

Third Quarter 2008

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

Special Insights No. 4

(Produced by the Editorial Board of the 1888 Message Study Committee)

The Son of God Among Us

Jesus is the Son of God. He is among us. This means that He is God, revealed to man. The term "Son of God" is an analogy that describes the connection between Himself and God the Father. It indicates origin, a close association and identification. It describes the link within the Godhead. It expresses an intimate relationship between the two: God the Father, and God the Son—Jesus the Messiah. Christ is the image of God to mankind. God—omnipotent revealed Himself to mankind, in Christ.

The meaning of the term "the Son of God" is that He is of the same nature as God. God the Father is not God the Son and God the Son is not God the Father. They are distinct persons with distinct centers of consciousness. The Father and the Son are one God not two Gods, one essence, one divine nature. From all eternity, without any beginning, the Father has always had a perfect image of himself and a divine reflection or radiance equal to himself in the Son.

In Christ, the invisible God is revealed. Jesus was with the Father before the world was created. Christ, as God the Son, is the Creator of all things. God in all His fullness, dwelt in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 1:13-20).

Jesus called Himself the "Son of God" (John 3:16-18). Gabriel testified to this in his instructions to Mary (Luke 1:35). The disciples identified Jesus as the Son of God (Matt. 16:15, 16; John 1:1, 34; 11:27; Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:5-11), as well as devils and the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:29; 27:54). Further, Jesus identified Himself as God revealed in the flesh (John 8:58).

While angels, prophets, and nature can reveal to us something about God, God alone can reveal God. It takes God to reveal Himself to mankind. The eternal Revealer revealed Himself to man by clothing His self-expression in human form as Jesus the Messiah. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

And what is a word? It is simply the expression of a thought. Perhaps you have used or have heard the following: "I am going to give him/her a piece of my mind!" How is this done? By speaking. Jesus is God's thought made audible and visible. This is the testimony of the Gospels—God's eternal self-expression, His Word, His Son, has entered human form as Jesus the Messiah.

Today the tendency of most of mankind is the desire for dramatic experiences for evidences of Jesus as the Son of God. This tendency is to bypass the fact that God revealed Himself in the Son of God in a town of public disgrace in Palestine, in the home of a simple carpenter, in ordinary human flesh as revealed in Scripture. This was God among us. This is "God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

Elder E. J. Waggoner had this to say about "God with us": "What could be weaker than a helpless babe, made still more helpless by being bound in swaddling clothes? Yet that represented the measure of the power which he had in himself when he performed the mightiest miracles. Faint with fasting, he resisted the temptations of the devil; and by the same power he cast out devils. He said, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing;' it was 'the fullness of the Godhead bodily' dwelling in him, and not his human flesh, that did the works. His name is 'God with us,' and he is 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;' and therefore the weakness of our flesh is no bar to the manifestation of his

strength in us. The power that does 'exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think' is 'the power that worketh in us.' Eph. 3:20" ("The Manger and the Cross," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Jan. 6, 1903).

Although Jesus limited Himself as a man, He is not a mere man or a high-ranking angel in human form. He is truly God as well as truly man. The Sonship of Christ is revealed in this: He was revealed as God in the flesh, and yet submitted to God the Father. The prime duty of a son is to honor and obey his father, to serve him freely and fully. Jesus as God the Son served God the Father not out of compulsion but because of His unity with the Father, served out of love.

The title of our lesson this week "The Son of God Among Us" points to the Old Testament prophecies in Isaiah: "Immanuel" (Isa. 7:13, 14), the "Mighty God, Everlasting Father" (9:6, 7) which are fulfilled in Jesus. "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

Elder A. T. Jones connected "God with us" and the third angel's message: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. 'His name shall be called Immanuel'—that is, 'God with us.' Now then, He wants that garment [Christ's righteousness] to be ours, but does not want us to forget who is the weaver. It is not ourselves, but it is He who is with us. It was God in Christ. Christ is to be in us, just as God was in Him, and His character is to be in us, just as God was in Him, and His character is to be woven and transformed into us through these sufferings and temptations and trials which we meet. And God is the weaver, but not without us. It is the cooperation of the divine and the human—the mystery of God in you and me—the same mystery that was in the gospel and that is the third angel's message. This is the word of the Wonderful Counselor" (*1893 General Conference Bulletin*—The Third Angels Message, No. 10).

In Thursday's section of this week's lesson there is reference to Matthew 23:37 where Matthew records the Son of God lamenting for Jerusalem: "How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings! But you were not willing!"

This lament is on-going until the end of the world. What happen to Jerusalem typifies our own day. The metaphor of a mother hen protecting her little ones revealed that a predator was about to fall upon the Jewish state of which nothing could prevent except their conversion to God through the Son of God as He proclaimed throughout the land the good news of reconciliation. Refusal of His salvation left them at the mercy of the Roman eagle which came and destroyed them.

Today's message of Rev. 18:1-4 is another of the same kind that the Son of God gave when He was among us. Only those who receive His message of the "Loud Cry" to "come out of her (Babylon)" by coming to Him will be safe from the eagle predator of the last days.

The letter to the Galatians gives the foundation of our hope in these last days: "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son ... to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal. 4:4-5). The Father sent His one and only unique divine Son to redeem you and me. Galatians 2:20 says that we are to "live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us." Jesus is "The Son of God Among Us" even "God with us."

This is the end-time message of the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14:6). The truth of the everlasting gospel is that the Son of God is among us, as one of us and He is one with the Father (John 17). The Son of God among us is our redemption, our safety, our haven of rest.

—Gerald L. Finneman

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