

# Godhead Class

## November/December 2018

### December 16: Oneness Pentecostalism

The *Oneness* segment of the Pentecostal movement is one of most common and notable opponents to the biblical presentation of the Godhead. The largest segment of this Pentecostal movement is the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI). Notable UPCI churches in our area include Calvary Christian Tabernacle (Longview), First United Pentecostal (Longview), First Pentecostal (Hallsville), and Abundant Life (Gladewater). While sometimes referenced as “Jesus-only” churches (they prefer *Oneness* or *Jesus Name*), their fundamental belief is that “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are manifestations, modes, offices, or relationships that the one God has displayed to humans.”<sup>1</sup> To simplify, it is the belief that Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Son, and Jesus is the Holy Spirit. The Oneness Pentecostal view does not see three persons in the Godhead, but three personalities of one God or three manifestations of one God. Their doctrine is defended by appeals to passages such as Deuteronomy 6 and Galatians 3 where the biblical authors reference God in terms of *oneness*, which to them means *numerical singularity*.

Perhaps the greatest problem in Oneness theology has to do with the incarnation – the biblical teaching that the divine Son of God “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1.14). Oneness theology, though, does not have a true incarnation; rather, it sees the *Son* as “only human”<sup>2</sup>. If this theology is true, then how do are we to understand

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<sup>1</sup> David K. Bernard *The Oneness of God*, Volume I, 2010, p15.

<sup>2</sup> John Scheel, *Greeson/Scheel Debate*, 1994

Jesus and the events surrounding His death? If just a human body containing a human spirit died on the cross, then our salvation is not purchased (Acts 20.28). But, if it was human body containing the divine spirit of the second person of the Godhead, who limited himself (Philippians 2) in coming to the earth, then our salvation has been purchased in the most remarkable and perfect manner!

A second problem Oneness theology faces is with regard to the many times we see the Father and the Son interacting. Oneness theology sees these interactions as between two different manifestations of Jesus – a human side and a divine side. For example, David K. Bernard, General Superintendent of UPCI, states, “Jesus prayed in his humanity, not in his deity.”<sup>3</sup> If the Father and the Son are the same person, then the concept of praying one to another seems lost. The Oneness position of the human nature praying to the divine nature brings along the unintended consequences of stripping the divinity away from the Son on His way to Calvary.

The position of Oneness theology advocates on the Godhead simply cannot be reconciled with Scripture. It is on that basis that such theology should be rejected.

- 1) What is the problem with the idea that only a human body with a human spirit died on the cross? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Can you find a time in the Bible where “one” does not demand numerical singularity? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Find a problem for Oneness theology advocates in John 17: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 4) According to 1 Corinthians 3.8, what were Paul and Apollos? \_\_\_\_\_  
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<sup>3</sup> David K. Bernard, *ibid.* p176