

## Lesson 1 Triune God Review

This file contains my personal response to the upcoming 2012 Sabbath School Quarterly in which the first week will be covering the Trinity. I have left the quarterly itself intact for greater context. My comments and additions will be in other colors. I will be posting my review of the first week's lesson on the Sabbath School Quarterly each day this week.

### Lesson 1

*\*December 31-January 6*

#### The Triune God SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study:

*Deu\_6:4; Php\_2:6; Mat\_28:19; Gen\_1:26-27; Joh\_14:1-31; Joh\_15:1-27; Joh\_16:1-33*

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"

*(Jud\_1:20-21, NKJV)*

Key Thought: Scripture contains references and hints to the deity and unity of the divine Godhead. Though the word *Trinity* itself doesn't appear in the Bible, the teaching definitely does. The doctrine of the Trinity, that God is One and composed of three "Persons," is crucial because it is dealing with who God is, what He is like, how He works, and how He relates to the world. Most important, the deity of Christ is essential to the plan of salvation.

We use words not found in the Bible all the time like "investigative judgment" and thus I have no issue with the fact that the word "Trinity" is not found in scripture. I however have not found the teaching in the Bible as there isn't a plain thus saith the Lord for one God being made up of three beings.

"Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support." {EGW, GC 595.1}

In Scripture, there are three separate but interrelated types of evidence for the Trinity, or tri-unity of God: (1) evidence for the unity of God, that God is one; (2) evidence that there are three Persons who are God; (3) subtle textual hints of God's three-in-oneness.

The Bible is certainly clear that God is one. It also shows us that He is our Father in Heaven.

(2) I have not found any passages where the Holy Spirit is called God in the scripture as He is always called God's Spirit or Christ's Spirit in one form or another. Jesus is rightfully called God having His Father's nature by inheritance.

(3) I am not a fan of "subtle textual hints" as this means I am assuming things based on hints that "seem" to fit my belief.

The distinctions among God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit found in the Bible must be understood as being the way God is in Himself, however difficult for our fallen minds to grasp. The "eternal heavenly dignitaries—God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit," as Ellen G. White calls them (*Evangelism*, p.616), are equal but not identical or interchangeable.

Notice Ellen White says "God" which shows she believed that there was a single being called God as do the scriptures. If you study you will notice that none of her quotes ever claim that there is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. I find it interesting when I see a Trinitarian say "God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit" such as our church has stated in this passage. If there are three beings that make up one God yet Trinitarians often speak of God as a single being then this suggests these three persons are actually three Gods which is of course tritheism. The statement that the Trinity is not "interchangeable" must be in the context of after creation as this is opposite to what our church has said previously:

"But imagine a situation in which the Being we have come to know as **God the Father came to die for us**, and the One we have come to know as Jesus **stayed back in heaven** (we are speaking in human terms to make a point)."**"Nothing would have changed**, except that we would have been calling Each by **the name we now use for the Other**"**"That is what equality in the Deity means."** (*Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School Quarterly, page 19, Thursday April 10 th 2008, The Mystery of His Deity*)

"Entirely through Their own initiative, the Godhead **arranged for One among Them to become a human being**. They did so in order to (1) provide us with our Substitute and Surety, (2) make God's ways plain, (3) restore us to our pre-sin perfection, and (4) settle the debate about God's Justice. At precisely the right time and in the right way, the three Members of the Godhead put into operation a plan They had devised before the world was created. They surrendered a portion of Themselves—the Divine Son—to become the Saviour of the world." (*Our Wonderful God, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, 4th Quarter 1998, Principal Contributor: Edwin R. Thiele*)

One of the arguments a Trinitarian will make for the three person equality amongst the Trinity is that God Himself died for us. In this argument it is often said that anyone of these three could have accepted this role when they made the plan before creation. More on this later in the quarterly. Though some early Adventists struggled with the doctrine, our church today has taken a firm and unrelenting stand on this teaching. As Fundamental Belief number 2 says, "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons."

The author's comments here may lead SDA's today to believe that our church only had a few non-Trinitarians in it during her early years. Below are statements from our 1936 Sabbath School quarterly showing what our church believed concerning Jesus:

"The direct statement of Jesus, "I came forth from the Father," **reads literally,** "

**I came out of the Father.**" Putting with this, His testimony in **John 10:38**, "The Father is in Me, and I in Him," we have His **personal witness that He truly was "begotten of the Father,"** as John says in 1:14." (*Sabbath School Lesson Study, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1936, Lesson 3, October 17 th 1936, page 12. The Godhead*)

"Cumulative evidence that the Son existed with the Father before creation is abundant in the Scriptures. In the few passages we have studied here, we find that Christ was with the Father "before the world was," "from, **the days of eternity**," "before the foundation of the world," "before all things." He was therefore **no part of creation, but was "begotten of the Father" in the days of eternity, and was very God Himself.**" (*Sabbath School Lesson Study, 4 th quarter 1936, Lesson 3, October 17 th 1936, page 13. The Godhead*)

There can be no mistake what was being taught by our church at that time as the SDA church of today would classify these statements as heresy. I for one strongly uphold this teaching that Jesus came out of God before creation. Notice below who authorized this:

"The outline at the close of each lesson will helpfully guide in the matter; and as the present lessons on doctrines are fully authenticated by the lesson committee of the general Conference Sabbath School Department anyone can know that what he teaches as he presents the lesson as a Bible reading or a sermon is correct." (Review and Herald, Dec 7, 1936)

The 1936 quarterly does use the term "Trinity" but it is not the same Trinity believed by your church today as this wasn't fully authorized until 1980. Thus I would agree that the Trinity was certainly making its way into our church and there were certainly men who believed in the Trinity of today at that time. However the Seventh-day Adventist church still believed that Jesus was truly the Son of God at that time unlike the teaching of today which says the second person of the Triune God is pretending to be a Son. I have more of an issue with our church teaching the term "Son of God" is a metaphoric role play than I do saying God is Triune although I disagree with both. The God I worship is not pretending to be the Father of Jesus.

Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. (2nd John 1:3)

Thus the saying that "some early Adventists struggled with the doctrine" is one in which I believe is strongly misleading. The history of our church that I have studied shows me we clearly knew Jesus as the Son of God and the church was united on this. Sunday's lesson on the "oneness of God" will be up next.

### Sunday's Lesson on the Oneness of God Review

If you are reading this article you may want to read Sabbath's article first called "Lesson 1 Triune God Review" as these studies are being posted in order. If you have already read it then may God Bless you in this study.

**SUNDAY** *January 1*

### The Oneness of God

The belief system of the ancient Hebrews was rigorously monotheistic, "mono" expressing "one" and "theistic" from the Greek word for "God," meaning that there is only one true God. This position is unwavering all through the Old Testament. There is but one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and not many gods as the nations and tribes around the Hebrews believed. In this sense, the religion of the Bible was unique.

The Jews have always taught that there is literally only one being who is the person known as God rather than today's teaching that one means a united plurality of beings all called God. This teaching that "one" is talking about a united plurality of beings called God rather than a mathematical one has come in through the teachings of Catholicism and Protestantism. It is not something Adventist scholars have discovered themselves.

How does God speak about Himself in [Exo\\_3:13-15](#)? How do these verses imply the oneness of God?

God says that He is the "I AM" and if you read the entire chapter you will see it was the "Angel of Yahweh" who was standing in the place of God speaking to Moses. This messenger was Jesus Christ in the form of fire or His Spirit. If you apply the gospels account where Jesus says He is the "I AM" you may be able to make the assumption that God is a plurality of beings since both God and His Son are the "I AM". In reality Jesus is the "I AM" as He has the same exact self-existent, eternal nature as His Father. Jesus may appear as the Angel of Yahweh but He has that same infinite nature that His Father has. They are surely

united in nature and all that they do but this doesn't mean that we can apply a plural meaning to the one God of the Bible. We simply know by this that there is more than one Divine being.

"As Jehovah, the supreme Ruler, **God could not personally communicate with sinful men but He** so loved the world that **He sent Jesus** to our world as a **revelation of Himself.**" .... Christ desired them to have a **clearer, more distinct knowledge of God.** " **I will show you the Father** , and will make you better acquainted with **Him,** " He said. It is this knowledge that Christians need today. This knowledge, which Christ alone can give, is the highest of all education. {9MR 123.2} {E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases Volume 9*, p. 122} 1903

[Back to the study](#)

The oneness of God is also found in the text ( *Deu\_6:4*) called by the Jews" the *Shema*. " It was given this name because the opening word, the command "Hear" in Hebrew, is the word "shema." This statement is one of the great truths about God, which the people of Israel were commanded to believe and to teach their children.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" ( *Deu\_6:4* , *ESV*)

.Compare that verse with *Gen\_2:24* ( *ESV*)

, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." What might it mean that the same Hebrew word for "one" appears in both texts?

The same word, *echad*, for "one," is used of God in the "Shema" of *Deu\_6:4*. This word *echad* for oneness does not imply a mathematical sum but a complex unity instead. Something is being affirmed here about a unity of distinct parts. Husbands and wives are to be "one" (*echad*) according to *Gen\_2:24*, just as in Deuteronomy God is "one."

The statement saying "This word *echad* for oneness does not imply a mathematical sum but a complex unity instead" is not a true statement from the research I have done. The word *echad* is used **HUNDREDS** of times in the Bible as a mathematical sum. In fact it is used as such in the same passage in *Gen 2:21*:

"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took **one** (*echad*) of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof" In *Deut 6:4* there are not multiple beings in the context like the Adam and Eve scenario to suggest "*echad*" is used in the sense of a "unity of parts". The meaning of "*echad*" must be explained by the immediate context and not the context of outside passages as it has different uses in scripture. The majority of cases are used as a mathematical one but the context will clearly show if it is used in the sense of "unity of parts". A simple search in the concordance will prove this. I actually quit counting after finding 260 scriptures where "*echad*" was used as a mathematical one. I had found a dozen or so cases where it was used in the sense of "unity of parts" but the context clearly explained it when this is so.

How does the New Testament talk about the oneness of God?

*Jam\_2:19* , *1Co\_8:4*.

The NT is very clear that God is one being as *James 2:19* and *1 Cor 8:4* express. In fact here is additional context from *1 Cor 8:4-6* that shows this:

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other **God but one**. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

But to us there is **but one God, the Father** , of whom are all things, and we in him; and **one Lord Jesus Christ** , by whom are all things, and we by him.

Paul clearly shows that the "one" God He believes in is the Father and that He also believed in "one" Lord Jesus Christ. In both cases the word "one" is used in a strict mathematical sense and not in the sense of a united plurality of beings. God is the "of whom" agent to the existence of all things and Jesus is the "by whom" agent of all things. This is why the Bible says that God created all things through (or by) Jesus Christ. Would we ever say that "**one Lord Jesus Christ**" actually means a united plurality of Lord Jesus Christ's?

Back to the study.

How should the understanding of God as one help us avoid the pitfalls of idolatry in any form? Why should the Lord alone be the one whom we worship? How can you eradicate any "idols" in your own life?

Taking the Bible as it plainly reads which says that God is one being the Father will takeaway the "Mystery" of Babylon in her confusing three in one god she established during the dark ages. Taking literal terms such as "one God" and spiritualizing the meaning into a plurality of gods is idolatry. An idol is something that a person cherishes above the truth when they will not let it go. False views and conceptions of God is idolatry. This quote from SOP covers what I am saying perfectly:

The present age is one of idolatry, as verily as was that in which Elijah lived. No outward shrine may be visible; there may be no image for the eye to rest upon; yet thousands are following after the gods of this world--after riches, fame, pleasure, and the pleasing fables that permit man to follow the inclinations of the unregenerate heart. Multitudes have a **wrong conception** of God and His attributes, and are as **truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal**. Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth. Thus they are led to turn away from the divine and to **exalt the human**. {PK 177.1}

The prevailing spirit of our time is one of infidelity and apostasy--a spirit of avowed illumination because of a knowledge of truth, but in reality of the **blindest presumption**. **Human theories are exalted** and placed where God and His law should be. Satan tempts men and women to disobey, with the promise that in disobedience they will find liberty and freedom that will make them as gods. There is seen a **spirit of opposition to the plain word of God**, of **idolatrous exaltation of human wisdom** above divine revelation. Men have allowed their minds to become so darkened and confused by conformity to worldly customs and influences that they seem to have lost all power to discriminate between light and darkness, truth and error. So far have they departed from the right way that they hold the opinions of a few philosophers, so-called, to be more trustworthy than the truths of the Bible. The entreaties and promises of God's word, its threatening against disobedience and idolatry--these seem powerless to melt their hearts. A faith such as actuated Paul, Peter, and John they regard as old-fashioned, mystical, and **unworthy of the intelligence of modern thinkers**. {PK 178.1}

We can eradicate idols from our life by honestly studying the scriptures and those translated will be free of idolatry as they have "no guile" found in their mouths. Making claims about terms like "echad" above are dishonest interpretations of scripture and bring upon idolatry. In most cases I do believe this is done in ignorance and praise God that He winks at ignorance if we are honest searchers. Most of the time people pick up teachings like "echad" from leaders and simply trust them without checking the scriptures themselves. Notice:

Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. **He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides**, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for

themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will .... {DD 38:1 Ellen White}

For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. (Isa 9:16)

We should certainly respect the authority of the leaders God has placed in our lives but we are never to look at them as the path of truth for us. I worship the one God of the Bible and His Son because they are where our source of love comes from. No idol or false god in our imagination can fill us with the love of God. If I am worshipping an idol in my mind my character will reap the rewards in due time. Monday's Lesson on the Deity of Christ is up next. Here's a link to all the reviews for this week's lesson:

Monday's Lesson on The Deity of Christ Review

This is the third study in the Sabbath School Quarterly.

MONDAY

*January 2*

The Deity of Christ

The deity of the Father is scarcely, if ever, in dispute. Those who question the Trinity often challenge the deity of Christ. Were Christ anything but eternal and fully divine, the plan of salvation would be seriously compromised (see Thursday's lesson)

.Non-Trinitarians in the SDA church do **not** challenge the Deity of Christ as we believe in the Deity of Christ the same as the SDA church used to believe. It is the church today that attacks the Deity of Christ like in Thursday's lesson by making false statements on what we believe such as Christ being created and not Divine. More on this in that lesson.

How does Paul, once a rigid Pharisee, talk about the deity of Christ?

*Php\_2:6.*

He says that Jesus was in the "form" of God and equal with God which is a true statement. He is God's only begotten Son so how could He be anything less than equal with God having the same nature as Him?

For a Pharisee grounded in the Old Testament teaching of the Oneness of God, this is an astonishing statement, because it reveals Paul's deep commitment to the deity of Christ. The book of Hebrews—written to Jews who were strong monotheists, as was Paul—contains potent statements underscoring the deity of the Son of God. In [Heb\\_1:8-9](#), Christ's divine nature is powerfully and explicitly expressed.

It certainly is expressed very well so let's take a look at it to see what it says.

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. 9Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; **therefore God, even thy God**, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Notice the text says that Jesus has a God. See also:

John 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to **my God**, and **your God**.

2Rev 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of **my God**, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of **my God**, and the name of the city of **my God**, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from **my God**: and I will write upon him my new name.

1 Cor 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

We clearly see the Father calls His Son God showing that Christ truly is Divine as Jesus is rightfully God. Notice though that the Father says "even thy God" which clearly shows that Jesus has the same God as we do. The testimony of scripture is that Jesus has a God. If Jesus is one of three co-everything God beings how does He have a God above Him? In case someone misunderstands how I believe Jesus is God in nature yet not the person of God please take the words from SOP over mine:

"The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity, **but not in personality** (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 116, Dec. 19, 1905, 'An Entire Consecration', see also The Upward Look, page 367*)

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Christ is one with the Father, **but Christ and God are two distinct personages.**" Ellen G. White to the delegates at the 1905 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park Washington D. C., May 19, 1905, *Review and Herald*, June 1, 1905

"We know that Christ came in person **to reveal God** to the world. **God is a person and Christ is a person.**" *1SAT* p. 343, Ms. 46, 1904. *MR* 900

It's not difficult to see that Jesus knows He has a God. Does this make Jesus inferior to His Father? Not at all and if you think this submission somehow degrades Christ please explain how you also must believe the submission of woman to man makes her inferior to him. The truth of scripture is submission has nothing to do with equality but is how the divine Government works. If you struggle with the thought of Christ being subject to God and that this makes Him inferior it is because of the satanic principles that we are infected with. These are performance based principles that have been imbedded in our nature and lead us to reach for power, position, and authority to make a name for ourselves and show equality. It causes people to look to the learned men of higher education for answers but Christ chooses the humble fisherman.

Back to the study.

Most important in revealing the deity of Christ is Jesus' own self-consciousness. He didn't march through the streets of Jerusalem with a triumphal chorus proclaiming His deity. Yet, the four Gospels include many threads of evidence that reveal that this is how He understood Himself. Jesus repeatedly claimed to possess what properly belonged only to God: He spoke of the angels of God as *His* angels (*Mat 13:41*); He claimed to forgive sins (*Mar 2:5-10*); and Jesus claimed the power to judge the world (*Mat 25:31-46*). Who else but God could, rightfully, do that?

His Son could do this as scripture says:

For as the Father hath life in himself ; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;  
27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. (John 5:26-27)

Jesus Christ has by inheritance all power and authority because He is God's Son. In fact He is equal with God because He is His Son."

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 equal with God." (John 5:18)

"The whole nation called God their Father, and if Jesus had done this in the same sense in which they did, the Pharisees would not have been so enraged. But they accused Jesus of blasphemy, showing that they understood that Christ claimed God as His Father in the very highest sense." (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, March 5, 1901, 'Lessons from the Christ-life')

Review how Jesus accepted the worship of various people in the Gospel records *Mat 14:33; Mat 28:9, Luk 24:50-52, Joh 9:35-38*. Compare His actions with Paul's (*Act 14:8-18*). What does Jesus' acceptance of all this worship reveal about His deity?

This shows that His Father is not jealous in a self-centered way as His Father allows the worship of His Son. God is jealous for our love knowing we can only have life from Him through His Son. If we serve man or false gods that do not exist we will perish not being connected with the true source of love. The first commandment is not arbitrary and thus does not exclude God's only begotten Son as we receive love and life through His Son. Jesus could not accept worship if He were non-divine. We see this in Revelation when the angels reject worship. Angels are finite beings and could be tempted into sin if worshipped. Thus out of love for them and God we would not worship them. This shows that God's Law is not self-centered or arbitrary.

At His trial, one accusation against Jesus was that He claimed to be the Son of God (*Joh 19:7, Mat 26:63-65*). If Jesus did not regard Himself as God, this was a critical opportunity for Him to correct a mistaken impression. Yet, He did not. In fact, it was at His trial before Caiaphas that He affirmed His own deity under oath. Hence, we have powerful evidence from the Bible of the deity of Christ.

If you read those passages you will clearly see that Christ never makes the claim that He is "the God" but instead says that He is the Son of God. Why would He deny who He is? It is in truth and love that Jesus has a Father as this is no role He took on to confuse mankind.

"Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." (2<sup>nd</sup> John 1:3)

In case you are confused on why the SDA church calls Jesus the Son of God and the 1st person of the Trinity "Father" please note what our church means when they say the term Son of God or Father:

It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past,  
They took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan (*The Signs of the Times*, July 1985).



"A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, **the role of the Father**, another **the role of the Son**." "The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit, **was also to participate** in effecting the plan of salvation. All of this took place before sin and rebellion transpired in heaven." By **accepting the roles** that the plan entailed, the divine Beings lost none of the powers of Deity. With regard to their eternal existence and other attributes, they were one and equal. But with regard to the plan of salvation, there was, in a sense, a submission on the part of the Son to the Father." (*Gordon Jenson, Adventist Review, October 31, 1996, p.12* *Week of Prayer readings, 'article 'Jesus the Heavenly Intercessor'*)

"We are left with no alternative than to accept that Jesus could not have become a literal son of God in eternity – He could not be His own son. He clearly accepted **that role for the purposes of the Plan of Redemption**. Some anti-Trinitarian objectors have claimed that we accuse God of only pretending to be the Father and that Jesus was only pretending to be the Son. Those who make such accusations have obviously blinded themselves from the evidence. Pretending implies **deception** and God should not be accused of such a practice. **Why retreat from the concept that the Members of the Trinity participate in role-playing? Role-playing is not deception**. Jesus for example performs many roles in the plan of redemption. Was He really the Angel of the Lord, Michael the Archangel, the Lamb, a Lion, a High Priest, the Rock, and so on? Yes, but not literally so, He fulfilled these roles and it would be absolute foolishness to accuse Him of pretence or deception in doing so." "**His Sonship can only be figurative**. Correspondingly, the Father has not always been the Father. These must have been **adopted titles suitable for the parts the Two played in the Plan of Redemption**." (*The-Trinity-Doctrine-for-SDA-Division-CD*) (Max Hatton, "The Trinity Doctrine for Seventh-Day Adventists.")

"Another important point involves how we interpret the Bible. Here the issue pertains to whether we should interpret **some passages literally or whether we may treat them more figuratively**. Maybe we could illustrate this way. While we often refer to Jesus as the Son and frequently call the first person of the Godhead the Father, do we really want to take such **expressions in a totally literal way**? Or would it be more appropriate to interpret them in a **more metaphorical way** that draws on selective aspects of sonship and fatherhood." ("The Trinity" by Whidden, Moon and Reeve, Page 94)

Please note what inspiration says about this type of interpretation:

The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by **learned men**, who, with a **pretense of great wisdom**, teach that the **Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed**." These men are **false teachers**. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: "**Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God**." [Mark 12:24](#)." "The language of the Bible **should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed**. Christ has given the promise: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." [John 7:17](#). If men would but **take the Bible as it reads**, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error." (*Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, page 598, 'The Scriptures a safeguard'*)

And Peter, describing the dangers to which the church was to be exposed in the last days, says that as there were false prophets who led Israel into sin, so there will be false teachers, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. . . . And many shall follow their pernicious ways." 2 Peter 2:1, 2. Here the apostle has pointed out one of the marked characteristics of spiritualist teachers. They refuse to acknowledge Christ as the Son of God. Concerning such teachers the beloved John declares: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son . Whosoever denieth the Son , the same hath not the Father." 1 John 2:22, 23. **Spiritualism, by denying Christ, denies both the Father and the Son, and the Bible pronounces it the manifestation of antichrist.** {PP 686:1}

If the terms Father and Son are metaphorical terms you must supply the inspiration that clearly shows this otherwise this is a spiritualized interpretation. Back to the lesson:

Take some time to dwell on the life of Jesus and, as you do, focus on the fact that He was God Himself, the Creator of the universe. What does this tell us about God's love for the world? Why should you draw much comfort and hope from this amazing truth?

Why would I focus on that when it is the opposite of what scripture says? Truly the Creator of the universe died for us and I believe He truly died but the Bible says that God gave us His Son. Because God gave us His Son, this shows me that I am of equal value to Him even as valuable as His Son. I believe the Son of God risked His own life in coming to earth. If there was no risk involved for "God the Son" in the Trinity to come to earth then my value to God cannot be measured.

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. (John 3:16)

Most Adventists today do not realize that the Triune God they believe in naturally leads to a denial that Jesus died on the cross nor was there ever a risk involved in sending "God the Son" to save us. This is a major issue for me in the Trinity doctrine. If God is Triune this is something that can never change under any circumstances. Common sense would tell you if He truly did die then there were three God's that temporarily became two God's yet the Trinitarians say they do not believe in three God's. This is why orthodox Trinity believers have the immortal soul doctrine or dualism. In order to preserve the Trinity when Jesus died on the cross He went on living in an immortal soul/spirit and thus God still remained Triune and only a human body died. You may have to do a lot of questioning to find those in our church who teach Jesus didn't really die on the cross but if you ask around you should find them. You will probably even find some that will say He resurrected Himself. For the most part people in our church have no clue that the Trinity doctrine does not allow the death of "God the Son". Here are some of the statements I have found on this issue:

"In answer to your question as to my conversation with Eld. Prescott, it was after I had spoken on the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, that he called me and wanted to talk with me about it. He tried to convince me that **Christ did not die as the Son of God**, as I had preached. And when he could not convince me, he said, "I do not appreciate your leaving me without a Christ for three days and nights" (Elder J. F. Anderson, as quoted by J. Washburn in his 1940 'Trinity' letter to the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference)

J. Washburn was very outspoken in this letter to the general conference as he pleads with them to stop the Trinity doctrine from invading Adventism in 1940. W.W. Prescott was a man who converted to believing in a Triune God and hence the reason for his objection to Washburn. Washburn went on to say in the letter:

If, however, we leap over all these minor, secondary doctrines and accept and teach the very central root, doctrine of Romanism, the Trinity, and **teach that the son of God did not die**, even though our words seem to be spiritual, is this anything else or anything less than apostasy? **and the very Omega of apostasy?** The apostasy in the days of Dr. Kellogg was in regard to the personality of God. Then He was regarded as an ESSENCE pervading all nature. Being checked by the powerful Testimony of the Prophet of God, it is bound to come back later in a modified form. The Spirit of Prophecy plainly indicated this, "THE RESULTS OF THIS INSIDIOUS DEVISING WILL BREAK OUT AGAIN AND AGAIN, and it HAS BROKEN OUT AGAIN, **and** is still on the personality of God." (*Judson Washburn, The trinity, Letter to General Conference in 1940*)

These quotes below are conversations Terry Hill (SDA laymen in England) had with Adventist ministers/scholars. He has chosen to keep their names silent. This area of teaching that the Son of God did not die on the cross is very quiet in our church and most are shocked to hear this. People are not even aware of it usually and only begin to accept and teach it when confronted with the fact that it is something that must be accepted when believing in a Triune God.

In a very recent email, a Seventh-day Adventist minister said to me that we do not know "how much" Jesus died at Calvary. Another minister said to me (again in an email), "If Jesus was God He has always existed and did not die when the God man died". Just over three years ago I said to a Seventh-day Adventist minister (whom I had been speaking with concerning Christ) that according to his reasoning, the divine Son of God did not die at Calvary. He responded by saying that this is exactly what he believed. He then went on to explain that at Calvary, only the human nature of Christ died. I replied to him by saying that as atonement for sin, this would only give us (fallen humanity) a human sacrifice. He said that this was correct and that for atonement with God, this is all that was needed. He then quoted Ellen White as saying that only human nature died at Calvary and not divinity.

I wish I could supply solid quotes from the church on this but we call it the "unaddressed issue" for a reason. It is simply better for the church to dodge this than put out statements promoting it as this will turn many from the Triune God teaching. I have mentioned this to church leadership as far back as September (2010) and as recently as the end of March (2011) and still have received no answer. More on this at the end of this study guide.

### How sin would affect Christ:

In yet another email, a Seventh-day Adventist theologian wrote to me saying "I do not know where you got the idea that sin would have brought the death of the eternal Son of God" He then said "God, because he is God cannot die. Humans can die." Regarding the trinity doctrine, I recently had a conversation with a retired Seventh-day Adventist minister. The minister had been energetically extolling the virtues of the trinity teaching - at least as Seventh-day Adventists understand it. In his explanation he said that if Christ had sinned (which he freely admitted had been possible), His humanity would have been lost but not the divine personage. He then went on to say that this is because the Son subsists as an **inseparable part of the trinity** and is therefore immortal. You may be asking why all these Seventh-day Adventists deny that a divine person died at Calvary. The answer is of course, they are all trinitarian. (Terry Hill SDA laity in England)

This is also part of the "unaddressed issue" as it is very hard to get a statement on what would have happened had Christ sinned. Some will scoff at this question but it is very important as it reveals the character of your God. Think about how unjust God would be if the wages of sin is death for us but not to His Son. Praise God that Christ succeeded in His trial. Max Hatton on this issue:

So now you know where I stand on the little game the Anti-Trinitarians like to play. They try to set you up for a big fall by their use; I should say misuse, of Ellen White. I would answer them on No. 1. "Yes He could have sinned." On No. 2. "It would have affected Him terribly if He had sinned. He would be shattered to a depth that we could never understand. God would be defeated, the human family would be forever lost, the residents of the other occupied planets would be in great distress and would probably lose a lot of confidence in God. It would have **adversely affected Christ's humanity somehow but his Deity would not be affected to the extent that He would be obliterated. He is Eternal**, Omnipotent, and such-like and **could never die.**" {Max Hatton, HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST FROM ANTI-TRINITARIANS}

An important point Trinitarians believe about "eternal" is its meaning is "without beginning and without end". This is another reason why "God the Son" couldn't die on the cross nor have perished if He had failed in the Trinity doctrine. You may ask who Max Hatton is so:

**Because of a resurgence of anti-Trinitarian views within the church**, two books on the Trinity have been published in recent years: **Max Hatton's** book *Understanding the Trinity* does not address the Adventist situation, but focuses on the biblical material and responds to attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity. W. W. Whidden, J. Moon, and J. W. Reeve's book *The Trinity* has two chapters by Jerry Moon dealing with anti-Trinitarianism in Adventism." (Gerhard Pfandl, Footnote, *The Doctrine of the Trinity Among Seventh-day Adventists*, 2006, page 160)

Max Hatton is an Adventist Pastor in Australia. I have found him to be the most honest and open Trinitarian on these issues. Very few leaders in our church will answer these questions. If you feel that Jesus was truly dead and are a Trinitarian I would like to have your understanding on how a Triune God becomes non-triune. The next study is Tuesday's lesson on the Holy Spirit.

## Tuesday's Lesson on the Holy Spirit Review

TUESDAY January 3 The Holy Spirit

If God can be "one," with the two Persons of the Father and the Son, adding a third Person to the Godhead should not particularly add more difficulty. We are talking here about the Holy Spirit.

Why are we not accepting a plain thus saith the Lord for these things? What gives man the right to say the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit equal the one God of the Bible when the Bible never says this?

Read [Gen 1:2](#). What does this tell us about the role of the Holy Spirit, who appears so early in the biblical record?

I will let scripture interpret the Holy Spirit for me.

Gen 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit (*rûach*) of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Psalms 33:6 By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the **breath** (*rûach*) of His **mouth**.

Job 33:4 The Spirit (*rûach*) of God hath made me, and the **breath** (*neshâmâh*) of the Almighty hath given me life.

John 20:22 And when he had said this, he **breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:**

Rom 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the **Spirit of God** dwell in you. Now if any man have not the **Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his.

Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, **who created all things by Jesus Christ**

:John 1:3 **All things were made by him** ; and without him was not anything made that was made.

Why do Adventists teach that the breath of man is interlinked with his spirit yet the breath of God and Christ is not linked with their Spirit? This is inconsistent interpretation of scripture. Scripture reveals that Christ is the Creator and He did this through the power of His Spirit which comes from His own being rather than another individual.

How does **Mat\_28:19** draw attention to the three members of the Godhead?

Three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned when Jesus instructs how new believers are to be baptized. Indeed, this baptismal "formula" is still used in most Christian baptisms today. The person who has chosen to follow Jesus is baptized into the "Name" (singular, not plural, in the Greek), though three Persons are included. Three Divine Beings are viewed as One.

All three have their source of divinity in the Father. As the Son came out of the Father He naturally has the Father's divinity in Him. Because the Son came out of the Father they share the same Holy Spirit also known as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. "Name" stands for character and authority and in this case this is the authority we are to submit to as they are our three Heavenly dignitaries working for our salvation. The book of Acts is clear evidence that this formula wasn't the preferred method of baptism as they always baptized in the Name of Jesus but I have no issue with either formula. This is because it is Jesus who baptizes with His Spirit which He showed by breathing it on the disciples. We see this here:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.** (Matt 3:11) And when he had said this, he **breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:...** (John 20:22)

Thus Matt 28:19's passage is not showing us three beings who make up one God. The passage is also not showing us three beings who we are to have a relationship with a relationship is what eternal life is all about but "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3) We have two beings who are personal beings in whom we are to love and the third person of the Godhead is the Holy Spirit of God and Christ. The very Spirit or person of Themselves is to dwell in us so that we may have that fellowship. Notice which beings are personal beings:

"Christ gave his followers a positive promise that after his ascension he would send them **his Spirit**. "Go ye therefore," he said, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father [**a personal God**], and of the Son [**a personal Prince and Saviour**], and of the Holy Ghost [**sent from heaven to represent Christ**]: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I **am** with you alway, even unto the end of the world." {RH, October 26, 1897 par. 9}

[bracketed comments in original, but emphasis supplied] **Matthew 28:19 never even uses the word God and thus the passage can only be assumed to be saying God is triune.**

At the baptism of Jesus, all three Persons of the Trinity appear together. Read Mark's dramatic description of that baptism

( [Mar\\_1:9-11](#)). Mark's description of the heavens as "parting" (vs. 10, NKJV) would be better translated "torn open" (NIV). Mark draws attention to all three Members of the Divine Godhead in an awesome revelation of God that affects even nature itself.

At this baptism we see God the Father, we see Him sending His Holy Spirit to empower Christ and we see His Son in who He is well pleased. There isn't anything in these passages to suggest these three make up one God. Here is an excellent quote on the baptism so watch who the Holy Spirit comes from:

"Never before had angels listened to such a prayer as Christ offered at his baptism, and they were solicitous to be the bearers of the message from the Father to his Son. But, no! **direct from the Father issues the light of his glory.** The heavens were opened, and **beams of glory rested** upon the Son of God **and assumed the form of a dove,** in appearance like burnished gold. **The dove-like form** was emblematical of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. While the people stood spell-bound with amazement, their eyes fastened upon Christ, from the opening heavens came these words: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." **The words of confirmation that Christ is the Son of God** were given to inspire faith in those who witnessed the scene, and to sustain the Son of God in his arduous work. Notwithstanding the Son of God was clothed with humanity, **yet Jehovah, with his own voice, assures him of his sonship** with the Eternal. In this manifestation to his Son, God accepts humanity as exalted through the excellence of his beloved Son." {RH, January 21, 1873}

This clearly shows us that the Holy Spirit came from the Father's very being rather than another individual. Here is this same thought from scripture:

John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which **proceedeth from the Father,** he shall testify of me: Through faith in Jesus Christ the chain of mutual dependence is fastened to the throne of God, and through the agency of man humanity is bound to God. "God has promised his Holy Spirit, the highest power in the universe, to be embodied in men, that through faith in Jesus Christ humanity may be elevated. **An influence emanating from God** draws and concentrates the power of the universe, that a lost and rebel race may be reconciled and restored to God. {ST, September 4, 1893}

[Back to the study:](#)

As with Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit is linked with and attributed to the actions of God. Review the following portrayals of the Holy Spirit's actions: 1. When announcing the birth of Christ, the angel tells Mary that her Child will be called "holy" because the Holy Spirit will come upon her ( [Luk\\_1:35](#))

[Let's look at Luke 1:35:](#)

"And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, **and the power of the Highest** will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

[The power of the Highest is God's Spirit as power is one of the aspects of God's Spirit.](#)

2. Jesus claimed that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, anointing Him to preach ( [Luk\\_4:18](#))

.In this passage we see that God anointed His Son with His Spirit and that is why the passage says "Spirit of the Lord" as it His Spirit.

### 3. He also claimed to be driving out demons by the Spirit of God ( Mat\_12:28)

.God's power was certainly the method used to perform these miracles and that's why the passage says "Spirit of God". The Holy Spirit truly is God's Spirit.

### 4. The Spirit, who is to carry on Christ's work after His departure, is another Counselor of the same kind ( Joh\_14:16 )

This may be one of the best passages to show the truth if we simply read the context.

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you **another Helper**, that **He may abide with you forever**—17 **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because **it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.**

18 **I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.**

This passage makes it so clear who is coming to dwell in us. Who is it that the disciples "knew"? It was Jesus and thus He was letting them know that He would come dwell in them through His Spirit."

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."(2ndCor3:17)

Here is an excellent quote that makes this clear:

None will keep the law of God unless they love Him who is the **only begotten of the Father**. And none the less surely, if they love Him, will they express their love and obedience to Him. All who love Christ will be loved of the Father, and **He will manifest Himself to them**. In all their emergencies and perplexities, they will have a **helper in Jesus Christ**. That **Christ should manifest Himself to them, and yet be invisible to the world, was a mystery to the disciples**. They could not understand the words of Christ **in their spiritual sense**. They were thinking of the outward, visible manifestation. They could not take in **the fact** that they could have the **presence of Christ with them, and yet He be unseen by the world**. They did not understand the meaning of a **spiritual manifestation**. {SW, September 13, 1898 par. 2}

Christ was to return to Heaven but His Spirit which proceeds from Himself would be another comforter for the saints. He would remain in Heaven as our mediator but He would be omnipresent through His Spirit.

### 5. Jesus breathed out the Holy Spirit upon His followers ( Joh\_20:22)

.Yes He did and this shows where the Spirit comes from. I'm surprised that this author used this quote as our church does not believe that the Holy Spirit comes out of God and Christ. Here is another excellent quote that shows the truth where the Spirit comes from:

Christ Himself calls our attention to the growth of the vegetable world as an illustration of the agency of **His Spirit** in sustaining spiritual life. The **sap** of the **vine**, ascending from the root, is diffused to the branches, sustaining growth and producing blossoms and fruit. So the life-giving power of **the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Saviour**, pervades the

soul, renews the motives and affections, and brings even the thoughts into obedience to the will of God, enabling the receiver to bear the precious fruit of holy deeds. AA 284.1

6. New Christians will have both the indwelling Holy Spirit ( [Joh\\_14:17](#) ) and also the Spirit of Christ ( [Gal\\_2:20](#), [Col\\_1:27](#) )

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God as there are not multiple Spirits.

"There is one body, and one Spirit. . ." (Eph 4:4) The Spirit of both God and Christ is the same Spirit as Christ came out of God and thus have the same Spirit. I'm not sure that the church is trying to say there is multiple Spirits though as I have never seen an Adventist teach that. I think the person is saying the Holy Spirit is an individual of Himself and when He lives in us we have the Spirit of Christ "metaphorically" as this person doesn't believe the Holy Spirit is literally the Spirit of Christ like I do. Notice this quote on what I am saying: "

**The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ**, which is sent to all men to give them sufficiency, that through His grace we might be complete in Him." (Ellen G. White, Letter to Jacob Christiansen, captain of the mission ship Pitcairn, Written January 2nd 1894 from Melbourne Australia)

If the church is trying to say that the Holy Spirit is an individual yet there is also a Spirit of Christ this would be a very new doctrine in our church. I don't think this was the thought behind the church's statement though. If you are a Trinitarian and you believe in a Holy Spirit individual plus a Spirit of Christ please let me know as I haven't seen this before. Back to the study.

**Christ and the Holy Spirit are intimately linked with each other's ministry. Moreover, there are biblical references that identify the Holy Spirit as God. Read [Act\\_5:1-11](#). How does this incident help us understand the deity of the Holy Spirit, as well?**

This passage does not say the Holy Spirit is God. It says that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God as the Holy Spirit is God's Spirit. All sin is against God and all sin is resisting the Holy Spirit of God. That is why in verse 9 it says:

"Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the **Spirit of the Lord**? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out."

If the Holy Spirit were another God individual like God and Christ He would be part of the counsel of peace but He isn't. "

Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be **between them both**." (Zech 6:13)

And I saw no temple therein: for the **Lord God Almighty** and the **Lamb** are the temple of it. (Rev 21:22)

I will finish this lesson with a quote from Ellen White's son on who he thought the Holy Spirit was in 1935 just before his death.

"The statement and the arguments of some of our ministers in their effort to prove that the Holy Spirit was an **individual** as are God the Father and Christ, the eternal Son, have perplexed me and **sometimes they have made me sad**. One popular teacher said we may regard Him (the Holy Spirit) as the fellow who is down here running things. My perplexities were lessened a little when I learned from the dictionary that one of the meanings of personality was characteristics. It is stated in such a way that I concluded that there **might be personality without bodily form which is possessed by the Father**



**and the Son.** There are many Scriptures which speak of the Father and the Son and the absence of Scripture making similar reference to the united work of the Father and the Holy Spirit or of Christ and the Holy Spirit, has led me to believe that the Spirit without individuality was the representative of the Father and the Son throughout the universe, and it was through the Holy Spirit that they dwell in our hearts and make us one with the Father and with the Son....(Other questions answered). With kind regards, I remain sincerely your brother." (Letter from W C White to H W Carr. April 30 1935.)

Odd that EGW forgot to teach her son the Holy Spirit was another individual like the Father and Son if that is what she believed. It's beyond reasonable to think that she would do such a thing. Wednesday's lesson on "Unity and Equality" is next.

## Wednesday's Lesson on Unity and Equality Review

WEDNESDAY January 4

In Unity and Equality

However clear the Bible is that God is one (echad), the Bible also talks about the plurality of Persons. Scholars and Bible students through the millennia have seen in many Old Testament texts powerful evidence of the plural nature of God. This truth, as with many others, is more fully revealed in the New Testament.

Read [Gen\\_1:26-27](#). How is God's plurality revealed here?

This pairing of plural and singular when referring to God also occurs in [Gen\\_11:7-8](#) at the building of the tower of Babel. God Himself speaks again. The "Lord" is mentioned, yet He speaks as one of a group ("Us").

The assumption here is that God is speaking to God in a plural group based off the word "Elohim". It is argued that this word is plural and because Elohim says let "Us" then God must be plural. The truth is this word is used as a singular being not as a plural despite Elohim being a plural word. Read the Old Testament and simply watch the context which will show you Elohim is a singular being rather than plural. There are many cases in the OT that shows Elohim used with a singular being. Notice:

Exodus 7:1 So the LORD said to Moses: "See, I have made you as **God (Elohim)** to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

Gen 23:6 Hear us, my lord (Abraham): thou art a **mighty (Elohim)** prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

It is true Elohim is plural but in the Hebrew language it has what is called plural of majesty which denotes greatness. We see this in the case of Abraham and Moses as we certainly wouldn't consider them to be multiple persons now would we?

1 Kings 11:33 Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped **Ashtoreth the goddess (elohim)** of the Zidonians, **Chemosh the god (elohim)** of the Moabites, and **Milcom the god (elohim)** of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father.

In this passage we see separate individual gods where Elohim is one being rather than a plural of beings. I don't know of any evidence that says each of these gods was actually a plural of elohim beings. In reality these gods don't exist.

Mark 12:29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God (**Theos**), the LORD is one

Deut 6:4 ~ Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God (Elohim), is one Jehovah;

The Old Testament uses the singular version "El" for God over 200 times and the New Testament uses "Theos" which is singular. The pair above clearly shows that Elohim is interchangeable with the singular Theos.

Psalms 45:6-7 Thy throne, O God (Elohim), is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

7Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God (Elohim), thy God (Elohim), hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Heb 1:8-9 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God (Theos), is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God(Theos), even thy God(Theos), hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

In the above passages there is Elohim the Father calling His Son Elohim but would we say that Jesus is more than one being or that the Elohim saying this to Jesus is more than one being? Of course not and the Greek version of this uses the singular Theos once again. This clearly shows Elohim is used for singular beings. An argument will usually be made for a plural Elohim using

Gen 1:26 "And God(Elohim)said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness".

On March 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 we had a seminar at our church and the speaker claimed this is God speaking in the fullness of the Godhead. He said the best interpretation of this is to be a council amongst the three persons of the Godhead. He first showed many other interpretations and shot them down as unbiblical. One of these interpretations he shot down as false was "And God (Elohim) said to Jesus Christ, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". He said we could only make that based on an assumption. I think the NT makes it clear this is actually truth rather than an assumption as Jesus created everything and fortunately I don't have to make an assumption on that as it is the correct interpretation according to the SOP.

But when God said to His Son, "Let us make man in our image," {EW 145:1}

God, in counsel with his Son, formed the plan of creating man in their own image." {Ellen G. White, RH 24 Feb 1874.}

See also James White:

"The Father and the Son were one in man's creation, and in his redemption. Said the Father to the Son, "Let us make man in our image." And the triumphant song in which the redeemed take part, is unto "Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."" {J. S. White, The Law and the Gospel, p. 1. 1870}

And again:

"The inexplicable Trinity that makes the Godhead three in one and one in three, is bad enough; but that ultra Unitarianism that makes Christ inferior to the Father is worse. Did God say to an inferior, "Let us make man in our image?" {J. S. White, Review & Herald, November 29, 1877}

A simple read through the OT will show you that Elohim is a singular being rather than a plurality of beings that make up one Elohim.

Read [sa\\_6:8](#). In what ways do you see the plurality of the "Lord" revealed there, as well?

All we know is that there is a plural of beings in the scenario rather than making the assumption that Lord here refers to multiple beings that make up Lord. It's the same situation as Gen 1:26.

In the New Testament, how does Peter's sermon at Pentecost exalt Jesus within the Godhead? (See [Act\\_2:33](#).) Peter, a devout monotheistic Jew, and thus a believer in One God, proclaims the full divinity of Christ, now in heaven. In his letter to the Jewish exiles of the dispersion, Peter again communicates evidence of the triune nature of God. (See [1Pe\\_1:1-3](#).) Acts 2:33 Therefore being by the **right hand of God** exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

In Acts 2:33 Peter says that Jesus is at the right hand of a singular "God" not plural. Here is 1 Peter 1:2-3:

Elect according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father through sanctification** of the **Spirit**, unto obedience and sprinkling of the **blood of Jesus Christ** : Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

3 Blessed be the **God and Father of** our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, . . .

We simply see a singular God who is the **God and Father of** Jesus Christ and we are to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit which is also represented as the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus is the life of Jesus or the Spirit of Jesus. Nothing in these passages make these three one God as the only being called God is the Father in the passage.

How does Paul include the plurality of God as he describes the process of salvation?  
[2Co\\_1:20-22](#). (See also [2Co\\_13:14](#).)

2 Cor 1:20-22 For all the promises **of God** in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory **of God** by us.

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in **Christ** , and hath anointed us, **is God**;

22 Who hath also sealed us, and **given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts**.

Again we see that God is a singular being rather than plural. There is also a Christ and a Spirit but they are never said to be one God. These are the three powers from Heaven working for our salvation. In fact Eph 4 makes it very clear:

4 There is **one body** ,and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling;

5 **One Lord, one faith, one baptism,**

6 **One God and Father of all**, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

A singular Holy Spirit, a singular Lord Jesus, and a singular God. The context of the passage shows one is used in a strict mathematical sense.

Let them be thankful to God for His manifold mercies and be kind to one another. They have **one God** and **one Saviour** ; and **one Spirit** --the **Spirit of Christ** --is to bring unity into their ranks.--9T 189. (Ellen White){PM 156.3}

2 Cor 13:14 The **grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**, and the **love of God**, and the **communion of the Holy Ghost**, be with you all. Amen.

God is again shown to be a singular being who brings us love, and because of Jesus we have grace. We have communion OF the Holy Spirit not WITH the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the vehicle or means by which God and Christ fellowship with us. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and **make our abode with him.**" (John 14:23)

We certainly need the communion OF the Holy Spirit. (1 John 1:3)

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

[Back to the study.](#)

With our finite minds, fallen as well, this teaching is not easy to fully grasp. But so what? We are dealing here with the nature of God, the Creator of the universe. How foolish it would be to think that we could fully understand Him, especially when, as humans, we don't "fully" understand pretty much anything. Dwell on even the "simplest" thing you can think of. How many aspects of it remain beyond your grasp? How much more so with something as grand as the nature of God Himself?

The church is trying to get the reader to feel comfortable with all the assumptions being read into these passages that have been given by playing the "Mystery" card. It seems that no explanation of the Trinity is complete without this language. Brothers and Sisters this lesson is trying to say it is ok to speculate on God because He is above our comprehension. I would suggest we should take the opposite path and not speculate because He is beyond our comprehension. John 17:3 says we are to know the only true God and Jesus Christ for our salvation so let's not complicate God. The Triune God is a "Mystery" you can't fully grasp and that I would agree on. I praise God that the truth in which I believe is no "mystery" as God has plainly spoken of Him and His Son through His word. Here is the "Mystery" God of the Catholic church:

"The **mystery** of the **trinity** is the central doctrine of Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the church."- (Handbook for Today's Catholic, p.16)

"And upon her forehead was a name written, **MYSTERY**, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (Rev 17:5)

The 144,000 know their God in clarity:

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having **his Father's name written in their foreheads.**

(Rev 14:1) *Some manuscripts say* "having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads."

None of them say the Holy Spirit is written on their foreheads. We are certainly sealed by the Holy Spirit as He lives in us but this happens when we know the Father and Son. Should we go the distance the Trinitarians have gone in putting this three in one God speculation together? "

The revelation of Himself that God has **given in His word is for our study.** This we may seek to understand. **But beyond this we are not to penetrate.** The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the nature of God; but the effort will be fruitless." "This problem has not been given us to solve. **No human mind can comprehend God** Let not finite man attempt to interpret Him. Let none indulge in speculation regarding His

nature." "Here silence is eloquence. **The Omniscient One is above discussion.**" {Ellen G. White, 8th Volume Testimonies, page 279, 'The essential knowledge'}

I finish this study with a word from Brother Waggoner:

"But when the doctor [Briggs] states that Seventh-day Adventists deny the divinity of Christ, we know that he writes recklessly." "We are fully persuaded in our own mind that he knows better; but be that as it may, the statement has been made so often by men who professed to know whereof they were speaking, that many have come to believe it; and for their sakes, as well as for the benefit of those who may not have given the subject any thought, **we purpose to set forth the truth.**" "We have **no theory to bolster up**, and so, **instead of stating propositions**, we shall simply **quote the word of God**, and **accept what it says.**" (E. J. Waggoner. Signs of the Times, March 25<sup>th</sup> 1889, article 'The Divinity of Christ')

Here's a link to all the reviews for this week's lesson:

### Thursday's Lesson on Trinity and Salvation Review

THURSDAY *January 5*

The Trinity and Salvation – The Gospel of John gives direct and conscious attention to the unique nature of God. John seems to be fully aware of the oneness, yet "threeness," of God. Read Christ's prayer in [Joh\\_14:1-31](#); [Joh\\_15:1-27](#); [Joh\\_16:1-33](#) and count the number of references to the three Persons of God.

How do these passages help us understand the reality of this important truth?

Not one of these passages states that these three make up one God. God is always shown as a singular being in these passages and that He has a Son while working in us through their Spirit.

This passage in the Gospel of John is the most extensive concentration of references to the coequal, three-Person God. Here the inter-dynamics among the Trinity come through repeatedly. The doctrine of the Trinity, far from being a piece of abstract speculation, is the inevitable conclusion that comes from a systematic survey of Scripture.

Not once has the church shown a plain thus saith the Lord that three beings equal the one God of the Bible. The church here says the trinity is not speculation but there are some in our church who have admitted it is an assumption. Notice below:

"While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, **it is assumed as a fact** by Bible writers and mentioned several times. **Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.**" (Adventist Review Vol. 158 No. 31, 1981, P. 4)

"The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one, is not explicitly stated but **only assumed.**" (Fernando L. Canale, the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 138, 'Doctrine of God')

Some will tend to resist this doctrine (the trinity) because it is not found expressly stated in the scriptures. (Adventist Review Aug 20 1993 P-8)

"The Scriptures were designed by God for practical living and **not for speculative theorizing.** Hence, they contain **no systematic exposition on the nature of the Godhead.** The Christian statement regarding the Trinity is an

attempt to state the **biblical paradox (which Scripture never attempts to resolve)** that there is **one God** (see Deuteronomy 6:4: James 2:19), yet **existing in three Persons** (see Matthew 28:19: 2Corinthians 13:14)." (*Frank Holbrook, Signs of the Times, July 1985, 'Frank answers'*)

"The role of the trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that the word itself does not appear in the Bible, **nor is there any clear statement of the idea**. But the Bible does set the stage for its formulation, and the concept represents a development of biblical claims and concepts. So **even though the doctrine of the trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God, it is part of what the church must say to safeguard the biblical view of God.**" . . . . "We can find **hints** of this doctrine in the Old Testament and **preliminary expressions** of it in the new." . . . . "As these passages indicate, the idea of the trinity has **precedents** in the Bible, **even though a full-fledged doctrine of the trinity is not to be found there.**" (*The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective.* by Richard Rice. 1985. Andrews Uni Press)

Notice this from SOP:

"In this age of the world there is no safety in departing from a **plain "Thus saith the Lord,"** however wise and correct the human assumption may appear. Tradition in names and books is nothing. God's word is everything. **The wisdom of the wisest man that lives is foolishness if it swerves one jot or tittle from the word of the living God.** God lives, God reigns, and He declares, "Them that honor me I will honor." Of those who place their sophistry above a **plain "Thus saith the Lord,"** God says, "I will make their wisdom foolishness." {BTS, May 1, 1913 par. 3}

There certainly is the appearance of the Trinity doctrine in scripture as there are three, but who told us we could make these three one God?

Of special importance in this context is the deity of Christ. If Christ were not fully God, then all we have is the Lord shifting the punishment for our sins from one party to another, as opposed to taking them upon Himself. The whole point of the gospel is that it was God Himself on the cross bearing the sins of the world. Anything short of this would denude the atonement of everything that made it so powerful and effective.

Jesus is fully God as He has the same nature as God. How could Jesus come out of God and be anything less than perfect God? The church is going to present a massive deception in this section by trying to make the people in our church believe that we teach Jesus was created and that He is not divine. This is not what we believe and the church knows it. The whole point of the gospel is that God gave up His Son to redeem us and not that He came Himself (John 3:16). Our church will say anyone of the three could have done this but you won't find inspiration to back that up. Notice our church on this:

"Entirely through Their own initiative, the Godhead **arranged for One among Them to become a human being.**

They did so in order to (1) provide us with our Substitute and Surety, (2) make God's ways plain, (3) restore us to our pre-sin perfection, and (4) settle the debate about God's Justice. At precisely the right time and in the right way, the three Members of the Godhead put into operation a plan They had devised before the world was created. They surrendered a portion of Themselves—the Divine Son—to become the Saviour of the world." (*Our Wonderful God, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, 4th Quarter 1998, Principal Contributor: Edwin R. Thiele*)

**"While *God the Father* didn't have a baby boy named *God the Son* we use those terms to help understand that the parts of the Godhead are separate yet closely linked the way a father and son bond together.**

When sin entered the world, the Trinity already had a plan in place to save humans. They didn't flip a coin to see who would have to go to earth to clean up the mess... **I don't know how the Trinity decided that it would be Jesus who would come to earth**, but I do know that all Three Members of the Godhead have been involved in our salvation from the beginning! The full Trinity made Itself known at the baptism of Jesus: (Matt. 3:16,17 quoted)." (Steve Case, *"why was it Jesus?"*, *Signs of the Times*, March 2011)

**"Jesus had to lower himself into human flesh to be able to die for our sins – but "Eternal" Beings cannot die, especially a GOD who pre-existed the creation of the universe! So how did GOD arrange it so that GOD could die for us? One of Him decided to lower Himself into human flesh, into a body that could die."** (Emphasis in original) (2007 Amazing Facts cartoon book "What About The Trinity?" by Jim Pinkoski with Doug Batchelor and Pastor Anderson, page 46.)

**"But imagine a situation in which the Being we have come to know as *God the Father* came to die for us, and the One we have come to know as *Jesus* stayed back in heaven (we are speaking in human terms to make a point)."** **"Nothing would have changed**, except that we would have been calling Each by **the name we now use for the Other.**" **"That is what equality in the Deity means."** (*Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School Quarterly*, page 19, Thursday April 10 th 2008, *'The Mystery of His Deity'*)

Now notice inspiration:

The Son of God, heaven's glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. **In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims**. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. **None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven.**

Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin--sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race. {PP 63.2}

While we dwell upon the paternal character of God, and His love expressed for man in the gift of His only begotten Son, we must tell people why such a costly sacrifice was necessary. It was because of sin. What is sin? The transgression of the law. **Only the Son of God could pay the penalty, and that by His own humiliation and death.** {1888781.2}

Adam, in his innocence, had enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but sin brought separation between God and man, and **the atonement of Christ alone** could span the abyss and make possible the communication of blessing or salvation from heaven to earth. Man was still cut off from direct approach to his Creator, but God would communicate with him through Christ and angels. {PP 67.2}

Over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, Christ had proclaimed in triumph, "I am the resurrection, and the life." These words could be spoken only by the Deity. All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are dependent recipients of the life of God. From the highest seraph to the humblest animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life. **Only He who is**

one with God could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. {DA 785.3}

“Think of how much it cost Christ to leave the heavenly courts, and take his position at the head of humanity. Why did he do this? -- Because he was the only one who could redeem the fallen race.” {Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1905, ‘God’s purpose for us’}

“It will be seen that He who is infinite in wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of His Son.” {GC 652.2}

The above makes it clear that God’s Son was the only being capable of becoming a human. Not even the Father could do this as He is the source of all things.

Back to the study.

Think about it: if Jesus were merely a created being, and not fully God, how could He—as a creature—bear the full wrath of God against sin? What created being, no matter how exalted, could save humanity from the violation of God’s holy law?

The problem isn’t with the violation of God’s law in the sense that God is arbitrary. The church paints a very arbitrary picture that God’s law demands the highest authority to be sacrificed. The church is right that a non-divine being could not make the atonement but she is right while making the reason arbitrary. The reason Jesus has to be divine is because on the cross He was separated from God when He said “My God My God why have you forsaken Me?” He also said “I thirst” showing the Spirit of God had been completely taken from Him. Seeing that Christ is bearing our fallen human nature He should instantly become evil wanting off that cross but He doesn’t. The reason is because He is also perfect love as He is divine. In His divinity He had power to lay down His life. In the Triune God formula it is impossible for one being to be separated from another God being otherwise you break the triune oneness and God ceases to be Triune. He would simply be two or three Gods. This is why Ellen White is clear that only Jesus could do this. The church will continue to paint an arbitrary picture of God and His law from this point on.

Were Jesus not divine, then God’s law would not be as sacred as God Himself, because the violation of it would be something that a created being could atone for. The law only would be as sacred as that created being, and not as sacred as the Creator. Sin itself would not be so bad if all it took were the death of a creature and not the Creator to atone for it. The fact that it took God Himself, in the Person of Christ, to remedy sin presents powerful evidence of just how serious sin is. Also, our assurance of salvation through what Christ has done for us—and not through our own works—comes from the fact that God Himself paid the penalty for our sins. *What could we do to add to that?* Were Christ created, maybe we could add something. But with God, the Creator, sacrificing Himself for our sins . . . it’s all but blasphemous to believe anything we do could supplement that sacrifice. Thus, were Christ not divine, the atonement would be fatally compromised.

Like I said before you will not find a non-trinitarian Adventist who denies the divinity of Christ or says He was created. We believe He was begotten which simply means He came out of God. Did our church believe in the divinity of Christ when we believed what I now believe?

“But when the doctor [Briggs] states that Seventh-day Adventists deny the divinity of Christ, we know that he writes recklessly.” “We are fully persuaded in our own mind that he knows better



; but be that as it may, the statement has been made **so often** by men **who professed to know** whereof they were speaking, **that many have come to believe it**; and for their sakes, as well as for the benefit of those who may not have given the subject any thought, **we purpose to set forth the truth.**" "We have **no theory** to bolster up, and so, **instead of stating prepositions**, we shall simply **quote the word of God**, and **accept what it says.**" (E. J. Waggoner. *Signs of the Times, March 25th 1889, article 'The Divinity of Christ'*)

Ellen White:

"In this country [Australia], the denominational ministers tell the **most unblushing falsehoods** to their congregations **in reference to our work and our people.**" "Whatever false report has been started, is circulated by those who oppose the truth, and is repeated from church to church and from community to community. The circulators of these falsehoods **take no pains to find out whether or not they are true**, for many of those who repeat the reports, though not the framers of them, still love the false reports, and take delight in giving them a wide circulation." "

**They do not, like honest, just men**, come to those who are accused, and seek to find out what is the truth concerning what they have heard in regard to their faith; but **without inquiry they spread false statements in order to prejudice the people against those who hold the truth.**" "For instance, an effort was made to obtain the use of the hall at a village four miles from Hastings, where some of our workers proposed to present the gospel to the people; but they did not succeed in obtaining the hall, because a schoolteacher there **opposed the truth**, and declared to the people that **Seventh-day Adventists did not believe in the divinity of Christ.**" "This man **may not have known what our faith is on this point**, but he was not left in ignorance. He was informed that there is not a people on earth who hold more firmly to **the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists.** But the answer was given that they did not want that the doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists should be promulgated in that community. So the door was closed." {Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1893, 'An appeal for the Australasian field'*}

*The attacks on the Deity of Christ used to be against the SDA church, but today are by our church. The church today falsely tries to claim we are attacking the Deity of Christ by twisting what we believe. This is the exact same thing that happened from outside our church back then of which Ellen White here supports what our church believed on the issue. These expressions by our church in this lesson, with the intent to show we believe Christ was created and not divine, have no truth in them.*

In 1888 Waggoner and Jones presented righteousness by faith in the context of the same God and Christ I believe in. They did not teach what our church believes today as they and our church back then believed Jesus was truly begotten of the Father. Here is what Ellen White said of their presentation on the Deity of Christ:

Messages bearing the divine credentials have been sent to God's people; the glory, the majesty, the righteousness of Christ, full of goodness and truth have been presented; the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ has been set forth among us with beauty and loveliness, to charm all whose hearts were not closed with prejudice. We know that God has wrought among us. {RH, May 27, 1890 par. 6} {EGW 1888 Materials 673.6}

We clearly see here that our church was not denying the Deity of Christ when teaching He was begotten. He is not sort of divine and nor can you say the Trinity doctrine is the only way Jesus can be fully divine as there is no such thing as partially divine. He is either divine or not divine. Here is info that shows we do not believe Jesus was created like our church states:

"The angels, therefore, are **created beings**, necessarily of a lower order than their Creator. **Christ is the only being begotten of the Father.**" (Past, Present, and Future p52 1909. James Edson White, Ellen Whites son.)

"But Jehovah could not permit this. He Himself had established the order of heaven. No created being could be equal with God. **The only begotten Son alone could occupy this position.**" (*James Edson White, Past, Present, and Future, page 100, chapter "Celestial war, 1914 edition*)

"It is true that there are many sons of God, but Christ is the **"only begotten Son of God,"** and therefore the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was or ever can be. The **angels** are sons of God, as was **Adam by creation; Christians** are the sons of God by **adoption**, but Christ is the Son of God **by birth**. The writer to the Hebrews further shows that the position of the Son of God is not one to which Christ has been elevated but that it is one which He has by right." (*Christ and His righteousness, page 12 'Is Christ God?', 1890*)

Notice how Ellen White borrows this and says the same thing:

"A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he **gave his only-begotten Son,**"-- not a son by **Creation**, as were **the angels**, nor a son by **adoption**, as is the **forgiven sinner but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person**, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th May 1895, 'Christ our complete salvation'*)

If God could have changed his Law to meet man in his fallen condition, would he not have done this, **and retained his only-begotten Son in heaven?**--He certainly would. {ST, February 25, 1897 par. 3 Ellen G. White}

[Back to the study.](#)

Think for a moment: the Creator of the universe died in your stead, in your place, so you could have the promise of eternal life in Him. How can you learn to draw hope and assurance from this amazing truth? In light of this reality, what else really matters?

It is amazing that God could love us as much as His own Son and by Him sending this Son I can know I am valued as much as His Son. I do not accept the Triune God who sent someone where no risk was involved. I also cannot accept a God who is pretending when He condemns theater (Hollywood) Himself. He could have let this planet perish but His love for us is revealed in Him giving up His Son. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8-9) [Here's a link to all the reviews for this week's lesson:](#)

### Friday's Sabbath School Lesson Review.

FRIDAY January 6

**Further Study:** In the doctrine of the Trinity, we do not find three different divine roles displayed by one Person (that is modalism). Nor are there three gods in a cluster ( that is tritheism or polytheism). The one God ("He") is also, and equally, "They," and "They" are always together, always closely cooperating. The Holy Spirit executes the will of both Father and Son, which is also His will. This is the truth that God reveals about Himself all through the Bible.

I find this comment to be false: "Nor are there three gods in a cluster ( that is tritheism or polytheism). This is in reference to the orthodox Trinity of three persons that make up one being. The other doctrine called

modalism is referring to the Jesus only doctrine. In reality the orthodox Trinity is not tritheism as they are only one God being so this is a true triune God. The SDA Trinity is much closer to tritheism than the orthodox Trinity have in three separate beings. In fact many who have wanted to be distinct from the Trinity condemn the word and admit teaching tritheism yet they believe in the exact same God structure as our church does. Some have some light differences in their version of tritheism. This comment "The one God ("He) is also, and equally, "They" and "They" are always together, always closely cooperating" is very confusing. The word "He" denotes a singular being rather than a "they". This is called spiritualism as men twist the plain meaning of God's word to confuse the mind. You will not find this supported in Scripture. When the Bible uses "He" in reference to God or Christ it is always showing a singular being.

The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by LEARNED MEN, who with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, or spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed." These men are false teachers *The Great Controversy page 598*

Some people struggle with the divinity of Christ because of how, while here in the flesh, Jesus had subordinated Himself to the will of the Father. Many see this as "proof" that He was somehow less than the Father. This reality, however, does not reflect the inner structure of the Godhead. This subordination reflects, instead, how the plan of salvation was to operate. Jesus was to come into humanity, becoming "obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8 ESV) Also, "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb 5:9) These statements reveal that the subordinate role Jesus played resulted from the Incarnation, which was crucial to the plan of salvation. They don't prove that He is anything other than fully divine and eternal.

The church is not being honest about our position on this. We never claim that subordination means "that he was somehow less than the Father." We do claim that Christ has always been submitted to His Father rather than the Trinitarian model that says this happened at the incarnation or that it was the "subordinate role Jesus played."

The Son of God was next in authority to the great Lawgiver. He knew that his life alone could be sufficient to ransom fallen man. *RH December 17 1892*

This does not somehow make Christ inferior to God like Trinitarians propose. It just shows us that the Father is the Head of Christ and highest in the courts of Heaven.

Christ is our example He was next to God in the heavenly courts. But he came to this earth to live among men. (*Notebook Leaflets from the Elmshaven Library, vol 1 pp 114,115; Letter 48, 1902*)

This is not the same as saying He was with God in the heavenly courts. It shows God's position is the highest in the heavenly court and then His Son. Notice this truth from Satan's rebellion:

The Lord has shown me that Satan was once an honored angel in heaven, next to Jesus Christ... And I saw that when God said to his Son, Let us make man in our image Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to be

consulted concerning the formation of man, HE was filled with envy, jealousy and hatred. He wished to be the highest in heaven, next to God, and receive the highest honors. *Spiritual Gifts vol 1 p 17*

Christ held that position and Lucifer coveted it.  
Notice this before the incarnation.

Moses passed through death, but Michael came down and gave him life before his body had seen corruption. Satan tried to hold the body, claiming it as his; but Michael resurrected Moses and took him to heaven. Satan railed bitterly against God, denouncing him as unjust in permitting his prey to be taken from him; but Christ did not rebuke His adversary, though it was through his temptation that the servant of God had fallen. He meekly referred him to His Father, saying, "The Lord rebuke thee" EW 164

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Back to the study.

"His name shall be called Immanuel... God with us. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was the image of God, the image of His greatness and majesty, the outshining of His glory. It was to manifest this glory that He came to our world." DA p19

Amen to this and in fact here is a great quote to go with it:

The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son; ...who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of

the angels said He at any time. "Thou art My Son, This day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son? Heb 1:1-5 God is the Father of Christ: Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father." All the counsels of God are opened to His Son. 8T 268

Discussion Questions:

Some early Adventists struggled with the doctrine of the Trinity. Today, the church has taken a firm stand on the doctrine. How does this change over time reveal to us the unfolding nature of truth? In your own experience, how have you grown in your understanding of truth? What beliefs did you once hold that, today, you no longer accept?

I covered this issue in the first study on this but notice below this evidence that show this change should never have happened:

Since the rise of the first and second angels' messages I have taken an active part in the work, and the evidence as it is now given cannot be controverted from the Word of God. We have not a shadow of a doubt as to the correct understanding of the order and character of the third angel's message and the two preceding it. We are now living under the proclamation of the message of the third angel. Many attempts will be made, as there have been in the past, to weave into the work human

theories. Diligent study will be made to get up something original. but we may say, as did Paul, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 3:11 ... In the power and strength and name of the Lord God of Israel, I stand before you and say, I know in whom I have believed. I know that we have the truth in regard to the three messages. I hide myself in Jesus. I am a laborer together with God, to give the message of warning, of reproof, of encouragement, holding aloft the banner on which is inscribed our message: "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." 9MR 133.2

Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder [Hiram] Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, "We can do nothing more," the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor to teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me. {1SM 206.4} During this whole time I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked as it were, and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying. This was one of the greatest sorrows of my life. I was in this condition of mind until all the principal points of our faith were made clear to our minds, in harmony with the Word of God. The brethren knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, and they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given. {1SM 207.1}

We believe without a doubt that Christ is soon coming. This is not a fable to us; it is a reality. We have no doubt, neither have we had for years, that the doctrines we hold today [1863] are present truth, and that we are nearing the judgment. We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. {2T 355.1}

The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believers faith. It is that which Christ Himself has declared to be eternal life... Upon this rock said Jesus I will build My church. In the presence of God, and all the heavenly intelligences, in the presence of the unseen army of hell, Christ founded His church upon the living Rock. That Rock is Himself – His own body, for us broken and bruised. Against the church built upon this foundation, the gates of hell shall not prevail." {The Desire of Ages p 412-413}

He who denies the personality of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, is denying God and Christ. "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." If you continue to believe and obey the truths you first embraced regarding the personality of the Father and the Son, you will be joined together with him in love. There will be seen that union for which Christ prayed just before his trial and crucifixion:– RH March 8 1906

Let not any man enter upon the work of tearing down the foundations of the truth that have made us what we are. God has led His people forward step by step, though there are pitfalls or error on every side. Under the wonderful guidance of a plain "Thus saith the Lord." A truth has been established that has stood the test of trial. When we arise and attempt to draw away

disciples after them, meet them with the truths that have been tried as by fire. Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the pillars of our faith concerning the sanctuary or concerning the personality of God or of Christ are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties, and to set the people of God adrift, without an anchor. 5BIO 411.5

"We must not for a moment think that there is no more light, no more truth, to be given us. We are in danger of becoming careless, by our indifference losing the sanctifying power of truth, and composing ourselves with the thought, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." "While we must hold fast to the truths which we have already received, we must not look with suspicion upon any new light that God may send *Gospel Workers page 310*

I appreciate the truth, every jot of it, just as it has been given to me by the Holy Spirit for the last fifty years. I desire everyone to know that I stand on the same platform of truth that we have maintained for more than half a century, That is the testimony I desire to bear on the day that I am seventy eight years of age ' Ms 142 1905

I do not wish to ignore or drop one link in the chain of evidence that was formed as after the passing of time in 1844, little companies of seekers after truth met together to study the Bible and to ask God for light and guidance. ...The truth, point by point, was fastened in our minds so firmly that we could not doubt. ... The evidence given in our early experience has the same force that it had then. The truth is the same as it ever has been, and not a pin or a pillar can be moved from the structure of truth. That which was sought for out of the Word in 1844, 1845, and 1846 remains the truth in every particular. Letter 38 1906

I understood that some were anxious to know if Mrs. White still held the same views that she did years ago when they had heard her speak in the sanitarium grove, in the Tabernacle, and at the camp meetings held in the suburbs of Battle Creek. I assured them that the message she bears today is the same that she has borne during the sixty years of her public ministry. She has the same service to do for the Master that was laid upon her in her girlhood. She receives lessons from the same Instructor. The directions given her are, "Make known to others what I have revealed to you. Write out the messages that I give you, that the people may have them." This is what she has endeavored to do. RH July 26 1906

There will be those once united with us in the faith who will search for new strange doctrines, for something odd and sensational to present to the people. They will bring in all conceivable fallacies, and will present them as coming from Mrs. White, that they may beguile souls. 1SM 41

Never seek to remove on landmark that the Lord has given His people. The truth stands firmly established on the eternal Rock a foundation that storm and tempest can never move." 8T 162

Let none seek to tear away the foundations of our faith, -- the foundations that were laid at the beginning of our work, by prayerful study of the Word and by revelation. Upon these foundations we have been building for the last fifty years. Men may suppose that they have found a new way, and that they can lay a stronger foundation than that which has been laid. But this is a great deception. Other foundation can no man lay than that which has been laid. RH March 3 1904

The Lord has declared that the history of the past shall be rehearsed as we enter upon the closing work. Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world, Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened, We cannot now enter into any new organization for this would mean apostasy from the truth. 2OMR 151.1

"The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of this new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure. Who has authority to begin such a movement? We have our Bibles. We have our experience, attested to by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. We have a truth that admits of no compromise. Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth? 1 SM 205 (1904)

As a people, we are to stand firm on the platform of eternal truth that has withstood test and trial. We are to hold to the sure pillars of our faith. The principles of truth that God has revealed to us are the only true foundation. They have made us what we are. The lapse of time has not lessened their value. It is the constant effort of the enemy to remove these truths from their setting, and to put in their place spurious theories. He will bring in everything that he possibly can to carry out his deceptive designs. But the Lord will raise up men of keen perception, who will give these truths their proper place in the plan of God. 1 SM 201.2

The past fifty years have not dimmed one jot or principle of our faith as we received the great and wonderful evidences that were made certain to us in 1845, after the passing of the time. . . . Not a word is changed or denied. That which the Holy Spirit testified to as truth after the passing of the time, in our great disappointment, is the solid foundation of truth. Pillars of truth were revealed, and we accepted the foundation principles that have made us what we are. Seventh day Adventists, keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus NYI February 7 1906

Change is not something our church had authority to do just as the Catholic Church had no authority to change times and laws

John 8:58 reads: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." How does this text powerfully reveal the full divinity of Christ?

It shows that He has the same nature as His Father as I touched on this in an earlier study Now back to the finale of the study.

Summary: If we want to deepen our love for the great infinite God we serve and be drawn to worship Him, we first must try to grasp what He tells us about Himself. The Trinity is a mystery, but in Scripture "mysteries" are deep truths that an infinite God reveals to us on a finite level. Thus we can safely speak of God only from our knees. "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! Deut 6:4 NKJV

Like the Catholics our church says "The Trinity is a mystery" I think we can safely speak of God when we simply speak His word rather than adding to it or speculating on it.

Revelation 17:5-6 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

"The mystery of the trinity is the central doctrine of Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the church.

(Handbook for today's Catholic p 16

- Our opponents sometimes claim that no belief should be held dogmatically which is not explicitly stated in Scripture . . . . But the Protestant churches have themselves accepted such dogmas as the Trinity for which There is no such precise authority in the Gospels. (Life magazine Oct 30 1950

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith." Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic faith is this, that we worship One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. (The Athanasian Creed)