

**Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**  
**First Quarter 2012: *Glimpses of our God***  
**Lesson 1 “The Triune God”**

**Read for this week’s study**

Deut. 6:4; Phil. 2:6; Matt. 28:19; Gen. 1:26, 27; John 14–16.

**Memory Text**

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 20, 21, NKJV).

**Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. The Oneness of God
- III. The Deity of Christ
- IV. The Holy Spirit
- V. In Unity and Equality
- VI. The Trinity and Salvation
- VII. Further Study

**Questions for Consideration**

- 1) What does it mean to “do theology”? How is “doing theology” different from “doing medicine, dentistry or nursing”?
- 2) The introduction to this quarter says that we are going to look at the “picture of God”. Why is looking at the various aspects of who God is so fundamental to our faith? The areas of beauty, romance, and ecology are not the traditional ways of understanding the picture of God in Adventism or conservative Evangelicalism!
- 3) The doctrine of the Trinity is how the early church defined its faith vis-à-vis the Greek philosophical thinking of third and fourth century. Should it play an important role in our contemporary understanding of who God is? If yes, why?
- 4) The lesson says that the deity of Christ is essential to the plan of salvation. Why? If it is, what are the implications for our perception of individuals like James White & Joseph Bates or groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses or Unitarians?
- 5) How does a doctrine fulfill its role? Does knowing the right doctrine(s) have any advantages that are not pragmatic? If yes, what are they? Is salvation a reward for believing the right set of Fundamental Beliefs (which equals doctrines)?
- 6) Why is it important to believe that the Holy Spirit is a person and not just some power?

7) What are the implications of belief in the Trinity? What difference does it make in our practical lives? How can our worship be more Trinitarian rather than Unitarian? What are the implications of believing in the Trinity for our understanding of gender, sexuality, etc.?

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Jesus said, "If you've seen me you've seen the Father, and I will send another counselor like myself who will do the same work I've been doing." Ellen White says we need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds. Here's one place where Paul speaks very personally of the Holy Spirit.

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness for we do not know how to pray, even, as we ought. But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men," that would be God, "knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." Well, of course! Just as Christ worked according to will of God, all three members of the Godhead are in perfect harmony with each other. Their goals for us are the same. {Graham Maxwell, excerpt from the audio series Romans – chapter 8, Loma Linda, California, 1977}

All God asks of us is trust. That's all He's asked of angels and men. But God has been accused of being unworthy of our trust, and the adversary has put Him in a very bad light. God has been accused of not even telling the truth, right away in the Garden of Eden. And further accusations through the years. And God has sought to answer these, not with claims, but with demonstrations, in His treatment of people, all through the centuries.

{Graham Maxwell, excerpt from the audio series – The Picture of God in All 66 – Luke, Riverside, California, 1981-1982}

\*\*\*Additional study: Listen to entire audio of Luke in The Picture of God in All 66.

### Further Study with Ellen White

It was through Satan's misrepresentation of God's character that man was led to doubt the reality of his love, and came to look upon God as his enemy. As Satan had done in heaven, so he did on earth,--declared God's government unjust, the restrictions of his law unnecessary, and bade man, as he had angels, to throw aside the yoke and let the dictates of their own nature be their only guide and law. He promised liberty; but as he himself is the servant of corruption, he brought the race into bondage, to sin, misery, and death. He represented God as claiming all and giving nothing, as requiring men's service for his own glory, but denying himself nothing for man's good. {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 6}

In this life we can only begin to understand the wonderful theme of redemption. With our finite comprehension we may consider most earnestly the shame and the glory, the life and the death, the justice and the mercy, that meet in the cross; yet with the utmost stretch of our mental powers we fail to grasp its full significance. The length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of redeeming love are but dimly comprehended. The plan of redemption will not be fully understood, even when the ransomed see as they are seen and know as they are known; but through the eternal ages new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind. Though the griefs and pains and temptations of earth are ended and the cause removed, the people of God will ever have a distinct, intelligent knowledge of what their salvation has cost. {GC 651.1}

Christ, the outshining of the Father's glory, came to the world as its light. He came to represent God to men, and of Him it is written that He was anointed "with the Holy Ghost and with power," and "went about doing good." Acts 10:38. In the synagogue at Nazareth He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18, 19. This was the work He commissioned His disciples to do. "Ye are the light of the world," He said. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:14, 16. {COL 416.2}

Christ came to represent the Father to man. He revealed the nature of God to the world. Satan had misrepresented the Father. He had pictured him as a being full of revenge, who had no forbearance, no mercy, no patience, no love. He clothed him with his own attributes; but Christ came, and took upon him humanity, that he might reveal to humanity the true character of the Father; and we are to represent Christ to the world as Christ represented the Father. {RH, April 30, 1889 par. 8}

### Even Your Sages Say

God the Father is a deep root, the Son is the shoot that breaks forth into the world, and the Spirit is that which spreads beauty and fragrance. (Tertullian)

Tell me how it is that in this room there are three candles and but one light, and I will explain to you the mode of the divine existence. (John Wesley)

Also there is a similitude of a Trinity shining in the body, soul and spirit. (George Ripley)

In the Trinitarian dogma God is one, good, true, and beautiful because he is essentially Love, and Love supposes the one, the other, and their unity. (Hans Urs von Balthasar)

I tell you the solemn truth that the doctrine of the Trinity is not so difficult to accept for a working proposition as any one of the axioms of physics. (Henry Brooks Adams)