

Three in One Mathew 28: 16-20

One of the things that makes the Christian faith distinct from every other religion of the world is our belief in the Triune God. The God we worship is one, yet there are three who are distinctly God. One God, revealed in three persons. The whole concept is nearly impossible to fully grasp, much like trying to understand how God always existed, or how God created everything from nothing.

The human mind, no matter how learned and intelligent, is not capable of completely and fully understanding the nature of God. That will not change until our human eyesight and feeble wits are fully restored for us in heaven. Someday, we will have a perfect understanding of who God is. In the meantime, we must rely upon our faith and the Scriptures to help us know and love God, the One who created us and placed us upon this earth.

A truthful and accurate understanding of God is vital to our faith, as it will determine how we worship, how we pray, and ultimately how we live our lives. Are we to worship God the Father, Jesus the Son or the person of the Holy Spirit? When we pray, are our petitions and prayers of thanksgiving directed to God the Father or to His Son Jesus Christ? And why do some faith traditions add saints and the Virgin Mary to the mix? These are important questions without simple answers, and like other difficult questions in life they must not hinder us from seeking the truth. We must begin with what we do know.

Many analogies have been used to attempt to describe the Trinity. Some use an egg, where you have the yolk, the egg white and the shell. But it is possible to separate the three, so ultimately it is insufficient. Others use a triangle, or three interlocking rings, or water in its three possible forms of ice, liquid, and steam. All ultimately fall short along the way. Earthly things are woefully inadequate to describe a Holy God, but the words of Scripture are more than sufficient.

One thing is certain. From beginning to end, the Scriptures reveal that there is only one true God and that God's people are to worship no one else but Him. The first of the Ten Commandments make it clear. example. Exod 20:2-3: I am the Lord your God and you shall have no other gods before me. Deut 6:4-Hear o Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone; and Deut, 32:39- "see now that I am he; there is no god besides me. There is ample evidence for the oneness of God in the Old Testament, but what about the New? God does not change throughout eternity. Malachi 3:6

The God of the Old Testament is also the God of the New. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 (among other places) affirms that truth. The question is how did we get from Yahweh, Elohim and Jehovah in the OT, the God of one, to the triune God of the new? How did the church fathers arrive at the conclusion that God is both Three and One, especially since the word "trinity" is not found in the Scriptures? The word might not be found, but there are several places in the Bible where a clear reference to a triune God may be found.

Some of the clearest passages of Scripture that affirm the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit are found in the NT book of Hebrews. Written to early Jewish converts, the first two verses of that book reveal 2 great truths- God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ, spoken through the Word and God created the world through Jesus Christ. Those that consider Jesus to be a great prophet, but not God fail to acknowledge that truth. The latter part of that verse is important to our understanding the deity of Christ, for Jesus was not just the Word of God, but He also was in unity with God when creation began. Prophets can speak for God, but only God can create something from nothing.

And when the prophets speak, the Holy Spirit is intricately involved. A perfect example is Hebrews 3:7, where the Scripture writer quotes Psalm 95 from the OT and states that it was written and spoken by the Holy Spirit. The implication is clear-though David wrote the words on the page, the inspiration for them came from God. God's very words are delivered, spoken and recorded through the Holy Spirit, the author of the Bible.

Our Scripture reading this morning- the great commission- is another beautiful example. Note that the name of God is singular, not plural. The benediction found in 2 Cor. 13:14 that we are so familiar with reflects the Trinity, as does the Gospel of John. It is there that John quotes Jesus as saying "I and the Father are one". And then "He who has seen me has seen the Father". "The Holy Spirit is given by the Father, sent from the Father, and proceeds from the Father. The Father sends the Spirit in the Son's name. The Son will send the Spirit from the Father. And then the Son must go away (return to the Father) so that He can send the Spirit. There can be no doubt the three are mysteriously and intricately linked. The Scriptures clearly teach that there is only One God, who has chosen to reveal Himself in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

People that wonder why Jews, Muslims and Christians cannot work out our differences and live peaceably with one another need look no further than a flawed understanding of who God truly is. That is the root cause of much of the hatred and bloodshed throughout history. While we Christians mourn for those who refuse to accept the truth of the Bible, other faith traditions are not so pacifistic. Part of the battle is over territory, but the fact is that Christians worship a different God than any other religion. Do not let anyone try to convince you otherwise.

I leave you this morning with a warning found in Hebrews 3:12. Take care brothers and sisters that none of you may have an evil unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. The Living God is none other than the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Three in one, and one in three. When we couple that with the promise that Jesus made to His followers- that He is with us always, even to the end of the age, we will have what we need to make disciples and go and be for the world the body of Christ. Let us continue to go and do that very thing. Amen