

BEHOLDING THE WONDER OF THE TRINITY

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Session Two: RELATIONSHIPS AND ROLES OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

- I. Introduction: Have you learned to read the Bible with Trinitarian lenses on?
- A. The Twin Pillars of Trinitarian Doctrine: Distinction and Equality; Difference and Identity. E.g. John 1:1
 - B. Definition of the Trinity: God's whole and undivided essence belongs equally, eternally, simultaneously, and fully to each of the three Persons of the Godhead, so that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each is fully God while each is his own personal expression, in relationship, role and activity, of the one eternal and undivided divine essence.
 - C. The Christian faith affirms that there is one and only one God, eternally existing while fully and simultaneously expressed in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead is equally God, each is eternally God, and each is fully God—not three gods but three Persons of the one Godhead. Each Person is *equal in essence* as each possesses eternally, simultaneously, and fully the identically same and undivided divine nature. Yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of that one undivided divine nature. Because of this, what *distinguishes* each Person of the Godhead from each other Person is not and cannot be the divine nature, since the identically same one and undivided divine nature is the full and eternal possession of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. So, what *distinguish* each Person of the Godhead from each other Person are the *relationships* that each has with each of the other Persons and his particular *roles* in relation to the others. In light of both the *equality of essence* yet *differentiation of relationships and roles* that exist among the Persons of the Godhead, we consider now just how those relationships and roles are expressed within the Trinity of Persons.

II. The Father's Unique Role Within the Trinity

- A. The Father as Supreme in Position and Authority among the Persons of the God-head

Psalm 2:7-9 – ⁷ “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. ⁹ ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’”

Matthew 6:9-10 – ⁹ “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.’”

1 Corinthians 15:28 – When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Ephesians 1:3 – Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him . . .

Philippians 2:9-11 – ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

B. The Father as the Grand Architect, the Wise Designer of Creation, Redemption, and Consummation

Ephesians 1:9-12 – ⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

C. The Father is the Giver of Every Good and Perfect Gift

James 1:17 – 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.

Romans 8:31-32 – ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

D. Yet, the Father often Provides and Works Through the Son and Spirit

All of Ephesians 1:3-14 makes this clear. The Father is to be praised, but his gifts to us come – every one of them – through the Son and Spirit.

III. The Father in Relation to the Son

A. The Son is under the headship or authority of the Father – General Truth Stated

1 Corinthians 11:3 – But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-2 – ¹ God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son [incarnation], whom He appointed heir of all things [eternity future], through whom also He made the world [eternity past].

B. The Son's Submission to the Father during His incarnation and earthly mission

John 8:28-29 – ²⁸ So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. ²⁹ “And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” This is typical of how Jesus spoke over and over. In John 4, when the disciples asked Jesus why he was not interested in eating, Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work” (John 4:34).

C. The Son's Submission to the Father in eternity past

Forty times in John's gospel, Jesus mentions the fact that the Father has sent him to accomplish the mission he is here to do. Some might be understood as a “sending” that occurred during the incarnation itself, but most refer to his being sent (or coming forth) from heaven.

John 3:16-17 – ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

John 6:38 – “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

John 8:42 – “. . . I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.”

John 10:36 – do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?

John 1:3, 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16, Heb 1:1-3 – the Father creates “by” or “through” the Son (the “Word”)

Eph 1:9-11 indicates that the Father ordained that everything in creation be placed in subjection to his Son, both as some are elected and redeemed in Christ (Eph 1:4-6), and as all others are brought to final judgment through Christ (John 5:22-29)—see Rev 5:9 for stunning display of both (see below for elaboration)

The Son obeyed the Father in heaven, as the Father’s instrument of creation, and as sent from heaven do the will of his Father. The Son submitted to the Father, then, in eternity past.

D. The Son’s Submission to the Father in eternity future

1 Cor 15:25-28 – ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ²⁷ For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Rev 1:1 – The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John.

E. The Love Relationship between the Son and the Father

John 14:31 – I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that *I love the Father* [italics added].

John 15:9-10 – *As the Father has loved me*, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and *abide in his love* [italics added].

IV. Application

- A. Marvel at the wisdom, the goodness, the care, and the thoroughness with which the Father exercises his authority – using His absolute authority always to bring about what is best.
- B. Marvel at the Father’s plan and purpose to place his Son on center-stage. He directs attention and honor to the Son, as the Son seeks, in all he does, to glorify his Father.
- C. Marvel at perfect, loving, and joyous obedience of the Son. He never sinned! In all that he did, his submission to the Father was absolute and uncompromising.