

## Lesson Ninety-nine

## THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

Scripture Reading: John 1:1-18, Matt. 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38.

Scriptures to Memorize: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4). "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (I Tim. 3:16).

48. Q. What is the signification of the name, The Word, as applied to the One whom we know historically as Jesus of Nazareth?

A. This name, The Word, describes Him in His eternal relations with the Father.

(1) It describes Him as *the Eternal Interpreter of the Nature of God*. Thus He is said to be "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), the Effulgence of God's glory and the Very Image of His substance (Heb. 1:3). Cf. John 4:24—"God is a Spirit," etc. John 14:9—"he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (2) It describes Him as *the Eternal Revealer of the Ideas and Thoughts of God*. John 14:6—"I am . . . the truth." John 7:16—"my teaching is not mine, but his that sent me." John 6:63—"the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life." Cf. John 8:28-32, 17:8, 12:49, 18:37, etc. (3) He is *the Eternal Executor of the Will of God*, in both creation and redemption. John 1:3—"All things were made through him; and without him was not anything

made that hath been made." Cf. *Psa.* 33:6, 9; *Col.* 1:16; *Heb.* 1:3, 1:8-12, 11:3, etc. *John* 4:34—"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work."

49. Q. In what twofold sense, then is the Person, whom we know as Jesus, The Word of God?

A. The Person whom we know as Jesus is The Word of God: (1) eternally and invisibly, in the sense that He is eternally "in the bosom of the Father"; (2) outwardly and visibly, in the sense that He is the perfect expression or revelation of God to men.

(1) Jesus of Nazareth is The Word of God *inwardly* and *invisibly*, in the sense that He is from eternity "in the bosom of the Father," or, in the sense that the relation between Himself and the Father is best described by that which exists between a word and the idea which it represents. (2) He is The Word *outwardly* and *visibly*, in the sense that He is the perfect expression or revelation of God to men. If you would know something of the *wisdom* of God, study and meditate upon the teaching of Jesus. If you would see the *power* of God, look upon Jesus stilling the tempest, casting out demons, healing the sick of all manner of diseases, raising the dead, etc. If you would comprehend something of the infinite *love* of God, see Jesus hanging on that middle cross, on a lonely hill back of Jerusalem, giving His life for our redemption, offering His body as a propitiation for our sins, shedding His blood for the salvation of men, and dying with a prayer on His lips for the forgiveness of those who were putting Him to death. He had a perfect right to say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (*John* 14:9). (3) This twofold sense in which He is The Word, is clearly expressed in *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."

50. Q. When did The Word of God become the Son of God?

A. The One who is eternally The Word of God became

**the Son of God when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”**

(1) John 1:14—“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.” Cf. Psa. 2:7—“I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” Here we learn that the divine begetting, in consequence of which the Word became incarnate, was a detail of God’s eternal purpose and plan, and therefore a matter of eternal *decree*. In other words, God decreed it from eternity. (2) It should be emphasized here that this name, The Word, does not stand for a mere abstraction, idea, principle, influence, etc. It is the name of a Person. The Word is always *personal*, as God is *personal*. The Word as a Person *was with God* from eternity; and, too, The Word *was God*, i.e., The Word was as truly Deity as God is Deity. (3) It was at Bethlehem, in the reign of Augustus, that The Word became flesh (*i.e.*, incarnate) and dwelt among men. In other words, the hitherto *invisible* assumed a *visible* form; the hitherto purely *spiritual* became temporarily tabernacled in a *physical* body; an uncreated and divine Person became, for the time being, an historic Person, the Savior, Redeemer, Son of God, Son of Man, Only Begotten of the Father, Immanuel, etc.

**51. Q. What is the name commonly given to this entrance of The Word into human flesh?**

**A. It is commonly designated The Incarnation.**

John 1:14—“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.” That is, The Word incarnated Himself for the time being, tabernacled Himself in a fleshly body; “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7); became a “sharer in the flesh and blood” like all the children of men (Heb. 2:14), etc. In short: what happened at Bethlehem was that a Pre-existent Person, The Word, took upon Himself a new order of being, “was manifested in the flesh” (I Tim.

3:16). The result of this great miracle of Incarnation, was the God-Man, the Divine-human Redeemer, Immanuel, God with Us, the Person whom we know historically as Jesus of Nazareth, and whom Paul so aptly named The Mystery of Godliness (I Tim. 3:16).

**52. Q. Through whose direct agency was this miracle of the Incarnation wrought?**

**A. It was wrought through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit.**

(1) Matt. 1:20—"Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is *of the Holy Spirit.*" Luke 1:35—"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God."

(2) Here we have a sublime picture of the Holy Spirit overshadowing, brooding over, the innocent Virgin, just as He brooded over the primordial chaos at the beginning (Gen. 1:2—"The Spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters"), and the result in each case was the nourishing and cherishing of incipient life. As a consequence of this *brooding* of the Spirit at the beginning of the physical creation, matter was set in motion, energy was generated, and a world marched into being. And as a result of the Spirit's *overshadowing* of the Virgin at the beginning of the spiritual creation, The Word became incarnate and dwelt among men, as both Son of God and Son of man, as the God-Man, as God With Us, as The Beginning of the Creation of God (Rev. 3:14). Mary, as the passive instrument through whom this miracle was wrought, was therefore His mother "according to the flesh," and God was His Father by the "overshadowing" of the Holy Spirit.

**53. Q. Through what human instrumentality was this miracle of Incarnation accomplished?**

**A. It was accomplished through the passive instrumentality of the Virgin Mary.**

(1) It was foretold by the Old Testament prophets that the Promised Redeemer should be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), and that He should be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2). "Ephrathah" was the ancient name for Bethlehem of Judea. (2) The narratives of the Virgin Birth of Jesus are to be found in the New Testament writings, in Matt. 1:18-25 and in Luke 1:26-38. In both of these narratives it is expressly asserted *that the conception and birth of Jesus took place prior to the physical union of Joseph and Mary.* Matt. 1:18, 24, 25—"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, *before they came together* she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. . . . And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife; *and knew her not till she had brought forth a son;* and he called his name JESUS." Luke 1:30-38, "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said unto the angel, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?* And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God. . . . For no word from God shall be void of power. And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her." (3) Language could not be more explicit and positive. There can be no middle ground in our attitude towards these scripture statements respecting the Virgin Birth. We must either accept or reject them *in toto*. They cannot be "explained away" in any manner whatsoever.

We believe therefore wholeheartedly that Jesus our Savior was born of a virgin—of one who was no less a virgin after His birth than before.

**54. Q. What are the main facts presented in the two narratives of the Virgin Birth given by Matthew and Luke?**

**A. The main facts presented in the two narratives of the Virgin Birth are:**

1. That Jesus was born in the last days of the reign of Herod over Judea (Matt. 2:1,13; Luke 1:5).
- (2) That He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18,20; Luke 1:35).
- (3) That His mother was a Virgin (Matt. 1:18,20,23; Luke 1:27,34).
- (4) That she was betrothed to Joseph (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:27, 2:5).
- (5) That Joseph was of the house and lineage of David (Matt. 1:16,20; Luke 1:27, 2:4).
- (6) That Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1, Luke 2:4-6). The statement often found in "modern" *Lives* of Jesus, to the effect that "Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, was born at Nazareth" *has no historical corroboration whatsoever* (e.g., Pfeleiderer, Oscar Holtzmann, Bousset, Renan, etc.).
- (7) That by divine direction He was called Jesus (Matt. 1:21, Luke 1:31).
- (8) That He was declared to be a Savior (Matt. 1:21, Luke 2:11).
- (9) That Joseph knew beforehand of Mary's condition and its cause (Matt. 1:18-20, Luke 2:4-7).
- (10) That nevertheless he took Mary to wife, and assumed full paternal responsibilities for her child—was from the first *in loco parentis* to Jesus (Matt. 1:20,24,25; Luke 2:5-7).
- (11) That the Annunciation and Birth were attended by revelations and visions (Matt. 1:20, Luke 2:8-39).
- (12) That following the birth, and temporary sojourn in Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod, Joseph and Mary returned to their home in Nazareth, where the Child grew up (Matt. 2:23, Luke 2:39). "It will be found that Matthew's narrative is told throughout from the standpoint of Joseph; Luke's from that of Mary" (Dr. James Orr, *Virgin Birth of Christ*, pp. 36-37). Similarly, Matthew

gives the *legal* genealogy, tracing the Line from Abraham down to David, thence through Solomon down to Joseph, whose name appeared of course in the genealogical records as the *legal* father of Jesus. Luke, on the other hand, gives the *natural* genealogy, tracing the Line through Mary (the daughter of Eli) to Nathan, another of David's sons, and thence all the way back to Adam (Matt. 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-28).

**55. Q. What is the designation given by the Apostle Paul to the One who was thus begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary?**

**A. The name given to Him by the Apostle Paul is: The Mystery of Godliness.**

Note that The Mystery of Godliness (*i.e.*, the Mystery of the God-Man, the Mystery of God With Us) is a Person, viz., "He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (I Tim. 3:16). Without controversy great is the mystery of the Person of our Redeemer!

## REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON NINETY-NINE

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49. In what twofold sense, then is the Person, whom we know as Jesus, The Word of God?
50. When did The Word of God become the Son of God?
51. What is the name commonly given to this entrance of The Word into human flesh?
52. Through whose direct agency was this miracle of the Incarnation wrought?
53. Through what human instrumentality was this miracle of Incarnation accomplished?
54. What are the main facts presented in the two narra-

- tives of the Virgin Birth given by Matthew and Luke?
55. What is the designation given by the Apostle Paul to the One who was thus begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary?

**Lesson One-Hundred**  
**THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD**

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Scripture Reading: Matt. 1: 18-25, Luke 1: 26-38.

Scriptures to Memorize: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

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56. Q. On what grounds do we accept as true the story of the Virgin Birth of Jesus, as presented in the narratives of Matthew and Luke?

A. We accept the story of the Virgin Birth, on the following grounds:

(1) On the ground of the *genuineness* of the Christian Documents as a whole. "These chapters containing the narratives of the Virgin Birth are attested by all available evidence as indubitably genuine parts of their respective Gospels" (Orr, *Virgin Birth*, p. 39). (2) On the ground of the *trustworthiness* of the New Testament writers. These men were not dreamers, visionaries, overwrought enthusiasts, or anything of the kind. Matthew was originally a tax-collector—certainly a practical profession requiring a practical man. Luke was a physician, and therefore in a position to understand this unusual case from his own professional viewpoint; hence, in his narrative, he gives the most minute details. Why discredit the testimony of these men who lived at the proper time to obtain accurate information, and accept the speculations