

ASSOCIATED BIBLE STUDENTS

“WEEPING MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.” PSALMS 30:5

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Shedding Light on Dark Age Doctrines

Part Three

In the *end times* in which we are living, light is being shed on the many mysteries of doctrine conceived in the dark ages of Christian history. One of these mysteries is the doctrine of the *trinity*. Now, in this age of enlightenment, thousands of faithful believers in Christ are beginning to doubt this doctrine which claims that Jesus is his own heavenly Father—Jehovah.

Often, they secretly question this doctrine, but maintain their silence for fear of being labeled a heretic. Indeed, most Christian churches claim that belief in the trinity is *essential* to being a Christian, leaving no room for dialog and certainly no opportunity for impartial investigation on this topic.

But, God Himself invites us to reason when He says, “*Come now, and let us reason together.*” (Isaiah 1:18) The Apostle Paul commended the Jews of Berea for their diligent search of the Scriptures to be sure that what they were being taught was indeed truth. Thus, their faith was well established and they quickly accepted Christ. (Acts 17:11) Paul urged Timothy: “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” 2 Timothy 2:15

It is with this Scriptural principle that all Christians should be encouraged to examine their church creeds to be certain that they are honoring God by what they believe. If there is doubt on any subject, there is need for study. Then, after thorough examination, “*let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*” without fear of persecution. Romans 14:5

**“HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD
IS ONE LORD.”** Deuteronomy 6:4

To both the Prophets and the Apostles, God revealed Himself in the Bible as having no equal, and always existing. “*Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD.*” (Isaiah 43:10, 11) His name in Hebrew is *YHVH* (Jehovah or Yaweh), and He is addressed throughout the Scriptures as



Heavenly Father, God, or LORD. For 4,000 years those who were His people had no indication that He was anything other than the supreme, unitary God that *He* declared Himself to be.

In His wisdom, the one true God promised the prophets of old that, in due time, He would send forth a savior to redeem the lost world of mankind. God

would anoint this servant as His representative with power and authority. The Jews lived in constant anticipation of this *Messiah* (Hebrew) or *Christ* (Greek)—both meaning *anointed*. “*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...*” (Heb.1:1-2) God anointed Jesus as His prophet—His servant. Moses told Israel, “*The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.*” (Deuteronomy 18:15) Prophetically, Isaiah said “*Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him.*” Isaiah 42:1

“MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.”

Matthew 3:17

This anointed *prophet* and *servant* was God’s “*only begotten Son,*” Jesus Christ the righteous. “*When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman...*” (Galatians 4:4) The Scriptures declare that the *Father* had no beginning. Jesus Christ is repeatedly spoken of as being brought into existence. Tertullian, writing in the second century, said, “*There was a time when the Son did not exist.*” (*Early Church Fathers*, page 21) How else could the Bible declare that Jesus was “*...the firstborn of every creature...*” and “*the beginning of the creation of God.*” Colossians 1:15; Revelation 3:14

Jesus desired that his disciples should understand who he was and why he came. He asked them, “*whom say ye*

that I am?" The Apostle Peter answered Jesus' question "Thou art the **Christ**, the **Son** of the living God." Jesus then declared that upon this *rock*—this foundational truth that he was the promised Messiah and **Son** of God—he would build his church. Matthew 16:15-18

Jesus had a mission to accomplish as God's *anointed one*, and the entire theme of the Bible states that mission: "For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me... And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life..." (John 6:38, 40) Here we see that God is the author, and Jesus is the honored executor of the Father's plans.

Although, as a Son, Jesus was *subordinate* to God Almighty, it makes him no less worthy of honor. "The Son of man came ...and there was **given him** [by his Father] *dominion, and glory, and a kingdom...*" (Daniel 7:13,14) Jesus did not assume this honor, glory or service on his own, but he received it at the hand of *his* Father and superior, God Himself. Jesus said, "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me..."

(John 8:54) Paul explained: "Christ **glorified not himself** to be made a high priest; but He [God] that said unto him [Jesus], *Thou art my Son...*" Hebrews 5:4, 5

Jesus recognized his honored position, and yet always remained humble. He said, "the Father is greater than I," and "I can of mine own self do nothing..." (John 14:28; John 5:30) The Apostle Paul declared, "The Head of Christ is God" and "ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." (1 Corinthians 11:3; 3:23) He also referred to the Father as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 1:17

ORIGIN OF THE TRINITY CONCEPT

That which the Jews believed for thousands of years about the singularity of God should be harmonious and compatible with Christian doctrine. Jesus taught his followers that the Jewish traditions and concepts about God the Father were not negated. Christianity is not a new religion with a new god, but an extension of Judaism, with the same God that Israel worshiped. Why, then, has this original understanding of God the Father given way to the concept termed the *trinity*, now considered by many to be the *touchstone* of Christian faith?

After the Apostles died, a gradual falling away from the original faith occurred. Great numbers of pagans entered the church bringing with them their pagan ideas. Various triune-god concepts, originating in Babylon, had spread throughout the ancient world and had become a prominent

feature of the Egyptian, Persian, Grecian, Roman, Japanese and Indian mythologies. Both Catholic and Protestant scholars recognize that the concept termed *trinity* took centuries to evolve, and concede that pagan Greek philosophy played a significant role in the development of the doctrine. Indeed, it was not formally introduced until the fourth century, leading to the Nicene Creed (AD325).

In this dark period of church history, many political pressures were mixed into Christian doctrine and practices. Fearing that religious dissension might disrupt the political unity of his empire, the Emperor Constantine summoned a general council of bishops to deal with the controversy as to whether Jesus the Son was also his own Father. The proponents for and against the trinitarian concept debated the issue, with the Emperor finally calling for a vote of the bishops to settle the matter. The Trinitarian Creed, as finally adopted, fixed the doctrine of the person of Christ as "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, ... of one substance with the Father..." With the Emperor's threat of banishment, according to Socrates, all but five signed the Creed. (Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.* 1, 8; and article *CREED*,

NICENE, McClintock & Strong *Cyclopedia*). The basic substance of the Nicene Creed came to be adopted by many as the true identity of God and the defining doctrinal test as to whether one was really a Christian.

This creed explicitly defined God as actually composed of three persons: "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit"—all co-equal and co-eternal—yet, in the Bible, only one of these appears: "...there is but **one God, the Father**, of whom are all things... and **one Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom are all things." (1 Corinthians 8:6) The other terms "God the Son" and "God the Holy Spirit" never appear in Scripture. In fact, the term *trinity* is not found in the Bible. Admittedly, the concept of the trinity is mysterious, incomprehensible and impossible to square with the *one* God testimony of the forefathers.

REAL SACRIFICE, REAL DEATH

To truly understand the relationship of the heavenly Father and His beloved Son is to understand the depth of compassion the Father had for the world of mankind. Jesus' suffering and death were real, and so too was the sacrifice of His Father in sending His Son to suffer. "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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world



through him might be saved.” John 3:16-17

It is a great mistake that many Christians make in thinking that only the all-powerful Jehovah could take on the weight of the sins of billions of people. This mistaken concept then demands that the one who died for our sins, Christ Jesus, must be God Himself. But the Scriptural doctrine of the *ransom* declares that the life of a perfect man could be and was the only acceptable sacrifice to offset the sin of Adam, and consequently the inherited sins of all mankind. “As by a **man** came death, by a **man** also came the resurrection of the dead.”

1 Corinthians 15:21

Only the life of a perfect man *without sin* could accomplish the equal payment required for the perfect life of Adam which was lost.

“There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:5,6) The ransom price was a perfect human life for a perfect human life—a *corresponding price*. The Greek words used by our Lord, “ransom for,” (Mark 10:45) are *lutron anti*, which signifies, “a price in offset, or a price to correspond.” Thus Jesus said, “The Son of Man came...to give his life a ransom [*lutron anti*—a price to correspond] for many.” Matthew 20:28

As Adam, through disobedience, forfeited his *being*, his *soul*, all his rights to life and to earth, so Christ Jesus our Lord, by his death, as a *corresponding price*, paid a full and exact offset for Father Adam’s soul or being. In consequence, all who were yet to be born from Adam—every human soul sharing by inheritance in his sin—receive the opportunity for life through Christ’s sacrifice.

If Jesus is God the Father, then Jesus’ death was not real—it was just an illusion, because God cannot die. When Jesus prayed with “strong crying and tears” unto his Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, his agony was real. The cry of Jesus on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” would merely have been without real suffering if he were his own Father and already immortal. No, when Jesus breathed his last upon the cross, **he really died**. This fact is especially important to comprehend to be able to appreciate the magnitude of the sacrifice that Jesus was willing to offer! He did not merely appear to humble himself, while really retaining his glory and power—no, he actually became a man, suffered and died. Philippians 2:7-8

THE TRUE ONENESS OF GOD AND JESUS

The relationship of the Father to the Son is truly beautiful. They are two completely separate beings, with *oneness*

applying only to their purpose and will. And the followers of Christ are invited to share in this intimate oneness of purpose and will: “...the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one...” (John 17:22) With this understanding we can clearly appreciate that Jesus, God’s chief agent from all creation, was “daily his delight” (Proverbs 8:30), and volunteered to be the redeemer of men in accordance with his Father’s plan. Jesus told his disciples, “Therefore doth my Father love me,

because I lay down my life...” (John 10:17) This was a sincere and deep love between a Father and a Son. And the followers of Christ share this deep love because of their willingness to share in his sufferings. John 15:9; Philippians 1:29

The night before he was crucified, Jesus prayed to the Father that he might be resurrected from death to “the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (John 17:5) At an earlier time, Jesus explained to his disciples, “I came down from heaven,” and “Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58; 6:38) But what did he mean? Jesus, as *the firstborn of every creature* had a heavenly nature before he came into the world as a babe. He gave up his spiritual nature for an earthly nature, in order that he might give his human life a ransom

price for the sins of the whole world. Colossians 1:15, 17

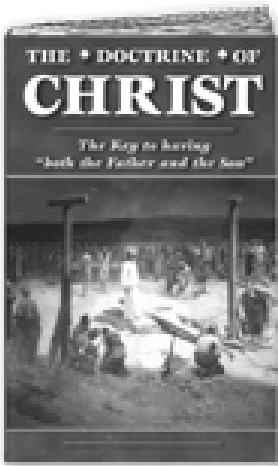
“THERE IS BUT ONE GOD, THE FATHER” 1 Corinthians 8:6

Because of Jesus’ faithful obedience, the Father was pleased to raise the Son to life anew—the Divine nature—to sit at the Father’s right hand on the throne of glory. “God... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things... when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high...” (Hebrews 1:2, 4) Jesus said that after the successful accomplishment of his mission, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to **my God**, and your God.” John 20:17

The result of Jesus’ sacrifice will be “testified in due time,” when he will raise the dead and set up his righteous Kingdom among men, destroy all enemies (including death), and “when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Corinthians 15:28) In Jesus’ own words, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” John 17:3-4



“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son also may glorify thee...” John 17:1



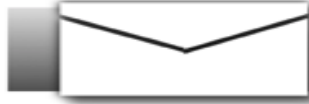
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