

The Father-Son Relationship (Part One)

The Bible Defines God's Nature

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It is in I Corinthians that the apostle Paul stated a very important principle to remember regarding the application of human reasoning to any spiritual matter. Now logical reasoning is most certainly required of us, but *human* reasoning, though it may be logical, is reasoning that has its basis *apart* from Scripture. In other words, it cannot be rightly defined by Scripture. That is, that it is reasoning that cannot pass the standard set by God's Word because it is not provable by God's Word. It is, among other things, speculative.

The Corinthian church had been having problems with divisions caused by some preferring certain ministers to others, and having judgmental attitudes toward Paul and others.

I Corinthians 4:6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that you might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

The part of that verse that is important to this message is to learn "not to think of men above that which is written." Of course what we mean here is that which is written in the Scriptures. The *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible has a marginal reference by this verse, saying, "What is written in Scripture, thus avoiding speculation."

Speculating is exactly what most Christians have done regarding much of the nature of God, and that includes the Trinity doctrine. I mentioned in an earlier sermon about finding a startling admission regarding speculating on the nature of God in an edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Unfortunately I did not save the edition information, but under the heading of "Trinity" it stated that the Old Testament contained no information regarding a trinity, and they admitted that the New Testament information was very slim. The body of the Catholic doctrine and its conclusion was arrived at by what they

called "Christological speculation." They were guessing regarding the Trinity.

Sometime ago I clipped a Billy Graham "My Answer" column concerning the Trinity. It was in the newspaper, and again I do not remember what newspaper it was, but the information is typical of information on the subject of the Trinity. I am going to give you a direct quote from that article. In fact, it was much of a very brief article that appeared there.

Christians, particularly theologians, sometimes talk of God as existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. [By this they do not mean that there are three different Gods. In fact, the opposite is the case. Deuteronomy 6:4 says "the Lord our God is One."] To understand this, it may help you to think of God as having three personalities, or three elements to His character or nature. We know from the Bible that God is our Heavenly Father. He has given life to us somewhat as an earthly father gives life to us, by creating us and taking care of us. He also has come to us in Christ, who was God in human flesh, fully God, and yet fully man. God also comes to live within us as the Holy Spirit when we turn to God and receive Christ into our heart. This is a profound truth, and none of us can fully understand its mystery. But don't let that worry you, for the Holy Spirit points us to an important truth you should not miss. God loves us and He wants us to come to know Him as in a personal way.

What they have, in effect, concluded is that since the Bible clearly states that there is One God that this One God has a split personality divided three ways. It is no wonder that they have concluded that this is profound. But the real truth is that such a conclusion is impossible if one restricts oneself to what the Scriptures clearly state about the relationship between the Father and the Son, and especially the Son. Once one sees that relationship clearly stated in Scripture, it solves the mystery of the Holy Spirit. There *is* no such thing as the Trinity doctrine explains.

About two months ago I received a small booklet in the mail from a friend who thought that I might be interested in what it had to say. I was. The booklet is titled *Christ and Deity* and was authored by a man named A. E.

Knoch. He wrote it toward the end of the 19th century, and shows the clear distinctions between the Father and the Son. Now using Scripture only, and letting the Scriptures speak what they clearly have to say, it shows the roles in which they perfectly cooperate within their relationship in the unfolding drama of God's ongoing creation.

So persuasive was this booklet that E. W. Bullinger, the man who authored *The Companion Bible*, fell out of favor with nominal Christianity late in his life partly because he rejected the Trinity doctrine on the basis of Knoch's writings on this subject.

I am warning you that many times this sermon might be difficult to follow. You should read the book! I am using Knoch's booklet as a guide, and I will be using many Scriptures, and in some cases I will be using some of them several different times. I also want to tell you that I will not finish this in one sermon because he really provided a wealth of material. The booklet is only about twenty pages long but the depth of the writing is tremendous.

What I have to say may challenge your present easy assessments that you know exactly who is being spoken of when you read the Bible and see the term "God." This is because the Bible in many places uses some of the same terms for either of them, but in order to understand the context rightly, only one of them is correct. For the most part you may not be getting anything new from what we have believed in the past from our teaching from Herbert Armstrong; however, you may be getting a much more detailed and clearer understanding, giving you far more proof that he was essentially correct, and you will also be getting new ways of proving the doctrine as correct.

I want you to turn to I Corinthians 8:6. This is foundational to understanding this sermon.

I Corinthians 8:6 But to us [Christians] there is but one God. [Not three, but one God] the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.

I am going to read to you from the *Revised English Bible*, and it will say basically the same things as the King James did, but in most cases they have changed the preposition, and in so doing it makes the relationship between us and the Father, and between us and the Son clearer, and at the same time gives a clearer picture of *Their* relationship with each other.

I Corinthians 8:6 (REB) Yes, for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him. There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

What this verse says regarding these relationships to us and each other is this: The Father is the Source of all things, and He is also the *Object* toward which all of creation is moving. It has one beginning and one ending. It begins with the Father and it ends with the Father. By the time we get done with these sermons I will prove this to you. I will tell you where the answer to the end is. It is in I Corinthians 15, where Jesus turns everything over to the Father; then the Bible to that point is complete. It is over. It is done.

It begins with the Father and it ends with the Father. The Father is the Source and the Object toward which all of creation is moving. The Son is the Channel through whom the Father carries out His purpose. Jesus Christ is the Conduit—the means through which and through whom all is being worked out. There are two distinctly different roles that these Beings are carrying out.

A little bit of a conclusion: Thus we owe our very existence, both physically and spiritually to the Father working through the Son. Let us get this point very clear. The Father is the Source of everything. The Son carries out His commands, in perfect agreement, I might say. This distinction is always, without exception, shown in the Scriptures. There are two distinct Beings, both of whom can rightly be called God.

John 8:42 Jesus said unto them [unto the crowd of Jewish people there], If God were your Father you would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; [That is why they would love

Him. Notice whom *He* called God. It was the Father. Notice how He got to earth. He was sent there by the Father.] neither came I of myself, but *He* sent Me.

Again, a very clear distinction is being made here. Jesus clearly states the position here, thus helping establishing the truth that the one Being is *greater* than the other. Though both are God, They are *not* co-equal as the Trinity doctrine claims.

Romans 11:36 For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Again, this is stating that God is the Fountain of all. It shows us though something that is very clear, if we would read the whole context. That is just the conclusion. It shows that nobody has a claim on God, that salvation depends on His mercy, that He is the Source of the power that saves, that He does not need the aid of man, that He is under no obligation to save, and that He is the very reason for which all is being done. That is a mouthful there!

Let us go to Revelation 4:11 because we want to keep confirming this position of the One we know of as the Father, that He is the Source of everything. Here we get a little vision of heaven here, and we see something in a statement that is made by the 24 elders.

Revelation 4:11 You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created.

This is one of those verses where, at first glance, you think it might be applying to Jesus Christ. He does play a very definite part in this, but if you go all the way through chapter 5, you find out that it is talking about the Father in conjunction with Jesus Christ.

All things were created for the Father's pleasure; however, God never deals with us except through the Christ. Hang onto that thought too! He never deals with us except through the Christ. The physical creation began in the Father and was carried out through the Son.

Now the same is true for redemption—the spiritual creation. It began with the Father, but it is carried out through the Son, and there is no conflict between Them. So while the Son is the image of the Father—and He is entitled to be called God and to receive the same honor as the Father—Jesus, by His own testimony, insists that the Father is greater than Himself.

We are going to go back to the book of John again. We will begin to see here the Son delineating His gifts and His responsibilities.

John 5:26-27 For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself. [That is a bell ringer! The life of the Son came from the Father.] And has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.

So the Son's everlasting life and authority to judge is a gift from God the Father.

I want you to note that I am not twisting anything. I am just telling you what Jesus Himself said.

John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me.

Again He repeats the fact that He is sent by the Father. All these things are adding scripture to scripture to scripture to show the relative position between the two of Them, and that the one is God just like the other is, but the one—the Son—is definitely in, what we would have to say, a somewhat inferior position to the other. By His own words, "the Father is greater than I." He is saying, "I am inferior to Him."

Once you start seeing these [Jesus' own testimony], they jump out at you all over the New Testament.

John 10:29 My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.

Again, the Father is greater than the Son. What we are seeing here is a clear delineation between the two.

The Trinity doctrine claims that there are three co-equal beings of the same substance in the Godhead. How can they be co-equal in the face of this testimony Jesus Himself gives, that even the Father and the Son are not co-equal? Where does the Holy Spirit begin to fit into this? Is there anybody who knows better than Jesus? So where does this so-called "third person," the Holy Spirit, belong in this relationship picture? Well, it does not at all, because no such being exists, let alone being "co-equal" with Them, when even the Son is not co-equal with the Father.

I am going to try to make this even plainer. We are going to go to John 17. This is Jesus' prayer to the Father just before His crucifixion.

John 17:20-23 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word: That they all may be one: as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that you have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them: that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved Me.

These verses clearly state that the Father and the Son are one, but Their unity does not contradict the fact that Jesus clearly states that They are not co-equal. They are one in character. They are one in purpose. They are one as to the plan by which Their purpose is being worked out. They are of the same mind, in perfect agreement as to what They are involved in, but are clearly different Beings.

Jesus' prayer at this point is for you and me. He states that clearly in verse 20: "Neither pray I for these alone [meaning the apostles who were right before Him there], but for them also which shall believe on Me through their [the apostles'] word." We read the things they have written. Jesus is praying about you and me. I want you to really get this. *He is praying for you and me.*

He also makes reference here then that He wants *us*—you and me—to become one with the Father *and* the Son to such an extent that He says, "even as" Jesus and the Father are one. The term "even as" means "to the same degree," "to the same level." It means "one," just as *They* are "one." Now let us bring you and me back into this picture since His prayer was that we become *one* with the Father the same way the Father and the Son are one.

Surely, brethren, we are different beings, are we not, each and every one of us having different lives from either the Father or the Son? If we are to be "one" with the Father "even as," to the same degree, in the same manner, to the same level as Jesus is now "one" with the Father, then it follows that we also will not be co-equal with the Father, even as Jesus is not co-equal with the Father; yet we will be "one" with the Father.

It may take you a little while to think this through, but you will see that this gives substantial understanding to how it is that two beings can both be God and yet they are not co-equal with one another. They are different beings. They have different levels of authority. They actually have different responsibilities as well. When we are resurrected we will be one with the Father the same way Jesus is, but we will be entirely different beings. We will *not* be part of the Godhead anymore than Jesus is part of the Godhead, and yet we will be God.

The Trinity doctrine says that the Godhead is closed. Herbert Armstrong taught us that the Trinity doctrine presents itself a closed Godhead. It does. But in one sense, we will be equal with Jesus. That is pretty high.

Before we leave this section, I want you to note that once again Jesus clearly stated that God sent Him.

John 14:4-6 And whither I go you know, and the way you know. Thomas said unto him, Lord, we know not where you go; and how can we know the way? Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father but by Me.

We are getting back a little bit to Jesus being the Channel through whom God's purpose is being worked out. We go to the Father through the Son.

Now we are going to go to Luke 10.

Luke 10:21-22 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered to Me of my Father: and no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he [meaning you and me] to whom the Son will reveal Him [meaning the Father].

Again we see the roles. The Father is the Source. The Son is the Channel. The only way to the Father is through the Son, and the only way to the Father is for the Son to reveal the Father to those who are chosen.

Now remember the principle I stated early in this sermon, that this is a consistency in the entire Bible. Our contact with God is always through the Son. He is the Revelator. We will see an illustration of this in Matthew 16.

Matthew 16:15-17 He [Jesus] said unto them, But whom say you that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.

Can you see the process here? The Father opened Peter's mind so that when he *saw* the Son, the Father began to be revealed to him *through* the Son. His situation was a little bit different from ours in that we do not have the privilege of being able to literally *see* Jesus Christ the way they did. They got a double-barreled dose of revelation of God in that they were not only able to *see* Him, but also to *hear* Him. The whole three and one-half years that they were with Him, He spent that entire time revealing the Father *to* them so that they would understand everything in its right context, and give honor to the Great Being that thought this out (if I can put it that way) and made sure that it was brought to pass in order that He might expand the knowledge of Himself all over the earth, and for all eternity. But He set up strict working

rules. We will get to that just a little bit later. Maybe the strictest of all the working rules is that He works everything through the Son and He Himself stays in the background.

Jesus was sent by the Father, and He is the only means by which we may come to know the Father. Everything is sourced in God the Father, but all—including the physical creation, the means of redemption in the Son's sacrifice beginning the *spiritual* creation, and His mediation work that continues the plan to completion—is channeled through the Son.

As we go on we will continue to see overwhelming evidence right from the Scriptures—the Bible's revelation of its truth—that there is only one God. In fact, we will eventually see it in Jesus' own words. Not in this sermon though. I will save that one for a little bit later.

This truth has been subtly undermined by the meaningless and incomprehensible phraseology of the Trinity doctrine. It is no wonder that the Trinity doctrine is a great mystery.

The revelation of God comes to us through our eyes and ears. We either listen to it or we read it through the pages of the Bible. We hear it expounded in sermons, and we read it, through our eyes, being expounded in booklets and articles that are written for that very purpose.

Our ears cannot discern what is inaudible and our eyes cannot see what is invisible. In Christ though, is the *image* of God. Hang onto that. This is going to be important. In Christ is the *image* of God, and if He were here physically, we could see Him and hear what He had to say, like the apostles did. The Scriptures affirm that the *subject* of Deuteronomy 6:4 is both invisible and inaudible. That Scripture does not apply to the Son.

Let us now go to Colossians 1 and we will begin to see this unfold.

Colossians 1:12-15 Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us

into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

Now you read that right in your own Bible! Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God.

Even we have a saying that so-and-so is the spitting image of somebody else. If one is the image, we are speaking of two distinct personalities. The one is the reflection of the reality, and only one, according to this Scripture, is the true God of the Bible. He is the image of the invisible God.

I am going to repeat it again. I am not twisting a thing.

Now wait till we read this next Scripture! Paul is also the author. It is in I Timothy. Paul is writing along there, and suddenly he has an inspiration, and he says the following:

I Timothy 1:17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, . . .

You already know what this is talking about! Jesus Christ was not invisible. The Father is invisible. Notice the next four words after "invisible": *the only wise God*! Paul said this under the inspiration of Jesus Christ, that the Father is "the only wise God."

I Timothy 1:17 . . . be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

The subject of this verse is the One that Paul called "the King." My Bible has that word "King" capitalized. It is referring to the Father. Paul is also stating in this verse that if one is the King, there is nobody of higher rank anywhere than the Father. The Father is eternal. He is immortal and He is invisible. His dominion extends over all ages and generations. By way of contrast, when Jesus Christ walked the earth, He was clearly seen and had authority over very little.

Like I said, once you begin to see this, the scriptures start jumping out all over the place. Let us go back to Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:26-27 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he [Moses] had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.

I will remind you that Moses saw God. That could not have been the Father that he saw. There is one God who is invisible. If we understand this, Moses' faith was in that God that he *did not* see. His faith was in the *invisible* God. This is what Paul is stating here in Hebrews 11.

As we go on, we are going to see more and more that it is not wrong for us to have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is also God, but the object of our faith has to be the Father. That is the way Jesus Christ wants it. Certainly we trust Him.

Can you imagine what an abomination it is that the Catholic church is telling these people to pray to Mary? When you pray, to whom do you pray? You pray to the Father. That is what Jesus told us to do. I am not going to say it is wrong, that we never make a prayer to the Son, but the overwhelming bulk of our prayers have to be to the Object of all of creation, both physical and spiritual, and that is to the Father, because He is the Boss. He is the only *invisible God* who is the Source of everything, and the object toward which everything is moving in this awesome universe. We have got to get everything in its right place.

Moses' faith was in the One, Paul is saying here, that we call today "the Father," because Moses never literally saw the Father, but he *did* see Him figuratively. He understood. He got the picture. Now if we understand and begin to apply this principle to ourselves, neither are we ever going to see or hear the Father as long as we are human. As He hid Himself from those great beings like Abraham, Moses, and so forth, He is going to continue to hide Himself from us. No child ever sees his father while he is still in the womb.

Now Knoch, in his booklet, occasionally refers to the Father as "absolute Deity." I am sure that he does this to distinguish the Father from the Son, who is also God, but who is a distinct and different Being. There is no hint in

the Bible that God's invisibility is due to human disability, but rather it is because the Father has *chosen* to hide Himself because it is important to His purpose. What is His purpose? Salvation is by grace *through faith* and it is not faith in something that we can see or hear.

The Father—absolute Deity—has deemed it is important to His purpose that He remain invisible and inaudible. One reason is that it is essential in terms of idolatry, because once we attempt to visualize Him we automatically begin to diminish Him to human proportions and He begins to lose some of His transcendence. If you think that is not true, I refer you again to what the Catholic church has done. They are reducing the transcendence of Jesus Christ through this "Mary" thing. But the Father they have not seen yet, and so there is no way that they can literally (we understand this correctly) reduce the Father's transcendence of what He really is if they would begin to understand.

There is a second reason why the Father hides Himself, and that is, by doing this He then directs His children's focus on the Son. This is important in helping us appreciate the part Christ plays in this unfolding drama of *His* revelation of the Father. It is far more important that we focus on God's mind and character than what He looks like because that is what is important to our growth spiritually, and salvation.

However, the Father has not left us entirely clueless in regard to generalities about "absolute Deity." This is done in two ways. First of all, we are told right off in Genesis 1:26 that we are made "in *T heir* image." You can begin to understand that word *Elohim* and "Their," because if Jesus Christ is the image of the Father, then we know that the Father looks somewhat like the Son.

A second way that God has met this challenge is by inspiring certain figures of speech, and one is called "anthropopatheia." In this figure of speech God is treated as a man, and thus we read in the Bible of His eyes, His ears, His mouth, His lips, His arms, His hands, His feet, and so we get a general idea. In addition to this, we read frequently of His feelings. He has very human-like feelings but they are all under perfect control. We can then understand even though we cannot actually literally see Him. But above all these things, He is focusing our attention on His image.

Adam and Eve saw God in the Garden of Eden. Abraham entertained Him in his tent. Moses met Him on the mount. Joshua encountered Him outside of Jericho. Samson's parents also spent some time with Him as well. Every one of these was a literal tangible and material contact with the Image—the Word—of the invisible God. They were not mere visions or dreams.

Recall again Colossians 1:15 where Paul called Jesus "the image of the invisible God." Let us go to John 1.

John 1:18 No man has seen God at any time; [Now who is the God of this verse? It is the Father.], the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared him.

This is a clear statement that we are to look to Jesus Christ for the revelation of the Father. No man has seen God at any time in mankind's history. It means of course, literally. Let us go to John 5 where Jesus confirms this.

John 5:37 And the Father Himself, which has sent Me, has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape.

That is pretty clear. No one has seen God at any time. Let us go now to John 14, to another very famous statement of Jesus.

John 14:8-9 Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father: and how say you then, Show us the Father?

Adam, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and others saw God, but they did not see the One that Jesus identifies as "the Father"—the One who is greater than Him, the One who sent Him to this earth, and the One who empowered Him with the authority to carry out His responsibilities.

On a few occasions Father and Son were visible at the same time, such as in Daniel 7 and Revelation 4 and 5, but on none of these occasions were they literal. In every case they were visions in which there is merely a sight as in a movie scene or a hologram in which there is no substantial existence.

Mankind longs to see God, and I would have to judge that this longing is not wrong in itself. I think we can even go so far as to say that this longing is implanted by God within us, if it is rightly guided and directed. He *wants* us to see Him *literally*! But right now our seeing has to be one of understanding. I do not think that it is any accident at all that this little work began by asking the question, "Do You See God?"

Unfortunately, in our longing to see God, we are led to do something that He forbids. Turn with me to Romans 1.

Romans 1:22-23 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

Brethren, every representation that man makes lowers Him from what He truly is, and also subverts mankind from the "Image" of God—Jesus Christ—who is the true and right representation of the Father. There is only one representation of Himself that God has permitted, and that is Jesus Christ. But the Christ is not the Father. He is not the "absolute Deity."

I have read portions of an article in which the author makes mention of the limitations that God imposed upon Himself in order to become a man. But brethren, I want you to understand that this is true only if we understand that always it is the *Christ* who imposes the limitations, never the Father. Again we are dealing with two distinct and different Beings, and so it is the Son who empties Himself, humbling Himself to take on the seed of Abraham, and become a man. It is the "Image of God" who made Himself visible. It is the "Word of God" who gave the Father expression and manifested His glory and all the revelations that the Father intended.

We are going to look at this term "image" a little bit more closely. Let us go to Matthew 22. This is that instance where they were trying to trip up Jesus regarding a few things, and it involved an image on a coin.

Matthew 22:20-21 And He [Jesus] said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They said unto him, Caesar's. Then said He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.

Now in like manner, here in the United States, on both the 25-cent piece and the one-dollar bill, the United States has placed an image of our first president, George Washington. Much of the sense of the teaching that is contained in this section of Matthew 20 lies in the term "image." That image on the coin indicated their subjection to Rome, and the people recognized that they were obligated to the one whose image was on the coins.

The image was made of metal and it was very small. In fact the image was only a partial showing of the man, which was probably a bust, and it only contained two dimensions. That image symbolized and stood for all that he was—the Caesar of the most powerful nation on earth at that time.

Let us apply that same representation to Jesus Christ, because the illustration He used Himself in Matthew 22 shows, that as "the Image of God," He did not have to be of the same substance as the Father, even as the image on the coin was not the same substance as the Caesar.

I bring this to you because the Trinity doctrine states that these three are not only co-equal, but also of the same substance. How can this be true since He is clearly identified by Paul in the Bible as the "image" of the invisible God? An image, brethren, cannot be precisely the same as what it represents. Impossible!

Let us go to Hebrews 10 where there is another illustration of this.

Hebrews 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

This verse asserts that the sacrificial law was only a *shadow* of good things to come. A shadow is not the reality. It is a reflection. It is an image of the reality, and most certainly is not of the same substance as the reality. Once again this points out that the reality, and the reality's image, are two distinctly different beings in many ways. Also note that the image does not have to have the same dimensions. In other words, an image need not reveal *every* phase of God's existence, but He must be a clear symbol of God's relationship to mankind.

Again we are getting back to the character thing, the mind thing, the attitude thing, the purpose thing. The image must be a manifestation of the Father's nature, of His love, His wisdom, His power, His mercy, and His grace, and a sight of "seeing" Him in the sense of grasping or understanding the Christ, the Image of God, whether in action or through the Word of God, should impress upon us more than we ever could get out of a mere vision of God.

Now without a doubt the image of Caesar on the coin was not much to look at or admire, but neither was the Image, Christ, as Isaiah asserts. Isaiah says there was nothing there to look at that we should just admire Him, but on the other hand, Christ was not a lifeless representation, but a life-giving *illumination* of "absolute Deity" that He represented. He was, and is, the very best that any image can possibly be.

Moffatt translates part of Hebrews 1:3 in this way, speaking about Christ. Think of this in terms of "image." "Christ reflects God's bright glory, and is stamped with His own character." Thus, in seeing Christ we see God, who no man can look upon and live. When God calls one of us, John 1:12 states: "But as many as have received Him [through Christ], to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

When God calls us He gives us the right and the power to look upon Him through His Image, and begin to develop that longing to see Him and be like Him. From this we should come to understand that God does not intend that Christ stand alone in His relationship to the Father, but God desires to fill the universe with images of Himself as His creation moves forward. Our destination is not negative. It is to be conformed to the image of the Son, and thus in being conformed to the image of His Son we also become the image of the Father, even as Christ is the image of the Father.

II Corinthians 3:17-18 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Let us look at another thing Paul wrote. One commentary I looked into said that this may be the very epitome, the summit, of Paul's revelation of the gospel in his writings.

Romans 8:29 For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

This is a process being done through sanctification right now as we are being transformed into this same image, from glory to glory. Colossians 3:5 tells us what we must do as our part in this transformation. I want to read this to you from the New International Version.

Colossians 3:5-11 (NIV) Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or

Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

When God gives us that vision of Him through the Image, and our longing to see the Father begins to be stirred, and we begin to study the Image of God in order to be like Him, and to be transformed into what He is, we have a responsibility once we begin "to *see*" God, and we begin to see that we are earthy, but our destination is to be heavenly.

Can we see that at the end of this process, that since Christ is the Firstborn of many brethren that we shall share in the same relationship *exactly* as Christ has with the Father? Can we look at ourselves and conclude without any difficulty at all, clearly understanding that we are a much different being from the Father? So also is Christ.

There is no such Godhead as the Trinity doctrine asserts. The Godhead consists of one Being—the One that we call the Father. Jesus Christ is clearly a different Being from the Father, even though He is one with Him. He is in perfect agreement in terms of nature, character, government, and purpose.

Matthew 11:27 All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knows the Son but the Father: neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.

So perfect is Jesus' representation of the Father that our eyes and ears and understanding can feast on seeing God in Him. There are innumerable idols in this world, and every one of them successfully degrades and conceals the Father. It is *only the Son* that gives the representation of the Father that the Father will accept. Now to what purpose?

Turn to Galatians 1. Here we are going to compare ourselves to Paul.

Galatians 1:15-16 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace [Why?] to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

We have been called, like Paul, that God might reveal His Son in us. So then, what did Paul say, in terms of what practical thing, we should do?

I Corinthians 11:1 Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Virtually every modern translation I have looked at says: "Be you imitators of me, even as I [Paul] imitate Christ." That is easier for us to understand. That is what we are supposed to do. In imitating Christ, then, the image of the Father as well begins to become impressed in our minds. Our part is to imitate Christ as Paul did, and that in turn will make us into the image of the Father.

I think this is a good place to break, but there is more to come, and I think that you will find the succeeding sermon or two on this to be quite interesting because it goes into other areas that are central to our understanding.