

The Circuit Rider

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LORDSHIP AND THE TRINITY

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.” (Matt. 28:19) “The Grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all.” (II Cor. 13:14) “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the FATHER, through sanctification of the SPIRIT, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of JESUS CHRIST: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied” (I Pet. 1:2)

This particular doctrinal study combines two great biblical subjects, that of Lordship and the Trinity. By tracing the use of the word “Lord” as applied to the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, the three persons of the one Godhead are revealed. The Jews of the Old Testament regarded God’s proper name to be Yahweh and considered it too sacred to even utter. For that reason, they referred to Him as “Lord” who is Adonai or Adonay in Hebrew and Kurios in the Greek. When Moses stood before the burning bush and received his call, it came from “the Lord God” (Ex. 3:13-15). In that passage from Exodus, the Great “I AM” is no other than Yahweh, “the Lord God”. He is the Supreme Ruler in Whom it is safe to trust at all times and under all situations and circumstances.

The word “Lord” when used of the three Persons of the Godhead implies deity and is a claim that demands our worship and respect. Only supernatural “faith” (Heb. 11:6) can accept the fact that the One God consists in Three distinct Persons. Any human attempt to illustrate the Trinity is feeble at best, but just as surely as water can take the form of either ice, liquid, and steam, so our One God has taken the “form” (Phil. 2:6) of Three Persons, “Father ... Son ... and Holy Spirit”. All Three Persons are equal in every way and rightfully deserve the title of “Lord” and the devotion due that name.

The Lord God (Ex. 6:2-3)

The word “Jehovah” can be basically used interchangeably with the word “Lord” when referring to “God” in the Old Testament. Jehovah is the English rendering of the Hebrew name, Yahweh, by which the Jews called “God”. It’s a name that belongs exclusively to God in dealing with His people. The name “Jehovah” in Hebrew was actually Yhovah and was the proper name of God that eventually went unpronounced in fear of taking it “in vain” (Ex. 20:7). To keep from even speaking God’s holy name carelessly, the Jews developed the habit of not even pronouncing it when reading the Old Testament Scriptures. Instead, when they came to the name “Jehovah”, they spoke the word “Lord”.

Because of this, the name “Lord” rather than “Jehovah” appears in the KJV. The word “Lord” expresses honor, dignity, and majesty which is deserving of “God Almighty” (Isa. 12:2, 26:4). When applied to “God”, the word “Lord” denotes the owner and governor of the “whole earth” (Ps. 83:18, 97:5). In the Greek, “Lord” refers to master or owner, one who has power and authority.

Our understanding of God from Scripture is clearly monotheistic (Deut. 6:4). As we keep in mind that the word “Lord” was substituted by the Jews for the name “Jehovah” as they read the Old Testament, this passage from Deuteronomy can literally be translated to read, “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God (Elohim) is one Jehovah”. Scripture never contradicts itself and there is a reason why this “one Jehovah” is also called by the plural name “Elohim” (Gen. 1:1). Elohim is a Hebrew word that was used for “God” in the plural to express the divine unity of the Trinity. Personal pronouns used in reference to God (Gen. 1:26, 11:7), the Theophanies (Gen. 16, 18), and references to the Holy Spirit’s work (Gen. 1:2, Judges 6:34) all teach the unity of the Godhead in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, from the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16-17) through the promises of the “Comforter” (Jh 14:16), the Trinity is undeniably taught.

We identify God the FATHER as the “God” of the Old Testament and the One to Whom Jesus prayed and taught His disciples to pray (Matt. 6:9-13). Actually, the term “Father” when applied to God, is more of a New Testament concept. When it was used in the Old Testament, it spoke of Him being the Father of Israel (I Chron. 29:10). In the New Testament, the word “Father” not only describes a believer’s personal relationship with “God”, but the unique relationship of Christ as God’s “only begotten Son” (Jh. 3:16).

The Lord Jesus (Rom. 10:9)

Peter’s declaration of Jesus in the use of the words “Lord” (Master) and “Christ” (Anointed One) expresses the single thought of His Sovereign rule (Acts 2:36). It’s possible for mankind to reject the Lordship of Jesus Christ in this life (Lk. 6:46), but impossible in eternity (Phil. 2:10-11). Paul profoundly states that there is “but one God, The Father ... and one Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 8:5). It is this second Person of the Trinity that “God”, without ceasing to be God, became human (Jh. 14:9). While sharing the limitations of human life on earth, He was also simultaneously keeping the universe together. He is the very Creator of “all things” and “head” of “the church” (Col.

1:12-19). Presently, He is interceding for the saints at the “right hand” of the “Father” (Heb. 1:3).

When we speak of Jesus as God’s “Son”, we do not mean that God created Jesus at some point and time (Jh. 1:1-4,14). There never was a time when Jesus did not exist. When God revealed Himself to man in the Old Testament, He did so in the second Person of the Trinity (Ex. 33:22). As the “Word”, Christ played an active role in speaking this world into existence. When the “fullness of time was come” (Gal. 4:4), the “Word was made flesh” when “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman”. Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no God and apart from God there is no Jesus Christ. The reaction of Thomas when he saw the resurrected Christ, was the declaration, “my Lord and my God” (Jh. 20:28).

The Lord The Holy Spirit (II Cor. 3:16-18)

In the unity of the Godhead, Jesus is considered “one” with the “Spirit”, not “one” and the same Person, but “one” and the same Being, both equally divine. Jesus Himself links the “Holy Spirit” with the Father and the Son in proclaiming God as a Triune Being (Matt. 28:19). Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, links the Trinity together in the closing of the second epistle (II Cor. 13:14). Peter links the Trinity together in the work of salvation (I Pet. 1:2).

Apart from the convicting and converting power of the Holy Spirit, a sinner can never know the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 12:3). To be indwelt with the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19) is to be indwelt with Christ (Col. 1:27). Not to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit means to be “none of His” (Rom. 8:9). The first appearance of the Holy Spirit is found in the very beginning of the Bible (Gen. 1:2). All three Persons of the Trinity existed from eternity and were present and active in creation. Someone has likened God the Father as the Architect of creation, God the Son as the Builder, and God the Holy Spirit as the Energizing Force. That may be a feeble way of expressing it, but it gives our minds a way of picturing God at work in creation.

CLOSING

No doctrine can be true if it is not consistent with the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity. In considering the Trinity, there are three in Person, but “one” in essence with all deserving the title of “Lord”. This three-fold distinction in the Godhead can be seen throughout Scripture, but is especially taught and more clearly revealed in the New Testament.

In seeking to understand the doctrine of the Trinity, we need to realize what it is NOT. It is NOT a succession of ways God has appeared in history. He did not manifest Himself only as Father during the Old Testament, only as Son during the New Testament, and only as Holy Spirit following the ascension of Christ. Such a view denies the eternal nature of the everlasting Trinity. But, we need to also understand that the Trinity is NOT a compiling of three gods. Such a view as this sees the trinity as three equal, but separate beings. This concept is called tritheism and is NOT biblical.

Like the word rapture (that is often used in reference to the Second Coming of Christ), the word Trinity cannot be found in Scripture, but the teaching is unquestionable. The word Trinity is a theological way of defining what the Bible teaches about God being revealed as “Father ... Son ... and ... Holy Spirit”. The Trinity is a difficult doctrine to explain because it is a mystery known only to God Himself. It cannot be rationalized simply because God is incomprehensible to the human mind.

Scripture defines this doctrine of three divine Agents and only one God Who is “Lord” of all. This means that the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is Lord. Not three lords, but “one Lord” (Eph. 4:5). Not a trio of separate deities, not one person impersonating two others in addition to him, but “one” God, yet within whose unity there is three distinct Persons Who are all co-equal and co-eternal.

The Trinity is so important in the New Testament because it is the third Person that introduces us to the second Person (Jh. 3:8, 14:26-27, 16:7-14). When sinful man broke fellowship with God then God came in Person to earth; the second Person sent by the first Person and empowered by the third Person, to save us from our sins. God in human flesh died to “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21) and to unite believers to Himself by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

A MINISTRY UPDATE

On June 30th of this year, Covenant of Grace Ministries celebrates its second anniversary. We began this ministry at the encouraging of a dear brother in Christ, Gerald Primm, who now serves on our Board of Directors. It was started with the intentions of me being able to devote my time and attention to a new area of ministry once I retired from the pastorate. Well, that time has finally come! After forty years of Christian ministry, I have announced my retirement from the pastorate effective July 30, 2008. This will enable me to give more of my energy to Covenant of Grace Ministries. Our web site is receiving “hits” from all over the world for which we “praise the Lord”. I hope to have the Book of James ready for broadcast by the end of this year. It is also my desire to someday write a book on the biblical role of a Deacon that will also include the subject of Elders. But, I plan to put that book on the back burner (so to speak), so that I can first of all write a book dealing with my personal experiences throughout my pastoral ministry. I have discussed the possibility of doing this as a joint effort with my closest long time friend and another Board Member, Jerry Stanley, who is now retired from the pastorate. Hopefully, this will be ready for publication within the next few years. I would appreciate your prayers for us as we seek to know and follow the Lord’s will. As always, “thank you” for your financial support of this ministry.

Because of His Sovereign GraceBWM