

=THE HOLY SPIRIT=

Lesson 15

Five Eras in God's Dealing with Man

**INTRODUCTION:** As we have been studying in our Sunday school lessons, God is a threefold being, or three persons in one Godhead. He is Father; He is Son; He is Holy Spirit. Each of these persons has had His era in dealing with man as God's primary way of revealing Himself to man. In other words, there was a time when God the Father spoke audibly to man. Then there was a time when God the Son appeared physically to man. Then there came a time when God the Holy Spirit dealt personally with man. For the lesson this week, let us notice these different eras.

- I. THE OLD TESTAMENT ERA WHEN GOD THE FATHER DEALT WITH MAN. During the Old Testament days God spoke audibly with man. (Teacher, it might be wise to use a tape recording of a male voice speaking here, or a male voice to record something that God said in the Old Testament. For example, he could record the Ten Commandments or anything God spoke to His men. Show the pupils how God spoke to man through His prophets and His men, even with an audible voice.)

Though this was the era when God the Father spoke to man, there were, however, isolated instances when God the Son and God the Holy Spirit dealt with man. For example, Jesus was in the Old Testament periodically. In Genesis 3:8 He was the Voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Notice Genesis 3:8a, "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...." He was in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Daniel 3:25, "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." He was the Captain that spoke to Joshua before the conquest of Jericho. (See Joshua 5:13-15.) He was the Angel of the Lord Who wrestled with Jacob all night at Jabbok. Read Genesis 32:24-32. Notice especially verse 30, "...for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Then the Holy Spirit also dealt with man in the Old Testament. This, of course, was a periodic dealing. It was said that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samuel, etc. Now bear in mind that this was the age when God the Father spoke to people, but God the Son and God the Holy Spirit made periodic appearances.

- II. THE FOUR GOSPELS—THE AGE WHEN GOD THE SON DEALT WITH MAN. For 33 years God was in the flesh on earth and Jesus revealed God to man. Ah, wouldn't it have been wonderful to have seen Him while He was on the earth! He actually walked with us. John said he felt Him and his eyes beheld Him. In spite of this fact, however, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit did occasionally make appearances. You will remember the baptism of Jesus when the voice came from Heaven and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove. Read Matthew 3:16, 17.
- III. THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AGE WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT DEALS WITH MAN. This is the age in which we live now. (Teacher, review here the different things the Holy Spirit does for us in this age. He comforts, He leads, He teaches, He instructs, He teaches us how to pray, He empowers, etc.) In spite of this fact, however, there no doubt are times when God the Son appears to people, and there no doubt are times when God the Father's voice speaks audibly to people.
- IV. THERE IS COMING AN AGE WHEN ALL THREE OF THE PERSONS OF THE GODHEAD WILL DO THEIR WORK AT THE SAME TIME. This is called the millennium. This is that 1,000-year period when Jesus shall live on the earth. We shall see Him. We shall go to see Him once a year in Jerusalem. We shall hear the voice of God speaking to us just as they did in the Old Testament. We shall continue to have the Holy Spirit in His fulness and power just as we do now. Ah, what a wonderful hope this is! For a thousand years we shall have all the advantages of the Old Testament people who heard the voice of God, all the advantages of the Gospel-age people who saw the face of Jesus, and all the advantages of the church-age people who were indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit. All three of these persons in completeness will be manifested to us during the millennium.

- V. THE AGE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM OR OUR ETERNAL HEAVEN. Whom then will we see in Heaven? Will we see three people or will we see one? It seems that the Scripture teaches that in Heaven there is a Holy of Holies and a mercy seat. On that mercy seat is sprinkled the blood of Jesus Christ. Over that mercy seat is the cloud, the Shekinah Glory, representing God's presence with His people. This is the same cloud that appeared over the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle in the wilderness. The Bible says that Jesus is at the right hand of God, sitting on His right hand. He is our lawyer, our intercessor. (Teacher, you can teach here what a lawyer does, how he appears in court for someone else to defend him and to free him.) So in Heaven, when we are there eternally, we will see this cloud representing God the Father, but the only body we will see is the body of Jesus, for in Colossians 2:9 it says, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Because of this we shall see Him, and He will be sufficient. This will be our Heaven.

CONCLUSION: At first glance, this lesson may seem quite difficult to teach to children. However, quite the contrary is true. Several things could be used. As was mentioned before, a tape recorder could be used to represent God's speaking to man. Pictures of Jesus could be used if it is explained very carefully that we do not know how He looked, that there were no cameras then and that no one who saw Him drew a picture to leave for us. Explain that He did not have the long hair as pictured in pictures, but a picture could be used to show that the people did indeed see Him. Then, of course, the several things the Holy Spirit does for us now can be mentioned. Emphasis could be placed on the kingdom age and the qualities of that age such as the wild animals being tame; little children being able to play with snakes; people living to an old, old age and people who die at the age of 100 being like an infant's death; the fact that there will be no more war; swords will be turned into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks; the fact that we will all have glorified bodies; and the fact that Jesus will be here! All of these things certainly would appeal to the fancy of a little child as well as to the hopes of an older person.