

The Trinity of God

Part 2

Speaker	Ernest Brown
Duration	00:48:26
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/eb019/the-trinity-of-god

Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Gospel by John, chapter 5.

John 5, verse 17, Jesus answered the Jews, My father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his father, making himself equally with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what [00:01:04] he seeth the Father do. For what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. We'll leave that chapter there and move on to chapter 17.

Verse 1, These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Chapter 4, verse 19. The [00:02:13] woman said unto Jesus, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a [00:03:09] spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

We have sought, as time has permitted, to see what we can gather into our garner in three brief sessions, an impression of what God has done from himself and for himself, to reveal himself as he has in Christianity. So much [00:04:06] might be said, and could be said, that would be worthwhile. We have to be careful we don't cloud the issue with too much detail. So we have taken account of the fact that, as Hebrews 1.1 tells us, that over the centuries before Christ came into the world, God had progressively, stage by stage, shown, declared, and revealed more and more of himself, and yet still keeping something back. We considered that with every revelation that God made of himself, that there were those on earth who were prepared and brought into a knowledge of [00:05:01] that revelation, and they gained an apprehension, which was the other word we use, God revealing himself in a downward direction to men, man reaching up, being led into an apprehension of what God was revealing about himself. And we'll come back to that. But now, with the incoming into the world of God the Son, God manifested in flesh, God has now revealed himself, manifested himself, declared himself, in a fuller way than ever would have been possible. All previous revelations were partial. Many of the revelations were transient for a time. None were permanent, none were eternal,

none were absolutely full. But [00:06:04] then, having looked briefly at John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1, we saw that in the person of the Son, who is God in person, that God has revealed himself in the fullest possible manner. This means that in our day, a greater apprehension of God can be entered into, and it also means that there can be a greater response to God. Response to God, in any day, is commensurate with the revelation God has given of himself, and the apprehension of God that man has been brought into it. So that tends, seems to be the sequence, revelation, apprehension, [00:07:02] and then response. We moved on from there to consider that if there were to be people on earth who entered into the apprehension of God's revelation of himself, seeing that they weren't fit in themselves as sinners, their sins must be dealt with, redemption must be secured, and for that, it meant that the Son, who came into the world to reveal God, had to go out of the world in that terrible way by the death of the cross. That left a gap. The one who had revealed God fully and entirely in his own person, and by what he did, had to go back to where he was before. And as we read and referred to last night, when the hour had come when [00:08:01] he should depart out of the world unto the Father, that he gathered his own around himself, and in those sweet chapters 14 to 16 of the Gospel by John, the Lord revealed to the disciples this further secret, that now that he was going out of the world, and they were going to be bereft of his personal presence, they would feel that very keenly, he reassured them that another comforter, he had been their comforter until now, another comforter was coming into the world, sent by the Father, yes, sent by the Son, coming himself the Spirit, because he wanted to, and as with everything else that's important in Christianity, the fruit of the concerted work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And [00:09:03] so we moved on to consider that this adequate, equal, equal caliber comforter would come into the world as he did on the day of Pentecost. There would be that small apostolic band who would act for God in making known the revelation of God, and the agent that they would use would be the Word of God. And I think that brings us to where we were at the end of the meeting last night. The persons of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, acting in concert for the glory of God, the holy apostles, with the Word of God, first of all oracularly and orally, by word of mouth, from them, and then when the canon of Scripture was committed to writing, preserved down the ages, so as the Lord prayed, as the Son [00:10:06] prayed for us, chapter 17, verse 20, praying not only for the apostles, but for us, who would henceforth believe on the name of the Son. And that is where we find ourselves now. The object of the activities of the persons of the Godhead, with the apostolic witness in our hands, the apostles' doctrine, and the Holy Spirit making these things good in our souls. So we are now poised, the revelation has been made, redemption has been secured, we are indwelt by the Spirit, those whom Christ has secured for God by his work upon the cross, and we are now able to enter, just a little, by way of response to all the revelation [00:11:04] that God has made of himself. Now I read chapter 5, verses 17 to 19, as a link between what we've had and that which we are moving on to. It may seem a difficulty to read words like, the Father sent the Son, to read words like, I do always the will of him that sent me. As we read, the Son can do nothing from himself. I want to make a statement for brevity, and I commend in particular the [00:12:04] writings of John, the Gospel and the three epistles in particular, to verify, Berean-wise, what I say. Verify that what I say is scriptural. Be no help to you, in fact it would be dangerous if what I say is outside the bounds of Scripture. I will use my words, but you check against the words of Scripture. I consider I am on good ground, scriptural ground, when I say that personally the Son is equal with the Father. But that, administratively, the Son is subject to the Father. Notice I say subject. I don't say inferior, although I'm not afraid of that word. [00:13:02] You know in Hebrews 2, where we read that the Lord became, for a little while, or in a little way, lower than the angels, exactly that could well be translated, that he became, for a little while, inferior to the angels. Those of you who use French translations will find the word there. What does that mean? Personally, the angels do him homage. Personally, he is vastly superior to the angels. But in the hierarchy of beings, notice I'm saying beings, not creatures, the Lord is the creator,

never became a creature. He became man, which is not the same. Well, man, as an order of being, is lower on the scale of beings than angels. [00:14:04] And so, positionally, in the position that he took in manhood, it does no disservice to his personal glory to say that he became, for a little while, inferior, positionally in brackets, to the angels. Personally, far higher than a creature angel could ever be. So, if we are going to quibble about words, let us make sure we understand what meaning we convey by the words. The Lord Jesus never became a creature. All things that have being came into being in virtue of his being. Colossians says, all things that have being, or their being, and continuous in being, in virtue of his being. All things subsist by him, as the text says. But [00:15:06] while, personally, he has the ultimate glory, and none could be higher, Philippians 2, among other places say, that as to the position he took in becoming man, he entered into a condition where he could die. In Godhead, in deity, he could never die. He is the eternally existing one. But for our sakes, and for the revelation of God, he entered into manhood with the ultimate intention of going out of the world, when the full revelation had been made, going out of the world by death, the death of the cross. But while he was here, John's Gospel highlights it. It delighted [00:16:05] him ever to demonstrate that in holy manhood, he was subject to the Father. He deferred to the Father administratively, I would say. You choose a better word, if you will. So, he was subject. He was subordinate, if you like. We no longer have bosses and slaves, have we? We have superordinates and subordinates. Most of us, in professional life, are superordinate to some and subordinate to others. Life gets complicated. When the Lord Jesus entered into manhood, he entered into a condition where it was proper that in manhood he was subject, not personally inferior, but administratively subject, subordinate to [00:17:02] the Father while he was here upon earth. And it was in becoming man that he not only became our kinsman with a view to dying for us and securing salvation for us, but he entered into a condition which we would recognise and we would understand the revelation of God that he was making, unless the word became flesh. Those who lived on earth at the time could never have understood the fullness of the revelation that God was giving of himself. But, as we read, when the fullness of the time was come, when the time was right, when the time was ripe, as we might say, that God revealed himself in the fullest possible way in the person of the Son who came into manhood for the express purpose of [00:18:02] revealing God as he had never ever done before. In chapter 17, I've been in Bible readings on chapter 17, where the brethren have never got beyond the first four words. I'm sure it wouldn't happen at all. These words speak Jesus, and debate continued for a long time, as it were, the words that have already been spoken in chapter 16 are the words that are about to be spoken in verse 17. Use your spiritual judgment. Seems to me to follow on after what we speak of as the last words of the Lord Jesus to his own, from the beginning of chapter 13, really, up to the end of verse 16, he gave his last account. He gave his last advice and counsel and instruction to the disciples, and it says [00:19:06] these words, having been spoken by Jesus, I would say, he lifted up his eyes to heaven. Now, here's a break. Until then, he had been speaking to men on earth, his own, in the upper room. He's now going to address himself in personal communion and prayer to his Father in heaven, and it's a suitable pause point, isn't it? That having been on earth, and speaking to men on earth, he lifts up his eyes to heaven, and commences this period of communion with the personal Appalachian Father. I can easily see from Scripture. Scripture makes it plain that when God [00:20:07] is fully revealed, in a fuller, more comprehensive way than he has ever revealed himself before, it is not under the name of Elohim, not under any of the compounds of the name El, not under Jehovah or any of the compound names of Jehovah, but the fullest possible revelation is under this name, this special name of Father. Now, I have just a little difficulty there, I suppose. You see, my earthly father died when I was two. I wouldn't think most people would [00:21:04] consider my memory was so much worse than average. It interests me, it intrigues me, when I see my grandson of two years age running about, he knows his mummy, he knows his daddy, he knows his granny, he knows his grandad, and if they were all taken away, it seems very difficult for me to imagine that in later life he

wouldn't remember them at all. Whether it's something what we call that it's a kindness of God, that certain unpleasant experiences are blotted out of our memories, I don't know. The fact remains, at the age of my grandson, who seems to know people so well he'd never forget them, at such a point in normal [00:22:04] life, my father died, and I have no recollection at all. Other than looking at a photograph, I can't remember what he looked like, the sound of his voice, what he did, how he did things, and why. I can't remember any conversations, so I have no basis of comparison. Most of you, I suppose, have known, and most of you may well still have, earthly, natural fathers, and you have that bond of father and child, father and son, father and daughter. And I suppose, well I'm sure, that God has put us in natural relationships, as a picture of eternal, spiritual, heavenly relationships. I have on my shelves a book, like many other books on my shelf, [00:23:07] I haven't yet read it. It's called The Natural Law in the Spiritual World. Sure, it's a good book, I hope to find out someday. But I find the title a little bit off-putting. It says, The Natural Law in the Spiritual World, as though the primary world was the natural world, and that God has based spiritual values, and spiritual relationships, on what we already understand in the natural sphere, as if God has said, well, I'll copy what we already know, and they'll quickly transfer from the natural to the spiritual. Now, scriptures tell me that God's primary world is the spiritual world, and that really, if there is a copy, it's the natural which is the copy of the spiritual. God has implanted, [00:24:05] in nature, which he designed, created, formed, and made, things which are intended to be a picture, which illustrate for us, to help us to understand, the true realities, spiritual, heavenly, eternal realities. I think I'm on good ground in that, because we get pictures in the Old Testament, which chronologically came first, but we well understand, don't we, that the types and the figures, and the allegories, in the Old Testament, are secondary, and they look forward, and point, and illustrate deeper, fuller, spiritual truths. Well, in the same way, these relationships, in which we subsist, because God has put us in them, are intended to give us a little glimpse of the fuller, deeper, spiritual [00:25:07] truth. As I say, compared with many of you, I suppose I'll start with a disadvantage. Another friend of mine enjoyed his father's company, as a little boy, a toddler, a boy, growing up, but I was most impressed once, when this friend said to me, you know, he said, one regret I do have in life, is that my father died, just as I was getting to know him as a person. I suppose some of you can identify with that. It's one thing to be a baby in daddy's arms. It's another thing to be a toddler, running [00:26:01] along, trying to keep up with him, while you hold his hand. It's another thing to be guided through boyhood, and as an early youth, but when you attain your majority, and become a mature person in your own right, it's another matter again, isn't it, to enter into a fuller, deeper, adult relationship, son with a father, if we might say, man to man. Well, this friend of mine, who many of you know, says it is his regret that he lost his father, just as he was getting to know him as a person.

In my early days amongst brethren, I noticed that one mature believer, one of my early spiritual mentors, had a very neat way of avoiding hard questions. I'm [00:27:05] not suggesting you practice this on a Thursday night. If he got a question he couldn't understand, or wasn't confident about the answer, he would say, well you know, that's one of those things that's better felt than told. I'm sure you've heard that before. But once he, I suppose he was hoist on his own petard, because he got a difficult question, and as often he said, well that's one of those things that's better felt than told. And another of his friends said, that may be so, but now's the time to tell it. The revelation of God as father. The knowledge of God as father. I could well say to you, you could well say amen if I [00:28:01] said it's better felt than told. But having read these scriptures, you might well say to me, that may be so, but tonight you have the responsibility, now is the time to tell it. For that reason, I read the opening verses of John 17. This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Many are the attempts to define eternal life by its very nature, beyond the power of finite mind to do in any satisfactory way. We [00:29:03] have on our shelves, most of us,

attempts at such definitions. I think it satisfies me as a start, as a start to say, a glimmer of light about eternal life is to understand that eternal life involves the knowledge and the enjoyment of the ever-subsisting relationship of the father and the son. John's writings tells us about the father, because it is about the revelation that the son gave. Perhaps another safe God is worthwhile. Now, you hear verses and without knowing them, by [00:30:07] memory, you say, ah, that's a Pauline statement, it'd be in one of Paul's epistles. Or you might hear another remark, you say, oh, that's one of John's statements. And of course, we are not always right, are we? This morning, I was thinking of a verse, and it was this. No man knoweth the son but the father, and no man knoweth the father but the son, and he to whom the son will reveal him. In my haste, I said, oh, that's bound to be John's Gospel, and it sounds like John chapter 5. Couldn't find it. Not wanting to weaken and use the concordance, I browsed through the Gospel of John, failed to find it, gave up, got the [00:31:02] concordance off the shelf, and realized, to my surprise, it's in Matthew, and it's in Luke, but it's not in John. But it's one of these cases where, to use the Bible term, the branches go over the wall. Notice what it says. No man knoweth the son but the father, no qualification given. Goes on to say, no one knoweth the father but the son, and he to whom the son will reveal him. Why is that? If personally they are equal, if administratively the father is superordinate to the son, the son is subject, subordinate to the father, why is it that there's a qualification about the son, the person of the son, and yet [00:32:02] there is the extension to the statement about the father, no one knoweth the father but the son, and he to whom the son reveals him. Well before I give my answer to that, I'll take you back to the offerings. The offering, where we get the phrase, it is most holy, where the holiness of the offering and what it stands for, is emphasized more than any, is the meal offering. The one that speaks in a special way of the perfect life on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he is not in deity but in the perfection of his subject manhood. Now I think that's a help. In that area where men, clever intellectual religious men, might be most inclined to read into it a personal inferiority relative to the son, [00:33:04] God takes special care to safeguard his purity and holiness. I think in that verse in Matthew and in Luke, when it gives no qualification about the knowledge of the son, that there is in things about the son that no one but the father could ever know, and leaves it there, I think that's in case we get unduly familiar because he came in lowly grace and lived here in this world. He came expressly to reveal the father and therefore it says no one knows the father but the son and he to whom the son shall reveal him. Philip was it said show us the father. The son said have you been so long with me and you don't know the father. Knowledge of the father involves getting to know the son better [00:34:08] and better as the days go by. As my friend said he would have liked to have known his father as an adult son knows his father, I think I'm beginning to see that that purity, that holiness, that fullness of that relationship of the son with the father ever in the bosom of the father, that is the character of the relationship and the character of the revelation that God has given of himself that by the increase of ever deepening knowledge of the son that the son conducts us into. Without the gospel by John, without John's writings, without the [00:35:02] Apostles doctrine, without the knowledge of God, there may be many who would consider knowledge of a father as being limited to preserving care, being looked after, having every kind of resource needed to make things convenient and congenial in life. No doubt that's involved. Now as the Lord said not a hair falls from your head without your father in heaven knowing it. Oh yes these things are true but when we talk of the knowledge of the father that the son has brought within the scope of our understanding it's more than creature care that's involved. It's an entrance into an understanding and enjoyment of that subsisting eternal relationship, a relationship of sublime love between the [00:36:03] father and the son. I'll leave that there for your meditations and I will move to chapter 4. Apprehension takes account of the revelation. The response is commensurate with the revelation. So then if worship was possible in the Old Testament and it was, the fullness of worship could never have been enjoyed in Old Testament times because God had not revealed himself in the fullest possible way. In a positive way, God now

having fully revealed himself as father in the person of the son, there is open to us now a fuller, deeper response to [00:37:06] God as father than could ever otherwise have been possible. Now we have to be careful not to adopt a formula. In my early days I remember leaving a prayer meeting and one of the brethren said to me, wonderful prayer meeting tonight everyone addressed the father. Now as a comparative novice I could well have informed, got the impression from that remark, oh it's a good thing. It's a sign of development and growth, sign of maturity. Don't pray to the Lord, pray to the father and that's the thing to do. Join an elite club who know that the best thing you can do is pray to the father. I would be most reluctant to give anyone else that sort of impression. But the Lord himself, the son himself said [00:38:09] the highest note, the highest tone of worship is the worship of the father. I'm glad that scripture says that men should honour the son as they honour the father and therefore it is valid, it is sublime, it is right to worship the son.

But worship, the Lord said, reaches its peak when there is the worship of God as the father. Now you'll have to listen very carefully to what I'm going to say in a few minutes time because I may well be misunderstood. But before I get to that point, in chapter 4 notice three things. Verse 23, well verse 21, the woman says, [00:39:15] you Jews say Jerusalem is the place to worship. We Samaritans, the word isn't used here but it was right, they said Mount Gerizim. Syke as well is under the shadow of Mount Gerizim. Those of you who may be going shortly, perhaps you'll stand at Syke as well and you'll be able to see Mount Gerizim. The woman asked the question, what is right? Which place is right? Gerizim as for the Samaritans or Jerusalem as for Jews from the day of Solomon's temple I suppose. The Lord said it's not the place, it's the person. And he goes on, the hour cometh and now is [00:40:06] when the true worshippers trace through the Gospel of John the things that are true. They're not false, they're not incomplete, they are not transient, they are not spurious, they are final, they are full, they are permanent, they are true. These are some of the contrasts that come to mind when we say the things in John's Gospel that are declared to be true. Now the true worship, the final full worship, which is only possible now because God has given a full permanent revelation of himself as Father, only because there's been a true revelation can there be true worship. And he says the true worshippers worship the Father [00:41:01] in spirit and in truth. Now notice that, in spirit and in truth. The Jews worshipped in a sensual way, things pertaining to the natural senses, things you can see and hear and touch and feel and taste and smell, things connected with the natural senses. Hebrews 12 develops that. It was a sensual worship. Christianity, the worship of the Father is a spiritual worship. The other word that's used, and in truth. The Samaritan worship was a spurious worship, it wasn't true. So in contrast with Judaism, the worship of the Father is spiritual. In contrast with Samaritan worship, the true worship of the Father is indeed just that, it's a [00:42:01] true worship. Notice how the Lord transfers the thought from what is spurious to what is true, from what is sensual or fleshly to what is spirit. For the Father seeketh such to worship him. A poser. I have been at perhaps or to maybe three remembrances of the Lord in the Lord's Supper in this room over the years. I can't remember much about what the brethren said except I was delighted to be with you on each occasion. I'm not speaking of pottery, I'm speaking my knowledge of believers in many places. It is rare, listen carefully to what I say, it is rare. It almost never happens that we worship the Father. Oh you see, we [00:43:03] worship the Father every week and we worship the Father in our homes. I wonder. It was the excellent example of a very intelligent brother that brought me to this distinction. I leave it with you. There is a difference between speaking of God as our Father and speaking of God as the Father. Of course, as soon as I say that you begin to agree with me, don't you? When we worship in spirit and in truth, very often, mostly, we offer worship to our Father, don't we? I wonder if we should be careful in what we say, well we should of course. I wonder, without contriving it, I wonder if in our souls we get to this point, that we get beyond [00:44:08] the blessedness of our relationship with him and consider what he is in himself, not so much our Father but as the Father. I

can only remember in practice one brother, maybe two, who with intent addresses worship to God the Father rather than God our Father. And I find that there are 52 hymns out of 500 addressed to the Father. There are 92 hymns in this excellent book about the Father. Perhaps that's one reason why it's such a good hymn book. If you are attracted to other hymn books, if you use other hymn books, it would be a good idea [00:45:04] to see how many of them are about God as Father, this fullness of the revelation of God, and how many of them by way of response are suitable vehicles for worship to the Father.

We've heard it. In verse 5, that which is entirely personal to the Son, a glory as we speak of it, that we can neither behold nor share. In verse 22, the Son prays for a glory that's been given to his own, and it's a glory that we shall be both behold and share. And when we come to verse 24, we read of a glory that [00:46:08] we can behold but never share. These are important distinctions. Notice then in verse 1, Father, glorify thy Son. All the way through, Father, Son, Father, Son. And when we come to verse 24, with which we must end, how many times we can say this, if there was no other chapter, if there was no other verse, it's sufficient to encourage us to understand that between the Father and the Son, there has been, there is, there ever shall be, the enjoyment of an eternally subsisting relationship without beginning or end. Notice what the prayer says. Thou lovest [00:47:08] me before the foundation of the world. Who is speaking? The Son. Who is he speaking to? The Father. So, the prayer in verse, or the statement in verse 24, Thou the Father lovest me, the Son, before the foundation of the world. Simple but sublime statement. I trust we are encouraged, not only on the immediate study, but to search out these terms that are used about the Lord Jesus, and to say how much blessing there is in following them through. There is a little hymn we often sing. We're going to sing it now. Hymn number 23. I wonder if it'll mean [00:48:02] just that little bit more to us now, when we sing it, to say, tis Jesus the first and the last, whose spirit shall guide us safe home. We'll praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that's to come. Number 22.