let God be true though every one were a liar." Humans are often misinformed and easily deceived, but what God says proves true. If you want to find the truth about God, look to God Himself! He will never lie or deceive you.

Our scripture reading comes from Psalm 103:1-5, a Psalm of David. "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle."

How does God speak about Himself? First, God, the Father, is a person, not a force or some disengaged power. The gods of the ancient times were made by human hands of wood or stone. These idols were formed the way people wanted. They couldn't see, hear, speak, or answer prayers. In contrast, the Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Paul said, "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature (that is, the Godhead), is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man" (Acts 17:29).

Instead, the God of the Bible who created us sees everything good and bad. He hears our prayers; He provides for our needs; He protects us in times of trouble, and forgives our sins. Jesus invites us to pray to our heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus said, "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:9-11). God the Father is a person who rejoices when we obey and grieves when we sin.

Second, the God of the Bible is utterly unique, and there is no one and nothing else like Him in all the universe. Exodus 15:11 says, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" The many gods of the Greeks and Romans were petty, uncaring, harsh, selfish, sinful, vengeful, and limited in power. They were also invented by men. In contrast, the God of heaven is merciful, compassionate, comforting, loving, and perfect. He calls us to live holy and righteous lives, to be kind and good to others, and to love Him as He loves us. The Lord Jesus reminds us that He is ever attentive to our needs. "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:29-30).

Third, God is spirit. A Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar asked Jesus about where she should worship. The Lord Jesus told the woman, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). In Luke 24:39 Jesus said, "A spirit does not have flesh and bones." Spirits aren't physical or material; they don't have the limits that you and I have. God is supernatural; that is, He is above nature.

Fourth, God is infinite. God isn't limited by space or time but is omnipresent, everywhere present. David asked, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me" (Psalm 139:7-10).

Sometimes children ask, "Well, if God created us, who made God?" God wasn't made; He wasn't created; He's always existed. God introduced Himself to Moses at the burning bush as, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). God was explaining that He is self-existent, that He has always been. God is eternal; we are temporal, but God is eternal. Moses wrote, "Before the mountains were born, Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:2). John heard God say, "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'" (Revelation 1:8). Though you and I measure time, to God "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).

We need to know that God isn't limited in knowledge or wisdom, but is omniscient; He knows all. Psalm 147:5 simply says that God's "understanding is infinite." Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good." Isaiah 46:10 reminds us that God can declare "the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'" David said, "Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all" (Psalm 139:4). God knows what we'll say because God knows our hearts. He sees into our souls. David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23-24).

God isn't limited in power like you and I. Jeremiah 32:17 says, "'Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your

outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.” The Lord Jesus said, “with people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God” (Mark 1:27).

Fifth, God is light! First John 1:5 says, “This is the message that we have heard from Him and we announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” God has absolute purity and holiness; in Him is no sin at all. God’s holiness means that He cannot and will not approve of sin.

Sixth, God is love. First John 4:8-10 says, “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). The faithful Christian understands that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37-39). He realizes that God demonstrated His love for us when we were weak, ungodly, and sinners; and He did this by sacrificing His Son Jesus on the cross.

Some say if God condemns sin He cannot be loving; for if God is truly loving, He will not punish sinners. But these traits, light, Holiness, and love are not contradictory but are complementary in describing the nature of God. God isn’t all grace or all wrath. One can be loving and yet still disapprove of sin. In fact, one cannot be loving without disapproving of sin. Good parents discipline their children because it’s what’s best for the child, and it’s best for them in the long run. Unloving parents don’t care what their children do. Since God cares what we do, He disciplines us in this life so He won’t have to punish us in the next life.

Ultimately God loves everyone, but He judges people according to their works, blessing those who repent and obey and showing wrath on those who will not obey. Romans 2:5-11 addresses some Christians who were stubborn and rebellious. Paul said “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, (He’ll give them) eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.” How we react to God will determine our future with or without God. God is consistent in how He treats His people and in how He treats those who will not obey the truth. God said, “Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them” (Ezekiel 8:18).

Seventh, God doesn’t change and He cannot be changed. God said, “For I, the LORD, do not change” (Malachi 3:6). James said, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:17). Because God doesn’t change we can know His words hold true for all time. Psalm 119:89 says, “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” Psalm 33:11 says, “The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.”

Because God doesn't change, we can rely on God. God keeps His promises. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor the son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" From the beginning we have seen how God keeps His promises. God told Noah, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). Our days and months and seasons still continue with precision just as they did in the beginning. God keeps His promises. After taking the land of Israel from the people of Canaan in fulfillment of God's commands, Joshua said, "Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).

God is faithful! Deuteronomy 7:9 says, "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments." First Thessalonians 5:24 says, "Faithful is He who calls you, and He will bring it to pass." Because God is faithful, we can depend on Him to keep His promises and to help us in our lives. For instance, God helps His people when they're tempted to sin. First Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it." God is also faithful when we seek forgiveness. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Even when the world was crashing down on Jeremiah in the destruction of Jerusalem, he could say, "'The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him'" (Lamentations 3:22-24). You too can have full confidence in God.

If God the Father created you, if He gives you life and daily provides for you, if He sent His Son Jesus to die for your sins, shouldn't you give Him your trust, your love, and your obedience? Each one of us is accountable to the one true and living God found in the Bible. He is God and there is no other. He watched His beloved Son suffer crucifixion; and no one will ever love you as He has loved you. No one else can save your soul. No one else can give you eternal life.

Each day we choose whether we'll follow Him or refuse Him. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it's impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of those who seek Him." Without faith in God and in Christ we can never be pleasing to God. The Lord Jesus said to His apostles, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

God loves you deeply and wants you to be saved from sin and live eternally in heaven with Him. Everything He's done since the beginning was to bring you truth and to save you. Every law of God is for your good. Will you not put your trust in Him, repent of your sins, be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Today is your best day to get right with God. Nothing is as important as making your calling and election sure, of knowing that you have obeyed the gospel. Will you obey today?

Jesus the Son

Spiritually and morally Jesus was the most outstanding man who ever lived. Was He just a man? Today we will explore the deity of Jesus. I'm thankful for the Scriptures because they tell me what I need to know about the Lord Jesus Christ; they teach the undeniable truth. It's a great blessing and privilege to know Him and to serve Him. The Scriptures open the door for us to have a close relationship with the One who created us, saves us, and loves us.

What shall we do with Jesus Christ? How do we understand Him? Some say He was a perfect man and nothing more; some say He was a great moral teacher; and others question whether he really lived or was an invention. The Scriptures present a different picture of Jesus. They describe Him as divine and allow Him to be called Lord and God. They reveal His place in creation, in the sustaining of life, and in our salvation. They present Him as the only head of the church, the only authority over all flesh, and as our judge on the last day.

In all history, Jesus stands out as the champion of love, of truth, of hope, of peace, and of righteousness. Utterly selfless, Jesus gave Himself completely to bless all people. Utterly sinless, He practiced what He preached, gave hope to the oppressed, and forgave the guilty. His constant message to weak and sinful people was to repent and turn to God. He comforted the grieving, raised the dead, healed the sick, delivered the demon-possessed, and fed the hungry. He told people what they needed to know to have eternal life. No human could perform miracles or live without sin as Jesus did. Jesus wasn't merely human; He was divine!

Our reading today comes from Colossians 1:15-20. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven." Was Jesus more than a man? Some say He was a great moral teacher and some a prophet like Moses or Elijah, but to us He is the Son of God. Calling Jesus the Son of God means that we recognize Him as divine. Many passages of Scripture clearly describe Jesus as deity or divine. The opening of The Gospel of John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men" (John 1:1-4). In this passage the Word was God and yet was with God in the beginning. Everything that exists came into being through Him; He created it.

The Gospel of John is also clear that Jesus has always existed. In John 8:58 the Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Abraham lived nearly two thousand years before Jesus was born, but Jesus said that He existed long before Abraham. The Lord Jesus prayed to the Father, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:4-5).

Though Jesus didn't have a fleshly existence until two thousand years ago, He has existed forever.

John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten (or the only unique) from the Father, full of grace and truth." It was always God's plan that Jesus would come into the world. First Peter 1:20 says, "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you."

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the birth of Jesus and told us much about Him in Isaiah 9:6-7. He said, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, And on the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness, From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this." Jesus was indeed a descendant of David since both Mary and her husband Joseph were descendants of David. He established His kingdom, the church; and it exists to this day. Jesus is indeed our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace.

An angel of the Lord told Joseph, "She (that is, Mary) will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21-23). Then he said all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." Jesus is indeed God with us, God manifested in the flesh so that He could save His people from their sins. When we look at Jesus, we understand God much better. John 1:18 says, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." Jesus reveals God to us.

The Lord Jesus explained Himself in John 14:6-7. He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one comes to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." We know what God is and what He is like because Jesus came to earth to reveal Him to us. The writer to the Hebrews said that Jesus is "the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus reveals God's undeniable power, God's great wisdom, God's steadfast love, and God's utter holiness. We can see the character of God in His Son, in the life of Jesus Christ.

If we wish to come to the Father, we must recognize that Jesus our Lord is the only way. Acts 4:12 says, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." You can't find God the Father any other way today than through a knowledge and relationship with Jesus Christ His Son. The Lord Jesus in prayer said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). Knowing the Father and the Son brings eternal life and forgiveness; and we can't get these things any other way than through Jesus. Salvation is in no one else.

John also reveals an amazing story of a doubter who had to be convinced of Jesus. When Jesus first appeared after His resurrection to His disciples in the upper room "on the evening of that day, the first day of the week (when He was resurrected)," the apostle Thomas wasn't

present. When Thomas heard Jesus had arisen he said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark that's in His side, I will never believe."

John 20:26-28 says, "After eight days (that is the next first day of the week) His disciples were again inside and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'"

Thomas' confession of Jesus as Lord and God is bold and clear. The word "Lord" is a reference to Deity and has its roots back in Exodus 3:14 when God told Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." From this phrase comes the Hebrew word "Yahweh," the name of God, which is translated in the Greek Old Testament with the word "kurios." This is the very word that Thomas used when he said to Jesus, "My Lord ("kurios") and my God!" To say Jesus is Lord is to recognize that He is divine. When Peter concluded His inspired sermon at Pentecost he declared, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Jesus indeed is Lord!

John is not the only witness to the deity of Jesus. Paul also helps us understand how He was in the form of God but fashioned as a man. Philippians 2:5-8 says, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient even to the point of death, even death on a cross." When Jesus came to this earth, He emptied Himself and took the form of a bondservant. He humbled Himself and obeyed the Father to the point of death on a cross.

The apostle Paul by inspiration said of Jesus, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything" (Colossians 1:15-18). When the Scripture says Jesus is the "firstborn of all creation," that scripture isn't saying that Jesus was created, but that Jesus has authority over all creation, that's the meaning of the term. Indeed, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). As firstborn, Jesus has all authority over us, you and me, today! Paul also said that Jesus is our God and Savior. He said, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13).

For any study of Jesus to be complete, we must examine His heart and recognize His love. As the Son of God, Jesus healed the sick, touched the leper, reached out to sinners, offered His forgiveness to the prodigal, and He showed patience to Peter when he denied Him three times. Jesus wept with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus and wept over spiritually fallen Jerusalem. Jesus taught us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. He fought the temptations of the devil and taught us to watch and pray that we might not enter into temptation. Jesus fought the legalism of the Pharisees and the greed and robbery of the moneychangers in the temple. Jesus prayed for the Father's will to be done on earth as it

is in heaven. He never gave in to His own will at Gethsemane. He blessed the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the meek, the one who mourned, the peacemaker, the one who hungered for righteousness, and the one who was persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Because He was divine, He knew the hearts of all people. John 2:25 says, "He didn't need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." He knew all the good, all the bad, all the fears, all the pride, all the hurts, and all the desires. He knew when people cared about God and when they didn't. He gave the worried reason to trust; He gave the downtrodden hope, gave the sinner forgiveness, gave the doubter faith, gave those who were despised love, and gave those who were proud a dose of humility. Jesus gave us what we needed and He gave it to us when we most needed it. Because He had divine wisdom, He knew what to say, when to say it, and how to say it. He spoke simply but profoundly, directly but lovingly, and truthfully but kindly.

We see His heart most clearly at Gethsemane and on the cross. Jesus didn't revile those who reviled Him and didn't threaten those who caused Him to suffer. Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him because they didn't know what they were doing. Jesus never called for the twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from the cross, but He remained there in agony until He died.

Why did He suffer? He suffered because He loved us more than He loved life. He suffered because that was the will of His Father in heaven. He suffered because He knew that His death would bring forgiveness and would open the door for a lost world to see His love and repent. He suffered because He wanted fellowship with you and me in this life and in the life to come. Jesus wasn't merely a man; He was the Son of God! Because He is, you must decide what you will do with Jesus. What will you do with Him?

In Matthew 27:22-25, Pontius Pilate asked the crowds after the trial of Jesus, "what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?" They all said, "Crucify Him!" And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!" Pilate washed his hands in front of the people saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." Pilate then had Jesus scourged and released Him to be crucified. The crowds demanded His blood and Pilate simply washed his hands of Jesus. What are you doing with Jesus? Are you washing your hands of Him? Are you rejecting Him?

Many wouldn't call for Jesus to die on a cross the way that the people did in those days; what they do today is simply ignore Him. Others wish that He'd quietly disappear because they don't want to hear His teaching on morals or on truth. They'd rather continue living in sin than follow Christ. When you ignore Christ, you're ignoring your only hope for forgiveness and eternal life. When you reject Christ, you're refusing His love and His sacrifice for you on the cross. You're saying His agony and His cruel death don't matter, that He died for no reason at all, and His love isn't important. Won't you love Him and recognize His love for you?

To demonstrate your love, place your faith in Jesus Christ, repent and give up your sins, confess Him as the Son of God and your Lord, and be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This baptism is in water and it's for the forgiveness of your sins. Acts 22:16 says, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." When you're baptized, the Lord will add you to His church; you'll be born again and free from sin, and God will call you His child.

The Holy Spirit

Some call Him the Holy Ghost, others the Holy Spirit. Who is He? Today we're exploring what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit. I'm so thankful God gave us the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit. Whatever was written there could easily be called God's Word and could just as easily be called the Words of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 3:7-11 introduce a quotation from Psalm 95:7-11, "just as the Holy Spirit says." The Spirit gave us this tremendous message.

From the earliest days of the church, people have had strange ideas about the Holy Spirit. In the third century, a heretic named Sabellius taught that the Holy Spirit was just one of the names of God, but was not a separate person from God the Father or Jesus His Son. In the fourth century, a heretic named Arius taught that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit were not eternal, but had a beginning. Others taught that the Holy Spirit was just a force or a presence and not a real person. It's easy to see that there's a lot of confusion about the Holy Spirit.

Some older versions used the word "it" to refer to the Holy Spirit. To be fair, the word "Spirit" in the original Greek language is a neuter word *pneuma*. But the Holy Spirit is not a thing. The Lord Jesus said, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come" (John 16:13). The word for "He" in this verse is not neuter, but masculine. Yes, the Spirit is a person.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter 1:22-25. "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. For, 'All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord endures forever.' And this is the word which was preached to you."

The Scriptures describe the Holy Spirit as a person. The Holy Spirit has a mind. Romans 8:26-27 says, "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." Only a person can have a mind, can think, or speak, or intercede. The Holy Spirit searches our hearts so that He may communicate to the Father what we are thinking. Only a person could do this.

Jesus promised, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (John 14:16-17). Jesus here calls the Spirit "another Helper" like Himself. The Spirit is described here as "another of the same kind" as Jesus. Just as Jesus was a helper or one called to the side of the apostles, so the Spirit will be a helper to teach and guide them. Only a person could do this.

The Holy Spirit, as a person, has emotions and feelings. Paul spoke of the "love of the Spirit" in Romans 15:30, and the "fellowship of the Spirit" in Philippians 2:1. He warned the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:30, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Indeed, when we sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit of God. A person grieves, but not some force or influence. The Holy Spirit is a person.

The scriptures not only describe the Holy Spirit but attribute to Him a Divine personality. More than one hundred times, He is called the "Holy Spirit," which is a clear reference to His deity. In Hebrews 9:14 He is called the eternal Spirit. The apostle Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 that the Holy Spirit is omniscient; that is, He knows all things. Paul said, "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit (that is, the things in scripture); for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."

Since the Spirit is Divine, he is omnipotent or able to do all things. Genesis 1:1-2 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." The word "hovering" in Hebrew is used of an eagle hovering in the sky, poised, alert, and watchful, ready for instant action to catch its fledglings. In Deuteronomy 32:11, it's a metaphor for God watching over His people.

David said that the Spirit was present everywhere; this is another sign of being Divine. He said, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me" (Psalm 139:7-10).

When the Lord Jesus was conceived, the Holy Spirit was involved. The angel told Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Later an angel of the Lord told Joseph, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20).

When Jesus and the apostles began working miracles, they acted in the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter recalled, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. And He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). In every miracle of Jesus, the Father and the Spirit were very much involved. Likewise, God was confirming His message through the miracles that the apostles and others performed by the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 2:3-4 says about our salvation that "It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will." The Holy Spirit was behind and involved in every single miracle.

When God raised Jesus from the dead, the Holy Spirit was very much involved. Romans 8:11 says, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." When Jesus comes again, the Holy Spirit will raise our bodies from the dead. Only a divine being can do this. Likewise, a prophet named Agabus made a prediction, "And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius" (Acts 11:28). Only God can know the future. The Holy Spirit is divine!

The Holy Spirit is indeed involved in inspiring those who wrote the words of the Bible as we've mentioned. Jesus promised the apostles, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). Jesus promised the apostles that the Spirit would guide them into all the truth. The Lord Jesus said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority (his own initiative), but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (John 16:12-13).

For this reason the apostle Paul could say, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). Every word written in Scripture is there by the power of the Holy Spirit. Second Peter 1:20-21 says, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation (that is, they didn't make it up), for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The human authors did not write whatever they pleased to write in Scripture; the Holy Spirit moved them to write the things that they did.

In Acts chapter five, the Scripture compares lying to the Spirit with lying to God. When Ananias and Sapphira agreed to give the purchase price of a piece of land, but secretly held back some of that price, Peter confronted them. He said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, didn't it remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you've conceived this deed in your heart? You've not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4). To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. The Spirit is divine!

The Scriptures also describe the Spirit as authoritative and sovereign. For instance, the Holy Spirit decided who would receive the various miraculous gifts; people couldn't choose which gifts they wanted for themselves. First Corinthians 12:11 says, "All these (that is, all these people who had miraculous gifts) are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he (that is, the Spirit) wills." The Holy Spirit determined who received what gift. The Holy Spirit is divine!

When the Lord Jesus spoke to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, He ended each segment with the warning, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." The Spirit of God speaks with authority in Scripture today, and the Lord Jesus plainly commands us to hear what the Spirit is saying.

When we are born again as Christians, the Holy Spirit plays a part in our regeneration. The Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). This new birth is a reference to baptism; it's a birth of both water and the Spirit. Titus 3:5 explains that God "saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." You and I cannot earn our salvation, but God saves us through the washing that regenerates (that's baptism) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that causes us to have this new life at the time of baptism. Romans 6:4 says, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead

by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” God raises us up in baptism to walk in newness of life. You might ask, “How is the Holy Spirit involved in our new birth?”

First Peter 1:22-23 explains, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again (now here’s how), not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God.” The Spirit of God inspired the Word of God and gave us that seed which is in the Word of God, that word that He guided the apostles and prophets to write, and that’s the truth. We can know the truth today because the Spirit led these men to write down God’s Word. When people hear and obey this inspired truth from the Holy Spirit, this imperishable seed that comes from the Holy Spirit, it causes them to be born again; we’re born of an imperishable seed, that’s the Word of God. The Holy Spirit works through the word planted in our hearts to cause our new birth. The seed is not some miraculous, direct operation of the Holy Spirit. No! But it’s the inspired word that was preached by the apostles and is found today in Scripture.

Some folks think we’re saved when the Holy Spirit directly and miraculously changes us from a totally depraved sinner into a saint. They believe the Spirit does this irresistibly and that we have no choice. But the Scriptures teach that we have free will and choose whether or not to serve God. Romans 6:17-18 says, “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness.” Here were slaves of sin who obeyed the truth and then they became slaves of righteousness. That’s how they were born again, when they obeyed it from their heart. You can do the same thing! Won’t you obey the Lord from your heart, and be born again? Does your life honor or grieve the Holy Spirit? Do the words you speak and how you speak them honor or grieve God? Does the way you treat other people cause the Holy Spirit to grieve over your soul? God wants to save you; the Lord Jesus died for you; and the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures which teach the truth and have that message of eternal life. When you listen carefully and obey, you honor God. But when you ignore God by failing to hear and obey what He says, you will surely cause Him grief. You will also cause yourself grief.

When people fail to love and serve God, but live with selfish ambition for their own pleasures, surely they can’t imagine that God is pleased. Many live as if there were no God, never giving Him a second thought. They don’t realize how God longs for a relationship with them. Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? If you do, God is smiling; but if you don’t have one, why not come to the Lord today?

You can be right with God and live with Him eternally by hearing the gospel, by believing in Jesus Christ, by repenting of your sins, and by confessing aloud Jesus as the Son of God, and by being baptized into Christ. It’s when you are baptized that God washes away your sin and gives you newness of life. That’s when you are born again and when the Lord adds you to His church. God also wants your heart and your love. He wants you to love Him with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. That means serving Him fully every single day. That means getting involved with His family, the church. It means avoiding anything sinful and realizing that you were saved to love and to serve others and help spread the gospel. My friend, will you honor the Lord by giving yourself to Him?

One God, Three Persons

How can there be one God but three persons? We've studied the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Today we're going to look at the Godhead. We're here to search the Scriptures for the will of God. We want to be right with God, and we know that the Lord teaches the truth in the Word of God. When we believe and obey the truth, we know that we're in a right relationship with the Lord; but when we stray from the truth, we put our souls in jeopardy. Truth matters! James 5:19-20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." If truth matters this much to God, it ought to matter as much to us. We turn to the Scriptures because we love the Lord and we want to remain right with Him.

For the last few weeks, we've been looking at God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We've seen how each of these three possess the nature and characteristics of God. The Bible teaches that there is but one God, yet three Persons. We don't believe in three Gods but in One God. Nor do we believe the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all the same person. Instead we believe in one God whose essence and substance is found in three distinct persons. This teaching provides a mystery for us, and we confess it's hard to understand. But we don't believe this because of the church tradition, but because the Scriptures clearly teach it. We want no other foundation than the Word of God. If we can't read it in the Bible, we can't hold it to be the truth that God wants to believe and obey.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to John 16:12-15. These are the words of Jesus. "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you."

The Scriptures boldly and clearly teach that there is only one God. Some statements from the Old Testament declare this: Moses wrote, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4). In his prayer of thanksgiving David prayed, "For this reason You are great, O Lord GOD; for there is none like You, and there is no God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears" (2 Samuel 7:22). At another time David sang, "For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God" (Psalm 86:10). Nehemiah declared, "You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them, And the heavenly host bows down before You" (Nehemiah 9:6).

The prophet Isaiah quoted the Lord, "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these" (2 Kings 19:15). "Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, 'O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth'" (Isaiah 45:5-7). It is clear that the Old Testament teaches one God, and only one God.

In the same way, the New Testament also clearly emphasizes there is one God. The Lord Jesus answered a scribe who asked Him what the foremost commandment of all was. He said, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength'" (Mark 12:29-30). Jesus certainly taught there is one Lord and no other. The apostle Paul by inspiration taught, "we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one" (1 Corinthians 8:4). James also said, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19). According to Rex Turner Sr. and Don Shakelford in their book, *Biblical Theology*, there are more than forty-five passages in the Old and New Testaments which express the concept that there is "one God," and that there is "only one God," and there is no other God.

Someone now asks, "Well Phil, how can this be? Didn't you teach that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are divine?" Can there be one God if all three persons are considered God? The New Testament writers help us to understand this problem by their reference to the Godhead or to Deity. This designation "Godhead" anticipates the concept of Deity revealed in God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Although it doesn't appear in the Old Testament, "Godhead" appears three times in the King James translation of the New Testament. Newer versions translate the words for Godhead as Deity or the Divine Nature.

This word first appears in Paul's speech at Mars Hill in Athens. Paul said, in the King James Version, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:29). The word "Godhead" in this passage is an adjective meaning "that which belongs to the nature or status of deity, or something that's divine." Paul was making clear that the true and living God was not like the idols of the pagan world. Since He created all things, He didn't live in temples made with hands.

The word "Godhead" appears a second time in the King James Version in Romans 1:20. Paul said, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." We've seen how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all involved in the creation of the world. When we look at how great and how magnificent our world is, it's easy to see how only a supernatural, divine Being could have created it. The amazing design and harmony found within the universe points to the unity of the Godhead in purpose.

The word "Godhead" appears the third time in the King James Version in Colossians 2:9. Paul wrote, "For in him (that is, in Jesus) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." This word "Godhead," found in the last two passages is an abstract noun describing "the state of being God, that is divine in character or nature, that is deity." So again, we see the divine nature of God dwelling in Jesus in bodily form. This passage helps us to understand that the one God is a Godhead and distinguishes the Son as having a body.

The New Testament says much more about the three persons in the Godhead. The New Testament, in two passages, lists the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These passages unite these three with the word "and." The word "and" here means these three all fit in the same category. First, the Lord Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-

20). People are to be baptized in the name (and that is a singular word) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To be baptized into Christ means we're baptized into the name of all three. When we become a Christian by being baptized into Christ, we have God as our Father, Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit as the earnest or guarantee of our inheritance, according to Ephesians 1:13-14.

The second passage that lists all three comes in Paul's final greeting to the church at Corinth, in 2 Corinthians 13:14. Paul said, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Each of these three persons of the Godhead blesses us. They act together in unison with one purpose – to bless us with their grace, love, and fellowship. If Paul didn't think of all three as divine, he would not have listed them together.

But you ask, "How can three be one?" Consider the prayer of Jesus to the Father found in John 17:20-23. He prayed, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. Now the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." Jesus wanted His followers to be one, and to be united, "just as We are one." Just as the church can have many members and yet be one body, so the Father, Son, and Spirit can be united as one.

We noted last week that God the Father was not alone in the beginning. John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." While the Father is God, the Son or the Word was God and was with God. Genesis 1:2 speaks of the Spirit "hovering" over the face of the waters, so we know that all three were present in the beginning and were involved in creation. While the Old Testament doesn't use a word describing the Godhead, some passages do recognize the fact of a plurality of persons as one God. For instance, Genesis 1:26 says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." These passages necessarily show God the Father was not alone at the time of creation.

In the same way, the writer of the book of Hebrews quoted from Psalm 45:6-7. The Hebrew writer said God was speaking about His Son Jesus. God said, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). Then again, in verse nine it says, speaking of the son, "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." Here you have one person in the Godhead speaking to another and calling Him God.

The New Testament also reveals how each person in the Godhead interacted with the others and how the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all distinct. You might remember when Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized. Matthew 3:16-17 says, "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'" Wouldn't it be absurd to suggest the Father who was speaking from heaven, and the Son who just came from the water after being baptized, and the Holy Spirit who was a dove, were all the same person?

Let's look at another passage. You remember the Lord Jesus said to the apostles, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it doesn't see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (John 14:16-17). All three are distinctly seen in this one passage. The Lord Jesus would ask the Father to give the disciples another Helper or Comforter to be with them, and that would be the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are all mentioned.

Again, the Lord Jesus said, "But the Helper, that is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26). Here again we have three persons! The Father will send the Holy Spirit to teach and to bring to the remembrance of the apostles the things that the Lord Jesus Himself taught. Each was involved in the teaching of the church.

Again, we have Jesus speaking, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me" (John 15:26). Here Jesus is sending forth the Spirit from the Father to testify about the Lord Jesus. If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all the same person, it would be illogical and meaningless to speak of them interacting with one another as these passages do. Jesus wouldn't make such an error. Nor should we. It is right to believe in One God, but it is also right to recognize that there are three Persons. Those are the things that we need to think about as we begin to look at One God and three persons. The concept of one God and three persons is difficult for many people. When we hear the word "apple," we may think of a fruit, a tree, or a seed. These are distinct things yet the same in essence. When we think of H₂O, we could speak of ice, water, or steam; they are distinct and yet one in nature. The Lord Jesus said in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one." He prayed to His Father in John 17:22 that His followers in the church may be one, "even as We are one." Now unity comes only when people are united in heart and mind with the same purpose.

Philippians 2:5-8 says, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus could be one with the Father because He took the form of a servant. Though He existed in the form of God, He humbled Himself and was willing to die on the cross for our sins.

To be one with the Father and Son, we too must humble ourselves and be obedient. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source (or the author) of eternal salvation." When we believe the gospel, when we repent of our sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and when we are baptized into Christ, we too are obedient and come to have the hope of eternal life. Only God can save, and that's why we must do things God's way. And if we wish to be God's people, let's do things God's way.