

Lecture 19 – The Trinity & the Old Testament; The Trinity & the New Testament

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” Genesis 1:26

“You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:3

Key Terms

Elohim, angel of the Lord, theophany, Unitarianism, complex monotheism

Objectives

- *Outline and locate Old Testament passages related to the doctrine of the trinity.
- *Outline and locate New Testament passages related to the doctrine of the trinity.

The Trinity and the Old Testament

I. Introduction

II. The Divine Name (*elohim*) Suggests That God Is Both Singular (*el*) and Complex (*elohim*) at the Same Time.

A. Genesis 1:26. “Let us make man in our image...”

1. Plural of majesty?
2. A polytheistic reference?
3. The heavenly court (angelic host)?
 - a. Scripture does not depict angels as fulfilling an advisory role.
 - b. *Us* should refer to the same person as *our*.
 - c. Only God is the subject of the verbs ‘asa’ (to make) and ‘bara’ (to create) in the creation account.
 - d. Cf. Genesis 11:7. “Let us go down and confuse. Only God is said to go down.”
4. A statement of self-deliberation?
5. John Wenham: Proclamation to the angelic host?
6. John Sailhamer: Anticipation of human plurality, thus human plurality as a reflection of divine plurality?
7. Trinitarian reference?
8. Our suggestion
 - a. Within the horizon of the human author: Self-deliberation
 - b. Within the sensus plenior of Scripture: A veiled trinitarian reference

B. Genesis 3:22. “The man has now become like one of us.”

C. Genesis 11:7. “Let us go down and confuse their language.”

D. Genesis 18. Abraham and the three men at Mamre

E. Genesis 19. Lot and the angelic visitors

F. Isaiah 6:8. “Whom shall I send? And who shall go for us?”

III. Angel of the LORD

A. Identification of the angel with Yahweh

1. Genesis 31:11-13
2. Genesis 32:24-30
3. Genesis 48:15-16

B. Ambiguity in the angel of Yahweh (Judges 6:11-15)

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C. A theophany of the pre-incarnate Christ? (John 1:18)

IV. What Does It Mean to Say That God Is One?

A. What does the first commandment (Exodus 20:3) mean?

1. An assertion of monotheism?
2. An instruction to Israel not to divide her confessional allegiance?

B. What of the *shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)?

1. Israel is not to divide her confessional allegiance because there is only one true God.
2. Hebrew words for *one*:
 - a. *yahid*: Unique (Proverbs 4:3)
 - b. *'ehad*: Unified (Genesis 2:24)
3. Zechariah 14:9. "On that day there will be one (*'ehad*) LORD, and his name the only (*yahid*) name."

V. Personification of Personal Extension

- A. Wisdom
- B. Word of God
- C. *Ruach Yahweh*
- D. What are we to make of these personifications?

VI. Conclusion

- A. The Old Testament certainly does not teach trinitarianism.
- B. The Old Testament hints at something more than unitarianism.
- C. Complex monotheism?

The Trinity & the New Testament

I. Introduction

II. Trinitarian Formulas

- A. Matthew 28:19
- B. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14
- C. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6
- D. Rom. 14:17-18; 15:16-18; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Gal. 3:11-14; Phil. 3:3; Col. 1:3-8; Eph. 2:11-22; 3:14-21; Tit. 3:4-6

III. The Deity of the Son

- A. Jesus bears divine titles.
 1. LORD (Mark 12:36-37; Phil. 2:10-11)
 2. Son of Man (Matt. 26:64. Cf. Dan. 7:13)
 3. God (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Heb. 1:8)
 4. Son of God (Mark 1:11; 9:7; John 5:18)
- B. Jesus possesses the characteristics or attributes of God.
 1. Grace, truth, glory (John 1:14, 17)
 2. Eternity (Col. 1:17); pre-existence (John 1:1-2)
 3. Immutability (Heb. 1:11-12)
- C. Jesus does the work of God.
 1. The work of creation (John 1:3; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2, 10)
 2. The work of providence (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)
 3. The work of redemption (John 1:12; Col. 1:14, 20; Heb. 1:3)
 4. The work of consummation (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2)
- D. Jesus receives the worship due God.
 1. The angels worshipped Him at His birth (Heb. 1:6).
 2. The blind man (John 9:38) and Thomas (John 20:28) worshipped Him during His

earthly ministry.

3. All will bow before Him in the *eschaton*.

IV. The Deity of the Holy Spirit

A. The Holy Spirit in the early church

1. Reticence about the Spirit among the Patristics
2. The Spirit in adoptionist thought: the Spirit as divine force
3. An orthodox response?
 - a. Clement of Rome
 - b. Irenaeus: The Spirit as the divine wisdom
4. The Spirit in subordinationist thought: Origen

B. Difficulties in understanding the Holy Spirit

1. Scarcity of explicit biblical revelation compared to the Father and the Son
2. The character of the Spirit's ministry
3. Absence of concrete imagery
4. The controversy about the Spirit in the 20th century

C. The personhood of the Holy Spirit (*Point 2 is not referenced in the CD lecture*)

1. *Ruach Yahweh* and *pneuma*
 - a. Divine wind
 - b. Divine breath
 - c. Charism
2. Means of reference: switch from linguistic gender to real gender for the sake of clarity
 - a. John 16:13-14
 - b. Eph. 1:14
3. The work of the Spirit is the work of a person.
 - a. Paraclete (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7)
 - John 14:16: *allon parakleton*
 - b. Glorifier (John 16:14)
 - c. Linked with personal agents (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)
 - d. Linked with the Father and Son at important events in Christ's ministry (Matthew 3:16-17; 12:28)
 - e. Linked with human beings in acts of ministry (Acts 15:28)
 - f. Possession of personal characteristics
 - 1) Knowledge and intelligence (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10-11)
 - 2) Will (1 Cor. 12:11)
 - 3) Emotions (Eph. 4:30)
 - 4) Has personal responses (Acts 5:3-4; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thes. 5:19; Acts 7:51)
 - 5) Engages in moral actions and personal ministry (Rom. 8:26; John 16:8)