

Lesson Ninety-eight

THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture Reading: John 1: 1-18, Rev. 19: 11-16.

Scriptures to Memorize: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1-4). "And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God" (Rev. 19: 13).

45. Q. Did the One whom we know historically as Jesus exist as a Person prior to His appearance in the flesh?

A. The Scriptures teach that the One whom we know historically as Jesus, existed from eternity as a Person.

(1) Micah 5:2—"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; *whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.*" There can be no doubt that this scripture was accepted as Messianic by the Jews (cf. Matt. 2:3-6, John 7:42). Compare the Old Testament passages relating to the "Angel of Jehovah" (Gen. 22:11,16; Gen. 31:11,13; Exo. 3:2-5; Judg. 13:20-22, etc., etc.). It is quite generally agreed that this phrase, "the Angel of Jehovah," is used throughout the Old Testament Scriptures to indicate the pre-incarnate Word, "whose manifestations in angelic or human form foreshadowed his final coming in the flesh" (Strong). (2) John 17:5—"And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self *with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*" How could a person who was *entirely* man have uttered such a prayer as this? (3) John 8:58—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, *Before Abraham*

was born, I am" (cf. Exo. 3:14). "I AM," *i.e.*, *self-existence, timelessness, etc.* (4) John 17:24—"Father, I desire 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.*" (5) Col. 1:17—"he is before all things, and in him all things consist." (6) Phil. 2:5-7, "Christ Jesus: *who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a man,*" etc. (7) Heb. 2:14—"Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, *he also himself in like manner partook of the same,*" etc. (8) Heb. 1:1-3, "God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, *through whom also he made the worlds: who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance,*" etc. (9) Heb. 1:8, 10—"But of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever . . . And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." (10) Rev. 1:8—"I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (11) Rev. 1:17, 18—"I am the first and the last, and *the Living one.*" (12) John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him: and without him was not anything made that hath been made." Here we learn (a) that the Word was *with* God, *i.e.*, there were Two,—God and The Word. (When I am *with* you, there are *two* of us). (b) That the Word *was* God, *i.e.*, The Word was, as to nature, Deity, as truly was God was Deity. (c) *That all things were made through Him, i.e.*, through the agency of The Word all things were created. Cf. Psal. 33:6—"By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made," etc. The Three who are designated God, the Spirit of God, and The Word of God, in the Old Testament Scriptures; are revealed in the New

Testament Scriptures as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). The Word is invariably presented in the Scriptures as the Eternal Interpreter of the nature of God and the Eternal Executor of the Will of God. John 1:18—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (13) We ask therefore: *How can any one reconcile the teaching of these numerous scriptures which expressly affirm the Pre-existence of Christ, with the notion that He was entirely man?*

46. Q. What was the nature of the relation that existed between God the Father and the One whom we know as Jesus our Savior, prior to the latter's advent in the flesh? And what is the Name given to our Savior, in the Scriptures, to describe this eternal relationship?

A. The relation that existed between God the Father, and the One whom we know as Jesus our Savior, prior to the latter's advent in the flesh, was (1) an eternal or unoriginated relation, and (2) a personal and spiritual relation. The Name given to our Savior, in the Scriptures, to describe this eternal and spiritual relation between Himself and the Father, is: THE WORD (THE LOGOS).

"The names Jesus, Christ, or Messiah, Only Begotten Son, Son of God, etc., belong to the Founder of the Christian religion, and to none else. They express not a relation existing before the Christian era, but relations which commenced at that time . . . To understand the relation betwixt the Savior and His Father, which existed before time, and that relation which began in time, is impossible on either of these [*i.e.*, the Arian or Calvinistic] theories. There was no Jesus, no Messiah, no Christ, no Son of God, no Only Begotten, before the reign of Augustus. The relation that was before the Christian era was not that of a son and father, terms which always imply disparity; but it was that expressed by John in the sentence under consideration. The relation was that of God and the 'Word

of God.' This phraseology unfolds a relation quite different from that of a father and a son—a relation perfectly intimate, equal and glorious." The foregoing exegesis is from the pen of Alexander Campbell, in *The Christian Baptist*, issue of May 7, 1827. Mr. Campbell goes on to explain: "1. No relation amongst human beings can perfectly exhibit the relation which the Savior held to the God and Father of all, anterior to His birth. The reason is: that relation is not homogenial, or of the same kind with relations originating from creation. All relations we know anything of, are created, such as that of father and son." (Note: where there is father and son, the father must of necessity *antedate* the son). "Now I object as much to a created relation as I do to a creature in reference to the original relation of God and The Word of God. *This relation is an uncreated and unoriginated relation.* 2. When in the fulness of time, it became necessary in the wisdom of God to exhibit a Savior, it became expedient to give some view of the original and eternal dignity of this wonderful visitant of the human race. And as this view must be given in human language, inadequate as it was, the whole vocabulary of human speech must be examined for suitable terms. 3. Of these terms expressive of relations, the most suitable must be, and most unquestionably was, selected. And as the relation was spiritual and not carnal, such terms only were eligible which had respect to mental and spiritual relations. Of this sort there is but one in all the archives of human knowledge, and that is the one selected. 4. The Holy Spirit selected the name, WORD, and therefore we may safely assert that this is the best, if not the only term, in the whole vocabulary of human speech at all adapted to express that relation which existed 'in the beginning,' or before time, between our Savior and His God."

47. Q. What are the implications of this name, The Word of God?

A. The implications of the name, The Word of God, may be stated as follows:

1. (1) A *word* is ordinarily defined as the sign or symbol of an idea. It is the idea expressed in written or spoken form. When I speak of a chair, for instance, there immediately flashes into your mind an image of the thing, of which I have the same image in my own mind; and the *image* represents an *idea*. The word is therefore the sign or symbol of the idea. (2) The human intellect *thinks*, *i.e.*, it formulates and relates ideas by means of words, and the result is *language*. Men cannot express their ideas without words of some sort. (3) It follows that the word, and the idea which it represents, must have their origin at the same time, and are therefore of like antiquity—or, as we say, co-etaneous. And though the word may not be the same in different languages, the same idea is expressed. (4) The idea and the word are distinct, of course; that is, they are *two*. (5) Yet the relationship between the two is the most *intimate* of which we have any knowledge, and is a relationship of the *mind* or *spirit*. (6) To be acquainted with the word is to be acquainted with the idea, for the idea is in the word, and the word stands for the idea.

2. We continue Mr. Campbell's exegesis from this point, as follows: "Now let it be most attentively observed and remembered," he says, "that these remarks are solely intended to exhibit the relation which exists between a word and an idea, and that this relation is of a mental nature, and more akin to the spiritual system than any relation created, of which we know anything. It is a relation of the most sublime order; and no doubt the reason why the name, Word, is adopted by the Apostle in this sentence, was because of its superior ability to represent to us the divine relation existing between God and the Savior prior to His becoming the Son of God. By putting together the above remarks on the term Word, we have a full view of what John intended to communicate: (1) As a word is

an exact image of an idea, so is 'The Word' an exact image of the invisible God. (2) As a word can not exist without an idea, nor an idea without a word, so God was never without 'The Word,' nor 'The Word' without God. Or, as a word is of equal age, or co-etaneous with its idea, so 'The Word' and God are co-eternal. (3) And as an idea does not create its word, nor a word its idea, so God did not create 'The Word,' nor 'The Word' God. Such a view does the language used by John suggest. And to this do all the Scriptures agree. For 'The Word' was made flesh, and in consequence of becoming *incarnate*, He is styled the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father. As from eternity God was manifest in and by 'The Word,' so now God is manifest in the flesh. As God was always with 'The Word,' so when 'The Word' becomes flesh, He is Immanuel, God with us. As God was never manifest but by 'The Word,' so the heavens and the earth and all things were created by 'The Word.' And as 'The Word' ever was the effulgence or representation of the invisible God, so He will ever be known and adored as 'The Word of God.' So much for the divine and eternal relation between the Savior and God. You will easily perceive that I carry these views no farther than to explain the nature of that relationship uncreated and unoriginated, which the inspired language inculcates."

3. Mr. Campbell concludes as follows: "These views place us on a lofty eminence whence we look down upon the Calvinistic ideas of 'eternal filiation,' 'eternal generation,' 'eternal Son,' as midway betwixt us and Arianism. From this sublime and lofty eminence we see the Socinian moving upon a hillock, the Arian upon a hill, and the Calvinist upon a mountain; all of which lose their disproportion to each other because of the immense height above them to which this view elevates us. The first sentence of John, I paraphrase thus: 'From eternity was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was, I say, from eternity with God. By Him all things were

made, and He became flesh and dwelt among us. He is become a child born and a son of man. As such He is called Immanuel, Jesus, Messiah, Son of God, Only Begotten of the Father' ” (A. Campbell, *Christian Baptist*, May 7, 1927).

4. Contemporary churchmen, as, for instance, Barton W. Stone, who later became his associate in the restoration of “the ancient apostolic order,” were inclined to question Mr. Campbell’s views of the Person of Christ. They labored under the impression at first that Mr. Campbell was tinged with Unitarianism. The foregoing paragraphs prove just the opposite. Mr. Campbell reveals in these statements His conviction that the Savior had a timeless existence, as eternal as that of the Father, and that the relation between the Two was, in his own words, “perfectly intimate, equal, and glorious.” Language could not be more explicit. (Mr. Campbell’s interpretation of the relation from eternity of the Father and the Savior is the clearest, I assert without any fear of successful contradiction, that is to be found in all theological literature. I have therefore taken pains to reproduce it here in full. I advise a thorough and equally painstaking study of it by all who pursue this course in Christian doctrine. C.C.C.)

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON NINETY-EIGHT

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46. What was the nature of the relation that existed between God the Father and the One whom we know as Jesus our Savior, prior to the latter’s advent in the flesh? And what is the Name given to our Savior, in the Scriptures, to describe this eternal relationship?
47. What are the implications of this name, The Word of God?