

Trinity Session 12

- I. Session 17: Implications #2: The Son's Subordination to the Father and Christian Submission
- a. Establish the Need: Are we under the Western myth that we are never to submit to anyone because we are all the same? Do we think that equality means there cannot be different roles? Does the study of the Trinity deepen our understanding of equality and submission?
 - b. Purpose: In this lesson we will see that the Bible does teach the Son being under the Father so that it would also motivate us to submit to all authorities God had ordained.
 - c. Two kinds of subordination: In considering whether or not the Son submits to the Father, it is important to keep in mind that there are two types of insubordination.
 - i. The **subordination of essence** or nature (called 'emphatic subordination')¹
 - ii. The **subordination of mission or status** (called 'economic subordination')."²
 - d. In what possible ways is the Son subordinate to the Father?
 - i. The Son cannot be ontologically subordinate to the Father in terms of His nature, and to embrace such a view would call to question both the Son's Divine nature and whether the Son is God.
 - ii. What remains is the question of whether the Son is subordinate to the Son in terms of relationship, roles and function.
 - e. The Son is subordinate to the Father (General Statements)
 - i. Remember: Anytime we see the term "Son" or "Father" to refer to the Godhead it already shows the general truths that the Son is under the Father!
 - ii. **John 14:28**= "*You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.*"
 1. Jesus clearly stated that "*the Father is greater than I.*"
 2. This cannot mean that the Father is greater than Jesus in terms of the Father's Divine nature, since Scripture elsewhere states that Jesus is God (**John 1:1, Colossians 2:9**) or equal with God (cf. **John 5:18**).

¹ Stephen D. Kovach, "Egalitarians Revamp Doctrine of the Trinity: Bilezikian, Grenz and the Kroegers Deny Eternal Subordination of the Son," *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 2, no. 1 (Winter, 1996), <http://www.cbmw.org/Journal/Vol-2-No-1/Egalitarians-Revamp-Doctrine-of-the-Trinity> (accessed January 19, 2010).

² Stephen D. Kovach, "Egalitarians Revamp Doctrine of the Trinity: Bilezikian, Grenz and the Kroegers Deny Eternal Subordination of the Son," *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 2, no. 1 (Winter, 1996), <http://www.cbmw.org/Journal/Vol-2-No-1/Egalitarians-Revamp-Doctrine-of-the-Trinity> (accessed January 19, 2010).

3. To avoid stating that Jesus is somehow metaphysically subordinate to the Father, a better explanation is that Jesus submits to the Father in terms of His relationship to the Father.
- f. The Son was subordinate to the Father during the Incarnation
- i. This point is probably not as controversial.
 - ii. **John 4:34**= *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”*
 1. In context **John 4** record Jesus with the Samaritan woman.
 2. Jesus was “*sent*” by Someone thereby indicating He submitted to Someone.
 3. Jesus was to accomplish this Sender’s work, thereby indicating He was following Someone’s order.
 4. **Who is it the Son was under?** Next passage answers the question.
 - iii. **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.’”*
 1. In His Humanity, Jesus was taught by the Father.
 2. Note Jesus said that He never did anything on His own initiative but instead relied on the Father.
 3. Jesus was subordinate to the Father in that He was taught by the Father.
 - iv. Certainly during the Son’s lifetime on earth He was obedient to the Father’s will even unto death (**Philippians 2:8**).
- g. The Son was subordinate to the Father before the Incarnation
- i. **John 6:38**= *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”*
 1. To be under the will of another is to be submission of another.
 2. The coming down of the Son from Heaven itself was an act of obedience to the Father’s Will.
 3. What is amazing about **John 6:38** is that the beginnings of Jesus submission to the Father’s will began not in the Incarnation but while the Son was still in Heaven.
 - ii. **John 3:17**= *“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”*
 1. This is talking about the Son’s first coming which was to save sinners; second coming would be to judge to fulfill **Psalms 2:9**.
 2. Jesus was subordinate to the Father in that He was sent by the Father.
 3. Note that the passage does not say that the Son sent Himself.
 - iii. **John 8:42b**= *“...for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but [a]He sent Me.”*
 1. Once again Jesus was subordinate to the Father in that He was sent by the Father.

2. Here however Jesus makes it clear His coming was not “*on My own initiative,*” showing how much He subordinated Himself to the Father!
- iv. **Acts 2:23** demonstrates that the Son was delivered to the crucifixion by the predetermined plan of God the Father (cf. **Ephesians 1:3-4**). It is telling that Jesus willingly submits Himself to the eternal prerogatives of the Father, a truth one would expect if the Son was subordinate to the Father in eternity past.
- h. The Son is and will be subordinate to the Father even after the Incarnation
 - i. **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.*”
 1. Note God (the Father) is the head of Christ.
 2. In order for submission to be practice in the church age Paul had to state the present reality of Christ’s own submission as a motivation.
 - ii. **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.*”
 1. The event of this verse has not taken place yet.
 2. It is not a question of “if” but “when” that all things will be under the subject of the Son.
 3. This same verse informs the reader that when this occurs, “*then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him.*”
- i. What does this mean for our lives?
 - i. Understanding the Son’s submission to the Father corrects the view that submission is bad
 1. Often a major presupposition that is often assumed by those struggling with the Biblical teaching of submission (wives to submit to their husbands, church members to the elders, etc) is that submission is bad and any differences in role means the existence of unethical inequality.
 2. If God is All-Good and yet among the Godhead the Son submits to the Father during eternity past, the incarnation and eternity future, certainly submission is a virtue within God.
 3. Therefore, as the insight of the Trinity demonstrates, the act itself of submitting to another does not entail that one is a victim or that their metaphysical natures are different.
 - ii. Understanding the Son’s submission to the Father motivate us to practice Christian submission!
 1. Be motivated: The Son lead by example! He wants us to practice submission and the Son Himself experienced, is experiencing and will experience submission!
 2. Be comforted: When we struggle to practice Christian submission in various spheres in our lives go to Jesus as our

High Priests who can empathize and help us in our hour of need!