

Dear friends, greetings.

Today we continue our discussion of current attacks on the deity of Jesus Christ and the Personhood of the Holy Spirit happening within our own faith communion. Today's discussion will focus on the deity of our Lord and Savior.

Modern-day false teachers in our faith communion are arguing that the Godhead consists of the Father and the Son, but that the Son was 'begotten' of the Father in eternity past, i.e. that there was a time when the Son was not. They also argue that the Trinity is to be discarded, that we are to worship God the Father and God the Son only, and that the Holy Spirit is nothing more than the mind / presence / character / personality of God the Father and God the Son.

How is one to respond to this theology? In this week's chewing on Scripture, we will ask what the Scriptures reveal about the eternal deity of Jesus Christ, and in the subsequent Worldview we will deal with the question of the personality of the Holy Spirit.

We turn first to Romans 11.34 ('For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?'). According to these false teachers, this verse is taken from Isaiah 40.13, and thereby they equate the Holy Spirit with the 'mind of the Lord' or the 'mind of YHWH' or the mind / presence / character / personality of God the Father and God the Son. Is this really how one may interpret Romans 11.34?

For 11 chapters, Paul has been providing his readers with a comprehensive account of the human situation and God's solution to that problem, the 'Gospel', which 'is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, first the Jew, and also to the Greek (Romans 1.16). Paul has guided his readers through the plan of salvation, the universality of sin, God's gracious solution of righteousness by faith, the way in which Christians should live their lives, and how both Jews and Gentiles are on equal ground when it comes to God's mercy. As Paul reflects on the wonders of the plan of salvation, in Romans 11.33-36 he breaks into a doxology of awe and praise – all he can do is praise God for what God has and is doing. The majesty of God leaves Paul awestruck. The thought that God, who has riches unnumbered, should choose to pour out His treasures on sinful human beings with absolutely no claim to the riches or blessings of God is too much for Paul.

In Romans 11.34-35, Paul is not making a statement about the nature of the Holy Spirit being the 'mind of God. Rather, Paul is in the midst of his doxology of praise to God for the wonders of the plan of salvation and is asking the rhetorical question whether anyone can ever fully understand the workings of the mind of God, the mystery of the plan of salvation, the depths of God's love in that He sent His Son to rescue this infinitesimally small planet with microscopic creatures (when compared to the size of the universe) from rebellion and sin and death? Who can really understand the mind or the love of God? By implication, no-one can. This calls for humility on the part of sinful human beings, allowing God to be God.

We now turn to the issue of John 3.16. The false teachers address the issue of Jesus Christ being 'begotten' (John 3.16), referring back to two OT texts: Ps. 2.7 and Proverbs 8.22-31. Apparently, according to these teachers of darkness, there was a time when the Son was not, but in eternity past, before the beginning of time, the Father brought forth the Son. How does this teaching relate to Scripture?

Firstly, we need to ask ourselves what does the word 'only begotten' mean in John 3.16. Does this mean, as some imply, that Jesus Christ was 'begotten' at some point by the Father? That He is in fact both divine, and with a beginning? As we have seen above, such an understanding of deity was a common pagan notion in the Graeco-Romano world, and was the background for the teachings on the deity of Jesus Christ by Arius.

The NIV renders John 3.16 as follows: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'.

The KJV renders John 3.16 as follows: 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'.

What is the difference between 'one and only Son' and 'only begotten Son'? The Greek word used is *monogenes*. There are two possible meanings. Firstly, the word stems from the verb *gennaō*, which means 'to beget', and is generally only used about males, as in the genealogy of Matthew 1. In this case, the meaning of the term *monogenes* would be 'the only one to be born to or begotten'. This interpretation would suggest that Jesus Christ was begotten, and that there was a time when He was not.

However, the vast majority of scholars reject this understanding of the word *monogenes*, preferring the understanding of 'unique' or 'one and only'.

How may we substantiate this view? Firstly, in the New Testament, the word *monogenes* is only used in Hebrews 11.17 and 1 John 4.7. 1 John 4.7 is a repetition of John 3.16, so doesn't add any further light to the interpretation. Hebrews 11.17 refers to Isaac as being the *monogenes* son of Abraham. We know that this couldn't possibly mean the 'only one to be born to or begotten' of Abraham, because Abraham already had fathered Ishmael, and after Sarah's death fathered many other children. The only interpretation that makes any sense is that of Isaac being the 'unique' son of Abraham, i.e. Isaac was the child of promise, through whom the promises of God would be fulfilled.

Secondly, the word *monogenes* is not understood as coming from the verb *gennaō*, as then the participle formed would be *monogenetos*, not *monogenes*. The origin of the word *monogenes* is understood to be *genos*, which means 'kind' or 'type'. In this view, John 3.16 refers to Jesus as the 'one and only' or 'unique' Son.

So, the meaning 'one and only' or 'unique' is the natural and obvious meaning of the word *monogenes*. Does this imply Jesus had a beginning, or at some time in eternity past was 'begotten' of His Father? The answer is no, unless you claim Jesus is a different God to the Father, and entertain a pagan view of the nature of deity. Jesus is the unique representative of the Godhead in all creation.

Those who use the word 'only begotten' to argue for a time when the Son was not, but was brought forth, often quote from Psalm 2.7, which reads as follows, 'I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.' Does this text indeed mean that there was a moment in eternity past when God the Father begat the Son? Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we come to a different conclusion.

Paul uses this very verse in Acts 13.33 to proclaim to the Jews of the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia as follows, 'God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' Neither the Septuagint (LXX) of Psalm 2.7 nor Paul in Acts 13.33 use the word *genos* (as used in *monogenes*) but the perfect form of the verb *gennaō*, which means 'to beget' and does not equate with the word *monogenes* of John 3.16, as we have seen above. Further, Paul's interpretation of Psalm 2.7 does not support the theory that at some point in eternity past, the Son was begotten of the Father, but that at His resurrection Jesus Christ was revealed and confirmed 'with power' to be the Son of God (c.f. Romans 1.1-6).

Additionally, when the New Testament speaks about the Father and the Son, it describes a unique relationship. God is mentioned as a Father in only 18 texts of the Old Testament, but in the Gospel of John alone, Jesus mentions His Heavenly Father more than 100 times in direct speech. We know the Father

because we know the Son. In part, their relationship is unique because it is eternal. There never was a time when it did not exist. If there was a time when it did not exist, that would mean there was a time when God would not have been the Father.

These prophets of darkness go on to argue that Jesus in John 8.42 declares that He is begotten of the Father. The text reads as follows, 'Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me.' They explain that the phrase 'I came from' comes from the Greek verb *erchomai*, which they claim means 'to be born'. Strong's Concordance refutes this claim, as the verb means 'to come out of', not 'to be born'. Jesus is not stating in John 8.42 that at some point in eternity past He was begotten of His Father, but simply that He was sent by His Father to earth, as John 3.17 also states.

They also argue that in the OT, not only the inspired prophets recognized Jesus Christ as the 'Son of God, but also pagans. They use the statement by Nebuchadnezzar when looking at the three Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace 'He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God' (Dan. 3.25) to argue that a) the three Hebrew worthies must have shared their faith in the coming of the Son of God, had b) explained the concept of the Son of God to Nebuchadnezzar, and that c) Nebuchadnezzar understood about the coming Son of God and when he saw the mysterious 4<sup>th</sup> figure in the furnace, concluded that he was looking at the Son of God.

None of this adds up however. Points (a) and (b) are arguments from silence – nowhere in Daniel does it say whether or not the Hebrews had proclaimed the coming Son of God to Nebuchadnezzar, and one cannot prove anything with an argument from silence. They are rather arguing from assumption instead of revelation of Scripture. Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar doesn't literally say 'Son of God' but rather 'son of the gods', i.e. he sees a heavenly / angelic / supernatural figure, but doesn't ascribe a particular identity to the being he sees. As we have seen already, this is an example of sloppy Biblical interpretation and conclusions based on assumptions and poor translation that are the trademark of these false teachers' theology.

Furthermore, they argue that we are to understand Jesus Christ as being the Wisdom figure of Proverbs 8.22-31. In this passage, we find the 'Wisdom' figure is one who was 'created at the beginning of His work' (8.22), and who was 'brought forth' (v. 24 and v. 25). They cross-reference Prov. 8.22-31 with 1 Cor. 1.24 which is selectively quoted as follows, '...Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.' Is this exegesis credible?

Firstly, concerning the identification of Jesus Christ with the Wisdom figure of Proverbs 8, we need to recognize that Proverbs 8.22-31 speaks about Wisdom, not Jesus Christ. As Dr Gerhard Pfandl writes,

'a) The context speaks about wisdom, not Jesus. The personification of wisdom is a literary device which occurs also in other parts of Scripture. In Psalm 85.10-13 we have 'mercy and truth' meeting together, 'righteousness and peace' kiss each other', and 'truth shall spring out of the earth.' In Psalm 96.12 'the field' is joyful, and 'all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord'....This kind of allegorical language should not be interpreted literally. 'Personification is a literary and poetic device which serves to create atmosphere, and to enliven abstract ideas and inanimate objects by representing them as if they were human beings'.

b) The personification of the divine attribute of wisdom as a woman begins in chapter one: 'wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares' (1.20). In chapter three we are told 'She is more precious than rubies' and 'all her paths are peace' (3.15,17). In chapter seven she is called a 'sister' (7.4), and in

chapter eight wisdom lives together with prudence, another personification (8.12). Personified wisdom is also the topic in Prov. 9.1-5. To apply these passages to Jesus requires an allegorical method of Biblical interpretation that leads to positions incompatible with other passages. It was this kind of hermeneutic that led to the rejection of the allegorical method of interpretation by the Reformers. It should also be noted that no verse of this passage is ever quoted in the NT {i.e. the apostles never used this verse in their preaching or teaching about Jesus}.

c) Proverbs 8.22-31 contains poetic imagery which needs to be carefully interpreted. The first phrase in verse 22 can be translated, 'The Lord possessed me' (KJV, NIV); 'The Lord created me' (RSV, NEB); or 'The Lord begot me' (NAB). The basic meaning of the verb *qanah* is 'to purchase, to acquire' and hence 'to possess' but the other two translations are possible. Apart from *qanah* two other words refer to wisdom's origin: *nasak* 'to establish' (8.23), and *chil* 'be born' (8.24,25). The basic thought of this passage is always the same, wisdom was with God before creation began. Whether God created her or whether she was begotten or simply possessed is not the focus. What is central is not her manner of origin but rather her antiquity and precedence within God's creation. Since the language is poetical and metaphorical, it should not be used to establish anything concerning Christ's supposed origin.

d) Ellen White at times applied Proverbs 8 homiletically to Christ, but she used the text to support his eternal pre-existence. Before quoting Proverbs 8 she says 'Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore' (SM 1.247).'

Secondly, concerning these false teachers use of 1 Cor. 1.24, there are serious concerns with the use of this passage to interpret Proverbs 8.22-31. They ask who is the 'wisdom' figure of Proverbs 8.22-31, and the following "answer" is given: 'Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1.24). Having 'proven' that Christ = 'Wisdom' of Proverbs 8.22-31, their arguments move on. 1 Cor. 1.24 however deserves a closer look.

From 1 Cor. 1.18 on Paul is discussing the message of the cross and how it is received in both Jewish and Greek contexts. The full passage is as follows, 'For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." <sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.'

Paul is discussing the different demands of Jews and Greeks: Jews demand signs, and Greeks (Gentiles) demand wisdom. In response, Paul gives neither signs nor wisdom, but proclaims 'Christ crucified', which is a stumbling block to Jews (who seek a sign) and to Greeks (who demand wisdom). However, to those who respond in faith to the proclamation of the Gospel, Jesus Christ meets all their needs, for to the Jews who seek a sign He is the 'power of God' and to Greeks who demand wisdom, He is 'the wisdom of God', i.e. Jesus meets the felt needs of both Jews and Greeks. Paul concludes by arguing that God's foolishness is 'wiser than human wisdom' and God's weakness is stronger than human strength'.

Paul is not discussing the ‘wisdom’ personification from Proverbs 8 in 1 Corinthians. In fact, whilst Paul makes extensive use of OT quotations and allusions throughout his writings, not once does he ever refer to Proverbs 8. Furthermore, Proverbs 8 is never used as a ‘*testimonia*’ or OT ‘proof text’ by any of the apostles to refer to Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians, Paul is simply arguing that whilst Jews and Greeks demand different things, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is able to meet these needs (for a sign or for wisdom) for those who respond in faith, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ is unable to meet these needs (for a sign and for wisdom) if met with disbelief.

If these false teachers’ assertions that “Jesus Christ = Wisdom” really holds true, one should be able to insert the name ‘Jesus Christ’ in the place of each and every instance of ‘wisdom’ in the above passage (1 Cor. 1.18-25), and the passage would still make sense.....and a brief attempt to do so, particularly with verse 21, shows such an idea is nonsensical. The whole meaning of the passage breaks down, and becomes nonsensical, when one makes such an attempted switch.

With the above background on the eternal deity of Jesus Christ, let us look at other Bible texts that support the eternal deity of Jesus Christ.

- In Revelation 1.17-18, Jesus quotes from Isaiah 44.6, which is spoken by YHWH (sometimes referred to as Jehovah): ‘Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.’ When Jesus told John that ‘I am the first and the last...’ He was asserting that He is Jehovah God.
- In John 10.11, Jesus asserts that ‘I am the good shepherd’. To His Jewish audience, familiar with the OT Scriptures, Jesus was asserting that He was Jehovah God, for Psalm 23 asserts that ‘The Lord is my shepherd.’
- When Jesus was debating with the Jewish authorities over His authority in John 8, we read the following passage: ‘Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." <sup>59</sup> So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.’ In this passage, Jesus asserts to the Jews literally that ‘I, I am’ or ‘*ego, ego eimi*’. What does this mean? The Jews began to pick up stones to stone Jesus to death on the spot, for they recognized the import of what Jesus was saying. Jesus was referring back to Exodus 3.14, where God revealed His name to Moses as ‘I am who I am’, i.e. God is the self-existent one, without beginning, without end, He simply is. Jesus made this claim about Himself in John 8, the Jews recognized this, and concluded that in Jesus was blaspheming in making Himself one with God, so determined to kill Jesus on the spot for this alleged blasphemy.
- Isaiah 9.6 is a famous verse about the arrival of the Messiah: ‘For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’ It is noteworthy that whilst a child is to be born, the Son is not born, but is given, i.e. the child comes into physical existence, but the Son does not, i.e. He is pre-existent, without beginning, in contradistinction to the child that is actually born and has a beginning. Furthermore, Isaiah reveals the list of the names of Jesus Christ, and in identifying Him as ‘Everlasting Father’ the oneness with God the Father and the eternal nature of the Son are revealed.
- Deuteronomy 6.4 is a famous text prayed by religious Jews to this day, ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone’ (NRSV) or in the KJV the text is presented as ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD.’ The word used for ‘one’ (*echad*) does not mean a numerical 1 as those with no understanding of Hebrew allege, but it denotes a unity of relationship and purpose.

The word is used in Genesis 2.24 to refer to marriage (2 persons becoming *echad*) and in Judges 20.1 (all of Israel gathering together as *echad*, i.e. multiple persons in unity of purpose). With this understanding, the call to monotheism is not primarily a call to worship a single divine being, but a call to worship a Godhead exhibiting unity of purpose and relationship.

- John 20.28 records the worship offered by Thomas after Jesus showed Thomas the scars on His body, ‘Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."’<sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"’
- Acts 7.59 records and interprets the last prayer of Stephen as he was being martyred, ‘And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’
- Revelation 1.5-6 records a doxology of praise from John to Jesus Christ, referring to Jesus Christ as ‘God’, ‘And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, <sup>6</sup> And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.’ John the Apostle speaks of Jesus Christ plainly, declaring that Jesus Himself is declaring Himself to be God as He speaks of making us priests and kings unto Him, and to His Father also.
- Matthew 1.23 records the name of Jesus Christ in the birth narrative: ‘Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.’ Jesus Christ is ‘God with us’, and in case there is any doubt as to which divine being, the name ‘Emmanuel’ refers to ‘El’, short for ‘Elohim’, the name for God in the creation story of Genesis 1.1.
- John 1.1 is part of the exalted Christology of the Johannine prologue (John 1.1-18). It reads as follows, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Jesus Christ is the Word, the *logos* of God. John consciously and deliberately repeats the opening words of Genesis 1.1 (‘in the beginning’, ‘*en arche*’ in the LXX, and John 1.1. ‘*en arche*’), i.e. in the beginning, before time and space were created, God existed....and Jesus Christ, the *logos* of God, was with God, and was God.
- Paul states, concerning the final judgement, in Romans 2.16 that ‘In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.’ Who is the judge of mankind? It is God. What is the judge’s name? We find the answer in 2 Timothy 4.1, ‘I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.’ Furthermore, in 1 Cor. 12.3, Paul states that ‘Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’ According to Paul, God will judge mankind, and Paul later clarifies in his pastoral letter to Timothy that it is Jesus Christ who will be the judge of mankind. Clearly, for Paul, Jesus Christ = God. God in Scripture is eternal, is the Creator of all things, is independent of all things, is before all, has no beginning, no ending, is forever present, is omnipotent and omniscient. Anything less, and God would not be the God of Scripture, but a pagan concept of a deity that comes into being with certain limitations.
- Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3.16 that ‘And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.’ God (in the person of Jesus Christ) was

manifest in the flesh....not a divine being that was mysteriously brought forth in a state of 'begottenhood'.

- Hebrews 1.8-9 states that 'But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. <sup>9</sup> Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Hebrews 1.5-14 is an example of Hebrew Biblical interpretation (called *midrash*) in which Paul starts with the propositional truth – that Jesus Christ is God (vv.1-4), and then moves through a string of pearls (the *haraz*) to come to the conclusion, which is given in 2.1-3. In this 'string of pearls', Paul quotes in vv. 8-9 from Psalm 45.6-7, in which God addresses the Son as 'God'. There is no hint of subordination on the part of the Son to the Father, no hint of prior existence of the Father to the Son. God the Father simply addresses God the Son as 'God'.
- 1 Timothy 2.3 states that 'For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.' Who is the Saviour of mankind? We find the answer in Acts 13.23, 'Of this man's seed hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.' Titus 1.3-4 also identifies who 'God our Saviour' is, 'But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; <sup>4</sup> To Titus, *mine* own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.' Titus 2.13 again identifies who 'God our Saviour is', 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,' i.e. Jesus Christ is God and our Saviour.
- Jesus responds to the question about which is the greatest commandment in Mark 12.29 as follows, 'And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: <sup>30</sup> And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.' Who is the Lord? At Pentecost, the Apostle Peter, speaking under inspiration, says that 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ' (Acts 2.36). In Acts 16.31 we find this teaching of the Apostle Paul, 'And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.' Later in his ministry, Paul states in Romans 1.3 'Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.' This brief selection of texts identifies Jesus Christ as Lord as God as the God of Deuteronomy 6.4.
- Not only is Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, He is our Creator. John 1.3 tells us that 'All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life; and the life was the light of men.' In Jesus is life, not life borrowed, not life given, not life inherited, not life begotten of another, but life in and of itself.
- Hebrews 3.4 tells us that 'For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God.' Paul does not qualify this statement about God building all things, e.g. by saying that it was a begotten Son who built all things, or a Son who once was not, but who in eternity past was begotten, or brought forth, of the Father. No – it is God who built all things, and Scripture reveals Jesus as the Creator.
- Colossians 1.16 tells us that 'For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.'

- In John 17.3, Jesus states that ‘And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’ God the Father and God the Son can only give eternal life if they themselves are eternal. One cannot receive eternity from a non-eternal being. Thus, God the Son is eternal as is God the Father.
- To emphasize the eternal being of Jesus Christ, Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6.13-16 that ‘I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; <sup>14</sup> That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>15</sup> Which in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; <sup>16</sup> Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen.’ According to the Apostle Paul, Jesus Christ is ‘King of kings’ and ‘Lord of lord’, and He alone has immortality. Mankind received conditional immortality in the Garden of Eden, conditional upon continuing obedience to God, and mankind lost this conditional immortality in the Garden of Eden when they disobeyed God. However, Jesus does not have conditional but unconditional immortality, and being immortal means that He could not have been begotten or ‘brought forth’ at some point in eternity past, for that would deny His immortality.

Further texts on the deity, pre-existence, humanity and incarnation of Jesus Christ are Micah 5.2, Matthew 1.20, 28.19, Luke 1.35, 24.39, John 1.14, 6.27, 14.16-17, 26, 14.8-11, Acts 5.3-4, Romans 1.3-4, 2 Corinthians 5.21, 5.15, Gal. 4.4, Ephesians 4.4-6, Philippians 2.6-8, Colossians 1.15-17, 2.9, 1 Timothy 2.5, 3.16, Hebrews 1.1-3, 8, 2.14-17, 1 John 4.2-3, 2 John 7.

Whilst on earth, Jesus Christ voluntarily submitted / subordinated Himself to His Heavenly Father, and we find this in Psalm 40.8, Matthew 26.39, John 3.16, 4.34, 5.19, 12.49, 14.10, 17.4-8, 2 Corinthians 8.9, Philippians 2.7-8, Hebrews 2.9.

Furthermore, whilst being the Son of Man, Jesus lived a life of sinless perfection, and we find this in Matthew 4.1-11, Romans 8.3-4, 2 Cor. 5.21, Hebrews 2.10, 4.15, 1 Peter 2.21-22, 1 John 3.5. Upon ascending to heaven, Jesus Christ resumed the position He had with the Father prior to the incarnation (Matt. 28.19, John 12.23, 17.5, Ephesians 1.19-22, Phil. 2.8-9, Col. 1.18, 1 Timothy 2.5, Hebrews 1.3, 2.9, 1 Peter 1.11 and Philippians 2.9).

We have seen above that the theology taught by these false teachers about the ‘begotten’ nature of the Son of God, that He was brought forth of the Father in eternity past, is unscriptural. The identification of Jesus Christ as the Wisdom figure of Proverbs 8 is a tenuous identification with no clear Scriptural support (whilst the apostles used repeated references to the OT to support their proclamation about Jesus Christ, Proverbs 8 was NEVER used by the apostles in the NT to support their proclamation about Christ). Proverbs 8 has been the subject of intense debate for centuries, with multiple possible interpretations being provided.

One must choose between interpreting the multiple and clear texts above on the eternal deity of Jesus Christ in the light of a single unclear text (Proverbs 8), or interpreting the single unclear text (Proverbs 8 – there is not even agreement as to whether this passage refers to the Son or the Holy Spirit) in the light of the repeated affirmations of the eternal deity of Jesus Christ as found throughout Scripture. As stated above in the discussion on the alleged identification of the ‘mystery’ of Revelation 17.5 with the ‘mystery’ of the Trinity in a single Roman Catholic publication, it is a strange and unsustainable hermeneutical process that insists on interpreting or denying the clear in the light of the unclear, yet this is precisely what these false teachers do when they deny the eternal nature of Jesus Christ.



With this in mind, we now turn to our final subsection, in which we address the issue of the Holy Spirit. Who or what is the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit a separate person within the Godhead, or is the Holy Spirit the mind / presence / activity / character of God the Son and God the Father?

Until we next meet via email, have a wonderful Sabbath day!

Conrad.