

Who Came Upon a Midnight Clear? Part 3

1. Was Jesus man or God? If both, in what exact way was he both? In some ways, this is a mystery and may remain that way until we reach eternity with God. But the mystery is there because of another question: if Jesus was God, how did he become God? Was he always God? Is he a created God, made out of the essence or will of the Father?
2. The Bible never uses the word “trinity” and the word “Godhead” is an attempt to put into English a Greek term. I remember replacing “trinity” with “Godhead three” in our songbooks in the song “Holy, Holy, Holy” as we were told it was biblical.
3. I’m not sure the term “Godhead” makes the mystery any plainer...but the Bible actually has quite a lot to say about who Jesus was and is and will be.
4. Muslims and some atheists call us pagans, claiming that we worship three gods. The fact is, we do believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and we believe that they are all one from eternity. That differs from any and all pagan systems in that their gods are not the same. They differ in personality, reaction, and decision. Our God moves as one and always has.
5. The reading for this morning is John 1:1-4. If this sounds a lot like the first verses in the Bible, you are paying attention. John even brings light into the story in his opening chapter. When he says “in the beginning was the Word” he is using the imperfect, durative tense in Greek. If we were being very literal, we would translate it as “In the beginning the Word continually was, and the Word was continually with God, and the Word was continually God.”
6. In their version of the New Testament, Jehovah’s Witnesses often put an indefinite article in any verse that calls Jesus God. Their Bibles will say the “Word was a god” and even use “god” with a little letter. They used to tell people as they went from door to door that they did that because, in the original Greek, it was a little letter. The problem is that Greek had NO little letters for hundreds of years after this time. Oh, and the Greek language has NO indefinite article. It DOES have a

definite article but that isn't used here. The language is precise and echoes the Name of God given to Moses: "I am that I am."

7. John goes on to tell us that nothing has been created or came into being except by him. That would mean that Jesus was not created. He has always been. While that frustrates we who live in the world of time, but we can understand circles that have no beginning and no end. Everything was created THROUGH the Word who existed in eternity.
8. In verse 4, Jesus is portrayed as the origin of all life. Once again, this parallels Genesis 1.
9. "Before me was no god formed, nor will there be one after me" (Isaiah 43:10) Our God was not formed and no other god will be formed. That rules out the idea that Jesus was formed out of the essence or will of God. Psalm 93:2 says "your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity." Then, Micah expressly applies this to Jesus when he says "But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, from you One will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." (Micah 5:2)
10. God declared that He was Yahweh and He would not yield His glory to any other (Isaiah 42:8). Then, the prophet Jeremiah, tells us this: "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous branch sprout from David's line. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: Yahweh, our righteous savior." (Jeremiah 33:15,16)
11. In the first year of OSHC, we had two sermons on the Angel of the Lord, a being that appears again and again in the Old Testament to receive worship, distribute justice, and change the course of people's lives. It might be time to review those lessons but, for now, remember that John chapter 1 says that no man has ever seen God at any time. Other passages agree. And, yet, Genesis 17 expressly says that Yahweh appeared to Abram. In Genesis 32:30, Jacob calls a place Peniel, saying "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

12. Moses spoke to God face to face in Numbers 12:6-8. The scripture says “he beholds the form of the Lord.” Are these contradictions? Again, we turn to John.
13. “No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.” (John 6:46) “And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard His voice nor seen His form (John 5:37). It is Jesus who comes to us, God in human form. We have never seen the Father but seeing Jesus IS seeing the Father. Look at John 14: 5-9.
14. And if any would doubt, Jesus makes it as plain as he could possibly make it in John 8:58,59. Jesus appropriates the very name that God gave Moses at the burning bush. Look carefully at the passage and the tense of the verb. “Very truly I tell you, Jesus answered, before Abraham was born, I AM. At this, they picked up stones to stone him.”
15. Some might then ask, as they did in the early church, why is Jesus referred to as the “Son of God” if he was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit? While a sermon isn’t the place to do a deep dive on this, I hope that this will suffice: Jesus is also called the Bread of Life, the Lamb of God, the Lion of Judah but we do not, then, assume that he is really bread, lamb or lion. We understand that God is using human terms to express a spiritual reality.
16. Jesus is the Son of God, and the only begotten Son of God, because Jesus is the ONLY representative of God in human form that this world will ever receive. We who follow him are to be imitators of his light and we reflect his glory but we will never be him.
17. In John 19:7, the religious leaders of the day heard Jesus say he was the Son of God and immediately said that he had to die. Why? They understand that the word “son” meant “the same nature.” When Jesus called himself the Son of Man, he was letting us know he was truly, utterly, and totally human. When he used the term “Son of God” he was letting us know that he was truly, utterly, and totally God. The Jews understood that and some believed him while others plotted how to kill him.

18. Paul says in Philippians 2:6 “Christ Jesus, Who, being in very nature God.” The writer of Hebrews makes a stark contrast between Jesus and created beings such as angels.
19. We will finish this lesson in Hebrews chapter one. Hebrews is an unusual book in that it is not a letter nor is it a history; it is a sermon. Hebrews 1:1-12.