

BIBLICAL MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD I

THE TRIUNE GOD

John 1: 1-18 & 14: 15-20

Catechism question for July 29: How was Christ humiliated?

A: Christ was humiliated by being born as a man and into a poor family; by being made subject to the law and suffering the miseries of this life, the anger of God, and the curse of death on the cross; and by being buried and remaining under the power of death for a time. Scripture: Gal. 4:4

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that an aboriginal man, who had never encountered modern, technological society, was hunting and found a Rolex watch. What would be some things that he could know about the origin of the watch just from carefully observing it? What could he know about the maker of the watch? What would be some things that he could not know? What would have to happen in order for him to know fully about the watch and the maker of the watch?

It would be obvious to the tribesman that the watch was made by someone or something. He could compare the materials used in its construction with the materials he made things with and conclude that whoever made it was superior in intelligence and ability or had access to better materials. He might be able to make some guesses as to the function of the watch. He might try to use it in all kinds of ways in which it was not designed. There would not be a lot that he could know about the maker beyond the possession of intelligence and skill. He could not know with certainty the purpose of the watch or how to use it. The only way he could know with certainty about the watch and the maker of the watch is if someone from the technological world came and explained the watch and the maker to him. Apart from revelation he would know little with certainty.

We are, as humans, like the aboriginal man in our relation to the world we live in and to the one who made it, but we are also unlike him. We can know a great deal, by careful study, of how the world functions. But we cannot know the purpose for which it was made or the exact

way to use it so that it functions as it was designed unless God tells us. We can know certain things about the Creator (Psalm 19 & Rom. 1:18-23) but there is much we cannot know unless he reveals himself to us (1 Cor. 2: 6-16). However, our situation is unlike that of the aboriginal man in that understanding how a watch functions, its purpose and knowing the maker of the watch is interesting and might help us not be late for dinner. But there is nothing moral or immoral about knowing about the watch and its maker. We, on the other hand, were made for the purpose of knowing and loving God. To be ignorant of God and to not love him is immoral and will not only result in living a worthless life here but also send us into eternal judgment. Today we are going to consider God's revelation to us that he has eternally existed as three persons. We would never know that God is like this without his revealing it to us in Jesus and through his word. Our aim in knowing is first so that we will worship him for his greatness and second, so that we will understand ourselves as made in His image.

Read John 1: 1-18. Make a list of everything you discover about the Word, God, the Father and the relationship between these "persons".

- *The Word was in the beginning*
- *The Word was with God, in the beginning*
- *The Word was God*
- *The Word is referred to with a personal pronoun, i.e. "him" in v. 2*
- *All things were made through him*
- *Nothing was made without him (He is the Creator and is distinct from his creation)*
- *He possesses life within himself*
- *The life he possesses gives light to men*
- *The light he gives drives back darkness. Darkness cannot withstand the light his life gives.*
- *God sent a man named John (the Baptist). God has authority to command people and purposes for which he sends people.*
- *God sent him to "bear testimony" to the light of Word so that all men might believe (in that Word).*
- *When John showed up he came only as a witness to the light who was coming into the world. When John showed up the light was not in the world but came after John bore witness to him.*
- *The Word was in the world*
- *The world was made through the Word*

- *The Father did not recognize the Word, even though he made it.*
- *He came to a group of people in the world that were considered “his own” but even they did not receive him*
- *Some people did receive him, i.e., believe in him, and those that did were made children of God*
- *Those who received the Word were “born of God” not born by any human or natural means.*
- *The Word became flesh and lived among the author and others like him.*
- *The author and others with him saw the glory of the word when he became flesh*
- *The glory they saw is the glory of the “One and only who came from the Father’s side.*
- *The Word had a place at the Father’s side that he left in order to become flesh and appear in his glory to John and friends.*
- *The word is full of grace and truth*
- *The Father and the Word are two distinct persons*
- *The Word who became flesh is greater than John, has surpassed him in importance and glory.*
- *The word who became flesh existed before John did.*
- *The word is full of grace that pours out of him in blessing to the author and all those with him.*
- *The name of the Word made flesh is Jesus Christ. He stands in contrast with Moses who gave the law, grace and truth have come through Jesus.*
- *God has never been seen*
- *The word made flesh, who is the One and Only (v. 14), who lives at the Father’s side, is God.*
- *The Father is God*
- *The Father and the Word are distinct persons as the Word lives at the Father’s side and comes from the Father and makes the Father known.*

What conclusions can we draw about the nature of God from these verses?

- *There are at least two distinct persons called God in this passage.*
- *It appears that they have distinct functions as well. The Word becomes flesh and makes the Father known and pours out blessing on people.*

- *The Father sends the Word.*
- *God gives spiritual life to some people, those who receive the Word.*

Read John 1: 29-34. What do we find out about Jesus, the Father and the Spirit here?

- *Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*
- *Lamb of God = the lamb who comes from God, the Lamb God sends to take away the sin of the world. Again there is distinction between Jesus and God and Jesus is sent on a mission.*
- *In v. 30, John connects this Jesus with the Word become flesh who is the One and only who makes God known and who is God by repeating what he said in v. 15. In other words, Jesus is God.*
- *In v. 31 John acknowledges that he, in himself, did not know Jesus’ identity, this was revealed to him, as he will make clear in vv. 32-34. His job was to make sure that the nation Israel was made aware of his arrival and his identity.*
- *The Spirit came down from heaven in the form of a dove and remained on Jesus. The Spirit is distinct from Jesus. The Spirit is from heaven in the same way Jesus is from the Father (v.14). The Spirit assumed a physical form, as a dove. The Spirit’s arrival upon Jesus is to physically show the Spirit’s presence in the life of Jesus.*
- *Now we find out, in v. 33 that what John hinted at in v. 31 is true. The only way he knew Jesus is because the “one who sent him” told him that the dove’s arrival would indicate the man who is the Son of God.*
- *Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit, who came from heaven in the form of a dove and remained on him. The Spirit and Jesus are distinct persons but cooperate in the work of saving people.*
- *Jesus is the Son of God. Like the “Lamb of God”, Son of God means that Jesus comes forth from God. He is God’s own Son.*

Read John 4: 34. What do we discover about the relationship between the Father and the Son?

The Father has sent the Son into the world to perform his work, to do his will. The Son delights in and gains strength from doing that will, that work. The Son gladly obeys the Father and does his will.

Read John 5: 16-23. What do you find out about Jesus, the Father and their relationship?

- *The Jews persecuted Jesus because he was healing on the Sabbath*
- *Jesus calls God “my Father”*
- *Jesus implies that the work that the Father is doing is the work that he is doing.*
- *The Jews are even angrier with him because they know that by calling God “my Father” he is claiming to be God. His enemies know this is what he is claiming. This means that the title, “Son of God” is a claim to be God. In the same way that the firstborn son of a king is king and to be treated as king.*
- *The Son cannot initiate work apart from the Father. Whatever the Father does, that is what the Son does. He does whatever the Father does. He is submissive to his Father. He is dependent on the Father.*
- *The Father loves the Son*
- *The Father takes the initiative to show the Son all that he does and this is what enables the Son to do the work he does. In fact, the Father showed the Son even greater things than healing the man who had been an invalid for 38 years (vv. 1-15).*
- *Jesus, in vv. 21-22, reveals two of the “greater” things that the Father shows the Son. The Father gives the Son the prerogative to give resurrection life to whomever he will. The Father entrusts the judgment of human beings into his hands.*
- *The Son and the Father deserve the same honor from men. Both Father and Son deserve to be worshipped as God who is both Savior and Judge.*

Read John 10: 28-30. What do we discover about the Father and the Son here?

- *The Son gives eternal life to his sheep*
- *No one has the ability to take his sheep away from him*
- *The Son’s Father gave him the sheep that he gives eternal life to. In other words the sheep are the Father’s sheep first.*
- *The Father is greater than all, including the Son*
- *No one has the ability to snatch the sheep out of the Father’s hand either. In other words, both the Son and the Father hold on to the sheep.*

- *Jesus and the Father are one in being and essence. If you’ll read vv. 31-33 you’ll see that this is exactly what the Jews understood him to be claiming.*

Read John 8: 54-59. What do we find out about the Father and the Son in this passage?

- *The Father glorifies the Son. The Father works to make the glory of the Son known in the world.*
- *The Son knows the Father and keeps his word*
- *Abraham saw the day of Jesus and was glad. (This is a reference to Abraham’s understanding of the work of the Messiah that he saw in the promises of God and especially in God’s provision of the ram in place of Isaac on Mt. Moriah.)*
- *The Jews are astounded that Jesus claims that Abraham has seen him. They want to know how this is possible when Jesus is not even 50 years old.*
- *Jesus then claims to the eternal God by claiming that he existed before Abraham. In fact he applies the name of God, Yahweh, to himself. “I AM” is the name God reveals to Moses in Exodus 3 and is translated Yahweh in English. In the English translations of the OT every time you see LORD in all upper case letters you can know that the name of God, Yahweh, I AM stands behind it. No wonder the Jews take up stones to kill him because he has uttered the most inconceivable blasphemy. He, a man, is claiming to be the eternal Creator and Redeemer of Israel. This is blasphemy unless it is true.*

Read John 14: 15-26. What do we discover about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in this passage?

- *The Holy Spirit is called “another Counselor”. Therefore, he must be a person like Jesus. He must be divine like Jesus. Yet he is different from Jesus.*
- *Jesus calls him the “Spirit of truth”. This means he is the Spirit who communicates truth. This is particularly significant in light of 14:6 where Jesus claims to be “the truth”.*
- *The Father is the one who gives the Spirit*
- *The Son asks the Father to give the Spirit. Therefore the Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son.*

- *The world cannot accept the Spirit because it does not see him or know him.*
- *The HS is called a “he”, not an “it”. Therefore he is a person.*
- *Christians know the Holy Spirit (he is a person who can be known)*
- *The Holy Spirit lives with Christians and in Christians*
- *Jesus does not leave Christians alone. He comes to them. He is in Christians also. In other words, the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christians is the same as Jesus being in Christians because the Spirit and Jesus are one essence, though different persons.*
- *The Father and the Son make their home with those who obey the Son’s commands*
- *The words Jesus speaks are the Father’s words. Jesus again is seen as depending upon and submitting to the Father.*
- *The Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father, to the disciples in the name of Jesus.*
- *The Holy Spirit will teach the disciples about all things and remind them of everything the Son said while he was with them.*
- *Jesus returns to the Father*
- *The Father is greater than the Son, not in his deity, but in his authority. He is the Father, Jesus is the Son.*

Read John 15:26. What do we find out about the Holy Spirit and Jesus here?

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit from the Father. Jesus has authority over the Holy Spirit but he comes forth from the Father. The HS testifies about Jesus. He makes much of Jesus.

Read John 16: 13-15. What do we discover about the HS, the Son and the Father?

- *The Spirit of truth guides Christians into all the truth. He is the teacher/revealer.*
- *He only speaks what he hears. He is submissive to the Father and the Son.*
- *He glorifies Christ by making what belongs to Christ known to Christians.*
- *Everything that belongs to the Father belongs to Jesus and this is what the Spirit makes known to Christians. The Holy Spirit makes much of Jesus who gets everything he has from the Father.*

In pairs, find verses from those we have read that support each of the following propositions about the nature of God and the relationships within the Godhead.

- **God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

John 1: 1-2 (The word was with God), John 1: 14 (the word came from the Father), John 1:18 (the Word is at the Father’s side), 1:32-34 (All three persons mentioned in distinction from one another), 14: 16 (The Son asks the Father to send the Spirit who is “another Counselor”)

- **Each one is fully God.**

1: 18, the Father is God. 1:1 & 18, 8:58, 10:30, the Son is God. 14:16-20, the Holy Spirit is God.

- **But there is only one God.**

John 1: 1-2, 5:18

- **The Father loves the Son and sends him forth to do his will**

1: 30, 4:34, 5:19-23, see also 17: 1-4

- **The Son submits to the Father and always does what pleases him**

John 4: 34, 5:19-23, 17:1-4

In Genesis 1: 26-27 we are told that God made man in his image, male and female. What are some possible ways that man made male and female might reflect the nature of God as a Trinity of being?

Men and women share equally in their humanity and their roles as image-bearers. They are equally important in the work of subduing and filling the earth. However, they are different in role and function in that work.